

UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLOMOUCI
FILOZOFOICKÁ FAKULTA

Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

**The Concept of Wealth in Selected American Literature Works after
1945**

Diplomová práce

Autor: Bc. Irena Spurná

Vedoucí práce: Prof. PhDr. Michal Peprník, Dr.

Olomouc 2019

Prohlášení:

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci vypracovala čestně a samostatně a že jsem v ní uvedla všechnu použitou literaturu a jiné zdroje.

V Olomouci dne

Podpis

Acknowledgments:

I would like to use this opportunity and thank my academic supervisor Prof. PhDr. Michal Peprník, Dr. for his expert advice and my family and friends for their support and godlike patience.

1	INTRODUCTION	5
2	BACKGROUND IDEAS	8
3	PIERRE BOURDIEU'S THEORY	14
3.1	FIELD, HABITUS AND CAPITAL	18
4	RABBIT IS RICH	22
4.1	FIELD	23
4.2	HABITUS.....	27
4.3	CAPITAL.....	31
5	THE BONFIRE OF THE VANITIES.....	35
5.1	FIELD	38
5.2	HABITUS AND CAPITAL.....	40
6	COSMOPOLIS.....	52
6.1	FIELD	55
6.2	HABITUS.....	57
6.3	CAPITAL.....	60
7	COMPARATIVE AND COMPLEMENTARY REMARKS	66
8	CONCLUSION	69
9	RESUMÉ	71
10	WORKS CITED	73

1 Introduction

Rich people have always been an attractive object of interest. People either love them and want to be like them or envy their every move and fall into the category of haters. The former of these two tendencies gave rise to the myth of American Dream, which sees richness as a virtue of success and stresses the importance of hard work. The theme has been a popular one in American fiction, as well as literary criticism and has become an inseparable part of American lifestyle. From the likes of the narratives of Benjamin Franklin, *The Way to Wealth* (1758), Horatio Alger's series, published around the end of 19th century, Francis Scott Fitzgerald's popular *The Great Gatsby* (1925), the extensive Rabbit Angstrom tetralogy by John Updike (1960-1990), to the violent case of Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991), authors have drawn readers' attention to stories of great motivating, as well as moralizing impact. For students and researchers interested to overview further literary and social reviews, the following titles might be of use: *Gambling with the Myth of the American Dream* by Aaron M. Duncan (2015), which elaborates on the attractions of plays with uncertain outcomes, *Surveyors of Customs* by Joel Pfister (2016), which points out the interconnectedness between literature and society, *Upward Mobility and the Common Good* by Bruce Robbins (2007). Also notable are Cal Jillson's *The American Dream: In History, Politics, and Fiction* (2016) and Kathryn Hume's *American Dream, American Nightmare: Fiction Since 1960*, published in 2000 and countless more. Especially nowadays, with the internet as a useful research tool, there exist hundreds and thousands of references online, regarding the topic of American literature and the American Dream or others, connected with topics of social roles and richness. None of the above mentioned reviewers serves a naïve outlook on the issues and they care for sustained objectivity as it might be tempting for people, sometimes, to simplify the concept. In the twenty first century, there have been tendencies to question the ongoing existence of the Dream as a notion in the modern society. In Noam Chomsky's *Requiem for the American Dream* (2017), for example, also available as a film created by Peter Hutchison, Kelly Nyks and Jared P. Scott (2014), posits that the American Dream as the public knows it, might be outdated and rather illusionary for today's United States. Even the former United States president, Barack Obama, published his ideas about the phenomenon in *The Audacity of Hope, Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream* in 2008, as the concept stays important for its original home field,

politics.

The aim of this thesis is to focus on the concept of wealth in chosen works of American literature, approximately around the millennium, the year 2000. In this context, the previously mentioned American Dream idea shall be understood as a motivating element not only in the protagonists' strivings but as an object of the authors' critique nonetheless. Writers stand out as society's valuable critics and therefore their work mirrors its virtues and vices. This text concerns *Rabbit is Rich* by John Updike (1981), *The Bonfire of the Vanities* by Tom Wolfe (1987), and *Cosmopolis* by Don DeLillo (2003). The books were chosen based on the criterion that they span over a number of decades and provide variation in perspective upon wealth and related connotations. Other criteria of choice were the works' names, which should be suggestive of richness of any kind, as well as the authors' popularity, so that the works are symptomatic of certain literary and social traditions in context of American fiction of the given period, and intended for wider audiences. The choice was made in order for the thesis to be relevant in today's world culture and tendencies. The works come approximately from the years 1980, 1990, and 2000. My aim is to map the different associations and evaluations which arise from the texts, connected with the meaning of wealth and habits of people who earned capital by different means and how the people themselves see the society surrounding them and their own situation, throughout the given timespan.

The focal point of this paper is the concept of wealth as it is adopted and manifested in the literary works by their authors. The carriers and active creators of the expressions of this notion are the protagonists. All of them are relatively rich men of a productive age and the analysis shall comment on their distinctive features, as they are present in their behavioural habits and attitudes towards their surroundings. To frame the criteria for the understanding and definitions of the relations of the concept in question, in order to serve the application in literary analysis, I chose a socioeconomic theory of a well-known and acclaimed French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, namely his theory of practice as it is described in his publication *Practical Reason, on the Theory of Action* (1998). To complement the primary source, I will also use secondary sources focused on Bourdieu's theory, to serve better understanding of the presented conceptions, as the explanation of the basic concepts underlying the thesis is crucial for successful application in the literary analysis. The notions of American Dream, capitalism and others will be regarded as subcategories of the general concept of wealth, which is connected

with American history and identity. Changes arising from the evolution of business circumstances and attitudes regarding the sociological and economical stratification in the American society and its relations to the concept of wealth, rich people and money shall be observed throughout the thesis, moving from one novel to another. The analysis will focus on different criteria of the characters' evaluations of either themselves, the outer world or both in context of their fields of practice and their actions with more or less concrete impact within the narratives.

In the first chapter, I will present ideas which presumably underlie the origins of countless books of American literature and fiction in general, in order to describe the base for further development of arguments in the analysis of each of the chosen works. The terminology of Pierre Bourdieu's publications will be explained and compared with some more general terms to offer the reader better known equivalents in the second chapter. In the subsequent chapters, the individual analyses of the pieces of fiction will follow. The three books are different in style and atmosphere and so the analyses themselves are different, too, in outcome. In each of them, the features of field, habitus and capital as they are manifested in the protagonists' life will be described. Further, I will offer a short comparative concluding chapter, to point out main similarities and differences among the men. The thesis will end with a conclusion.

2 Background Ideas

As we are being reminded in *The American Dream* by Jim Cullen, at the roots of the Declaration of Independence, The American Dream or the American identity, the basis of the entitlement of people to independence, rights, individuality, and other worldly advantages, is, in the original theory, determined by the Creator. This approach could also be connected to Abraham Lincoln's and Benjamin Franklin's ideas that virtues and rewards are two sides of one coin, forming the main basis of the American Dream, not only the actual positive outcomes of hard work but also the impossibility of not being happy because logically, in the conception is also embedded the fact that if people are not successful, if they are not becoming rich and moving up, only they themselves can be blamed for the stagnant or negative outcomes.¹

This awareness of individual responsibility might be the main point in the conflict between the classes, or a resolution. These ideas, which had been considered at the beginning of the European-American history, have served as a structure which should be holding the spirits of the nation together and which functions as a religion in itself, while it is clear that the notion is very closely connected with the religion of the founding fathers. Those are the rules which not only describe a person's potential but also prescribe that one shall be striving for a better future for himself and his family and neighbours at least. They establish the responsibilities of a man to take care of himself and improve.

The notion of the American Dream is somewhat universally applicable and especially in the context of today's world and idea trends caused by globalization, this topic is very interesting and still relevant. All of the ideas are so universal that they are completely, maybe not literally, transferable on today's society, and hence to the situation of the whole time span included in the analysed works. Represented by the protagonists and other characters, we can see three different examples of a lifestyle and their possible consequences. In the context of the stories, the described events, allusions to American identity shall be explicitly visible but they are also axiomatic and therefore immanently omnipresent at the same time.

¹ Jim Cullen, *The American dream: A short history of an idea that shaped a nation* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2004) 88.

American literature has partly been defined by the existence of wealthy characters. Of course, this fact might be based on the reality that the concept or myth of the American Dream has influenced the creation and the whole history of the United States and also, each fictional character has to have certain qualities which attract the attention not only of the reader but also of other fictional characters, if relationships in the broad sense play a role in the individual piece of fiction. Of course, wealth is one of the aspects which are more likely to be interesting, as only a restricted percentage of people are wealthy. For the others, their existence and the wide range of daily habits and opportunities remains somewhat mysterious. Common individual's life visions and possibilities are restricted, which motivates him to not only follow the rich's habits and daily rituals but also try and recognize the special traits and personal attitudes that he may possess or follow.

The desire to achieve beyond one's parents' economic status or ensure a child's greater success in life has inspired generations of Americans to study hard, work industriously, save carefully, and connect to a set of larger social ideals. Indeed, the promise of economic opportunity was part of what forged the idea of the United States of America more than two centuries ago. It has since served as a powerful engine of growth and social cohesion.²

The notion of virtue and reward seems to be following most of the literary figures from history. The analysis will be observing behaviours regarding positive or negative virtues and positive or negative outcomes, growth of capital or loss. It is interesting to review famous literary works with success and wealth as their main topics. Taking the likes of Franklin's *The Way to Wealth* and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* into account and bearing the concept of the Dream in mind, what does really come out of these visions in real life? Do the common Americans share similar attitudes towards pursuing the dream as the compensation for hard work and appraisal of self-made men or does the concept always carry with it prejudices about the mystery of shady business and undeserved rewards? Characters' assets are not decisive for the overall impression they impose on others because these usually stay covert and the observers create their evaluation of the subject in focus based on external demonstration of characteristics or temporal impulses.

² Isabel V. Sawhill and John E. Morton, "Economic mobility: Is the American dream alive and well?", (2007) 7.

The overlapping connections between the characters will be of interest, too, as an important part of the outcome of the thesis. The personal influence of the American Dream associates the notion of general motivation.

Motivation, forces acting either on or within a person to initiate behaviour. The word is derived from the Latin term *motivus* (“a moving cause”), which suggests the activating properties of the processes involved in psychological motivation. ... Motivation is not typically measured directly but rather inferred as the result of behavioral changes in reaction to internal or external stimuli... Motives are often categorized into primary, or basic, motives, which are unlearned and common to both animals and humans; and secondary, or learned, motives, which can differ from animal to animal and person to person.³

Nevertheless, people are not as strong as programmed machines and sometimes, the relative relationships are creating or damaging big parts of the characters’ lives. One of the issues of this work is that wealth may bring with it problems to people who are not fully prepared to take control over all the connected outcomes of success. The goal is to uncover the messages of the literary authors, woven into the field, habitus and capital of each protagonist.

Referring to the American Dream, presumably, when an individual wants to pursue richness, he bases his visions on the fact that any person, poor or rich, can attain greater capital by working hard applying discipline, aiming in one direction. It is a question, how far the concept of wealth is connected with the theoretical concept of success. A part of the Dream is conscious aspiration towards a goal and adjustment of actions to adhere to the vision and the procedures of the fulfilment of the wishes. Surely, a dream as a goal still remains abstract but bears the possibility in itself, of becoming real. The thesis shall review the circumstances of becoming rich and of what comes after the characters reach their relative success and become wealthy, as all of the protagonists are at a stage in their lives when they are relatively rich and successful already. We can presume that the authors’ aim is to depict the realities of life where the dream is almost

³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, s. v. “motivation,” accessed January 28, 2019,
<http://www.britannica.com/topic/motivation>.

completely fulfilled but where none of the main characters is really happy, at least at some stages of the books.

To make the stories interesting and create tension, the authors make the readers follow their thoughts based on the characters' obedience or disobedience to socially or morally imposed rules. Otherwise the books would not make sense and there would be no projection of a system of values present. The aspects of basic morals are therefore not to be forgotten when evaluating one's social and economic contributions. Another point is, living is a long process and people should not be judging themselves or others based on only one moment in their lives. Sometimes, the individual is also opposed to the archetypal representations of certain social beliefs.

The coevolution of liberal individualism and “democratic” institutions intensified the focus on the lifelines of more ordinary people, and has made individual flourishing or the lack thereof a common litmus test of cultural vitality even as the individual is imagined as operating within and/or against a cultural collectivity that in some sense also defines him or her.⁴

Most of the readers already have some real-life experience with the rich and are carrying some template approaches in their conscious and unconscious minds, which are then readily applied in the perception of the at the time of reading still unfolding characters. These templates are subjective but in society, there is a number of objects of interest and symbolism, recognized as expressions of taste and mostly, the books refer to real life contexts, in spite of being fictional. Such outer messages can be consciously or unconsciously expressed, as well as perceived and they are a part of the social play. The notion of the roles we play in everyday life on the outside and on the inside is closely connected with Pierre Bourdieu's theories. In theory, there exist some binary influences between people and the society, the latter represented mainly by parents and education authorities. These impact one's personal growth and then the person, via his actions in the society, acts as an agent of the reverse effect, which actually depends on his power and influence, so his social or symbolic capital.

⁴ Lawrence Buell, *The dream of the great american novel* (Harvard University Press, 2004) 105.

This topic has been worked through by several great philosophers and theorists of our age. When connected with the concept of wealth, their work especially focuses on definitions of capital and subcategories thereof but also on the impacts of ownership of individual or personal capital, such as power, possibilities, cooperation, globalization, and charity. Such are some of the official outcomes, nonetheless, there exist certain personal predispositions, as well as purposefully attained skills and coping mechanisms, which may arise from the circumstances, leading to the creation of capital. All of these aspects, in the end, compose an individual's being, his or her practice. We can liken this notion to a term of social psychology, social identity.

Social identity theory, in social psychology, the study of the interplay between personal and social identities. Social identity theory aims to specify and predict the circumstances under which individuals think of themselves as individuals or as group members. The theory also considers the consequences of personal and social identities for individual perceptions and group behaviour.⁵

The world of these theories might seem complicated, therefore it is of crucial importance to choose only one model for critical application.

It is interesting to observe sociological patterns in real life and in works of literature nonetheless. Such continuity is inevitable. Within the stories in focus, the areas where wealth shows impact is usually the immediate family, as well as other closer acquaintances but we can simply see this impact as an extension of the individual's habitus, as it is seen by Bourdieu. In text, we have to use close reading, deconstruction and focus on outstanding hints. One of the more profound concepts used in fiction and real life, is the concept of symbol as the carrier of social differences between people. Such symbols of wealth shall not be overlooked as they can also serve as tools of power, so a kind of capital.

Symbols are more difficult than signs to understand and to define, because, unlike signs and signals, they are intricately woven into an individual's ongoing perceptions of the world. They appear to contain a dimly understood capacity that

⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, s. v. "social identity theory," accessed January 29, 2019, <http://www.britannica.com/topic/social-identity-theory>.

(as one of their functions), in fact, defines the very reality of that world. The symbol has been defined as any device with which an abstraction can be made. Although far from being a precise construction, it leads in a profitable direction. The abstractions of the values that people imbue in other people and in things they own and use lie at the heart of symbolism.”⁶

The presence of such a symbol on its own can shift circumstances of communicative interactions and can lead to altered outcomes of the situations. Such symbols are nowadays usually connected with marketing strategies of numerous product brands. Ranging from expensive items like cars or yachts, the symbols can also be of a subtler nature, being a bracelet, a watch or even a monogram or the choice of colour, as we have seen in countless works of literature up to this date. Such notion shall provide a wide possibility for treatment by the authors and a wide possibility for entertainment of the readers. Bourdieu works with symbolic capital, where the power one possesses does not have to be expressed in any item but it can be carried on people’s minds and influence their interpersonal behaviour, more or less knowingly.

Symbols also contribute to the sense of identity, which the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines as “the distinguishing character or personality of an individual,” as well as “sameness of essential or generic character in different instances.”⁷ It is not necessary to link *habitus* to *identity* but the percentage of similarity of these concepts would be high. “Identity results from interaction in the social world and in turn guides interaction in the social world. This must not be misunderstood as logical circularity. Rather, it describes a causal chain in which identity serves as a critical mediating link.”⁸

The thesis of this work is to show on specific examples, intended by the literary authors, that wealth may bring with it problems to people who are not fully prepared to cope either with the outcomes of success or with other situations of their lives. The distinctive features of the protagonists’ personalities and their stories shall partly speak for themselves. Arguments in this thesis also work with a presupposition that there exist specific aspects of people’s characteristics or consecutions of conscious actions, which

⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, s. v. “communication,” accessed January 15, 2019, <http://www.britannica.com/topic/communication>.

⁷ Merriam-Webster.com, s.v. “identity,” accessed November 8, 2018.

⁸ Bernd Simon, *Identity in modern society: A social psychological perspective* (John Wiley & Sons, 2008) 2.

lead to acquisition of wealth. We can call such actions strategies as they are usually planned and they aim to reach a specific goal. This is further explained by Bourdieu in the frame of habitus. Pierre Bourdieu in his theory of practice describes the area into which a person invests energy as field and the applied experience one attains during life as habitus. The outcomes of the combination then create capital, which may or may not be used for further growth.

This work reviews the protagonists' identities by describing their practices; the field, habitus and capital and uses various circumstances of their stories for literary interpretation. On the one hand, their Psyché is assumed to be different from other people's. On the other hand, their Psyché is the same and they fulfil specific aspects of their potentials related to material success, which leads to distinction. Their identity is a sum of traits which lead to designation of actions and outcomes. All of these ideas and notions give the literary works the space for play with the characters' auras and are the objects of interpretation with the use of Pierre Bourdieu's theory.

3 Pierre Bourdieu's Theory

For the purpose of the thesis, I am going to use the socio-economic theory of Pierre Bourdieu, a renowned French sociologist, namely the three concepts of the *Theory of Practice* he developed, *field*, *habitus* and *capital*. The main source of the definitions is the publication *Practical Reason* from the year 1994. This theory fits the purpose perfectly as it looks at the characters from a social, as well as economic perspective. He is not the only sociologist concerned with the description of human practices.

Social theorists have treated a variety of different categories of social entities as basic, including *social laws* (Mill 1843, Spencer 1895); *social facts* (Durkheim 1894, Mandelbaum 1955); *social groups* (Oppenheim & Putnam 1958, Gilbert 1989, Tuomela 2013); *human kinds* (Boyd 1991, 1999b; Millikan 1999, Mallon 2016); *institutional facts* (Searle 1995); *social objects and social properties* (Macdonald & Pettit 1981, Ruben 1985); *social predicates* (Kincaid 1986); *social practices* (Bourdieu 1977, Giddens 1984, Schatzki 1996);

and *social processes*(Whitehead 1929, Rescher 2000, Livet & Nef 2009)."⁹

Nonetheless, Bourdieu's approach combines definitions of objectivism, whose circumstances he subsumes especially in the concept of field, and subjectivism, mainly defined as habitus. He then describes capital of different forms as the core product of human socioeconomic activity. Capital is power, thus, those who possess more capital than others wield more power.

Bourdieu's work is, to our knowledge, the most recent attempt in the social sciences at offering a general, grand perspective on society, on the ways people think and behave. The breadth and scope of his knowledge enabled him to blend philosophy, sociology, anthropology, linguistics, history and economics into an integrated, consistent theory of human behaviour and social reality.¹⁰

Bourdieu is often described as a nonconformist and also a critic of the French society of his age. His work draws attention to itself because of the wide scale of topics it embraces and because the presented ideas are original, as well as well structured.

Despite this heterogeneity in his interests, his objective was to elaborate a “science of practices” that would allow for an original and rigorous critique of domination, the core of his scientific objectives, which brings unity to his wide-ranging sociological thinking and permeates each single inquiry.¹¹

The notion of domination is connected with the concept of wealth and its representations in forms of capital, where more capital builds more power and vice versa.

For the literary analysis, the social theory of practice developed by Pierre Bourdieu seems to be the most suitable one. For application in the interpretations of this thesis, a theory which is complex on its own is needed. A few concepts that can be applied

⁹ *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, “Social Ontology”, (Stanford University, 2018) Web. 27 November 2018.

¹⁰ Asimina Christoforou and Michaël Lainé, eds. *Re-thinking economics: Exploring the work of Pierre Bourdieu*, (Routledge, 2014) 3.

¹¹ Gabriella Paolucci “Biography – key concepts” in *Re-thinking economics: Exploring the work of Pierre Bourdieu* edited by Asimina Christoforou and Michaël Lainé (Routledge, 2014) 26.

to the world of the characters will be useful and Bourdieu's theory is self-sufficient, or more precisely, it functions on its own and only uses a limited number of references, moreover, the terms he uses interact perfectly and are also vague enough. Consequently, the protagonists in question and their life circumstances can create another complex sum of ties, more or less independent. This set of ideas fits the purpose perfectly, as it looks at the characters from a social, as well as economic perspective. Nonetheless, Bourdieu's approach combines definitions of objectivism, especially in the concept of field, and subjectivism, mainly defined as habitus.

Whilst objectivism holds that social reality consists of sets of relations and forces that impose themselves upon individuals, subjectivism, on the contrary, takes individual representations as its basis, and asserts that social reality is but the sum total of the innumerable acts of interpretation whereby people jointly construct meaningful lines of (inter)action.¹²

The concepts of Bourdieu's theory, field, habitus, and capital are applied to describe the distinctions of characters' professional environment, the capital they are able to operate and the everyday expressions of these individuals' characters in each of the books and to combine the results to create a more or less complex whole. Bourdieu states that:

The essential point is that, when perceived through these social categories of perception, these principles of vision and division, the differences in practices, in the goods possessed, or in the opinions expressed become symbolic differences and constitute a veritable language.¹³

The three literary works will, therefore, be compared with respect to field, habitus, and capital to create a conclusion. For the purpose of the thesis, the analysis of each of the concepts will be presented separately, except for parts where separation cannot be successful because of the close contiguity of the used theoretic tools, represented in the

¹² Paolucci 26.

¹³ Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical reason: On the theory of action* (Stanford University Press, 1998) 8.

chosen texts. Where it is necessary, some parts will also be analysed in more of the contexts or included in more of the subchapters.

What interests us are the relations of the social agents, their contacts or acquaintances, the role of their capital, also compared, and the effects of such comparison. Nevertheless, the information about the origin of their capital and their initial motives might be of importance. This approach to the analysis shall work best, because if we took psychological theories as the basis for the work, the focus would be aimed at the inner life of the characters and if we used economic theory with emphasis on capital, the focus would be on the ways of earning and accumulating wealth rather than the social outcomes thereof. The socio-economic theory seems to be a perfect fusion to lay the foundation of the thesis. Bourdieu introduces his introduction to practices with social agents and their objective opponents as focal points. The aspects of the protagonists' areas of invested energy and their distinctive action features serve the authors of the books as functional carriers of the intended messages and points. The combination of all of these is the individual expression or representation of the concrete application of motivation and execution within the concept of wealth in case the agents are successful and owners of great capital.

The chosen works are foremost focused on a wealthy individual and his distinctive features, rather than his relationships. The psychological ties of the protagonists and their closest acquaintances and their impact are backgrounded in favour of the men's individualism. In case of Rabbit Angstrom, the image of his personal habitus is very much derived from his family's practices, foremost his attitudes towards the individual members. Both, Sherman McCoy and Eric Packer, on the other hand, are drifting apart from their closest family and enjoying more freedom within their fields, approaching independence as a form of reward for their hard work. The concept of habitus is therefore applied to describe the distinction, the everyday expressions of these individuals' personalities in each of the books and to combine the results to create a more or less complex whole. Furthermore, their habitus is described as a practice within their concrete fields. Focusing on the concept of wealth in the analysis, it can be subcategorized according to the theory of practice. Descriptions of different fields and their distinctive features will provide an outlook on practices within the related professions and their social circles in chosen areas, cities, offices. The catalytic element in these contexts would be

illusio. Bourdieu gives *illusio* more definitions and its understanding also relies on specific circumstances of its occurrence. According to him, it is “the fact of attributing importance to a social game,” as well as “at the same time the condition and the product of the field’s functioning.” He further explains that: “What is experienced as obvious in *illusio* appears as an illusion to those who do not participate in the obviousness because they do not participate in the game.”¹⁴ The habitus complements the field as a description of another entity within the field, the individual representation of habits, beliefs, and attitudes, resulting in a lifestyle with impact on personal relations and growth of capital. Various possessions, knowledge, network contacts, and similar attributes will be described as different kinds or different constituents of capital. The three literary works will, therefore, be compared with respect to field, habitus, and capital. According to Pierre Bourdieu, field and habitus are closely interwoven and one cannot exist without the other. For the purpose of the thesis, the analysis of each of the concepts will be presented separately with the notion that the separation cannot be wholly successful and where it is necessary, some parts will be analysed in more theoretical contexts or included in more of the subchapters.

3.1 Field, Habitus and Capital

According to Pierre Bourdieu, the notions of field and habitus are closely interwoven and one cannot exist without the other. Field is the relatively objective perspective and the area of action. The field designates the borders of our actions and the most efficient procedures to reach the desired outcomes, the capital in frame of the area of action. Bourdieu suggests that our reactions to inner impulses are rather not consciously controlled and therefore our actions within the field may or may not be specifically designed to function within the ties of the field and are influenced by the individual habitus.

It is true that most human behaviours take place within playing fields thus they do not have as a principle a strategic intention such as that postulated by game theory. In other words, social agents have "strategies" which only rarely have a true

¹⁴ Bourdieu 76-79.

strategic intention as a principle¹⁵

We shall consider the characteristics of each field and, nonetheless, look at the common fields which differ very little in each story, such as family and masculinity and business in general.

Most of the time, the aim of the game is the maximisation of symbolic capital (e.g. “honour” or “credit” for artists), but the very definition of symbolic capital is not immovable, since it is also the outcome of the struggles that take place in the field. To illustrate how fields work, Bourdieu once again uses the game metaphor. Each field is like a game in which there are stakes that players fight for, and a form of investment made by players that Bourdieu refers to as *illusio*, i.e. the belief in the game.¹⁶

We may take the institution of family as a support system for the leading individual, the main social agent and the representative of the family but it may also function as an important mirror of the character's way of acting and well-being. It is very important to observe both sides of the coin and the family's external, as well as internal circumstances and demonstrations of quality of ties shall be closely examined. The focus of the analysis will also be the extent to which the work or social field of professional interest of the representative is influenced by the situation in the family and vice versa.

The habitus fulfils a function which another philosophy consigns to a transcendental conscience: it is a socialized body, a structured body, a body which has incorporated the immanent structures of a world or of a particular sector of that world – a field – and which structures the perception of that world as well as action in that world.¹⁷

Bourdieu presumes that our practice of action is not only partially intentional and controlled, mainly unconscious, but also that the growth into the social agents we become

¹⁵ Bourdieu 81.

¹⁶ Paolucci 29.

¹⁷ Bourdieu 81.

is organic and therefore also our associations and perceptions, which lead to our actions, may be unknown to our active and understood conscience. Of course, this theory resembles the theory of unconscious behaviour but rather than being focused on the processes of our minds, Pierre Bourdieu explains the phenomenon in the context of social relations and actions. “Habitus are generative principles of distinct and distinctive practices (...) But habitus is also a classificatory scheme, principles of classification, principles of vision and division, different tastes.”¹⁸ An individual’s habitus therefore includes the use and perception of symbols, too. On the whole, habitus can help create capital but can work as capital too, generating personal worth. Bourdieu uses in this context the expression “a feel for the game” or a sense of how one shall act under different circumstances but both of these meanings resemble the associations one might have with instinctive behaviour or a sixth sense. We know that, originally, our instincts were developed for the purpose of defending our safety and gathering necessities such as food and other means of self-preservation. Encyclopaedia Britannica defines instinct as “an inborn impulse or motivation to action typically performed in response to specific external stimuli.”¹⁹ Today, instinct is generally described as a “stereotyped, apparently unlearned, genetically determined behaviour pattern”²⁰ and further definition involves a polemic on to which extent are instincts innate as opposed to learned and there seems to be a dispute because the expression carries in itself a range of meanings depending on the context of its usage.²¹ We can further complement Bourdieu’s aspect of habitus with Popper and Eccles’s statement:

Our mind . . . is never a mere ‘stream of consciousness’, a stream of experiences. Rather, our active attention is focussed at every moment on just the relevant aspects of the situation, selected and abstracted by our perceiving apparatus, into which a selection programme is incorporated; a programme which is adjusted to our available repertoire of behavioural responses.²²

¹⁸ Bourdieu 8.

¹⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, s. v. “instinct,” accessed January 15, 2019, <http://www.britannica.com/topic/instinct>.

²⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, s. v. “instinct,” accessed January 15, 2019, <http://www.britannica.com/topic/instinct>.

²¹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, s. v. “instinct,” accessed January 15, 2019, <http://www.britannica.com/topic/instinct>.

²² Karl R. Popper and John C. Eccles. *The self and its brain* (Springer Science & Business Media, 2012) 128.

It is a topic of question, how far our today's intentions and actions or inner reactions to external impulses differ from our ancestors' ones. Even the outcomes of our behaviour, the acclaimed personal capital's nature, may in a way be very similar to the original wins, yet still, the aspects of habitus, motivation and instinct correlate. People are still motivated by basic needs and the common motivators include the safety of our children and overall satisfaction of our family's needs.

Capital is a notion mainly discussed in economics. It offers the possibility for investment of choice and is attained by work or by other economic exchange. It can be seen as an equivalent term of wealth, same as habitus. In Bourdieu's conception, it carries a broader meaning, reaching beyond the usual financial approach. "Bourdieu refers to the notion of *capital* as any resource that produces the 'profits' which derive from participating in a field."²³ More concretely, Bourdieu distinguishes cultural, economic and social capital, and a sum of all of these, he calls symbolic capital.

Each form of capital can be converted into another form of capital through a conversion rate that differs in all fields. (...)

Thus, Bourdieu's vision offers a richer understanding of inequality and domination than a pyramidal perspective, since it depends on the possession of these diverse forms of capital.²⁴

We shall consider ownership or presence of all of these in the main characters' lives. There might not be precisely visible borders between them regarding concrete examples. The bordering relations of the capitals may be more or less fluid but the overall outcome as seen in one's life is one and we may call this symbolic capital. "Symbolic capital differs from other species of capital; in fact it is not a material entity but describes the effects produced by other forms of capital. . . . Symbolic capital is capital with a cognitive base, which rests on cognition and recognition."²⁵ Based on what we know from the theory, we can say that all people are responsible for their own capital and its protection, as it can be earned, inherited, lost or stolen.

²³ Paolucci 30.

²⁴ Paolucci 31.

²⁵ Paolucci 31.

All these forms of capital, along with the notions of habitus and field, belong to an integrated conceptual framework to provide a general theory of practice. Bourdieu clarifies the link between these three dimensions of practice through his well-known formula (1979 trans. Nice 1984): [(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice²⁶

These concepts will be highly useful for the interpretation of the main characters' behaviours and surrounding circumstances. The aim of the work is to find out what the aspects of the lives of people with great capital are. Presumably, the aspects are distinctive in the books and carry with them certain social references. The recognition of these references is, as a part of the interpretation, also the aim of the thesis.

4 Rabbit Is Rich

The novel from 1981 is third part of the famous Rabbit tetralogy by John Updike, the rest consisting of *Rabbit, Run* (1960), *Rabbit Redux* (1971) and *Rabbit at Rest* (1990), lets us enter the world of Harry Angstrom, here mainly a husband, father and businessman. The novel is a confirmation of the fact that "Updike's devotion to the day-to-day ordinariness of town life is integrally connected with his philosophy and aesthetic."²⁷ The text faithfully depicts day-to-day realities of life with artistic precision and expression. It presents circumstances relatable to generations of people, yet manages to push the reader to new realizations once and again. It is divided "into two primary components, one that looks backward and another that looks forward."²⁸ Harry Angstrom is clearly in the middle of his life. He is a good businessman, skilled in his kind of small-scale accounting, even though his area of knowledge is not too extensive or proficiency-bound. His store is a typical small-town type of a car dealership. He is a rather conservative boss to his enterprise and he prefers the well-established status quo to modern day innovations and risks. He is in his forties, metaphorically harvesting the produce of his actions of the

²⁶ Paolucci 32.

²⁷ John Neary, *Something and nothingness: the fiction of John Updike & John Fowles* (SIU Press, 1992) 98.

²⁸ Marshall Boswell, *John Updike's Rabbit Tetralogy: Mastered Irony in Motion* (University of Missouri Press, 2001) 131.

previous decades. He knows the worth of hard work and is definitely not willing to let his deserved rewards be shaken by unnecessary foray. He is oriented on Toyota retail and it is his beloved activity. Almost as beloved as the cars themselves. He entered the field by marrying his wife Janice some twenty years ago and inheriting 49% of her father's company Springer Motors. We can say that Harry and Janice complement each other very well and that he was predestined to lead the car-selling business. Even though there are some parallels between his son Nelson's current tendencies and the father's own past experiences and aspirations. Nelson is about to leave college and start selling cars under his father's command but the senior strongly disapproves of such a vision. Harry interprets it as an intrusion to his physical and mental space, so his playing fields. Nonetheless, he reviews his past and present and wonders whether his life still suits him and his needs well enough to be sustainable in the long term but due to a set of unexpected events, new possibilities for all members of his family appear, as an opportunity for them to show their characters and re-establish their relationships. Marshall Boswell, in his study *Rabbit Tetralogy, Mastered Irony in Motion*, provides an expert outlook on all of the four novels. According to him, the third book "has been regarded as a conclusion, a summing up of the unresolved issues raised in the first two novels."²⁹ Yet, the same time, he remains objectively receptive of the book's author and adds that Updike's "dialectical vision remains always unresolved and in tension."³⁰ Still, the text has its physical ending and shall partly be respected this way. The final decision comes as a precisely timed consequence and all parts of the story and its characters' destinies come together in bitter-sweet family bliss.

4.1 Field

Harry's field of practice is not only his car retail but mainly his family. It is a surprising fact because in the beginning, he tends more towards isolation. This might as well be the fact because he might have been overlooking some of his family's needs because of the business before and so now he has to harmonise the two fields' relation to each other. He obviously goes through a crisis and is at a place in his life where he does not know how to evaluate what he has and who he is, anymore. He loses touch with what truly matters

²⁹ Boswell 130.

³⁰ Boswell 130.

to him. He is preoccupied with money and calculations, mostly, but also with retrospective thoughts which seem to have the purpose of providing him with the necessary reassurance, accompanying his apparent mid-life crisis. He starts jogging and realizes he might be “running out of gas”. This metaphor, as a vision connecting his own physical being with the sometimes occurring, unwelcome state of cars, is used at a number of occasions in the story and might be symptomatic of Harry’s feeling, his temporary evaluation of his own life, the motivation for changes and resolutions. He nostalgically recalls the old times with memories of songs and past friends and lovers, which draws the reader closer to understanding his partially romantic but nervous nature. He thinks that their family house is too small for all the members living together and considers whether or not there is enough space for him personally, with his wishes and needs: “... there isn’t a corner of the Springer house where Harry feels able to breathe absolutely his own air.”³¹ With Janice, they are nervously anticipating their son’s arrival from college. We can read that they are not used to having him around anymore. Harry is very critical of his wife and son, only to reevaluate his life and reassure himself of what really matters to him. Apparently, he forgot how to see his family with grateful eyes and instead, sometimes perceives them as enemies or opponents.

I’ve been trying to get out of this fucking depressing house for years and I don’t want this shiftless arrogant goof-off we’ve raised coming back and pinning me in. These kids seem to think the world exists to serve them but I’m sick of just standing around waiting to be of service.³²

Even though Harry has been relatively successful, there exists another level of comfort, regarding housing, the level of social capital he has not reached so far. Locust Boulevard, “the better-off love up here, the bone surgeons and legal eagles and middle management of the plants that never had the wit to go south or have come in since.”³³ In case of Nelson, Harry actually actively tries to protect his own field of action. On this example, the borders of individual personal fields are visible and the incidents of the plot point out the difficulties of human coexistence within various fields. When Nelson finally arrives with

³¹ John Updike, *Rabbit is rich* (Penguin UK, 2006) 45.

³² Updike 49.

³³ Updike 41.

his girlfriend Melanie and throughout the few following weeks, the family appears commonly on the outside but the plot becomes dynamic and the family figures are put through a testing period. We can see a number of fields in the text. None of them is too competitive. Within the family, the roles are set. It might be surprising, how peaceful the circumstances of each field actually are. This aspect of the narrative may be derived from the proceedings and perceptions of an aging man. The stable, maybe even stagnating nature of Harry's recent lifestyle is clearly presented in the depiction of his everyday life. In all of the fields, there are other characters than Harry and mostly, they have both roles, which are switched from time to time. His family are his teammates and opponents at the same time. The close family consists of Harry, called Rabbit, his wife Janice, their adult son Nelson and Janice's mother Bessie. It depends on the situation and argument used but most of the rules of the game are derived from Harry's own friendly and empathic nature. The whole story turns out to be rather sweet, in spite of the confused and frustrated beginning. We can call his opponents fellow travellers as disputes are a natural part of every relationship and Harry is still clearly working to help the other members when his help is needed.

A typical example of such features would be Harry's good friend and company partner Charlie. They have been together for a long time and it is clear that Harry trusts his friend with the business, which is a significant proof of inseparability and respect. "Side by side they had suffered with Springer Motors as the Datsun franchise came into the Brewer area, and then those years when everyone was buying VWs and Volvos, and now the Hondas and Le Car presenting themselves as the newest thing in cute economy."³⁴ In his field of business, Springer Motors, Harry clearly proves he is resilient, has tons of experience and understands loyalty. He might as well be as good-quality as the cars he sells. Even though Charlie and Janice once had an affair, it was a long time ago and Harry remains calm about it. This fact shows the reader how much he actually praises the stability of his business. He sometimes puts his wife's and his son's feelings at stake when he lets them contemplate whether they mean to him at least as much as the cars. The *illusio*, the collective motivations and rules of the game, is not so clear in Harry's professional field, as we are not offered much comparison with other car sellers. We can count as a fact that the store owners and sellers, as well as customers, believe that

³⁴ Updike 13.

there are really significant differences between car models and brands. Another factor connects these two groups and that are the ideas imposed on them by attractive advertisements. They are also able to bind the family members, on a little bit ironic level but still positively. Janice says, placating,

“I think the Toyota ads on television are very clever and glamorous.” “Oh the ads have charisma,” Nelson says. “The ads are terrific. It’s the cars I’m talking about.” “Don’t you love,” Harry asks, “that new one with Scrooge, the way he cackles and goes off into the distance?” He cackles, and Janice and Nelson laugh, and for the last block home, down Joseph Street beneath the bare maples, their three heads entertain common happy memories, of Toyota commercials, of men and women leaping, average men and women, their clothes lifted in cascading slow-motion folds like angels, robes, like some intimate violence of chemical mating or hummingbird wing magnified and laid bare in its process, leaping and falling, grinning and then in freeze-frame hanging there, defying gravity.³⁵

Cars are a recurrent and defining theme of his life and he observes their features, advantages and disadvantages, economic factors, as well as emotional. Sometimes they complement the situations happening and sometimes they serve as tools with whose help people express their attitudes. Harry shows his strengths in what he knows about cars and it is his safe emotional space, when he thinks about them and they have been a part of his life for a long time. Especially Nelson’s self-esteem depends on his father’s cars, either in his own possession or in his store, Springer Motors’ agenda. He tries to show his father that he knows a thing or two, too.

“So you don’t like Toyotas.” “It’s not a question of like, Dad, there isn’t that much about ’em to like or dislike. I was talking to some girl at the party last night who’d just bought a Corolla, and all we could talk about was the old American cars, how great they were. It’s like Volvos, they don’t have it anymore either, it’s not something anybody can control. It’s like, you know, time of life.”³⁶

³⁵ Updike 383.

³⁶ Updike 383.

What brings a breath of chaos are Nelson's affairs is Nelson's behaviour. He figures as an intruder of Harry's field and even causes financial damage by not driving his family's cars carefully enough. He tries his luck at helping at Springer Motors and even applying some of his ideas but only costs his father more money and worries.

The protagonist himself provides an expert review of his field, served to the reader by third person narration and is a perfect observer of his surroundings. He is quite mature and his analyses are valid for how long he has known his family and how much he loves them. Even though he speaks critically of them, after every dispute, we learn of his fondness towards them again. Janice usually offers some good advice but the circumstances of the field are not based on illusions except for one aspect as he is persuaded that if he had a better house at a better address, everything would be better. The family is relatively rich as they can afford a number of cars, trips to exotic places and a new house but still quite modest. Other intruders of his field are Nelson's girlfriends Melanie and Teresa, called Pru. Both of the young women function as catalysts to the story, in a way. Their actions influence Nelson's situation and thereby also Harry's. A visible solution comes when Pru becomes pregnant and later also Nelson's wife. Harry suspects her motivations at first as he perceives her common background as a threat to the family's capital. Nonetheless, the new baby brings with it a breath of fresh air in the end and actually becomes a positive bonus to Harry's symbolic capital as the daughter will carry the family's genes for the future.

4.2 Habitus

Harry's habitus is very much derived from different associations and definitions of masculinity in spite of being called Rabbit. Harry is a prototypical example of a man having a mid-life crisis. He would like to be seen as a strong head of his family and business. "Rabbit basks above that old remembered world, rich, at rest."³⁷ He has earned himself a certain level of living comfort but may be experiencing impulses of doubts about his happiness, originating in the contemporary circumstances of his family life, therefore life in general. "Despite the emblems of success, Rabbit senses a lack. He is

³⁷ Updike 78.

older now and feels mortality, which has haunted him through the earlier novels, closing in.”³⁸ He is in his forties and reflecting on his past, making important decisions for his future. He is also reassessing his wife, maybe enjoying the now experienced perspective on women, often engaging his mind with sex-related subject matter. He enjoys playing golf, having barbeques and driving his Corona around. These are some typical rich man’s hobbies. He experiences his mid-life crisis, with his fellow travellers – his wife and their friends but it is a mild one as most of the changes and memorable events of the few described months usually come from the outside. Nelson is struggling to find some common ground with his father and vice versa.

"Forget it," Nelson says, standing up. "I don't want any job with this creep."

"What's he so hostile for?" Harry beseeches the women. "All I've said was I don't see why we should fire Charlie so the kid can peddle convertibles. In time, sure. In 1980, even. Take over, young America. Eat me up. But one thing at a time, Jesus. There's tons of time."³⁹

Nelson presents to him a set of unpleasant surprises but Harry is able to handle most of them and in the end, becomes happier. Clearly, his decision to stay strict with his son proves to be rightful. He is anxious about what comes next and especially in the beginning contemplates whether some changes to his status quo would be beneficial for him. He depends on his possessions emotionally. “In *Rabbit Is Rich*, we see that in pursuing his kingship, Rabbit has increasingly withdrawn into a masculine and materialistic world.”⁴⁰ It is clear that he has to find a way out of his proclaimed misery. Just like every middle-aged person, female or male, he has to redirect his focus on new quests and pursue new goals. Find meaning in things he might not have considered much before. Mary O’Connell states that: “Furthermore, Rabbit needs to find the actual granddaughter who will link him spiritually and physically with the future.”⁴¹ In order to be able to do that, he will have to sustain his relationship with his son Nelson. Harry clearly has to come to terms with the fact that his family field is greatly influenced by the women’s decisions

³⁸ Mary O’Connell, *Updike and the patriarchal dilemma: masculinity in the Rabbit novels* (SIU Press, 1996) 164.

³⁹ Updike 136

⁴⁰ O’Connell 174.

⁴¹ O’Connell 174.

and needs. Maybe his task is to acknowledge his wife's and her mother's contributions to the family first, before he can dwell in the capital won by his work. Women certainly do play a big part in his life, so it is a nice touch to the story when he is ready to take care of his baby granddaughter in the end. Still, before this moment comes, he has to deal with unfinished work, namely cease fire with his son Nelson.

The rules for life Harry follows are easy, to not hurt anyone, to be reasonable and not risk too much. "Society is no longer Rabbit's enemy because it now rewards him in a way it never did before. As a rich man, he benefits from following the rules."⁴² He is pretty direct and analytical. When anything bothers him, he knows something has to be done about it, as his outlook on various situations is often right. He might possess this talent for interpretation and calculations due to his experience but it might as well be an inseparable part of his "original" habitus, which lead to his relative success and richness. His Toyota store was inherited from his father-in-law and is therefore not Harry's originally but he has gained his respect there and is a full-fledged owner and leader of the playfield. He is not alone in the decision making, as his mother-in-law, so called "Mother", "Mother Springer", "Mom-mom" or "Bessie", as well as his wife Janice feel entitled to give him advice and their suggestions usually include ideas about the family, as well as the store. Throughout the story, which might span over a period of a few months, the women prove to be knowledgeable and valid parts of the team, even though in the beginning, Harry's thoughts are infected with anxiety and tension towards the women, as Nelson is coming to stay in the family house and as he feels he lacks some freedom in his own decision making. Still, none of the members has much of a habit of arguing and they usually speak honestly with each other. Nelson is presented as Rabbit's counterpart. Rabbit is supposed to help him unconditionally, yet he vehemently refuses to do that. Unfortunately, he is somehow unable to enforce his decisions on his son. Nelson acts as an allusion to Harry's younger existence "scared of life,"⁴³ when he, too, did not know exactly, what he was doing, yet adopting a great deal of responsibility by starting a family and taking over a valuable business. At times, the two of them interchange when Nelson becomes the narrator and the reader experiences his point of view.

⁴² Boswell 137.

⁴³ Updike 386.

Harry has a habit of keeping things to himself. He can entertain himself pretty well when he analyses his company and strangers. The text is filled with memories from his past. It seems as if he were trying to recall a better, more important or stable version of himself. As if he felt that the current circumstances do not correspond with what he actually stands for. A great part of Harry's habitus in the particular book is derived from his age and his belonging to a specific generation within the American history, yet this fact does not overshadow his personality. Maturing as he is, "the gas crisis becomes in *Rabbit is Rich* a metaphor for an entropic decline of Harry's fighting spirit. Ironically – though, in Updike's work, not surprisingly – this decline is presented as a product of contentment and success."⁴⁴ By extending the borders of his experience and reaching beyond his existing abilities, he carries out his last defiance against decay and then he settles rather peacefully in the direction towards retirement.

When he is confronted with problems caused by his son, he remembers his young days. He expresses a lot of sentiment in his memories and they complement the contemporary events. They help with the interpretation, too. Harry uses them as small steps, which he has to overcome, leading to his maturing. Finally, to free himself and Nelson, he has to cut the cord between them, when he is about to move into another house. "For all that is wrong between them there are moments when his heart and Nelson's might be opposite ends of a single short steel bar, he knows exactly what the kid is feeling. Still, just because people are frightened of being alone doesn't mean he has to sit still and be everybody's big fat patsy like Mim said."⁴⁵ By setting the border, Harry regains his masculine and paternal power.

In Rabbit's case, the tendency to look back occupies quite a considerable part of the story. In his case, the retrospective is crucial for his future development. He is stagnant until he realizes that there was nothing in the past which he had done wrong, none of his decisions and goals were misplaced. He does not have another daughter who would be longing after his care, nor her mother, especially predestined to be his life partner. With his son Nelson, he undergoes something similar to a final battle before they define their boundaries within their fields, family and business. For Harry, it is definitely not a lost match. Even though it seems Nelson causes him distress and does not follow the rules set by the head of the family, by the forcible liberalization of their ties, symbolically finalized

⁴⁴ Boswell 137.

⁴⁵ Updike 422.

through Nelsons wedding, the father gains more personal freedom and is freed of some of his paternal responsibility. We as readers do not attain much information about Harry's future goals, so we cannot predict whether he is going to be happy.

4.3 Capital

Harry gives money a lot of importance. For him, money is the entity he can actually rely on and the one he knows well. Especially in situations where it is not so fitting, such as when pregnant Pru, Nelson's new wife, breaks her arm and has to stay in the hospital.

"A week!" Harry says, as soon as they're rolling in the Mustang. "Does anybody have any idea how much a week in a hospital costs these days?" "Dad, how can you keep thinking about money all the time?" Nelson points out the obvious, yet Harry quickly offers an argument. "Somebody has to."⁴⁶

It is his habit to interpret any circumstance in numbers of dollars. In spite of being rich, the family does not lose touch with real life, real values and it keeps them driving in the right direction. The orientation on money is certainly a factor which helps Rabbit in his business and which has brought him where he is now but it can also seem harsh at times. Especially for Nelson, as he is trying to find his own worth as a fresh adult but still comes from another generation and relies on a different set of values than his father and tries to confront him with his own approach. "They don't care, Dad. People don't care that much about money anymore, it's all shit anyway. Money is shit."⁴⁷ The generational difference is clear.

Next, the objects of cars carry with them so many meanings within the narrative. For Rabbit, they are almost a part of his soul. They represent economic, cultural, symbolic as well as a kind of emotional capital. He thinks about them all the time. With a person's description, the reader is always presented with their taste in cars, the vehicles they either own or once owned, the way they treat the car, the colour, and so on. Harry sees cars as if they were on the same level on the system of values as people, even family members.

⁴⁶ Updike 376

⁴⁷ Updike 187.

When he engages sweet memories of his past, remembering his family's trips, he mentions the feeling of safety after they return home. Adding humour, he recalls:

When the Model A was tucked into the garage and little Mim tucked into bed Harry could hear his father vomiting in a far corner of the yard. He never complained about vomiting or about work, they were just things you had to do, one more regularly than the other.⁴⁸

These pages of memories show how much Rabbit has valued family life ever since his childhood, which might have motivated him to lead a similar but different kind of life himself. He recognizes his progress, evaluates the difference between his capital now and then. "He sees now that he is rich that these were the outings of the poor, ending in sunburn and stomach upset."⁴⁹ At least he puts his sister as high on the chain as the long-adored cars. Cars in this way, are the symbolic vehicles which transfer people from the past to the future. As an invention, they show the level of development of the society and can easily provide a whole family with luxury and technology at the same time, in exchange for money gained through hard work, of course.

Going from money to cars, another mirror-offering aspect of the story is sexuality. On the one hand, it is a natural part of a person's life and it may play a special role for a middle-aged male adult, as he tries to define his happiness. On the other hand, in such cases, projections of sexuality and the related satisfaction or a lack thereof, are definitely a kind of social or symbolic capital and seen as a kind of reward for hard work and other hardship in life. It is a kind of field which is underlying for all other activities and the attained capital, all at once. It may as well be the source of his overall libido. It is connected with his wife, money, his past and it helps him recover as a man. The recent state of Harry's sexual life might serve as a tool of measurement, either to compare his winnings with other men or with his own experiences from the past. Harry goes through a sexual metamorphosis and refreshes not only his self-esteem but his love for Janice, nonetheless. The means of reaching this state can be seen as pricey but the risk of having extramarital sex at a Caribbean holiday, for example, is worth the outcome. Still, Harry does not seem to be too emotionally overwhelmed by this little adventure and generally,

⁴⁸ Updike 152.

⁴⁹ Updike 152.

it functions as another form of capital, as a necessary experience in frame of his maturing. In the story, there are several sex scenes described to great detail but this fact serves a purpose of stressing the importance of a healthy sexual life to Harry's overall satisfaction. Moreover, it brings to him another advantage, one more companion for the future, his lover Thelma, the wife of his friend, Ronnie. Harry also sees physical bodies as a sort of capital. His wife's body parts and their common bed scenes are described to great extent in the text. The men in the story enjoy the opportunities of comparing women's bodies and evaluating the measure of their wives' attraction. We can see that Nelson has a similar habit of evaluating women but not so strictly physically so far.

He and Pru are lying in the old swaybacked bed he used to share with Melanie. He thinks of Melanie, unpregnant, free, having a ball at Kent, riding the campus buses, taking courses in Oriental religion. Pru is dead sleepy, lying there in an old shirt of Dad's buttoned at the breasts and unbuttoned over her belly.⁵⁰

Another factor is Harry's own attractiveness and throughout the story he realizes he is positively assessed by other women than his wife. Nonetheless, the evaluation depends on many factors and the important outcome is that Harry sees his wife as his great fortune and she is happy to be with him, too. He remembers past events when he wanted more freedom but they are left behind. "What he had liked about it, he sees now, was that it would have made it easy for him to leave Janice: just walk out under the streetlights and leave her with her parents. But he hadn't left her, and now cannot. She is his fortune."⁵¹ The metaphor of "running out of gas" is proven wrong as he is able to reevaluate his capital.

Towards the end of the story, Harry even begins to invest in forms of capital he does not know so well yet and relies on his friend's advice. Thankfully, his investments are successful and even provide a positive outcome of rekindling his romance with Janice. In this context, the aspect of fortune plays a role of a finalising touch of the momentum in the Angstroms' life, similarly to Nelson's awaited baby. In this part of the book, Janice also shows another side of her character as she expresses not only her support for the husband's decisions but also modesty.

⁵⁰ Updike 347.

⁵¹ Updike 419.

They transfer silver dollars from the boxes to the bag. When the silver clinks loudly, Janice winces and says, ‘Shh.’ ‘Why? Who’ll hear?’ ‘The people out there. The tellers.’ ‘What do they care?’ ‘I care,’ Janice says. ‘It’s stifling in here.’ (...) Janice feeds stacks of coins into the coarse gray pouch furtively, suppressing the clink. ‘This is so embarrassing’ she says, ‘suppose one of those ladies comes in,’ as if the silver is naked flesh; and not for the first time in twenty-three years he feels a furtive rush of loving her, caught with him as she is in the tight places life affords.⁵²

Thanks to the successful procedures, both Harry and Janice forget about the previous stagnant energies of the every-day and focus again on a common project, which also brings benefits to the rest of their family. In the end, they are able to buy the house of their dreams and start a new phase of action.

The houses are another form of capital, highly important to the story. Of course, they serve as the necessary refuge to people but also as the status symbol of a typical American family. Harry’s new house he buys with his wife in the end is a proof of his successful journey to find his way in what seemed to be a chaotic and oppressed road at first.

Stepping out between the monumental pillars into the winter daylight blinking, Janice and Harry owned a house, and the day after tomorrow would fly into summer. For years nothing happens; then everything happens. Water boils, the cactus blooms, cancer declares itself.⁵³

Finally, the whole family is heading towards a calm future. They are happy with the new baby, which Harry calls “his” as another instance of capital, too and it complements his “keystone of wealth”, Janice. He is even willing to compromise when Nelson finally goes back to college.

He knows it. He just can’t do everything at once. He’s told Pru over the phone he’ll drive back as soon as he’s registered and look at the baby and leave us the

⁵² Updike 407-8.

⁵³ Updike 427.

car he took. Though maybe, Harry, we could just let him use it for now.” “That’s my Corona!” “He’s doing what you wanted him to do, go back to college. Pru understands.⁵⁴

It is quite clear that in his personal system of values, he exchanged a few items and values his family over anything else in the world.

5 The Bonfire of the Vanities

The book, written by Tom Wolfe and published in 1987, focuses on the environment of Wall Street and other parts of New York and the practices within. The title “undoubtedly refers to the urban pyrotechnic rituals that Savonarola inspired during the Italian Renaissance. This would suggest that his novel shares a similar prophetic vision of the city, one capable of illuminating the corruption and decay of contemporary American values, beliefs and practices.”⁵⁵ The overall impression of the society is brought to the reader via the protagonist, Sherman McCoy. His rather conflicting nature is unfolded throughout the story but comes to light fully when a problem occurs. Via Sherman’s actions, the author comments on the vanity of contemporary Wall Street. The urge to write such a book might have been supported by his critical outlook on the merciless wolves of Wall Street, who had already been in full swing, operating their fraudulent schemes at that time. As if Wolfe was also warning about the future, the existence of the likes of Barry Minkow and Bernie Madoff, who would, blinded by the power of money, brazenly destroy many people’s lives, he presents the realities of his narratives with distinct detail. As a former journalist, in his writing he engages a style which is now called “the new journalism” and the novel is an extensive account of the wealthy people’s attitudes and presumptions during the every-day life in New York City.⁵⁶ James F. Smith likens Tom Wolfe to Theodore Dreiser.

⁵⁴ Updike 497.

⁵⁵ Joshua J. Masters, "Race and the Infernal City" in Tom Wolfe's Bonfire of the Vanities," *Tom Wolfe* edited by Harold Bloom (Infobase Publishing, 2009) 180.

⁵⁶ James F. Smith, "Tom Wolfe's Bonfire of the Vanities: A Dreiser Novel for the 1980s," in *Tom Wolfe* edited by Harold Bloom (Infobase Publishing, 2009) 146.

Both Dreiser and Wolfe see beneath the conventions of the day, though each seems genuinely intrigued and captivated by them, to the emptiness beneath surface details, leading these two journalists-turned-novelists to question the quality of American life and the American dream itself.⁵⁷

To describe the novel's structure and style, we can use another one of James F. Smith's observations.

The first is scene-by-scene construction. In other words, telling the entire story through a sequence of scenes rather than simple historical narrative. Second is the use of real dialogue—the more the better. The third, which is the least understood of the techniques, is the use of status details. That is, noting articles of clothing, manners, the way people treat children, the way they treat servants. . . . The fourth is the use of point of view, which is depicting scenes through a particular pair of eyes.⁵⁸

In the same year as the book, 1987, another work about the vanities of stock market mules was published, the film *Wall Street* starring Michael Douglas and Charlie Sheen.

Already the beginning of the book hints at a battle between different social groups. Both of the sides, standing against each other, have some serious defects which the opponents can aim at. At the ends of the scale, there are the super-rich males of Wall Street, able to afford anything they dream of, extravagant cars and homes and even wives, whose children attend the best education institutions and whose wealth and success is then automatically transferred further and further onto the next generations. On the other end of the scale, there are the inhabitants of the Bronx, for example, often immigrants, still in the hard battle for the satisfaction of mere basic needs. In the story, the low stratum and the opposition mainly plays the role of a mirror, in which we can very clearly reflect the superficial, naïve charm of Sherman, even childlike at times.

⁵⁷ Smith 135.

⁵⁸ Smith 146.

To be socially successful and rely on social masks or symbols, such as a certain kind of education or material background, is simply not a sufficient way to lead one's life. Surprisingly, the typical "Wall Street Wasp with a Yale chin"⁵⁹ is not aware of such truth. The socially weaker ones work with the premises that most of the others have it easier in their lives. Unfortunately, they do usually not see the hard work, hidden behind all the superficial tokens of wealth. On the other hand, the socially stronger group presumes that when people are not successful in their lives and they have only limited possibilities, that the main reason for such result is their own lack of action and good judgement, accompanied by laziness and pessimism. Neither of the two parties is really capable of understanding the conditions of the other one and both are therefore prone to starting a conflict. Tom Wolfe, via his characters, shows us that the ultimate sin, in the end, is ignorance. Ignorance towards any kind of truth or logical deduction based on modesty. Sherman McCoy impersonates the opposite of modesty.

Both of the sides may be building their arguments on a false belief and on some delusional visions of imaginary social models. This is something that is quite often happening in politics because common people are not really able to see what is happening behind the scenes, who is pulling which strings and they are therefore not able to react to the political impulses in a proper way. They usually end up constructing some theories of their own, so that they have some intuitively deduced, relatively complex material which they can relate to, envisioning their future with the help of cunning politicians, who long for the people's money. The rich, on the other hand, do not care about the true, underlying functions of politics and see the field only as the means to gain more power. In the *Bonfire*, politics is used as a background or a complementing social concept to the qualities surrounding material capital, to lend the characters' actions attributes linking them to more social reality-bound truths, tying them to the ground they may never have touched before, as we can see on McCoy's example, as well. The fact is, that almost or truly none of them is actually different from the other. At first it does not seem so because the people express some judgement toward another group, type, or individual but in the end, most of the characters presented in the novel, McCoy, Kramer, Fallow and even Maria Ruskin, are quite closely connected through their common characteristics. Most of the characters seem to be using a strategy of dissolving momentous focus and creating

⁵⁹ Tom Wolfe, *The bonfire of the vanities* (Macmillan, 1987) 162.

some kind of a mask, impression capital, we could say. The background of the individual stories is then created by an omnipresent evaluation of outer expressions of each person, related to the presence or absence of their overall capital. Wolfe makes his reader never cease to remember material worth of people as it is seen by relentlessly superficial people.

With time, the characters, Sherman especially, have to face different problems and usually, their behaviour is very evasive regarding social and moral responsibilities. Some of them get another chance to recover and reflect on past actions but mostly, when out of danger, they tend to forget very quickly about their negative deeds and memories and try to recover their image, like in McCoy's case, when he returns back from the court, towards the end of the narration, and retells his court story very differently from what really happened. Inevitably, his future does not depend on his decisions but on an outer force, which does not decide based on make-believe luring of the ego.

5.1 Field

McCoy operates in a number of fields. It is his job, his household, his free time – often spent with his lover Maria and then the “jungle,” which will be introduced further in the paper and which plays a decisive role in McCoy's life. Sherman McCoy is working on Wall Street and his whole life, he had been heading this way. Especially at the beginning of the book, the reader learns about the protagonist's background but throughout the whole story, the aspects of field or socio-economic background are used for the purpose of comparison between the characters and also their surroundings. Wall Street trading has been his safe playfield. This is where he felt confident and enjoyed his esteem. According to his own words, his field was mastering the universe. He probably uses this metaphor because he cannot imagine any better job in the world and thinks he possesses great power. On the other hand, he also mentioned the type of common man or simply “a man” as superior to masters of the universe. Maybe it is too easy to adopt the privilege of being such a man especially because it is a vague expression, difficult to deny and one can probably be a master of the universe without anyone realizing it or knowing about it. What we know as a fact is that in his field, there were more people at a level position to his and his activities consisted of dealing with money in stock markets and the skill of persuasion. The field of Wall Street businesses has always been one of prestige and myth, one where men of flesh and bones were practicing power over things which were reaching

beyond their own existence. Money in immense amounts and other people's lives. Relative wealth of their families was one of them but a good sense of style and even physical features. His true inner field lies somewhere else and is partly imaginary.

The world was upside down. What was he, a Master of the Universe, doing down here on the floor, reduced to ransacking his brain for white lies to circumvent the sweet logic of his wife? The Masters of the Universe were a set of lurid, rapacious plastic dolls that his otherwise perfect daughter liked to play with. They looked like Norse gods who lifted weights, and they had names such as Dracon, Ahor, Mangelred, and Blutong. They were unusually vulgar, even for plastic toys. Yet one fine day, in a fit of euphoria, after he had picked up the telephone and taken an order for zero-coupon bonds that had brought him a \$50,000 commission, just like that, this very phrase had bubbled up into his brain. On Wall Street he and a few others—how many?—three hundred, four hundred, five hundred?—had become precisely that...Masters of the Universe. There was...no limit whatsoever!⁶⁰

The Master of the Universe. From the nature of the expression, there would only be one person of such kind in the Universe or if there were more of them, they would be cooperating, using special procedures with special purposes. Of course, Sherman's usage of the term clearly suggests, in a humorous way, that he relies on *illusio* not only in frame of his field, but also regarding his own identity and self-reflection. The term master suggests some uniqueness and a high level of possibility or ability. There is also the aspect of ruling something or someone, present. The term on its own is somewhat sarcastic already, when used about a person, moreover when it is a self-imposed characterisation of a male. McCoy himself does not deem the figures decent but his subconscious is talking when he compares himself to them. The attribute is also used in a situation when the man is actually nonsensically imposing his fabled power on his wife and transposed also on his daughter, whereas both of them perform as relatively innocent members of the tender gender and represent the major part of his non-material capital and should therefore be people of utmost importance to him. Nonetheless, at the same time, the usage of the

⁶⁰ Wolfe 27.

phrase for description of himself, shows the reader that the man has some “higher” goals and that he poses his ambition in a specific field of action over the mental wellbeing of other members of his family.

Another subcategory of his field of activity, were the facilities where he participated in studies, the places of his education. Same as his job, these schools hosted people from top social strata. In both of these environments, there were certain characteristics predestining the participants to be valuable members. The participants had to possess. That was a part of the *illusio*.

How the stories circulated on every campus! If you weren’t making \$250,000 a year within five years, then you were either grossly stupid or grossly lazy. That was the word. By age thirty, \$500,000—and that sum had the taint of the mediocre. By age forty you were either making a million a year or you were timid and incompetent. Make it now! That motto burned in every heart, like myocarditis. Boys on Wall Street, mere boys, with smooth jawlines and clean arteries, boys still able to blush, were buying three-million-dollar apartments on Park and Fifth.⁶¹

As if money were the first and foremost criterion of a successful life. Not family, not character, but the numbers on one’s account. We can see in case of the representatives of the authorities in the system that they too are only people with their own mistakes and sometimes unethical behaviour. The opposition is not only created by the individual and the authority but also the impressions the facts create. In such cases, it is a truly illusionary world the people live in. That is the important threat that the author stresses.

5.2 Habitus and Capital

Sherman McCoy interprets his own personality based on its symbolic qualities. He estimates his worth according to how successful he is at work and how much respect other people show him.

⁶¹ Wolfe 75.

He lived on Park Avenue, the street of dreams! He worked on Wall Street, fifty floors up, for the legendary Pierce & Pierce, overlooking the world! He was at the wheel of a \$48,000 roadster with one of the most beautiful women in New York—no Comp. Lit. scholar, perhaps, but gorgeous—beside him! A frisky young animal! He was of that breed whose natural destiny it was...to have what they wanted!“⁶²

Clearly, in his mind, he divides people into breeds, which will also be discussed further, when he comes into conflict with a member of “another breed”. Nonetheless, he relies on comparison as a tool for constant self-enhancement. His vanity mainly lies in his inability to acknowledge other people’s qualities. Even though his system of thought is inert and is usually not presented to his opponents as an overt weapon, it has serious long-lasting effects on his life. There are several allusions in the book, to masters of the universe, the jungle and even Greek gods when he speaks about himself in third person as of Priapus, “a god of animal and vegetable fertility, (...) represented in a caricature of the human form, grotesquely misshapen, with an enormous phallus.”⁶³ Sherman adores these natural qualities of strength and dignity but clearly, he actually must be deeply dissatisfied with himself if he wants to resemble anything else than himself, especially something widely acknowledged as manly and good.

At the moment of his first encounter with another man, as opposed to a female, we are witnesses of quite a direct comparison of two capitals and something what may be a hint of an original motivator for success, namely a childhood feeling of being less, of not being regarded as an important member of the society.

Sherman had known him ever since they were boys at the Buckley School. Browning had been a fat, hearty, overbearing junior snob who at the age of nine knew how to get across the astonishing news that McCoy was a hick name (and a hick family), as in Hatfields and McCoys, whereas he, Browning, was a true Knickerbocker. He used to call Sherman “Sherman McCoy the Mountain Boy.”⁶⁴

⁶² Wolfe 97.

⁶³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, s. v. “Priapus,” accessed January 28, 2019, <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Priapus>.

⁶⁴ Wolfe 27.

Apparently, men hold these small incidents in their minds and little by little, they create pictures in their heads, of everything they do not want to become and use it as motivators, to become what they want to be. This part of memory also shows how certain assets do not play as big a role as money, for example physical stature. Even though some men from high class, wealthy families do not meet the expectations for attraction, a muscular, good-looking body can never make up for lack of economic capital.

Still young...thirty-eight years old...tall...almost six-one...terrific posture...terrific to the point of imperious...as imperious as his daddy, the Lion of Dunning Sponget...a full head of sandy-brown hair...a long nose...a prominent chin...He was proud of his chin. The McCoy chin; the Lion had it, too. It was a manly chin, a big round chin such as Yale men used to have in those drawings by Gibson and Leyendecker, an aristocratic chin, if you want to know what Sherman thought. He was a Yale man himself.⁶⁵

This part is very interesting. These lines are used at the beginning of the first chapter and the author is describing a character. To describe and understand a man's belonging, we learn about the nature of his chin. Out of all the possible aspects of expression of such qualities, we learn about his chin. His chin is an innate part of his physique and he cannot change anything about it but the reader learns that it makes a very apparent social symbol and functions as a tool of impressing other people, at least from his point of view.

It seems like Sherman is dealing with some power wars at home, too. He is not only behaving in a dominant way but he also criticizes the women that the successful men tend to choose to be their wives. His case might be the typical case of a man, feeling intimidated by his wife's skills or needs, by his ability to see all his flaws and confront him with his real attributes. He might see her as an opponent in the domestic field, where there exist forms of capital, too. The most valuable capital at home would probably be the time spent together, the power of decision and mental energy. He looks back to when they were still happy together and the reader is assured that originally, they were a typical young couple.

⁶⁵ Wolfe 21.

And all at once he *feels* the ineffable way they closed themselves up in the perfect cocoon, in his little apartment on Charles Street and her little apartment on West Nineteenth, immune to all that parents and Buckley and St. Paul's and Yale had ever imposed on him – and he *remembers* how he told her – in *practically these words!* – that their love would transcend...*everything* – and now she, forty years old, starved and Sports Trained to near-perfection, goes crying off to bed.⁶⁶

This part stresses the cruel aspects of ageing and accentuates the factor of the changing nature of capital throughout a marriage, when the originally appraised attributes of a person lose their importance and instead others become valued as the couple ages and matures. Judy is losing her initial advantages but before she regathers a different form of capital and shows her husband how much the stable warmth of a sweet home is worth, he refocuses his attention on useless, unsustainable and fleeting bodily qualities of another woman. Nonetheless, even if the New York high-class families preferred the one child model where all the family's energy and sources are invested into one successor only, they have only just started a family and their adored daughter Campbell was still small, not able to use the benefits for her or the family's good and growth of capital. Sherman, just like countless men, sees Judy's body as one of her biggest assets but not to be one-sided in judgement, she too, seems to be enjoying the superficial comforts Sherman's money brings her. Her excessive fondness of interior decorating and social flaunting is scary. She fits very well into the society "characterized by status seeking, ethnic chauvinism, political manipulation, and racial hostility."⁶⁷ This passage draws attention to another fact, that not only he but people like him are products of the society they were raised in. His habitus has been shaped by the demand of his authorities and peers, against which it must be difficult to fight. Clearly, the amount of capital that stands behind the system is huge. In the eyes of common young men, the fruits of the high society system are probably worth the risk of becoming a ruthless money-making machine. To present another perspective of the problem, Joshua J. Masters argues that in the novel, "the city itself becomes the displaced source of anxiety rather than the institutions responsible for

⁶⁶ Wolfe 50.

⁶⁷ Smith 147.

both the realization and construction of the city, such as the intertwined structures of capitalism, racism, and imperialism.”⁶⁸ It is true that the city, a famous metropolis, the centre of business and chaos, posits on its inhabitants the stress of the possibility of unexpected encounters with threats and enemies, creating in the people a feeling of paranoia and anxiety, which can even have lasting effects on their personalities.

Of course, the women have different roles, they might actually be trying hard to keep up with their competition but also to keep their husbands’ attention, as hard as it may be, when the husbands are always working and always meeting not only other successful men but women as well. Some of the women might also have heard some comments regarding their figures in the past and their shape might simply be the result of all the pressure imposed on them and for showing the result, they only get more negative comments, be it covertly or openly. He calls the women of his wife’s qualities “social X-rays” but what would he call himself if he were a stranger? Kathleen J. Weatherford in her *Tom Wolfe’s Billion-Footed Beast* states that

Wolfe’s proclivity for ironic name-calling, particularly when it points out the difference between a fictionalized ideal and a debased actuality, points to the satiric nature of Wolfe’s characterization and of the book as a whole. Rather than exploring the depths of his characters’ personalities, Wolfe exposes their superficiality and lack of complexity by resorting to neat, sarcastic expressions to categorize and mock them.⁶⁹

When we get further within the text, we see the paradoxes of Sherman’s life. He loves spending time with his lover Maria. Maria Ruskin is also married, yet her husband is almost never to be seen around. She has a certain kind of aura about her which Sherman seems to like. This feeling is surely supported by the fact that she cannot pose any real threat on him and that she accepts him as he is. We see how he likes the simple things and the emphasised Southern accent as attributes of Maria, which has probably never been associated with high society but rather with rural life and manual work.

⁶⁸ Masters 185.

⁶⁹ Kathleen J. Weatherford, "Tom Wolfe's Billion-Footed Beast." In *American Studies in Scandinavia* 22.2 (1990) 89.

In blithe moments, when King Priapus reigned, with no crises in his domain, Sherman made this climb up to Maria's with a romantic relish. How bohemian! How...real this place was! How absolutely right for these moments when the Master of the Universe stripped away the long-faced proprieties of Park Avenue and Wall Street and let his rogue hormones out for a romp!⁷⁰

With Maria, he also uses another kind of discourse. He lets go of his assertive behaviour and she seems to be the one giving the situations their direction, so he is at times even willing to be submissive. She does not let him say what he wants to say at first, which is the direct opposite of what his conversations look like with his wife. Maybe the other life he experiences with Maria shall represent his original self, or what he naturally tends to like but is afraid to identify with openly. He creates illusions about himself, as well as others. He is very critical of others, he cares about his image, in his eyes, he is always separated from others, he does not tend to feel obliged to anyone, yet still, he is not able to keep his relationship with Maria, either and his destructive nature, once again and for all, comes to light.

When he causes the trouble and injures a young African-American from the Bronx, he is not in control of himself and is also not respectful towards any natural force, nor ethics. This experience is a very bordering as Sherman himself feels – is he guilty of something, is he not guilty? As if he was given one last chance to realize his mistakes and start coping with things wisely, directly. The discrepancy between the pragmatics of life, the theory, the romantic, the morale, the ethic and religious aspects is omnipresent for all of us, yet the outcomes depend on our ability to withstand. The real problem is that Sherman is not able to handle the situation properly and be honest and act like a real man. This is the proof of the habitus being subconscious when the practice is being acted out. “He had saved a woman.”⁷¹ he tries to fool himself. He must know this conclusion is not correct because there was no real death threat and Sherman and Maria’s position was rather neutral. „She was right. The Master of the Universe was cheap, and he was rotten, and he was a liar.“⁷² The situation was merely unknown to them, not dangerous, the outcome was dependent on their actions and reactions. When he sees his failure and is

⁷⁰ Wolfe 38.

⁷¹ Wolfe 252.

⁷² Wolfe 52.

still not capable of a reasonable reaction, he is resolute to dwell in idle passivity and waits whether the consequences of his actions will be enforced or not.

An important role in the book is played by the recurring theme of a jungle. Big cities and metropolises are sometimes called urban or concrete jungles and according to the evolutionary theory, we as people are all animals but the humankind often refuse to see themselves as animals and prefer a more sophisticated label, like “the King of the Jungle”. This is the chapter which tells the story of the inconvenient accident between McCoy, Maria and the two Bronx young men. The chapter starts with Sherman’s balancing of the possible prospects of the trip. He reviews the pros and cons. He wants to pick up Maria at the airport but he is afraid of leaving his expensive Mercedes unattended. It is as if his instincts were letting him know in advance that something about the trip was not quite right. Although, when he considers his wife’s possible opinion on the matter, he takes into account a change in his behaviour, coming home for dinner for a whole week, which, according to him, is a deed worth of praise. It shows the reader that his marriage has probably reached a stage where his family’s rights regarding his attention have been limited to a mere minimum while he was in his eyes entitled to freedom and happiness in whichever form he chose.

What is interesting and a little bit paradoxical about the jungle fight is the fact that Sherman was not used to contact with other social classes and generally people outside Park Avenue and Wall Street. This was a totally strange field for him. For him, almost any other contact and occurrence in unknown places, are perceived as jungle fights, yet in these unknown fields, he proves to be absolutely helpless. For him this is a field he does not understand, where the rules of the game are not defined by heritage or brainpower. In the “jungle,” he can easily fall prey to someone. In the end, he does.

And then he was dead, so dead he couldn’t even die. He didn’t even possess the willpower to fall down. The reporters and cameramen and photographers—such vile abuse!—still here, not three feet away!—they were the maggots and the flies, and he was the dead beast they had found to crawl over and root into.⁷³

Getting into an unexpected situation, he got caught up in his fears of the unknown, of life where money was not the only decisive factor of evaluation. He was not able to act in a

⁷³ Wolfe 733.

pragmatic way and not even face the consequences afterwards. Quite the opposite as he was trying to flee responsibility, lying to everybody. Undoubtedly, since the dreaded moment when he and Marie ran over a black boy, Henry Lamb, "Sherman is haplessly caught in a scandal that deprives him of all that matters to him: his Mercedes Roadster, his expensive Manhattan apartment, his leggy mistress, his family, and his Wall Street power."⁷⁴ His self-reflective thoughts usually appear to move on some high classificatory levels, especially when he compares the outcomes of his work with other people's outcomes or circumstances. He wants to strive up and above towards the fulfilment of his superego, the Master of the Universe. That is, of course, impossible and just as he begins the journey towards the perfect vision of himself, he starts to lose the ground under his feet. This all might be caused by the fact that his motivations are very superficial. For him, when he was winning, all the circumstances seemed fair to him. It was only when the situation turned around that he started to see the world as an unfair place, full of vile beast.

In fact, regarding the problematic of inequality, there does not exist any other wealth than personal wealth because wealth or a lack thereof only really influences people in their individual lives. What did Henry Lamb, the victim of the hit-and-run, care about Sherman McCoy before the accident? He was probably dealing with his own personal faith and people who overly concentrate on others waste their precious energy somewhere where it cannot be paid back. In the particular situation of the sudden conflict, he reacted as a coward. In fact, Sherman made the biggest mistake when he started to concentrate on the unreal, on a passing vision.

Sherman is a shining example of the fact that people who "have it all" might not exist. Every person owns a specific kind of capital which cannot be replicated because it is consequently dependent on the unique set or quality of habitus and social capital. If Sherman had more emotional relationships, his needs would be met and he would be supported by a web of more or less influential personalities. So far, he relies solely on the *illusio* he might have adopted at the university, the vision that some people are simply predestined to have a beautiful life because of the way they were born. It is a house of cards. When he is forced to let go of this *illusio*, there is nothing left for him. The fact

⁷⁴ Carol McNamara, "The Pursuit of Happiness, American Style: Tom Wolfe's Study of Status and Freedom." In *Perspectives on Political Science* 34.1 (2005) 23.

that he was acting on his own, without any briefing of ideas from another person who would know his life and his set of skills, etc., he acted in an abrupt and impulsive way and his only choice was to rely on himself solely. He was not even able to foretell possible reactions of his friend Maria, maybe also because he was not really interested in her. It turned out he took her as a part of his social capital. She simply fit the picture of a companion of the Master of the Universe.

Sherman thinks he deserves something more, at least from time to time even though he is happy with what he has but some aspects of it, again, seem to be paradoxical. From what we know, his marriage is not idyllic anymore, he and his wife seem to have some problems already and the way he speaks of himself suggests he might actually feel like lacking something. In general, he is trying to save his self-image by entering fields he does not know and hoping to find there something enriching. His relationship with Maria, if we can directly connect it with the incident, costs him everything he has. The reader can see that he has a tendency to flee difficult situations rather than solve them in a manly way. He is self-centred and criticises other people to create an illusion of self-sufficiency, the illusion of being a special kind of man. He is very irritated most of the time. Nothing is working the way he wants it. When he arrives to Maria, she does not treat him as someone special and the way he describes her, he speaks of her, she does not seem to be anything special to him, either. It is again, just some aspects of the relationship that he likes as attributes he can add to the definitions of himself, to his habitus or identity as he imagines it.

The descriptions of people are crucial to the story, usually their appearance, what kinds of objects they like, clothes they wear, school they studied, field of activity, how much money they make but not much about their character traits. To complexify the overall picture, the story presents a few other male characters as entities complementing or opposing the protagonist and his characteristic. Kramer as well as the judge live very different lives from Sherman but all free of them share the same place of living, they are active in geographically connected areas. They seem to impersonate three stages of a man's career path. Kramer is at the beginning, still full of ambition. He sees the disadvantages of the field but is not discouraged to pursue his goals. Sherman, on the other hand, is at top of his career, which means he can only go down from that and he does. He does not fulfil the role of a family man that he assigned to himself. He acts impulsively, driven by his never dying self-enthusiasm and egotism. Last but not least,

the judge is at a respected position already. He has to deal with people like Kramer and Sherman, who are living below his level. He has a stable system of values and acts wisely.

The narration becomes more and more focused on the figure of Kramer, the Assistant District Attorney, who is working on McCoy's case. He can be defined by striving for improvement and in his habit of observing others, he focuses on their symbolic capital, too.

And this man whose car goes thwop every time he opens the door is at the top of the hierarchy here in the island fortress. He, Kramer, occupied some uncertain position in the middle. If he played his cards right and managed to ingratiate himself with the Bronx Democratic organization, this—thwop!— was the eminence to which he might aspire three decades from now.⁷⁵

This is a hint that shows us Kramer's way of thinking regarding aspirations. He is describing his way of concentrating on people who are more successful than him in his field and whose image motivates him for further actions. Of course, this might be the common procedure. What catches his attention is the man's car as the symbol of capital. In his field of law, unfortunately, the state money, the capital is rather symbolic. The car has certain attributes of a used item, never seen on contemporary cars, which seem to be attracting Kramer. He puts one of these aspects, the "thwop", so the sound the door makes being closed, on a sad pedestal as the token of his whole vision or a goal of his aspirations. Unfortunately for him, during his practice in court, he can mostly win respect and authority, rather than money and comfort. The interesting aspect of his description might be the hypocrisy regarding the meaning content of his goals and the associations that arise in his mind when he is thinking about the issue. He does not imagine the work and its outcomes, so the possible impact on other people, and so on, but rather the advantages he personally might gain. He wants to "ingratiate" himself with others because the visions seem to be especially revolving around the attributes he himself might possess. Helle Porsdam, speaking about the legal aspect of the *Bonfire*, remarks:

⁷⁵ Wolfe 59.

Even before we are told her real name, Miss Thomas is referred to by Larry Kramer as "the girl with the brown lipstick," a "rare flower" about whom he daydreams. Getting a date with her is the prize he hopes to win, and when he performs in court, he performs for her with this aim in mind. The link here as elsewhere in the novel between sex and power is very strong; for the male contestants of the game of law or investment, the reward is sex.⁷⁶

In the end, Kramer is caught in his own webs of egoistic prejudices and aspirations as it is revealed in the epilogue that he, too, finds a lover and actually resembles McCoy, against whom he was fighting the whole time. The tension of the fight is emphasised in the court scenes, where Kramer acts so unprofessionally and lets himself become absorbed in the case, possibly due to the effect of Miss Thomas's attraction and his lust for a win over McCoy.

As the alarm rang in his head, Kramer grew still more depressed.

Right then and there he made up his mind. He was going to do something—something startling, something rash, something desperate, whatever it took. He was going to break out of here. He was going to rise up from this muck. He was going to light up the sky, seize the Life for himself—He could see the girl with brown lipstick again, just as surely as if she were standing right next to him in this sad grim place.⁷⁷

In the beginning, it seems like he is only focused on the external displays of capital but in the end, the initial feelings evolve into something more elaborate. At first, he sees the judge only as a type, as his visions, personalized. Just like everybody, he does not think about the different aspects which go along with functioning and being successful in a certain field but only perceives the result of the successful people's actions. People usually do not realize the downsides of success or wealth, even though the downsides are inevitable. At the end of the chapter, Kramer is able to see the judge as a common person

⁷⁶ Helle Porsdam, "In the Age of Lawspeak: Tom Wolfe's *The Bonfire of the Vanities* and American Litigiousness." In *Journal of American Studies* 25.1 (1991) 55.

⁷⁷ Wolfe 61.

and what he really appreciates is the judge's nature, his way of dealing with conflict and his sense of humour. In Carol McNamara's words, "it is Kovitsky who exhibits the most truly independent moral courage of any character in the book."⁷⁸ It also seems like the judge reacted in an unexpected way, showing a kind of rebellion. In his position of a public figure and a person of authority, people would tend to perceive his function to be a result of strictly controlled behaviour and they would not expect him to be similar to themselves.

Hah! If I got paid overtime for all the hours I'm gonna have to put into this one—well, I could move to Park Avenue myself. But you know what? That doesn't matter to me. It really doesn't. All I care about is, whatever kind of life I lead, I want to be able to look back and say, 'I made a difference.' This case is so important, on every conceivable level, not just in terms of my career. It's just a...I don't know how to say it...a whole new chapter. I want to make a difference, Shelly.⁷⁹

Kramer is literally turning into McCoy. Kramer wants to make a difference and not be like the others, not be influenced by the surroundings, like McCoy at the time when he was waving his signature gesture at his wife, still hopeful. Moreover, Kramer was already having an affair. In this case, it is very visible how much the men were actually influenced by their own illusory visions of themselves in the society. Same like the others, another character, Peter Fallow, the journalist leading the press war against McCoy, transforming the case into "the people vs. the morally decayed rich", only follows his self-absorbed dreams, too. They overestimated their individuality and moral strengths.

The whole story is based on the evasive nature of prejudices and cognitive biases. From all the detailed information the reader gets in the text, it is impossible to gather complex characters. All the people mirror each other, just like their actions cause mirroring in negative or dangerous outcomes. Because of their lack of emotional responses, the characters do not even fully experience the situations they end up in but oftentimes, the people around them, their relatives or closest acquaintances, are hurt but unable to return the attack because in cases of the attackers being narcissists and

⁷⁸ McNamara 23.

⁷⁹ Wolfe 826-827.

psychopaths, their attempts are completely useless. The story shows the fleeting nature of symbolic capital. Certain expressions of habitus can carry with them destructive consequences for the acquired capital. On the other hand, specific groups of people within the field can build advantage unexpectedly or use the same traits which helped a person to build his reputation, to destroy it. Everything in the society is changing as the effect of mutual influence between the collective and the individual spheres.

6 Cosmopolis

Cosmopolis is a novel of theory and transcendence. Published in 2003 and written by Don DeLillo, it works with the atmosphere of stepping into the unknown, the new millennium. Here, the unknown is represented by the virtual, the cyber space, only understandable for the chosen ones. Another unlimited unknown is the cosmos. The novel “seems a throwback to early DeLillo novels in its playfulness, disengagement from realism, and nihilistic flavour.”⁸⁰ In his work, DeLillo compares the human existence as a system of body and reason, the communication and trading systems, devoid of emotion, the capitalist social system and the genius unreachable system of the universe, in a way. All of these can be understood as different fields.

Mysterious networks and systems have long permeated his fiction: the mystical waves and rays of *White Noise*, the cosmological balances and patterns of conspiracy in *Libra*, the global corporations and intelligence systems of *The Names*, or the deterministic coincidences of history in *Underworld*.⁸¹

Toulmin in his publication *Cosmopolis* reminds us that the name itself refers to the existence of two kinds of orders, which we as people, inhabitants of the world, can perceive; the order of nature and the order of society.⁸² This perspective offers a tool for the analysis of the story and its attributes. On the one hand, it hints at the importance to accept natural outcomes of events and our inability to change certain phenomena. On the

⁸⁰ Christopher Donovan, *Postmodern counternarratives: irony and audience in the novels of Paul Auster, Don DeLillo, Charles Johnson, and Tim O'Brien* (Routledge, 2005) 155.

⁸¹ Alison Shonkwiller, "Don DeLillo's financial sublime." in *Contemporary Literature* 51.2 (2010) 256.

⁸² Stephen Toulmin. *Cosmopolis: The hidden agenda of modernity* (University of Chicago Press, 1992) 67.

other hand, there is always a possibility for us to help form and adjust the circumstances of life events and control our reactions to them at the same time. From another point of view, cosmopolis refers to different strata of activity, which coexist in parallel to each other and teem with different qualities. Some of the qualities can be shared and some account for developmental stages within the system. Important is the role of the protagonist within his designated fields. He is the main object via whose habitus the author shares ideas defining the specific fields. Nonetheless, the book by Don DeLillo contains the theory for its analysis within the text and through the minds of masters of theory, through their quotes, we can alternately foretell what is going to happen later in the story and find the true meaning of the main character Eric Packer's or his opponent Benno Levin's actions, as well as interpret the narrative turns.

There is an Order of Nature, evidenced in the annual cycle of the seasons, and in the monthly changes of the tides. Practical activities (agriculture and navigation, for example) depend for their success on human ability to achieve command of this order, though this influence is at best marginal.

The traditional Greek word for that first kind of order was *cosmos*; to say that the astronomical universe (*ouranos*) was a *cosmos* was to record that celestial events happen, not randomly, but in a natural order. There is also another Order, that of Society, as evidenced in the organization of irrigation systems, the administration of cities, and other collective enterprises.

There everything ostensibly happens under human control, though the greed of tyrants and the interests of conflicting groups create rifts in the social fabric that challenge the imagination of men of goodwill. The Greek word for this second kind of order was *polis*: to say that a community (*koinoneia*) formed a *polis* was to recognize that its practices and organization had the overall coherence that qualified it - in both the ancient and modern senses of the term - as a "political" unit.⁸³

Cosmopolis can be understood as a village or city, being a part of the universe or transcending the borders of the earthly place and reaching towards the extra-terrestrial. It

⁸³ Toulmin 67.

suggests a combination of different fields, which enter or influence each other. Transcendence is a crucial aspect of the definition of the term *cosmopolis*, as well as of the novel, as it can also be applied to another kind of system, a human being, for example, metaphorically stepping over the borders of the arbitrary definitions of society and expanding the borders of perception. The fields influence the habitus and vice versa. From this point of view, Don DeLillo's piece can be seen as setting the limits to such desires of a man, who, paradoxically to his other abilities, shows lack of complexity in his thoughts and mainly lusts for power. It is a story of oppositions in a quantum sense, where the individual destinies of the objects in question change the essence of their existence drastically, imperceptibly, until they reach the new state. The protagonist overestimates his habitus and his power not only within his business field but also in the field of his city and the world, as it is amended by cosmic forces. In *Cosmopolis*, all of the fields are "magically" connected by cyberspace occurrences.

The book starts with one of Eric's mornings. Unable to sleep, he provides the reader with first glimpses onto his habitus. He uses his time to read on "the special theory" of time and space and contemplate on natural phenomena. We can see how precise he is in thought and practice. He sets his day goal to have his hair cut and chooses a long-known barber for this purpose. The circumstances of this occasion offer us another perspective on his habitus as the environment of the barber's is rather unusual compared with Eric's daily luxurious amenities. An example of such would be his exceptional limousine, which he uses for transport. During the day, he encounters his assistants, proven experts in different fields, whose services he uses to complement his own decision arguments. He is able to do most of his work in the vehicle. He is about to invest huge amounts of his cyber capital into yen. His main business field is namely currency trading. Specifically, he uses his ever-expanding knowledge to predict currency movement and invest and gain capital via this action. Surprisingly, the course of his destiny takes an unfortunate turn during a very short period of time. He refuses to acknowledge the restrictions to his safety and freedom caused by the president's visit to the city and the growingly chaotic environment, created by people protesting against the status quo, endangers his existence. The occurring situations, nonetheless, offer him the opportunity to learn more about his essence as a human being. In the end, he is met by his assassin, Benno Levin and faces the end of the day and more. Throughout the story, Eric travels virtually from the top of his abilities, to the utter bottom. It is possible to deduce his

motivations in the end but what we see at first is a story happening within one day, twenty four hours, in which the conventional truths are turned upside down and a prosperous young man accelerates his downfall. "The future becomes insistent. This is why something will happen soon, maybe today (...) To correct the acceleration of time. Bring nature back to normal, more or less."⁸⁴ The natural cosmic laws are pronounced and an entity is quickly transformed when it reaches the limits of its existence. In the end, he meets a person, an outcast, who seems to be his complete opposite. In the reality of the story, Benno Levin is presented as another person but when his existence is reviewed from an analytically unrestricted perspective, he may as well be a part of Eric's existence, a part of his mind. Either a haunting memory of what Eric's life looked like before he became what he is and before the breakdown; or a representative of what is left of Eric afterwards. Either way, Benno's story, a first person narration called *The Confessions of Benno Levin*, accounts a number of explanations.

6.1 Field

In *Cosmopolis*, we witness Eric acting and moving within four fields. The main field is his career, which defines him greatly. The field of career is subdivided into the physical fields of his apartment and his car as an extension of his home, where he feels safe and where he can carry out his usual routine work, meetings and relaxation as well. The next physical field would then be outside of his car, the streets of the city where people, including himself, behave in unpredictable, often violent ways, where a bodyguard is almost a necessity for him. Another field, remarkably different from the others, is his barber Anthony's place. There he behaves as a different kind of man, almost as if he were devoid of the whole of his capital, as if he were an average citizen. The last field would then be his assassin's apartment, which he enters with the notion of entering a dangerous zone where his control over his destiny would be very limited.

Illusio plays a very small role in *Cosmopolis* because in Eric's field, everything is so precise that there is no room for a „shared presumptuous system of values.“ He, in a way, creates the *illusio* himself as he is very careful about sharing information or accepting facts which are not true or which are misleading. He concentrates on his own

⁸⁴ Don DeLillo, *Cosmopolis* (Picador, 2011) 156.

ideas. In currency movement predictions, everything is very individualistic as any leakage of information would cause the predictions and purchases to be ineffective as other traders would act on it immediately. For his kind of business, objective analysis and ability to foresee the movement of stock are crucial for success. “Likewise, wild randomness can be a sign of underlying chaos – which, perhaps counterintuitively, indicated that there is often enough structure present to make useful predictions. And so whatever your views on markets, there’s a place for the Predictors.”⁸⁵ On stock markets, any kind of information can cause reaction, which, of course, influences selling and buying and therefore the prices of stock, so the core of interest of speculations. What is shared among the current as well as former Wall Street tycoons is the kind of presumption that they must be perfect at everything they do, better than their competition, unreachable yet still, the results are fleeting. “Their models, and the models that have come since, are based on rigorous reasoning that, in a very real sense, cannot be wrong. But even the best mathematical models can be misapplied, often in subtle and difficult-to-detect ways.”⁸⁶ They also await praise from others but they are at the same time not concerned about it at all and presume that others praise them and therefore approach them in a directive, assertive way. Their personal relationships are usually partly based on business- or money-related ties, too. An *illusio* of this game is the reputation. Eric knows that even the most successful people can become powerless if their image is damaged. “We’re all young and smart and were raised by wolves. But the phenomenon of reputation is a delicate thing. A person rises on a word and falls on a syllable.”⁸⁷ Because of his experience and insight, Eric actually starts losing any real faith in social and worldly *illusio*. Russel Scott Valentino remarks that “he is a man ahead of our time. He is ahead of time in general, discerning a world that does not yet exist. This talent has made his fortune, but it has also called into question his position in time and space...”⁸⁸ He sees most of the concepts as outdated and strives for extraordinary experiences.

Another part of this field is the never-ending caution. Eric starts the day very early because he cannot sleep, so there is a lot of space in the 24 hours for various kinds of

⁸⁵ James Owen Weatherall, *The physics of wall street: a brief history of predicting the unpredictable* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013) Loc 2694.

⁸⁶ Weatherall Loc 2211.

⁸⁷ DeLillo 11.

⁸⁸ Russell Scott Valentino, "From Virtue to Virtual: DeLillo's Cosmopolis and the Corruption of the Absent Body," in *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 53.1 (2007) 146.

experiences. There is a division, as always, between the perceived world in one's proximity and „invisible“ world, where a big part of our lives is happening but which we cannot see. It is the world of our friends and family, our co-workers, when they are far from us, going after their routine deeds or contemplating about the future. Quite surprisingly, this part of our worldly reality can have huge impact. On stock markets and in case of Eric's lifestyle, this sort of virtual reality takes the majority of all affairs within the day, as he is able to lose all his money due to a misconception and rob his wife though his watch in seconds.

The application of the relations between technology and capital is a part of the habitus within the field. The more ready a subject is to react promptly, without prolonged thought, the more he feels like he is using the power of intuition. In spite of the *illusio*, the actors can never know for sure, what is going to happen. To attain as much useful information as possible, Eric Packer uses his theorists, whom he trusts but whom he also rightfully perceives only as advisors, not as decision-making authorities. The burden of omnipresent choice lies upon him. Within the field, opposites of every notion or concept play decisive roles in the situations. The author proposes a real game between the rules of capitalism and of ethics. In an extreme way, when a businessman succumbs to emotion or empathy, it means a negative shift in probability for winning. In business, fragility means danger but in *Cosmopolis*, nothing is as simple as that. The rules of *Cosmopolis* imply that omission of any of the possible attitudes and conditions for the existing variables means danger and is at the same time inevitable. In context of this theory of the inevitable end and distortion, determined by the laws of nature, zero capital can have maximal and minimal worth at the same time as zero capital can scarcely create any more economic capital but means everything as a tool to bring objects of nature, including human beings, to the end, to the omega of their life, to another dimension. Don DeLillo and Eric play with the binary nature of the system of ones and zeros, existence and nonexistence, which designate the reality, being virtual at the same time, and probable from the perspective of the theory of relativity and quantum mechanics.

6.2 Habitus

Eric spent a lot of time and energy building his distinctiveness from the masses, the core of his habitus. Symbolically, what he gains is the white limousine that carries him through

the city and provides him with the necessary wall between him and the outside world. It almost seems as if his distinctiveness really relied on the car because any time he leaves the comfort of the vehicle, he becomes less protected and his experiences become very mundane, for example when he kills a man, when he meets his wife in a café over a mediocre meal or when he unintentionally joins his wife in a scrummage of naked bodies referencing our primordial nature. The reader learns about Eric's nature from the narrator's depictions as well as Eric's own information experts' evaluations. Because of their abilities to analyse precisely, for what they are paid by Eric himself, they provide the reader with mesmerizing description of the protagonist's body and soul.

He is somehow predestined to be successful, it is an innate part of his habitus. Partly, it is the capacity of his brain, his efficiency and performance ability. This is the basic predisposition, necessary for the right kind of development. Apparently, this aspect of his personality is easily visible for his observers as well. This factor is influential for the story, as Benno Levin follows him based on an incident from the past but not only that. It seems like Benno Levin is obsessed by Eric's being. His original name was Richard Sheets and becoming a criminal, as well as a literary author, he had changed his name. They might as well be one person. Benno, nonetheless, is presented as the complete opposite of Eric. He has no possessions and no importance, his capital is mere zero but his devotion is enormous. He has nothing to lose but nothing to win, either. Eric, on the other hand, has everything to lose and he is willing to do it. The fruits of his life-long devotion to capital gaining are at stake and he does not shy away from this risk. This is the point of the story where the classical interpretation of capital is questioned. This is a serious milestone for Eric and suddenly, he turns around and focuses on himself as on a person, a psyche unit, covered with flesh and bones. He exchanges the virtual for the real in his system of values. Another part of his success is the decision making, being able to choose the convenient direction of his actions. Nonetheless, he is also willing to work very hard and devote all his energy to building the right knowledge base.

Comparison is definitely an aspect which determines his habitus as it provides motivation to improve on the one hand, when he compares himself with other successful personalities, and self-confidence on the other, when he sees how different he is from "losers" on the other end of social chain.

Maybe it was his slouch. But Eric didn't care whether this was someone he'd once known. There were many people he'd once known. Some were dead, others in forced retirement, spending quiet time alone in their toilets or walking in the woods with their three-legged dogs.⁸⁹

By this evaluation he suggests that people who are not able to keep up with him are simply less able, worth less, in a way, the three-legged dog as their possession being a metaphor of something insufficient, intrinsically damaged. It does not matter whether they work hard or not, the important criterion is how far they can go.

Moreover, Eric truly hates his opponents and competition. He is envious of anyone who has more attention or power. On the particular day, when the president comes to the city, to Eric he seems to be unreachable. The president has the status assigned to him legally and such status carries with it the unreplaceable value of strong social capital.⁹⁰ In the story, this symbolic power of the watched leaders is transferred and *omnipresented* via the countless screens mentioned in the text. Screens of mobile phones, computers, trading information boards, watches, security systems provide the characters with partial insight into the virtual world. They function as the connectors of the real and virtual worlds.

Eric's habitus is seen as counteracting with the functionality of his field of practice. The theory comes to a point of destruction. Destruction is synonymized with creation and therefore capitalism is likened to communism as both of them lead to destruction, not unlike any other natural power, when driven to extremes. "A spectre is haunting the world – a spectre of capitalism"⁹¹ The spectre can be Eric himself, as he is a prototypical capitalist creation. Through his habitus in action, he became a shadow of an empathic being, by driving everything to extremes, destroying conventions, he became a threat to himself, as according to Marx and Engels, capitalism produces "its own grave-diggers"⁹². This aspect is one that proves the close interconnectivity between field, habitus and capital in *Cosmopolis*. The broadest field of activity, the cosmos, uses its powers on Eric as an impersonation of capitalist creations. His greatest capital is his ability to use his knowledge to influence the cyber capital, his habitus, which in turn has

⁸⁹ DeLillo 54.

⁹⁰ DeLillo 75.

⁹¹ DeLillo 95.

⁹² DeLillo 89.

impact on the cosmos and fields of other people. The virtual field can exist anywhere. In fact, it exists on hard drives but it is projected onto screens, perceived by Eric, so the interplay of all of these aspects actually happens in his mind. “Life is increasingly lived between the real and the virtual, the material and the immaterial. The complex systems that make life possible produce excesses, surplus, and waste that threaten to make life impossible.”⁹³ In the reality of the story, when Eric starts to realize his mistake, he becomes destructive, or his previously lurking pernicious tendencies come to light fully. In this case, the natural order and the consequences differ from what Eric intends it to be, which determines his destiny. If he really were the master he thought of himself, he would never have believed the opposite can be true. Paradoxically, he was trying to predict what the natural order will do and use it for his own good and work against it at the same time.

He is, however, a believer—a true believer who has faith in things unseen. Eric is convinced that his analysts can detect order beneath all the chaos. While his god writes algorithms rather than scripture, the way he understands the world does not differ significantly from how the biblical prophets did.⁹⁴

6.3 Capital

For Eric Packer, there exist more forms of valuable capital. Even though his life story is very exceptional not only compared to the conventions in a reader’s reality but especially within the borders of the story in the year 2000. The world of *Cosmopolis* is very similar to the one we are living in now. The technology presented as Packer’s devices of personal security and comfort are highly imaginable for us because of their similarity to modern fitness gadgets and high-speed wireless data-transferring connection, the accuracy of measurement of all possible dimensions and innumerable computer application software. In Eric’s world, nevertheless, everything is brought to extremes. In his interpretation, everything was aiming to become limitless. His personal relationships were of almost inhumane nature, his body’s faults were closely observed every day and he controlled his mind, willpower and skills to such an extent that he became an influential figure for huge

⁹³ Mark C. Taylor, *Rewiring the Real: In Conversation with William Gaddis, Richard Powers, Mark Danielewski, and Don DeLillo* (Columbia University Press, 2013) 244.

⁹⁴ Taylor 237.

amounts of other people and within one sole day, he fell from the absolute top to the dirtiest ground. What he values most is he himself. Originally, he devotes 99% of his energy to become more and more outstanding every minute. For this purpose, he uses the services of a few experts, too, but his attitude towards them is unclear. "It's cyber-capital that creates the future."⁹⁵

Relatively short after the beginning of the day, we learn about the decisive aspect of the story, of Eric's fate, actually, the decision to go into the risk of investing major sums of dollars into Yen, the Japanese currency, in spite of clear warning signs. Packer's currency analyst, Michael Chin, advises him to be careful and to "adjust", avoid risking to the border of real threat of destruction because they were "speculating into the void."⁹⁶ Eric fails to overcome his self-conceit and is seduced by his vision of surpassing the safe ground, the usual procedures of currency fluctuation speculations. Later in the story, his idea is supported by his chief of theory, Vija Kinsky, who herself mainly combines the different theoretical outlooks because that exactly is her job.

But there's something you know. You know the yen can't go any higher. And if you know something and don't act upon it, then you didn't know it in the first place. There is a piece of Chinese wisdom," she said. "To know and not to act is not to know.⁹⁷

Kinsky puts forward the aspects of the problem. By doing that, she also uncovers the truth of the theory of *cosmopolis* and connects the ties of reality into a complex picture.

You apply mathematics and other disciplines, yes. But in the end you're dealing with a system that's out of control. Hysteria at high speeds, day to day, minute to minute. People in free societies don't have to fear the pathology of the state. We create our own frenzy, our own mass convulsions, driven by thinking machines that we have no final authority over. The frenzy is barely noticeable most of the time. It's simply how we live.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ DeLillo 156.

⁹⁶ DeLillo 22.

⁹⁷ DeLillo 83.

⁹⁸ DeLillo 84-85.

This piece of text, the dialogue and the theory within, exposes the core of Eric's transformation. It puts everything that he believes in, into question. We know that he values theory and execution of the related propositions most and foremost and yet, when this approach is proven ineffective in this particular case, it turns out to be a mere dogma. When he executes his decision, he loses everything. He is definitely not the best anymore. At the moment, he is the best at taking a great risk against all odds but not at surviving. The later part of the theory is the actual description of our population cosmos, the cosmos we do not and cannot understand fully, where we cannot control our destiny because it depends on too many more or less unrelated factors. The tendencies of the circle are then fulfilled when she also reveals that "money has taken a turn" and is now "talking to itself", being a result of the tendencies of "Chrimatistikós", Aristotle's concept of accumulation of money for the sole purpose of gaining wealth as opposed to offering some kind of service to the society.⁹⁹

The pedestrians of the city are protesting against the fact that in a world of random phenomena, there exist partly self-entitled authorities with the goal to rule over the masses and provide the laws themselves. Eric consequently joins this sense of anarchy and starts the sabotage of his own right to life and love and ends up nonexistent, transformed, reincarnated or immanently existent as an undefined form. At least as a character of Don DeLillo's story, he still exists. "There are dead stars that still shine because their light is trapped in time. Where do I stand in this light, which does not strictly exist?"¹⁰⁰ Eric, in a way, likes the protesters' energy and realizes they may have something in common. Not only do they read the same poems, but to capitalism as a concept, as a human scheme of practice, they play a similar role.

The market culture is total. It breeds these men and women. They are necessary to the system they despise. They give it energy and definition. They are market-driven. They are traded on the markets of the world. This is why they exist, to invigorate and perpetuate the system.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Scott Meikle, "Aristotle on money." in *Phronesis* 39.1 (1994) 27-28.

¹⁰⁰ DeLillo 154.

¹⁰¹ DeLillo 89-90.

Physical money, same as the people of the system, become obsolete in the form they exist at a given moment. Everything evolves, we cannot stop the time. The four dimensions of existence go on in the repeating circles and once a circle is completed, there comes a new round. The fact that capital in the physical sense becomes highly symbolic with help of the cyber-capital that “creates the future”¹⁰² is also presented in the circumstance that Eric is advised to purchase a Rothko painting. From a general perspective, a painting would carry with it the value of cultural capital but Rothko’s paintings are defined by their simplicity and high reproducibility. In context of the text, this mention, together with the astronomic price for the painting, function as an obvious innuendo at the absurdities of today’s societies and the free market system.

The protagonist of the main narrative exists as Eric now, at least we are reading a description of his present self, which is kind of determined by the future events as the time theory is suggesting. Throughout the whole text, Eric encounters scenes or visions of the future events. First of all, he hears about destruction and decay as natural result of universal processes, apart from randomness of certain events. All this, accelerated as the spectre of capitalism puts even more pressure on all occurrence within the markets and as this expanding entity speaks through the man’s investment moves, pushing him on the edge of existence. Eric becomes a part of the destructive force and assists in fulfilment of the process. He sees a burning man in the street, as a symbol of a human defeated by the system. When he realizes that he too is being haunted, namely by his assassin Benno Levin, he starts seeing his future on his all-mighty super-smart wristwatch. He sees an image of a dead body with a tag on it, designating a “Male Z”.

He knew that Male Z was the designation for the bodies of unidentified men in hospital morgues. O shit I’m dead. He’d always wanted to become quantum dust, transcending his body mass, the soft tissue over the bones, the muscle and fat. The idea was to live outside the given limits, in a chip, as data, in whirl, in radiant spin, a consciousness saved from void.¹⁰³

Benno Levin is the narrator of the secondary story, *The Confessions of Benno Levin*. An outcast with zero capital, living alone, writing a diary about the following and murder of

¹⁰² DeLillo 78.

¹⁰³ DeLillo 205.

Eric. There are segments of Benno Levin's confessions from quite an early stage of the novel and the true identity of Benno Levin is questionable. According to his own words, he is Eric's former employer, seeking a revenge after being fired and losing his capital, becoming a person of no personal worth. He could also be Eric's past and future self, his creator and murderer at the same time. The author uses the notice to remind the reader which character he is referencing to, therefore confesses his presence. In the critical moment of the encounter of Benno and Eric, it is difficult to tell these two men apart.

He pressed the muzzle of his gun, Eric did, against the palm of his left hand. He tried to think clearly. He thought of his chief of security flat on the asphalt, a second yet left in his life. He thought of others down the years, hazy and nameless. He felt an enormous remorseful awareness. It moved through him, called guilt, and strange how soft the trigger felt against his finger.¹⁰⁴

All of a sudden, Eric felt compassion. He has undergone this whole painful, self-destructing journey to feel like a human being again. He had to lose all his capital to find his own worth as a person, made of flesh, sense and emotion.

The concept of four dimensions of spacetime, three of space and one of time, which influence each other to help the natural occurrences to fulfil their circle of existence, plays a role here, too. There are four parts to the book while two of them belong to Benno's writing. The primary narration is in the third person mode while the secondary is in the first person mode. Eric's life ends up in Benno's hands and then Benno decides, what is important and what is not. He determines the capital value. In this particular case, he likens a person's life to the importance of not even one cigarette but one drag. He says: "One drag on one cigarette, I probably wouldn't have to shoot you."¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, in this part of the story, cigarettes become a recurring theme. It is a representation of a bad habit, typical for workers, poor people but one that can connect them to the rich. Cigarettes, nicotine and other substances contained in them, are an example of the common objects of human desire. Only a man himself can control his desires but he can also succumb to them. He can become a slave of any power, any idea and that is what

¹⁰⁴ DeLillo 196.

¹⁰⁵ DeLillo 203.

both Eric and Benno became. In the end, the author makes them almost submerge into each other.

I have become an enigma to myself. So said Saint Augustine. And herein lies my sickness.” “That’s a start. That’s a crucial self-realization,” Eric said. “I’m not talking about myself, I’m talking about you. Your whole waking life is a self-contradiction. That’s why you are engineering your own downfall.¹⁰⁶

All of it as if Benno was saying that if there was any chance for a change, if Eric could have overcome the stiffness, the dogmatic following of his theoretical beliefs, the determined hateful critique towards anything not perfect, everything would have been different. Besides the references mentioned above, Benno and Eric have another thing in common, the asymmetrical prostate, which, too, is used for theory, as Benno suggests Eric should have observed his body more and used his condition for the analysis of the movement of yen. “Benno’s gentle intelligence carried no trace of rebuke. He was probably right. There was something in what he said. It made hard sense. Maybe he was turning out to be a worthy assassin after all.”¹⁰⁷ At one point, Benno confesses: “I am planning to make a public act of my life through these pages I will write .”¹⁰⁸ This remark draws us to another dimension and actually implicates the author of the book, Don DeLillo himself. He too has decided to follow Eric’s movement everywhere, write about him, kill him, publish the piece and therefore fulfil Eric’s wish of transcending his existence, living on. With a little help, the assassin’s name may also suggest this reality. The form of his name, “be no levin” as in “be no leaving”. Moreover, the author was also brilliantly able to include the reader in his theory and in the spacetime of the story. Benno’s following lines could belong to any person in the world. All of us are guilty of carrying pieces of protagonists of countless works of literature and film, the so-called “bad guys” if they can even be labelled as such, inside of us.

¹⁰⁶ DeLillo 189.

¹⁰⁷ DeLillo 198.

¹⁰⁸ DeLillo 149.

I think about myself too much. I study myself. It sickens me. But this is all there is to me. I'm nothing else. My so-called ego is a little twisted thing that's probably not so different from yours but at the same time I can say confidently that its active and bursting with importance and has major defeats and triumphs all the time.¹⁰⁹

The circle is fulfilled in frame of the triple relationship of the piece of art, its author and the audience.

There exists an opposition. Eric, when we look at this life as a whole, interpreted or expressed in one day, actually devotes his energy to destroying himself. So the meaning of his life became expelling as much energy as he could into killing himself, destroying everything about himself, getting rid of his capital so that only a bare minimum is left. Benno, on the other hand, also has only a bare minimum left but, as he states, he devoted his life to following Eric and killing him, to give his life a meaning, a purpose.

7 Comparative and Complementary Remarks

The field is different in each case. Within the field of society which would compare the protagonists on the social scale taking into account their social capital, each of them would be occupying a different position. Rabbit Angstrom represents an upper-middle-class kind of a man. He is remarkably responsible within his business field and truly cares about all of his fields of activity. Two of them are closely interrelated, his family and his car retail. He is probably the most emotional one of the three men. The occurrences within his fields impact his sense of self and he lets a lot of things touch his feelings. This fact has positive impact on his life and he can profit from his ability to be flexible and adjust to the current circumstances. Sherman McCoy, on the other hand, succeeds in life only when he is granted the privileges of the New York City high society he is used to. It seems like he refuses to further build himself. He rather dwells in his supposed superiority and is not able to react when problems occur. The result of this flaw in his habitus is his social “death.” Eric Packer is the extreme example of a man haunted by the “spectre of capitalism.” He fails to relax into his naturally-given humaneness and instead rather

¹⁰⁹ DeLillo 60.

destroys himself. He suffers from the fear of being common, being mundane. His habitus drives his capital into such extremes that they become unbearable and the nature as the highest field destroys Eric in return.

All of the chosen protagonists are men and all of them are wealthy. They possess great financial capital, and this fact is represented outwardly by material goods they surround themselves with. In all of the cases, the most outstanding examples of such are the homes and cars. Both of these practical representations of certain concepts of private possessions carry with them an aura of an x-factor which either makes or breaks the deal of fulfilling an ideal, the illusio. We can assume the x-factor is the collective habitus of the owners of the specific possessions as habitus provides the private field with the necessary distinctiveness. In case of the texts in regard, the protagonist's habitus would be the defining one as all of the wives rather stand in the background instead of making crucial decisions for their family.

Based on their habitus, the alfa males express their taste for cars and houses or apartments. Within their fields, their position and habitus are designated by the nature of the field and their roles. In the field of family, the men play their roles sufficiently but not in a sacrificing way. As if they were transferring some of the business behaviour and rules into their homes but on the other hand, their ways of behaviour may just be their natural traits, which lead them to participate in the field of business and which are an inextricable part of their habitus and cannot be expressed differently in other fields, like the family.

The text plays with the false perceptions and impressions of tokens of wealth. Social stereotypes are replayed again and again as if functioning as repetitive confirmations of the absurdity of the ever lingering presumptions and applications of rigid social concepts. Even if we take a look at people who fulfil all the conditions of being wealthy, professional and aristocratic, like Sherman, what is the effect of their perfection? Can they apply their traits in other ways than the common people? Except for some charitable deeds probably not. All human actions are finally distilled into the evaluation of their relationships. Namely, everything is relative. Sherman would not become what he is without the previous aspirations of his family, based on which he could start from a heightened starting position. Without Sherman's successes, his wife would not be able to design expensive apartments but she would not be a wife of a faithful husband, either, because people are unfaithful across social classes. Their infidelities might be relative of their appearances, inherited from their parents' genes.

In the novels, all of the three men go back and recall some memories of their past to review their current self-image as a part of their symbolic capital. They consider their roots and overall background to better understand some aspects of their personality as it is now. They compare their past circumstances, conditions of their upbringing, their parents' wealth and approach towards life as it is with the reality they have built themselves, as the result of actions derived from their individual habitus. Men in general care about whether they are attractive to women or not. Sex is one of our basic needs and therefore it is a natural impulse to ensure availability of resources. It may be a natural solution to a lack of sex in a marriage, to outsource this pleasure. Apart from this point of view, in the texts we can see that having an extramarital affair gives the protagonists a sense of experiencing something more than the others, something envied by most. All of this may be connected with their self-esteem, as for them it is necessary to feel satisfied with their actions and possessions, even if each of them evaluates these based on different criteria. All of the three stories depict something like an inevitable process of calibration which they have to go through in order to be able to continue with their lives.

An important aspect of the habitus of the characters is also self-relationship. Love of selfish a very problematic concept in the modern world. It is often perceived as something weak, something not worth a powerful pragmatic businessman. Nonetheless, it is one of few tools improving a person's life, mental hygiene. Without mental training, the businessmen can actually lose their strength and the same might be true for personal relationships of romantic kind. To fulfil their needs, men need other people, who know them and appreciate their distinctive features and react positively to their actions because still, the men are reliable on appreciation and evaluation, positive evaluation being a major motivation. The issue of realizing the necessity or importance of personal relationships can as well as a moral issue be seen as an issue of pragmatic value, a positive bonus which is often crucial for a fulfilling life.

8 Conclusion

This diploma thesis has concentrated on literary analysis of chosen works of American literature after 1945. The works in focus are *Rabbit Is Rich* by John Updike, *The Bonfire of the Vanities* by Tom Wolfe and *Cosmopolis* by Don DeLillo. These three books have greatly complemented each other in the interpretation as they are different, yet built on the same theme, which is the concept of wealth and an individual's practice within his fields of action and his relationship to capital growth. Already the process of choice of the works in question was crucial to the successful creation of arguments within the paper, structured by Pierre Bourdieu's theory of action and the selection has proven to be successful in providing the desirable result.

Because the thesis works with a set of presumptions, necessary to create a common ground for the developed arguments, these are presented in the theoretical part of the paper. Notions like the American Dream, motivation and identity connect two main spheres of being, the social and the individual. Moreover, they function as a linking element of the subject matter of the novels and the ideological heritage of the United States of America. This theoretical chapter provides the necessary frame to the various associations which may arise when interpreting the individual narratives.

For the purpose of the analysis, the theory of practice by Pierre Bourdieu, especially in the form published in *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action* in 1998, was used as a structuring background. The points of reference have been the concepts of *field*, *habitus* and *capital*, as well as the notion of *illusio*, which are introduced in the third chapter. These have helped to identify the protagonists' distinctive features, applied in their specific fields of action and the way such interactions impacted their capital.

The chosen books are very different and very similar at the same time. By stating their similarities and differences, we may add to their analysis, as they complement each other on a certain level of topicality, related to the end of the past century. It was the time of rapid changes, which, of course, had palpable effect on the American society. Going from *Rabbit Is Rich* to *Cosmopolis*, we are moving on a scale of masculine prosperity from middle-ranked to exceptionally extreme. Focused on capital, the men have either become less concerned with their personal relationships, or more ruthless, or both.

All of the three men were consequently faced with certain situations in their lives, which worked as testing factors for their character and maturity or consciousness

regarding a reasonable balance between the pragmatic, goal- and profit-oriented and the emotional aspects of their lives. All of the reviewed books present other characters than the protagonists, with whom the main men can be compared. Surprisingly, all of them can function as some parallel existences of the protagonists, as a suggestion of alternative personalities.

The analysis shows that via their books, Updike, Wolfe and DeLillo offer a critical view on middle-aged capitalist American men and thereby the individual within the social system as a whole. The topic of wealth has long been popular among literary authors, yet the approach of the new millennium and the ever-growing globalization have presented new opportunities for literature to review the changing status quo.

All three of the authors have created really exceptional stories and on their basis, provided the readers with a critical outlook on wealthy characters. The three protagonists were depicted as typical representatives of businessmen striving for recognition in the age of capitalist pressure.

It is interesting how the evidence in literature really shows the different view on the concept of the American Dream. It seems like the concept has never really worked as a socially binding and fulfilled. From the books, it even seems like it has created a lot of differences between people. Especially for the ones who have not been able to obey the rules of social upward movement and success from the capitalist point of view. The cause might also be the fact that as an arbitrary social concept, it can never be acceptable for every individual. Some people simply grow as nonconformists independently of their ancestors or material capital and some people, even though being mentally rich and knowledgeable, never become materially rich and evaluated in the society. If a whole nation is supposed to share one belief, it can never work.

9 Resumé

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá analýzou konceptu bohatství tak, jak je vyobrazen v jednotlivých vybraných knihách americké literatury po roce 1945. Již výběr děl představoval jeden ze zásadních kroků, které měly vliv na zpracování tématu jako celku tak, aby práce byla kompaktní a aby byly splněny podmínky pro rozvoj teze. Nositeli tohoto konceptu jsou ve všech třech případech protagonisté děje, Harry Angstrom, Sherman McCoy a Eric Packer. Na jejich příkladech byly popsány aspekty prostředí, jednání a kapitálu. Všichni tři muži jsou relativně úspěšní a bohatí a za svůj status vděčí svým schopnostem a dovednostem na poli specifických druhů podnikání. Pro účely analýzy se vycházelo z předpokladu, že bohatí lidé disponují odlišujícími znaky v rámci jejich zvyků a přístupů k okolí a že jejich charakterové vlastnosti a projevy žebříčku hodnot, který vyznávají, s sebou přináší důsledky pro jejich osobní život a jako takové jsou zajímavé nejen jako námět pro spisovatele, ale i literární kritiku. Tyto předpoklady byly potvrzeny a analýza zprostředkovala náhled na tři muže jako představitele kapitalistické společnosti na přelomu devatenáctého a dvacátého století. Každý z nich je něčím jiný a jejich životní příběhy jsou odlišné, ale přeci jen je spojují určité prvky nejen jejich osobnosti, ale i jejich příběhů jako literárních děl. Autoři těchto děl, John Updike, Tom Wolfe a Don DeLillo, vycházejí z podobného myšlenkového pozadí a nabízejí čtenářům výmluvné studie literárních postav jako mužů středního věku zmítaných jejich potřebami a požadavky kapitalistického systému zároveň. Pomocí vykreslení osudů každého z nich nastavují zrcadlo chtíči a egotismu, lidským pohnutkám, které když nejsou správně zpracovány jejich nositeli, můžou mít relativně negativní dopad především na jejich osobní vztahy a reputaci. Každý protagonista stojí ve svém příběhu před určitým úkolem, vytvořeným shodou okolností, který musí správně uchopit a zpracovat, jinak se dostává do potíží a dává v sázku svou celkovou spokojenosť a také ekonomický i symbolický kapitál, který stihl do té doby vybudovat.

Jako teorie pro vytvoření struktury interpretace byla zvolena teorie jednání francouzského sociologa Pierra Bourdieua. Jeho koncepty pole, habitus a kapitál byly použity jako vodítka v popisu jednotlivých částí v interpretaci děl. Celá tato teorie, blíže popsána v knize Teorie jednání, se zaměřuje na popis a pochopení jednání lidí jako občanů v oblasti sociálních skupin, ve kterých se pohybují a společnosti jako takové. Zvláštní důraz je kladen na faktor vzájemného ovlivňování se jednotlivce a jeho okolí a

důsledný dopad na jeho kapitál ekonomický a sociální, to znamená nejen hmotný majetek, ale i rostoucí nebo klesající vliv ve společnosti a moc. Tato teorie zprostředkuje velmi užitečný nástroj pro literární analýzu a dává možnost nahlédnout na koncept bohatství v literatuře tím, že pomáhá odlišit různé prostory aktivity literární postavy a tím vyzdvihnout aspekty jejího jednání v různých situacích a v neposlední řadě i její pojetí důležitosti vlastního kapitálu jako konceptu bohatství. Výsledky konání hlavních postav v ději naznačují důležitost správného zhodnocení sociálních vazeb člověka a schopnosti empatie a lidského cítění jako takového, oproti pragmatismu moderní doby za účelem vydělávání peněz.

10 Works Cited

- Bloom, Harold, ed. *Tom Wolfe*. Infobase Publishing, 2009.
- Boswell, Marshall. *John Updike's Rabbit Tetralogy: Mastered Irony in Motion*. University of Missouri Press, 2001.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Practical reason: On the theory of action*. Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Buell, Lawrence. *The dream of the great American novel*. Harvard University Press, 2014.
- Christoforou, Asimina, and Michaël Lainé, eds. *Re-thinking economics: Exploring the work of Pierre Bourdieu*. Routledge, 2014.
- "Communication." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Encyclopaedia Britannica. Accessed 15 January 2019.
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/communication>.
- Cullen, Jim. *The American dream: A short history of an idea that shaped a nation*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2004.
- DeLillo, Don. *Cosmopolis*. Picador, 2011.
- Donovan, Christopher. *Postmodern counternarratives: irony and audience in the novels of Paul Auster, Don DeLillo, Charles Johnson, and Tim O'Brien*. Routledge, 2005.
- "Identity." *Merriam-Webster.com*. Merriam-Webster. Accessed 8 November 2018.
- "Instinct." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Encyclopaedia Britannica. Accessed 15 January 2019.
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/instinct>.
- Masters, Joshua J. "Race and the Infernal City" in Tom Wolfe's Bonfire of the Vanities." *Tom Wolfe* edited by Harold Bloom, Infobase Publishing, 2009, 179-192.
- McNamara, Carol. "The Pursuit of Happiness, American Style: Tom Wolfe's Study of Status and Freedom." *Perspectives on Political Science* 34.1 (2005): 16-26.
- Meikle, Scott. "Aristotle on money." *Phronesis* 39.1 (1994): 26-44.
- "Motivation." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Encyclopaedia Britannica. Accessed 28 January 2019.
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/motivation>.
- Neary, John. *Something and nothingness: the fiction of John Updike & John Fowles*. SIU Press, 1992.

O'Connell, Mary. *Updike and the patriarchal dilemma: masculinity in the Rabbit novels*. SIU Press, 1996.

Popper, Karl R., and John C. Eccles. *The self and its brain*. Springer Science & Business Media, 2012.

Porsdam, Helle. "In the Age of Lawspeak: Tom Wolfe's The Bonfire of the Vanities and American Litigiousness." *Journal of American Studies* 25.1 (1991): 39-57.

Posner, Richard A. "The Depiction of Law in the Bonfire of the Vanities." *Yale LJ* 98 (1988): 1653.

"Priapus." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Encyclopaedia Britannica. Accessed 28 January 2019.
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Priapus>.

Sawhill, Isabel V., and John E. Morton. "Economic mobility: Is the American dream alive and well?." (2007).

Shonkwiler, Alison. "Don DeLillo's financial sublime." *Contemporary Literature* 51.2 (2010): 246-282.

Simon, Bernd. *Identity in modern society: A social psychological perspective*. John Wiley & Sons, 2008.

Smith, James F. "Tom Wolfe's Bonfire of the Vanities: A Dreiser Novel for the 1980s." *Tom Wolfe* edited by Harold Bloom, Infobase Publishing, 2009, 135-149.

"Social identity theory." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Encyclopaedia Britannica. Accessed 29 January 2019.
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-identity-theory>.

Taylor, Mark C. *Rewiring the Real: In Conversation with William Gaddis, Richard Powers, Mark Danielewski, and Don DeLillo*. Columbia University Press, 2013.

Toulmin, Stephen Edelston, and Stephen Toulmin. *Cosmopolis: The hidden agenda of modernity*. University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Updike, John. *Rabbit is rich*. Penguin UK, 2006.

Valentino, Russell Scott. "From Virtue to Virtual: DeLillo's Cosmopolis and the Corruption of the Absent Body." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 53.1 (2007): 140-162.

Weatherall, James Owen. *The physics of wall street: a brief history of predicting the unpredictable*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013.

Weatherford, Kathleen J. "Tom Wolfe's Billion-Footed Beast." *American Studies in Scandinavia* 22.2 (1990): 81-93.

Wolfe, Tom. *The bonfire of the vanities*. Picador, 2008.

Údaje o DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCI studenta

Osobní číslo:	F140267	Datum zadání:	29. dubna 2015
Jméno a příjmení:	Bc. Irena SPURNÁ	Plánované datum odevzdání:	30. dubna 2016
Obor/kombinace:	Anglická filologie – Německá filologie (AF-NF)	Datum odevzdání:	
Zadané téma:	Koncept bohatství ve vybraných dílech americké literatury po roce 1945		
Stav práce:	Rozpracovaná práce		

Údaje o kvalifikační práci

1. Hlavní téma

Koncept bohatství ve vybraných dílech americké literatury po roce 1945

2. Hlavní téma v angličtině

The Concept of Wealth in Selected American Literature Works after 1945

3. Název dle studenta

The Concept of Wealth in Selected American Literature Works after 1945

4. Název dle studenta v angličtině

The Concept of Wealth in Selected American Literature Works after 1945

5. Souběžný název

6. Podnázev

7. Anotace (krátký popis práce)

Tato diplomová práce se zaměřuje na aplikaci socioekonomické teorie jednání Pierra Bourdieua, především konceptů pole, habitu a kapitálu v literární analýze vybraných děl americké literatury po roce 1945. Tato teorie je aplikována za účelem popsání jevů spojených s konceptem bohatství tak, jak se projevují v životech protagonistů děje. Vybranými díly jsou Rabbit Is Rich, The Bonfire of the Vanities a Cosmopolis. Analýza za pomoci této teorie nabízí zajímavé poznatky, zejména odlišující znaky chování zástupců bohatých tříd v období milénia ve více či méně realistickém prostředí. Tyto znaky jsou také částečně mezi sebou porovnány a nakonec je vyvozen závěr.

8. Klíčová slova (oddělujte čárkou)

Americká literatura, Americký sen, Bohatství, Pierre Bourdieu

9. Anotace v angličtině (krátký popis práce)

This diploma thesis offers a literary analysis of selected works of American literature after 1945. The novels in focus are Rabbit Is Rich, The Bonfire of the Vanities and Cosmopolis. All of these are reviewed with the help of several concepts of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of action, mainly field, habitus and capital. The aim of this paper was to provide a critical outlook on protagonists of the works in question and their relationship towards wealth. Nonetheless, the interpretation accounts a number of similarities and differences among of the protagonists' practice. A conclusion completes the thesis.

10. Anglická klíčová slova (oddělujte čárkou)

American Literature, American Dream, Wealth, Pierre Bourdieu

11. Přílohy volně vložené

12. Přílohy vázané v práci

13. Rozsah práce

70 (165 224 znaků)

