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Sveučilište u Zadru
Odjel za anglistiku
Diplomski sveučilišni studij engleskog jezika i književnosti; smjer: nastavnički (dvopredmetni)

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Zadar, 2016.

Abstract

As one of the central concepts of the American culture, small-town America has long been explored by various writers, among which Ray Bradbury and Stephen King stand out as extremely important figures in terms of the 20th century popular fiction and their contribution to the overall perceptions of the small town. This analysis therefore aims to present the characteristics of the small town as depicted in their work through the lens of human geography, concretely, Bradbury's *Dandelion Wine, Something Wicked This Way Comes* and *Farewell Summer*, and King's *'Salem's Lot, It* and *Needful Things*, while simultaneously looking back to the origination of such fiction in the form of Howard P. Lovecraft's depiction of the subject in "The Dunwich Horror" and "The Shadow over Innsmouth". Following a brief explanation of the commonly recognized attributes of small-town America, the analysis continues with the exploration of the respective writers' treatment of place elements – location, physical patterns, people and time, as realized in the specific conditions of the small town. Ultimately, the analysis produces information which lead to the conclusion that there is a certain basis which can be recognized across considerably different depictions of the small town. On the other hand, the differences in the specific manifestations, or rather the individual writer's inclination towards the positive or negative side of the concept, can be seen as valuable sources of insight into American feelings towards what is seen as uniquely theirs and defining them.

Key words: small-town America, human geography, Howard P. Lovecraft, Ray Bradbury, Stephen King

1. Introduction

While one may see America[1] as a land of large-scale features – from natural landscapes such as the Grand Canyon to man-made ones like the bridges and skyscrapers of New York – it is precisely the landscape of the *small* that is believed to define the quintessential America, the embodiment of what it means to be American and the way of life perceived as proper. The landscape in question is of course that of the American small town, a concept made widely known and recognizable both visually and affectively not only to the Americans themselves but also to everyone else exposed to various media depicting the American culture, especially popular culture in forms of numerous films and TV shows which are equally successful in making us fall in love with their quaintness and intimacy and utterly dread their obscure malevolence. It is not stated without a reason that the concept is known both visually and affectively, for the American small town is not merely a combination of specific architectural and design features, it is also a set of ideas which are inevitable to evoke certain sentiments. While these sentiments may sometimes be ambivalent the small town, whether it is seen as an epitome of good life and all that is decent or of depravity and hidden evil, is one of the central images of distinctly American landscapes. It is hardly surprising then that it was also given considerable attention by several American writers and even became one of the defining points of their work. However different their vision of the small town might be, they are still bound by their contribution to the present understanding of the concept.

The aim of this paper is to present small-town America as it is depicted in novels written by Ray Bradbury and Stephen King, more precisely, Bradbury's *Green Town* series, which include *Dandelion Wine, Something Wicked This Way Comes* and *Farewell Summer*, and King's novels *It, Salem's Lot* and *Needful Things*. While they are certainly not the only

[1] The term "America" is used, and will be further on, to signify the United States of America.

writers who used the small town setting for their novels, these two writers, each with their own experience of this characteristically American notion, offered the most comprehensive picture of both positive and negative perceptions of the 20th-century American small town, drawing in the process on the overall tradition of the small-town genre fiction, the foundation of which was lain by Howard Phillips Lovecraft. Consequently, two highly representative Lovecraft's short stories, "The Dunwich Horror" and "The Shadow over Innsmouth", will be used as the starting point of the analysis. The choice of those specific works was also determined by the fact that they do not merely touch upon the subject of the small town, but rather they are to a large extent determined by it. In other words, although pertaining to different genres (and in this light, we may expect to find greater similarities between Lovecraft's and King's towns), the chosen works are essentially novels about the advantages and shortcomings of small-town life in the context of which the small town can never be treated only as a lifeless background but an integral part of people's lives, something which is shaped by their feelings and actions, and at the same time shapes them. The analysis will be based on and informed by the insights from human geography, which sees places as meaning-imbued concepts which arise from the relationship between human beings and space around them. This will ultimately allow for an insight into different possibilities of small town representation and their explanation.

The analysis will begin with an overview of several elements which help define the American small town, from the issue of its size as defined by Richard V. Francaviglia in his work *Main Street Revisited: Time, Space and Image Building in Small-Town America*, to its origins as discussed by B.D. Wortham-Galvin in her paper "The Fabrication of Place in America". After establishing what the general attitudes towards the small town are in America, the analysis focuses on specific fictional towns which are presented in Lovecraft's, Bradbury's and King's works. In order to enable a systematic analysis of the material the

basic guideline for observing the depictions of the small town by different writers will be elements of places as proposed by Edward Relph in his work *Place and Placelessness*; namely, location, landscapes, people and time. The analysis of those elements will be informed by insight from works by several different authors who either deal with the small town specifically, such as John Brinckerhoff Jackson in his paper "The Almost Perfect Town", or with a certain aspect generally attributed to the small town, such as Gill Valentine in her work *Social Geographies: Space and Society*.

2. Defining the small town

Before starting the analysis of the small town as manifested in Lovecraft's, Bradbury's and King's fiction it is necessary to establish what constitutes a small town. The issue proves to be more complex than it would seem as the problem lies in the definition of a small town. In his work on the imagery and meanings of small downtowns Richard V. Francaviglia states, "I shall define small towns as having a population of more than about 750 and fewer than 30,000 people. These communities are large enough to have a Main Street but small enough not to take on too many characteristics of decidedly urban places. Smaller places are more likely to be hamlets; larger places are more appropriately called small cities" (xx). Defining small towns solely in terms of the number of residents, however, can be somewhat misleading, and it should be noted that Francaviglia's extensive research of Main Street focuses on other, more significant motifs. That does not mean that the definition is incorrect. In fact, according to Francaviglia's definition even King's fictional town of Derry (which as it will become clear is characterized by other elements typical of small towns), which the protagonist retrospectively considers to had been "a big town" in 1958 with its "maybe thirty thousand people inside the Derry incorporated city limits" (*It*, 575) falls into the category of a small town. However, the small town is more than its numbers. Another factor that might

create confusion is the ambiguous urban/rural character of small towns. On one hand, the small town is seen as an urban settlement as it stated by both Francaviglia, who claims they are "best studied as small urban places" (xxi), and Michael Pacione in his work *Urban Geography: A Global Perspective*, "The world's urban population is distributed among settlements of differing sizes along a continuum from small towns with several thousand people to giant cities with populations of tens of millions" (72). On the other hand, there are those who emphasize the rural nature of the small town as for example Michael Bunce in his work *The Countryside Ideal* and David Bell in his work "Anti-idyll: Rural horror". Thus Bell claims that "In the USA, the small town and the farm are the valued landscape forms of the rural" (92). Even though such views may seem to create a conflicting image of the small town character in terms of its urban/rural nature, this is not how they should be understood, but rather it should be observed that it is not uncommon for researchers to recognize both aspects of the small town, which would be quite difficult if they indeed did not exist. Therefore, the small town will be further on discussed in this paper with this in mind – as a concept within which a consensus in the form of combination of urban and rural traditions is reached.

What is noticeable at this point is the usage of the small town as a rather generalizing term. It is true that there are many small towns across America, each with their own distinct history, spatial features and communities, but all of those towns share some common elements, which go beyond typical New England white steeples or Main Street red brick buildings, and the existence of which is deeply rooted in the origins of the small town. The small town as it is known today is as much real as it is a myth. Writing about Main Street, which he calls the "essence of the small town, and synonymous with it" (97) Miles Orvell states in his work "Constructing Main Street Utopia and the Imagined Past" that "Main Street has a peculiar resonance within American culture. It is not only "real" public space; it is also a mythical place, perhaps the most iconic (and sacred) of American places, fraught with

nostalgia for a lost America, carrying the symbolism of political community, of democratic town meetings, of life in harmony with nature" (97-98). However, small towns in America were not always evocative of such ideas even though they existed practically as long as the nation itself, and they are still not outside of America. The American small town as the presently existent concept was primarily a product of the American desire for a "simpler" life and a stable world which arose in the second half of the nineteen century as the developing industry and urbanization threatened to change America. That change can sometimes be overwhelming and perceived as unpleasant is no novelty, and neither is the practice to look back into past in search for an answer. Thus the past became the embodiment of stability the desire for which lies at the core of small-town America. Of course it was not just any past that assumed such an important role in American culture, but a very specific spatial realization of it – the New England village. This was an entirely conscious choice, for the New England village was perceived as a truly and purely American place, or as B.D. Wortham-Galvin defines it "an ideal setting: cultivated nature" (24). In other words, it implied an empty, untainted space which through direct human action transformed into a new home for the first settlers and thus became American, and which consequently served as the ultimate archive of the American history – the part of the land (both material and mythical) to which all of their perceived national values could be traced. However, this perception initially was not solely a common case of nostalgia, as it might have become later on. The New England village was indeed "pure" in another sense. It was founded and inhabited by people of the same cultural background, something which was seen as its major advantage in a time of confusion and conflict. As Wortham-Galvin puts it, "The fictions of New England resisted fact in order to stabilize the socially uncertain present. It was the teeming influx of immigrants from Western and Eastern Europe during the nineteenth century that drove the desire to culturally and physical reinvent New England" (24). The irony of the immigrant nature of the first settlers

themselves was of course completely missed, and while the physical peculiarities of the New England village may have been restricted to the region, the ideal of "the mythic New England village, in which people work in concert with each other and nature to ensure the prosperity of their community" (Wortham-Galvin 30) soon spread throughout the country and became the basis of small-town America.

As it is the case with probably every man-made concept, this idyllic image has always been contested to some extent, but on the whole the questioning of the ideal was not that common and ardent practice up until the 20th century. The 20th century put the actual small towns under a considerable strain as many of them could not cope with economic implications of the depression and two world wars. As Halper and Muzzio state in their paper "It's a Wonderful Life: Representations of the Small Town in American Movies", "The Depression, among other things, was a brutal attack on prevailing verities: the inevitability of progress, America as a land of material abundance, hard work and honest-dealing as a path to the good life (…) Small towns suffered grievously during the Depression, generally more than cities" (5). Even more difficult times were ahead as the ending of the second war marked the beginning of the period of prosperity and consumerism and small towns were no match for big cities and the increasingly popular suburbs. As it is stated in the introduction to John B. Jackson's description of a typical small town "The Almost Perfect Town", the 1950's with their "freeway construction, mass auto-ownership, and the proliferation of highway-based shopping centers (LeGates and Stout 162) were threatening to destroy small-town America.

As it is evident today, all those processes were not entirely successful, for small towns both as actual and imagined places continue to endure in America, but what is certain is that the previous century was marked by a growing disbelief in the small town idyll. Opinions arose according to which the small town was stagnant, oppressive, and narrow minded, a place whose extreme isolation and self-directedness foster the growth of many social evils.

Thus Benjamin Stein writes in 1976 in his paper "Whatever happened to small-town America?" about "the current view of the small town as everything frightening and corrupt about America" (18). Gradually another image arose, that of the idyllic heart of America transformed into the embodiment of utter depravity.

It was inevitable for these changes in general sentiments to leave their mark on practices of the small town depiction in fiction, as it is pointed out by John Langan in his work "The Small-Town Horror", "Since the mid- to late 1970s, the small town as a setting for horror narratives has become so common as to constitute one of the genre's hallmarks, an icon of the supernatural narrative" (537). Obviously, the myth came into question, but while the 1970's might have been marked by a rise in the frequency of such an approach to the small town, and King's popularity certainly played a significant role in that, the phenomenon did not appear in vacuum (538), as Langan further emphasizes. In one way or another they draw on Lovecraft's depiction of small towns inspired by the actual places of his native New England. However, before continuing the explorations of the idyllic and anti-idyllic small towns, one thing should be kept in mind – Lovecraft was a man of his time. What that means is explained by Alan Moore in his introduction to *The New Annotated H.P. Lovecraft, "*Born in 1890, with his first great rush of literary productivity occurring in the roaring, emblematic year of 1920, Lovecraft came of age in an America yet to cohere as a society, much less as an emergent global superpower, and still beset by a wide plethora of terrors and anxieties" (8). Those terrors and anxieties found their expression mainly in the form of immigrants, as it was already explained. Therefore, as horrifying Lovecraft's towns may be they are still highly reflective of the same ideas responsible for the origination of the myth of the small town and one would be mistaken to assume that he shared the more recent negative sentiments towards such places. He was not fearful of the small town but rather for it. Disillusionment came after Lovecraft.

3. Depictions of small-town America

Before focusing on specific representations of small towns in chosen works of fiction it should be noted that the small town in general, as a concept, has certain meanings. These meanings might be quite ambivalent and showing oscillations across certain periods of time but their existence cannot be brought into question. What is more, small towns, when observed discriminately, are populated by human beings and, therefore, filled with human activity (this may change as time passes as it will be shown, but they do start out as such). This is relevant in the context of distinction between space and place. In his work *Space and Place* Yi-Fu Tuan claims that "What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value" (6), place is security, something we are attached to (Tuan 3). Edward Relph offers a rather similar definition of places as "centres of meaning, or focuses of intention and purpose" (22). Small towns are then obviously places when seen from the perspective of the locals, at least in the sense of being known, and their analysis must therefore take into account crucial conditions associated with the existence of places. According to Relph there are several characteristics of place which should be given attention if one wants to understand it; these are "setting, landscape, ritual, routine, other people, personal experiences, care and concern for home, and in the context of other places" (29). It follows then that small towns, as any other place, can be analyzed in terms of their history or more broadly relationship with time, location in space and relationship with space around them, their shared and individual landscapes, and their people, which is all "essential to our experience and sense of place" (Relph 29) as it becomes the source of meanings and values people ascribe to those places. Observing them through the lens of those aspects it will be possible to understand how the small town is represented by each writer.

3.1. Time and history

In his depiction of "the almost perfect town" Jackson states that "Optimo, being after all an imaginary average small town, has to have had an average small-town history, or at least a Western version of that average" (164), which in its case means a pre-Civil War one. He goes on to offer a brief version of that history and its crucial points for the way Optimo sees itself today. What can be concluded from Jackson's argument is that Optimo has to have a history because it is largely that history that makes it a good place fit for humans; it secures the town identity and is a rich source of civic pride. Even though Jackson's attention is directed exclusively towards the small town and its appraisal, his sentiments do not exist in isolation, for time, and history as a manifestation of it, is generally recognized as an important aspect of understanding places. Thus Relph includes time in his analysis of elements that constitute "authentic" places, "Much ritual and custom and myth has the incidental if not deliberate effect of strengthening attachment to place by reaffirming not only the sanctity and unchanging significance of it, but also the enduring relationships between a people and their place" (32-33). In other words, time and tradition highly contribute to the evolvement of attachment to place by drawing on the feeling of its stability; continuous accumulations of meaning throughout time result in belonging to a specific part of the world, in knowing who you are by knowing your place in the world, that is, in rootedness, which he highly values. Tuan, in his exploration of the relatedness of time and place, further solidifies both Relph's and Jackson's point, "What can the past mean to us? People look back for various reasons, but shared by all is the need to acquire a sense of self and of identity. I am more than what the thin present defines" (186). History captured in a place, as part of the physical world, is a valid point of reference for what is now. Firstly, in terms of the place itself, as King writes in *It,* "To know what a place *is,* I really do believe one has to know what it *was*" (181), and secondly, in terms of people who consider the place *theirs*, of who they are, or think they are,

because of the history of their town. It was already mentioned that one of the generally known features of the American small town is its association with community. This will explored in greater detail later on but for now it suffices to say that the analysis of impacts of sense of time on perceptions of the small town takes this feature into account and observes the impacts mostly in a communal or shared sense.

Lovecraft's treatment of time and history in representation of the small town puts into question the postulates of the idyll by showing the negative consequences of a historical background desired by Jackson. Both Dunwich and Innsmouth are old towns, in fact ancient for the American context, as Lovecraft declares for the latter, "the ancient Massachusetts seaport of Innsmouth" ("The Shadow over Innsmouth" 492), and it is largely from that condition that their ruin and horror arise. One cannot escape the impression that Dunwich, which is "indeed ridiculously old—older by far than any of the communities within thirty miles of it" ("The Dunwich Horror" 336), is incapable of escaping its horror precisely because of its history. While Dunwich, as the narrator experiences it, is largely the product of questionable traditions of its current residents and their ancestors, these traditions, however, do not embody the initial state or origins of Dunwich, which was founded by Salem settlers and thus by implication should have held an elevated position according to Lovecraft, "The old gentry, representing the two or three armigerous families which came from Salem in 1692, have kept somewhat above the general level of decay; though many branches are sunk into the sordid populace so deeply that only their names remain as a key to the origin they disgrace" ("The Dunwich Horror" 335). Such ideas are primarily reflective of Lovecraft's well known love of aristocracy, which he openly advocated, as S.T. Joshi includes in his work *Dreamer and a Visionary: H.P. Lovecraft in his Tim*e, "I believe in an aristocracy, because I deem it the only agency for the creation of those refinements which make life endurable for the human animal of high organization" (qtd in Joshi 183). They also express his fears of its

decay and degeneration; in a way precisely that is of importance here, not the final product but rather the *transition* from the aristocratic origin, one that might have been a quality starting point and possibly a source of communal pride, towards the present decadence through practices of the townsfolk themselves. This transition or rather corruption happens throughout time, quite some time to be precise (again, for the American context), which creates an opportunity for the development of a substantial town and communal history. It is precisely that aspect of time that may influence a place negatively – the longer the history of the town the more opportunity there is for unpleasant things to happen and corrupt it. That the small town can have too much of a history, so to speak, is pointed out by Michelle K. Smith in her paper "Of Landscapes and Nightmares: The Geography of Fictional Horror", "The isolated rural and wilderness settings also offer the accretion of history (…) They offer a past for the origination of evil, and then its isolation allows the evil to flourish unheeded. Hidden, out-of-the-way evil is nurtured in the hospitable surroundings" (77). Once more the importance of history for the concept of the small town is acknowledged but it undergoes severe reversal of values. If the present community can only look to a rather dark past of their town as their resource for making sense of who they are and shaping their identity, the image of the idyll seems to be irretrievably lost.

When it comes to a sense of time influencing the small town in Bradbury's world, things change. First of all, it should be noted that the issue of time or rather the passage of time is one of the main subjects of his Green Town series; they are in many ways an attempt to make peace with the inescapable faith of growing up and loss as a part of life, and while it might not coincidental that this subject is explored amidst the streets and meadows of a small town (for there is a stark difference between the small town of 1920's, which is represented in the novel, and 1950's, when *Dandelion Wine* was published), this has less to do with the American small town narrative and more with being a human. Therefore, it will not be given

further attention. Nonetheless, time is relevant in the creation and experience of Green Town, where *Dandelion Wine, Something Wicked This Way Comes* and *Farewell Summer* are all set, although in a quite different way. What is noticeable in all three novels is the lack of retelling of history, all that is said of the town is that "it was a trading post" (*Dandelion Wine* 167). This is understandable for Green Town, as Bradbury in his introduction to *Dandelion Wine* openly states, is basically the town where he was born and raised, Waukegan, Illinois renamed (7), something that should also be kept in mind for the rest of this analysis. Waukegan indeed *was* a trading post but the rest of its history needs no telling as it is available outside the pages of the novel. However, this particular condition is also the reason for the lack of it for Green Town is also a magical place and a part of that magic depends on it existing in a universe of its own, unburdened with the conditions of reality. What history is present in the town fits with both Relph's and Tuan's ideas of time and place, and more importantly Jackson's "typical" small town. Pieces of town's past are cherished and respected, their value is recognized and efforts put into their preservation,

> In the alley behind the house was a huge old-fashioned pine-plank boardwalk. It had been there ever since Will remembered, since civilization unthinkingly poured forth the dull hard unresisting cement sidewalks. His grandfather (…) had flexed his muscles in favour of this vanishing landmark, and with a dozen handymen had toted a good forty feet of the walk into the alley where it had lain like the skeleton of some indefinable monster through the years, baked by sun, lushly rotted by rains. (*Something Wicked This Way Comes* 73)

What is more, time as frozen as it may be in townscape does not create a feeling of passivity or obsolescence, for it is infused with human activity as everything else is in Green Town. This "vast gift from another time" (*Something Wicked This Way Comes* 73-74) is used as a means of communication between two friends and is given life once more, "Late nights (…)

one or the other of the boys would prowl out under the moon and xylophone-dance on that old hollow-echoing musical boardwalk" (*Something Wicked This Way Comes* 74). The same mechanism is used in the mention of only other historical element of townscape, although that one is not of as intimate and defining of the town, but rather presents a common American monument, ""Boom!!" said Tom. "Boom. Boom. Boom." He sat on the Civil War cannon in the courthouse square. Douglas, in front of the cannon, clutched his heart and fell down on the grass" (*Dandelion Wine* 162). In Green Town the past does not hold sway of the present nor does it oppress the town life, instead it enriches it and fuses with the other elements of the idyll through human actions and enjoyable experiences. In this manner even solemn monuments can be re-evaluated as sites of children's playfulness.

The treatment of the issue of time in King's small-town America is basically a continuation of Lovecraft's work – there is such thing as too much history, time creates an opportunity for the accumulation of bad things and accordingly negative meanings of the small town. Langan asserts that "the primitive, whether savage rituals or genetic monstrousness, survives and even thrives within the boundaries of the small town" (544), and while the latter is easily recognizable in Lovecraft's towns, the former is evident in Derry where the main antagonist monstrous Its feeding cycle remains undisturbed for more than two centuries. But Derry is significant in another sense, one which will be shown to echo through the discussion of the problem of small-town communities – the exclusion of certain parts of town history. This is not infrequent, as Tuan's claims clarify, "What facets of the city's past should be preserved? Not the evidences of societal failure, such as old prisons, mental hospitals, and workhouses. These are removed with no regret or second thought on the inviolate nature of history" (197). The fire at the Black Spot is an example of such exclusion on the ideal level, "A perfect example of how the Chamber of Commerce will try to rewrite history" (*It* 528), the fire set by the Derry branch of the Legion of White Decency in which

many African Americans were killed and whose members constitute some of the "finest" families of the present town community. There involvement was never openly recognized and the whole subject is mostly ignored. One of the survivors comments on the depths of the problem, "Most of the history books talk more about the KKK than they do about the Legion of White Decency, and a lot of people don't even know there was such a thing. I think it might be because most of the histories have been written by Northerners and they're ashamed" (*It* 536). The situation is no different with parts of the town past which are preserved in space, material in nature, as the case of Canal Days Museum (opened as a part of the already mentioned Festival) shows,

> The museum was sponsored by the Derry Ladies' Society, which vetoed some of Hanlon's proposed exhibits (such as the notorious tramp-chair from the 1930's) and photographs (such as those of the Bradley Gang after the notorious shoot-out). But all agreed it was a great success, and no one really wanted to see those gory old things anyway. It was so much better to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative, as the old song said (*It* 23-24).

Derry serves as a proof that the small town history quite possibly also includes nasty moments and not just those that are material for civic pride. Also, it is both an example of how easy it is to disregard and hide the realities of past for the sake of attempts at the preservation of the myth. Ironically, such actions may prove to seal the destruction of that myth and death of the small town both in its ideal and concrete form.

3. 2. Location

Apart from a specific relationship with time, the understanding of the possible depictions of the small town depends on its spatial factors, and should begin with the observation of its location and relationship with the space around it. When discussing the

location of places we are simply dealing with the issue of *where* those places are in space, and while that question cannot always be easily answered, for "location or position is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of place" (Relph 29) and some places are not located at all, when it comes to small towns the question is not problematic, for they are fixedly located. In fact, while Lovecraft's Dunwich and Innsmouth are fictional towns, they are set in the actual New England geography. Fictional and real spaces are constantly merging as one may see in "The Shadow over Innsmouth" in the case of the said town, "A queer kind of a town down at the mouth of the Manuxet" (493). While there is no such thing as the Manuxet River or the seaport town of Innsmouth, Newburyport, the town from which the narrator takes the bus to Innsmouth, is very much real. Some of those fictional places can even be more or less accurately pinpointed to real New England towns, but more importantly they are inspired by real New England towns. The same applies to Stephen King's fictional Maine geography in which fictional towns of Derry, Jerusalem's Lot and Castle Rock exist alongside places like Augusta or Portland, as for instance "Jerusalem's Lot is a small town east of Cumberland and twenty miles north of Portland" (8). Such practices both point to the regional writers' attachment to place and create the possibility of understanding specific small towns in more universal terms due to their fictitiousness. On the other hand, Bradbury's Green Town is declared to be his hometown Waukegan, as it was already explained.

Furthermore, when Tim Cresswell's claim that "Naming is one of the ways space can be given meaning and become place" (9) is considered Bradbury's choice immediately provides the reader with a certain set of expectations (which may have been left unfulfilled or reversed but they are not as it will be shown) – those of more concrete nature manifested in town's scenery and more abstract ones indicating a certain pleasantness, a liveliness. The only other town name discussed in the novels is that of King's Jerusalem's Lot "or 'salem's Lot as the natives often refer to it" (*'Salem's Lot* 8) and it is in no way evocative of pleasant images

and feelings. If quite unpleasant associations with the actual town of Salem are not enough, the fact that the town was named after one of the earliest resident's large sow named Jerusalem helps.

> Jerusalem broke out of her pen one day at feeding time, escaped into the nearby woods, and went wild and mean. Tanner warned small children off his property for years afterward by leaning over his gate and croaking at them in ominous, gore-crow tones: 'Keep 'ee out o' Jerusalem's wood lot, if 'ee want to keep 'ee guts in 'ee belly!' The warning took hold, and so did the name (*'Salem's Lot* 23).

Naming is undoubtedly important for the creation of place as it fixes the town more permanently both in space and human consciousness, as it also offers the locals a means of expressing their belonging to *their* town thorough contracting the official name into 'Salem's Lot. But if the issue of by-name-given meaning is considered, this example makes it rather hard to imagine that one will find the small-town idyll in Jerusalem's Lot, as opposed to Bradbury's "countryside-embodied" name of Green Town. The point is supported by the concluding remark on the origins of the name, "It proves little, except that perhaps in America even a pig can aspire to immortality" (*'Salem's Lot* 23), which turns the image of idyll into a critique.

There is another aspect important for the analysis of location, which by no means implies only practices of regional writers or creation of semi-fictional geographies. Moreover, this aspect demands for a slight elaboration of location as element of place. It is not enough to merely say that a small town is positioned *there*, as *there* for small towns usually implies a very specific type of surrounding space. Describing what he believes to be a typical small town of Optimo Jackson states that "the ties between country and town have not yet been broken, (…) the world of Optimo City is still complete" (166), and this is what makes the small town "so valuable". It was already stated that according to certain scholars the

American small town is a form of rural and Jackson's claim brings those two worlds together. The small town as a form of rural implies a certain landscape within the town as well as a direct influence on the locals' way of living – those elements will be analyzed later on – for now it suffices to say that the myth of the small town sets it in the countryside, amidst nature. This is true for Lovecraft's Dunwich, as one can see from the description of the surrounding area.

> The trees of the frequent forest belts seem too large, and the wild weeds, brambles and grasses attain a luxuriance not often found in settled regions (…) Gorges and ravines of problematical depth intersect the way, and the crude wooden bridges always seem of dubious safety. When the road dips again there are stretches of marshland that one instinctively dislikes, and indeed almost fears at evening when unseen whippoorwills chatter and the fireflies come out in abnormal profusion to dance to the raucous, creepily insistent rhythms of stridently piping bull-frogs. ("The Dunwich Horror" 335)

Dunwich is indeed located amidst nature but it is not a source of pleasure, one might even say that there is something *unnatural* about it. The lusciousness of it seems excessive and uncontrollable, which in turn makes its proximity oppressive rather than uplifting. It is teeming with alien life whose presence is only felt by humans through eerie sounds and glimpses of light and shadows. Dunwich is located in the middle of a menacing world. Moreover, the space around it cuts it off from the outside world which further lessens the possibility of experiencing the small town idyll. This characteristic of the small town as a strongly rural place is recognized by Bell who points out that "one of the main reasons for deploying the rural as a location [for horror stories] is that it offers isolation and an alien environment" (93), something that Lovecraft makes use of in the description of Innsmouth, which is surrounded by the sea on one side while "wide salt marshes, desolate and unpeopled, keep neighbours off from Innsmouth on the landward side" ("The Shadow Over Innsmouth",

492). The isolation of the backwater town is a clear example of how various aspects of place are inextricably linked, as it allows for the introduction of another element frequently associated with rural horror that will be of certain importance for the analysis of small town people. As Gill Valentine states, "The independence and insularity of rural inhabitants has also fostered cultural myths in the USA about rural incest, inbreeding, backwardness and even cannibalism" (258). Dunwich's isolation thus serves as a fertile ground for what is commonly seen as abomination, and further distances it from the image of a green oasis and towards a place instinctively disliked, "people shun it without knowing exactly why. Perhaps one reason (…) is that the natives are now repellently decadent, having gone far along that path of retrogression so common in many New England backwaters" ("The Dunwich Horror" 335).

Bradbury's Green Town on the other hand fits perfectly with the image of pastoral idyll. It would be an understatement to say that the ties between country and town have indeed not been broken, for the town is not merely surrounded by nature, but rather the boundary between the two seems somewhat vague as nature infuses the small town.

> Who could say where town or wilderness began? Who could say which owned what and what owned which? There was always and forever that indefinable place where the two struggled and one of them won for a season to possess a certain avenue, a deli, a glen, a tree, a bush. The thin lapping of the great continental sea of grass and flower, starting far out in lonely farm country, moved inward with the thrust of seasons. (*Dandelion Wine* 29)

Such environment offers a certain sense of isolation even it this case. "Warm summer twilight here in upper Illinois country in this little town deep far away from everything, kept to itself by a river and a forest and a meadow and a lake" (*Dandelion Wine* 187). However, Bradbury's small town shows how this does not necessarily have to be a negative trait. Green Town's isolation does not turn it into a corrupted, threatening place, but rather it creates a

haven in which childhood fantasies can be made real and fears faced without destructive consequences, while the absence of mention of any other surrounding places, that is, of the description of specific geographical points and features which determine the town's location transforms it into an almost magical micro-cosmos, even though Bradbury makes it clear that he is writing about Waukegan.

King's small towns are also set in the countryside although in varying degrees, which consequently determines the extent of their isolation. Jerusalem's Lot for instance is strongly rural which is visible in the change of scenery as one approaches the town, "The trees, mostly pine and spruce, rose in gentle slopes toward the east, seeming to almost crowd against the sky at the limit of vision. From here the town was not visible" ('*Salem's Lot* 15). The town is surrounded by tree-covered hills and the Royal River provides a natural boundary on the east (23). Castle Rock and Derry do not seem to be physically drastically cut off from the rest of the world although there are woods around them, which is far from unusual considering that Maine is heavily forested. The lack of isolation though does not make them any less horrifying.

As it has by now become evident, the issue of the small town location leads to the question of its interaction with the space around, at which point it is impossible not to make observations about the *town* physical patterns, for such a proximity to nature and bonds between it and the town are prone to be reflected in the town's landscape itself.

3.3. Landscape

It is noted by Cresswell that "We do not live in landscapes we look at them" (11). Indeed, they are visual concepts and should not be equated with places. However, these physical forms of places are recognized by Relph as one of the crucial elements of place, "Whether place is understood and experienced as landscape in the direct and obvious sense

that visual features provide tangible evidence of some concentration of human activities or in a more subtle sense as reflecting human values and intentions, appearance is an important feature of all places" (31). In other words, physical characteristic of the small town provide an insight into the town's practices and values; they are materializations of unique human activities and experiences. The erection of town monuments is a clear example of that, but not the only one, as even buildings and various other man-made landscapes as well as the status of (more) natural landscapes within the small town speak of the locals' routines. What is more, these uniquely small-town features not only reflect but influence and determine the way of life in the small town.

3.3.1. Country life

It was already concluded that small towns are set amidst a strongly natural landscape. Such surroundings are often more than surroundings as they dictate the patterns of town landscape and consequently call for a certain way of life that emphasizes the benefits of man's bond with nature – or as Bunce puts it "the belief that rural life is more natural than urban; that, by virtue of their closeness to the soil and their dependency on the physical environment, farming folk live a more natural and therefore more fulfilled existence" (23). Dependency on the immediate environment however offers more than a personal fulfillment; it ensures the small town's self-sufficiency as a highly valued feature. Both aspects are absent from Lovecraft's small town in which "the farming folk" do not emanate an air of content, "the planted fields appear singularly few and barren (…) Without knowing why, one hesitates to ask directions from the gnarled solitary figures spied now and then on crumbling doorsteps or on the sloping, rock-strown meadows" ("The Horror of Dunwich" 335), and it is precisely "a large and partly inhabited farmhouse set against a hillside four miles from the village and a mile and a half from any other dwelling" ("The Horror of Dunwich" 336) that plays the

central role in the conception of evil that strikes the town. Reasons for this should be sought in the dangers of insisting upon self-sufficiency to the extent that it may lead to inability to respond to the dynamics of the outside world. There are no proofs to suggest that Dunwhich is not an exclusively agricultural town, as both landscapes support this claim and the mentioned locals working on farms. Moreover, it is stated that "Industry did not flourish here, and the nineteenth-century factory movement proved short-lived" ("The Horror of Dunwich" 336). What is more, the proximity of nature, or rather the natural landscape that is a part of the town does not transform it into an idyll but provides space for evil to appropriate and dwell in. In Dunwich the strange domed hills around the village with their constant rumblings looked upon uneasily by the locals themselves prove to be the ground for unholy rites and one of the many local ravines, the Cold Spring Glen, becomes a refuge for the product of those rites.

> Whatever had burst loose upon the world had assuredly gone down into the great sinister ravine; for all the trees on the banks were bent and broken, and a great avenue had been gouged in the precipice-hanging underbrush (…) From below no sound came, but only a distant, undefinable foetor; and it is not to be wondered at that the men preferred to stay on the edge and argue, rather than descend and beard the unknown Cyclopean horror in its lair. ("The Dunwich Horror" 348)

All in all, natural landscapes and with it associated activities offer no enjoyment in Lovecraft's small town.

With Bradbury's Green Town that of course is not the case. Firstly, Green Town, as the name suggests it, is rather green. The first novel of the series basically opens with a view of pleasant scenery, "At night, when the trees washed together, he flashed his gaze like a beacon from this lighthouse in all directions over swarming seas of elm and oak and maple" (*Dandelion Wine* 13), one in which the protagonist – a local boy – dreams to immerse himself, "he saw his hands jump everywhere, pluck sour apples, peaches, and midnight

plums. He would be clothed in trees and bushes and rivers" (*Dandelion Wine 13)*. The subtle presence of natural elements permeates almost every scene of small town life. They are never obtrusive but rather seem to enrich the overall townscape and enable the creation of a very pleasant sense of place whether in the peak of summer when "The leaves on all the trees tremble with a soft awakening to any breeze the dawn may offer" (*Dandelion Wine* 117) or near its end when "The first cool touch of autumn moved slowly through the town and there was a softening and the first gradual burning fever of color in every tree, a faint flush and coloring in the hills, and the color of lions in the wheat fields" (*Dandelion Wine* 178). It is not surprising when all is considered that the residents of Green Town seem to love being out, in the town, as the presented aspect of the small town landscapes, and especially "the long elm-shadowed streets" (*Dandelion Wine* 118), is something which is recognized as an important element of the small-town downtown by Francaviglia.

> The regular spacing of a line of trees down the center of Main Street (…) effectively both architecturalizes and naturalizes the space. Strategically planted shade trees serve to soften the streetscape and provide shade when planted in front of commercial buildings. They were commonly employed by merchants on Main Street as a way of making shopping more pleasant and the streetscape more beautiful. (Francaviglia 75)

While the last claim obviously involves an observation of the commercial advantages of introduction of such an element in downtowns, Francaviglia's reasoning holds for the townscape in general. Tree-lined streets are aesthetically pleasing and human-friendly and by being such they increase the possibility of people actually walking along them, and experience the place more fully as Doug's grandfather also feels, "A walk on a spring morning is better than an eighty-mile ride in a hopped-up car, you know why? Because it's full of flavors, full of a lot of things growing. You've time to seek and find" (*Dandelion Wine* 63).

The issue of living off the land is not so prominent in the depiction of Green Town but the importance and pleasures of enjoying the offerings of nature and taking part in active interaction with it are repeatedly emphasized,

> God bless the lawn mower, he [Doug's grandfather] thought. Who was the fool who made January first New Year's Day. No, they should set a man to watch the grasses across a million Illinois, Ohio, and Iowa lawns, and on that morning when it was long enough for cutting, instead of rachets and hems and yelling, there should be a great swelling symphony of lawn mowers reaping fresh grass upon the prairie lands. (*Dandelion Wine* 61)

In his view that small piece of nature in one's front yard enables one to become a recluse for one moment and in finding peace from the world around him to become truly oneself. This understanding highly evocative of transcendentalist philosophy of interaction with nature as a necessary condition for a healthy mind is summed in his claim that "A man toting a sack of blood manure across his lawn is kin to Atlas letting the world spin easy on his shoulder. As Samuel Spaulding, Esquire, once said, 'dig in the earth, delve in the soul'" (*Dandelion Wine* 64).

King's Jerusalem's Lot may be named after a sow but it is no less green than Green Town and natural elements define its townscape to a large extent. There is no shortage of the elm-shaded parts of town and the fact stands that one may take a shortcut through the woods from one end of the town to the other starting from one's own back yard, "At the back of the mowed yard, a beaten path led down the slope to the woods. The Glick house was on Brock Street, Mark Petrie's on South Jointner Avenue. The path was a short cut" ('*Salem's Lot* 56). Whether this positive is highly questionable, for it is precisely on that shortcut that the first vampire attack occurs. Still, there are many opportunities for the locals to enjoy the rural scenery, and lovely scenes which fit in the image of the idyll or as Bunce calls it "the

armchair countryside", "The back porch was painted white with red trim, and the three wicker chairs lined up on it looked toward the Royal River. The river itself was a dazzling dream. There was a late summer moon caught in the trees on the river's far bank, three-quarters full, and it had painted a silver path across the water" ('*Salem's Lot* 31). In regards with the more fulfilled existence of those living off the land, which are supposedly a common occurrence in small towns, King's depiction shows all the realities of such a life.

> The land is granite-bodied and covered with a thin, easily ruptured skin of topsoil. Farming it is a thankless, sweaty, miserable, crazy business (...) you hitch your harrow to your tractor and before you've broken two rows you bust one of the blades on a rock you missed. And putting on a new blade (...) your boy's sweat-slicked fingers slip and one of the other round harrow blades scrapes skin from your arm and looking around in that kind of despairing, heartless flicker of time, when it seems you could just give it all over and take up drinking or go down to the bank that holds your mortgage and declare bankruptcy, at that moment of hating the land and the soft suck of gravity that holds you to it, you also love it and understand how it knows darkness and has always known it. The land has got you, locked up solid got you. (*'Salem's Lot* 145)

This particular excerpt shows how even without the introduction of horror elements which transform one of the ultimate American ideals into a place where many things have gone wrong, the concept of the New England Village, and particularly the agrarian component of it, is indeed a myth, easily enjoyed from afar and by those who can afford to believe in it, while the locals, those who have been there for generations, often do not have the luxury of living the myth, as Donald W. Meinig also emphasizes in his essay "Symbolic Landscapes" by calling the hard New England ground "a problem which has been driving such persons [the locals] away from these New England villages for generations, and a problem which is simply ignored in the idealizations" (177). That being said it does not mean that in King's small-town

America one cannot draw satisfaction from working with the land; for Mike, who is living on a farm in Derry rides with his father through their fields were "door into spring" (*It* 322). Their work on the farm is a source of bonding and learning appreciation for the land you live on even when the place is far from idyllic. There is no resentment on the behalf of Mike's father but rather an acceptance of the way the land is and will always be, which is evident in the portrayal of the rock harvest (which seems almost futile as every year there are more rocks to remove anew), "Looking down at this badlands, which he had made first alone and then with the help of his son, (…) Will had lighted a cigarette and said, 'My daddy used to tell me that God loved rocks, houseflies, weeds, and poor people above all the rest of His creations, and that's why He made so many of them" (*It* 323).

3.3.2. Spaces of small and near

It has already been suggested that certain features of townscape, specifically trees along streets, which encourage people to participate in public space and which are typical of small towns are highly desirable. That manmade space can have a strong impact on the creation of place is something pointed out by Tuan, "The built environment, like language, has the power to define and refine sensibility. It can sharpen and enlarge consciousness" (107). In that light, another characteristically small-town feature which makes them what they are and which is the obvious fact of their existence must be explored – they are small, and by being such they allow for a closeness of everything in them, which consequently enables people to be out in the streets more, as more or less everything is within a walking distance. However, one would be mistaken to assume that this signifies mere practicality of small-town spaces. This aspect is not questionable, but it leads to something more important, something that should be the core of any place – the increased probability of feeling good about yourself, your role in that place and essentially the place itself. Furthermore, what this feature of small

towns helps producing is more time spent in public spaces, which increases your chances of interacting with other people and forming social ties, or simply, satisfying human need for company, even among those people who sometimes might be left out. The issue is given considerable attention in James Howard Kunstler's critique of post-World-War-II American landscapes, *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of Man-Made Landscape,*

> The extreme separation and dispersion of components that use to add up to a compact town, where everything was within a ten-minute walk, has left us with a public realm that is composed mainly of roads. And the only way to be in that public realm is to be in a car, often alone. The present arrangement has certainly done away with sacred places, places of casual public assembly, and places of repose. (118-119)

To put it simply, because it is small and because everything in it is rather close, the small town is believed to be the proper way of designing spaces for people to live in, for one would feel more compelled to participate in the fabric of shared spaces and consequently there would arise higher chances of the development of a sense of community, as "connected localities" equals "connected people".

Lovecraft's Innsmouth, "a town of wide extent and dense construction" ("The Shadow over Innsmouth" 499) does not lack the desirable arrangement and its "narrow, shadow-blighted ways" (504) are definitely more suitable for a human being than a car. It is then small surprise that the narrator (who is a visitor) is able to explore most of the town on foot in a span of one afternoon. However, the town as he encounters it is also "one with a portentous dearth of visible life" ("The Shadow over Innsmouth" 499). While Innsmouth once may have been lively (as we learn from the narrator), the community-supportive conditions of the small-town design were not able to preserve the pleasant liveliness of public spaces which are associated with the concept of the small town. Innsmouth is the complete reversal of such

ideas and it is precisely its utter and uncanny desertedness that is one of the main sources of horror.

> Not a living thing did I see, except for the scattered fishermen on the distant breakwater, and not a sound did I hear save the lapping of the harbour tides and the roar of the falls in the Manuxet. The town was getting more and more on my nerves, and I looked behind me furtively as I picked my way back over the tottering Water Street bridge. ("The Shadow over Innsmouth" 505)

It is unexpected and thus unsettling to see a small town in such a state.

At this point it should not be disregarded that Lovecraft's towns are different from Bradbury's and King's small towns in the sense that they are being experience by an outsider, which immediately makes them more hostile. According to Relph the dialectics of inside-outside is one of the crucial elements in our experience of places, "It is the difference between safety and danger, cosmos and chaos, enclosure and exposure, or simply here and there" (Relph 49). While Lovecraft's protagonists do not belong to the town and the town does not belong to them, the problem of not experiencing the place positively must not be explained away by that condition, as by getting to know a place we may learn to like it. The explorer of Innsmouth does in fact manage to appreciate its landscapes to some extents, as he objectively points out that "there were architectural details worth viewing at every silent corner" ("The Shadow over Innsmouth" 516), but it is Innsmouth's unnatural state that completely obstructs the possibility of moving towards the other end of the scale. The physical patterns of the town are obviously not sufficient to make it a lovely place and the presence (or absence) of people can severely influence the experience of landscape.

In Green Town, on the other hand, people are a common sight all over the town which is teeming with life, or as one of the characters succinctly puts it, "in a town this size, everybody's within a mile of someone at one time or other in the day" (*Dandelion Wine* 143).

This however does not do justice to Bradbury's portrayal of small town vivaciousness and sociability. The opening images of rural scenery in *Dandelion Wine* are followed by the image of town waking up, "Doors slammed open; people stepped out" (15), and it seems that during that one summer portrayed in the novel they stay out there. There are of course various scenes which focus exclusively on people's homes, or private spaces, but Green Town is primarily a place where different people meet each other on the streets, people who are glad to be where they are or learn to be so by the time the reader leaves Green Town. This is something on which one of the characters counts in his endeavour to build a "Happiness Machine", "Leo Auffmann loitered out through the streets (…) jerking his head at the slightest sound of distant laughter, listened to children's jokes, watching what made them smile. At night he sat on neighbors' crowded porches, listening to the old folks weigh and balance life" (*Dandelion Wine* 68). Bradbury's depiction of the small town may generally lack elaborate descriptions of the townscape as a whole, but the image of a place perfectly designed for humans is build through focusing on crucial elements which define its space. That front porches are one of the highly valuable features of small-town space – an example of connectedness of space which is the product of a sense of community and simultaneously one which fosters that same sense of community – is something pointed out by Kunstler, who asserts that "The procession of porches along the street created a lovely mediating zone between the private world of the home and the public world of the street, further connected and softened by the towering elm trees and the lush foliage" (185). The premise here is perfectly sound but it still remains void of value, which is essential for the myth of the small town. Bradbury's realization of the idea, however, shows why the small town, with its porches and limited spaces, can evoke extremely positive emotions.

> Sitting on the summer-night porch was so good, so easy and so reassuring that it could never be done away with. These were rituals that were right and lasting; the lighting of

> pipes, the pale hands that moved knitting needles in the dimness, the eating of foil-wrapped, chilled Eskimo Pies, the coming and going of all the people. For at some time or other during the evening, everyone visited here; the neighbors down the way, the people across the street. (*Dandelion Wine* 44-45)

This characteristic of Bradbury's depiction of the small town further strengthens the concept of the idyll already introduced by rural landscapes and meanings ascribed to them.

So far it has been proven that small-town spatial patterns are supposed to draw people onto streets and generally into public spaces which thus become an end in itself and not only a means which they often are in large urban areas according to the advocates of small-town life. It has been shown what kind of feelings arise when the townscape fails to actualize its potentials – the desolate town of Innsmouth is an eerie place which evokes anxiety in the one who explores it. It has also been demonstrated what it looks like when those potentials are in fact materialized, as Green Town public spaces filled with human activity project a strong feeling of warmth and through it succeed in sustaining the image of the small town idyll.

King's portrayal of the small town reaches a middle ground; it is neither a physically decadent ghost town which leaves no room for doubts about the nature of its condition, nor a place whose social activity immediately communicates a valued form of existence. All of the towns depicted in chosen novels are seemingly doing well – some are larger, some are smaller but they appear to be normally functioning places. Jerusalem's Lot is indeed first introduced to the reader as a ghost town but initially it was "a sprawling, comfortable township" ('*Salem's Lot* 9), which the reader is capable of seeing as events which led to the present state are narrated. However, there is one difference between Jerusalem's Lot and Green Town that puts the former into an inferior position and points to the reality of small towns in post-war America, "TV has pretty well put the kibosh on the old neighborhood get-togethers, except for the duffers who hang around Milt's store" (*'Salem's Lot* 176). Old men who hang around

the said store and in the town park seem to be a sad image in comparison with the constant interaction of people in Green Town. At the same time, there is no doubt that Derry is a lively town, as Bill's bicycle drive through Derry's downtown shows. There are many obstacles for a kid on a bike – both traffic and "a trio of old ladies crossing Main Street" (*It* 277). A little farther on "the corner of Kansas and Jackson (…) Kids ran here and there, playing tag and throwing baseballs" (*It* 288). And if that is not convincing enough one should take a look at the town festival – "a rousing success, most Derry residents agreed" (22) – which provides perfect context for people's interaction and creation of town image by making use of the town's public spaces, "There was a huge striped refreshment tent in Derry Park and band concerts there every night. In Bassey Park there was a carnival with rides by Smokey's Greater Shows and games run by local townfolk. A special tram-car circled the historic section of the town every hour on the tour and ended up at this gaudy and amiable money-machine" (*It* 24). Still, an outsider who knows nothing about it feels that "The town seemed to have wrapped itself around her like a python. She could sense it, and the feelings it produced were not good" (1199), and it is also felt by some locals that there is something wrong with Derry, as evident from on of the characters saying, "There's something ugly about this town anyway. I've always thought so" (221).

Obviously, the issue of small-town spaces being lived and active is not that simple. The small-town may be defined by a human-friendly environment and small space which makes people participate in the public domain, but just filling the streets, parks or squares with people is not enough for the small town to be understood as a place which, on one hand, can be so loved and valued by the Americans while, on the other hand, is so successfully deployed and enjoyed as a source of horror. To do that more attention should be given to an element which was already mention as being fostered by the physical form of the small town – a sense of community.

3.4. Community

People are an important element of places. That is hardly surprising as places are usually sites of interaction with other people; the feelings those people evoke in us may affect the way we perceive a certain place. This applies to all places where some sort of human contact has happened but the simplest example of the way this inscription of values operates is probably a childhood home – one does not have to live in a masterpiece of architecture to love the place where he lives; a loving family will normally suffice. And while it would be incorrect to assume that places are defined solely on the basis of their people, they *do* play a significant role. The dynamics of this relationship are summed up by Relph, "The relationship between community and place is indeed a very powerful one in which each reinforces the identity of the other, and in which the landscape is very much an expression of communally held beliefs and values and of interpersonal" (34). The information presented in the analysis of the issue of proximity and smallness has already shown how a place can affect its people on the most general level. Because it is small everything is close in the small town, because everything is close people are frequently close in space – a space that is limited and therefore everyone eventually knows everyone and is in one way or another involved with almost everyone – and that produces a sense of community.

That community is associated with the small town is a widely known idea, for it is an essential part of the myth of the small town. Valentine is one of the many researchers to point to the fact, "Claims of an ethos of co-operation and mutual aid have characterized numerous studies of rural life (Newby 1985, Bell 1992). In other words, rural space is defined as synonymous with a particular form of social relations: *gemeinschaft*, 'community'" (250). The myth of the small town operates on an exclusive assumption that this element is entirely positive and desirable, for why would anyone want to drown in a sea of strangers inhabiting a big city when he can be surrounded by people who truly know him and appreciate him for

who he is and for what he means to the town? Hence the small town, with its tight-knit communities, has long been seen in America as the last resort against the alienation, impersonality and loneliness of the modern metropolis. The truth is often far more complex, and it is precisely the underlying, covert facts of strong communal nature of small towns that can be used to explore the negative sides of the small town as a place.

The specific state of the local people in Lovecraft's Dunwich was already mentioned in the analysis of its isolation, a common trait of the small town location. Due to its seclusion and self-reliance Dunwich remained closed-off from the rest of the world and people's directedness toward each other resulted in incest. "They have come to form a race by themselves, with the well-defined mental and physical stigmata of degeneracy and inbreeding" ("The Dunwich Horror" 335). What is immediately noticeable is that the state of the community is very much similar to that of the town spaces themselves, or to be more specific, there is an obvious correlation between the two, one reflects the other and draws from it in the process of place formation and, consequently, in the negative perception and evaluation of it by those who are not a part of the town. "[One] wonders at the cluster of rotting gambrel roofs bespeaking an earlier architectural period than that of the neighbouring region. It is not reassuring to see, on a closer glance, that most of the houses are deserted and falling to ruin, and that the broken-steepled church now harbours the one slovenly mercantile establishment of the hamlet" ("The Dunwich Horror" 335). People are indeed their place and a place is its people (Relph 34), as the general impression of corruption cannot be pinpointed to either of them separately.

Apart from this relationship between landscapes and people, there is something else that we learn about the Dunwich people and that is highly representative of the bad side of small town communities, "The average of their intelligence is woefully low, whilst their annals reek of overt viciousness and of half-hidden murders, incests, and deeds of almost

unnamable violence and perversity" ("The Dunwich Horror" 335). Communal bonds are certainly strong, but that did not come to be merely through familiarity and camaraderie that are usually implied in the myth of the small town, but rather thorough shared experience and love of obscenities. This serves as a concrete example of Langan's claim that "concern with communities bound together in secret sin" (547) is one of the crucial elements of small town horror narratives, as well as the "representation of populations aware that something is wrong with one of their inhabitants, but failing to act on their knowledge until it is much, much too late" (Langan 547). Due to their heritage and alleged deeds the Dunwich community is already a grotesque version of an idealized community, which severely damages the image of the small town life, but the final element which transforms the place into a site of horror are apathy and lethargy of the locals who despite fearing one of their neighbours (largely responsible for the later events) and being vaguely aware of his activities do nothing to stop him, "For a decade the annals of the Whateleys sink indistinguishably into the general life of a morbid community used to their queer ways and hardened to their May-Eve and All-Hallows orgies" ("The Dunwich Horror" 340). Even when the actual "horror of Dunwich" ensues the locals, who are afflicted by it, fail to act. "Darkness fell upon a stricken countryside too passive to organise for real defence. In a few cases closely related families would band together and watch in the gloom under one roof; but in general there was only a repetition of the barricading of the night before, and a futile, ineffective gesture of loading muskets and setting pitchforks handily about" ("The Dunwich Horror" 348). And the passivity of the community is only worsened by their extreme self-reliance, thus outside help from Ayelsbury, the neighbouring town is eventually sought only after several days of town being terrorized pass and people die "since Dunwich folk are never anxious to call the outside world's attention to themselves" ("The Dunwich Horror" 340).

Same principles operate in the creation of Innsmouth. As well as Dunwich, the town is infamous, feared and strictly avoided by other inhabitants of the region, but despite rumors of its abnormality the isolation of the town has enabled the locals to keep to themselves and their way of life. The connection between the state of landscapes and people of the town is again present but with Innsmouth both are more radically distorted.

> Some houses along Main Street were tenanted, but most were tightly boarded up. Down unpaved side streets I saw the black, gaping windows of deserted hovels, many of which leaned at perilous and incredible angles through the sinking of part of the foundations. Those windows stared so spectrally that it took courage to turn eastward toward the waterfront. Certainly, the terror of a deserted house swells in geometrical rather than arithmetical progression as houses multiply to form a city of stark desolation. The sight of such endless avenues of fishy-eyed vacancy and death, and the thought of such linked infinities of black, brooding compartments given over to cobwebs and memories and the conqueror worm, start up vestigial fears and aversions that not even the stoutest philosophy can disperse. ("The Shadow over Innsmouth" 505)

Not only that the place is half deserted and ruinous, which is an obvious sign of the small town decay and obviously evokes unease in the observer by itself, but the people who are left "seemed sullenly banded together in some sort of fellowship and understanding—despising the world as if they had access to other and preferable spheres of entity. Their appearance—especially those staring, unwinking eyes which one never saw shut—was certainly shocking enough; and their voices were disgusting" ("The Shadow over Innsmouth" 502). The secrecy that bounds them in this case proves to be more extreme than that of the Dunwich folk. The striking similarity in the description of the townscape and the locals as manifested in the reference to the fish-like quality of both ("avenues of fishy-eyed vacancy" and "the

unwinking eyes") can be taken as the proof of the connection between place and its people but it is also significant in the more narrow context of dangers of closed small-town communities. What the town hides are in fact the consequences of one of the locals striking a seemingly profitable deal with some sort of amphibian creatures who eventually grew dissatisfied with mere sacrificing of the townsfolk and demanded interbreeding; the majority of the Innsmouth people are the result of that interbreeding and all who opposed were eliminated. One of the still human locals says that nothing was meant to be different on the outside, they were only supposed to keep shy of strangers if they knew what was good for them ("The Shadow over Innsmouth" 513), and while the neighbouring communities feel that there is something wrong with the town their knowledge and action remain highly limited. That such distinctly unnatural routines can go unnoticed for several decades is highly representative of small town insularity. The issue of the town's public image together with the narrator's final discovery of his own monstrous Innsmouth heritage connects "The Shadow over Innsmouth" to other small-town horror narratives, which Langan claims are all "bound together by common concerns with authenticity, an anxiety about the difference between what we seem to be and what we in fact are" (537) – clearly, concerns which perfectly translate the processing of identity issues, which the small town experiences itself due to its half mythical nature, onto human level.

Bradbury's representation of small-town America does to some extent include these same preoccupations but, on the whole, his approach to the role of community in the creation of the concept is extremely close to the traditions of the small town idyll. It was already shown how specific features of townscape, such as human-scaled spaces, pleasant streets and porches affect the locals' willingness and possibility to interact – the townscape can be seen both as the expression of already existent values of Green Town residents and the enabler of their persistence. People in Green Town obviously do make up a loving community. Another

aspect of communities that Bradbury presents in a positive light is that everyone knows each other (for how could not they in such a small place), and what is more, feels comfortable around other people. From that arises another commonly emphasized characteristic of the small town – the feeling of safety, or more precisely public safety. Valentine thus states that "the rural is imagined as an idyllic setting for family life because it is regarded as a safer space than the city in which to bring up children" (257). It is not so surprising that this would happen as public nature of people's lives makes transgressions of any sort more difficult to happen. The following scene perfectly captures the mentioned idyllic qualities and the consequences of the feeling of safety (especially when one considers the fact that the protagonists of novels set in Green Town are children),

> Miss Fern and Miss Roberta humming by in their electric runabout, giving Tom or Douglas a ride around the block and then coming up to sit down and fan away the fever in their cheeks; or Mr. Jonas, the junkman, having left his horse and wagon hidden in the alley, and ripe, bursting with words, would come up the steps looking as fresh as if his talk had never been said before, and somehow it never had. And last of all, the children, who had been off squinting their way through a last hide-and-seek or kick-the-can, panting, glowing, would sickle quietly back like boomerangs along the soundless lawn. (*Dandelion Wine* 45)

Children are truly safe in Green Town – they are allowed to interact with all kinds of people without anyone worrying about the possibility of danger, moreover, they are allowed to play around the town even as the night falls. A little boy can be sent alone to the store on the corner (another example of benefits of smallness) in the dark while the town still feels magical and friendly, "He clutched the money and ran barefooted over the warm evening cement sidewalk, under the apple and oak trees, toward the store. The town was so quiet and far off you could hear only the crickets sounding in the spaces beyond the hot indigo trees that

hold back the stars" (*Dandelion Wine* 49) and boundaries of private properties pale in comparison to good-natured demeanor of the locals, "Mrs. Bentley, coming out to water the ivy upon her front porch, saw two cool-colored sprawling girls and a small boy lying on her lawn, enjoying the immense prickling of the grass. At the very moment Mrs. Bentley was smiling down upon them" (*Dandelion Wine* 85).

The feeling of safety and enjoyment of other people's company are not the only ways Bradbury constructs the idealized small town in terms of community. Community means a common involvement and, to some extent, shared experience of the place that is inhabited, or as Kunstler puts it "It is a living organism based on a web of interdependencies" (186), and further as he quotes Wendell Berry "it must be generally loved and competently cared for by its people, who, individually, identify their own interest with the interest of their neighbors" (qtd. in Kunsler 186). These interdependencies are certainly of an affective nature but they are expressed in the physical form of the town and in the way in which changes in small-town space affect all the residents. The episode with the town clock serves as a good example. Several boys, wanting to preserve their childhood and stop the old men from stealing their time, destroy the town clock. They of course fail but the failure turns out to be even greater as we learn from Doug's grandfather how seriously the whole community is affected by the act.

> they're going to have to do quite a lot of repairs in City Hall. They don't say quite what it is they have to fix, but the bill is sizeable and I figure if we apportion it out to various homesteads in the town, it will come to about (...) $70.90 per homestead. Now, most of the people I know around here don't have that kind of money. In order to get it, the people in those homes will have to work quite a few days or maybe weeks or, who knows, months. (*Farewell Summer* 55)

What can be noticed immediately is that the repair of the clock or the locals' participation in it is at no point questioned. The town is a common good and everyone are a part of it, so when a

change happens not only that everyone will feel it but also they will all be willing to correct what was done to it, because it is as if it was done to them. In Green Town, however, there is no ill will and upon realizing the gravity of their deed the boys clean up their mess and admit that "the town's running again the way it's supposed to" (*Farewell Summer* 58). Bradbury's small town is built on the idea that communities do not necessarily have to be bound by dark secrets but rather respect and friendliness and that small spaces filled with people are not exclusively suffocating. While Green Town may posses some mythical qualities, this is not impossible as even Tuan claims that "When people work together for a common cause, one man does not deprive the other of space; rather he increases it for his colleague by giving him support" (65) and that in fact "People (…) can (...) enlarge our world. Heart and mind expand in the presence of those we admire and love" (Tuan 64).

Tuan's statement can further be related to another value, or as Orvell claims one of core values in American society (97), that for many Americans became embodied in the small town – family. If we were to be more specific, the small town, with its origin in the New England village, symbolizes the best the Americans have known of family-centered community (Meinig 165). The creation of Green Town as an ideal place strongly depends on this element. What one is allowed to see around the town, in public space, never collides with representations of private places, that is, homes. Family is as much a defining factor of Bradbury's small-town America as rural landscapes and communal bonds. And living next door to your grandparents once more proves the benefits of physical proximity, as Doug's home seems enlarged by it, and a feeling of homeliness and warmth infuses even the act of gutting a chicken, "Next door, baking bread filled the air with its late-afternoon aroma. He ran out across the yard and into his grandma's kitchen to watch her pull the lovely guts out of a chicken and then paused at a window to see Tom far up in his favorite apple tree trying to climb the sky" (*Farewell Summer* 7). Everywhere you look in Green Town you will not be

disappointed, and while bad things do happen there and they do arise from unresolved issues about the inhabitants' identity (specifically in *Something Wicked This Way Comes)*, which brings Bradbury's town closer to those of Lovecraft and King, there is no drastic discrepancy between what one seems to be and what he really is. People may be troubled by life (that is, by Bradbury's main preoccupation in these novels – the loss of childlike spirit and burdens of growing up) but they are essentially good people. There is no real falseness of image in Green Town – landscapes and people are in unity just as they were in Lovecraft's towns, only here they are equally pleasant, and the reader discovers that even houses shelter the ideal of family life, rather than concealing some nasty reality of the small town. The sentiment is perfectly summed up in the "discovery" of the already mentioned Happiness Machine in one of the locals' homes, in completely ordinary spaces and routines of his family,

> You want to see the real Happiness Machine? They followed him up the front-porch steps. "Here," whispered Leo Auffmann, "the front window. Quiet, and you'll see it." Hesitantly, Grandfather, Douglas, and Tom peered through the large windowpane. And there, in small warm pools of lamplight, you could see what Leo Auffmann wanted you to see. There sat Saul and Marshall, playing chess at the coffee table. In the dining room Rebecca was laying out the silver. Naomi was cutting paper-doll dresses. Ruth was painting water colors. Joseph was running his electric train. Through the kitchen door, Lena Auffmann was sliding a pot roast from the steaming oven (…) Everything was there and it was working. (*Dandelion Wine* 78-79)

One can infer that the Green Town community is idealized on the basis of what was already discussed. Safety, friendliness, warmth and family are certainly sufficient to make one see it in positive light, but there is one last feature that contributes to the idealization and should therefore be briefly mentioned, and which might easily be overlooked. In Green Town there is no mention of class distinctions. It is true that there are people in the town who are

evidently more affluent than others. Thus it can be learned that Miss Loomis lives in a freshly painted, three-story Victorian house with a huge green garden (*Dandelion Wine* 168) and that there are four ancient gray-flaked mansion houses at the green slopes above the ravine that goes through the town (*Farewell Summer* 8), but these are the only images of the townscape which suggest that there indeed is an uptown area in Green Town, and such notions remain limited to the townscape; in no way do people's actions reflect them. This element makes Bradbury's Green Town fit even better with the general American myth of the small town which is predominantly middle class, "with no great extremes of wealth or poverty, with social gradations but no rigid layers" (Meinig 167), and which excludes the possibility of class conflicts. That the small town is seen as such is not surprising if it is taken into account that according to Bunce it was precisely the middle class, who wanted to separate themselves from the "wicked" world of urban-industrialism, who enabled the rise of the myth, "Segregation from this world, from the urban masses and the socially unstable, congested and unhealthy environment which they were perceived to have created, thus became synonymous with the middle-class domestic ideal" (10). In reality however the small town is not as homogenous as it was desired to be and it was King who showed the not so lovely side of small towns in terms of their communities.

With King the issue of differences between the realities and falsehoods of town community, and accordingly between myth and reality of the small town, assumes a much more defined form. It was already shown that there is nothing palpably wrong with his small-town landscapes; they are typical in the sense that they present active but not overcrowded public space, and while the rural component of the town may not be as evocative of the notion of harmony between man and nature as it is in Bradbury's small town, it is nonetheless strongly present and still enjoyable to a certain extent, and yet his small towns turn out to be sites of horror. The reason for that lies largely in the town community.

When we take into account Relph's idea that landscapes reflect communal values it should be noted that there is a recurrent theme in anti-idyllic representations of the small town. Thus Valentine points out that "[Rural] landscapes that appear idyllic and self-contained are feared to hide malignancy, decay and chaos" (258) and Bell asserts (in response to Bunce's "armchair countryside") that he wants to offer "behind the sofa countryside" (92), a depiction of the rural "nasty underbelly" (91). The small town, as a form of rural, is obviously understood to *look* idyllic, while it is not. However, the landscapes of King's small-town America are only superficially typical, and as one looks closer he may discover the true nature of the town – not only of its physical form but through it also of its people. Derry is the best example of that. While the town may generally look normal there is a canal that runs through the middle of its downtown, "It had been the Canal which had fully opened Derry to the lumber trade (…); it had been the Canal which had birthed Derry's boom years" (*It* 23). This positions the Canal, both physically and symbolically, into the center of Derry, which becomes problematic when we observe its description, "the [Canal] water (…) was polluted to drop-dead levels by sewage and mill wastes. Fish were caught from time to time in the Canal, but they were inedible mutants. (…) People walked beside the Canal, sometimes hand in hand (if the wind was right, that was; if it was wrong, the stench took much of the romance out of such strolling)" (*It* 230). However, the problem with the Canal is not that it is an ugly sight or an unpleasant experience (for it would be wrong to assume that the small town includes only beautiful landscapes), but rather that it is seriously polluted by the town waste, both industrial and, more importantly, human, and that waste goes right through the heart of the town. While this does not necessarily have to be interpreted symbolically, the fact remains that downtown, the place which according to Francaviglia is "a setting where social dramas unfold", and which "reflects the social life of the community" (191), is largely defined by the flow of filth and excrement, which makes it difficult not to see Derry as inherently soiled. In this light, it is

hardly a coincidence that Its lair is right below the Canal and that after Its destruction the whole area collapses into the Canal.

The state of downtown is reflective of the state of the town community, which is far from the "Bradburyesque" idealization. It is true that there are good people there and they always were (*It* 537), as one of the characters points out, but that does not diminish the fact that life in the small-town can be very difficult precisely because of people, that is, community and that not everyone benefit from that crucial condition of the small town idyll. Iris Marion Young discusses this issue in her critique of the community ideal by stating that "it privileges unity over difference, it generates exclusion and it is an unrealistic vision" (qtd. in Valentine 135). What is of importance here are the first two reasons and their dangerous implications, for "a desire to be with people like ourselves or with whom we identify, and a fear or dislike of those who are different from ourselves are often the basis of political sectarianism, bigotry, hatred and discrimination" (Valentine 136). All of that can be seen among the members of the Derry community as racism, anti-Semitism, and homophobia seem to be a common occurrence in the town. And while there are various locals' remarks, such as calling Stan, who is Jewish, a "fuckin Christ-killer" (*It* 82), which tell of a high level of intolerance, it is through their manifestation in the townscape that the overall sentiment is given a note of permanence, as the case of the homophobic-graffiti covered Kissing Bridge proves, "Another match revealed STICK NAILS IN EYES OF ALL FAGGOTS (FOR GOD) (…) Don swept his arm vaguely down the length of the Kissing Bridge. 'There's a lot of this stuff… and I just don't think one person did it all. That's why I want to leave Derry (…). Too many places and too many people seem to have the deep down crazies" (*It* 34-35).

These are the more extreme examples of the negative sides of the small-town mindset, but in Derry even the slightest deviation from the norm can make one painfully visible in his or her difference, as all the members of the Losers' Club experience – and while some of their

"faults" may cause them to be rejected even in other contexts (for instance Ben's obesity), Beverly's situation is relevant for the small town context and the idea of its harmonious community. In his depiction of Optimo, a fictional typical American small town, Jackson claims that the downtown area of "depot, market, factories, warehouses, slum", and of "assorted public of railroaders and Latinos and occasional ranch hands" (165) (basically of poor people) is "a little disreputable" but "Actually the whole of Optimo looks on the section with indulgence and pride; it makes the townspeople feel that they understand metropolitan problems" (165). In King's fictional town of Derry, however, there is no mention of that "indulgence and pride", but quite the opposite. The difference between uptown and downtown Derry is very obvious and so is the difference between residents of those areas, but there is nothing mutually enriching in that difference; it is the source of stigmatization and exclusion of those who do not fit into the picture of the small town idyll, as the following shows,

> It had probably been the excitement of the bell signaling the end of another school-year that had caused Sally to slip and speak to Beverly (…). Sally Mueller and Greta Bowie both came from rich families with houses on West Broadway while Bev came to school from one of those slummy apartment buildings on Lower Main Street. Lower Main and West Broadway were only a mile and a half apart, but even a kid like Ben knew that the real distance was like the distance between Earth and the planet Pluto. (*It* 200)

This also shows that the proximity of everything in town does not necessarily have to produce an overall feeling of community, for social barriers may still dwarf those spatial conditions, and when that happens, the limited environment only intensifies the issue. The sentiment is suitably summed up by Francaviglia who asserts that, "We [the Americans] have always been, and perhaps ought to be, ambivalent about small towns, for they provide security at a price: conformity" (130). It is unwise to be different in the small town, and those who cannot help it

soon find out that there is no place for them in the idyll. In reality, the imposed and widely accepted image of "middle" or "average" nature of community members results in everyone else who cannot reach that trait perceiving the town as an oppressive place. The principle is also obvious in the Losers' Club "choice" of playground. Rural environments of the small town have long been seen as ideal for children, as they provide various opportunities for children to explore the space around them and to have adventures in space that is entirely their own, without the supervision and restrictions of the adult world. The truthfulness of the idea is explored in Owain Jones's work "Little figures, big shadows: Country childhood stories", where he summarizes the myth as following, "Once outdoors (and mostly in company), country children are seen as being blessed through their proximity to and interaction with nature" (157). King's small town again proves to be a re-evaluation of the myth. The Losers do indeed play in the most natural part of the town – the Barrens – and their imagination does transform it into a place of adventures and fun, a place they love because it *theirs*, but the truth is they are there because, as one of them admits, they are hiding from the big kids (*It* 82), because there is no place for them anywhere else. And the idea of them being "blessed" by this immersion in nature takes a rather grotesque turn when one realizes what the Barrens actually look like, "Dump down one way, streams full of piss and an gray matter, muck and slop, bugs and brambles, quick-mud" (*It* 390), and a bit farther down the solid waste gets pumped into the Kenduskeag Stream (*It* 390). A place where the town feces end up is hardly evocative of idyll or a place fit for children for that matter.

There is another disadvantage to the strong communal aspect of the small town apart from its tendency to discriminate, and that is crowding. This may be surprising, for it is usually the big city that is imagined as being filled with people. However, the sheer number of people is not of relevance here, what is relevant is the feeling which limited spaces and communal practices characteristic of the small town produce. Tuan provides an explanation,

"Crowding is an awareness that one is observed. In a small town people "watch out" for one another. "Watch out" has both the desirable sense of caring and the undesirable one of idle – and perhaps malicious – curiosity. Houses have eyes. Where they are built close together the neighbors' noises and the neighbors' concern constantly intrude" (60-61). This lack of privacy is a major issue of King's Castle Rock, as it obvious from the very beginning of the novel which opens with the first-person narrator telling the reader all kinds of gossip about the townsfolk. As Langan points out, the voice is "meant to be a generic representative of the community" (553). What that implies is that gossip seems to be the way of life in small towns, something that is accepted as a normal occurrence, "It's just small town life, though – call it Peyton Place or Grover's Corners or Castle Rock, it's just folks eatin pie and drinkin coffee and talkin about each other behind their hands" (*Needful Things* 8). In the small town everyone knows everything about everyone, "Secrets can and are kept in Castle Rock, but you have to work mighty hard to do it" (*Needful Things* 4). Such a lack of privacy and the struggle to preserve it tend to put a severe strain on the community and the possibility of maintaining quality relationships. Constant concern with other peoples' lives and the tendency to experience other peoples' actions personally leads to constant frictions, as the case of Castle Rock which is easily manipulated into chaos and overt violence shows. The image of the community that arises from the narrators' gossip is one of various individual and group conflicts. It seems that everyone has a bone to pick with at least one person in the town, which is a complete opposite of Bradbury's Green Town community. Castle Rock is a clear example of Tuan's claim that "Privacy and solitude are necessary for sustained reflection and a hard look at self, and through the understanding of self to the full appreciation of other personalities" (65).

All that was said of King's small-town America so far definitely does not correspond with the myth, but there is one last element that completely destroys its idyllic qualities and

puts King's small town within the frames of Lovecrat's tradition – the already mentioned problem of authenticity. While "malicious curiosity" may be common in small towns and contribute to its oppressiveness by depraving people of privacy and freedom, Jerusalem's Lot shows us that secrecy still exists and that the true face of the small town and its people is even more horrifying than it would seem.

> The town has its secrets, and keeps them well. The people don't know them all — they know old Albie Crane's wife ran off with a traveling man from New York City or they think they know it. But Albie cracked her skull open after the traveling man had left her cold and then he tied a block on her feet and tumbled her down the old well and twenty years later Albie died peacefully in his bed of a heart attack. ('*Salem's Lot* 146)

Even when one thinks he has experienced the less pleasant but realistic side of small-town life there still remains a considerable gap between reality and image, and when reality or at least pieces of it are finally uncovered the conclusion emerges that the small town was dead long before some outside force threatened it, "There is no life here but the slow death of days, and so when the evil falls on the town, its coming seems almost preordained, sweet and morphic. It is almost as though the town knows the evil was coming and the shape it would take" ('*Salem's Lot* 146). The destruction is concluded by an outside menace, or vampires in this case, but it originated in the unperceivable corruption of the community and values the small town should stand for but fails to, or as Langan puts it "the threat to a small town has its roots in the community's secret life" (559).

3.5. The outside

The state of community and its (wrong)doings may function as the decisive element in the determination of the town final fate but what helps draw attention to that issue is the small town attitude and reactions to those who are not part of the town, those who are from

somewhere else, or nowhere for that matter, to put it simply – the outsiders. It was already stated in the introductory part that the myth of the small town developed as a response to the overwhelming changes in society. From that moment on the small town has been seen as a place on which one can count to remain stable amidst a rapidly and constantly fluctuating world. While it is understandable that people need a certain amount of stability in life, such an attitude can turn out to be very problematic and affections for what familiar and well incorporated elements of small-town life are may turn into an irrational fear and hatred of that what is new and different. These consequences of calls for authenticity and rootedness in history are something David Harvey points to,

> On the one hand investments in place can play a role in resisting the global circulation of capital but on the other it is often quite an exclusionary force in the world where groups of people define themselves against threatening others who are not included in the particular vision of place being enacted. The flows of globalization, on the other hand, are seen as anxiety provoking for those people who seek to invest in the fixities of place-based existence. (in Cresswell 62-63)

Whether this is true of place generally is not of interest here, but all the works analyzed in this paper prove that it *is* true of the small town. While the problems (or demise in Lovecraft's and King's works) of the small town are implicitly enabled by the community's attitudes and doings, they are always triggered by an outside force, the overt menace to the small town is always the outsider.

The element is easily recognizable in Lovecraft's fiction, as supported by Lovecraft scholar T. R. Livesey's statement that "several of Lovecraft's stories, notably "The Dunwich Horror" and "The Shadow over Innsmouth," fall squarely in the tradition of the genre of science-fictional accounts of invasions" (qtd. in Klinger 24). Genre delineation is of secondary importance here, what is crucial is the recognition of "invasion" factor. In "The

Dunwich Horror" this is less evident but the "monster" that comes to destroy the town (and the world if it was not stopped) is still from the outside, a product of union between a human and Yog-Sothoth, a member "some terrible race of beings from another dimension" (351). The invasion of Innsmouth is much more extreme as the town is actually overtaken by numerous creatures and everyone is forced to mix with them or at least comply with their terms if they want to live. The creatures were invited, so to speak (which again points to the problems within the community), but they came from the outside, from the deep sea near the town, "that cursed place of all wickedness whar the deep water starts" ("The Shadow over Innsmouth" 508), as one of the still "pure" characters says. What is more, the knowledge how to contact them was acquired in distant lands, in South Sea Islands. It is tempting to ascribe these representations of danger to the small town in forms of outsiders to Lovecraft's well known controversial attitudes towards foreigners, which were also to a large extent reflective of nation-wide "fears that the established European settler stock might soon be overwhelmed by sprawling foreign populations" (Moore 8), and which indeed have found their way to his fiction, "in his much-loved everyday New England landscape altered and infected by conceptions from beyond" (Moore 9). However, that would be at least partially wrong, for there is no proof that the same can be said of Bradbury and King, and yet their small-town America is threatened in the same way – from the outside.

In fact, this is the only aspect of Bradbury's ideal Green Town that is completely shared by more unpleasant depictions encountered in other works. In *Something Wicked This Way Comes* the menace is most clearly defined as a carnival that comes to town and feeds on secret regrets of the townsfolk – the least severe manifestation of Langan's claim of concerns with authenticity.

> Maybe a man walked around in a monkey skin a million years ago, stuffing himself with other people's unhappiness, chewed their pain all day like spearmint gum, for the

> sweet savour, and trotted faster, revivified by personal disaster. (…) So from one man here, one man there, walking as swift as his oily glances, it became scuttles of dogmen begging gifts of trouble, pandering misery, seeking under carpets for centipede treads, watchful of night sweats, harkening by all bedroom doors to hear men twist basting themselves with remorse and warm-water dreams. (156-157)

People might go willingly to the carnival, which is set in the meadow just outside the town but they are tempted, even tricked by those who are from the outside, and not only that, for Bradbury's depiction of threat to the small town incorporates mobility, as it is further emphasized, "Then out on the road, Gypsies in time, their populations grew as the world grew, spread, and there was more delicious variety of pain to thrive on. The train put wheels under them and here they run down the long road out of the Gothic and Baroque" (*Something Wicked This Way Comes* 157). This additionally intensifies the danger – those who travel are seen as people without place and thus without a stable, recognizable identity. They threaten the rooted lifestyle of the community, which is seen as proper, authentic, and normal, as well as the supposed clarity of the small town identity. Like Harvey's idea, this animosity towards mobile people is also claimed to be a common phenomenon. "Anthropologist Liisa Malkki has argued that there is a tendency in the modern world to locate people and identities in particular spaces and within particular boundaries (…) She suggests that it is our incessant desire to divide to the world up into clearly bounded territorial units which produces a 'sedentarist metaphysics'" (qtd. in Cresswell 109-110). As Cresswell further explains this is "a view of the world that values roots, place and order over mobility and fluidity. This leads us to think of mobile people as disruptive and morally suspicious" (121). When it comes to the small town narrative such beliefs are clearly evident. The travelling carnival disrupts the everyday existence of those who chose to spend their lives in Green Town, people who believe to be safe in the comfort of their homes and their lovely town, and should be so

according to the myth. Those who succumb to the allure of the carnival are ultimately doomed to become a part of it and that seems to be the cruellest faith, as there is only misery on the road. This idea is expressed even by one of the characters' reflection on his life, "Born in Sweet Water, lived in Chicago, survived in New York, brooded in Detroit, floundered in lots of places (…) Then in the middle of all the running away, which I called travel, in my thirty-ninth year, your mother fixed me with one glance, been here ever since" (*Something Wicked This Way Comes* 152-153). Fixity might have its difficulties but it is still the right choice to make.

King's depiction of small-town America continues both Lovecraft's and Bradbury's tradition of outside menace. Derry, Jerusalem's Lot and Castle Rock might already be experiencing problems due to the state of their communities but there ruin is certainly enhanced by an outsider. That being said *Needful Things* is in this sense especially evocative of Bradbury's *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, and it is certainly not accidental that King announces the change that is coming to the town by saying "There's a storm on the way" (12)[2]. In the case of Castle Rock the threat comes in form of a new shop owner, who therefore by implication enters the heart of the small town – Main Street. As with Bradbury's carnival, no one is forced to go there, the townspeople go willingly and soon become enchanted by the owner. What they do not know is that the price one pays for what the thing he needs is his own soul. Gaunt outsideness is obvious, but it is not as simple as he presents it by telling people he is from Akron, Ohio, and the reader soon finds out that Gaunt had shops all over the world, the business though is always the same "whether in Lebanon, Ankara, the western provinces of Canada, or right here in Hicksville, U.S.A" (*Needful Things* 545). The truth is that Castle Rock just like Green Town is threatened not just by an outsider but by someone

[2] Bradbury opens his novel with the following, "The seller of lightning-rods arrived just ahead of the storm" (*Something Wicked This Way Comes* 4). It soon becomes clear of course that it is no ordinary storm, just like the one that is coming to Castle Rock.

who is essentially without place, or at least that place is not determined (it is merely suggested that Gaunt is a demon), and whose mobility is inextricably linked with his monstrosity.

> He had begun business many years ago—as a wandering peddler on the blind face of a distant land, a peddler who carried his wares on his back, a peddler who usually came at the fall of darkness and was always gone the next morning, leaving bloodshed, horror, and unhappiness behind him. Years later, in Europe, as the Plague raged and the deadcarts rolled, he had gone from town to town and country to country in a wagon drawn by a slat-thin white horse with terrible burning eyes and a tongue as black as a killer's heart. (*Needful Things* 740)

While the issue of mobility as such is not so overtly present in other two King's novels, both Derry and Jerusalem's Lot are defined by their exposure to a malicious outside force. In the case of Derry, the threat resembles the one encountered in Lovecraft's Dunwich; It is the ultimate outsider, literally, for he is not even of this world, "It came from … *outside* (…) Outside everything" (*It* 919). Jerusalem's Lot downfall, on the other hand, happens in a manner similar to that of Innsmouth. While the concept of invasion is more complex here, for the vampires that in the end overtake the town are actually members of the initial community, the fact remains that the events are triggered by an outsider, a vampire of course, of vague origins and loose ties with what once might have been his place, as it is noted by one of the characters, "I think that we must assume, in line with the legends, that he is old . . . very old. He may have changed his name a dozen times, or a thousand. He may have been a native of almost every country in the world at one time or another, although I suspect his origins may have been Romanian or Magyar or Hungarian" (*'Salem's Lot* 218). The fact that there is utter agreement on this point of the fictional small town depiction both in its ideal form and questioning of the same suggests that the small town is a rather self-enclosed unit and to

whatever consequences this leads it is evident that small towns are imagined as places of rootedness and accordingly (what is seen as) authenticity.

4. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to provide an analysis of small-town America as presented by two writers, Ray Bradbury and Stephen King, whose work reflected as well as contributed to the formation of the present American feelings and attitudes towards one of the central concepts of their culture – the small town. H.P Lovecraft's depiction of small-town America was used as a starting point of the analysis, as his work on the subject left its mark on the subsequent fictions of the 20th century. Upon determining some general facts about the existence and understanding of the American small town as a highly ambivalent concept, the analysis focuses on the towns from the chosen material by following the basic outline in terms of location, landscapes, people and the role of time in creation of places. Thus we learn that the small town is usually set amidst natural surroundings, which may even lead to its isolation, and that this has the equal potential to enhance its demise, as Lovecraft's works show, and to transform it into the ultimate haven, as Bradbury's Green Town proves. It also became clear that while King's small towns are not physically isolated their problems are not less severe. Furthermore, the analysis of the physical forms within the town showed that the small town is marked by a rural feel and interaction with the land, the unpleasant traces of which can be seen in Lovecraft's deteriorating towns. Both Bradbury and King preserve this element but while Bradbury insists upon the image of the idyll, King portrays a more realistic picture. The same applies to the element of people, or in the case of the small town, its well known sense of community. It might even be concluded that the community plays a central role in the creation and experience of all the analyzed towns. Therefore, it is not surprising that the fallen communities inhabit dying Lovecraftian towns, nor that the idealized communities project an air of idyll in Bradbury's charming Green Town, nor is it surprising that King's small-town America tortured by various social tensions and iniquities crumbles under the strains of its own mythical qualities. Finally, the analysis has shown that at least in

one way Lovecraft's heritage strongly perseveres, and that is the depiction of the threat. While the fates of the small towns are in the end determined by the discrepancy between the reality and appearances of their nature, events which reveal this issue are always triggered by an outside force. Whether to Innsmouth, Green Town or Castle Rock, evil always comes from the outside; idyllic or not, the small town does not take kindly to strangers. In this light it also becomes understandable why the small town is often seen as stagnant, for the analyzed places are obviously marked by stability and opposition to flux. As emphasis on its authenticity of existence may explain its appeal, so the small town inflexibility and rather rigid positioning of itself and its people against what is seen as the outside world may help us understand why it became a problematic concept as times have changed.

When all is considered it becomes evident that the presented small towns generally share certain features. It is only a matter of author's preferences and convictions which side of the coin he will show us, whether the town on its dying breath already ruined by the outside forces, the magical place of childhood happiness, or a place as bad as any other completely devoid of its mythical qualities. What must not be forgotten is that despite their fictional status these towns should not be regarded as unreal. They are very much a product of the real world conditions and American preoccupations – xenophobic paranoia of the turn of the century, the lingering of the myth before the troubles ensued, and finally the post war dying of small towns and ultimately disillusionment with the myth.

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Naslov rada: “Amerika malih gradova” u djelima Raya Bradburyja i Stephena Kinga

Sažetak

Kao jedan od centralnih koncepata američke kulture tzv. „Amerika malih gradova” već dugo zaokuplja razne pisce, među kojima se Ray Bradbury i Stephen King ističu kao izuzetno važne figure u kontekstu popularne književnosti dvadesetog stoljeća i njihovog doprinosa sveopćim shvaćanjima malog grada. Stoga je cilj ove analize prikazati karakteristike malog grada kakvim je predstavljen u njihovim djelima pomoću spoznaja humane geografije, točnije, u Bradburyjevim djelima *Maslačkovo vino, Nešto nam se zlo privlači* i *Zbogom ljeto,* i Kingovim *Salemovo, Ono* i *Potrebne stvari*, pri čemu se konstantno osvrće na izvore takve književnosti u vidu stvaralaštva Howarda P. Lovecrata i njegova prikaza koncepta u „Dunwichskom užasu” i „Sjeni nad Innsmouthom”. Nakon kratkog objašnjenja osobina koje se uobičajeno vežu uz Ameriku malih gradova analiza se nastavlja razmatranjem pristupa pojedinih pisaca elementima mjesta – lokaciji, fizičkim uzorcima, ljudima i vremenu, pri čemu se naravno uzimaju u obzir specifični uvjeti malog grada. U konačnici, analiza pruža informacije koje navode na zaključak o postojanju određene baze koju je moguće prepoznati kroz znatno različite prikaze malog grada. S druge strane, razlike u konkretnim manifestacijama, odnosno naklonjenost pojedinog pisca pozitivnoj ili negativnoj strani koncepta, mogu se smatrati vrijednim izvorima uvida u američke osjećaje prema onome što se smatra jedinstvenim za njihovo kulturno iskustvo i identitet.

Ključne riječi: Amerika malih gradova, humana geografija, Howard P. Lovecraft, Ray Bradbury, Stephen King