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Californian Flânerie in Karolina Waclawiak's *How to Get into the Twin Palms*

Kalifornijska *flânerie* w powieści Karoliny Waclawiak *How to Get into the Twin Palms*

Abstract: Unlike most of the immigration novels created by contemporary Polish American female writers, *How to Get into the Twin Palms* written by Karolina Waclawiak, does not focus on the hardships of assimilation into American culture but depicts experiments with ethnic cross-dressing. Waclawiak, a representative of the so-called one-and-a half generation of Polish immigrants from the 1980s Solidarity wave, reinvents the immigration story as her protagonist, Zosia, a Polish American resident of Los Angeles, yearns to become Russian in order to be granted entrance to the mysterious and appealing Russian nightclub. The protagonist's transformation into Anya goes hand in hand with her exploration of the City of Angels, the postmodern megalopolis with neon lights and pavements reaching the horizon. Thus, Zosia/Anya becomes a Californian flâneuse, the urban scrutinizer and strolling observer of the what is known as the most photographed but least photogenic city in the United States. In this context, the main aim of this presentation will be to explore Californian flânerie in Waclawiak's novel: while walking down the city streets the narrator flâneuse reflects on her home (Polish) culture, underscores her status as an immigrant outsider, and delves into the questions of alienation as well as defamiliarization. Hence, one may assume that flânerie itself contributes to the transformation of Waclawiak's protagonist.

Keywords: flânerie, Los Angeles, Polish American, gentrification, Karolina Waclawiak

Abstrakt: W odróżnieniu do większości powieści imigracyjnych tworzonych przez współczesne pisarki polsko-amerykańskie *How to Get into the Twin Palms* Karoliny Waclawiak nie koncentruje się na kwestiach dotyczących asymilacji z kulturą amerykańską, ale opisuje doświadczenia związane z etnicznym crossdressingiem. Waclawiak, przedstawicielka tzw. pokolenia półtora – polskich imigrantów z fali Solidarności lat 80., rewolucjonizuje narrację emigracyjną, ukazując losy Zosi – mieszkającej w Los Angeles Amerykanki polskiego pochodzenia, która pragnie stać się Rosjanką. Dziewczyna chciałaby otrzymać bilet wstępu do tajemniczego i pociągającego rosyjskiego klubu nocnego. Przemiana bohaterki w Anyę idzie w parze z jej eksploracją Miasta Aniołów, postmodernistycznego megalopolis neonów i sięgających po horyzont chodników. W ten sposób Zosia/Anya staje się kalifornijską *flâneuse*, obserwatorką miasta określanego jako najczęściej fotografowane, lecz najmniej fotogeniczne w Stanach Zjednoczonych. Głównym celem artykułu jest zbadanie kalifornijskiej *flânerie* ukazanej w powieści Waclawiak. Spacerując ulicami miasta, narratorka-*flâneuse* zastanawia się nad rodzimą (polską) kulturą, podkreśla swój status imigranckiego outsidera, zagłębia się w kwestie obcości i defamiliaryzacji. Można więc przyjąć, że sama *flânerie* przyczynia się do przemiany bohaterki Waclawiak.

Słowa kluczowe: flânerie, Los Angeles, tożsamość polsko-amerykańska, gentryfikacja, Karolina Waclawiak

Unlike most of the immigration novels created by contemporary American female writers of Polish descent[1] *How to Get into the Twin Palms*, written by Karolina Waclawiak, does not focus on the hardships of assimilation into American culture but depicts experiments with ethnic cross-dressing.[2] Waclawiak, a representative of the so-called one-and-a half generation of Polish immigrants from the 1980s Solidarity wave, reinvents the immigration story as her protagonist, Zosia, a Polish American resident of Los Angeles, yearns to become Russian in order to be granted entrance to the mysterious and appealing Russian nightclub. The protagonist's transformation into Anya goes hand in hand with her exploration of the City of Angels, the postmodern megalopolis of neon lights and pavements reaching the horizon. Thus, Zosia/Anya becomes a Californian flâneuse, the urban scrutinizer and strolling observer of, as Thom Andersen notices, the "most photographed but least photogenic city" (2014) in the United States. In this context, the main aim of the present article is to explore the Californian flânerie in Waclawiak's novel: while walking down the city streets the narrator flâneuse reflects on her home (Polish) culture, underscores her status as an immigrant outsider, and delves into the questions of alienation as well as defamiliarization. Hence, one may assume that flânerie itself contributes to the transformation of Waclawiak's protagonist.

[1] The novel under analysis can be also described as the hybrid text, relying on the term hybridity coined by Homi K. Bhaba in "The Location of Culture," and occupies the place between the immigrant and the ethnic novel. Grażyna J. Kozaczka explains this classification in *Rekonstrukcja tożsamości w polskiej prozie migracyjnej początku XXI wieku: Rozterki pokolenia 1,5 w Stanach Zjednoczonych i Kanadzie* (2018, 251–252).

[2] It seems significant to notice that while writers such as Dominika Dominczyk, Leslie Pietrzyk, Suzanne Strempek Shea or Ellen Slezak present their characters oscillating between the diasporic periphery and the assimilated centre or completely disregard the ethnic roots of their characters (as it occurs in the subsequent novels penned by Pietrzyk and Strempek Shea), none of them depicts the transformation of the protagonist into a Russian girl.

It is probably not a too far-fetched statement to claim that any serious discussion of flânerie and the flâneur starts with Walter Benjamin, a literary critic, writer, philosopher of history and a sociologist, who locates the origins of this phenomenon in nineteenth-century Paris and defines Baudelaire's hero of modernity, the paradigm of modern flâneur, as "an incognito observer, a solitary (male) loiterer who strolls the streets and later the arcades of Paris, engaged in an act of passionate observation of the fast-paced spectacle of urban, capitalist modernity" (Trivundza 2011, 71). Not only is the flâneur a stroller but also a detective of street life, a neutral onlooker, a credulous gawker, a barefoot amateur sociologist. The explanations of the term offered by various literary critics or oftentimes even non-sociologists, such as Robert Park, Rob Shields, Siegfried Kracauer, to name only a few, are as long-winded as they are thought-provoking: the flâneur is also defined as "a dandy, a reporter, a producer of texts (i.e. a man who writes feuilletons for the newspaper), a mystery solver and a mystery himself" (Shields 1994, 61). As a consequence, flânerie is perceived as "a form of pedestrian connoisseurship and consumption of the urban environment; its sights, smells, characters and action" (Shields 1994, 61). The tactile dimension of flânerie is crucial because even though flânerie is sometimes limited to the optical sensations, some scholars (Benjamin included) sustain that the practice of strolling is "much more than the optical regime of the visual," because in order to reflect upon the atmospheric quality of the urban scene, the flâneur, as a social investigator, should possess the ability "to experience correspondences [which] presuppose synesthesia, i.e. the interrelationship between the senses" (Paetzold 2001, 37).

According to Rob Shields, flânerie may be defined as "a spatial practice of specific sites: [such as] the interior and exterior public spaces of the city [which] include parks, sidewalks, squares, (…) shopping arcades, malls (…) and it is part of a social process of inhabiting and appropriating urban space" (1994, 64). In other words, the flâneur as a "street prowler, wanderer, [a figure sometimes elevated to the status of the] detective," "seeks clues and reads people's characters not only from the physiognomy of their faces but via a social physiognomy of the streets"

(Shields 1994, 64). What is more, for Benjamin the flâneur, being intoxicated with the spectacle of the city, i.e. with the urban environment, is able to notice the palimpsests of the past and manages to excavate the old traces; he is an urban sociologist "collecting and recording urban images, social interactions (…) someone clearly at home in the metropolis, capable of combining (…) watchfulness and the preserving of his incognito" (Frisby 2001, 37). Due to the flânerie's significant reliance on observation and perception, it seems vital to emphasize the fact that the flâneur requires spectators; it is the main reason why Benjamin promulgates: "the crowd is (…) an audience, flânerie is thus a crowd practice" (Shields 1994, 64). However, despite the fact that the flâneur demands the existence of the throngs of city ramblers, the author persuasively insists on the necessity of the marginal position of the flâneur in the megalopolis. It may be explained by the fact that "the flâneur is an uprooted person, he is at home neither in his class nor in his birthplace but rather in the crowd" (Frisby 2001, 38). Frisby clarifies Benjamin's line of thought, stating that "such marginality creates a distance between this figure and that which is observed" (2001, 37) and such a distance guarantees the anonymity of the solitary scrutinizer because, even though the flâneur "plunges into the urban crowd, he does not aim to establish any kind of personal bonds to people in the crowd, but chooses to remain both anonymous and independent" (Trivundza 2011, 75).

What seems to be significant, however, is the fact that the figure of the flâneur may not be easily pinned down and, in Frisby's view, "the discussion of the flâneur and flânerie cannot be confined to a single historical conjuncture" (2001, 34). Therefore, Zygmunt Bauman, for instance, discusses flânerie within the constellation of postmodern life and postmodern urbanity in his article "Desert Spectacular," published in 1994, and reaches a conclusion that "the art that the flâneur masters is that of seeing without being caught looking" (Bauman 1994, 141), but "unlike the man of the crowd, he wants the crowd as a shelter, not the cure, for his loneliness; as a wall protecting his solitude" (139). In "Desert Spectacular" Bauman makes a general claim, stating that "in the city, as in the desert, the stranger, the wanderer, the nomad, the flâneur finds re-

prieve from time" (140). Bauman goes even further and maintains that "what attracts the stranger to the city is what makes the city and the desert alike: in both, there is just the present, untied by the past, the present that may be lived as the beginning" (140). Attempting to outline the similarities between the desert and the city, and locating the flâneur in this context, Zygmunt Bauman alludes to Edmond Jabes's statement that "in a desert there are no avenues, no boulevards, no blind alleys and no streets, only (…) the fragmentary imprints of steps, quickly effaced and denied" (cited in Bauman 1994, 140). Bauman observes that, in a similar vein, Benjamin elaborates on the possibility of "obliteration of the individual's traces in the big city crowd" (cited in Bauman 1994, 140). Therefore, both the city crowd and the desert possess the same characteristic feature, which the scholar explains as follows: "the aimless, diffuse street crowd in which the flâneur hides is a tacit agreement to treat each other as if everyone was alone in a desert; that crowd can survive only as long as it pretends to be a desert so that everyone can go on playing the game of I-see-you-you-see-me-not" (Bauman 1994, 141).

Stressing the importance of the flâneur as the travelling player, Bauman explains further the idea that "the joy of strolling is the joy of playing" (1994, 142) and notices that whereas in the modern era, the "world fit for the play of discovery [for the flâneur] was the street of modern metropolis" (147) with the arcades where people used to linger and where the action occurred, in the postmodern metropolis, however, freeways and expressways are the centres of today's action, with "beautiful passers-by who hide inside cars with tinted windows" (148). Postmodern flânerie, in Bauman's opinion, becomes "democratic yet commercially regimented" (cited in Paetzold 2001, 37) and may lead to "pleasure or ecstasy of freedom and enjoyment" (Paetzold 2001, 37). The discrepancy between modern and postmodern flânerie is aptly expressed by Bauman in the following fragment:

> in the world of smaller Disneylands, yesterday's free floating flâneur is called, like before, to wander aimlessly; only there is an aim in his aimlessness now, a function, a utility, a design – none of which is of his making; there was a

> goldmine somewhere in the modern urge to 'wander aimlessly': the market found it and set to exploit. Disneylands are the mineshafts (1994, 150).

In light of the above, Disneylands/shopping malls are the enclosed enclaves which are meant to accommodate postmodern flâneurs on the move, whom Bauman describes as "conformist idlers [aspiring] to nothing else but to surrender to the incessant call of the sign of consumption" (152).

There are no Disneylands in Los Angeles – one would probably have to travel to the original Californian theme park located in Anaheim, about thirty miles south of the City of Angels, or to Las Vegas in order to catch a glimpse of 'pseudo-flâneurs,' using Kurt Borchard's terminology, who "wander from one impersonation of a city/culture/era to another, stroll from one game to another, and move from one presentation of self to another" (2003, 191).[3] Los Angeles, however, becomes a site for postmodern flânerie in Waclawiak's novel, even though the city itself, the most advanced form of agglomeration, is not destined to be the arena for strolling. Just the opposite: not only is Los Angeles a city "with brown air, fouled beaches (…) and a concrete river, the Death Star to American nature lovers – the place from where the destruction of nature emanates" (Price 2006), but, above all, it is not a city for walkers but a "uniquely mobile metropolis" (Banham 2009, 5). Reyner Banham, the author of the monumental work *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*, confesses that "the city will never be understood by those who cannot move fluently through its diffuse urban texture, cannot go with the flow of its unprecedented life (…) [one needs] to drive in order to read Los Angeles in the original" (5). Therefore, the main character of the novel, Zosia, becomes a flâneuse and explores the city by driving her car without any apparent aim. The narrator admits:

[3] Borchard (2003) explains that the economy of Las Vegas relies mainly on the purchase of services and the city attracts pseudo-flâneurs, who may be described as unreflective consumers interested in spending money on services, entertainment and gambling.

> I drove down Sunset Boulevard, (…) I kept driving through Bel Air. Stared at the gates, took the turns quickly on Sunset, where I always pretended to be a race car driver, past the Jacaranda trees, and pulled alongside the 405 and saw the jam. In both directions, the cars were slowly stalling and stuck. Traffic had started early. (Waclawiak 2012, 68–69).

Zosia/Anya observes the city from a distance, peering from behind her steering wheel. She admires "advertisements for slim jeans and elaborately rhinestoned popstar fragrances" (Waclawiak 2012, 68), she "passes stores with neon sturgeons in the window and CAVIAR written in neon cursive inside the belly of the fish, [observes] pawnshops, with dirty faded gold rings" (169) on display. She attempts to investigate the architecture of the old apartments with curious spires, located near the border of Little Armenia (although the adjective "old" is probably not the most appropriate word in this context because, as Thom Andersen explains, there are only a few buildings in L.A. which are more than one hundred years old, and the site may become historic in Los Angeles only because once it was a movie location). Waclawiak's character yearns to see her flat from the uphill, but the lights of Hollywood Boulevard obscure and blur her vision; she mentions the castles on Hayworth and stops her vehicle when she senses the necessity.

From time to time, Waclawiak's protagonist makes comments on the sight of easily-duped tourists, who admire celebrities and "congregate in front of the Silent Movie Theater" (2012, 77). Anya arranges car escapades to Hollywood Boulevard, sits in her car and watches throngs of figures or she pulls her automobile into the cramped parking lot[s] and scrutinizes the inhabitants of L.A., "sprinkling onions on top of the chili, on top of the dog, inside the bun", "moving like clockwork" which, as the narrator admits, "makes her want to be good at something and have a task" (87). Rarely does Anya step out of her vehicle to roam and merge with the pedestrians. There is a purpose of hiding oneself in the car because one does not need to encounter those who are described by Bauman as "dangerous people pure and simple: layabouts, beggars, homeless conscience-soilers, drug pushers (…) child molesters and rap-

ists waiting for the prey" (Bauman 1994, 148). Waclawiak seems to provide the examples of the degenerate ones when her protagonist notices the passers-by. Anya observes that there are drunk girls walking up the street and "the top of the canyon had coyotes, homeless men in the bushes; (…) Griffith Park was the other. The observatory. [She] wasn't sure what could be there. [She] had heard several things" (Waclawiak 2012, 169), partially implying that it was not the best spot for strolling. The park, the pavements and the street level, therefore, do not provide one with a feeling of safety and do not constitute the guarantee of security. The street, as Bauman reiterates, "is [after all] more a jungle than the theatre [for a postmodern flâneur who hides oneself] (…) behind security locks and burglar alarms" (1994, 148).

One may conclude that the flâneuse's gaze and the snapshot-like images caught by the writer in the rear-view mirror of Anya's car, help Waclawiak capture the fleeting character of Los Angeles, where everything is on the move, where "transport has been an obsession that grew into a way of life" (Banham 2009, 13). Dana Cuff, a sociologist and a historian, claims that the fleeting city has characterised American urbanism since the time of the New Deal and later World War II, and the term is especially applicable with reference to Los Angeles, where city planners decided to tear down whole districts (especially near Downtown), leaving no traces of what was buried beneath. On the one hand, such actions performed by the leaders in the real estate business guaranteed the introduction of the new programs of property subdivision; on the other hand however, demolition on a large scale emphasized the fact that those buildings, in Dana Cuff's view, "had a provisional quality, a sense of temporary permanence" (2000, 36).

The sense of destruction and demolition also permeates and pervades Karolina Waclawiak's novel. When Anya engrosses herself in the adventure of flânerie, she notices the fires which were set during Santa Ana Season and which, unfortunately, managed to spread to enormous proportions and cover vast territories of L.A., leaving the city itself and its inhabitants vulnerable. The fires spotted by the main character seem to be playing a defining role in accentuating the fleet-

ing character and the peculiar provisional quality of Los Angeles. When the flames devour the letters in the famous Hollywood sign on the hills, Anya confesses: "the LAND long gone. It looked vulgar in the dark, it looked like a lie" (Waclawiak 2012, 173). Los Angeles needs to be destroyed "in order to prepare the soil for the new growth" (Waclawiak 2012, 191), and, as the narrator observes, the flames "would get the glut moving again" (173), while the fire would "prepare the soil for new growth" (191). It seems that the City of Angels in *How to Get into the Twin Palms* becomes an "active and ever-changing palimpsest of the new global metropolis" (Vilder 2009, xxxv) and Anya, the flâneuse, attempts to 'excavate' and read the city by looking at it from the distance. The protagonist explains:

> I needed a better look at the city. I had been trawling the boulevards and avenues, the flats, and I needed to see things. Bright things. (…) The buildings jutted from the landscape and I just sat there, ash crinkling down around me. This city cut up into neat squares. Avenues were dissected by boulevards which were dissected by streets and I wanted it all to mean something to me. I wanted to understand. I tried looking for my apartment. My alley. The Twin Palms. I sat there and studied the landscape, followed Los Feliz Boulevard to Sunset Boulevard to Fairfax and down (Waclawiak 2012, 170–171).

Due to the fact that Los Angeles is a metropolis physically interrupted by freeways and demographically fragmented into neighbourhoods, it seems logical that Anya/Zosia explores the metropolis by car. Nevertheless, the protagonist becomes also a social investigator as a pedestrian, strolling her Russian neighbourhood and scrutinizing the social types. Being a flâneuse, she acts as an explorer, meticulously describes her Russian or Ukrainian neighbours, and heavily relies on olfactory and visual sensations. The narrator recounts:

> As I walk down the street the smell overwhelms me. The smell of rye bread and ponchki filled with prune jam. The yeast smell from the bakery over-

> takes everything and keeps it an immigrant neighbourhood in Los Angeles. (…) The grocery stores (…) sell aging fruit and herring and halvah. I hate herring. In tubs with oil and onions, the silvery pieces curl onto each other, unmoving. I should love herring. I should love borscht. I should slurp it up with pumpernickel or rye (Waclawiak 2012, 7).

When Anya describes the Russian delicacies put on display, they resemble scintillating curiosities itemized by the guides; when the character confesses that she "leans up close to the Russian women in their coats as she walks through and feels the silver foxes and minks brush against her cheek" (Waclawiak 2012, 7), whose smell reminds her of the coat her mother used to have, one may deduce that such a sensation proves the protagonist's "fascination not just with commodities but with distant cultures experienced through rubbing shoulders with foreigners" (Shields 1994, 10). The postmodern flâneuse experiences the atmosphere of an urban site by means of the senses and she almost surrenders in the intoxication of the commodities around her. Furthermore, Zosia/Anya occupies a marginal position – she is "an uprooted person, at home neither in her class nor in her birthplace but rather in the crowd" (cited in Frisby 2001, 27), to recall Benjamin's words again. Waclawiak's character describes herself as the individual who "was from nowhere, [and] lived in too many places to hold on to anything permanent" (2012, 11). Anya dwells in the Russian district and wants to crawl out of her Polish skin, both in order to pass as a Russian and be granted entrance to the Twin Palms (which eventually does not end in a breakthrough but a breakdown) and to examine the Russians who, in her opinion, possess a sense of allure and "hold a certain sense of mystery" (Waclawiak 2012, 5).

However, Zosia's desire to shed her Polish skin and transform into a Russian may also result from her own search for meaning and/or her curiosity to test her identity. One may bear in mind at this point Keith Tester's remarks about flânerie as the act of doing "thanks to which the flâneur hopes and believes he will be able to find the truth of his being" (Tester 1994, 7). In *How to Get Into the Twin Palms* the

protagonist wants to "look Russian, maybe Siberian, and it would look good against fur" (Waclawiak 2012, 101), she starts smoking in order to create an aura of the Russian girl from the Burda magazine, she practices mimicry and "kills her ability to pass for Middle American and quiet and from here, [i]nstead [she is] from the bloke again; Soviet-built and dooming" (16). Being a passionate observer, she hides behind the flower pots on her balcony and watches secretly people entering and leaving the Twin Palms. Zosia/Anya wants to belong to the Twin Palms public, to participate in the life of the city and to pass as a Russian. The narrator confesses:

> They [Russians] stomped around the sidewalk in silk and polyester. Bright knits in clashing patterns. They exposed their arms, wrinkled and sagging. The jewels on their hands could not obscure their aging fingers. With the furs gone they looked like immigrants again. Inexpensive fabrics and ill-fitting dresses and pant sets. The older women wore gauzy tops over satin shirts and covered the sag of their arms with volumes of sheer sleeves in melons and chartreuse. Their husbands and lovers clutched on to the fabric and led them upstairs (Waclawiak 2012, 32).

Interestingly, even though Zosia plays the role of the solitary scrutinizer not wishing to be seen by anyone, it is in the throng of people, within the bustle of the Russian visitors of the Twin Palms, where she finally realizes that truly "[she] has never wanted to become" (Waclawiak 2012, 168) and accepts herself for whom she is. In one of the pivotal scenes in the novel, when the protagonist finally manages to enter the club with her Russian lover, Lev, and similarly to the flâneur who "can put on whatever mask will gain him access to otherwise secret and mysterious places" (Tester 1994, 4), she finds herself in the centre of the crowd and passes as one of them, her secret is divulged. Anya's meticulously planned scenario comes to an end and she elbows her way through the throng, "being pushed and shuffled around, not looked at, not noticed" (Waclawiak 2012, 166).

There are multiple passages in the novel that suggest the existence of the scrutinizing eye of the narrator: Anya is staring at people, salivating at the thought of Russian or Polish delicacies, visiting local small stores not only to do shopping, but, above all, to observe "small hunched women [who] were wrestling with wire carts" (Waclawiak 2012, 32), who "walked in packs, sometimes alone, always in layers of clothing – always neat and scrubbed clean" (100). While reading the passages describing shops, cafes and boutiques in Waclawiak's novel, one may find the echo of Bauman's conclusions that "the public place is an arena to move through, not be in," while "the shopping-mall affluence and street squalor join efforts in keeping up the seductiveness of one and repulsiveness of the other" (1994, 149). Zosia/Anya confesses in one of the most revealing chapters of the novel, i.e. when she finally finds herself in the Twin Palms club, that Lev (her Russian lover), the people, and in general "the smell of everyone mixed with the food" (Waclawiak 2012, 169) makes her anxious and dizzy, almost on the verge of fainting, as if the protagonist was in a trap. Interestingly, the same feeling is evoked when Zosia/Anya reflects upon the city: "there is no way out," she confesses, "Los Angeles was trapped and I was trapped within it" (Waclawiak 2012, 172), emphasizing the fact that the complex, maze-like system of the highways is so entangled that there is no guarantee of escaping L.A. when the fire encroaches.

Taking into consideration Bauman's remarks on the significance of the designed reality (represented by Disneylands) for postmodern flâneurs, one may state that the author of "Desert Spectacular" highly criticizes places like that and notices that there is a different order governing those sites, i.e. the touristic order, meant to "accommodate flâneurs on the move, (…) those 'conformist idlers who aspire to nothing else but to surrender to the incessant call of the sign consumption'" (Bauman 1994, 152). When Anya/Zosia pursues her nomadic adventures driving the car she notices "pawnshops with dirty, faded gold rings in the windows" (Waclawiak 2012, 169) and famous people headshots covering the walls of the motels "enticing tourists into be-

lieving that they too could see someone famous, (…) sit and breathe famous air" (77). The protagonist observes the inhabitants of L.A. lining up "for a chance to get on The Price is Right" (Waclawiak 2012, 60) supermarkets, being aware of the fact that people are lured into believing that they are offered a bargain and thus duped by the dazzling promises of consumerism. Furthermore, she drives down Hollywood under the 101 "before hitting the Walk of Fame and watching tourists stop and shoot pictures of their feet on gum-covered stars" (Waclawiak 2012, 78); Anya/Zosia is fully aware of the fact that it is just a façade and beyond the surfaces, the enormous glowing signs, "up-lit billboards advertising booze and women and jeans and dresses" (59) that encourage people consume even more, there is only profit.

As Disneylands become paragons of reality in the postmodern times, flâneurs are encouraged to build their own lives and their own homes as 'a replica of Disneylands,' Bauman explains, where the individuals are able to indulge themselves in the series of games and "change places of reality and fantasy (…) [and] one does not need legs to be a nomad [because] the seductive mountain came home, ensconsed in the black sheath of the videotape" (1994, 155). As far as Anya/Zosia's home is concerned, it does not seem to be the case; the character perceives her domicile as the place of respite but the food smells from her Russian neighbours tend to tumble through the walls making her apartment "smell like an immigrant's house, (…) [therefore the main character attempts to] "get away from the smell" (Waclawiak 2012, 78) that makes her repulsed and intoxicated.

Waclawiak may not be making any important contributions to the literature of flânerie but, as a relatively new, raw and irresistible voice on the Polish American literary scene, she "takes the immigrant novel and spins it on its head" as the blurb on the cover of her book heralds. Not only does the author place her American/Polish/Russian literary character in California in order to experiment with ethnic cross-dressing, but she also offers her readers a glimpse of life in the City of Angels on the move, from the point of view of a perpetual outcast.

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