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## ***Locus Amoenus: A Lexicon of Contrasts in Adam und Evelyn***

### **Abstract**

In literary history the *locus amoenus* has often had the function of purifying and revitalizing the soul of its dwellers by way of contact with idyllic nature. Its prototype is the Garden of Eden, to which the title of Ingo Schulze's novel *Adam und Evelyn* (2008) refers. Nevertheless, Schulze moves away from this canonical setting by creating a polyphonic universe that reflects the society and underlines how ambivalent the concept of *locus amoenus* has become for the citizens of the GDR by the end of the 20th century. On the one hand, the idea of idyllic nature was still alive for many citizens of East Germany; on the other, for many citizens that same idea had vanished and the borders of *locus amoenus* merged with those of the Federal Republic's cities. This paper aims to pinpoint the different representations of *locus amoenus* underlining the cultural distance between the word choices of the main characters. In fact, thanks to the use of such an accurate lexicon, the writer creates a semantic and linguistic net of contrasts, expectations and premonitions. The new elaboration of this *topos* goes hand in hand with the attempt to highlight the inner structure of the novel, an interpretive model that the reader can only see after several readings. The dialogic and polyphonic character of the novel imposes a reading that continually retraces its steps in search of occurrences, memories and omens that reveal the relationship between the protagonists and the surrounding environment.

*Keywords:* *locus amoenus* characterization, ambiguity, lexicon, German Democratic Republic, novel, society, Ingo Schulze

### **From *locus* to *loci*: new elaboration of a *topos***

Doch der Augenblick zwischen dem Nichts  
und dem Etwas ließ sich nicht fassen,  
ganz so, als gäbe es ihn nicht.<sup>1</sup>

This is the starting point of the present research: this line appears at the very beginning of the novel in question, *Adam und Evelyn*, and underlines the elusive character of the moment, an instant of slight

1 Schulze, Ingo (2009) *Adam und Evelyn*, Berlin: Berlin Verlag, position in eBook: 71–72. ["But that moment between nothing and something could not be captured – it was as if it didn't exist at all" Schulze, Ingo (2011), *Adam und Evelyn*: the novel, translated by John E. Woods, New York: Alfred. A. Knopf; 3. From now on, only the pages shall be cited in the footnotes].

changes that one can only see in the long distance. The characters of the novel found themselves in this moment, the summer of 1989 in the GDR, the German Democratic Republic. That summer, after twenty-eight years of separation, the Iron Curtain that crosses Europe – and in general the whole World – is beginning to fall and one of the first initiatives in that direction is taken by Hungary, that decides to open the gates to the West in order to allow the citizens to travel. Moved by the dream of the West and the desire of something more for their lives, since June 1989 many East Germans decide to leave the GDR and reach West Germany passing through Hungary. It is in this historical period that the story of Ingo Schulze's novel *Adam und Evelyn* develops. Published in 2008 it immediately becomes one of the so-called *Wenderomane*, since it takes the reader back to the summer of 1989 by telling the story of a couple, namely Adam and Evelyn, that for different reasons leaves the little town in the GDR to reach Hungary, specifically Balaton's Lake, one of the most visited holiday destinations of that period, but more importantly one of the few that was allowed by the GDR.

Strictly connected to the semantic field of the term holiday is the theme of *suspension*, a location without time that transcends the routine and these aspects connect us with the concept of *locus amoenus*. In literary history this *topos* is generally an idealized and peaceful place that has often the function of revitalizing the soul of its dwellers, but it is also part of the bigger literary *topos* of the journey: its peculiarity is the passage from *locus terribilis* to *locus amoenus* (Pozzi, 1984: 433), that is from a dreadful place to the one of rebirth, physically and metaphorically speaking. The repetition of this scheme creates what we can call a *topos* – and yet, what happens if this passage is not shared by all the travellers? At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is it still plausible to think that just a natural landscape can be defined as *amoenus*?

Different factors intermingle in this research: the idea of holiday and travel in the GDR, the sense of limit and absence felt by many East Germans but also the sense of home and comfort for many others – all of that contributes to change the relationship between people and the surrounding environment and creates different kind of *comfort zones*, so that it could be more suitable to talk about *loci*, that belong to different semantic spheres and are not always linked to a traditional conception of idyllic landscape. The aim of this contribution is to underline the different conceptualization of *locus amoenus* in Schulze's novel and to understand better how this concept is declined in many ways by the voices of the story.

Was mich interessierte war die Wahlmöglichkeit [...] eine Wahl, wie es für Ostdeutsche davor nicht gegeben hatte und wie es sie bald darauf für alle nicht mehr gab. ... Adam und Eva dürfen – zum ersten Mal – wählen, ob sie im Status quo verharren oder das Verbotene probieren. (*Was wir wollen*: 58–59)<sup>2</sup>

Adam and Evelyn, the main characters of the homonymous novel, are deeply immersed in this *Zeitabschnitt*, having to *choose* if they are going to remain or not. Adam is a women's tailor and Evelyn is a waitress, they live in a little town in the GDR near Dresden and they are planning their holiday at Balaton's Lake. Also called Plattensee, this lake was in those years one of the most popular holiday destinations, as it was one of the few that was allow by the GDR, but a journey there was always subject to the request of a *visa*. Loyal to the couple to which the names refer, the story of Adam and Evelyn begins with a sin,

2 Weintraut, E. J. (2016). Ingo Schulzen's "Adam und Evelyn": "Zwischen dem Nicht-mehr und dem Noch-nicht-dort." *The German Quarterly*, 89(4), 463–479. [What I was really interested in the possibility of choice that originated after the gate opening in Hungary, a choice that the East Germans never had before and would never have again ... Adam and Eva could choose, for the first time, to remain in the *status quo* or to try the forbidden." Unless otherwise indicated translations are those of the author.]

a transgression, committed this time by the man: when Evelyn finds Adam cheating on her with one of his clients, she decides to leave for Balaton's Lake with a friend, Mona, and her cousin Michael that comes from Hamburg, West Germany. Moved by the desire to get Evelyn back, Adam decides to follow her, even if he never really wanted to leave the house and his beloved garden. The journey of our contemporary heroes begins in this moment, a vacation that later becomes an escape. Starting from Dresden they cross three different countries and stop in more than 10 cities, all this complexity can also be retraced in the number of the characters that participated in this trip, in fact the group will soon become larger when they meet Katja, a girl from Potsdam that already tried to cross the border but failed. Each of them embodies a particular *Weltanschauung* and helps to create the polyphonic dimension of the novel. The narration is indeed a perfect representation of Bakhtin's idea of polyphonic novel: each character has a personal understanding of the world and a unique voice, the only thing they have in common is the search for a *Dasein*, a place-to-be. This kaleidoscope of ideas is composed by voices that interact with one another through dialogues, prose descriptions are kept to a minimum: and yet, even if the story proceeds just through dialogues, there is a lack of communication and many progresses in the story originate from a misunderstanding.

In this intricate picture all the actions are linked to the reaching of this *locus*. Due to the circularity of the text and many narrative strategies, the reader has to approach the novel many times to highlight its inner structure: the narration is scattered with signs that refer to a specific *locus* and can be appreciated only with a deep reading that continually retraces its steps in search of signals and occurrences, so that we can talk about a system of signification. Whenever something present to the recipient's perception stands for something else, we speak about signification (Eco 1975: 19–20).

### Balaton's Lake

The first representation of *locus amoenus* is Balaton's Lake and is clearly the closest to the canonical concept of this *topos*. The function of the location is crucial in the narration, it is at the same time point of arrival and stop of a bigger journey. So longed-for by all the characters that want to leave the GDR, at the beginning it is rejected by Adam because he does not want to leave his house e always tries to postpone the departure, which Evelyn instead deeply desires. Contrary to the reader's expectations, the lake's force of rebirth and peace is perceived only by Adam.

Sie setzten sich unterhalb des Kreuzes auf den Felsen, zwei, drei Meter vom Abgrund entfernt. Die Gegend auf der anderen, der südlichen *Balatonseite* war bis auf die beiden *Hügel* ihnen gegenüber flach. Die Sonne spiegelte sich im Wasser, auf dem sich die Schatten der Wolken deutlicher abzeichneten als auf dem Land. Sie schienen sich nicht zu bewegen. Die *Weinberge* unter ihnen sahen aus wie schraffierte Flächen, ein paar Feuer erkannte man am Rauch. Fast auf selber Höhe mit ihnen stand eine *Lerche in der Luft*. (*Adam und Evelyn*: 2286) <sup>3</sup>

3 "They sat down on rocks farther down from the cross and five to ten feet back from the precipice. The region on the far southern shore of Lake Balaton was flat except for two hills. The sun was mirrored on the water, where clouds traced more definite shadows than over the land. But they never seemed to move. The vineyards below were textured, hatched surfaces, smoke marked a couple of fires. A lark hung in the air at eye level" *Adam and Evelyn*; 171–172.

The *italicized* words form this wonderful landscape, this *locus*, and yet for all the characters this idyllic landscape is meaningless, as they continue to think about the trip and to count the days till they will cross the border and enter the West. The only one really connected with the idyllic nature is Adam, that at the end shows his disagreement:

“Da unten gibt’s dann Wels vom Rost mit Weinsoße und Knoblauch,” sagte Michael.  
 “Fährst du morgen?” fragte Katja. Michael nickte und schob sich einen Apfelschnitz in den Mund. “Ich dachte, du wartest auf uns.” [...]  
 “Ich halte das nicht mehr aus,” sagte Katja. “Kannst du mich nicht im Kofferraum verstecken?”  
 “Der hat keinen Kofferraum.” [...]  
 “Könnt ihr nicht mal von was anderem reden?” sagte Adam. “Schöner bekommt ihr’s sowieso nirgendwo.” (Adam und Evelyn: 2287–2290)<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, Adam *uses* it as an excuse to postpone the departure, since shortly after he says: “‘Wenn ich hier wohnen würde,’ sagte Adam, der einen Stock mit einer aufgespießten Kartoffel ins Feuer hielt, ‘bekämen mich auch keine zehn Pferde nach Budapest’” (Adam und Evelyn: 2329–2330)<sup>5</sup>.

The border between *topos* and *stereotype* is very uncertain in Schulze’s novel and is characterized by the use of irony, which also influences the choice of Balaton’s Lake as main element and point of arrival of the journey: actually, Plattensee was just one of the very few holiday destinations for East Germans, in fact that could either decide for a vacation inside the GDR, for example at Ostsee, or in the near socialist countries, like Hungary (Hoffmann 2013: 182). This dualism reveals itself also in the novel, after he leaves his house to follow Evelyn, Adam is asked by a gas station attendant where he is going and he replies: “Warnemünde”<sup>6</sup>. These are the only two options, so that they never really *chose* Balaton’s Lake, they just accept what had already been chosen by others.

### The routine in the GDR

In Adam two semantic spheres melt together, the one of nature and that of the everyday reality, both of them combined create the idyllic. The idyllic chronotope is characterized by the strong relation between men and nature and the deep bond with the native country (Bachtin 2001: 372).

4 “Can’t you find another topic for conversation? Anyhow, you’re going to find a more beautiful spot anywhere.”

5 “‘If I lived here,’ said Adam, who had impaled a potato on a stick and was holding it in the fire, ‘wild horses couldn’t drag me to Budapest’”; 174.

6 “Adams rot-weißer Wartburg 311 gehörte zu den Autos, die der Tankwart, ein kleiner Mann mit schwarzen Haaren und großer Brille, mochte. [...] Na, ist das Leben noch frisch?’ Adam nickte. Er beeilte sich, die Kanister aus dem Kofferraum zu nehmen, solange der Wagen hinter ihm noch nicht heran war. Er öffnete sie und stellte sie neben die Zapfsäule. ‘Wohin soll’s denn gehen?’ ‘Warnemünde,’ sagte Adam. Er wusste selbst nicht, warum er log” (352–357). [Adam’s red-and-white Wartburg 311 was one of the favorite cars of the garageman, a short guy with black hair and big glasses. [...] ‘Well, things still lookin’ up?’ Adam nodded. He was in a hurry to get the cans out of the trunk before the next car pulled in. He opened them and set them down beside the pump. ‘Where you headed?’ ‘The coast. Warnemünde,’ Adam said. He himself didn’t know why he lied’; 24.

Es *dämmerte* bereits, als Adam den *Gartenschlauch* nahm und *die Beete* und *Sträucher* goss. Bei der *Gartenarbeit* kamen ihm immer die besten Ideen, deshalb lag im Schuppen auch ein Schreibblock, auf dem er seine Einfälle mit einem Zimmermannsbleistift skizzieren konnte. Zwischendurch setzte er *die Schildkröte* ins *Gras*, sprach mit den Nachbarn und *säuberte* den kleinen Teich, von dessen Rand vier Frösche aus Sandstein dünne Fontänen spuckten. *Er freute sich* wieder über *den flachen Stein*, den er im *Frühling* in die Mitte des Beckens gelegt hatte, kaum höher als *der Wasserspiegel*, ideal für *die Vögel*. Nachdem im Garten alles getan war, und die Schildkröte wieder in ihrem Gehege herumkroch, genehmigte er sich eine zweite Flasche Bier und eine Zigarre. (*Adam und Evelyn*: 388–394)<sup>7</sup>

In this passage Adam finds himself in his *Dasein*, his beloved garden, and the whole description is dominated by a positive mood, every element contributes to create an idyllic atmosphere. All the *italicized* words are connected with one another and are lighted by two of them that have a natural positive potential: *die Dämmerung* and *der Frühling*. However, this description appears very early in the novel, therefore we can easily understand that the situation for Adam is going to change soon. The function of a *topos* depends on its position in the novel: it indicates the realisation of the dream when is collocated at the end of the story but can also be a bad omen when it appears at the beginning of the narration, like in this case. In fact, Adam will never be in his garden again. At the end of the novel we find him and Evelyn living in a small apartment in Munich, with a garden that does not belong to them but they are *allowed* to use and here he will burn all the pictures of the clients he had in the GDR, the last sign of his previous life.

Moreover, thanks to Schulze's word choice we can observe a certain form of humor when after the description of such a peaceful and relaxing scene Adam celebrates it all with beer and cigars, *Bier* and *Zigarre*. Adam is a *gemütlicher Mensch* – like Evelyn says: “Adam ist so genügsam. Abends sein Bier und im Garten sitzen und die Zigarre, und dann kommt der Nachbar an den Zaun [...]” (*Adam und Evelyn*: 2125–2126)<sup>8</sup>. despite knowing that the GDR's system is problematic and should evolve, he loves the *status quo*, his job as women's tailor and everything linked to his everyday life. A life, that he willingly abandons when he decides to follow Evelyn, but the real banishment comes at the end of the novel: after the fall of the Berlin Wall, they decide to come back to their town in the GDR to collect some of their personal things. However, they find out that the house has been robbed, presumably by the old neighbours. At this point all the elements that created Adam's *locus amoenus* had been destroyed: his old garden, the beloved Wartburg that he had to sell, his work and, finally, even the turtle didn't seem to enjoy its new life, having to go into hibernation in the vegetable's shelf of their new kitchen.

Erst als sie Adams Stimme und sein Lachen aus dem Garten hörte, bemerkte sie, dass eines Fenster angelehnt war. Es roch nach Feuer. Zuerst sah sie ihren Strohhut auf seinem Kopf. Adam hielt da aufgeschlagene Album wie eine Partitur vor sich, zog eines der großen geklebten Fotos seiner Frauen heraus und ließ es in die Flammen fallen. Er tat dies ohne Hast. Er blätterte um, zog das nächste

7 “Evening was falling by the time Adam turned the garden hose on the flower beds and shrubs. He always had his best ideas when gardening, which was why he kept a drawing pad in the shed, for a quick design sketch with a carpenter's pencil. He took time out to set the turtle in the grass, to speak with the neighbors and clean the little pond. Along its rim were four sandstone frogs that spat jets of water. He was as delighted as always with the flat stone he had laid in the middle of the pond last spring – perfect for birds. When he had finished with the garden and the turtle was back to crawling around in its pen, he treated himself to a second beer and a cigar”; 27.

8 “Adam is so undemanding. Sits there in the garden of an evening, with a beer and a cigar, and the neighbor comes to the fence [...]”; 159.

heraus, warfs es ins Feuer. [...] Plötzlich sah Adam über die Schulter zu ihr herauf, als hätte er die ganze Zeit gewusst, dass sie dort stand. Er zog den Hut, lächelte, nickte ihr zu und setzte den Hut wieder auf. Evelyn überlief es kalt. (*Adam und Evelyn*: 3765)<sup>9</sup>

This last scene concludes Adam's journey that started with him developing pictures in the Dunkelkammer. Although the anguish atmosphere of the scene, the act of *burning* can be understood as a way to *save* the pictures: to save them in his mind, as a reminder of what he had *before*, and to avoid the fall in the wrong hands.

### The metropolis of West Germany

The other co-protagonist, Evelyn, takes an opposite journey. Since the beginning the reader knows that she suffers from the impossibility to study Arts in the GDR, as she wanted to, but because she was not admitted she begins to study pedagogy and later becomes a waitress, until one day she decides to quit her job, she comes home early and find Adam cheating on her. Her choice to break the routine is what allows her to change her life. From this moment forward the character of Evelyn seems to begin an evolution that will end with her living in Munich. The distance between Adam and Evelyn reveals itself from the very first dialogue:

“Fahren wir übermorgen?”

“Sobald unser Schlitten da ist, geht's los.”

“Das hör ich seit drei Wochen.”

“Ich habe angerufen. Was soll ich denn machen?”

“Wir fahren gar nicht, da geh ich jede Wette ein.”

“Du verlierst” Adam holte Foto um Foto aus dem Wasser und hängte sie auf. “Du verlierst garantiert.”

“Wir kriegen nie wieder ein Visum. Jetzt würden die uns schon gar keins mehr geben [...]” (*Adam und Evelyn*: 125–129)<sup>10</sup>

If by reading this dialogue we keep in mind what we said before about Adam, we can already notice one important opposition between the two of them: Adam's dimension is linked to the present and the past, Evelyn instead is always projected on the future. Her choice started all the journey, her actions and movements will always impact on Adam. Through the psychological evolution of this character does not seem complete, at the end of the novel she reaches her goal and finds her *Daheim*.

9 “It wasn't until she heard Adam's voice laughter coming from the garden that she noticed one of the windows had been tipped open. There was smell of fire. The first thing she saw was her straw hat on his head. Adam was holding the opened album in front of him like a musical score. He pulled one of the large, reassembled photographs of his women out and dropped in into the flames. He did this without haste. He turned the page, pulled the next one out, tossed in on the fire [...] All at once Adam looked up at her over his shoulder, as if he had known she had been standing there all along. He doffed his hat, smiled, nodded to her, and set it back on his head. Evelyn felt a chill run up her back”; 281–282.

10 “So are e leaving tomorrow?” “As soon as our new chariot arrives, we're on our way” “I've been hearing this for three weeks” “I've called. What am I supposed to do?” “We're not even going to go on this trip, I'll bet on you” “You'll lose” Adam pulled photo after photo from the water and hung them up. “I guarantee you'll lose” “We'll never get another visa [...]”; 7.

Evelyn *ließ sich* von den Leuten, die mit ihr aus *der U-Bahn* gestiegen waren, *überholen*. Kurz bevor sie die Treppe erreichte, *blieb sie stehen*. Für einen Moment war sie ganz allein auf *dem Bahnsteig*. Der gehörte also jetzt zu ihr, zu ihrem Weg, wenn sie aus *der Universität* kam. Noch war er von keiner Sorge verdorben, keine schlechte Erinnerung haftete an ihm. Und sie selbst war nicht jene, die sie kannte, sondern eine, die sie sich immer vorgestellt hatte, wenn sie an *die Zukunft* dachte. (*Adam und Evelyn*: 3607–3611)<sup>11</sup>

This description appears in the next to last chapter of the novel, with the title *Letzte Dinge*, and can be considered specular to the one we quoted before, with Adam in his old garden. Here, in this metropolitan atmosphere, Evelyn has found her dimension: everything is new and still untouched by bad memories, everything belongs to her. In this scene she appears light as a feather and determinate at the same time, she “*ließ sich überholen*” but she also stands, “*sie blieb stehen*”, she lets the other pass by and she stands still knowing that she owns that place.

The words that shape her concept of *locus amoenus* belong to a different semantic sphere and are linked to the metropolis, the possibility of choice, the education, the future that she can now imagine for herself: *Freiheit, studieren, probieren* in the following passage are just few examples.

“Ich weiß nur, dass ich nicht zurückgehe.”

“Und warum?”

“Warum ich das erst seit heute weiß?”

“Warum du rüberwillst.”

“Weil ich nicht zurückwill. Ich will nicht wieder kellnern, mich wieder um einen Studienplatz bewerben, wieder abgelehnt werden, wieder all die Visagen sehen, die einen fragen, warum man nicht für den Frieden ist, und der ganze Scheiß.”

“Das wird sich ändern, beim dritten Mal klappt es, die nehmen dich.”

“Nein. Das war hier *schon zu viel Freiheit, ich hab mich zu sehr daran gewöhnt*.”

“Gewöhnt, woran?” Adam setzte sich auf die Bettkante.

“An den Gedanken weiterzufahren. Ich will *weiterfahren*.”

“Was ist denn das für eine Begründung?”

“Ich weiß auch nicht, ob es mir drüben wirklich gefällt, aber ausprobieren will ich es.”

“Ausprobieren, na wunderbar, und wenn es schiefgeht? Wir haben nur ein Leben.”

“Ja, ebendeshalb.” (*Adam und Evelyn*: 2533-2541)<sup>12</sup>

This dialogue comes after an illusory reconciliation in a chapter not accidentally entitled *Missverständnis* :

11 “Stepping from the subway car, Evelyn let the others overtake her. For a moment she stood there alone on the platform. It belonged to her now, to her tour back from the university. It was still unspoiled by worries, untouched by bad memories. And she herself was not the person she knew, but the someone she had always pictured when she thought of the future”; 271.

12 “All I know is, I’m not going back” “And why?” “Why didn’t I know it before this morning?” “Why do you want to head across?” “Because I don’t want to come back. I don’t want to keep on playing waitress, keep on applying for university, keep on being refused, keep on looking into all those fat-ass faces that ask why you’re not for peace – all that shit.” “That will change, third time’s a charm, they’ll accept you” “No. There’s too much freedom here already. I’ve got used to it” “Used to what?” Adam sat down on the edge of the bed. “To the idea of moving on. I want to move on” “What sort of sense does that make?” “I don’t know myself if I’ll really like it over there, but I want to give it a try” “Give it a try – great, and when it doesn’t work out? We have only one life” “Right, you said it”; 189–190.

Schweigend aßen sie die letzten beiden Feigen. Dann lehnte Evelyn ihren Kopf an Adams. *Ihr Strohhut verrutschte dabei etwas. Für einen Moment sah es aus, als trügen sie ihn beide.* (*Adam und Evelyn*: 2505–2507)<sup>13</sup>

The straw hat's symbolism is crucial, the reader knows that he brings it to Eve from the GDR and he never wears it, until the last scene when he burns all his pictures. And in this same occasion, Adam's crisis operates as a positive force on Evelyn, that looks at him from the window but then sees her reflection on the glass:

Die Lampe spiegelte sich in der Scheibe. Darunter erkannte Evelyn sich selbst und um sich herum das ganze Zimmer, das noch viel größer schien *als in Wirklichkeit*, beinah riesig, und direkt in dessen Mitte sah sie, klein und *farbig*, ihr eigenes Bild. (*Adam und Evelyn*: 3776)<sup>14</sup>

### Conclusions

Schulze's structure of the novel allows the careful reader can appreciate the connection between words that become natural and create what Paul Grebe called *Sinnkopplung*, the idea that some words can only relate to other specific terms (Hoberg, 1973: 74). Following this theory, in the next passage we see that for Adam the term *Studienplatz* has a close connection with *kriegen* and *bewerben*, instead for Michael, that comes from West Germany, the stronger connection is that between *Studienplatz* and *schicken* and *endlos*.

“Am liebsten würde ich Evi nen *Studienplatz* schenken.”

“*Bei uns* kannst du dir den selber *schicken* und *endlos* studieren.”

“Ohne Begrenzung?”

“Manche studieren zehn Jahre und mehr.”

“*Bei uns* musst du *einen Platz kriegen*, und wenn du den nicht bekommst ... Evi hatte so ne blöde Beurteilung, weil sie als Einzige in der Klasse geraucht hat und manchmal zu spät kam, obwohl sie nur um die Ecke wohnte. Die Zensuren waren gut, aber für Kunstgeschichte hat man sie zweimal abgelehnt.”

“*Kunstgeschichte* ist eine *brotlose Kunst*.”

“Wieso? Die verdienen nicht weniger als alle anderen.”

“Bei euch vielleicht, aber da brauchst du auch eine Stelle.”

“Wenn du erst mal den *Studienplatz* hast, dann kriegste auch ne Stelle, da *muss sich sogar die Uni drum kümmern*.”

“Wieso die Uni?”

“Ist schon besser, du suchst dir selbst was, aber wenn du nichts findest, müssen die was für dich finden oder dich behalten.”

“Ist ja kurios.” (*Adam und Evelyn* 2005–2014)<sup>15</sup>

13 “They ate their last two figs in silence. Then Evelyn leaned her head against Adam. Her straw hat has slipped a bit to one side. For a moment it looked as if they were both wearing it”; 187.

14 “In the windowpane was reflection of the ceiling lamp. Beneath in Evelyn saw herself and the whole room around her, looking much larger than in reality, almost huge, and right in the middle she saw, small but in bright colors, her own image”; 282.

15 “What I'd most like to give Evi is admission to a university” “That's easy for us, you give it to yourself as a gift and can study forever” “No limits?” “There are people who've stretched it out for ten years and longer” “Over here you first have to be selected

This dialogue can be found in chapter thirty-two, *Arbeit für die Ewigkeit*, and is crucial because it shows two very different *Weltanschauungen*. Throughout all the novel we find these sorts of opposition that arise through dialogues and help the reader understand the development of the character. Going further with the readings the picture of this semiotic scheme becomes always more detailed and completes the frame drawn by this research, few further examples: the man that Adam helps to get on the train at the beginning of the novel (chapter eight) that later seems to be the concierge of the hotel where Evelyn and Michael were robbed and they end up asking Adam for help (chapter thirty); the gas station attendant that Adam meets at the beginning of the journey, when he decided to go after Evelyn (chapter six) and that they meet again just before the threat of a new separation (chapter thirty-nine); Evelyn's bag, that Adam never opens and carries with him the whole trip, only to discover that Evelyn never wanted to go just on vacation and the bag was her passe-partout:

“Aber das muss dir doch klar gewesen sein, spätestens seit Prag!”  
 “Was heißt, seit Prag?”  
 “Oder früher schon, du hattest doch meine Tasche!”  
 “Und?” Adam legte das aufgeschlagene Buch auf seinen Bauch.  
 “Da war alles drin, Zeugnisse, Geburtsurkunde, Impfausweis, sogar mein Taufschein”  
 “Woher sollte ich das wissen?”  
 “Hast du sie nicht aufgemacht?”  
 “Nein.”  
 “Und der Schmuck? Warum hast du mir den Schmuck mitgebracht?”  
 “Hab ich dir doch gesagt, das war mir zu Hause zu unsicher.”  
 “Du hast so gelächelt dabei. Für mich war das wie *ein Zeichen*.” (*Adam und Evelyn*: 2510–2516)<sup>16</sup>

This research didn't want to just talk about East and West. Knowing that maybe we're not yet (historically) far enough to objectively observe that period, the aim of this contribute was to show how an ancient *topos* could still be able to spread the same message, thanks to the break of tradition that enriches the evolution of the system. *Adam und Evelyn* tells us more than just a love story, it is a kaleidoscope of imagines, colors and cities that reflect the shared journey of most East German in that same period. After reading about this long journey one might think if the idea itself of a fixed and still *locus amoenus* can still be plausible in the contemporary era, or if maybe this role of “safe place” and comfort zone has been taken by the *road*, that is the main element of the novel next to Balaton's Lake. The *road* allows the development of characters that, otherwise, would remain flat. It is home and gateway at the same time but, most of all, it keeps us

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for admission, and if you aren't – Evi got such a stupid evaluation her senior year, because she was the only one in her class who smoked, and showed up late sometimes, even though she lived just around the corner. Her grades were good, but she was turned down twice to study art history” “Art history is a good way to starve” “What do you mean? They don't earn less than anybody else” “Maybe on your side, but you need to find a job first” “Once you've been admitted to study then at the end you'll get a job too. The university even has to make sure you're taken care of” “Why the university?” “It's better if you find a job yourself, but if you can't, they have to find something for you, or let you continue studying” “Now, that's strange”; 151.

16 “But it must have dawned on you at some point, since Prague at the latest” “Why since Prague?” “Or even earlier, you had my gym bag after all” “So what?” Adam laid the open book on his stomach. “Everything was in there – my grades, birth-certificate, vaccination card, even my proof of baptism” “And how was I supposed to know that?” “Didn't you open the gym bag?” “No” “And the jewelry? Why'd you bring the jewelry along?” “I told you, it seemed too risky to leave it at home” “But you were smiling that funny way. For me that was a clear signal”; 188.

moving and suggests that maybe our real *Dasein* is in this situation of tension and desire. Hopefully, this essay was able to summarize the great kaleidoscopic nature of the novel, presenting cause for reflection that need and deserve to be developed.

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