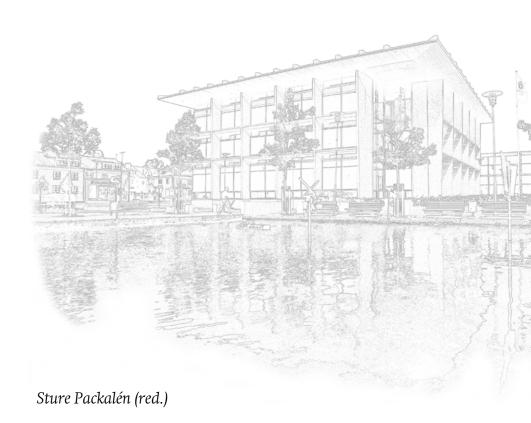**MÄLARDALENS HÖGSKOLA
ESKILSTUNA VÄSTERÅS**

LITTERATUR OCH SPRÅK

**Theodor Kallifatides, Bodil Malmsten, Hugo Hamilton,
Fransk 1800-talsprosa, Marcel Pagnol, Vilhelm Moberg,
Språkundervisning**

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Birte Schulz, *M.A., doktorand vid University of Limerick, Irland*

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Innehåll

Acculturative stress and the development of a bicultural identity in Hugo Hamilton's *Nazi Christmas* and *The Irish Worker*[1]

Thorsten Päplow & Birte Schulz

In reading Hugo Hamilton's works, one notices the recurrence of themes, such as nationality, conflicting feelings of belonging, alienation and the problematic nature of an identity forged out of the often contradictory elements of a bicultural heritage. Obvious examples in this context are Hamilton's first novel, *Surrogate City* (1990), his second novel *The Last Shot* (1991), and even more explicitly his memoirs *The Speckled People* (2003) and *The Sailor in the Wardrobe* (2006). In an interview Hamilton explains that the motivation behind the first part of his memoirs, *The Speckled People,* was primarily the desire to make sense of the culture clash he and his siblings experienced as the children of an Irish father and a German mother:

> Aber mit diesem Buch ging es mir nicht nur darum, eine Beichte abzulegen oder einfach irgendwie die Details ans Licht zu bringen, sondern es drängte mich vielmehr der Wunsch, die verschiedenen Nationen und Kulturen, die in unseren Kinderleben aufeinander prallten, zu verstehen.[2]

Similarly, the short stories "Nazi Christmas" and "The Irish Worker", from the collection *Dublin Where the Palm Trees Grow*, investigate different stages of dealing with the psychological difficulties of a dual cultural heritage and, when analyzed together, trace the painful but ultimately successful development of a bicultural identity.

Biculturalism: A Short Introduction[3]

There are numerous definitions of biculturalism. One of the earliest was proposed by Stonequist in *The Marginal Man* (1935). LaFromboise et al. represent his position as follows: bicultural people are "[…] individuals

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[1] This article is an adaption of the following dissertation: Thorsten Päplow (1999), *Biculturalism in Hugo Hamilton's "Nazi Christmas" and "The Irish Worker"*, Trinity College Dublin.

[2] Eva-Maria Vogel – Wolfram Schütte (2004), "Sprache der Rettung und verbotene Sprache", in *Titel-Magazin*. http://www.titel-magazin.de/artikel/0/1266/hugo-hamilton-im-gesprach.html (7 January 2011).

[3] We would like to point out that the purpose of this article is to shed light on two of Hugo Hamilton's short stories. Thus, we cannot do justice to the vast and wide-ranging field and study of bi- or multiculturalism.

who live at the juncture between two cultures and can lay claim to belonging to both cultures, either by being of mixed racial heritage or born in one culture and raised in a second […]."[4] In other words, a bicultural person is someone who is not only exposed to two different cultures but, for different reasons, lives in two cultural worlds. Some of the most common circumstances in which biculturalism often arises – i.e. migration and ethnically or culturally mixed parentage – are outlined in Stonequist's idea of 'marginal man', a predecessor of what today may be called the study of biculturalism.[5] Others would be a (former) colonial situation in which one people with a certain culture is colonised by another with a different culture. Another cause of bi- or multicultural heritage could be a multicultural and multilingual state such as Switzerland, for example.

One can identify two trends within the scientific community as far as biculturalism is concerned: firstly, biculturalism as a social phenomenon within a particular society and, secondly, biculturalism concerning the individual. In this essay we will focus mainly on the effects of bicultural heritage on the individual. On the part of the individual, Stonequist is particularly concerned about the psychological implications of being bicultural and argues that people with mixed cultural heritage are prone to suffering psychologically. Summarising Stonequist, Park defines 'marginal man' as someone whose

> fate […] *condemns* him to live, at the same time, in two worlds in the same which compels him to assume, in relation to the worlds in which he lives, the rôle of a cosmopolitan and a stranger.[6]

According to Park, 'marginal man' may become, "[…] relatively to his cultural milieu, the individual with the wider horizon, the keener intelligence, the more detached and rational viewpoint"[7], despite the unfavourable fate of marginality, or might even have "long-term benefits for society"[8]. Stonequist however asserts that such benefits come at a price, namely mental instability, due to the loss of (cultural) identity, and marginalisation through social rejection. Stonequist expresses this concern stating that belonging to two cultures may cause a disadvantageous "dual personality" since "[…] the individual who is identified with both groups

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4   Teresa LaFromboise – Hardin L. K. Coleman – Jennifer Gerton (1998), "Psychological Impact of Biculturalism: Evidence and Theory", in Pamela Balls Organista – Kevin M. Chun – Gerardo Marín (eds.), *Readings in Ethnic Psychology*. New York & London, p. 123.

5   Cf. Stonequist, Everett V. (1937), *The Marginal Man – A Study in Personality and Culture Conflict*. New York, p. 2-4.

6   Robert E. Park (1937), "Introduction", in Everett V. Stonequist, *The Marginal Man – A Study in Personality and Culture Conflict*. New York, p. xvii (stress added).

7   Park, p. xvii-xviii.

8   Cf. LaFromboise et al., p. 124.

experiences the conflict as an acute personal difficulty or mental tension."[9] While admitting that such a "duality does not always constitute a personal problem" an individual living in two cultures "[…] finds himself on the margin of each but a member of neither. He is a 'marginal man'."[10]

As Kerwin and Ponterotto point out, Stonequist's deficit model of the 'marginal man', is "antiquated" by today's standards.[11] Since the 1930s a lot of psychological, sociological and other scientific research has been conducted in order to develop more adequate models for bicultural psychology and sociology. Still, Stonequist's observation that a bi- or multicultural identity may come at a price, is nevertheless an important factor. The general trend of modern research, however, shows a more positive attitude towards bi- or multiculturalism, which does not mean that the problems and challenges a dual or multiple cultural heritage poses for an individual, as described by Stonequist, are to be neglected.

Modern research has provided alternative ways of looking at biculturalism. Ballesteros, for example, defines biculturalism as the "[…] ability of a person to function effectively in two cultures. A bicultural person is one who, at will, can shift from one cultural 'gear' to another."[12] The idea of 'bicultural competence' is a vital part of the so-called 'alternation model' that "[…] assumes that it is possible for an individual to have a sense of belonging in two cultures without compromising his or her sense of cultural identity."[13] In other words, a marginal or dual personality is not the necessary outcome of a mixed cultural heritage.[14] The alternation model also renounces the claim that a bicultural person must prioritise one culture at the expense of the other. LaFromboise et al., by advocating in favour of the 'alternation model', reject the idea of an inevitably negative developmental outcome of biculturalism:

9   Stonequist, p. 4.
10   Stonequist, p. 3.
11   Christine Kerwin – Joseph G. Ponterotto (1995), "Biracial Identity Development – Theory and Research", in Joseph G. Ponterotto – J. Manuel Casas – Lisa A. Suzuki – Charlene M. Alexander (eds.), *Handbook of Multicultural Counseling*. Thousand Oaks, p. 205.
12   Octavio A. Ballesteros (1983), *Bilingual–Bicultural Education: An Annotated Bibliography 1936 – 1982*. Jefferson (North Carolina), p. 3.
13   LaFromboise et al., p. 131.
14   *Cf.* for example John W. Berry – Uichol Kim – Thomas Minde – Doris Mok (1987), "Comparative Studies of Acculturative Stress", in *International Migration Review* Vol. XXI, No. 3. New York, p. 493: "We have concluded that clearly, mental health problems often do arise during acculturation; however, these problems are not inevitable, and seem to depend on a variety of group and individual characteristics which enter into the acculturation process. That is, acculturation sometimes enhances one's life chances and mental health, and sometimes virtually destroys one's ability to carry on; the eventual outcome for any particular individual is affected by other variables that govern the relationship between acculturation and stress."

Although there are a number of behaviors involved in the acquisition of bicultural competence (e.g., shifts in cognitive and perceptual processes, acquisition of a new language) the literature on biculturalism consistently assumes that an individual living within two cultures will suffer from various forms of psychological distress. Although it is clear that ethnic minorities in the United States and elsewhere experience high levels of economic and social discrimination as well as other disadvantages, it is inappropriate to assume that this sociological reality produces a predictable negative psychological outcome. Research suggests that individuals living in two cultures may find the experience to be more beneficial than living a monocultural lifestyle. [15]

Stonequist's model of the 'marginal man', however antiquated in approach and phrasing from a modern point of view, and the 'alternation model' form the cornerstones of psychological research in the field of biculturalism. However, the major difference between Stonequist's theory and the alternation model, apart from the conclusions they draw, is the way in which research is conducted and more importantly the way in which biculturalism is approached. Thus, more recent scientific and psychological research indicates that coping with being bicultural is a *process*, perhaps even a never-ending one. LaFromboise et al. hint at this by asserting that certain adjustments have to be made in order to learn to deal with one's biculturalism, "e.g., shifts in cognitive and perceptual processes, acquisition of a new language." [16] Coping with being bicultural and the particular problems that biculturalism entails means striving for a positive and stable development of one's identity. Identity is, as many psychologists have shown, a development with different stages. Erikson for example states that "[…] the problem [of identity] is so all-pervasive and yet so hard to grasp: for we deal with a <u>process</u> 'located' *in the core of the individual* […]." [17]

In a bicultural context, there are many models and theories of identity development. For the purpose of this article we will concentrate on a model introduced by G. K. Kich in an unpublished dissertation in 1982, and later elaborated on in the article "The Developmental Process of Asserting a Biracial, Bicultural Identity". While it may be argued this model takes a rather broad view, we chose it for precisely this reason, since it provides a certain flexibility in our aim to apply a bicultural model to a

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15   LaFromboise et al., p. 136.
16   LaFromboise et al., p. 136.
17   Erik H. Erikson (1968), *Identity – Youth and Crisis*. London, p. 22 (stress added: underlined).

literary analysis of two of Hugo Hamilton's short stories.[18] According to this model there are three major developmental stages for a bicultural (and biracial) identity formation:

1. an initial awareness of differentness and dissonance between self-perceptions and others' perceptions of them (initially, 3 through 10 years of age)
2. a struggle for acceptance from others (initially, age 8 through late adolescence and young adulthood)
3. acceptance of themselves as people with a biracial and bicultural identity (late adolescence throughout adulthood) [19]

While this model is constructed for a bicultural and biracial context we will focus on the bicultural aspects. The first stage, then, describes the first step towards an ethnic and cultural awareness. Young bicultural children, in most cases on entering kindergarten or primary school, realise that they are different from other children. They may be confronted with different ways of social interaction, a different language, different customs, different food, different clothes etc. Everything adds up to the impression: 'I am different'; bicultural children are also seen as different by others. Consequently this awareness of differentness leads to insecurity and confusion brought about by the clash of two cultures in one person. Naturally, "[…] the child is not equipped to resolve this conflict at such an early age […]"[20], as Root points out. In short, a child has no means of understanding and therefore coping with the culture-shock. But since, for various reasons, both cultures are inherent in a bicultural person there is no running away from the conflict.

Learning how to deal with one's biculturalism and developing a positive attitude towards one's dual heritage is called 'acculturation', literally

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[18] More detailed models on biculturalism or the development of a bicultural identity could probably be applied in an in-depth study of Hamilton's memoirs *The Speckled People* and *The Sailor in the Wardrobe*, simply because the amount of text of two full length books allows for a more detailed analysis. Some of the incidents, depicted in "Nazi Christmas", reappear in for example in *The Speckled People*, such as being called "Kraut" or "Nazi", the incident on the bus as well as the execution scene (cf. Hugo Hamilton (2003), *The Speckled People*. London, p. 3, 85; 99-100; 4 & 135-136.).

[19] George Kitahara Kich (1992), "The Developmental Process of Asserting a Biracial, Bicultural Identity", in Maria P. P. Root, *Racially Mixed People in America*. Thousand Oaks (California), p. 305.

[20] Maria P. P. Root (1998) , "Resolving 'Other' Status – Identity Development of Biracial Individuals", in Pamela Balls Organista – Kevin M. Chun – Gerardo Marín (eds.), *Readings in Ethnic Psychology*. New York & London, p. 103.

meaning "moving towards a culture"[21]. The psychological imbalance and conflict caused by acculturation is called *acculturative stress*. As Berry et al. point out, "individual acculturation experience may vary from a great deal to rather little"[22], depending on various factors, for example the social conditions of both the acculturating group or individual, the level of cultural diversity in both groups and the psychological characteristics of the individual. 'Acculturative stress', as part of "the concept of *psychological acculturation*, which refers to changes in an individual" rather than a group, will be the main focus of our analysis of Hugo Hamilton's short story "Nazi Christmas".[23]

The second stage of Kich's model is the logical continuation of the first stage; it describes the "struggle for acceptance from others"[24] and, perhaps more importantly, the struggle for acceptance of oneself as a bicultural individual. Having realised one's differentness in terms of cultural heritage this struggle begins. In bicultural terms, Hamilton's story "The Irish Worker" can be regarded as a sequel to "Nazi Christmas". The boy in the former story is to be placed between phases two and three in Kich's model. He no longer suffers from his bicultural situation and has managed to establish himself comfortably in both cultures. Still, he does not seem entirely certain of his position and continues to observe the differences of German and Irish culture.

"Nazi Christmas" – The Bubble Bursts

In the short story "Nazi Christmas"[25] the narrator describes the unpleasant events of one particular Christmas season in the 1960s.[26] During a reading Hugo Hamilton characterised the childhood of the young narrator as "living in a bubble", in so far as the boy's early experiences are largely confined to the domestic environment.[27] As soon as he steps out of the sheltered sphere of his home, however, the boy realises that he is different; specifically that he is half-German. His mother is from Kempen, a

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[21]   John W. Berry (1998), "Acculturative Stress", in Pamela Balls Organista – Kevin M. Chun – Gerardo Marín (eds.), *Readings in Ethnic Psychology*. New York & London, p. 117.

[22]   Berry – Kim – Minde – Mok (1987), p. 493.

[23]   John W. Berry (2006), "Acculturation: A Conceptual Overview", in Marc H. Bornstein – Linda R. Cote, *Acculturation and Parent-Child Relationships. Measurement and Development*. Mahwah (New Jersey), p. 16.

[24]   Kich, p. 305.

[25]   Hugo Hamilton (1996), "Nazi Christmas", in Hugo Hamilton, *Dublin Where the Palm Trees Grow*. London, p. 9-15.

[26]   Cf.: "Eichmann went on trial for war crimes when I was around five years old" (Hugo Hamilton (1996), p. 10.).

[27]   Hugo Hamilton, "Reading", Oscar Wilde Centre for Irish Writing, Trinity College Dublin, 12 January 1999.

town west of the river Rhein.[28] Although there is no direct evidence pertaining to the father's nationality, it is reasonable to assume that he is, as Hugo Hamilton's father, indeed Irish. This makes the narrator a "half-German Dubliner" and exposes him to all the stress a bicultural existence can entail.[29]

During the course of the story, the intensity of how people react towards the narrator and his siblings and accordingly their feelings of differentness and dissonance increase. In broad terms, the story moves from the friendly but insensitive man in the fish shop to the "childhood sport of mob sadism".[30] Even if the joking ways of the fishmonger are quite different from the aggressive behaviour of the group of Irish children, they are part of the same phenomenon and contribute, albeit in different ways, to the feeling of dissonance that the children experience.

One of the features that evoke this feeling of difference is language. The story begins with the notion of language as a sign of dissonance. The children speak German with their mother while everybody around them speaks English. In an interview Hugo Hamilton remembers: "I've come to associate language with torture, in some ways".[31] For the children, language also becomes an instrument of torture:

> It began with the man in the fish shop saying "Achtung!" and all the customers turning around to look at us. Even the people outside under the row of naked turkeys and hanging pheasants stared in through the window. We were exposed. Germans.[32]

The words 'it began' are misleading since it is clear from many instances in the story that this is not the first time that something of this kind has happened. It is the beginning of a chain of events on one particular day in his childhood that the narrator remembers so vividly; this day in the Christmas season epitomises a childhood of differentness and dissonance. The fishmonger's greeting in the form of the order "Achtung" ("attention"), probably directed at the other people in the shop, immediately singles out the mother and children, reducing German culture and Germanness to a military status. Ironically, women and children are the only groups that are (traditionally) not part of any armed forces.[33] The key sentence in this passage, however, is: "We were exposed" – it is clear for everyone to see

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28   Hamilton (1996), p. 12.
29   David Flusfeder, "A View from the Edge of Europe", *Times Literary Supplement*, 9 February 1996.
30   Flusfeder.
31   Arminta Wallace, "First a Flight to Berlin, then a Refuge in Fiction", in *The Irish Times*, 6 November 1990.
32   Hamilton (1996), p. 9.
33   Hamilton (1996), p. 9.

that they are (half-)German.[34] The "naked turkeys" echo the narrator's feelings; he feels "naked", exposed to the world and vulnerable, anticipating a kind of psychological flaying.[35] The narrator would prefer to remain undetected but the 'torture' is not quite over yet:

> There was a chance they [the people in the shop] might have overlooked the whole thing if it wasn't for the man in the fish shop trying out some more of his German. All the stuff he had picked up from films like *Von Ryan's Express* and *The Great Escape*.
>
> "Guten Morgen," he said leaning over the counter, then leaning back with an explosive laugh that acted as a trademark for his shop […].
>
> "We haff ways of making you talk," he said to us whenever we refused to perform for the benefit of his customers and say a few words in German.[36]

Significantly, the fishmonger with his "half-baked notions of Germanness [that are] entirely informed by war movies" makes the children perform part of their cultural and ethnic heritage, which is a very degrading experience for the narrator.[37] For the man in the fish shop it is a performance but for the narrator it means far more: part of his identity becomes a freak show. Even if the man is clearly joking and not quite aware of the implications of what he asks the children to do, the narrator experiences the whole incident as utterly distressing and degrading. For a bicultural child there is nothing worse than being made the object of ridicule because of his or her cultural heritage. But the man tops the scene with a last blow, as it seems to the narrator: "'Halt! We must not forgetten der change'".[38] To the fishmonger this may sound like a German sentence but it is not; a German person without any knowledge of English would certainly not be able to understand him. He has no intention to humiliate the children; he tries to be funny, perhaps even out of a vague uncertainty and unfamiliarity with people from a non-Irish background, not realising that this humour is at the expense of the children.

Thus, the children are exposed to misrepresentations and clichés of their language, but they are helpless in the face of this overwhelming and confusing situation: "Like our mother, we were too shy and unable to respond to these contortions of language".[39] They are "too shy" and too intimidated to react in ways other than being silent or reluctantly going

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34 Hamilton (1996), p. 9.
35 Hamilton (1996), p. 9.
36 Hamilton (1996), p. 9.
37 Flusfeder.
38 Hamilton (1996), p. 9.
39 Hamilton (1996), p. 9.

along with confirming clichés. In Kich's terms, they experience their 'differentness' as 'dissonance'. Defining the difference between these two terms he states:

> Differentness can be seen as neutral, based on an objective comparison process [...]. Dissonance, however, often an uncomfortable and negative experience of conflict, implies a negative judgement about the difference, where the comparison process results in an experience of *devaluation* and *discrepancy*. [40]

These perceptions of 'devaluation', 'discrepancy' and overall mental tension caused by the clash of two cultures within one individual, is called "acculturative stress". [41]

Flusfeder goes so far as to say that the "narrator, his older brother Karl and their sister Amelia, are *cursed* by difference". [42] To the narrator being bicultural and having a dual heritage is indeed a torture, a constant battle with his surroundings and himself. The narrator depicts with astonishing simplicity how the feeling of being different becomes a very negative and frightening experience:

> There was something about us that made people laugh, or whisper, or stop along the street quite openly to ask the most bizarre questions; something that stuck to us like an electronic tag. [43]

Being half-German is something that people in Dublin in the 1960s find peculiar. The narrator differentiates between three different types of reactions with, as it seems, a decreasing degree of humiliation for the children: through their differentness the children become the object of ridicule, they are even openly laughed at; people whisper behind their backs and make them feel very uncomfortable, as if there is something inherently comical, peculiar and 'strange' about them; people asking them 'bizarre questions', perhaps even with good intentions, also gives the children the impression that they do not belong.

Moreover, the German words used by the Irish people in the story, the "gibberish of German" [44] as the narrator calls it, are either violent, connected to the military or outright Nazi slogans: "Achtung" [45], "Achtung!

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40   Kich, p. 306 (stress added).
41   Cf. for example Berry – Kim – Minde – Mok (1987), p. 493.
42   Flusfeder.
43   Hamilton (1996), p. 9.
44   Hamilton (1996), p. 13.
45   Hamilton (1996), p. 9.

Get the Krauts"[46], "Donner und Blitzen"[47], "Gotten [sic], blitzen…Himmel"[48], "Heil Hitler"[49], "Sieg Heils"[50]. The negative impact of these "warcries", as the narrator puts it, is apparent since the picture of Germanness that they see drawn by the Irish people is solely connected with World War II or rather with American war movies such as *The Great Escape*.[51] Thus, the narrator's remark: "Everywhere we went, the German past floated on the breeze after us" refers to a German past that is marked by images and connotations of violence.[52]

The type of Germanness that is projected onto the children, even by the "friendly" man in the fish shop, is that of an aggressive and militant people.[53] Despairingly, the narrator realises: "It didn't help that Eichmann went on trial for war crimes when I was around five years old. So I was called Eichmann, or sometimes Göring. My older brother usually went under Hitler or Himmler", the word Nazi would always be the first connotation of Germanness, even in Ireland.[54]

Of course, the children have little concept of what the word Nazi really entails. During the snowball execution the narrator reveals: "All of it meant little to us. It was as though the terms were being invented there and then, as though they came from somebody's perverse imagination. One of them said something about concentration camps, and gas chambers".[55] Naturally, Nazi-Germany means little to the children; they were born after the war and it is hard to imagine that this period in German history was discussed over the dinner table with relatively young children.

More importantly, the prejudices the children encounter are in sharp contrast to their own experiences of Germanness. While Germans are branded as a violent and militaristic people, at home the children experience German culture in terms of "the smell of baking"[56], "sweets" on St Nicholas Day[57], "candles"[58], the sounds of the "Cologne Children's Choir"[59] and "*Glühwein*"[60]. Their only source of reference as far as Germanness is concerned is, since they live in Dublin, their home. And the cosy

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46 Hamilton (1996), p. 10.
47 Hamilton (1996), p. 10.
48 Hamilton (1996), p. 13.
49 Hamilton (1996), p. 10.
50 Hamilton (1996), p. 13.
51 Hamilton (1996), p. 10.
52 Hamilton (1996), p. 10.
53 Hamilton (1996), p. 9.
54 Hamilton (1996), p. 10.
55 Hamilton (1996), p. 14.
56 Hamilton (1996), p. 10.
57 Hamilton (1996), p. 11.
58 Hamilton (1996), p. 11.
59 Hamilton (1996), p. 11.
60 Hamilton (1996), p. 12.

and peaceful domestic environment is at odds with the image they are confronted with by some of the Irish people around them. The reactions of the people they encounter are "a constant reminder of the discrepancy between their developing self-perceptions and others' perceptions of them".[61]

The children cannot cope with this discrepancy and are frightened by the obvious gap between their own conception of their Germanness and the others' notions of what Germanness is supposed to imply. Every time they leave the house they dread to be confronted with this discrepancy. In the fish shop, the narrator feels "exposed", not only to the looks of the customers but worse, they are found out.[62] Naturally, they try to hide and avoid being exposed again:

> It didn't help either that on those shopping trips into town before Christmas, our mother talked to us in German on the bus. Just when we began to enjoy the *comfort of anonymity*, she would say "Lass das sein" ("Stop that") in a harsh German tone and the passengers would turn around to stare again.[63]

They have come to fear the looks of other people reminding them of their differentness. This is a very common feature among bicultural and biracial children; Kich states that many "are ashamed and outraged at being so persistently judged by their being different".[64] The children in "Nazi Christmas" are not outraged, they are far too intimidated but they slowly become ashamed and afraid of their Germanness, even though they are 'only' half-German.

Thus, what the narrator calls 'the comfort of anonymity', of people not knowing of their German heritage, becomes a vital part of their lives; in essence, the narrator tries to deny his German heritage but the resulting "feeling of marginality" leads to "anxiety" and acculturative stress.[65] In his attempt to resolve the inherent conflict of his biculturalism, the narrator even shows tendencies to adopt the clichés of Germanness inspired by American war movies. The choice of words here almost suggests that he is a German spy trying to infiltrate Irish society: "The word was out. Our assumed identity as Irish children was blown."[66] While the children assume this identity in order to maintain the 'comfort of anonymity', the implication is that they pose a threat or a danger to Ireland and that

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61 Kich, p. 307.
62 Hamilton (1996), p. 9.
63 Hamilton (1996), p. 10 (stress added).
64 Kich, p. 310.
65 Berry – Kim – Minde – Mok, p. 492.
66 Hamilton (1996), p. 10.

just being German suffices to disrupt the peace in Dublin. It is indicative of the level of stress the narrator must feel that he interprets a harmless feature of his home life in terms of potential conflict: "At the same time we knew we were the only house with real candles, almost like a sign to the outside, a provocation."[67] Not only do they experience their differentness as negative and distressing but as a provocation to the outside world; being half-German and insisting on showing it is provocation enough. The "profane secret" is revealed, the great sin of Nazi-Germany follows them and inevitably they become part of it.[68]

The narrator even connects certain aspects of the weather with the nationality of his family: "The snow seemed to be a German invention too."[69] This irrational association shows how deep the narrator feels his differentness and that he concludes that the dissonance he experiences within himself has some negative influence on his surroundings in the form of various disturbances of normality in Dublin.

Moreover, he comes to believe that his German heritage makes him inherently different from the Irish people around him: "We lacked the Irish instinct for blending in with the crowd, that natural expertise of human camouflage."[70] Clearly, this is not the thought of a child but rather the narrator looking back. But nevertheless the boy seems to think that there is something innately different about him that sets him and the rest of the family (perhaps with the exception of the father) apart from everyone else. The narrator experiences his differentness as deeply stressful, even displaying almost paranoid tendencies in that he sees his very existence as a provocation and disturbance. The psychological impact of this dissonance is added to by the impression that being German, or half-German for that matter, is somehow 'bad'. Thus, even though the events – i.e. the man in the fish shop, the journey on the bus, the candles etc. – seem rather trivial, the stress they cause is immense and they ought to be seen as stressors in the context of an acculturative process, not as causes of stress in themselves. These incidents are manifestations of the internal conflict within the boy and probably his siblings. Through alienation and marginalisation the boy has become frightened and intimidated because he cannot deal with his internal conflict caused by his dual cultural heritage. He therefore experiences everything that is remotely connected with differentness in an extreme way. It is as if his internal dissonance has become some type of magnifying glass. Thus, the level of acculturative stress that the boy experiences is high, leaving him frightened, confused and always slightly 'on edge'.

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[67] Hamilton (1996), p. 11.
[68] Hamilton (1996), p. 10.
[69] Hamilton (1996), p. 11.
[70] Hamilton (1996), p. 10.

Digression: Prejudice and Violence in "Nazi Christmas"

In order to explain the climax of "Nazi Christmas", the verbal and physical attack upon the narrator and his brother and sister, and its significance for the story, the question of prejudice is significant. Thus, one may ask: what kinds of prejudice are we, or rather the narrator in "Nazi Christmas" dealing with? The *OED* defines prejudice as "a feeling, favourable or unfavourable, towards any person or thing, prior to or not based on actual experience."[71] This contains the basic 'ingredients' of the phenomenon of prejudice: firstly, prejudice can be a projection of both positive and negative attitudes although "*ethnic* prejudice is mostly negative".[72] Accordingly, we will concentrate on prejudice 'against' and not 'in favour' of ethnic and cultural groups. Secondly, prejudice is usually based not on actual fact but on hearsay or generally held beliefs. In other words, prejudices are generalisations and stereotypes attributed to a certain ethnic group. Allport states: "No one can possibly know *all* refugees, Catholics, or Orientals. Hence any negative judgement of these groups *as a whole* is, strictly speaking, an instance of thinking ill without sufficient warrant."[73] Thus, prejudices such as: Germans are racists, Jewish people are greedy, black people are dirty, Polish people are always drunk, Irish are notoriously rebellious etc., are connected with groups. Ethnic prejudices do not reflect individuals but conceptions of the group an individual belongs to. Allport stresses this by redefining prejudice as "an avertive or hostile attitude toward a person who belongs to a group, simply because he belongs to that group, and is therefore presumed to have the objectionable qualities ascribed to the group."[74] Thus, certain characteristics connected with a certain ethnic group are transferred to the individual with the silent understanding that a particular member of a group is like all the other members of that group.

But one important distinction must be made, as Aboud points out: "Stereotypes are rigid, overgeneralised beliefs about the attributes of ethnic group members whereas prejudice is a negative attitude."[75] In other words, overgeneralisations such as: *all* Germans are punctual, tidy and well–organised or *all* English people like football, are stereotypes, projecting a certain characteristic onto all members of a particular group. Following these two examples a prejudice against Germans and English people could be: all Germans are punctual, tidy and well-organised, and therefore secretly preparing for the next war or all English people are (potential) football hooligans. While stereotypes reflect a lack of information and knowledge, prejudices display an uninformed *and* negative or hostile attitude that cannot be argued with because it is not based on fact or

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[71]   Oxford English Dictionary (1961), Vol. VIII. Oxford, p. 1275.
[72]   Gordon Allport (1979), *The Nature of Prejudice*. New York, p. 6.
[73]   Allport, p. 7.
[74]   Allport, p. 7.
[75]   Frances Aboud (1988), *Children & Prejudice*. Oxford, p. 5.

rational thinking. In other words: "Prejudgements become prejudices only if they are not reversible when exposed to new knowledge."[76] In addition, prejudice requires a certain negative or hostile behaviour pattern or as Aboud terms it: an "[…] organized predisposition to react negatively."[77] This predisposition must be 'organised' in the sense that a certain type, if not always the same or with the same intensity, of reaction follows. Thus, prejudice evokes a negative response or behaviour of some kind, i.e. talking ill of a certain group, discrimination or even violence.

Following the distinction between stereotyping and prejudice the fishmonger in "Nazi Christmas" tends to overgeneralise. As we have mentioned earlier, the choice of words – i.e. military language – and his references to the Second World War are stereotypes rather than heart-felt prejudices. The narrator even points at the source of information: "All the stuff he had picked up from movies like *Von Ryan's Express* and *The Great Escape*."[78] Indeed, judging from his behaviour, the fishmonger's knowledge of German and Germanness seems to be inspired by films, a rather limited and perhaps not the most reliable or objective source. Consequently, the narrator is confused because he cannot reconcile these stereotypes with his own positive perceptions and experiences of Germanness, i.e. Christmas songs, German Christmas traditions, sweets etc.

But such phrases as 'Achtung! Get the Krauts', 'Sieg Heil' or being called Hitler, Göring, Eichmann or Himmler are much more specific or "organized" and more indicative of acts of prejudice.[79] We find the overgeneralisation in the identification of all Germans, or half-Germans for that matter, as Nazis and the negative reaction, i.e. shouting and even violence in the form a "neat karate chop".[80] Significantly, while the fishmonger uses stereotypes, because he knows that calling them Nazis is inappropriate, the prejudicial attitudes seem to come from children, either in school or in the street. In his study *Children & Prejudice* Aboud states that there is no indication that children are more or less prejudiced than adults. But,

> the psychological structures of children are generally simpler than those of adults, in the sense of being less differentiated and less integrated. Similarly, we should expect the structure of prejudice to be simpler in children, perhaps less organized and perhaps less categorical […]. It may be useful, therefore, to think of rudimentary forms of a prejudiced attitude, which precede the adult form.[81]

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76   Allport, p. 9.
77   Aboud, p. 5-6.
78   Hamilton (1996), p. 9.
79   Aboud, p. 6.
80   Hamilton (1996), p. 10.
81   Aboud, p. 4-5.

Therefore, the openness of the Irish children's behaviour and antipathy can be attributed to the assumption that they have a simpler view of time and history. Given the rather unrefined and undifferentiated character of most of the American war movies in the 1950s and 1960s, some of which were part of "the Allied Powers['] extensive propaganda campaign", children may easily come to misleading or vague conclusions.[82] Children also have a more limited perception of time and might not attribute Nazi Germany to the past in the same way as adults would; indeed, it might not occur to children that 'Nazi Germany' is a chronological category at all. Assuming that the Second World War is the predominant factor in German history, they might even conclude that all Germans have always been and will always be Nazis. They would also have learned that Nazis are ultimately evil. Thus, the extreme and simple conclusions an Irish child may draw would be: all Germans are Nazis, in past, present and future and all Nazis are evil. Even though this may oversimplify the matter, it seems apparent that certain elements drawn from these conclusions, of course to varying degrees, are indeed the motivation behind the described antilocution and the occasional physical violence. Also, if we assume that a child's perception of Germanness and German history is simpler than an adult's, their reactions and behaviour patterns seem to be simpler, more open and less refined. We do not want to insinuate that children are more prejudiced or violent than adults but within the dramatic scenes that the story depicts, an adult, for the reasons given above, would be less likely to shout verbal tirades such as 'Sieg Heil' or 'Heil Hitler' at the narrator and his siblings.

However, the attack that the narrator and his brother and sister suffer at the hands of a group of Irish children does not appear to be primarily inspired by prejudicial hatred. Even the narrator suggests that ethnic prejudice is not the initial cause of the attack but a convenient circumstance. Admittedly, it is not possible to draw a clear line between these two factors. However, there are some subtle indications in the text that hint at the motivation for the group's behaviour. There is no personal grudge since the narrator states: "[…] we were ambushed in the lane by a gang of boys we had never seen before."[83] It appears rather that the narrator and his siblings happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. The Irish children do not seem to have any apparent reason for the attack and appear to just want to 'pick a fight'. Even though the narrator's older brother is pushed against a wall with the words: "You Nazi bastard", this reaction seems to be a bit extreme for the occasion.[84] However, Root notes that "[f]or those children who are products of interracial unions during

[82] Kerry Segrave (1997), *American Films Abroad – Hollywood's Domination of the World's Movie Screens*. Jefferson (N. Carolina), p. 169.
[83] Hamilton (1996), p. 12.
[84] Hamilton (1996), p. 12.

foreign wars (i.e., WW II, Korean War, Vietnam War), fear of the 'enemy', translated into national hatred towards the 'enemy', may be projected onto interracial families and their children."[85] In the case of "Nazi Christmas" it seems unlikely that the Irish children in the story have developed such an antipathy towards the narrator and his siblings. Even though war movies or hearsay might inspire antipathy, there does not seem substantial enough grounds to account for the physical attack.

Significantly, the narrator states: "Amelia stopped resisting and they stopped putting snow under her jacket because she wasn't contributing to the *fun*."[86] 'Fun' is the key word that reinforces the impression that the attack is part of a game. Hence, when the game appears to become boring, since none of the victims is 'contributing to the fun' any longer, by means of sheer "inner defiance", the attackers have to come up with a new game: "'What will we do with these Nazi fuckers?' the leader asked, holding his stony white disc up to our faces."[87] In order to be able to continue with the game they put the three children on trial. Perhaps informed by movies, they seem to re-enact the Nürnberg trials of Nazi war criminals, much in the style of "re-fighting a Hollywood version of the war" as part of a game.[88] Not that there is any doubt about the verdict but the Irish children need some type of justification for the continuation of violence. Even the mentioning of "concentration camps, and gas chambers" appears a bit hollow and functions primarily as an indirect justification in order to be able to increase the violent nature of the attack.[89] Thus, one could conclude that the prejudice towards the half-German children is more or less a convenient circumstance.

Still, although the whole situation seems to have the character of a game the presence of prejudice is apparent. Would the attack have been carried out if the children were not half-German? Would it have been carried out with the same vigour? The atmosphere of prejudice is pervasive: we find the over-identification of the half-German children as Germans, the stereotyping of all Germans as Nazis and the 'organised reaction' in the form of the assault, the 'trial' and the 'execution'. In this case it seems that game and prejudice complement each other in the minds of the attackers. Thus, the assault and the 'trial' are as much a manifestation and a re-enactment of prejudice as they are a pastime and an outlet for aggression.

Although the prejudicial tendencies of the Irish children are somewhat diminished by their limited and simple perception as well as the game-like character of the assault, the impact on the narrator as a child is immense,

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85   Root, p. 103.
86   Hamilton (1996), p. 13 (stress added).
87   Hamilton (1996), p. 13.
88   Flusfeder.
89   Hamilton (1996), p. 14.

hence the title "Nazi Christmas". There is a lot of confusion on the narrator/child's part as well because he cannot grasp how Christmas songs, sweets etc. relate to gas chambers, concentration camps and World War II. Additionally, his knowledge of this period of German history is fairly limited: "Whenever I asked my mother about the Nazis I saw a look in her eyes somewhere between confusion and regret."[90] Naturally, having little idea who 'the Nazis' were he asks his mother since she is the German link. Not surprisingly, his mother does not seem prepared to talk about this topic. It seems that the mother brushes the topic off in many cases and thus making it even more difficult for her children to understand the discrepancy of the different conceptions and manifestations of Germanness: "Our mother told us to ignore them. We were not Nazis."[91]

However, in psychological terms the assault by the group of Irish children marks the peak of the acculturative stress that the narrator experiences as a child. Significantly, the last sentence: "'It's only snow'", is an attempt to play down the importance of the situation and becomes part of the quiet endurance.[92] But the snowballs the Irish children throw at them take on a metaphorical significance. The snowballs seem to embody the hatred, the stereotypes and the prejudices that are constantly being 'flung' at the children. The narrator describes the snowball that hits him "with a flash of white" in the eye as "a hard lump of icy stone".[93] Not only are the snowballs hard and icy but so is the wave of hatred that the children feel.

This particular memory is of special significance in a bicultural context. Several scientific studies, interviews and cases mention how many bicultural, biracial or otherwise marginalised children clearly recall stones or other objects being thrown at their heads. Stonequist, for example, records the memories of a Jewish boy growing up in the USA who was attacked by children of Polish origin who threw stones at him and his brothers shouting anti-Semitic insults.[94] It is not peculiar that this happened but it is important that both the man in Stonequist's interview and the narrator of "Nazi Christmas" remember an incident of this kind so vividly. The metaphorical importance of one's head being attacked can be taken quite literally: the boy is exposed to something that he cannot understand and that causes deep psychological stress.

As far as biculturalism and the acculturation process is concerned, the boy in the story can be placed at stage one of Kich's model. The gap between the boy's self-perception and how he is perceived by others leaves him utterly bewildered. The title "Nazi Christmas" summarises these two

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90 Hamilton (1996), p. 14.
91 Hamilton (1996), p. 10.
92 Hamilton (1996), p. 15.
93 Hamilton (1996), p. 13.
94 Stonequist, p. 124.

different perceptual viewpoints. For the narrator s a boy Germanness around Christmas has only positive connotations and yet, he is called a Nazi; these are two things that the child cannot reconcile. Additionally, the feeling of 'differentness' turns into 'dissonance' and confusion, making the boy feel completely at odds with his surroundings. The level of acculturative stress and psychological strain on the developing child is very high and the story shows no resolution to the dilemma of biculturalism, within which the boy finds himself.

"The Irish Worker" – Assertion of the Self

While in "Nazi Christmas" the level of acculturative stress the boy experiences threatens to seriously affect his developmental process, it is of utmost importance to see biculturalism as a *development*, not a dead end street of despair. Hamilton seems to acknowledge this in "The Irish Worker"[95], which can be read as a sequel to "Nazi Christmas". "The Irish Worker", then, is also based on the experiences of a boy, most probably the same boy as in "Nazi Christmas", but at a later stage in his life. The boy here is a teenager "studying for the Leaving Cert".[96] The main characters in the story are the boy, his German mother and Mr McNally, the 'Irish Worker'.

In terms of Kich's model the boy has largely overcome the "struggle for acceptance from others", which is the main feature in Kich's second phase.[97] Although he does not feel the need to search for this acceptance he is still a bit insecure; for example in the case of their neighbour, Mrs Tarleton: "Mrs Tarleton trusted nobody. Not even us next door. Least of all us in No. 2."[98] The silent implication is that a half-German half-Irish family in Dublin cannot be trusted; at least that is what the boy-narrator suspects. Still, Mrs Tarleton is mentioned only on the periphery of the story and the amount of acculturative stress, confusion and insecurity is insignificant in comparison with "Nazi Christmas". Far more important is the aspect of "self-acceptance" and the "assertion" of a "bicultural identity", phase three in Kich's model.[99] The key points of the third phase are very much visible in Hamilton's story: the "ability to define him- or herself positively", a "stable self-acceptance" and the "assertion of the self".[100] When reading the short story the positive and comfortable position from which the boy-narrator acts and expresses himself is obvious. He is studying for his Leaving Certificate, fearing most of all the "hounding force of the Christian Brothers", like so many before him and with him, displaying the same anxiety before the final exams as most teenagers in his position feel.[101] In

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95 Hamilton (1996), p. 25-34.
96 Hamilton (1996), p. 27.
97 Kich, p. 305.
98 Hamilton (1996), p. 28.
99 Kich, p. 314.
100 Kich, p. 314, 315 & 317.
101 Hamilton (1996), p. 27.

other words, he seems quite comfortable with his life; apart from the suspicious neighbour, the boy-narrator does not mention any other sign of prejudice or violence against him. However, the strategy with which the boy asserts his identity is quite interesting: he observes, categorises and relates his observations to himself.

From this perspective, one might picture the constellation of characters in "The Irish Worker" as triangular. He locates himself between his German and his Irish heritage, i.e. the German mother and the Irish worker and distances himself from both, which can be seen as the beginnings of the assertion of his own identity. The younger boy in "Nazi Christmas" identified, for the most part not voluntarily, with his German background; in "The Irish Worker" the boy distances himself somewhat from both the German and the Irish influence. In an attempt to find his own position and play a more active part in the development of his identity, he categorises (sometimes even stereotypes) representatives of the two cultures according to what he perceives to be their significant attributes. Contemplating, for example, the tone of his mother's evaluation of the storm, blowing some of the slates off the roof, he observes:

> My mother repeated the words after him [the father] as she went to look at the damage. It sounded much more dangerous coming from her in German.
> "Das kann enorm gefärlich [sic] sein," she said, seeing the broken slates.[102]

For him the English sentence: "That kind of thing is very dangerous", sounds far more "dangerous" in German, simply because it is German.[103] It is a very common cliché that the German language sounds dramatic but there seems to be another reason why the boy perceives the German sentence as more serious. 'That kind of thing is very dangerous' and the German 'Das kann enorm gefährlich sein' ('This can be extremely dangerous') differ somewhat; not only is the German word 'enorm' stronger than 'very' but 'kann' ('can') opens a whole range of things that might happen. [104] Indeed, the mother imagines all kinds of worst-case-scenarios: "It [the slate] could have sliced someone in the neck. Or it could have chopped someone's shoulder. Or imagine if somebody got that on his head."[105] Whether such a trait is typically German or not is irrelevant; the reaction of the boy is far more important in this context. Thus, recognising his mother's 'imagine-the-worst attitude' he wonders whether such an

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[102] Hamilton (1996), p. 27.
[103] Hamilton (1996), p. 26.
[104] Cf. the concept of the "nightmare factory" in *The Sailor in the Wardrobe* (for example Hugo Hamilton (2006), *The Sailor in the Wardrobe*. London, p. 12-14.).
[105] Hamilton (1996), p. 27.

attitude is really justified under the circumstances and almost ridicules his mother:

> 'Jemand konnte [sic] das auf den kopf [sic] kriegen.' *Jemand*, somebody. The only person going out at that time was my father. Besides, the slates had fallen during the night. The morning was calm and seemed to promise a summer's day. There was no danger. The damage began to reduce from what seemed like three or four slates at first down to one grey slate broken into many pieces. [106]

Of course, the somewhat mocking voice of the narrator and the boy's thoughts are inextricably linked. By observing, evaluating and categorising he slowly creates his own perspective, no longer relying fully on definitions by others, which so oppressed the boy in "Nazi Christmas". The boy in "The Irish Worker", however, is still at an early stage of what Kich calls the 'assertion of the self' since he defines himself by means of contrast. Still, being able to look at one's cultural heritage and its representatives from the distance of an observer is an important step in coping with biculturalism and quite an achievement for a teenager of his age.

His mother seems to be the boy's only representation of Germanness he can refer to and by observing her he tries to guess at what is German about her. Thus, his observation is a tendency to imagine a worst-case scenario in the face of one broken slate; the second feature that stands out is control of the family and particularly Irish workers who she thinks are not up to the German standard as far as working discipline is concerned. The boy states: "Suspicion was her way of maintaining order", not only in the family but also with the Irish worker. [107] Amused, the boy listens to his mother's attempts to locate Mr McNally and therefore control his work. In Mr McNally, then, we find some elements of a modern type of "stage Irishman" [108]; he has an "honest face" [109], is "not without charm" [110] and obviously is not the hardest working man in Ireland, since he has fallen asleep on the roof. The important thing here is not Mr McNally himself but the boy, who is not in the least surprised that the worker fell asleep after finishing the job. In fact, he sympathises with the worker saying: "I was in the same boat as Mr McNally. With no further cause to deviate, I returned to my room." [111]

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[106] Hamilton (1996), p. 27.

[107] Hamilton (1996), p. 30.

[108] Cf. for example: Robert Welch (ed.) (1996), *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature*. Oxford, p. 533-535.

[109] Hamilton (1996), p. 28.

[110] Hamilton (1996), p. 29.

[111] Hamilton (1996), p. 29.

Thus, the advanced stage in the bicultural development process compared to "Nazi Christmas" is apparent. The boy in "The Irish Worker" does not experience his dual cultural heritage as a burden. He does not feel marginalised any longer and seems quite comfortable with his position, which in turn enables him to understand his mother and anticipate the worker's behaviour and attitude. The boy is just at the beginning of phase three of Kich's model and has clearly gained a *positive* view and attitude of himself as a bicultural person. It appears more than likely that in time he will regard his dual cultural and lingual heritage as "beneficial", as is often the case with individuals.[112] Thus, the one-way street of the terrors of biculturalism that "Nazi Christmas" describes is not the final outcome, but only a stage in the developmental process. Still, as Kich points out, the assertion of a bicultural identity is an "ongoing and unfinished process"[113]; in other words, coping and eventually even enjoying the benefits of biculturalism is a life-long challenge and, although the boy seems to be quite comfortable with his position, he still seems to long for an unattainable simplicity, for him, represented by a monocultural frame of reference: "I'd love to know things that could never be contradicted."[114]

[112] LaFromboise et al., p. 136.
[113] Kich, p. 316.
[114] Hamilton (1996), p. 25.

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