

## THE *GLAMORAMA* AS WORLD MODEL

'God is dead.' (Nietzsche)

'Nietzsche is dead.' (God)

'Both of them are dead.' (Odin)

(graffiti)

Hungarian criticism primarily approaches Bret Easton Ellis's novel, *Glamorama*<sup>1</sup> from particular theoretical problems. These are prominently the problem of the reality-effects (the necessity and impossibility of a referential- or mimetic-principled reading) and the questions of the textual apprehensibility of popular culture (filmic narration, surficiality, subcultural embeddedness, etc.) Although these approaches lead the reader to recognitions which are revealing in a considerable number of cases, they provide few clues concerning the text's readability as a novel. They above all deal with the details and, indeed, with the surficial aspects of the text. Rather, it appears to me that an allegorically organised, coherent system of narrative and metaforic patterns run along the text; the interpretation of which, not least, confronts us precisely with that theoretical possibility that the distinguishability of surface and depth cannot only be admitted as an illusion; or can, but not in the sense as the criticism of logocentrism traditionally conceives it. In my paper, I undertake the task of interpreting the novel by the comparison of these patterns while also looking for the answer how this attitude of the text in relation to signification can be apprehended.

The central theme of the text is conspiracy. Therefore, my first question is what in fact conspiracy is as such. It is a complex structure, formed by an undefined number of elements, in which each element of the system is attached to at least one other, and the map of the links is arborescent, amorphous. Regarding the interplay of the elements, every system element is moved except for one, and several elements are movers as well. Nevertheless, one element is exclusively a mover, i.e. the system contains one (and solely one) unmoved

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<sup>1</sup> Bret Easton Ellis: *Glamorama* (1st ed.) (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999). All references are to and all quotations are extracted from this edition. The page numbers of the referred to or quoted parts appear in brackets after each reference or quotation in the text of the paper.

centre. The operation of the system is governed by some kind of law which determines, on the one hand, the rules by which particular elements are joined, and on the other, the rules by which the elements move.<sup>2</sup> This principle is unknown in every case just as the whole of the structure organised by it. As the object of cognition, the conspiracy becomes a secret, and as a secret waiting for disclosing, it can be divided into two levels. The surface level is composed of systematically recurring motifs, changes, movements which are related to single system elements, and which can be structured according to the aspect of identity and difference and interpreted as signs (symptoms). On the second level, reason, motivation, principle stands, which as a signified can at least be assumed and recognised in principle (i.e. it can be detected).

This system corresponds to the linguistic model of the metaphysics of presence and to its epistemological fundamental, having its base on this very linguistic model, which itself is based on the separability and superposability of the sign and the signified, on the subordination of the sign, and on the principle of representation (i.e. the system corresponds to the aspiration by which the metaphysics of presence strives to map out the referential world relying on the help of causality). In this perspective, as the objects of experience, every phenomenon and thing fits into the same network of an unknown system, where they play or can play the roles of the mover and the moved at the same time. The purpose of cognition is to reach that fixed point which is the ultimate reason of every movement, which is the unmoved itself by exploring the movement and the net of links (the meaning and the sense) of particular elements. The significance of cognition accordingly lies in the fact whether the explored net could really be closed or not, i.e. whether it is complete or not. In other words, in the fact how many elements and how exclusively they are attached to the known reason (the mover).

Consequently, we can rightly expect that the novel is going to tell us about how the characters are connected to the conspiracy. The relevant attribute of the characters will be their position in relation to cognition, and the plot will take shape through the transition of this attribute. According to our first assumption, the conspiracy, despite of all its obscurity and complications, is a local one. Therefore, we would await reading a detective story, learning about the operation of a confinable, circumscribable (a politically and/or socially subversive) system. Our impression is that the bounds of the conspiracy show congruence with the frames of Victor's life. The sequence of oblique hints and motifs leads us to the suspicion that the key figure of the conspiracy is the father, and his aim is to replace Victor with an alter ego. (Lunch with the father,

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. the description of the system with Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (XII. 6-7, especially 6, 1071b 4).

the critique of Victor's lifestyle, the necessity of a "new you" [79], the problematics of replacement, the insufficiency of the change of the name [77–82].) Considering all what have just been elaborated above, what in fact can this text be about?

Joining the problematics of genealogy and representation in the relation of the strong father versus the weak son could in principle become interpretable according to the semiotic scheme of fallogocentrism. The assigning of a name as a cultural creative gesture is supposed to provide opportunity for the existence and (self-)representation of the father (and of the ultimate substance at the end of the invisible genealogy chain). The metaforic attachment of the offspring (the signifier) and the begetter (the signified) through the identical name would create the unity and exclusiveness of genealogy (meaning). However, the conspiracy, which seems to be ruled by the father, is precisely working on the metaforic replacement of an offspring who represents the father imperfectly. In this sense, Victor is a bad trope because in his case, two things showing no similarity have been denominated by the same word (name). On the other hand, his alter ego is a trope which represents well because in its case, the same word (name<sup>3</sup>) refers to a similar entity. So, the correlation of meaning is assured; moreover, it is necessary; actually this is what happens. The two possible agents of cognition and designation would be Victor and/or the father, and similarly, two narrative patterns could unfold further on.

In the first case, Victor, the son, i.e. the level of signifiers would uncover the level of things, i.e. signifieds by unveiling the conspiracy and proving the presence of the father behind it. Accordingly, this would also be the narrative of self-knowledge at the same time, resulting in the reconsideration of the position in the face of the father. As a consequence of the opposition between father and son, the story of some kind of (re)identification process would come to light. It would either reinterpret the relation of the signifier and the signified and bring about a well functioning new trope (reckoning with the father, the declaration of the self as a new meaning) or would reinforce this signification and would frame itself into a good metaphor (i.e. Victor would start to lead a life approved by his father). In the second case, the interpretative gesture would be accomplished by the father, who finally manages to find a well representing son for his self-designation due to the alter ego. The story in this case would tell us about the self-interpretation of the father, in which the fate of Victor would be to disappear in one of its blind spots.

The story comes up to our expectations to the extent that the alter ego on the side of the father really takes over Victor's place (pt. 5), and Victor also exposes the role of the father (400–3). However, our expectations are refuted to

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<sup>3</sup> "THE TRANSFORMATION OF VICTOR WARD (UH, WE MEAN JOHNSON) [...]" (450).

the extent that single moments of the story cannot be explained by this as a central conception, and the narrative is not closed either. During his acquaintance with things, Victor casts light to systems of conspiracy operating below, above, and next to each other, involving a whole range of (minimum) double agents. He recognizes that Palakon, the father, and Bobby equally and mutually take advantage of each other (and him) to achieve their own goals (421–3). Thus, the centre gets displaced, but it is inscrutable where. The father cannot be the centre because he is controlled as well (by the Japanese, 422), and another, more sophisticated conspiracy is being hatched around him. (The Victor alter ego keeps on acting in undetected affairs [457–9], the appearance of Lorrie Wallace and Palakon on the video record [475].) Bobby cannot be the centre since in spite of his death, everything goes on. Palakon cannot be the centre either because he “ [...] has... no affinity...” (422), or rather, even if he did, the context implies that he could only be a moved element in the system of the conspiracy.

So, the text introduces more and more conspiracies, double agents, and alter egos (Jamie Fields, who—besides Palakon—gives away the most about the whole, is one of them as well [424–6]), which makes us reconsider our previous notions concerning the scope, the number of the moved elements, and the structure of the novel's conspiracy. Such a complex structure is getting outlined in front of us in which the different size subsystems (the simultaneously running conspiracies) possess partial autonomy, and their elements are intricately attached to the elements of other subsystems, making even the status of the immobile centres relative. All the same, they do not extinguish each other; the resultant of their operations points strictly at one direction: at the father, behind the father, at the post of the president, and behind it, at the direction of a global political pursuit (mainly on p. 422). (Its nature is unknown, but it is not relevant in relation to the structure.) Furthermore, the conspiracies are omnipresent in the time and space of the novel's world. (Jamie Fields at the college [467–8]; Abdullah's report presumably about the first appearance of the later Victor alter ego [11]; the started, but not finished fragments of the narrative in pt. 5 concerning the Victor alter ego and the pseudo-Lauryn Hynde, showing up beside him [460–3], or the already mentioned videotape with Palakon, etc.) Every portion of the text's world is produced by the conspiracies; every happening of it is the result of the pulling of the conspiratorial strings. (Or rather, after the novel has introduced alter egos in so great a quantity, presupposing the opposite would be more difficult to justify.) However, in this case, we can no longer talk about conspiracies—at least not in the sense in which we did previously—since they mean reality itself.

Similarly, the logocentric model of cognition conceives the referential world—which it considers to be the most complex organism—as the interaction

of more systems of rules, which are subordinate, superordinate, or co-ordinated to each other, and which are only partly independent from the other. The responsibility for the mapping and exploring of these can be taken by the different disciplines, within which particular subsystems (conspiratorial subthreads) correspond to particular problem fields of each discipline. Since in the text, the conspiracy system gets identified with reality itself, we cannot place anything to its end (or to its dominant centre), but the unmoved mover, the Father.<sup>4</sup> In short, the conspiracy system is the metaphor for Creation and for the metaphysical absolute behind it; hence, the analogical structure bears its determining features. It is not scrutinizable and not conceivable, but it is present in every space and every time; it creates and rules the world with all its elements<sup>5</sup> and will also destroy it according to its wish.<sup>6</sup> What can the text be about in this case?

Against this absolute conspiracy, the stake of cognition is the highest possible. According to our expectations, in the following, the novel is going to tell us about how the level of language, signifiers, cognition (Victor) is revealing the level of the world, things, signifieds, demonstrating the presence of the only fixed point there, the presence of the Father. Thus, the story would again serve as the narrative of self-knowledge at the same time, i.e. as the story of a (re)identificational process based on the widest perspective possible. The presupposition of being the object or the element of the conspiracy, of being a creature would provoke the reconsideration of the position in relation to the Father. In the first case, Victor would again venture to rewrite this signification denying his bond to the ultimate signified. In the second case, by accepting it, he would shape himself into a good metaphor putting on the determining features of the signified.<sup>7</sup> The latter would be the traditional narrative of cognition concluded by the Christian West. Its prototype is the prodigal son's story in the parables, where the son gets from the lack of knowledge (from false believes), through sin, to the perception of Truth, to conversion.

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. the theological system of Saint Thomas Aquinas (that phase of the Aristotle reception which had the most significant effect on Christian theology) with special regard to his "five ways" (*Summa Theologiae* 1a, q2, a3).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. "[...] he's erasing people, he's inventing a new world, seamlessy. 'You can move planets with this,' Bentley says. 'You can shape lives. The photograph is only the beginning.'" (357-8).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. "The extent of the destruction is a blur and its aftermath somehow feels beside the point. The point is the bomb itself, its placement, its activation—that's the statement. [...] It's really about the will to accomplish this destruction and not about the outcome because that's just decoration." (296).

<sup>7</sup> Imitatio Christi; cf. "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Ephesians 4.24).

The text comes up to our expectations to the extent that it suggests the frame of this narrative scheme in the form of allusions; however, it also refutes them to the extent that it suggests so only in a way as if that scheme was unnarratable. The alter ego converts to the principles of the father (446); it rereads Dostoyevsky (*ibid.*); its deeds are explained as repentance by the others (455); it functions perfectly as a metaphor; however, it does not tell us about what is really going on. On the other side, Victor seems to get (at least regarding the volume of the conspiracy) from sheer incompetence to the complete understanding of the system.<sup>8</sup> He wants to communicate the truth, which he sees more and more clearly, with the purpose of saving others;<sup>9</sup> he shows the development of the intention of help and compassion in himself as new characteristics;<sup>10</sup> he strives to prevent further destructions;<sup>11</sup> by this time he feels responsibility for the father (347); he watches himself from an entirely new perspective as a sign of the change of his identification;<sup>12</sup> he feels regret,<sup>13</sup> and he shows the feeling of self-accusation (478). Furthermore—after the disorders of his short- and long-term memories—as the primary condition of fashioning self-identity, he begins to remember, confronting his past and present selves.<sup>14</sup> In short, Victor's transformation follows what has been expected; however, its interpretation (declaration), i.e. true cognition, fails to come about. The question remaining after all these is to what extent the language of the fictional world can account for this.

If any meaning can be assumed in this world, it is undoubtedly the concept of being “in” (cf. first on p. 5), trendy. If cognition can have any objects, they are certainly the celebrities and products in who and in which this concept is embodied. If the process of signification can be assumed, it can be ensured by the brand and celebrity names, which promise to guarantee the

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<sup>8</sup> Especially his conversations with Palakon and Jamie Fields (406–7, 421–6) and finally the videotape (475).

<sup>9</sup> He wants to help the French prime minister's son (321–2) and Felix (349–53).

<sup>10</sup> Bentley (416–9), Jamie Fields (421), Chloe (426–30).

<sup>11</sup> Bobby's murder (432–6), a (hopeless) attempt to prevent the explosion of the airplane (436–8).

<sup>12</sup> “On the radio: something emblematic of where I'm at this moment, something like ‘Don't Fear the Reaper’ or ‘I'm a Believer.’” (342)

<sup>13</sup> “How many warnings had I ignored?” (477).

<sup>14</sup> “[...] on that afternoon [...] a few decisions had to be made [...] I had to accept this if I wanted to get anywhere. [...] I [...] made a promise to myself [...] The future started mapping itself out [...] But [...] at that point I had no way of understanding one thing: if I didn't erase this afternoon from my memory [...], sections of this afternoon would come back to me in nightmares. [...] I faded away and my image overlapped and dissolved into an image of myself years later [...]” (480–1). Further on: 403, 467–8.

exclusiveness of meaning even only by the notion of trade mark. This mode of signification appears in its clearest form in the specific listings of the register at the club opening party. They would represent the most steady parts of the text concerning signification and the most compact ones concerning meaningfulness.<sup>15</sup>

These texts are built up by identical sequences which are in principle supposed to represent identical semantical contents (the invited celebrities). It is impossible to interpret them referentially because most of them (justly) refers to an unknown signified, and how they differ from each other is not specified. Since in the text, most of the sequences do not appear twice either (apart from the names of the main characters and one or two determinant exceptions), they cannot be interpreted inside the fictional world either because they cannot be recognised as signs. So, although their difference is given, this only allows each sequence to create a unit of empty space equivalent to the others behind itself. Though it is clear that not all of the names are unfamiliar (and it is very likely that they can all be referentialised), the intertextual signs themselves (known from other texts of the referential world) cannot be interpreted either. On the one hand, because the sequences referring to known signifieds correlate semantical contents which do not belong together,<sup>16</sup> and hence the lists can only be regarded coherent (Victor surely considers them as such) if—in this context—they do not mean what we may relate to them in the referential world. On the other hand, provided that meaning formation is the result of the given system of differences, the known signs—transferred to a system considerably based on equivalency—cannot function in any other way either, just according to the same system. Consequently, they can only be interpreted as linguistic elements homonymous with particular known proper names, but without known meanings. However, since in the language of the novel the rule that difference is conceived as identity (and vice versa)<sup>17</sup> seems to be quite a general one, even the

<sup>15</sup> The metaphoric of cognition told by Victor when part of the list is being read out: “ ‘Yes’ [...] ‘Fine’ [...] ‘I am *shuddering* with pleasure.’ [...] ‘Somebody needs to hose—me—down.’ [...] ‘Fan-fucking-tastic.’ [...] ‘Faster.’ [...] ‘More, more, more—’ [...] ‘Oh boy, we’re in the hot zone now.’ ” (70–2). The same in the next chapter from Buddy Seagull when Victor is selling the Hurley Thomson gossip to him: “ ‘Now I’m vaguely enthralled.’ [...] ‘I’m getting a little hot.’ [...] ‘You’re stroking my boner’ [...] ‘I’m rock hard. Continue.’ ”, etc. (75–6).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. “*Nike* [...] *Beavis and Butt-head* [...] *Jeff Koons*, *Nicole Kidman*, *Howard Stern* [...] *Huckleberry Finn* [...]” (185).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. the utterances with definitive value, e.g. “ ‘Shit’ [...] ‘Um, I mean that in a good way.’ ” (8); “ ‘No, in is out. Out is in.’ ” (15); “ ‘I want something unconsciously classic. I want no distinctions between exterior and interior, formal and casual, wet and dry, black and white, full and empty [...]’ ” (51); “ ‘Jesus, it could apply to anything,’ I mutter. ‘So ultimately it’s like meaningless.’ ” (105). With reference to causality cf. “

theoretical assumption of the difference of meaning is questionable. So, this pseudo-language does not have any designates.

After all these, the fact that alter egos and actors are/can be made to appear on the scene in such a quantity is hardly suprising. At the same time, by the introduction of the filmic levels, another operation emerges in the language of the text, which works just in the opposite direction as the one—which may be identified as a horizontal merging—mentioned above. (The structure of the film levels with the apperance of actors and alter egos as signifiers in the first place can also be approached as a semiotic model.) The filmic narratives below each other get repeated endlessly. At particular points (where the characters join them), they intersect, but never cover each other. As the objects of cognition, some figures (subjects) are signifieds on their own. Yet, as actors (alter egos), they stand in the position of signifiers; they serve as the signifiers of the played characters (roles). Nevertheless, showing this acting from a different perspective; moreover, showing this shooting from an even newer perspective, the signified (the played character) becomes a signifier (an actor), etc. The filmic narratives intersecting each other construct the structural model of postponement. The (self-) identities (characters, roles) get differentiated (cf. *différance*); the meanings (scripts) disseminate. Hence, the centre of the conspiracy system necessarily disappears in the fabric of the script and film levels, which can be comprehended as the metaphor of the postmodern (deconstructive) understanding of signification.

It is as if we had the chance to understand Victor's story as a linear one by following the transformation of his relation to this kind of language. This narrative is anticipated in the metaphoricality of the following question (NB during the journey, ergo unavoidably during the Journey): " 'Really—there's fog?' I ask, having assumed that I had been staring at a giant gray wall but actually it's a huge window [...]" (215). At the beginning of the story, Victor disseminates and merges meanings;<sup>18</sup> he does not understand or know anything;<sup>19</sup> he cannot and does not want to say anything. Contrary to him, the characters (lovers, movie makers, agents, etc.) around him possess some kind of knowledge and attempt to put it into his mouth (in the form of warnings,

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'[...] in no particular order [...]' " (14 and the same later on pp 66, 139, and 307).

<sup>18</sup> " 'Jesus. As usual, you're so literal-minded.' " (24); " 'Literally or figuratively?' 'Is there a difference with you?' she asks. 'How can you be so dense?' " (35); " 'I want some kind of answer from you,' she says calmly. 'Don't free-associate. Just tell me why' " (176); " 'Did you...understand the question?' [...] 'Maybe you've misunderstood my answers.' " (142), etc.

<sup>19</sup> " 'I don't know anything, JD. Nothing, nada. Remember that. I...know...nothing. Never assume I know anything. Nada. Nothing. I know nothing, not a thing. Never—' " (7).



cautions, instructions, etc.)<sup>20</sup> again and again. Despite the fact that Victor's idiocy is obvious for everybody, regarding the signifying rules of the fictional world, it is only he who practises language adequately since in this world these exact kinds of statements—e.g. “I KNOW WHO YOU ARE AND I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING” (105 and from that page till the end)—are impossible, even if they are true. However, the virtuosic word-plays and misunderstandings/misinterpretations together with Victor's wisdoms are abating as the story advances, and by the end of the novel, they give their place to a naive, unreflected, meaning-centred usage of language.<sup>21</sup> By this time, it is Victor who would strive to communicate in possession of a wider knowledge, but the addressed ones do not understand him.<sup>22</sup>

Victor first problematizes the relation of language and the possibilities of cognition directly in the opening lines of the novel. The reading of the “specks”—which appear on the “third panel” (accidentally right at the beginning of the thirty-third chapter, in pt. 1), which “look like they were somehow done by a machine” (5), and which seem to be “glowing”, what is more “spreading” (6)—does not tell us more than metafiction tells us any other times, i.e. that only the space of language and signification can be taken for granted. Victor's own “story” (i.e. the “who, what, where, [and] when” of the story [5]) itself is the process of signification. As a subject, he wholly shares the language that this world speaks, thus his constant characteristic cannot be anything else, but meaninglessness, misunderstanding, self-contradiction, and instability. However, after his metaphor (the alter ego) takes over his place in the level of signifiers, and because he himself does not have the opportunity to appear on the scene in a new role as a signifier,<sup>23</sup> his existence (captivity) as the—hypothetic—object of cognition (as a signified) becomes inaccessible for the usage of language. The meaning, i.e. the direction from which he speaks (the intention of help) and himself, of whom he

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<sup>20</sup> “‘No,’ he says. ‘It’s all clear to us.’ [...] ‘It’s only sketchy to you.’” (165); “‘See, Victor, the problem is you’ve got to know things,’ she says. ‘But you don’t.’” (173); “‘Everything you know is *wrong*.’” (176); “‘It’s what you don’t know that matters most [...]’” (283), etc.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. “‘At first I was confused by what passed for love in this world: people discarded because they were too old or too fat or too poor [...], they weren’t hip, they weren’t remotely famous. This was how you chose lovers. This was what decided friends. [...] On the verge of tears—because I was dealing with the fact that we lived in a world where beauty was considered an accomplishment—I turned away [...]’” (480–1), or cf. the sentence quoted under footnote 12.

<sup>22</sup> The son of the French prime minister and Felix (footnote 9), the sister (468–9, 476), the evoking and reinterpretation of the sentence “*I know who you are and I know what you’re doing*” by him at this time (437).

<sup>23</sup> “‘Your role is over, Victor,’” says the director (of (one of?) the French crew(s) (471).

wants to give news (the telephone calls to his sister) are profound secrets, and both remain unuttered and unutterable. By the end of the novel, Victor's and his company's usage of language, following the change-over of the alter egos,<sup>24</sup> occupies a chiasmic opposition in relation to each other.

He reflects on this in the closing chapter while he is most likely to be shot in the back of the neck<sup>25</sup> by that certain Uzi which has been loaded earlier, in pt. 6, ch. 13, precisely when the reality and the unfathomability of the conspiracy gain final proof. The mountain is always a probable scene for forming connection with the sacral. Life flows in the valley, on the fields, on the highways just like in the picture. The mountain is unknown, a secret,<sup>26</sup> and at its feet lies language itself: the "villagers [...] celebrating in a field of long grass" on the hither side and the "highway" lined with "billboards" on the farther side, behind the mountain.

"The stars are real." If I understand it literally, Victor talks about some figures of the picture. If he means celebrities, he says a figure of speech. It is only representation that is real.

"The future is that mountain." In this sense the metaphoric mountain is either unreachable, or one can only saunter off from it to the highway, back to the territory of language. The questions and the promises of the answers are there somewhere, "[at] any point beyond [the mountain]".

To sum up, the alter ego signifies something, but not what is really there. Falling out from the signifying process, Victor remains unuttered. It is only substitution that is real; what is really there, cannot be worded.

The text represents the concepts of language and cognition as both the postmodern and the metaphysics of presence conceive them by the trope system of a complex metaphoric allegory based on structural analogy. The annihilation of reality (the explosions, the murders, etc.), the apocalyptic narrative itself stem from the inner, metaphoric logic of allegorization, and in the reading of the novel it is conceived as the ground state of Creation.

Certain motifs of the text obviously offer themselves for this approach. (As a matter of fact, sometimes with even too suspicious an obviousness.) The smell of shit and flies: the collateral accessories of decay. Cold, hoar, ice: they are all associated with distance, isolation, atomization. Teutonic cross and pentagrams at

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<sup>24</sup> As the file names prove, by that time—expectedly—both the father and the sister are alter egos (358).

<sup>25</sup> Watching the "mural", he says, "I'm *falling forward* but also *moving up* toward the mountain [...]" (482, italics mine). Earlier: "'Someone is going to extract you from this sooner or later,' the director says."—ambiguously, specially as a few lines later he presumably apostrophes the same person as a war criminal (471).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. "*The question about the hat will never be asked. The question about the hat is a big black mountain and the room is a trap.*" (341).

the beginning and the ending of the novel (16, 415–6): the symbols of apocalyptic ideas. Confetti: occupying, covering up, legitimizing something. Victor's alter ego as the "wolf in a lamb's clothing" (cf. Matthew 7.15 and Revelations 13.11–2) is the anticipation of the antichrist.<sup>27</sup> However, instead of the horsemen of the apocalypse, we persistently come across the Japanese and rugby-player hippies taking their Pekineses for a walk.

The numbering of the different sections of the text in this approach can be interpreted as follows. The numbering of the parts—which starts and increases from one (1)—would be the apocalyptic narrative itself, inside which perpetual destruction and the reaching of the endpoint is taking place. This is an onward, never-ending count-down. Thus, the chapters would mean the chain of the moments of devastation, the gradual narrowing down (of the opportunities and the scope of motion), the falling back, the annihilation. Nevertheless, these two numberings are not simply the opposites of each other. So far as the chapters within a part always arrive at zero (0), the apocalyptic narrative can only count with something already existing, i.e. with Creation, with the one (1) since it exists from the beginning. The last chapter joins the two numberings; in it the numbering of the chapters is already increasing, but from zero (0). The final annihilation (0) as the condition of the advancement of the apocalyptic narrative is here already running parallel with the forward movement.

The interpretation of the mottos<sup>28</sup> can be the following. The sentence attributed to Krishna is a revelation signed as coming from God and states the meaning of the ultimate substance, an identical meaning (you, *I*, these) being present behind and in everything. This utterance reveals and attempts to make us see<sup>29</sup> a knowledge which is beyond the interrelations (language, causality) the secular world can see. In the extract ascribed to Hitler, Hitler provides the

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. " 'Don't fear the reaper, Victor,' Deepak says [...] 'I *am* the fucking reaper, Deepak,' [...]" (445–6). (Cf. footnote 12.)

<sup>28</sup> "There was no time when you nor I nor these kings did not exist.—Krishna. You make mistake if you see what we do as merely political.—Hitler"

<sup>29</sup> In spite of the fact that this text structurally resembles to the "out-is-in"-like parts of the novel and in its meaning to the appearance of alter egos, from this point of view the East can be set in parallel both with the postmodern concept of language (regarding its conception about the signifying process) and with the metaphysics of presence (regarding its conclusion). (Every difference is the result of the deceptive operation of consciousness and language; in fact everything is The Same; none of them is That.) This conception occurs only once in the novel, but at a distinguished point. In pt. 5, when we confront with the unnarratability of the narrative of cognition, the Indian guru, Deepak makes a similar statement to Victor's alter ego: " 'You see that bench?' [...] 'It's also you,' [...] 'You, Victor, are also that bench.' " (445). The invoking of the East in this case seems to open the door to the blending of the logocentric and the postmodern concepts of language.

indirect interpretation of his and his supporters' deeds as an alternative for a different interpretation. What these deeds would exactly be is not known, but on the one hand, in case they can be confused with politics—because though they are not „merely” political, they obviously bear that quality as well—they are necessarily acts (a text) which own(s) an unfixed centre and have (has) no inherent meaning. On the other hand, these deeds evoke apparently apocalyptic notions. The first motto, disrupting the linguistic and causal relations, points from the sacral towards man. The second points from man, through language, to the desacralized world. The first states the existence of meaning and faces us with the impossibility of a linguistic-causal cognition. The second implies a meaning which is in continuous motion and gives its linguistic-causal-natured interpretation.

The two texts occupy the same chiasmic opposition in relation to each other as Victor and his alter ego do. If we treat the opposition as a question, this question refers exactly to the most important moments of the novel: to the existence or the lack of meaning, to the possibility or impossibility of cognition, to the role of language within that, and to the sacral references of these; i.e. to the rereading of the postmodern discourse of cognition—itself rereading the metaphysics of presence—which, in my approach, is finally the central problem of the novel.

I think that the main concern of *Glamorama* is not the nature of textual operations, but the nature of reality, which the novel conceives as a text in the widest sense. Principally, the work is not interested in the theoretical problems of signification, but in the practice of signification and interpretation proceeding in the referential world. It regards the whole postmodern discourse (particularly deconstruction) as a tradition having been read into topi, and thinking over tradition taken in this sense, it creates its own patent absurdity. It re-evaluates the most productive theoretical commonplaces by inserting them into a structure which can be understood as some kind of synthesis of the inseminal and disseminative text models. It does not presume an accessible ultimate signified, but it considers certain pseudo-meanings to be inherent. It treats the impossibility of referential representation as an evidence; nevertheless, it seems to conceive itself as a mirror capable of showing reality in its totality. And what can be gathered from this mirror is above all not some kind of (trifling) metaphysical moral, but the existence of this complex (combined) textual pattern itself as the primary principle underlying cultural motions.

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