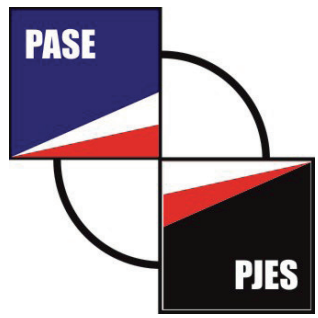


POLISH JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

Journal of the Polish Association for the Study of English (PASE)

No. 8.1

Polish Association for the Study of English

ISSN 2545-0131 (print)
ISSN 2543-5981 (online)

Warsaw 2022

Publisher:
Polish Association for the Study of English
ul. Hoża 69, 00-681 Warszawa
ISSN 2545-0131 (print)
ISSN 2543-5981 (online)

CONTENTS

From the Editor

The whole editorial board of the *Polish Journal of English Studies* would like to welcome you wholeheartedly to our first issue in 2022. The current volume offers a selection of greatly varied papers on a range of topics much broader than in any previous issue. Not only will you find here papers on English and American literature but also studies in film adaptation, linguistics, and literary translation. We hope that this variety will become a staple characteristic of our journal, and with every issue we will be able to broaden the range of presented topics.

The work of our editorial board stops now, but only briefly, as we are already well advanced in the preparation of the second 2022 issue, commemorating the centenary of the publication of *Ulysses*, *The Waste Land*, and *Jacob's Room*, three major works of English modernist literature. Naturally, we are also looking forward to submissions which will be considered for publication in 2023.

Krzysztof Fordoński
Editor-in-chief of the *Polish Journal of English Studies*

"Literary Critics Make Natural Detectives" – Or Do They? Detection and Interpretation in A. S. Byatt's *Possession: A Romance*

Agnieszka Seredyńska
independent scholar

Abstract: This paper explores the themes of detection and interpretation in A. S. Byatt's *Possession. A Romance*, which, I argue, are interconnected in two ways. Firstly, the plot centres around an investigation conducted by a pair of academics, who exercise their skills as literary critics to piece together the story of two Victorian poets. Secondly, the novel's structure, specifically the inclusion of the pseudo-Victorian intertexts the scholars use as evidence, offers the reader an opportunity to become an armchair detective and perform the interpretive work undertaken by the modern-day characters. Even so, this article aims to demonstrate that *Possession* actively resists this detective-like approach to literature. Byatt's critics prove blundering sleuths, relying on lucky coincidence and intuitive apprehension more than reasoning and critical insight, and the conclusions they arrive at turn out to be partially misguided. Furthermore, a close-reading of the pseudo-Victorian intertexts challenges the assumption that literature offers an unproblematic window into its author's life and feelings, which the investigation tacitly relies on. The article contends that despite the writerly games *Possession* plays with its audience, it ultimately favours a non-academic approach to reading as opposed to one that takes the text apart in search for meaning.

Keywords: A. S. Byatt, detection, literary criticism, historiographic metafiction, neo-Victorianism

A. S. Byatt's *Possession. A Romance* is a story of literary investigation and discovery, relating the efforts of two modern-day scholars, Roland Mitchell and Maud Bailey, to uncover the details of a relationship between nineteenth-century poets, Randolph Henry Ash and Christabel LaMotte. This quest for knowledge takes the pair on an adventure through old country estates, Yorkshire beaches and a graveyard, where the dead are disturbed to yield their secrets and satisfy the desire for narrative closure. Through a combination of marvellous feats

of detection and canny readings of various texts, the venture reaches a satisfactory, though partial, conclusion. "Literary critics make natural detectives," Maud remarks in the early stages of the investigation (Byatt 1991, 238), and *Possession* entertains this notion in two ways: on the level of plot and through its formal construction. Overcome by "some violent emotion of curiosity" (Byatt 1991, 82), Roland and Maud step into the role of sleuths; but even though their search takes place outside of the conventional academic milieu of libraries and archives, the clues they uncover are either textual or substantiated by textual evidence, requiring them to mobilise their skills as critics. Significantly, the texts they discover and interpret to reconstruct the (hi)story of Ash and LaMotte are included in the body of the novel, which makes the process of reading *Possession* "an exciting detective game" (Mitchell 2010, 103): the reader, too, is invited to become an armchair detective and perform the interpretive work undertaken by the modern-day characters.

Yet even if Byatt's critics turn into sleuths with little effort, their investigative skills ultimately leave something to be desired. Moreover, their discoveries owe more to lucky coincidence and intuitive apprehension than astute critical insight, which will be demonstrated in the first part of this article. Although the scholars succeed in establishing key facts about the Victorian poets – namely, that they had a brief relationship and a daughter, Maia, whose existence Christabel concealed from her lover – their interpretation proves only partially accurate since they assume Ash never learned about the child; what they do not (and cannot ever) know is that he and Maia met. An account of this encounter is supplied in the Postscript by what Byatt terms the "Victorian 'omniscient' third-person" narrator (Byatt 1995, 17), whose presence in the novel highlights the gap between history and its retrospective narrativisation, the shape of which is inevitably determined by the existence (or accessibility) of evidence. *Possession*'s concern with the question of how the past can come to be known in the present makes it possible to read it in line with Linda Hutcheon's concept of "historiographic metafiction."[1] Hutcheon coins this term in *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* to designate texts that "lay claim to historical events and personages" and "rethink and rework the forms and contents of the past" on the grounds of their "self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs" (Hutcheon 1988, 5). In *Possession*, this is done in two ways: through the interplay of two

1 For a reading of *Possession* as historiographic metafiction, see for instance: Wells 2022, Walsh 2000.

narrative timelines, whereby the twentieth-century characters seek to discover the events disclosed to the reader by the Victorian narrator, and by undermining the reliability of the various forms of writing that Roland and Maud rely on as evidence throughout their quest. Thus, in the second part of this article, I will argue that while the critics' findings tacitly depend on the assumption that texts can be read as an accurate reflection of historical events or the writer's feelings and attitudes,[2] *Possession* actively resists such an approach by complicating the pseudo-Victorian intertexts' relationship to the reality they are called upon to convey. Furthermore, the novel is suspicious of the sort of reading it both illustrates and invites, whereby texts are mined for clues intended to produce meaning; in other words, the sort of scholarly efforts at interpretation exemplified by the two fictional critics and encouraged by the text's narrative structure.[3] My aim is therefore to challenge Maud's hypothesis and analyse the complex relationship *Possession* establishes between detection and interpretation by drawing on Hutcheon's insights to contextualise the discussion. I am not, however, seeking to either prove or disprove the novel's postmodernist credentials; the theoretical underpinnings of this article are merely to reflect the fact that *Possession* is steeped in the intellectual discourses of the 1980s, and if it exemplifies a brand of postmodernism, it is one that is very much of its time.[4]

Hunting "hypothetical ghost[s]" – Roland and Maud's detective quest

Possession opens in the London Library, where Roland accidentally finds two letters written by Ash to an anonymous "Madam" in the poet's copy of *Principi di Scienzia Nuova* (Byatt 1991, 5). This momentous discovery, which eventually makes it necessary to "reassess *everything*" (Byatt 1991, 485) that has been taken

2 In this way, the investigation is to a large extent underpinned by the Romantic theory of authorship, which saw literature as expressive of the author's consciousness.

3 For the purposes of this article, I take "literary criticism" to mean the particular brand exemplified by Roland and Maud both throughout their investigation and in their scholarly work, which Ann Marie Adams defines as "investigating primary texts in order to decode textual clues" (Adams 2003, 111). For an in-depth analysis of Roland and Maud's critical identities, see Adams 2003.

4 Recently, Matthias Stephan challenged Hutcheon's definition of postmodernism by arguing that her analysis belies "ties to a, perhaps unconscious, modernist structure driving" it (Stephan 2019, 31). Therefore, reading *Possession* as historiographic metafiction does not necessarily mean it is postmodern in terms that would be acceptable to present-day critics, which supports Jackie Buxton's "contention that postmodernism is more of a constructed 'reality' than a quantifiable materiality" (Buxton 2001, 217).

for granted about both Ash and his recipient, Christabel LaMotte, is, therefore, a stroke of sheer luck – a pattern that will recur throughout the novel insofar as many of the findings that drive the investigation forward should never come to light under ordinary circumstances. The aura of implausibility surrounding these discoveries corresponds to Byatt's choice of genre: as the epigraph from Nathaniel Hawthorne announces, *Possession* is a "Romance in the broader generic sense," and as such opts "for a symbolic rather than mimetic mode of representation" (Wells 2002, 671), releasing the author from the obligation to aim, in Hawthorne's words, "at a very minute fidelity, not only to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience" (Byatt 1991). The subsequent discovery of the full correspondence between Ash and LaMotte illustrates this particularly well, for there is not much that is ordinary about it. The event takes place in Christabel's old room in Seal Court, the Bailey household in Lincolnshire. As Roland and Maud are having a look around, Maud, prompted by the sight of Christabel's old dolls, recites one of her poems, "a kind of incantation":

> Dolly keeps a Secret
> Safer than a Friend
> [...]
> Could Dolly tell of us?
> Her wax lips are sealed.
> Much has she meditated
> Much – ah – concealed (Byatt 1991, 82).

Interpreting the poem to mean that the dolls are, indeed, hiding something, Maud is rewarded for her shrewd reading with a package containing letters by both Ash and LaMotte. When Sir George Bailey questions her how she knew "to go for the dolls' bed," she replies: "I didn't know. I just thought of the poem, standing there, and then it seemed clear. It was sheer luck" (Byatt 1991, 84). The correspondence is therefore recovered as if by a miracle, and the word "incantation" used to describe Maud's recitation of the poem enhances the mystical aura surrounding the discovery. It takes more than a competent scholar: even with her extensive knowledge of LaMotte, Maud could not have interpreted the poem in this way in any other context: she needs to be in Christabel's room, in a particular frame of mind, and aided by a flash of sudden inspiration for the magic to happen. Elizabeth Bronfen goes as far as to read Maud's insight as guided by the "spectral influence"

of LaMotte (Bronfen 1996, 132), an interpretation that does not seem at all far-fetched given the Gothic atmosphere of this scene (Bentley 2018, 146).[5] This crucial instance in the narrative is therefore framed in a way that creates an impression of otherworldliness around the recovery of the Ash-LaMotte correspondence.

The same is true of the subsequent discovery Roland and Maud make, which is considerably less substantial than a pile of letters. When the two scholars go on a research trip to Yorkshire in the hopes of hunting down the "hypothetical ghost" of Christabel who may have accompanied Ash on his journey there (Byatt 1991, 251), the proof they find is hardly proof at all. The evidence they gather is Maud's Victorian brooch which may have been bought by Ash for Christabel, or by Christabel herself, and begins to "look different" in the shop Roland and Maud visit, coloured by the possibility of being a part of the other storyline, as well as the overall impression of Yorkshire which Roland identifies as an influence on LaMotte's "The Fairy Melusina":

> [i]t's full of local words from here, gills and riggs and ling. The air is from here. Like in his letter. She talks about the air like summer colts playing on the moors. That's a Yorkshire saying. (Byatt 1991, 264)

Despite the lack of concrete evidence, Maud confidently declares she "feel[s] certain" that Christabel did come to Yorkshire with Ash. What finally settles the question for both researchers is the most ephemeral discovery of all, a "curious natural phenomenon" of sunlight reflected off a pool of water inside a cavern, "a kind of visionary structure of non-existent fires and non-solid networks of thread inside it," which Maud relates to the beginning of "Melusina":

> Three elements combined to make the fourth
> [...]
> A show of leaping flames, of creeping spires
> Of tongues of light that licked the granite ledge. (Byatt 1991, 266)

---

5 It is worth noting that Seal Court meets all the criteria of a Gothic setting, defined by Jerrold E. Hogle as an "antiquated space" which hides "some secrets from the past that haunt the characters, psychologically, physically, or otherwise" (Hogle 2002, 2) – such as a stack of previously unread letters written by two poets who are referred to as "possessing" the modern-day characters (Byatt 1991, 486).

The use of the words "non-existent" and "non-solid" in the description of the phenomenon highlights its transitory, almost otherworldly nature, which Roland then remarks on, once again drawing attention to the importance of luck in his and Maud's detective endeavour: "[e]ven this isn't proof. And if the sun hadn't struck out when it did I wouldn't have seen it. But it is proof, to me" (Byatt 1991, 266). Thus, the certainty the two scholars gain is extremely precarious and thoroughly subjective, predicated as it is on a serendipitous coincidence and a personal hunch.

As it turns out, their intuition is impeccable: in the following chapter, the narration unexpectedly shifts to the nineteenth-century timeline and recounts Ash and LaMotte's sojourn in Yorkshire, providing the reader with confirmation for what the modern-day characters can only assume based on proof which, as Maud herself admits, will not "stand up" (Byatt 1991, 264). In this case, the Victorian narrator is an extension of Roland and Maud's reconstruction of Ash and LaMotte's romance, validating the critics' suppositions, which would otherwise seem like a flight of scholarly fancy. This makes it possible to read this section, as Ashman Long does, as "set[ting] up the reality that the later characters seek to access" (Ashman Long 2018, 159). For the critic, the "interplay of narrative frameworks" in *Possession* and "the assumption of 'a reality that escapes our grasp'" underpinning it confirms that the text is, as its subtitle announces, a Romance, and not a postmodern novel (Ashman Long 2018, 155, 158). However, I would argue that this conclusion does not necessarily follow as long as we accept Hutcheon's understanding of postmodernism, or, more specifically, of the relationship between history as events in the past and history as a narrative recounting these events. Hutcheon affirms that "in arguing that history does not exist except as text," postmodernism "does not stupidly and 'gleefully' deny that the past existed, but only that its accessibility to us now is entirely conditioned by textuality" (Hutcheon 1988, 16). This is certainly true for Byatt's fictive scholars, though not for her readers, who are offered privileged, unmediated insight into the past in the nineteenth-century sections of the novel. The question *Possession* poses is, therefore, not whether the past has an ontological reality, but, to quote Hutcheon again, "how can we know that past today – and what can we know of it?" (Hutcheon 1988, 92). At this point in the novel, Roland and Maud's suppositions about Ash and LaMotte's budding romance – unfounded as they may seem – are consistent with what the readers are told happened in the Victorian timeline; the tension between the two comes to the fore further

on in the Postscript. Before considering the ending of the novel in more detail, however, it is necessary to see how the scholars arrive at the end of their quest for knowledge.

The last piece of the puzzle, which makes possible the great denouement and (supposed) narrative closure, is exhumed with Ash's body. Consumed by "the thought of perhaps never knowing" the contents of the mysterious box that Ellen Ash buried with her husband, Mortimer Cropper, aided by Hildebrand Ash, desecrates Randolph Henry's grave and recovers the box, which contains, among other things, the letter Christabel wrote to give Ash "at least – the facts" about their daughter (Byatt 1991, 489–9). Unlike the "evidence" found in Yorkshire, the letter can hardly be contested, and yet it is very much like the correspondence found in Christabel's room insofar as it should never have come to light under ordinary circumstances – raiding graves is, after all, hardly a viable manner of conducting research. Another parallel between the two scenes is to be found in their Gothic undertones, here taken to a caricatural extreme: as Bentley points out, "[i]n this scene the use of pathetic fallacy is so overdone as to parody the Gothic style" (Bentley 2018, 146). A short passage will suffice to demonstrate this stylistic excess:

> A kind of dull howling and whistling began, and then a chorus of groans and creaking sighs, the trees, protesting. [...] The wind moved in the graveyard like a creature from another dimension, trapped and screaming. (Byatt 1991, 494)

Not only does nature express vociferous opposition to Cropper's sacrilegious deed, but it also proves instrumental in capturing the villain: the falling trees block Cropper's escape, trapping him at the site of the crime until the heroes catch him red-handed (Byatt 1991, 494). At the close of the investigation, we once again seem to enter the realm of the supernatural, which underscores the improbability of the scene.

There are therefore two contradictory impulses at play in the detective plot. On the one hand, a providential hand seems to guide Roland and Maud in their investigation, creating fortuitous circumstances and offering flashes of insight, as if the past was trying to make itself known. This, I would argue, erodes their agency as detective-critics. On the other hand, because the discovery of the evidence – be it material or immaterial, incontrovertible or dubious

– is so unorthodox and improbable, there is a sense that it could have very easily been lost altogether. Although the scholars are satisfied with the resolution Christabel's letter provides, the fact that the novel insistently plants clues where no one would expect to find them inevitably raises the question of what else might be out there that the modern-day characters have missed. This is addressed in the Postscript when the narrator remarks:

> There are things which happen and leave no discernible trace, are not spoken or written of, though it would be very wrong to say that subsequent events go on indifferently, all the same, as though such things had never been. Two people met on a hot May day, and never later mentioned their meeting. This is how it was. (Byatt 1991, 508)

The two people are Randolph Henry Ash and his daughter, Maia, also known as May. Considering how carefully Byatt names her characters,[6] this can hardly be a coincidence: May can also mean "may," expressing the possibility of an alternative story – the unrecorded meeting of Ash and Maia – which the Postscript supplies. Previously, the omniscient narration was used to legitimise Roland and Maud's suspicions, to give the reader proof for their far-fetched conclusions. In this instance, the Victorian voice, asserting the unquestionable truth of the episode it recounts ("This is how it was"), unsettles the complacency of the modern-day characters by furnishing the reader with knowledge that the "critics and scholars cannot discover" (Byatt 1995, 17). Guided in their interpretation by the contents of Christabel's final letter to Ash, in which she mistakenly assumes that he is oblivious to his daughter's existence, the scholars naturally infer that the hair in Ash's watch, which he cuts during his encounter with Maia, belongs to Christabel, and it never occurs to them to question this conclusion; in the end, they put too much faith in the words on the page, and this time their intuition proves fallible. Thus,

---

6 As Jackie Buxton observes, "[j]ust as Roland is indeed the childe of his poet-mentor, so it is no accident that Maud, often described as "icily regular, splendidly null' and emotionally sequestered like 'The Lady of Shalott' is housed atop Tennyson Tower" (Buxton 2001, 94). Roland's name may also refer to Roland the hero of the medieval *chanson de geste* seeing as he is likened to a knight by Lady Bailey and his pursuits are referred to as a "quest for knowledge" (Byatt 1991, 74, 4). Maud's surname, Bailey, also resonates with her withdrawn personality, as does that of Christabel; this comes into sharp relief in the latter's final letter to Ash when she speaks about her "motte-and-bailey defences" (Byatt 1991, 502), which establishes a symbolic lineage between the two women, on top of their blood relation.

the Postscript highlights the limitations inherent in the scholars' investigative efforts, showing that "while events did occur in the real empirical past" – in this case, the nineteenth-century timeline – they can only be known "through their discursive inscription" (Hutcheon 1988, 97). Where no such inscription exists, as in the case of Ash's meeting with Maia, the historical record will inevitably fall short. Although the reader is allowed a glimpse into History, it remains partially obscured for Roland and Maud, and the version of events they produce and accept as historically true is inevitably "a human construct" (Hutcheon 1988, 16) – restricted by the accessibility of evidence and somewhat misguided. In the harsh words of Chris Walsh, "as literary sleuths they are all failures" (Walsh 2000, 193).

Texts as clues – the unreliability of the written word

An attentive reader should not be surprised by the fact that the critics ultimately find themselves duped by the very medium they so thoroughly rely on. One of the paradoxes of *Possession* is that while astute (or perhaps inspired) readings allow the present-day characters to discover much about the past, the texts they use to do so are notoriously unreliable. As Hutcheon points out, "the epistemological question of how we know the past," which was the subject of the first part of this article, is linked to "the ontological one of the status of the traces of that past" (Hutcheon 1988, 122), which is what the following pages will analyse.

In the case of Christabel's final letter, the scholars' mistake is to assume that the version of events she relays to Ash is the only possible one. This is a clumsy oversight considering that, beginning with Ash's note to LaMotte that sets the plot in motion, the private correspondence included in the novel demonstrates that "not even first-hand information is any guarantee of truth" (Hansson 2003, 362) – it cannot even be trusted to reliably convey the writer's feelings. The two versions of Ash's letter to Christabel which Roland stumbles upon reveal the gap between what the poet wants to say and what he dares to put down on paper seeing as the first draft is marked by a sense of urgency that the second one takes great pains to conceal. Thus, the "extraordinary" conversation between Ash and Christabel becomes merely "pleasant and unexpected," and the poet's "strong sense of the necessity of continuing out ~~intere~~ talk" is rephrased as a deferential inquiry: "Is there any way in which it can be resumed, more privately and at more leisure?" (Byatt 1991, 5). These revisions point to a reality beyond the written word, which the letter approximates, but cannot be depended on to capture.

The reliability of texts as evidence is further complicated by the journals present in the narrative – one written by Ellen Ash, the other by Christabel's cousin, Sabine De Kercoz. Ellen's journal explores the blurred line between public and private and, according to Adrienne Shiffman, indicates that the diary should be generically labelled as fiction given "the possibility of external readership" (Shiffman 2001, 95). Beatrice Nest, the editor of Ellen's journal, has a "far-fetched" theory about Ash's wife – that she wrote it "to baffle" her potential audience:

> When I started on it, I thought, what a nice dull woman. And then I got the sense of things flittering and flickering behind all that solid – oh, I think of it as *panelling*. (Byatt 1991, 202)

The crossed-out passages in Ellen's journal are a visual representation of Beatrice's panelling, allowing a glimpse of an underlying layer of meaning even as they conceal it. Relating the reception of a gift from Ash, a brooch from Whitby and a poem, Ellen records:

> I transcribe the poem here, for it is worth more to me than the lovely gift itself. ~~Despite all~~ We have been so happy in our life together, even our separations contribute to the trust and deep affection that is between us. (Byatt 1991, 299)

The crossed-out phrase exists "in a state of liminality; simultaneously included and omitted, it hovers between presence and absence," indicating "an act of self-editing on the part of the diarist in order to create the fiction of the perfect marriage" (Shiffman 2001, 99). It also creates a possibility for another story, one which characteristically comes to light in a chapter recounted by the Victorian narrator towards the end of the novel, in which Ellen's devotion to Ash is revealed to be an act of compensation for the fact that she denied him the physical consummation of marriage (Byatt 1991, 459). The complex dynamic of guilt and dependence that "~~despite all~~" points to is therefore disclosed to the reader but inaccessible to the modern-day cast of *Possession*. By straining "the truth of her journal" in this contradictory way, Ellen makes it "a defence against, and a bait for, the gathering of ghouls and vultures" (Byatt 1991, 462) and effectively gains the upper hand over her anticipated readers by pre-emptively frustrating their attempts at reading her narrative as a straightforward account of the facts.

The fictive potential of a private journal, as well as its relationship to a potential audience, is explored further through Sabine de Kercoz. An aspiring writer, Sabine is encouraged by Christabel to learn her craft through practice, a task she duly takes on. Yet already in the first entry, she stumbles upon a problem:

> Am I writing this for Christabel to see, as a kind of *devoir* [...] or even as a kind of intimate letter, for her to read alone, in moments of contemplation and withdrawal? Or am I writing it privately to myself, in an attempt to be wholly truthful with myself, for the sake of truth alone? (Byatt 1991, 336)

For Sabine, writing for an audience precludes absolute transparency, and though she ultimately settles for the latter, the possibility of a readership haunts the pages as, in a later entry, she remarks: "Also I am afraid that [the journal] might be read, by accident, and misconstrued," a fear which prompts her to temporarily give up writing (Byatt 1991, 371). Much like the journal of Ellen Ash, then, the veracity of Sabine's account is tainted by the audience she anticipates.

The journal's relationship to reality is further complicated by Sabine's excessive subjectivity. This may seem like a redundant observation – after all, a diarist can hardly avoid filtering the events they record through their feelings – but Byatt amplifies Sabine's inability to extricate the facts from her highly emotional interpretation, as if to highlight the danger inherent in the genre. Christabel arrives on the De Kercoz doorstep to seek shelter during her pregnancy, yet for months Sabine remains, in her own words, "blind" to her cousin's condition, too preoccupied with the perceived threat that Christabel seems to pose to Sabine's relationship with her father (Byatt 1991, 371). The way in which jealousy quite literally distorts her perception of Christabel is made clear in this passage:

> They [Christabel and Mr De Kercoz] sit at the table and exchange metaphysical theories and I sit there like a shape-changing witch, swelling with rage and shrinking with shame, and they see nothing. And *she* changes in my sight. I hate her smooth pale head [...], as though she was some sort of serpent. (Byatt 1991, 366)

In the context of the modern-day characters' quest for knowledge, Sabine's journal constitutes invaluable evidence, filling the gap in the historical record

of Christabel's life and revealing the existence of a child no one had previously even expected. And yet Byatt shrouds this revelation in a narrative that persistently draws attention to its own limitations as far as its status as evidence is concerned. Moreover, owing to its limited perspective, the journal tells only a fraction of the story, raising more questions than it answers: "What became of the child? [...] How had Ash and LaMotte parted? Did Ash know of the possible child?" (Byatt 1991, 422).

In the absence of clues, Maud searches for them in two poems written by Sabine, interpreting one of them "to mean that the child had been born dead," and the other "to be an evidence of a terrible guilt, on Christabel's part, at the fate, whatever it was, of the infant" (Byatt 1991, 422). Maud's conclusion about the child's untimely demise proves to be wrong, yet this does not necessarily invalidate her reading of Sabine's poem, for, similarly to the journal, it only reflects Sabine's perception of reality, and she strongly hints at her conviction of the child's passing (Byatt 1991, 378). Thus, even if Maud is correct in deciphering the author's meaning, she still falls prey to Sabine's misrepresentation of events. In this way, *Possession* suggests that an "accurate" decoding of authorial intent might not necessarily result in an accurate reconstruction of the historical record and, additionally, raises the question of how to read and interpret texts, which I will return to shortly.

As previously mentioned, many of the literary works that help Roland and Maud unravel the mystery are included in the narrative, making it possible for the reader to interpret them for themselves. Initially, the relationship between the pseudo-Victorian intertexts and the narrative seems rather straightforward: the poems are frequently used as proleptic epigraphs anticipating narrative developments. The opening chapter of the novel, for instance, begins with a poem by Ash in which "the tricksy hero Heracles / Came to his dispossession and the theft" (Byatt 1991, 1), foreshadowing Roland's theft of Ash's letter from the London Library. Likewise, Chapter 4 is prefaced with a poem by LaMotte in which she depicts Rapunzel, locked up in a "glassy Tower," letting down her golden hair for the "foul Old One," who climbs up, sending "Pain [...] shrilling / Through every strand!" (Byatt 1991, 35). LaMotte's description of Rapunzel prefigures Maud, who is introduced as living "at the top of Tennyson Tower" (Byatt 1991, 39) and is distinguished by her hair, which, like that of LaMotte's Rapunzel, is linked to anguish, though mental rather than physical. Maud's blond mane undermines her credibility as a feminist scholar, which prompts her

to shear it; she only grows it back at the suggestion of an exploitative lover and then decides to wear it hidden away under a turban, "a kind of captive creature," Roland thinks in a later chapter (Byatt 1991, 272), a phrase which once again echoes the image of the imprisoned Rapunzel. As these two examples demonstrate, *Possession* draws meaningful connections between the Victorian texts and the present-day narrative: by having the former illuminate aspects of the latter, the novel encourages viewing them as useful interpretive clues, which corresponds to the way literature is used in the detective plot.

This approach is nevertheless complicated by the introduction of Ash's "Mummy Possest," a poem based on Robert Browning's "Mr Sludge, 'The Medium,'" which is used as one of the epigraphs to the novel. The similarities between the two texts are telling. Browning's poem "has usually been read as a scathing attack on Spiritualism" (Helfield 2006, 7); accordingly, on account of writing "Mummy Possest," Ash was, according to his fictitious contemporary, "taken by the general public as a champion of reason against knavery" in the spiritualist controversy (Byatt 1991, 398). Yet just as Browning's attitude towards spiritualism wasn't necessarily quite as condemnatory as critical consensus would have it (Helfield 2006, 7), so in *Possession* there are two contradictory accounts of a seance which Ash attended: one fictionalised by the poet himself in "Mummy Possest," the other given by Mrs Lees, a medium who witnessed Ash's comportment during the event and declares it "far from that" of a "detached observer" which he then sought to present himself as (Byatt 1991, 398). These conflicting versions of events – one which sees "Mummy Possest," and by extension Ash, as a virulent critic of the fraudulent practices of mediums, and the other that belies this image – cast doubt on the straightforward equation of the poem with the historical reality it responds to (which was a necessary condition throughout Maud and Roland's quest), and, consequently, highlights the potential issues that arise from using literary texts as a window onto their creators' attitudes or the past more broadly.

There is another significant analogy between Browning's poem and "Mummy Possest," which explicitly raises the question of the veracity of literary texts. In the excerpt from Browning that Byatt chooses as an epigraph, the speaker draws a parallel between the deceitful Mr Sludge and poets, who use lies to arrive at "portly truth." As Helfield notes, Browning suggests an affinity between the medium and the artist in a number of his dramatic monologues: "[b]oth, for example, are characterized as potentially fraudulent, for both fabricate the

subjects they purport to objectively represent" (Helfield 2006, 7). The same sentiment is echoed in "Mummy Possest," a dramatic monologue delivered by a female medium, who defends her trickery thus:

> You call these spirit *mises en scène* a lie
> I call it artfulness, or simply Art
> A Tale, a Story, that may hide a Truth
> As wonder-tales do, even in the Best Book
> [...]
> Through medium of language the great Poets
> Keep constant the Ideal, as Beatrice
> Speaks to us still, though Dante's flesh is dust
> So through the Medium of this poor flesh
> [...] the sublimest Souls
> Make themselves known to those who sit and wait. (Byatt 1991, 408–9)

The argument here is that even though spirit manifestations may be carefully contrived, they hint at a deeper truth – the existence of the spirit world – in the same way that poets use fictional storytelling to communicate what Browning terms "portly truth." In *Possession*, this view of poetry is not limited to Ash's fictitious medium: Christabel also expresses a desire to "write a Fairy Epic, [...] not grounded in historical truth, but in poetic and imaginative truth [...], where the soul is free from the restraints of history and fact" (Byatt 1991, 373). If we accept the idea of poetic truth as viable,[7] then the equivalence of poets with mediums can be read as validating the latter rather than discrediting the former: indeed, this is how Helfield interprets it in the context of Browning's poetry, suggesting that in Browning's texts, "both [poets and mediums] are at times genuinely capable of capturing the spirit of the dead and making it manifest to others" (Helfield 2006, 7). Conversely, if we start from the premise that spiritualism is nothing but chicanery, what follows is the inevitable conclusion that poetry is a meaningless string of falsehoods. "Mummy

7 Peter Lamarque argues that we should, suggesting that "there is no disagreement" about the fact that there is "some connection" between truth and literature; the debate as he sees it rather hinges on the question whether or not truth is "a criterion of literary value" (Lamarque 2015, 367).

Possest" does not resolve this dilemma, and neither does the novel as a whole. The inclusion of this particular poem nevertheless forces us to think about the cognitive value of literary texts and, by extension, reconsider the assumptions about their usefulness as a clue in a detective quest which we (as well as Roland and Maud) have hitherto relied on.

Significantly, the Browning-Ash parallel established by "Mummy Possest" can be extended to include Byatt, too, insofar as mediums, poets and *Possession* all bring back the dead. In one of the letters to his wife, Ash declares that "[i]f there is a subject that is my own, my dear Ellen, as a writer I mean, it is the persistent shape-shifting life of things long-dead but not vanished" (Byatt 1991, 256, 104). In this way, his goals are not unlike those of *Possession*; and if we are indeed encouraged to draw a parallel between Ash's poetic endeavours and the novel as a whole, how does that affect our reading of it? Anticipating the reader's attempts at interpretation, the narrator offers this metafictional passage:

> There are readings – of the same text – that are dutiful, readings that map and dissect, […] and for a time do not hear golden or apples. There are personal readings, that snatch for personal meanings, I am full of love, or disgust, or fear, I scan for love, or disgust, or fear. There are – believe it – impersonal readings – where the mind's eye sees the lines move onwards and the mind's ear hears them sing and sing. (Byatt 1991, 472)

As Kate Mitchell notes, Byatt "posit[s] the existence of an ideal reader," whom Roland comes to embody when he "reads not searching for allusions to other texts, nor hunting for hints about Ash's life, but enjoying a reading in which he can again hear the language sing," engaging with the text "both intellectually and emotionally" (Mitchell 2010, 102–3). Thus, the reading that *Possession* itself seems to favour is that which privileges simply the sound of the words and the pleasure they bring rather than any meaning that can be extracted from them; in other words, the kind of reading that stands in opposition to literary criticism. In this way, as Ann Marie Adams argues, the novel "rejects all reading practices save those [Byatt] enjoins upon her reader," which she characterises as "uncritical and non-liberatory" – or "readerly" to use Roland Barthes' terminology (Adams 2003, 108, 121). This retreat into the readerly introduces an insoluble

tension in the novel, which has hitherto enticed its readers into the very mode of reading it now dismisses. Thus, *Possession* ends on a paradoxical note creating that can be read as profoundly postmodern in Hutcheon's understanding of postmodernism as "a contradictory cultural enterprise, one that is heavily implicated in that which it seeks to contest" (Hutcheon 1988, 106).

Conclusion

Possession is a multifaceted, complex novel that, to borrow Hutcheon's terms, addresses the epistemological question of how we can know the past, and interrogates the ontological status of its traces in the present. It is also a text about the triumphs and pitfalls of reading and interpretation. Byatt dramatizes these concerns by making the novel a detective game about literary investigation. Yet despite Maud's assertion that "literary critics make natural detectives," she and Roland prove fumbling sleuths at best: whatever success they enjoy by the end of the novel is largely due to a combination of luck and impeccable intuition. The marvellous coincidences and flashes of insight that drive their investigation forward suggest "a controlling, coherent narrative" (Ashman Long 2018, 158), a "plot or fate" the existence of which Roland contemplates "partly with precise postmodernist pleasure, and partly with a real element of superstitious dread" (Byatt 1991, 421). Byatt deals the final blow to the scholars' credibility as detectives with the inclusion of the Postscript, whereby she allows the reader to gain the upper hand over the present-day characters by offering them privileged insight into the Victorian timeline. In this way, *Possession* asserts the existence of the past that the characters' conclusions can be measured against and, in the case of the Postscript, found wanting. Thus, the novel corresponds to Hutcheon's understanding of the relationship between historical events and their inscription in the present as always discursively constructed.

This brings us to the textual traces on the basis of which the scholars reconstruct their version of events, and which the readers are encouraged to read and interpret for themselves: the pseudo-Victorian intertexts included in the novel. Regardless of what type of discourse they typify – be it correspondence, a private journal or poetry – as clues in the detective plot, they challenge "the implied assumptions of historical statements: objectivity, neutrality, impersonality, and transparency of representation" (Hutcheon 1988, 92). Moreover, *Possession* undermines the sort of reading that Roland and Maud perform throughout their

investigation, which treats literary texts as a mystery to be unravelled. This rejection of the impulse to "map and dissect" is surprising in a novel that lends itself particularly well to precisely this mode of reading. Throughout *Possession*, the "connections [that] proliferate apparently at random" (Byatt 1991, 421) suggest an intricate design which entices the reader to follow it in the hopes of cracking the novel's code only to have their efforts be rendered meaningless with a passage that contends that the ideal reader ought to be compelled by the beauty of language. Not only do literary critics not make natural detectives in *Possession* – they don't even make particularly good readers. The tension this fragment produces in relation to the rest of the novel can nevertheless be seen as an example of the paradox that, for Hutcheon, defines postmodernism.

Works cited:

Adams, Ann Marie. 2003. "Dead Authors, Born Readers, and Defunct Critics: Investigating Ambiguous Critical Identities." In A. S. Byatt's *Possession*." *Journal of the Midwest Language Association*: 107–124. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1315402.

Ashman Long, Jordana. 2018. "The Romance and the Real: A. S. Byatt's *Possession: A Romance*." *Mythlore* 37: 147–164. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26809329.

Bentley, Nick. 2018. *Contemporary British Fiction*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Boccardi, Mariadele. 2013. *A. S. Byatt*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bronfen, Elisabeth. 1996. "Romancing Difference, Courting Coherence: A. S. Byatt's *Possession* as Postmodern Moral Fiction." In *Why Literature Matters: Theories and Functions of Literature*, edited by Ahrens Rüdiger and Laurenz Volkman, 117–34. Heidelberg: Winter.

Buxton, Jackie. 2001. "'What's love got to do with it?': Postmodernism and *Possession*." In *Essays on the Fiction of A. S. Byatt. Imagining the Real*, edited by Alexa Alfer and Michael J. Noble, 89–104. London: Greenwood Press.

Byatt, A. S. 1991. *Possession. A Romance*. London: Vintage.

Byatt, A. S. 1995. "The Writing of *Possession*." *The Threepenny Review* 63. https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/4384459.

Hansson, Hedi. 2003. "Biography Matters: Carol Shields, *Mary Swann*, A.S. Byatt, *Possession*, Deborah Crombie, *Dreaming of the Bones*." *Orbis Litterarium*: 58, 353–70. https://doi.org/10.1034/j.1600-0730.2003.00779.x.

Helfield, Randa. 2006. "Dead Women Do Tell Tales: Spiritualism, Browning, and the Dramatic Monologue." *Studies in Browning and His Circle* 27: 7–25. https://www.jstor.org/stable/45285402.

Hogle, Jerrold E. 2006. "Introduction: the Gothic in Western Culture." In *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, edited by Jerrold E. Hogle, 1–20. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hutcheon, Linda. 1988. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. New York: Routledge.

Lamarque, Peter. 2015. "Literature and Truth." In *A Companion to the Philosophy of Literature*, edited by Garry L. Hagberg and Walter Jost, 367–384. Chicester: John Wiley and Sons, Ltd.

Mitchell, Kate. 2010. *History and Cultural Memory in Neo-Victorian Fiction. Victorian Afterimages*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Shiffman, Adrienne. 2001. "'Burn What They Should Not See': The Private Journal as Public Text." In A. S. Byatt's *Possession*." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 20: 93–106. https://www.jstor.org/stable/464469.

Stephan, Matthias. 2019. *Defining Literary Postmodernism for the Twenty-First Century*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Walsh, Chris. 2000. "Postmodernist Reflections: A. S. Byatt's *Possession*." In T*heme Parks, Rainforests and Sprouting Wastelands. European Essays on Theory and Performance in Contemporary British Fiction*, edited by Richard Todd and Luisa Flora, 185–94. Amsterdam-Atlanta: GA.

Wells, Lynn. 2002. "Corso, Ricorso: Historical Repetition and Cultural Reflection in A. S. Byatt's *Possession: A Romance*." *Modern Fiction Studies* 48: 668–92. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26286694.

Violence and Rejection: The Hegemony of White Culture and Its Influence on the Mother–Daughter Relationship in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*

Magda Szolc
University of Opole

Abstract: For quite a long time, mainstream academic discourse has ignored the significance of the mother–daughter relationship and excluded it from thorough scholarly analysis. However, the theme developed the interest of twentieth-century women's literature, and the bond between a mother and her daughter marked its presence with the emergence of motherhood studies in the 1970s. Toni Morrison – one of the finest black female writers – in her debut novel, *The Bluest Eye* (1970), illustrates the complex bond between Pauline and Pecola Breedlove. Their relationship is shaped by the women's fascination with white culture and the standards it promotes. In the novel, Morrison raises awareness of black women's marginalisation and the way in which white culture shapes a woman's vision of herself. The aim of this paper is to analyse the destructive influence of white hegemony on the perception of the black female self and its devastating effect on the mother–daughter relationship in *The Bluest Eye*.

Keywords: rejection, mother–daughter relationship, white hegemony, the black body, blackness

Introduction

Moved to the periphery and for centuries secondary in the patriarchal reality, women often fell victim to violence, humiliation and subjectification. The patriarchal model, defined as a "sexual system of power in which the male possesses superior power and economic privilege," had a massive impact on all spheres of their everyday life, including education, professional life and family (Eisenstein 1979, 17). Denied the right to express themselves freely, women suffered from gender inequalities and sexual and economic exploitation. One of the fundamental features of patriarchal societies is the pressure on motherhood. Becoming a child-bearer was considered a woman's obligation and her

worth was evaluated on the basis of her fertility. As Mariana Valverde puts it, in nineteenth-century North America, white women who aspired to acquire an education or pursue a professional career were accused of committing "racial suicide," since the theories on race that were popular at the time emphasised the superiority of white people over people of colour. Therefore, women were expected to sacrifice themselves to motherhood rather than take up a career path (Valverde, quoted in Mandell and Johnson 2017, 2).

The patriarchal and binary social structure emphasised the distinction between masculinity and femininity; the former was defined as dominant, powerful and intellectually superior, whereas the latter symbolised sexuality, subordination and inferiority. This was particularly severe for the women of colour who fell victim to slavery, violence and social exclusion. The experience of slavery that came to an end in 1865 with the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution created a specific image of the promiscuous black woman who, unlike white women, symbolised sexual looseness and immorality. As Julia Sheron Jordan-Zachery observes, white women in nineteenth-century North America were depicted in terms of the virtues of a real womanhood and embodied its characteristics (2009, 32). One of the instances Jordan-Zachery presents in her study refers to John R. Lynch's perspective on women being classified according to their race. A former slave and a Mississippi politician, Lynch shed light on the matter of categorisation among women with different skin colour. In his view, the society had constructed a specific image of a coloured woman who, in spite of her virtues and impeccable morals, would never be perceived as a real "lady," since such a term was reserved solely for white women (Lynch, quoted in Jordan-Zachery 2009, 32). On the other hand, black womanhood was classified as "non-woman" and "non-human" in terms of morality and sexuality (ibid., 33). Stereotypical constructions of African-American women as lustful, degenerate and morally loose prevailed in the American perception of black womanhood for many decades. Initiated during the slavery era, the pejorative image of blackness as inferior and secondary continued to function into the twentieth century.

According to Alice Walker, black womanhood is a composite of various myths and stereotypes concerning women of colour (1983, 237). Among them are multiple images of black women as *Mammy*, *Sapphire*, *Matriarch* or *Mean and Evil Bitch* (ibid.). A similar view is shared by Barbara Summers, according to whom "black women in white America have been called many things: mammy and

mule, radical and religious, sapphire and sexpot, whore and welfare queen" (2001, xiii). This biased approach created many categorisations against black women. However, subjugation and social prejudice did not solely concern adults, as girls of African descent experienced injustice and similar humiliation as well. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to demonstrate the destructive impact of white hegemony on the formation of black identity and racial awareness in a black girl. In order to illustrate its negative influence on a child, I will analyse Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) in terms of children's self-perception and self-loathing. The female protagonists of the novel, Pecola Breedlove and her mother Pauline, fall victim to white hegemony and the standards of white aesthetics. Their identity and self-image are shaped by these norms, which turns out to be disastrous for both of them. Moreover, I will provide a thorough analysis of the complex bond between Pecola and her mother. As regards methodology, the article refers to contemporary texts on mother–daughter relationships, specifically Elizabeth Podnieks and Andrea O'Reilly's *Textual Mothers/Maternal Texts: Motherhood in Contemporary Women's Literatures* (2010) and Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1995). Since the paper focusses on the matter of black bodies explored by a Polish scholar, Anna Pochmara-Ryżko, George Yancy's perspective on the topic is included in the paper as well. To this end, the analysis is based on Yancy's study, *Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race in America* (2017).

Standards of beauty

The socially constructed category of beauty consists of standardised characteristics that define what is generally considered attractive and desired. Over the centuries, aesthetic canons have evolved, creating new ideals of perfection. Nevertheless, the image of beauty has often been understood in terms of skin colour, placing one tint in a primary position over the other. Stephanie M. H. Camp comes to the conclusion that

> during the age of European exploration … the sight of humans different from themselves raised questions for Europeans about the nature of human difference from other earthly creatures and from one another. (2015, 676)

This was the visual experience on which the categorisation into races was based. Facial features such as skin, hair or eye colour positioned a man on the social ladder of civilisation. The darker his skin, the lower the man's position in society.

During colonial exploration, the concept of beauty was associated with Eurocentric standards that idealised whiteness. As Margaret L. Hunter claims, "black people and blackness were defined as barbaric, savage, heathen and ugly; white people and whiteness were defined as civilised, modern, Christian and beautiful" (2005, 20). Because of the binary representation of races which was characteristic of colonial discourse, whiteness was used to carry positive connotations, whereas blackness was associated with irrationality, otherness and barbarism. The image of African slaves as being more animal than human prevailed in colonial discourse. The aim of European ideology was to reinforce the idea of white supremacy and to create a false image of the colonised. By doing so, the imperial centre justified its violence and atrocities, claiming that the native inhabitants of Africa were wild and non-human. In Edward W. Said's parlance, it constructed a false concept of the East in order to exert its power over it. By describing the Orient as mysterious and primitive, the imperial claim over the people of Africa and their lands was justified.

As mentioned before, slavery contributed greatly to the negative categorisation of people of colour, women in particular. Angela Y. Davis goes so far as to claim that "in the eyes of the slave holders, slave women were not mothers, not at all, they were simply instruments guaranteeing the growth of the slave labor force" (1983, 7). This concurs with Robert Staples' remarks in his *Exploring Black Sexuality*, where he points out that sexual promiscuity between slaves was encouraged by their white owners in order to increase the production of the labour force (2006, 18). Nevertheless, black females were sexually victimised and exploited by white slave owners who, as Staples adds, realised their deepest sexual fantasies (ibid., 19). This victimisation of black female slaves, however, was justified by the view that they were immoral and promiscuous.

In the post-slavery period, the negative representation of African-Americans still revealed itself in many fields. In her essay, "Making Racial Beauty in the United States," Stephanie M. H. Camp seems to support this line of thinking. According to Camp, in the view of white America, blackness and beauty were two contradictory categories, unable to function simultaneously (2016, 120). Carrying derogatory associations with mental and physical primitiveness, blackness has rarely been discussed in terms of aesthetics. Although black society was marginalised and subjugated in general, it was the black woman in particular

who suffered from racial and sexual exploitation. Unlike white American women, who led a life of virtue – standing by their husbands and catering for their children – black women were reduced to bodies whose main obligation was to serve the whites or provide slave labour. Since they were perceived as sinful and immoral, they developed a sense of inferiority and self-loathing. Juxtaposed against white womanhood, their images were constructed in such a way as to bring to light their secondary social status.

Standards of beauty, though, have changed over time and are still undergoing a continuous process of evolution. As Naomi Wolf , the author of *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women* (2002), highlights, "beauty is not universal or changeless" (2002, 12) – quite the opposite, it is pluralised, it mutates and it encompasses many beauty ideals. While a century ago it would have been socially unacceptable to perceive women of colour in terms of real beauty, in the contemporary world the myth of attractiveness has evolved and pluralised into many instances. Nowadays, it is not surprising to see models of different ethnicities on the covers of fashion magazines. Nor does it come by surprise that older models are part of various fashion campaigns. As the reality is changing constantly, "there is a bit more room today to be oneself" (ibid., 6). Regardless of one's weight, age or skin colour, everyone has a right to express themselves without the fear of being judged.

In search of acceptance

Racism and its consequences are some of the main themes Morrison elaborates on in *The Bluest Eye*. An argument that supports this view can be found in Doreatha D. Mbalia's work, *Toni Morrison's Developing Class Consciousness*. From Mbalia's perspective, "the thesis of [*The Bluest Eye*] is that racism devastates the self-image of the African female in general and the African female child in particular" (2004, 32–33). Pecola, an eleven-year-old black girl, is shaped by racist stereotypes and norms of white hegemony. Because of her background, appearance and gender, the girl becomes a victim of white standards of beauty. Consequently, she experiences social elimination at the hands of other members of the community, and she blames her blackness for the hardship of her existence.

The title of the novel symbolises Pecola's deepest desire: to have blue eyes. The child associates them with happiness and the ability to be loved and accepted, particularly by her mother. The young girl's image of herself is based

on mainstream standards of white American popular culture, in whose view "adults, older girls, shop[s], magazines, newspapers, window signs – all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured" (Morrison 2017, 20). In the first half of the twentieth century in America, girls of colour were bombarded with images of white dolls or female stars whose pictures were seen on TV screens, billboards on the Main Streets of American cities and at the cinema. As a result, African-American girls compared themselves to white embodiments of beauty who, in public view, symbolised the desired attractiveness. In search of acceptance, black women blindly internalised the white racist mentality and developed in themselves self-loathing and an indifference to suffering.

In her oeuvre, Toni Morrison teaches us that whiteness is responsible for racial inequality in American society. Black individuals are perceived according to the judgmental white gaze that expresses contempt for coloured otherness. In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison successfully demonstrates how the white gaze operates when referring to blackness. A perfect illustration of how it perceives black bodies is Pecola's visit to Mr Yacobowski's corner shop, where the girl goes with the intention of purchasing Mary Jane candy, since "to eat the candy is somehow to eat the eyes, eat Mary Jane, Love Mary Jane, Be Mary Jane" (ibid., 38). With this simple act of consumption, the girl hopes to realise her biggest dream of becoming a beautiful, white girl with blue eyes – a Mary Jane herself. Nevertheless, what Pecola meets is the hostile gaze of Yacobowski, in whose view the girl is worthless and insignificant. The white immigrant defines Pecola according to racist representations of blackness. From George Yancy's perspective, Yacobowski constructs Pecola's body in a distorted way, and in doing so, he "reinforces the illusion that he lives his own white identity/his body as real and stable" (ibid., 173). On the one hand, Pecola is invisible to Yacobowski, since for him "there is nothing to see" (ibid., 48). On the other hand, however, the man recognises her, as he hesitates to touch the girl's hand in order to accept payment for the candy. In Yancy's opinion, Yacobowski's doubts confirm his racist attitude towards Pecola, since he "reduces her to an epidermal Blackness, something to be avoided" (ibid., 175). For him, the girl is just an object not worthy of his gaze. Instead of finding sympathy, Pecola is deprived of her humanity by the man, who shows "the total absence of human recognition" (ibid., 48–49).

Pecola's experience with rejection and lack of understanding is similar to Ralph Ellison's invisible man. Like the girl, Ellison's character experiences

a sense of non-existence and perceives himself through others' lenses. Racially constructed barriers and prejudices determine his self-worthlessness and inform his identity as an outsider. Like Pecola, the man feels invisible because

> people refuse to see me …. When they approach me, they only see my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination – indeed, everything and anything except me …. That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. (Ellison 1995, 7)

Since Pecola blames her blackness and dark eyes for the pain and aggression inflicted on her by others, each and every night she prays for blue eyes. She believes that the eyes have the magical power of salvation, that "if those eyes of hers were different, that is to say, beautiful, she herself would be different …. Each night, without fail, she prayed for blue eyes" (ibid., 46). Being a tragic figure who sees herself through the white lens, Pecola tries to bleach her blackness with the intention of finally becoming beautiful. Not only is her black body condemned by the white gaze, but she is also objectified by other people of colour who internalise racist perspectives on black inferiority as their own. Since whiteness symbolises universal and desired beauty, it is also valorised by black bodies. In consequence, they measure their own worth according to white standards and recognise themselves stereotypically, as ugly and sinful. Therefore, as Pecola stands in opposition to idealised standards of beauty, she is objectified by both black and white members of the community. Her life is influenced by others' opinions of her ugliness, which degrades the girl and deprives her of a sense of communal belonging. Although Pecola's schoolmates and teachers are people of colour as well, Pecola alone is the object of mockery. Sitting alone at a double school desk, Pecola is almost invisible to her teachers, as "they tried never to glance at her, and called on her only when everyone was required to respond" (ibid., 45–46). The misery of her situation is confirmed by the fact that – except for Claudia and Frieda MacTeer, whom Pecola befriends – there is no-one in the girl's social environment whom she could rely on or trust. Often laughed at and made fun of, Pecola is the embodiment of what damage and harm internalised racism can do to an innocent, black girl.

Pecola's self-perception is based on racial stereotypes which objectify people of colour and portray them as inhuman. In many critical sources (e.g. Koo

1993), Pecola Breedlove is described as a victim of racism and false assumptions about black womanhood. Being a black female child in a society soaked with racism and sexism, Pecola experiences objectification on multiple levels (Koo 1993, 97). Her yearning to be taken care of and accepted is illustrated in Pecola's admiration for white culture. The girl's love for whiteness is confirmed in her fascination with an American child starlet who enjoyed worldwide popularity in the 1940s, Shirley Temple. Drinking milk from a blue-and-white Shirley Temple cup makes Pecola's dream of being beautiful more realistic, as the child hopes that with every sip of the milk, her skin will get fairer. The girl internalises the belief in white superiority, and therefore longs for Shirley's fair skin and blue eyes. Pecola believes that through the act of mimicry, the white attributes will erase her sense of worthlessness and inferiority, transforming her into a real American beauty.

The mother–daughter relationship

The motif of the mother–daughter relationship has long been excluded from mainstream academic discourse. It was Adrienne Rich who introduced the first systematic analysis of motherhood in patriarchal culture. A poet and feminist and the author of *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, Rich struggles to draw attention to the Western assumption that women are inferior to men, according to which the ""man's world" is the "real world," that patriarchy is equivalent to culture and culture to patriarchy" (1995, 16). As she claims, the bond between mother and daughter is considered one of the most central and formative relationships in every woman's life, since

> the cathexis between mother and daughter – essential, distorted, misused – is the great unwritten story. Probably there is nothing in human nature more resonant with charges than the flow of energy between two biologically alike bodies, one of which has lain in amniotic bliss inside the other, one of which has labored to give birth to the other. (ibid., 225)

In spite of its importance, though, nineteenth-century American writers – like their European colleagues Jane Austen or the Brontës – presented the figure of a mother as absent and distant (Hirsch 1989, 10). However, in the

twentieth century, the mother's role, as presented by Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette or Virginia Woolf, grew in significance, as it formed the daughter's confidence and self-awareness. Moreover, with the emergence of motherhood studies in the 1970s, the mother's voice underwent a considerable transition and became audible (Podnieks and O'Reilly 2010, 2). This period saw a growing interest in the issue of the mother–daughter relationship, especially in black female literature. According to Marianne Hirsch, the narratives of Toni Morrison or Alice Walker are good examples of the shift, as they contributed to the recovery of the bond between mother and daughter (1989, 16). Respecting their maternal heritage, Morrison and Walker – along with other female writers of colour – identified themselves with the past of their female ancestors. This concurs with what Heather Ingman observes, that living in a racist and discriminatory society, women of colour were forced to fight for the value of their lives, as "race, class and gender oppression intensify their need to uncover a strong matrilineal heritage" (28, 1999).

Toni Morrison illustrates a difficult mother–daughter bond, characterised by complexity and deviating considerably from perfection or flawlessness. In *The Bluest Eye*, the writer depicts the difficult relationship between Pecola and Pauline, which is shaped by the omnipresent cult of white culture and internalised racism among black bodies. Drenched in admiration for the beauty standards it promotes, Pecola and Pauline's worship for whiteness exemplifies the destructive influence of white hegemony on their relationship. Believing in the myth of white superiority, the women develop in themselves a false assumption that they are worthless, and they fall victim to the canons of beauty. For instance, Pauline's fascination with whiteness is exemplified by her obsession with American cinema. By watching films featuring white American actors, the woman escapes the hardship of her reality. Each visit to the cinema is a moment that Pauline longs for, since

> the onliest time I be happy seem like was when I was in the picture show. Every time I got, I went. I'd go early, before the show started. They'd cut off the lights, and everything be black. Then the screen would light up, and I'd move right on in them pictures …. Them pictures gave me a lot of pleasure, but it made coming home hard, and looking at Cholly hard. I don't know. (Morrison 2017, 123)

The cinema is one of the few places where Pauline finds happiness. In the darkness of the cinema, she admires the white images and indulges herself in the cinematic fiction. Captivated by the beauty of the American actresses, she dreams of becoming one of them. In consequence, the woman creates a false image of herself and mixes reality with imaginary plots. Because she associates whiteness with the opportunity to be noticed and recognised, her obsession with white American culture deepens. According to Yancy,

> through a process where reality and fiction are blurred, Pecola's mother, Pauline, is caught within a world of white filmic hyperreality, which further nurtures Pecola's inability to see through the farce of whiteness. (2017, 181)

The contrast between the blackness of the cinema and the whiteness of the screen supports Richard Dyer's view on the discrimination of non-whites. In his opinion,

> it is at least arguable that white society has found it hard to see non-white people as individuals; the very notion of the individual, of the freely developing, autonomous human person, is only applicable to those who are seen to be free and autonomous, who are not slaves or subject peoples. Movie lighting discriminates against non-white people because it is used in a cinema and a culture that finds it hard to recognize them as appropriate subjects for such lighting, that is, as individuals. (1997, 102)

The cinematic use of light, as Dyer notices, has a hidden purpose, namely, to exercise domination and power over the weak. Since movie lighting privileges white bodies over people of colour, the aim of the medium is to support the idea of the supremacy of whiteness. The exclusion of non-white actors from American movies confirms the biased and racist attitude of the film industry in the first half of the twentieth century. In consequence, the practice led to the assumption that people of colour were not worth visual representations on the big screen. Whereas white aesthetics was associated with order, beauty and cleanliness, the image of a black person evoked derogatory connotations. Stereotyped as dirty,

savage and irrational, black people were denied the possibility of being recognised as individuals. Therefore, white standards of behaviour were valorised and imitated by people of colour, since they equated whiteness with perfection and stability. This was also the case with Pauline, whose fascination with white standards of beauty led her to blindly imitate American actresses – Jean Harlow in particular. As Gary Schwartz interprets it,

> Pauline, as the viewer and learner, has absorbed the visions of light and darkness and becomes the engine of their reproduction. … Wittingly or otherwise, Pauline not only becomes the Imitation but, in turn, imitates it. She is an imitation of an imitation. (1997, 123)

Pauline's admiration for whiteness is also expressed in the way she idealises the Fisher family. Working as a Mammy, she becomes a devoted servant and fits the categorisation of black womanhood perfectly. The image of the Mammy, as stated above, was one of the stereotypical and cultural representations of women of colour in the United States. In the view of Julian Sheron Jordan-Zachery, the author of *Black Women, Cultural Images, and Social Policy*, the portrait of the Mammy that prevailed in the literature of the nineteenth century depicted her in terms of loyalty and servitude (2009, 38). Her value was based on the role she played in a white American family. Taking care of white children, the Mammy was perceived as a "passive nurturer, a mother figure who gave all without expectation of return, who not only acknowledged her inferiority to whites but who loved them" (hooks 1981, 85). However, the positive image of a loving, tender and affectionate Mammy was limited to her relationship with the white family she worked for. As regards the bond with her own children, the Mammy failed to be a good and supportive parent.

Morrison's character, Pauline Breedlove, embodies the servile Mammy, as her main devotion is work and caring for the little Fisher girl. Nicknamed Polly, she becomes "an ideal servant, for such a role filled practically all her needs" (Morrison 2017, 100). In the Fishers' house, Pauline finds happiness and a sense of stability. Working for a white American family makes her disregard her blackness and internalise the racist beliefs about people of colour. Surrounded by white porcelain and impeccably clean floors and furniture, she momentarily forgets about her African background and distances herself from her family, Pecola in particular. An incident that explicitly illustrates Pauline's hostility

towards her daughter takes place in the Fishers' mansion. Pecola accidentally spills blueberries in the kitchen of her mother's employers, and is punished by Pauline. The woman is infuriated:

> Mrs. Breedlove yanked [Pecola] up by the arm, slapped her again, and in a voice thin with anger, abused Pecola directly and Frieda and me by implication. "Crazy fool . . . my floor, mess . . . look what you. . . work . . . get on out . . . now that . . . crazy . . . my floor, my floor . . . my floor." Her words were hotter and darker than the smoking berries, and we backed away in dread. (ibid., 108–109)

When the floor gets dirty, the woman loses control and pours out all her anger and irritation on Pecola. As the cleanliness symbolises perfection and her obsession with whiteness, the dirtiness of the floor stands for the blackness and inferiority Pauline associates herself with. Calling Pecola "a crazy fool" and punishing her physically, Pauline confirms her devotion to the Fishers and the household duties she is obliged to perform. The tragedy of the situation lies in Pauline's attitude towards Pecola. Showing no motherly feelings for the girl, Pauline is more concerned with the messy kitchen floor and the Fisher girl's dirty dress: "Hush, baby, hush. Come here. Oh, Lord, look at your dress. Don't cry no more. Polly will change it" (ibid., 109).

The passages quoted above openly show Pauline's distinction between black and white bodies, treating the former disrespectfully. While the white body is associated with being loved, valued and cared for, its black counterpart receives nothing but insult and is physically and mentally victimised. According to Vanessa D. Dickerson, "while the narrative represents Pecola's body as the real, embraceable body and the Fisher girl's as the specterised and distant body, Pecola's is socially assaulted, the Fisher's girl's held dear" (quoted in Yancy 2017, 183–184). The reason for this binary representation originates from a common belief about whiteness and its privileged position. Therefore, as a black girl, Pecola receives no recognition or attention from her mother. Instead, Pauline's motherly feelings of comfort and tenderness belong to the white Fisher girl. Consequently, Pecola becomes a victim of Pauline's obsession with whiteness and, as Dickerson states, Pecola "is one example of the black child whose need for his or her mother is sacrificed to the white child's pleasure or comfort in a mammy" (ibid., 183).

According to Hirsch, to know the mother "we would have to *begin* with" her story (1989, 5). Therefore, in order to analyse the bond between Pauline and Pecola, it is crucial to bring to light Pauline's difficult past, her traumatic childhood. As a young girl, Pauline did not receive parental love or affection. Socially denied and condemned to isolation because of her deformed foot, the girl experienced rejection from her early years. As a result of her disability and other people's indifference towards her, young Pauline developed a feeling of separateness:

> There were no funny jokes and anecdotes about funny things she had done; why no one ever remarked on her food preferences – no saving of the wing or neck for her – no cooking of the peas in a separate pot without rice because she did not like rice; why nobody teased her; why she never felt at Home anywhere, or that she belonged any place. (Morrison 2017, 110–111)

Pauline's childhood experience of isolation and rejection left a deep mark on her psyche and shaped her self-perception. Abandoned on a daily basis and denied parental care in her childhood, Pauline becomes devoid of any maternal instincts for Pecola later in her life. Instead, "into her daughter she beat fear of growing up, fear of other people, fear of life" (ibid., 128). Since Pecola is a reminder of Pauline's own ugliness, the woman distances herself from her daughter. Moreover, the rejection Pecola receives from her mother originates from the Breedloves' conviction of their ugliness and worthlessness:

> You looked at them and wondered why they were so ugly; you looked closely and could not find the source. Then you realized that it came from conviction, their conviction. (ibid., 38–39)

The belief in their repulsiveness has a negative impact on Pecola, since the girl understands what beauty is according to her parents' perspective. As the Breedloves' existence revolves around their race and poverty, they are unable to endow the girl with care or parental love. Instead, as Paul Douglas Mahaffey puts it, "when [Pecola] turns to her parents in order to establish a positive link between childhood and adulthood, she only finds an overwhelming source of racial self-hatred" (2004, 158). Nevertheless, it is the relationship between

Pecola and her mother that considerably shapes the girl's vision of herself. Since Pecola's birth, the woman's attitude towards her has been characterised by repulsion and contempt. Pauline and her blind fascination with whiteness leads the woman to construct her own idea of beauty. The conviction that white bodies are superior to black ones distorts Pauline's vision of herself and Pecola. Pauline perceives the girl as hideous, since her "head was full of pretty hair, but Lord she was ugly" (Morrison 2017, 126). Unlike blackness, whiteness is considered a signifier of impeccability and purity. According to George Yancy, it is "the product of a generative context of white hegemony" (2017, 188). Its power creates the image of whiteness as pure and desirable. Black bodies, on the other hand, evoke pejorative and derogatory connotations. Their representation as evil, sinful and dirty develops mutual aversion among people of colour. Consequently, the stereotypical illustration of blackness and a lack of self-awareness in black bodies demonstrate the destructive powers of white hegemony.

Although Pecola is still a child, she is aware of the source of her rejection. The blue eyes Pecola longs for so desperately symbolise her desire for acceptance and change. Constantly reminded of her otherness and ignored by her relatives and the local people of Lorain, Pecola's only hope lies in the magical power of blue eyes. According to white aesthetic standards, as George Yancy notices, blue eyes "constitute a metonymy for white hegemony" (ibid., 181). Since Pecola's blackness does not meet the standards of universal white beauty, the girl sees herself through the distorted eyes of those who believe in racist stereotyping and regard whiteness as superior. Naively, the girl drinks milk from a Shirley Temple cup and eats Mary Jane candies with the hope of becoming white, pure and finally accepted. This act of cannibalism symbolises how strong Pecola's desire for visual change is. With every sip of milk, with each bite of Mary Jane candies, the girl hopes for a visual metamorphosis which will turn her into a white, impeccable beauty. Nevertheless, Pecola's dreams are not realised and all she receives from her mother and the community is rejection and a sense of being invisible.

The bond between Pauline and Pecola mirrors the destructive impact of white hegemony on the mother–daughter relationship. In Eunsook Koo's opinion, "the cruelty and hate expressed in Mrs. Breedlove's physical violence towards her daughter suggests the total estrangement between mother and daughter" (1993, 115). This estrangement, together with the disgust and hostility from the hands of others, leads Pecola to insanity and makes her life tragic:

> The damage done was total. She spent her days, her tendril, sap-green days, walking up and down, up and down, her head jerking to the beat of a drummer so distant only she could hear. Elbows bent, hands on shoulders, she flailed her arms like a Bird in an eternal, grotesquely futile effort to fly. Beating the air, a winged but grounded bird, intent on the blue void it could not Reach – could not even see – but which filled the valleys of the mind. (Morrison 2017, 204)

The comparison to a bird unable to fly symbolises Pecola's great desire to escape the hardship of her existence. The girl would like to float away in the sky like a winged creature, and leave all the traumatic memories behind. Her madness, though, prevents Pecola realising her dreams, as she gets lost in her craziness and is "somewhere in that little brown house she and her mother moved to on the edge of town, where you can see her even now, once in a while" (ibid., 205).

Conclusions

In order to understand blackness, one needs to confront it with white constructions of the black body. Following Frantz Fanon's way of thinking, blackness can be recognised only in relation to whiteness, since "not only must the black man [woman] be black; he [she] must be black in relation to the white man [woman]" (1967, 110). Therefore, whiteness has often been perceived as a category that signifies power, absolute truth and universalism. It has frequently been a point of reference when evaluating an individual, a non-white person in particular. W. E. B. Du Bois, the author of the pivotal work *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), presents a similar approach to the matter of blackness. In his seminal piece of writing, Du Bois reveals derogatory constructions of the black body, which is understood as different, inferior and problematic. From his perspective, black people undergo the process of "double consciousness" defined as

> a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals

> in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (Du Bois 1903, 45)

Regarding Pecola Breedlove, the girl also undergoes the process of "double consciousness," measuring her own worth by the way others perceive her. As mentioned before, her situation exemplifies how whiteness and the conviction of its superiority influence the self-esteem of the black body. Since Pecola internalises the myths of black inferiority and worthlessness, her desire is to possess blue eyes, which – in her view – will save her from despair. Nevertheless, her search for acceptance and maternal love leads the girl to delusional insanity and the conviction that the blue eyes she desires are finally in her possession. The bluest eyes, however, do not liberate her from the wretchedness and misery of her existence. On the contrary, the girl becomes the saddest, the "bluest" version of herself, unable to find consolation or happiness. Morrison's use of a pun in the title of the novel emphasises Pecola's dramatic condition in a society permeated with racism and intolerance of otherness. Similarly to Ralph Ellison's invisible man, Pecola strives to regain the human dimension of her existence. Nevertheless, unlike Ellison's character, the girl fails, since she is victimised by the white gaze. The paradox of her situation lies in the fact that in spite of her invisibility, she is seen by others as an embodiment of worthless blackness. Her recognition is limited only to instances when the girl falls victim to the community's humiliation and mockery. Unlike the white Fisher girl, who, as a specterised body, symbolises civilisation and impeccability, Pecola's body is tangible and perceived as dirty, polluted and thus doomed to failure. In this particular example, among many others in *The Bluest Eye*, it is evident how the myth of whiteness was constructed and how it functioned in the America of the 1940s, resulting in the distorted and biased perception of people of colour and internalised racism among them.

Works Cited

Camp, Stephanie M. H. 2015. "Black Is Beautiful: An American History." *Journal of Southern History*, 81(3): 675–690. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43918403.

− − −. 2016. "Making Racial Beauty in the United States: Toward a History of Black Beauty." In *Connexions: Histories of Race and Sex in North*

America, edited by Jennifer Brier, Jim Downs and Jennifer L. Morgan. 113–126. Chicago: University of Illinois Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctt1hd18k1.8.

Davis, Angela Y. 1983. *Women, Race and Class.* New York: Vintage.

Dyer, Richard. 1997. *White*. New York: Routledge.

Eisenstein, Zillah. 1979. *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism.* New York: Monthly Review Press.

Ellison, Ralph. 1995. *Invisible Man.* New York: Vintage Books.

Fanon, Frantz. 1967. *Black Skin, White Masks.* Translated by Charles Lam Markmann. New York: Grove Press.

Hirsch, Marianne. 1989. *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

hooks, bell. 1981. *Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism*. Boston: South End Press.

Hunter, Margaret L. 2005. *Race, Gender and the Politics of Skin Tone*. New York and London: Routledge.

Ingman, Heather. 1999. *Mothers and Daughters in the Twentieth Century: A Literary Anthology*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Jordan-Zachery, Julia S. 2009. *Black Women, Cultural Images, and Social Policy*. New York: Routledge.

Koo, Eunsook. 1993. *The Politics of Race and Gender: Mothers and Daughters in the Novels of Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Joy Kogawa*. New York: UMI.

Mahaffey, Paul Douglas. 2004. "The Adolescent Complexities of Race, Gender, and Class in Toni Morrison's 'The Bluest Eye.'" *Race, Gender & Class*, 11(4): 158. http://jstor.org/stable/43496824.

Mandell, Nancy, and Jennifer Johnson. 2017. *Feminist Issues: Race, Class, and Sexuality*, 6th ed. Pearson Canada Inc.

Mbalia, Doreatha D. 2004. *Toni Morrison's Developing Class Consciousness*, 2nd ed. Susquehanna UP.

Morrison, Toni. 2017. *The Bluest Eye*. New York: Vintage Books.

Podnieks, Elizabeth, and Andrea O'Reilly. 2010. *Textual Mothers/Maternal Texts: Motherhood in Contemporary Women's Literatures*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Lourier University Press.

Rich, Adrienne. 1995. *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Said, Edward W. 1979. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.

Schwartz, Gary. 1997. "Toni Morrison at the Movies: Theorizing Race Through Imitation of Life." In *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Existential Philosophy*, edited by Lewis R. Gordon. New York: Routledge. 123.

Staples, Robert. 2006. *Exploring Black Sexuality*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Summers, Barbara. 2001. *Black and Beautiful: How Women of Color Changed the Fashion Industry*. New York: Amistad.

Walker, Alice. 1983. *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose.* New York: Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich.

Wolf, Naomi. 2002. *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women*. New York: HarperCollins Inc.

Yancy, George. 2012. *Look, a White! Philosophical Essays on Whiteness*. Philadelphia: Temple UP.

---. 2017. *Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race in America*, 2nd ed. Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield.

Colonial/Imperial Discourses in a First-Contact Narrative: Terry Bisson's "They're Made of Meat" (1991)

Adam Briedik
Department of English and American Studies,
Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia

Abstract: This article explores the intersection of colonial/imperial discourse inherent in the genre of science fiction using the example of a first-contact narrative – Terry Bisson's short story, "They're Made of Meat" (1991). As a first-contact narrative, the story is analysed in the context of Mary Louise Pratt's (1992) theory on transculturation: contact zone, anti-conquest narrative and autoethnography. First, the paper considers the historical development of the first-contact trope, then the narrative is interpreted as establishing and reproducing several functions of colonialism/imperialism. The distinctively colonial character of the hegemonic discourse informs the dynamics of the contact. However, what sets Bisson's story apart is not only the subversive nature of the narration, but its seemingly philosophical implications presented in the figure of an alien. The ethnographic framework of the contact zone emulates cognitive appropriation as a function of colonial/imperial discourse; simultaneously, it legitimises the dominant culture while being permeated by discourses such as primitivism and racism. Yet, the narration itself functions as a projection that does not offer space for the marginalised other to actively construct their own identities.

Keywords: Terry Bisson, They're Made of Meat, first-contact narrative, colonialism

Introduction

Examining the genesis of science fiction (SF) during the height of the colonial project and the dogmatic scientific positivism of modernity, John Rieder advocates making a "connection between the early history of the genre of English-language science fiction and the history and discourses of colonialism" (2008, 1). Following Rieder's analysis of colonial discourse in early SF as a "part

of the genre's texture [and] a persistent, important component of its displaced references to history" (2008, 15), Jessica Langer states that

> the figure of the alien – extraterrestrial, technological, human hybrid or otherwise – and the figure of the far-away planet ripe for the taking are deep and abiding twin signifiers in science fiction, are perhaps the central myths of the genre. … These two signifiers are, in fact, the very same twin myths of colonialism. The Stranger, or the Other, and the Strange Land" – whether actually empty or filled with those others, savages whose lives are considered forfeit and whose culture is seen as abbreviated and misshapen but who are nevertheless compelling in their very strangeness (2011, 3–4).

The concepts are references to Robert A. Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961, manuscript 1991). The novel introduced the word "grok," which denotes "to understand so thoroughly that the observer becomes a part of the observed – to merge, to blend, to intermarry, to lose personal identity in group experience" (305)[1] Thus, the novel, its title and the concepts themselves point to a quintessential problem of SF and colonialism – the knowability of radical difference. This preoccupation with difference extends to such academic discourses as otherness, alterity and subalternity.

Within the entire canon of SF – dystopian/utopian literature, eco-fiction, future-war stories, alien contact narratives and several others – Terry Bisson's short story, "They're Made of Meat"(1991), is a humorous example of the inherent presence of colonial discourse in the genre. Here, he also made marked forays into the exploration of themes, motifs and style that would become his trademarks. Seemingly an amusing story of casual surfaces, "They're Made of Meat" deals with the same venerable SF cliché as the earliest travel narratives of the colonial era: first contact. It allows the writer to explore subjugation, dominance, primitivism, racism and other anthropological issues embodied by the extraterrestrial beings and manifested in the dynamics of the narration's cultural exchange.

---

1 The novel revolves around the terrestrial adventures of Valentine Michael Smith; born on Mars, he is a human by nature and a Martian by nurture. His quest for humanity culminates in the establishment of a peace-and-love cult, his self-immolation in a mob lynching and a conclusive messianic resurrection.

In this sense, the paper engages with the recent interest in SF and its intersection with colonial/imperial discourses.[2]As for the question of the presence of colonial/imperial discourse, which resurfaces throughout this article, how this question is answered depends mainly on how SF engages with such discourse in first-contact narratives in general, and with the story in particular. Thus, the article begins by exploring the trope's relationship with colonial ideology. Then, the analysis turns towards a critical reading of Bisson's story from the perspective of Mary Louise Pratt's theory on transculturation and her critique of travel narratives introduced in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992).Pratt's interpretation of the genre of travel writing belongs to the domain of literary criticism. It simultaneously operates as a critique of the political and economic ideologies that motivated colonialism/imperialism. Her analyses of colonial relationships have been consistent with other scholars' conclusions grounded in centre-periphery relations.[3]Borrowing the term "contact zone," this paper argues, firstly, that the colonial/imperial framework of the hegemonic discourse is defined by the ethnographic nature of the contact. The paper also considers the employment of subversion in the narration and the construction of the hegemonic discourse. Continuing with Pratt's reconsideration of the term "anti-conquest narrative" – a concept integral to her work and understanding of first-contact narratives – the story can be perceived as not engaging with the empire's *la mission civilisatrice*, despite the fact that it establishes ethnography as an extension of empire, and despite the narration's evident obligations of power. Returning to Pratt for the last time, the paper employs the concept of "autoethnography" and considers the reciprocal dimension implied by the story.

First-Contact Narratives

According to Rieder, "no informed reader can doubt that allusions to colonial history and situations are ubiquitous features of early science fiction motifs

2 The concepts of colonialism/imperialism are employed interchangeably and in the broadest historical sense, including early exploration, Victorian ethnography and anthropology, economic exploitation and land appropriation, human trafficking for slavery, centre-periphery relations between an empire and its satellite settlements, American westward expansion and interventionism, transatlantic imperialism and its collapse, the rise of continental imperialism and totalitarian regimes, the post-war economic and ideological division of the world embodied by the Cold War, the post-colonial constitution of the world, and neocolonial and capitalistic globalisation.

3 See, for example, Homi K. Bhabha's concept of "Third Space" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2007).

and plots" (2008, 2–3). He adds that scholars generally agree that SF emerged and expanded in the second half of the 19th century, in "the period of the most fervid imperialist expansion" (Reider2008, 2–3).In fact, Gregory Benford (1980) compares the British Empire to the SF motif of a "galactic empire," and Patricia Kerslake (2007, 191) concludes that the themes, attributes and purposes of empire and science fiction are entirely intertwined.[4]The genre is preoccupied not only with history, but also a generic set of tropes, themes, motifs, narratives and forms emerging from (post)colonial history and the problems arising from the whole context, as well as historical forces reflected in its discourses, such as otherness, primitivism, racism, colonialism, imperialism and many others.[5]

The wide variety of texts regarded by scholars as SF calls into the question how is SF defined; however, systematic study of SF – one that would include classic and modern texts, from both the American pulp and European traditions and would exclude the growing body of post-genre and slipstream genres – has been declared impossible. According to Paul Kincaid's definition, SF is several things:

> a future setting, a marvelous device, an ideal society, an alien creature, a twist in time, an interstellar journey, a satirical perspective, a particular approach to the matter of the story, ... here more overt, here more subtle (2003, 417–418).

Rather than seeking a singular answer, this definition corresponds with what Samuel R. Delany (2012) labelled SF's historical, theoretical, stylistic and valuative plurality. Following this orientation, it is difficult to achieve a precise definition, as it includes a variety of traditions/subgenres, and this complexity of SF is best understood rather as a mode, not a definitive genre. The trope of first contact should be recognised as marked by this generic variability/permeability; in fact, the trope functions as a vehicle for plot of several SF subgenres. .

The historical origins of the first-contact narratives are connected with the early modern travel narratives from the Age of Exploration. The narrators

4 See also Patrick Parrinder's *Shadows of the Future: H.G. Wells, Science Fiction, and Prophecy* (1995), or Istvan Csicsery-Ronay's "Science Fiction and Empire" (2003).

5 Samuel R. Delany (1994, 152–157) disagrees: His insistence that the history of science fiction does not date back further than 1910 is directed against the academic constructions of the genre that have sought to connect it to the long-established tradition of satire, utopia and marvellous journeys. Delany, in contrast, points to the genre's subcultural character and low/pulp profile.

of these texts were not only educated explorers, but also representatives of political power and administrators of the lands being discovered. As opposition to the medieval romance and quest narratives, the texts – best exemplified by early modern travel writers such as Columbus, Vespucci, Cortez, Oviedo and Las Casas – stressed the political, ethical and philosophical discourses emerging from direct contact with the Other. However, Joseph Levine points out that the first texts were composed at a time when fiction and history, both the invented and the discovered, were only beginning to be distinguished (1997, 69).For example, there was a boom of legends and fantastic tales connected with the discovery and exploration of the Americas. Unfortunately, these narratives contained plenty of "monsters": including implausible references to cannibals, giants and fantastic beasts and places such as the Fountain of Youth or El Dorado.[6]As the subsequent centuries of exploration, expansion and exploitation named, mapped and ascribed their own cartographic reality onto the entire world, the cyan width of the oceans was eventually replaced by the cold interplanetary void of space in SF and travel narratives metamorphosed into first-contact narratives.

First-contact stories are crucial scenarios to SF. According to Landon, they explore a fictional *novum* – "the existence of other intelligent life forms in the universe" (2002, 80).Considering the history of SF, it is necessary to distinguish between its phase of emergence and the later, more mature self-awareness of the mode. The early European tradition established both "positive" and "negative" narratives (ibid., 80).Ursula LeGuin – a prolific theorist and SF author – also congruently points to contradictory ways in which American pulp SF constructs its alien figures either as irredeemably evil or as "wise and kindly beings" who occupy "a pedestal in a white nightgown and a virtuous smirk – exactly as the 'good woman' did in the Victorian Age" (1993, 95).

The positive stories can be traced back to Camille Flammarion's *Real and Imaginary Worlds* (1865) and *Lumen* (1887), while it was H. G. Wells who introduced the Darwinian view of a technologically superior alien race conquering our planet, in *War of the Worlds* (1898). According to Rieder, "the Wellsian strategy operates within the framework of colonial discourse on several levels with a critical reversion of positions" (2008, 10). Rieder ranges widely across SF, discussing the lost world motif, satirical fantastic voyage narratives, time-travel

6 See Gomez-Galisteo's *Discovering Florida: First-Contact Narratives from Spanish Expeditions Along the Lower Gulf Coast* (2015).

stories, artificially constructed humans, invasion literature and (post)apocalyptic fiction. Among the texts he selects is Jack London's first-contact short story, "The Red One" (1918); he states that "no early science fiction story more effectively engages the problem of understanding the exotic other" (2008, 91). The narrative, which is told from the perspective of Bassett – a butterfly collector on an expedition in Guadalcanal who is captured by headhunters – revolves around the titular "Red One": a red spherical extraterrestrial artefact "worshipped by ape-like, man-eating and head-hunting savages…as if Jehovah's Commandments had been presented on carved stone to the monkeys of the monkey cage at the Zoo" (London 2021, 39).

The late 1930s and early 1940s established an innovation on the plot of invasion literature which, according to Rieder, "points toward a postcolonial framework of imagining imperial hegemony and cultural difference" (2008, 147). Following the collapse of the colonial world, combined with subsequent international anxieties of the Cold War, the new postcolonial perspective of hegemony involved more secretive and pervasive means of control through infiltration, manipulation and ideological occupation, as in John W. Campbell's "Who Goes There" (1938). Campbell's plot of alien contagion among an isolated group of American researchers in Antarctica is a re-enactment of replacing an ideological agenda. The alien's desire to assimilate the whole of humanity via infiltration leaves the world familiar externally yet alienated internally while the character of the contact is rendered as conspiratorial.

Rieder states that one of the evident dichotomies in SF is the "radical difference as an intellectual and philosophical exercise and exploiting the exotic as a spectacular opportunity for wish fulfilment" (2008, 75). American pulp magazines through the forties, fifties and sixties were dominated by the self-reflexive aspects of SF, thus destabilising and relativising the tension created by the persistent permeation of colonial discourse into the genre. Murray Leinster's novella "First Contact" (1945) not only epitomised the term, but also introduced the first usage of the concept of a universal translator. As a variation on the subject of radical difference, the story of the terrestrial ship *Llanvabon* and its crew's encounter with a technologically equal yet biological different strain of aliens produced a humorous comedy of errors built upon mutual failure of communication and militaristic paranoia polarised with erasure of the anthropological difference and desire for cognition. The narrative culminates with a successful exchange of knowledge, technology and optimistically advancing further contact.

When analysing SF's engagement with its impossible facts, Rieder argues that the analogy to the real world and the *novum* engages one of "the central problems of colonial discourse...the exotic other is...understood only as a distorted projection of the observer" (2008, 68). While this engagement is a concern of Leinster's narrative, it thematically occupies the work of Stanisław Lem, who managed to fuse together the stronger sides of "the Soviet and American SF traditions" (Landon 2002, 83). In *Solaris* (1961), the narration revolves around the attempts of a group of scientists to communicate with an extraterrestrial life form that manifests as the vast ocean of the titular planet. The ocean's responses take the form of materialised simulacra of familiar *doppelgängers*, exposing hidden aspects of the human scientists while revealing nothing of the ocean's nature itself. Even the scientists eventually conclude:

> We are only seeking Man. We have no need of other worlds. We need mirrors. We don't know what to do with other worlds. A single world, our own, suffices us; but we can't accept it for what it is (Lem 1971, 81).

This quotation points to a framework where an insurmountable epistemological problem limits the impossibility of cognitive appropriation. However, unlike Leinster, Lem deemed such scenarios pessimistic, inherently biased and self-absorbed, thus condemned to failure.

In conclusion, first-contact stories can take many forms, ranging from the discovery of an ancient artefact that reveals a previous presence of intelligent life, through an interception of messages and actual first-hand contact, to full-scale military invasions. Furthermore, their interrogation of the Other happens in narratives that have themselves been othered by many writers. The alien other allows writers to meditate upon such issues as racism and xenophobia, to simulate contact between higher and lower cultures and to investigate such aspects of communication as linguistics and translation by adapting the anthropological theory to contact with extraterrestrial cultures. A desire for cognition operates as a form of appropriation in the modern texts, replacing the previous exploitation of the exotic other through the appropriation of land, resources and inhabitants. Thus, anthropocentrism is not necessarily predicated on imperialism or colonialism, and the narratives do not ultimately imply ethnocentrism. However, Patrick Parrinder (1995, 65) extends the relationship of colonial ideology

and SF to Ursula Le Guin's work from 1969, which brings into question even more recent texts, such as Terry Bisson's story, "They're Made of Meat."

Contact Zone

Originally published in *OMNI*[7]and then appearing in the collection *Bears Discover Fire* (1993) – the collection and the story marked the culmination of Bisson's second serious effort in the short-story genre, which began as "an eighteen hundred dollar sale," which revived his "interest in short story fiction" (Bisson 1995, 251).According to Bisson (1995), the title was inspired by Allen Ginsberg's reply to an interviewer who kept prattling on about their souls communing. The poet corrected him: "We're just meat talking to meat" (251). Without worrying about Ginsberg's ironical use of the word "meat," Bisson directs his reader to the area where the story's complexities come into focus.

Before approaching the analysis of the short story, it is necessary to introduce Mary Louis Pratt's (1992, 8) concept of "contact zone" – a social space where two or more disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple in asymmetrical relationships of dominance and subordination, such as colonialism, slavery and their postcolonial heritage. In the case of the story in question, two interplanetary explorers are on a mission, and they discuss the recent discovery of a carbon-based sentient life form, which represents the only sentient species in the sector. According to Jessica Carducci (2016), not only is a figure of alien conceptualised "corporeally," but *the aliens are also* physically and literally "branded" (145). The narration begins as one traveller informs his incredulous companion about the existence of sentient life in the form of "meat."The encounter was initiated by a radio signal they had received, the transmission having been broadcasted "for almost a hundred of their years" (Bisson 1995, 35). The first direct speech acts set the tone of the whole dialogue as they advance a critical awareness of the Other:

> "They're made out of meat."
> "Meat?"
> "Meat. They're made out of meat."

7 *OMNI* (1978–1997) was a science fiction magazine published in the UK and the US. The publication's abrupt end followed the death of its co-founder, Kathy Keeton.

> "Meat?"
> "There's no doubt about it. We picked several from different parts of the planet, took them aboard our recon vessels, probed them all the way through. They're completely meat." (ibid., 34)

The story immediately establishes – with respect to Said's dichotomy (1978) – a binary separation of the "us" and "them," and as the story progresses, asserts the naturalness and dominance of the "us-culture" in the hegemonic discourse, constituting the internal divisions of the narration. Thus, the quotation does entail the colonial discourse of "the Other." To be othered, this interplanetary endemite is homogenised into a collective "they," which is distilled even further into an iconic *substantivum*: "meat." Though the name says nothing about it while constructing its identity as an object – a mass noun of uncountable, syntactic quality of an undifferentiated unit rather than something with discreet subsets – it does not necessarily entail the violent and reductive exploits of colonial trafficking and human commodification in slavery. Returning to the story, its subtleties of narration and meaning reveal that the new life form is, in fact, humankind:

> "Just one. They can travel to other planets in special meat containers, but they can't live on them. And being meat, they only travel through C space. Which limits them to the speed of light and makes the possibility of their ever making contact pretty slim. Infinitesimal, in fact." (Bisson 1995, 36).

The contact – in the story initiated by radio transmission – implicitly references the programme Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence and the first broadcast beamed into space with the intention of contacting extraterrestrial life, organised at the Arecibo Radio Telescope in Puerto Rico on 16 November 1974; thus, the narration is firmly grounded in the history of America's political platform of the "new frontier."[8] While the dialogue manifests internal divisions, it does not constitute the actual contact, nor does "the messages to the stars."Apart from its

8 With a particular interest in technology and space exploration, the term "new frontier" was employed during the 1960 acceptance speech by Democratic presidential candidate John F. Kennedy. He explicitly invoked the metaphor of the American frontier and Manifest Destiny in order to raise America's eyes towards the stars through NASA's space programme, thus reconstructing its rhetorical ties to American expansionism (White and Limerick 1994, 81).

inevitability in travel, memoir and ethnographic writing, a first contact takes on more physical and violent forms than verbal abuse, especially when derived from the first-hand encounter in the story, and an attentive reader does recognise the shared space of this cultural exchange in generic alien abductions:

> "There's no doubt about it. We picked several from different parts of the planet, took them aboard our recon vessels, probed them all the way through. They're completely meat."
>
> ...
>
> "Nope. They're born meat and they die meat. We studied them for several of their life spans, which didn't take too long. Do you have any idea the life span of meat?" (Bisson 1995, 34–35).

Although the concept of abduction does not necessarily signify a colonial relationship, of the many variations of first contact, this phenomenon calls to attention a wide variety of epistemological concerns with the colonial/imperial framework. One of the most vital elements the story shares with colonial discourse is the prevalence of scientist characters. Not only does the story mention a zoological acquisitiveness and centre the narration around the gathering of biological specimens, but it suggests a more profound study and even experimentation. The entire narrative can be read as abounding with ethnographic passages providing a curious *melange* that documents minute details about language, technology, culture and biology. It seems necessary to introduce at this point of analysis Rieder's term "colonial gaze." The gaze distributes knowledge and power to the subject who looks, while denying or minimising access to power for its object, the one looked at (2008, 7). As the aliens make their declarations – and through the explanation – they are installed in command of the contact zone, and what constitutes the imperial/colonial framework of the relationship is the ethnographic and scientific nature of the story. Thus, the story is ultimately a discussion on dominance and subjugation through the authority of language. Formally naming the new species they have discovered, they quickly transform the language of discovery into the language of legal dominance. However, the narration suggests more profound confrontations and opens up the possibility to view the contact in a greater, more philosophical dimension.

The duo of explorers – presumably unrestrained by the limitations of the Newtonian universe and possibly capable of traveling faster than light – are

presented only through their respective direct speech acts.[9] They have no frame of reference; there is no way to judge their position, shape or size. The whole story consists of their dialogue without implying anything about the appearance, setting, names or actions involved during the dialogue; Bisson completely truncates the introductory clauses while keeping the quotation marks. Unlike the "meat," they are not reducible to something one can perceive, name and subsequently understand by one's ordinary senses, thus, cognitively appropriate eventually. While with the traditional "bug-eyed alien," a proper image is formed and cannot fall apart, Bisson's creation cannot be contained, comprehended and encompassed. However, the use of quotation marks might be indicative of present tense; the enclosure of the voices within the frame of quotation marks is a possible demonstration of the orality and audibility of their utterances. Seemingly, then, they occupy a different space, one that does not intersect with ours – a realm where life forms are not necessarily biological. Thus, Bisson's portrayal of his characters resolves the dilemma of SF, which according to Sara Ahmed, underlines the dichotomy of the alien in popular culture: both "over-represented" and "beyond representation" (2000, 1). On both sides, the stereotyping is not dependent on visual cues, but on the essentialisation of the subjects, except that the text involved establishes not only an opposition between two elements but a more complex relationship between the entities. The discourse of otherness, which accompanies the colonial implications of the encounter, simultaneously interrogates the immortal philosophical dispute about the prominence of essence over substance.

Summarising the character of the contact zone, Bisson's strategy is to reverse the constitution of internal divisions; he transposes the positions of coloniser and colonised as the aliens impose their dominance upon humanity's explorative efforts. He also reverses the epistemological framework of relationships in the hegemonic discourse. The hegemonic discourse is initially constituted in the abductions; the dominance is established through the ethnographic character of their epistemological framework, which resides within the framework of colonial/imperial ideology. It operates within the same Foucauldian differentials of the "power-knowledge discourse" (1990) as colonial ideology, where power derives from and uses knowledge; on the other hand, power reproduces

9 Bisson's stage directions represent them as "two lights moving like fireflies among the stars" on a projection screen (Bisson 2008).

knowledge in accordance with its anonymous intentions. At the same time, Bisson excels at immediately establishing and maintaining a sort of philosophical dispute that does not deter the characters in the business of creating the Other and delineating that opposition which must exist in order that they might define themselves by the Other.

Anti-Conquest Narrative

According to Ursula Le Guin (1993, 94), no scholar can ignore SF as a reconstruction of "[t]he white man's burden all over again," and Landon states that first-contact narratives go a long way toward justifying the missionary fervour and sense of purpose found in much SF (2002, 81). When the aliens discover a new species, they name it, thereby establishing it in a new relationship with the quasi-empire they represent. This relationship is marked by unenforceable obligations of power. Initially, the aliens carry out their official mission as they "are required to contact, welcome, and log in any and all sentient races or multibeings in the quadrant, without prejudice, fear, or favor" (Bisson 1995, 36). So the cognitive appropriation is established and operates as a function of empire, a tremendous ideological project which Thomas Richards (1993, 6) dubbed "the imperial archive": "The great Victorian projects of knowledge all had their center the dream of knowledge driven into present"[10] This agenda represents, to borrow a term from Kelz (2016), their "responsibility to otherness." Their responsibility is to be attentive to that which lies beyond the margins of their identity, their concepts and their projects – that which is other. So this principle is a profoundly human condition. Important here is the overall process of othering; otherness might include race, class, and gender, but does responsibility cross the borders of species? The story's representatives are not complicit with their ideological obligations. "Unofficially," they decide to "erase the records and forget the whole thing" (Bisson 1995, 36), and after a further conversation, they both conclude – with their sense of ethics – that communication with conscious meat would be altogether bizarre, so they "marked the entire sector *unoccupied*" (ibid., 37) and resolved to "just pretend there's no one home in the universe" (ibid., 37).

10 Richards states that "the new disciplines of geography, biology, and thermodynamics all took as their imperium the world as a whole, and worked out paradigms of knowledge which seemed to solve the problem of imperial control at a distance" (1993, 6).

Survival in both modes – SF and colonial – secures the innocence and legitimisation of the coloniser in the narratives set in the strange land, even as he executes his complicity with the ideology of dominant culture – a strategy which Mary Louise Pratt (1992, 9) calls "anti-conquest narrative."[11]Since the story does emulate contact between higher and lower cultures, the aliens justify their actions on the colonial discourse of primitivism; however, the discrimination here is not based on the popular figuration of technology or the lack of access to it as an indicator of primitivism and inferiority:

> "That's impossible. What about the radio signals? The messages to the stars."
> "They use the radio waves to talk, but the signals don't come from them. The signals come from machines."
> "So who made the machines? That's who we want to contact."
> "They made the machines. That's what I'm trying to tell you. Meat made the machines."
> "That's ridiculous. How can meat make a machine? You're asking me to believe in sentient meat." (Bisson 1995, 34)

According to Langer (2011), parallels between SF and colonial fiction have much to do with race: "an invented sink category that infers intellectual, emotional, cultural and other differences based on relatively minor human phenotypical variation" (82). The interstellar duo of explorers instead deals with the new species accordingly – as being burdened with a radical biological difference – and their descriptive language bears racial overtones, seemingly eradicating the anthropological difference in the process of othering:

> "Oh, there is a brain all right. It's just that the brain is made out of meat!"
> "So... what does the thinking?"
> "You're not understanding, are you? The brain does the thinking. The meat."
> "Thinking meat! You're asking me to believe in thinking meat!"

---

11 Pratt offers a radically different theorisation of the concept than Edward Said (1978), who refers this way to the postcolonial texts of native resistance. Here, Pratt employs the term auto-ethnography, which is discussed later.

> "Yes, thinking meat! Conscious meat! Loving meat. Dreaming meat. The meat is the whole deal! Are you getting the picture?"
> "They actually do talk, then. They use words, ideas, concepts?"
> "Oh, yes. Except they do it with meat."
> "I thought you just told me they used radio."
> "They do, but what do you think is on the radio? Meat sounds. You know how when you slap or flap meat it makes a noise? They talk by flapping their meat at each other. They can even sing by squirting air through their meat." (ibid. 35–37)

The newly discovered beings are stripped of their identity and cognitively conquered mostly due to the reductive, totalising character of the verbal abuse. However, considering Carl Thompsons' (2011, 5) assertion that the travel genre contributes to "racist belief and ideologies that were so common in the high imperial period, for example, its role in promoting racial and cultural supremacism," the manner in which the beings are described repeatedly and the insistence on their substance bears racist aspects: the nickname "meat" carries racial overtones. The word could be compared to employing racial slurs since the term "meat" is not only possibly abusive, but also biologically inaccurate. The word then justifies the escalating objectification, abuse and violence against the humans, a tendency which the story shares with other SF texts: for example, Michel Faber's *Under the Skin* (2000).[12]Both Faber's and Bisson's extraterrestrials acknowledge the anthropomorphic nature and traits of humanity, in a sense that they share traits with their respective races. However, Faber's aliens treat humanity as an intergalactic livestock, whereas Bisson's travellers discuss them as mere victims of their biological functions.

Unlike language and culture (two of three mediating terms of the colonial triangle), race cannot be changed; unlike a diaspora, it cannot be escaped. "Meat," characterised through the discourse of primitivism, is confluent with a popular colonial figuration of racism. Thus, the narration references colonial situations, racial ideology and, furthermore, the discourse of racial divisions. The entanglement of the fictional motifs and colonial ideology come into focus upon the contradictions that emerge when their anatomies and actual social scripts are combined.

---

12 The protagonist is an extraterrestrial who kidnaps hitchhikers and delivers them to his planet. There, they are referred to as "Vodsels" and considered a rare delicacy.

They perceive humans and their language and technology to be as unadorned as the bodies of those who produce them. In such ways, the indifferent rhetoric of the aliens is not that of adventurous travel narrators or curious scientists who encounter amazing people. The story makes this clear in the last few lines, when the aliens instead decide to contact "a rather shy but sweet hydrogen-core cluster intelligence in a class-nine star in G445 zone, who "was in contact two galactic rotations ago [and] wants to be friendly again" (Bisson 1995, 37).

While their intelligence suggests the possibility of compassion, it is met with inordinate rationality. Thus, the aliens' disregard for humanity places it in an unjustifiably lower status in relation to others. These references to the effects and conditions of cultural exchange correspond with the term "relational injustice" (Wong, 2019). While the alien explorers consider different instances of alterity as acceptable – "a carbon-based intelligence that goes through a meat stage, "or "[a] meat head with an electron plasma brain inside" (Bisson 1995, 35) –the whole idea of recognising humankind seems absurd to them: "Singing meat. This is altogether too much" (ibid., 36). So when the aliens discover humanity, they name it and eventually ignore it, thereby establishing it in a new relationship with the quasi-empire of intergalactic beings they represent. Christopher Columbus revealed a similar process in action in a letter that was widely distributed across Europe:

> I discovered many islands, thickly peopled, of which I took possession without resistance in the name of our most illustrious Monarch, by public proclamation and with unfurled banners. To the first of these islands, which is called by the Indians Guanahani, I gave the name of the blessed Saviour (San Salvador), relying upon whose protection I had reached this as well as the other islands; to each of these I also gave a name, ordering that one should be called Santa María de Concepción, another Fernandina, the third Isabella, the fourth Juana, and so with all the rest respectively (1493, 1).

Bisson's story evidently mocks such an approach to intercultural contact while stressing the ignorance of judging the cultural practices of other peoples as being physiologically determined. However, the contact zone operates within the same differentials of ideology and innocence as colonial travel narratives.

In conclusion, the prominent mark of colonial/imperial ideology in Jack London's "Red One "is the overriding ambivalence that makes itself felt at every

level at which one attempts to approach the text" (Rieder 2008, 94). While London constructs the story's ambivalence as an exotic/demonic dichotomy, Bisson emulates ambivalence between ideology and innocence, while ascribing to other cultures the structural impositions of knowledge and frames of reference based on the self-centred construction of a coherent reality. Akin to imperialism, the ideological encumbrance imposed renders the whole communication not only as merely impossible, but also as strongly undesired.

Autoethnography

Le Guin (1993, 102) accused the SF genre of failing to develop complex characters, settling instead for a prescribed set of characters such as"captains and troopers, and aliens and maidens and scientists, and emperors and robots and monsters – all signs, all symbols, statements, effigies, allegories, everything between the Stereotypes and the Archetypes" – but never with unknowable characters.So while the individual images differ, the composite image is almost totalised.In the years following WWII, Emmanuel Levinas reconsidered the concept of "totality." As a characteristic of the whole Western continental philosophy and ideology,he identified totality as aform of imperialism, associating it with "the whole Western civilization of property, exploitation, political tyranny, and war" (1987, 53).[13]

Bisson's totalization of "the Other" reveals the unethical orientations where the Other is deprived of its alterity, dissolving into a single concept – conquered cognitively, visiting violence upon the otherness of the Other. Regarded as nothing more than primitives bound by their flesh, this balance and cogency can be equalled with colonial imperialism. The aliens' disregard for difference and shallow acceptance of the material world resembles superior colonial thinking and supremacy. However, humans – whose lives are considered forfeit and whose culture is seen as abbreviated and misshapen in their very strangeness – are at the very heart of the colonial project; its dispelling is at the heart of the

13 Levinas (1969, 1987) extends his assumptions and regards totality as foundational to fascist ideology as well. Thus, his views are in line with Hannah Arendt's (1973) argument about the rise of totalitarian regimes and continental imperialism in post-WWI Central and Eastern Europe. According to Levinas, German fascism and Soviet communism were strongly influenced by Pan-Germanism and Pan-Slavism, "continental imperialism, therefore, started with a much closer affinity to race concepts, enthusiastically absorbed the tradition of race-thinking, and relied very little on specific experiences" (224).

postcolonial one. It is crucial to note here that the most interesting feature of using the language in postcolonial literature may refer to how it constructs not difference, separation and absence from the norm, but a form of resistance.

According to Pratt (1992, 8), "the term 'contact' foregrounds the interactive, improvisational dimension of imperial encounters so easily suppressed or ignored by accounts of conquest and domination told from the invaders' perspective." If noticing the general configuration of the constituents of the contact zone, which exists as a complex system of polarisations, it begins to undermine images with ethnographic significance and calls into attention the discourse of agency. Recasting this in the words of Emmanuel Levinas' blistering critique of totality, "to approach the other in conversation is to welcome his expression, in which at each instant he overflows the idea a thought would carry away from it" (1969, 51).[14] However, the narration does not offer a voice and space for the marginalised, subjugated and exploited, leading to a curtailment of their agency – not only by depriving the contact zone of control over the character, but also through the inability to recollect the encounter:

> "Cruel. But you said it yourself, who wants to meet meat? And the ones who have been aboard our vessels, the ones you have probed? You're sure they won't remember?"
> "They'll be considered crackpots if they do. We went into their heads and smoothed out their meat so that we're just a dream to them."
> "A dream to meat! How strangely appropriate, that we should be meat's dream" (Bisson 1995, 36–37).

As subalterns, to borrow Gayatri Spivaks' (Young, 2003) term referring to marginalised groups without human agency – as defined by the social status that denies access to both mimetic and political forms established in the structures of political representation – humanity is excluded from the hegemonic discourse. Nevertheless, if they could approach it, address themselves to the audience, what would happen if one rearranges the positions of the colonial gaze and consider

14 He argues that a "face-to-face" encounter with the Other is disruptive to totality and represents a gateway to more abstract Otherness, beyond the capacity of "the I, which means exactly: to have the idea of infinity" (1969, 51).

the humans' reciprocal gaze? The generic conventions would switch from those of the ethnographic image to what Pratt (1999) calls "autoethnography" – a text which "people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them" (35).The reversal of perspective would yield an absolutely different narrative, reconstructed from their point of view.

The aliens decipher the communication, and they recognise that humanity "wants to explore the Universe, contact other sentients, swap ideas and information. The usual. ... That's the idea. That's the message they're sending out by radio. 'Hello. Anyone out there. Anybody home.' That sort of thing" (Bisson 1995, 35–36).Humanity's message, beamed across the cold void of space by SETI, was a mind-expanding accomplishment so complicated it required a great deal of room for human imagination and creative sensibility. While applauded by many, the event was advocated by the same noble cause as the mission of the scientists in Lem's *Solaris*: "We are humanitarian and chivalrous; we don't want to enslave other races, we simply want to bequeath them our values and take over their heritage in exchange. We think of ourselves as the Knights of the Holy Contact" (Lem 1971, 81).

On the other hand, several conspiratorial objectors deterred; "some actually suggested that sending such a message was dangerous because it might attract the attention of hostile aliens" (It's the 25th anniversary, 1999). While this perspective exhibits notions of paranoia, the ambivalent nature of the event concurs with Peter's analysis of actual contact narratives, where he establishes a commonly perceived dichotomy (1995, 199). He differentiates between contactee narratives that engage with "mysticism," where aliens exist as reflecting divine natural order, presumably perceived as Columbus described himself upon his encounters with the natives of Caribbean: "Come, come and look upon beings of a celestial race. Come! and see the people from heaven!" (Columbus 1930, 3).[15] On the other hand, abductee narratives, unlike contactee ones, function by developing an objective and scientific discourse. Abductee narratives indicate a fear of technology coupled with the fear of a loss of individuality. The real-life abductee narrations depict the extraterrestrial as emotionless and potentially psychopathic – exhibiting no depth or feelings (Peter 1995, 199).

15 The concept of beneficial contact/invasion was occasionally explored in fiction, with aliens spreading their culture to "civilise" the "barbaric" earthlings or to protect them. This variation on the plot is akin to combining invasion literature's theme of occupation with a parental framework (Fitting 2001, 143).

While Peter discusses actual narratives, Bisson's confrontation between cultures manifests the potential for a similar confluence of concerns. Using Rieder's (2008, 5) term "anthropological difference" – in the way Victorian anthropology conceptualised the play of identity and the difference between scientific subject and object of observation as different moments of history congregating at the same time – the autoethnographic narration would depict anthropological anachronism with a scene of an imperceptible, futuristic and invasive alien.

While alien-abduction narratives could be described as generic, the experience of the abductee is depressingly singular. It is ironic that, according to Mack, the confrontation of an actual abductee narrative (each completely interchangeable) has become a way of reconstructing personhood and identity (2000, 241). As a discussion on alterity and agency, the point of constituting an abductee narrative effort is to give plausible meaning to his personal myth. According to Pratt (1999, 40), the Other, "on the one hand, one must produce oneself as a self for oneself. That is survival. At the same time the system also requires that you produce yourself as an 'other' for the colonizer."Their constant negotiation requires "living in a bifractured universe of meaning," and the burden of producing oneself is laid upon the other. This could serve as the marginalised group's point of entry into hegemonic discourse, but not of the dominant linguistic culture's social domains. The traditionally marginalised are not co-present with the dominant in the narration, shaping and influencing their respective representations through resistance, and participation providing them with a measure of agency. The idea of antithesis is reflected in the narration in the sense that the humans involved are not only at odds with aliens – for not recognising their subjectivity – but also with humanity itself. This calls to attention themes such as the construction of identity through reaffirmation of voice, a common theme in postcolonial literature. This issue generates more discussion than the story actually answers and limits the conceptual framework of transculturation.

The first contact is without any transformation that would be possible as a function of reciprocity through the agency of appropriation; based on this, it is impossible to construct the subjects of the narration without placing them outside the possibility of communicating the knowledge. This is indicative of a framework similar to "the uknowability thesis" in SF as described by the Marxist critic, Frederic Jameson (2005). In his study of *Solaris* (1961), he explores "the impossibility of understanding the Other" – an assumption he considers "implacably negative and skeptical" (107–108).

In conclusion, Gregory Benford (1980) describes SF as unimaginative; he believes that there are "no true aliens," only the retelling of our own history. However, he is unable to conclude whether it is a "simple lack of imagination" or "unconsciousness need to return repeatedly to the problem" (55). Bisson's figure of an alien – constructed with every aspect of their speech in contrast with humans, who are denied active participation or a voice in the contact – functions as a displacement of the negative aspects of humanity onto the aliens.This calls to mind Fanon's argument that it imitates the way Europeans repudiate their "most immoral impulses" and "most shameful desires" by projecting and transferring them onto the colonial others (1986, 190). Thus, it is ironic that the experience of the abductee during the initial rendezvous has become so dehumanisingly biased:"And why not? Imagine how unbearably, how unutterably cold the Universe would be if one were all alone" (Bisson 1995, 37).

Conclusions

To summarise the paper, Bisson's story, "They're Made of Meat"(1995),effectively engages with the problem of understanding the Other in the intricacies of colonial/imperial ideology, science and even the history of exploration. Simultaneously, this paper demonstrates and proves how the notions of the contact zone, anti-conquest narrative and autoethnography can be a point of analysis of first-contact narratives. Furthermore, if one considers Bassnett's (2002, 239) assumption that in travel writing the lines become blurred between the autobiographical, the anecdotal and the ethnographic, then the story's confluence of exploration, scientific examination and objective factuality with subjective fallacy suddenly become far more powerful.

Terry Bisson imitates how the colonial/imperial discourses construct their others in order to confirm their understanding of reality. The Other here is dehumanised and subjugated to a finite, knowable concept, both politically and pragmatically. The distinction between us and them functions as a method of control and dominance in this power hierarchy predicated on ethnography, primitivism and racism; thus, the dynamics of contact are contested on the enforced differentials of power and knowledge. However, what sets Bisson's story apart are the philosophical and ethical dimensions of the contact. It is a story of an interstellar failure of communication of disastrous proportions, where the author combines an ethical and philosophical consciousness with a commitment

to the story as a work of colonial science fiction. If one allows oneself an instance of anthropomorphism, the ignorance, prejudice and audacity that constitute the erasure of alterity in the act of communication depict an innocent account permeated by imperial ideology. Humans occupy the position of victims in the narration, and their marginalised selves simultaneously exist in the form of actual marginalised people, which is not nearly so romantic a formulation; on the other hand, the aliens' attempt to impose their transcendent meaning upon a different life form operates as a type of projection.

Works Cited

Ahmed, Sara. 2000. *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*. New York: Routledge.

Arendt, Hannah. 1973. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.

Aschcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. 2007. *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. London: Routledge.

Bassnett, Susan. 2002. "Travel Writing and Gender." In *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, edited by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, 225–241. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

Benford,Gregory. 1980. "Aliens and Knowability: AScientist's Perspective." *Bridges to Science Fiction*, edited by George E. Slusser, George R. Guffeyand, and Mark Rose, 53–63. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP.

Bisson, Terry. 1995. *Bears Discover Fire*. New York: Tom Doherty Associates, Inc.

———. 2008. "They're Made Out of Meat: A One Act Play by Terry Bisson." TerryBisson.com. Last modified July 2, 2008. https://web.archive.org/web/20080702175538/http://www.terrybisson.com/meatplay.html

Carducci, Jessica. 2016. "A Freak Show in District 9: The Construction of a Freak Amongst Aliens." *The DigitalLiterature Review* 3: 136–148.

Columbus, Christopher. 1493. *Letterfrom Christopher Columbus*. Miami: Florida International University.www2.fiu.edu/~harveyb/colum.html.

Csicsery-Ronay, Istvan. 2003. "Science Fiction and Empire." *Science Fiction Studies* 30(2): 231–245.

Delany, R. Samuel. 1994. *Silent Interviews: On Language, Race, Sex, Science Fiction, and Some Comics*. Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press.

———. 2012. *Starboard Wine: More Noteson the Language of Science Fiction.* Middletown,CN: Wesleyan UP.

Faber, Michel. 2000. *Under the Skin.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Fanon, Frantz. 1986. *Black Skin, White Masks*, translated by Charles L. Markmann. London: Pluto.

Fitting, Peter. 2001. "Estranged Invaders: The War of the Worlds." In *Learning from Other Worlds Estrangement, Cognition, and the Politics of Science Fiction*, edited by Patrick Parrinder, 127–145. Durham, NC: Duke UP.

Foucault, Michel. 1990. *The History of Sexuality*. New York: Vintage.

Gomez-Galisteo, Carmen M. 2014. *Discovering Florida: First-Contact Narratives from Spanish Expeditions Along the Lower Gulf Coast*, edited and translated by John E. Worth. Gainesville: UP of Florida.

Heinlein, Robert A. 2005. *Stranger in a Strange Land*. London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd.

Jameson, Frederic. 2005. *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and the Other Science Fiction*. London: Verso.

Kelz, Rosine. 2016. "Otherness and an Ethics of Responsibility". *The Non-Sovereign Self, Responsibility, and Otherness. International Political Theory Series*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. http://doi.org/10.1057/9781137508973_4.

Kerslake, Patricia. 2007. *Science Fiction and Empire*. Liverpool: Liverpool UP.

Kincaid, Paul. 2003. "On the Origins of Genre." *Extrapolation* 44 (Winter 2003): 409–419.

Landon, Brooks. 2002. *Science Fiction After 1900: From the Steam Man to the Stars*. New York: Routledge.

Langer, Jessica. 2011. *Postcolonialism and Science Fiction*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Le Guin, Ursula K. 1993. *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction*, edited by Susan Wood. New York: Harper Perennial.

Lem, Stanisław. 1971. *Solaris*,translated by Bill Johnston. NY: Berkley Publishing Corp.

Levinas, Emmanuel. 1969. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority.* Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP.

———. 1987. *Collected Philosophical Papers*, translated by Alphonso Lingis. Dordrecht and Boston: M. Nijhoff.

Levine, Joseph M. 1997. "Thomas More and the English Renaissance: History and Fiction inUtopia." *The Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain:*

History, Rhetoric, and Fiction. 1500–1800, edited by Donald R. Kelly and David Harris Sacks. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

London, Jack. 2021. *The Red One*. LaVergne,TN: Ingram Content Group.

Mack, John. 2000. "How the Alien Abduction Phenomenon Challenges the Boundaries of Our Reality." *UFOs and Abductions: Challenging the Borders of Knowledge*, edited by David M. Jacobs, 241–261. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

Parrinder, Patrick. 1995. *Shadows of the Future: H.G. Wells, Science Fiction, and Prophecy*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP.

Peters, Ted. 1995. "Exo-Theology: Speculations on Extraterrestrial Life." *The Gods Have Landed: New Religions from Other Worlds*, edited by James R. Lewis, 187–206. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Pratt, Mary L. 1992. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London: Routledge.

———. 1999. "Apocalypse in the Andes."*Américas*51(4): 38–47.

Richards, Thomas. 1993. *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire*. London: Verso.

Rieder, John. 2008. *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP.

Said, Edward W. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Penguin.

Thompsons, Carl. 2011. *Travel Writing*. New York: Routledge.

White, Richard and Patricia N. Limerick. 1994. *The Frontier in American Culture*, edited by James R. Grossman. Berkeley,CA: University of California Press.

Wong, Brian. 2019. "On Relational Injustice: Could Colonialism Have Been Wrong Even if it Had Introduced More Benefits than Harms?". *Journal of Practical Ethics*, vol.7, Supplementary, October. http://kwokscholars.org/blog/ethics-of-relational-injustice-and-colonialism.html.

Young, Robert J. C. 2003. *Postcolonialism: AVery Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford UP.

News Cornell. 1999. *It's the 25th anniversary of Earth's first (and only) attempt to phone E.T*. November 12, 1999. Accessed March 10, 2021.https://web.archive.org/web/20080802005337/http://wwwnews.cornell.edu/releases/Nov99/Arecibo.message.ws.html.

"When You're Most Invisible of All": The Search for Identity in Jon McGregor's *Even the Dogs*

Fatmah Al Thobaiti
Modern and Contemporary English Literature at Taif University, Saudi Arabia

Abstract: Individual and social identity have generally been considered inseparable components of a person's self-concept. When the social identity of a person is marginalised or stigmatised, his or her individual concept of self gets disrupted. In *Even the Dogs*, Jon McGregor utilises the metaphor of home to explore the individual and social negotiation of identity. The novel illustrates the struggle of a homeless group in forming individual identities when their social identities are lost and unrecognised. This study advances knowledge of the meanings of home and homelessness and contributes to existing understandings of identity formation in relation to marginalised groups.

Keywords: social identity, individual identity, home, Jon McGregor, homelessness, contemporary fiction

Introduction

In *Even the Dogs,* Jon McGregor uses the metaphor of home to explore the negotiation of identity within the complex context of society. The novel tells the story of the police discovering the body of a dead man, Robert, in his flat in a social housing block. We follow the corpse's journey to cremation, throughout which a group of homeless people – drug addicts, alcoholics and vagrants – who were in Robert's life come in and out of focus as they learn about Robert's death and move around the city looking for their next fixes. Mainly, these people are Danny, who finds Robert's body before the police do and runs off in panic; Mike, a Scouser who suffers from schizophrenia-type disorder; Heather, who pretends to be in control of her life though she is not; Steve, who used to be in the army; and Laura, Robert's daughter. Through this fragmentary narrative and the characters' relationships to the physical as well as abstract sense of home, we learn about the struggles they face in their negotiation of social and individual identities.

The metaphor of home is used in McGregor's novel to illustrate how individual identity formulates itself in relation to social identity: the loss of one often disrupts the other. Socially, the characters in the novel are stripped of their individual attributes and are identified collectively as "homeless." They describe themselves as being "invisible" in society. This categorisation results in the disruption of their individual identities. "Home" in the novel is used as a symbol of individual identity. Throughout the narrative, many of the meanings related to home are deconstructed, such as location, privacy and protection. This deconstruction can be seen as betraying the fragmentation and loss of individual identity that the characters face as a result of their loss of social identity.

Using the theories of home and identity, this article argues that the yearning for home of the main characters, Robert and Danny, is inextricable from their desire to find social and individual identities. The relationship between home and identity is germane to today's world of political and environmental issues, which lead many people to migrate to different countries, find greener pastures and alter their lifestyles. Therefore, the idea of home in relation to identity formation is a topic of ongoing, and even increasing, relevance today. Studying literature's portrayal of home and identity could yield insight into understanding the struggle of moving or losing a home, which results in the loss of identity. In *The Politics of Home*, Rosemary George claims that "all fiction is homesickness" (1996, 1). Rosemarie Buikema explains that great literary works "embod[y] the desire to come home, to be at home, to be recognized and to be protected by boundaries and a sense of sameness" (2005, 178). Finding that the metaphor of home is at the heart of McGregor's portrayal of loss of identity, this article analyses the relationship between the characters' notion of home and concepts of identity. With this analysis, the article presents an understanding of some of the multifarious meanings of home and identity.

Home and Identity

The theoretical framework of this article draws upon studies from different disciplines to understand home and identity. In its simplest form, the word *home* is used to refer to "one's fixed residence, the center of domestic life" (Knopp 2002, 15). Nevertheless, once we look deeply into the term and its various uses, we realise that *home* denotes much more than a specific geographical location. As Scott McQuire notes, "the older geographical question 'where

is my home?' has been replaced by a newer question: 'What is the meaning of home?'" (1997, 528). Studies that move away from the literal meaning of home to a more abstract understanding of it complicate the relationship between home and place. In his studies of exile, Hamid Naficy notes that "*home* is anyplace; it is temporary and it is moveable; it can be built, rebuilt, and carried in memory and by acts of imagination" (1999, 6). Nicole Schröder states that "not for everybody is home located in a certain house, at a certain address – rather, it might be connected to people, family, and friends, or it might be associated with a specific feeling" (2006, 34). However, for bell hooks – the cultural critic of race, class and gender issues – our understanding of home changes according to our feelings and experiences:

> At times, home is nowhere. At times, one knows only extreme estrangement and alienation. Then home is no longer just one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and everchanging perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference (1990, 148).

Therefore, the meaning of home can differ and is changeable.

Not only that, but the meanings of home can also be contradictory. On the one hand, home can be connected to feelings of protection and stability. As Cresswell notes, home is "an exemplary kind of place where people feel a sense of attachment and rootedness. Home, more than anywhere else, is seen as a center of meaning and a field of care" (2004, 39). For Clare Marcus, home is "a place of self-expression, a vessel of memories, a refuge from the outside world, a cocoon where we can feel nurtured and let down our guard" (1995, 4). On the other hand, while home could embody positive meanings, such as stability and protection, it could also be viewed as a space of exclusion and oppression. Schröder affirms that

> it makes much more sense to view home as a site of and for ambiguity since its protective functions are interconnected with its limiting characteristics. Feelings of solidarity, safety, and protection are often achieved by severe acts of exclusion and regulation, which are in turn oppressive (2006, 33).

From this point of view, home is viewed as a space of "control" (Douglas 1991, 287) and as a "context for the exercise of power" (Sibley 1995, 91). Thus, homes are about shelter as much as they are about dominance.

Another contradiction of meanings appears in the relationship between home and self-expression. On the one hand, home is seen as a place that allows alternative versions of the self to emerge, "since the exclusion of the outside can also mean the protection from restricting outside forces such as social norms and laws" (Schröder 2006, 32). On the other hand, home can "be a place of limitation and even oppression, a place where the self is heavily restricted" (Schröder 2006, 32). Home therefore does not have the same meaning for everybody, and people's feelings towards it are complex: a mixture of yearning and resistance. These complex meanings of home signify that homelessness too cannot be simply explained as a lack of a home; rather, it can be defined as the absence of any of the meanings related to home, such as care, protection or – for that matter – identity.

These complex and contradictory meanings of home explain the significance of using it as a metaphor for identity in McGregor's novel. Like home, identity is viewed as fluid, contingent and multifaceted (Hogg, Terry, and White 1995; Novotny 1998; Young 1997). Furthermore, identity is defined as "the set of meanings that define who one is when one is an occupant of a particular role in society, a member of particular group, or claims particular characteristics that identify him or her as a unique person" (Burke and Stets 2009, 3). Like home, then, identity has a double meaning – social and individual – and they are linked together. As Korostelina explains, "most identity theories clearly state that identity has two main components: individual or 'self' identity (which includes role identity) and collective or 'we' identity (which includes group identities and social categories)" (2007, 35). "Social identity," she affirms, "is usually described in terms of group similarities and reflects shared interests, values, and beliefs, while individual identity is defined as a set of individual features and provides a basis for differentiating an individual from other people" (Korostelina 2007, 35). A person's unique and individual identity, however, is implicated in social identity (Byrne 2019, 444). The social context plays an important role in identity construction. Oyserman, Elmore and Smith note that people

> are likely to define themselves in terms of what is relevant in their time and place: Group memberships (e.g., religion, race, or gender),

> family roles, looks, school attainment, or athletic prowess should matter more or less depending on what is valued in one's culture and in one's place within social hierarchy (2012, 76).

However, this does not mean that individuals play a passive role when it comes to the construction and reconstruction of identities (Giddens 1991, 54). Schultermandl and Toplu are of the view that

> if we assume that identity is purely based on choice, it is difficult to account for the social and material realities that result from existing power relations and their impositions on the individual. If we assume identity to be solely inscribed by society onto the individual, we overlook the self-determination and agency of every individual (2012, 12).

Individuals, as Rose suggests, are "neither actors essentially possessed of agency, nor … passive products or puppets of cultural forces" (1998, 189). Both factors – social and individual – play important roles in identity formation.

In her study of social identity, Korostelina explains Mead's (1943) theory of social identity, which indicates that the social identity "Me" and the individual identity "I" "are deeply interconnected: A person makes his or her contribution to the development of society, and society influences the formation of the person" (2007, 36). This article aligns with this view of the complex mechanism of identity formation, which states that the stability of individual identity depends on the social context, in which individuals assess themselves as identical or different to others. As the following analysis shows, McGregor uses the metaphor of home to present this complex mechanism of identity formation.

The association between home and identity has been the focus of many studies (Hauge 2007; Lewicka 2008; Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996). Hazel Easthope argues that "the relationship that people have with their physical environment and the ways in which they understand that relationship through different conceptualizations of place are important aspects of identity construction (on both an individual and a group level)" (2009, 74–75). Focussing on home, Jane Jacobs and Susan Smith note that it is "a site for constituting and performing selfhood" (2008, 515). Indeed, the formation of home is closely similar to the formation of individual identity since, as Schröder notes, "both

are based on establishing difference" (2006, 32). That is to say, like individual identity, home formation is connected to acts of inclusion and exclusion, both physically and in an abstract sense. Home formation "depend[s] on strict differentiation between what is familiar (same or similar) and what is other and result in exclusions of what is deemed to be out of place" (Schröder 2006, 2). Similarly, "maintaining the purity of the self, defending the boundaries of the inner body, can be seen as a never-ending battle against residues" (Sibley 1995, 8). Therefore, as Schröder states, "the exclusion of the other in geographic terms can be interpreted as an externalized version of the desire to maintain a stable sense of (a homogeneous, pure) self" (2006, 18). The formation of both identity and home, then, are based on the drawing of rigid boundaries that differentiate between what is oneself and what is not.

In the same way, home contributes to identity formation; the lack of a home impacts a person's sense of self (Boydell et al. 2000; Rayburn and Guittar 2013; Wardhaugh 1999). Indeed, the meanings of home are intensified for those who do not have it and for those whose home exists in the past or in the imagination – something unattainable. The inability of the homeless characters in *Even the Dogs* to draw boundaries between what is home and what is not home influences their understanding and expression of the self and the other. As the following analysis shows, *Even the Dogs* particularly explores this identity confusion for the homeless through its choice of narrative technique.

The Search for Home/Identity in *Even the Dogs*

The main characters in *Even the Dogs*, Danny and Robert, are stripped of their social and individual identities. As mentioned above, the disruption of one results in the disruption of the other. Socially, Danny and Robert feel invisible to the world around them. McGregor portrays this invisibility through the narrative voice used in the book. Christopher Tayler comments that the narrative voice in *Even the Dogs* is "invisible presences of some kind" (2010). As we read the story, we realise that the characters in the novel drift into its world without being recognised. He explains that

> once the reader has settled into the novel's idiom, worries about the narrative perspective begin to fade. Perhaps it makes no difference if "we" are ghosts or hallucinations, living or dead: the kinds

> of people that McGregor is making speak are only very intermittently visible to inhabitants of the regular world either way (Tayler 2010).

Danny and Robert find themselves on the margin; they are always on the outside looking in: "aren't we always outside the remit. We watch" (McGregor 2010, 194). They feel what Carol McNaughton describes as the homeless archetype of "outsiders" (2008, 1). Their wait for recognition becomes more difficult when they find themselves in trouble and in need of help, when they become "most invisible of all":

> Lying on the ground and looking up and waiting for someone to come along and help. In some kind of trouble. A turned ankle or a cracked skull or a diabetic epileptic fit or just too drunk to stand up again without some kind of a helping hand. Which is when you're most invisible of all. Get a good look at people's shoes while they're stepping around you. Like they'll leave you there for days. Like they'll leave you there as long as it takes (McGregor 2010, 58).

When Danny finds Robert's corpse "waiting" in his home for days, he realises that their wait to be recognised by people is endless, which shocks him to the core and sends him wandering the streets in search of answers.

Danny and Robert are invisible to society because they are viewed collectively as drug addicts, alcoholics or homeless people. This is indeed a reflection of the social discourse of the homeless. Celine-Marie Pascale notes that

> although most newspaper articles do not use class to characterize individuals, for people who cannot afford housing, their status as homeless precedes all other information about them, most generally, even their name. People without housing are commonly identified simply as 'the homeless' (2005, 257).

Therefore, she suggests that "the national discourse about people who cannot afford housing is not so much one of wealth and poverty as it is one of community and alienation" (Pascale 2005, 157). Understanding homelessness as an all-encompassing characteristic is dangerous because it distorts the multiplicity of the various identities of the people who experience it. Restricted to the "homeless"

label, these marginalised groups of people have little control over their social identities. As Bauman and Vecchi note,

> for the disadvantaged in society, access to identity is barred – they are given no say in deciding their preferences. They are burdened with the identities enforced or imposed by others; identities which they themselves resent, but are not allowed to shed (2004, 38).

Besides being classified narrowly by society as "homeless," this category is often negatively stigmatising (Rayburn and Guittar 2005, 160), and stigmatised identity attributes are hard to move away from (Brekhus 2003). It is a difficult manoeuvre for homeless people to construct and negotiate their individual identities, no matter how multiple and fluid their identities may be. "Homelessness" is seen as their ultimate "self." This is the struggle that the main characters of *Even the Dogs* face: A collective identity is enforced upon them by a society that strips them of their individuality.

The characters in *Even the Dogs* are perpetually waiting for social assistance, medical attention, love, care and, above all, recognition. The act of waiting reflects a level of passivity and a lack of agency on their part, resulting – as Bauman and Vecchi (2004) explained above – from the collective identity enforced upon them by society and the difficulty of shedding it. Jena notes that "homelessness poses a significant threat to the individual's positive sense of identity, as they live in a world of uncertainties, characterized by social isolation, discrimination, injustice, and fear characterized by the danger of prosecution, lack of protection and insecurity" (2020, 43). Because society fails to recognise their individuality, homeless people find refuge in the collective and generic identity imposed upon them: the homeless. Issues such as homelessness – at certain times and given the "right" contextual conditions – supersede the atomised individuality of the person. When drug addiction is involved, as in *Even the Dogs*, individual identity becomes even more distorted, and users temporarily escape the burden of individuality and identify with a group. "Heroin use," Abigail Gosselin argues, "causes individuals to cross identity boundaries, and it unites different people around a shared compelling interest, equalizing not only moments in time but also potentially distinctive markers of identity" (2011, 137). Gosselin also notes that markers and boundaries of identity are not so determinate for many people. "Problems like addiction," she emphasises,

"can obscure or highlight these boundaries, complicating or simplifying identity as a result" (2011, 137). Identity boundaries are obscured when drug addicts experience collective moments of ecstasy. Their sense of identity is superseded by a (temporary) identification with each other and they feel as one: "it's like when you're on the gear all your emotions and memories are blocked up" (McGregor 2010, 186). This state of collective identity is highlighted in the novel through descriptions such as the following:

> The rest of us sleeping. Danny and Ben and Laura and Mike and Ant and whoever else happened to be around. Or not quite sleeping but closing our eyes and listening to the music coming from the taped-up stereo in the kitchen, some broken-beated lullaby holding us up against the walls and against each other, while our hands fall open and spill the spoons and pipes and empty cans, the scraps of foil and paper and cotton wool. Our crumbs of comfort scattering across the floor. Our open hands (McGregor 2010, 9).

Being together and experiencing the same level of ecstasy, they feel as one. Ben Malbon argues that certain social situations, such as clubbing, allow a "going-beyond of individual identities, an experience of being both within yet in some way outside of oneself at once" (1999, 49). This state could apply to homeless people and drug addicts, who alternate between an awareness of their individual identities and a sense of collective identification with other members of the group. The homeless characters in *Even the Dogs*, then, are not completely passive when it comes to identity formation. Ultimately, they yearn for individuality and, at the same time, find comfort in the collective identity to which they choose to escape, which is also enforced upon them by society.

The narrative voice in *Even the Dogs* significantly embodies the way this confusion and alternation of individual and social identity operate for homeless people. McGregor uses an ambiguous "we" to narrate, and unify, the story of all characters. Every now and then, however, the narrative voice shifts from "we" into an "I," a "he" or a "she," giving each character a unique and recognisable voice. As Tayler notes, in *Even the Dogs*, "distinct characters start emerging from the ragged compound voice" (2010). These characters "are both depressingly similar and strongly particularised" (Tayler 2010). Donna Nurse describes the narrative voice in *Even the Dogs* as a "ghostly Greek

chorus" with characters "taking a turn as soloist" (2010). The narrator "we," she notes, "effortlessly slip[s] in and out of each unmistakable voice" (Nurse 2010). To make sense of the collective, yet fragmentary narrative voice in *Even the Dog*, Toby Clements compares these voices to organs in the body: "[A]s Robert's body is bagged and driven across town for its post-mortem, McGregor performs a similar operation on Danny and Steve and Heather and Laura, taking each one in turn as if they were organs in Robert's body" (2010). This comparison is useful because it reflects the type of relationship these characters have with each other; they feel like and are referred to as one, yet at the same time, they are distinct from one another.

Furthermore, in its attempt to reflect this interconnection between social identity and individual identity, *Even the Dogs* utilises the metaphor of home as a representation of identity. Presenting home as a symbol for individual identity, it draws an analogy between home and the physical as well as emotional peculiarities of the characters. The reader of the novel can immediately notice the resemblance, for example, between Robert's home, in a housing block, and his dead body. Robert's home is dirty and messy; the wallpaper is tattered, and "peppered spores of mould thicken and spread towards the ceiling" (McGregor 2010, 11). When Robert's body is found, it is in a similarly horrible condition. The policeman "shines a torch over the body, the damp clothes, the broken and blistered flesh. … the swollen and softening skin, the sunken gaze, the oily pool of fluids spreading across the floor. The twitch and crawl of newly hatched life, feeding" (McGregor 2010, 5). There's a resemblance between Danny's imaginative appearance and imaginative home, too. When Danny daydreams about he and his wife being healthy, clean and drug-free, he imagines the home they'll be living in as clean and fully equipped:

> And for a minute he'd seen the two of them somewhere else, somewhere clean, a brief and lonely vision of them dying clean and healthy in a big wide bed of their own, a car in the driveway, two cars in the driveway, jobs to go to, his contact lenses in a little case on the bedside table, the smell of coffee and bread drifting in from a spotless kitchen at the other end of the house and the two of them clean and naked in bed beneath soft white sheets without scars or sores or bruises or scabs (McGregor 2010, 44).

Home not only reflects Robert's physical appearance, but his past behaviours as well:

> Tea-stains the colour of old photographs splash across the wall, lingering long after the broken cups are cleared away …. A dent, the size of a fist or a forehead is hidden by a framed school portrait … the damp patches spread further, and the paper sags away from the wall, and the ceiling stains a darkening nicotine yellow (McGregor 2010, 10–12).

The stains and dent in the wall suggest that the emotional damage resulting from these violent behaviours is still lingering inside of him and has not healed. This image of home, reflecting Robert's physical and emotional side, resembles his individual identity.

Yet, as suggested above, Robert's individual identity is deconstructed by outside factors, which he submits to. When Robert learns that his wife and daughter are never coming back, he decides to sell all of his furniture, which alludes to the idea that he is giving up all the peculiarities that form his individual identity. Gradually, his home empties and is deconstructed literally. Two men from a rental shop carry the furniture from the home without looking at – that is, without recognising – him:

> The last things to go, as the flat kept emptying out, were the television and the washing machine. Two men from the rental shop came and collected them, and he didn't have whatever it might have taken for an argument. Strength, heart, fucking, gumption or something. There's nothing worth watching anyway, he joked, as they unplugged the television and carried it out of the flat without looking at him. Mind your backs lads, he said, as they eased the washing machine down the hallway, dripping water behind them and taking a chunk out of the doorframe on their way through (McGregor 2010, 60).

The gradual emptying of Robert's home reflects the gradual loss of individual identity that he experiences in every encounter with the outside world, where he is viewed solely as homeless.

To illustrate the characters' obscuration of identity boundaries, the novel destabilises the meaning of home as a protected and private space by representing it as being continually invaded. Throughout the story, doors and windows are used to invade the privacy of homes rather than to exclude invaders. Once doors and windows are open, all kinds of things rush into a home; things that can be felt with almost all the senses: "sunlight comes in" (McGregor 2010, 10), "exhaust fumes from the road drift in" (McGregor 2010, 11), "spring air" (McGregor 2010, 11), "sounds of children being called home for bed, and music, and the faint shouts of football games on the playing fields" (McGregor 2010, 11). The novel itself opens by breaking down the door and completely demolishing the privacy of Robert's home: "they break down the door at the end of December and carry the body away" (McGregor 2010, 1). The novel also highlights the idea of home as an invaded space by depicting Laura storming into Robert's flat through the kitchen window (McGregor 2010, 1). Even when Robert is alive, he has no control over who enters his home:

> For a moment the room feels crowded again, crowded like it was the last time we were all here together with Robert stretched out on the floor the way he always was by the end of the night, with that look on his face he only ever got when he was sleeping. And there he is, snoring, spluttering, reaching out a hand behind his head like he's looking for something to hold on to. One of us, Heather probably, leaning forward to pull his coat more snugly across his broad chest, his shoulders, tucking his hat back on to his head until she sees the rest of us watching (McGregor 2010, 9).

Robert's home is a place where everyone can hang out: "seemed like the deal was if people brought him food and drink they could hang out in his flat" (McGregor 2010, 30). The walls of the home, too, are not intact separators between the outside and the inside. They are torn and blistered. Rather than providing enclosure and structure, they reveal chaos and a lack of boundaries.

Destabilising home as a private and protected space problematises the characters' relationships to home and, by extension, to individual identity. The characters' conceptions of their individual identities seem to be similarly distorted. They fail to find themselves because they are unable to fit in within society, to feel "at home" anywhere or to find their social identity. For Danny,

home is like "when you're climbing a tree and the branch breaks off. You're still holding on to the branch but you're falling through" (McGregor 2010, 34). This image alludes brilliantly to the contradictory forces these characters face: No matter how hard they try to find their individual identity beyond the label "homeless," they fail because they feel rootless, detached and invisible to society all the time. Danny and his friends yearn to find and express their individuality, and to be recognised for it, yet they always find themselves forced into, and at the same time gravitating towards, the generic category of the homeless. While every one of them has his/her own characteristics – such as age, background, education and hobbies – once they become *homeless*, the differences between them flatten and they identify themselves essentially as *homeless* – a group of people who share nothing in common except the lack of a home.

Conclusion

Through the metaphor of home, McGregor represents how a lack of social identity calls into question individual determinants of identity. The issue of the novel's characters goes some way beyond the search for a home to live in; the quest here is to feel at home in oneself. Immersed in the social identity of "the homeless," the characters' search for a home is a search for an individual identity that they never found. Since having a home is one of the main identifiers of one's identity, homelessness promises only confusion and a loss of one's sense of self. The characters find themselves lost and constantly in a state of waiting. Through its representation of the homeless characters' struggle with identity formation, the novel presents an exemplary display of the difficulties involved in obtaining a positive social identity that acknowledges individuality and differences. The home metaphor used in *Even the Dogs*, in other words, helps us understand the struggle of marginalised people to "place" themselves in society.

References

Bauman, Zygmunt, and Benedetto Vecchi. 2004. *Identity: Conversations with Benedetto Vecchi*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Boydell, Katherine, Paula Goering, and Tammy Morrell-Bellai. 2000. "Narratives of Identity: Re-presentation of Self in People who are Homeless."

Qualitative Health Research 10, no. 1: 26–38. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10724750.

Brekhus, Wayne. 2003. *Peacocks, Chameleons, Centaurs: Gay Suburbia and the Grammar of Social Identity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Buikema, Rosemarie. 2005. "A Poetics of Home: On Narrative Voice and Deconstruction of Home in Migrant Literature." In *Migrant Cartographies: New Cultural and Literary Spaces in Post-Colonial Europe*, edited by Sandra Ponzanesi and Daniela Merolla, 177–188. Oxford: Lexington Books.

Burke, Peter and Jan Stets. 2009. *Identity Theory.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Byrne, Anne. 2003. "Developing a Sociological Model for Researching Women's Self and Social Identities." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 10, no. 4: 443–464. www.journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/13505068030104010.

Clements, Toby. 2010. "Even the Dogs by Jon McGregor: Review." The Telegraph. www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/7316176/Even-the-Dogs-by-Jon-McGregor-review.html.

Cresswell, Tim. 2004. *Place: An Introduction.* United Kingdom: Wiley Blackwell.

Douglas, Mary. 1991. "The Idea of Home: A Kind of Space." *Social Research* 58, no. 1: 287–307. www.philpapers.org/rec/HOLTIO-13.

Easthope, Hazel. 2009. "Fixed Identities in a Mobile World? The Relationships between Mobility, Place, and Identity." *Identities* 16, no. 1: 61–82. www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10702890802605810.

George, Rosemary Marangoly. 1996. *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction.* London: University of California Press.

Giddens, Anthony. 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gosselin, Abigail. 2011. "Memoirs as Mirrors: Counterstories in Contemporary Memoir." *Narrative* 19, no. 1: 133–148. www.jstor.org/stable/41289290.

Hauge, Ashild 2007. "Identity and Place: A Critical Comparison of Three Identity Theories." *Architectural Science Review* 50, no. 1: 44–51. www.faculty.arch.utah.edu/benham/group%203/Place-Identity.pdf.

Hogg, Michael, Deborah Terry, and Katherine White. 1995. "A Tale of Two Theories: A Critical Comparison of Identity Theory With Social Learning Theory." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 58: 255-269.

hooks, bell. 1990. *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. Boston: South End Press.

Jacobs, Jane, and Susan Smith. 2008. "Living Room: Rematerialising Home." *Environment and Planning A* 40, no. 3: 515–519. www.journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1068/a40357.

Jena, S. P. K. 2020. *Homelessness: Research, Practice, and Policy*. London: Routledge.

Knopp, Lisa. 2002. *The Nature of Home: A Lexicon and Essays*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Korostelina, Kaina. 2007. *Social Identity and Conflict: Structures, Dynamics, and Implications*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lewicka, Maria. 2008. "Place Attachment, Place Identity, and Place Memory: Restoring the Forgotten City Past." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 28, no. 3: 209–231. www.doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2008.02.001.

Malbon, Ben. 1999. *Clubbing: Dancing, Ecstasy and Vitality*. London: Routledge.

Marcus, Clare. 1995. *House as a Mirror of Self.* Berkeley: Conari Press.

McGregor, Jon. 2010. *Even the Dogs*. USA: Bloomsbury.

McNaughton, Carol. 2008. *Transitions Through Homelessness: Lives on the Edge.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

McQuire, Scott. 1997. "The Uncanny Home: Television, Transparency and Overexposure." *Paradoxa* 3, no. 3–4: 528–537. www.minerva-access.unimelb.edu.au/handle/11343/34834.

Naficy, Hamid. 1999. "Framing Exile: From Homeland to Homepage." In *Home, Exile, Homeland: Film, Media, and the Politics of Place*, edited by Hamid Naficy, 1–16. New York: Routledge.

Novotny, Kristin. 1998. "Taylor-made? Feminist Theory and the Politics of Identity." *Women and Politics* 19, 1–18.

Nurse, Donna. 2010. "Review: Even the Dogs by Jon McGregor." *The Globe and Mail*. www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/books-and-media/review-even-the-dogs-by-jon-mcgregor/article4316104/.

Oyserman, Daphna, Kristen Elmore, and George Smith. 2012. "Self, Self-Concept, and Identity." In *Handbook of Self and Identity*, (2nd edition), edited by Daphna Oyserman, Kristen Elmore, and George Smith, 69–104. New York: Guilford Press.

Pascale, Celine-Marie. 2005. "There's No Place Like Home: The Discursive Creation of Homelessness." *Cultural Studies Critical Methodologies* 5, no. 2: 250–268. www.doi.org/10.1177/1532708605274558.

Rayburn, Rachel, and Nicholas Guittar. 2013. "'This is where you are supposed to be': How Homeless Individuals Cope with Stigma." *Sociological Spectrum* 33, no. 2: 159–174. www.psycnet.apa.org/record/2013-02375-004.

Rose, Nikolas. 1998. *Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power, and Personhood*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schröder, Nicole. 2006. *Spaces and Places in Motion: Spatial Concepts in Contemporary American Literature*. Tubingen, Germany: Gunter Narr Verlag.

Schultermandl, Silvia, and Sebnem Toplu. 2010. "A Fluid Sense of Self: The Politics of Transitional Identity in Anglophone Literatures." In *Contributions to Transitional Feminism* (vol. 2), edited by Silvia Schultermandl and Sebnem Toplu. London: Transaction Publishers.

Sibley, David. 1995. *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and Difference in the West*. London: Routledge.

Tayler, Christopher. 2010. "Even the Dogs by Jon McGregor." *The Guardian*. www.theguardian.com/books/2010/jan/23/even-the-dogs-jon-mcgregor.

Twigger-Ross, Clare, and David Uzzell. 1996. "Place and Identity Process." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 16: 205–220.

Wardhaugh, Julia. 1999. "The Unaccommodated Woman: Home, Homelessness and Identity." *The Sociological Review* 47, no. 1: 91–109. www.journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1111/1467-954X.00164.

Young, Marion. 1990. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

The Distortion and Demise of Language and the Written Word in Aldous Huxley and Selected Russian Dystopias

Marek Ochrem
University of Wrocław, Poland

Abstract: Critical studies of classic British dystopic novels from the first half of the 20th century have undeniably been extensive and voluminous, whereas the more contemporary Russian dystopias came into being later and there is therefore much less critical research on the issues raised therein, especially in comparison with the scholarship on British dystopia. The aim of this study therefore is to fill a gap in this field of academic research. Specifically, the author pays particular attention to the interplay between selected works of classic British/Russian dystopia and contemporary dystopic Russian novels. Furthermore, an attempt has been made to pinpoint connections between the reality of the dystopian worlds discussed herein and the real world.

Keywords: dystopia, Huxley, Russian dystopia, novels

We can safely assume that the nineteenth-century world and its whole philosophy, with its convictions and system of values, irrevocably came to an end after World War I. The post-war shift was profound and multifaceted. The edifice of science, culture, politics and society collapsed. Albert Einstein's theories caused a paradigm shift in astrophysics. Space and time ceased to be separate and unalterable entities. Quantum mechanics proved that micro- and macroworlds do not fit together well. New inventions and discoveries changed the way people coped with agricultural (genetics) or industrial production (assembly lines). In art, modernist and postmodernist painters and sculptors broke with tradition and began to develop innovative styles, such as cubism or Art Deco. In Europe and Asia, some monarchs were dethroned and new states came into being. Nevertheless, most importantly, the rise and expansion of totalitarian states and their ideology in the twentieth century (Soviet Russia, Nazi Germany and communist China in particular) took the issues addressed in the classic dystopias beyond the scope of literature. It is hardly surprising

that both publicists and literary scholars have devoted much attention to the literature dealing with the issues of fictional, yet all too familiar political realities. Nonetheless, in the 1980s and 1990s there was a lot of hope that the era of authoritarian regimes was coming to an end. The Scorpions, a German heavy metal band, came up with the song "Wind of Change," a significant anthem for the political changes in Eastern Europe at that time. In 1989, Francis Fukuyama, a famous political scientist, even prognosticated the end of history with liberal institutions – such as democratic governments, free markets and consumerist culture – becoming universal worldwide.

All but one of the Russian narratives discussed herein date back to the 1980s or the beginning of the twenty-first century (Zamyatin's early dystopia *We* is the exception; *Moscow 2042* by Vladimir Voinovich is from 1986; *The Slynx* by Tatyana Tolstaya is from 1986–2000; and *Day of the Oprichnik* by Vladimir Sorokin was published in 2006). Thus, it is not surprising that their perspective on various sociopolitical issues is mostly a bit different from the deeply pessimistic outlook for the future in Zamyatin's, Huxley's and Orwell's dystopias. At the end of *Moscow 2042* and *The Slynx*, the old reigns of terror cease to exist and are replaced with new despotic regimes. That "wind of change" is visible in those stories, whereas in Huxley's dystopian world any change is just unthinkable and unfeasible.

This study demonstrates the role of both language and the written word in the ruination of the world represented in *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley and in selected works of Russian dystopian literature. Moreover, it points out the dire consequences of either the absence or serious distortion of good professional journalism, quality literature and even rich vocabulary in conveying complex or unorthodox ideas. Such social evils as a decline in morality, ubiquitous window dressing and/or outright lies, the brutalisation of society, a reign of secret police terror, travesties of justice, highly conformist behaviour and an incapacity for independent and logical thought are just a few examples of the nightmares of the dystopian worlds discussed herein.

Current Research on the Issues Discussed in this Article

A number of literary critics have commented on the role of language, journalism and belles-lettres in Huxleyan and Russian dystopias. Michael Sherborne writes about the simplification of language and meaningless repetitive discourse in Huxley's *Brave New World*. As he argues, the World State in this dystopia equips its inhabitants with

a parody of meaningful discourse. In fact, the people in the novel, whenever they are faced with the need to say something, fall back on clichés from advertising slogans, nursery rhymes and proverbs. Still, the words and phrases they use are often corruptions of ancient ones changed to better suit the needs of the State. Sherborne draws the following analogy between Orwell's *1984* and *Brave New World*:

> Like Newspeak, the official language of George Orwell's *1984*, the proverbial sayings of the World State are a way to reinforce orthodox ideas and to make it hard to conceive of alternative ones. (2005, 88)

Also, he points out that in Huxley's work many words have become taboo and/or obsolete ("father," "mother," "family," "parent," "home," "born," "Christianity," etc.). He compares the predictable and standardised rhetoric of the narrative to machine discourse.

Nathan Waddell, Krzysztof Hejwowski and Grzegorz Mróz, in turn, pay particular attention to the role of the Shakespearean element in John's life and the World State. Waddell indicates that Shakespeare is utterly incompatible with Huxley's dystopia:

> In the World State the language of Shakespeare is firmly out of place, its profound sense of difference confusing and ostracizing John the Savage, rather than helping him decode his surroundings." (2016, 37)

Krzysztof Hejwowski and Grzegorz Mróz are more interested in the interplay between the great playwright's writing and the triviality of both the Controllers' world and the Americanised world of the 1930s. In their monograph on Aldous Huxley, they make an attempt to explain the possible reasons for so extensively including the Bard of Avon's literary output in the dystopia:

> In *Brave New World*, the language of Shakespeare and the world of human experience depicted in his masterpieces … became an antidote (the only one in the novel) to the shallow superficial world of consumerism, universal stability and prosperity, … which Huxley observed with an increasing sense of surprise and horror in the mid-1930s. (Hejwowski and Mróz 2019, 46–47)

In her monograph, Katarzyna Sobijanek concentrates on Russian dystopian visions, in particular on the issues of exercising control over people seen from a linguistic angle. She points out in *Oblicza totalitaryzmu we współczesnej antyutopii rosyjskiej* that effective control of language is tantamount to control over human beings: "The control of language and limitations on the number of words and expressions are in fact synonymous with controlling people" (Sobijanek 2013, 114–115, my translation). She also stresses that anyone brought up in a specific sociopolitical system is conditioned by the knowledge instilled in them. Sobijanek further notes that

> as he [a character in a novel] does not know such notions as love, freedom, a critical approach, choice or mutiny, he is not likely to ponder over them, discuss them or, all the more so, live up to them. (2013, 115)

She further draws our attention to the fact that in Vladimir Voinovich's dystopia we encounter all those long and often senseless abbreviations and acronyms, which are the Russian version of Orwellian Newspeak: Moscowrep (Moscow Communist Republic), CPGB (a merger of the Communist Party and KGB), Genialissimo (the Muscovite leader), natfunctbur (a toilet), etc. Sobijanek also comments on the freedom of expression in *Moscow 2042* by Vladimir Voinovich:

> One's artistic freedom is confined to obeying the colonel's orders, who gives authors assembled in an office space instructions regarding the subjects they are supposed to pursue in the works they produce. (2013, 119)

Just as in the case of Sobijanek's treatise, Joanna Madloch touches on some specific aspects of neo-Russian Soviet language in *Moscow 2042*. Specifically, she emphasises the role of Newspeak in this dystopia:

> A distinctive "Soviet" tendency to use Newspeak and acronyms is ridiculed by means of using complex compounds frequently …. It is also noticeable that Moscowrep citizens are named according to the social position they hold. (Madloch 1994, 70, my translation)

Unlike Madloch, M. D. Fletcher addresses the issues of the non-existence of genuine literary criticism and the obsequious praise for Genialissimo's alleged artistic legacy in Voinovich's novel. Specifically, he writes about the absence of literary critics and the attribution of any pieces of good literature to the Moscowrep leader in the Moscow of the future: "There are no longer any critics, as their function has been taken over directly by the security police" (Fletcher 1989, 3). Specifically, at one point he refers to a literature class. The students learn that the sentence "I devoted my lyre to my nation" does not belong to Alexander Pushkin, but of course to Genialissimo. Thus, belles-lettres does exist here – in contrast to, say, Orwell's dystopian vision – as only the head of state can author anything in print.

As in the case of Sobijanek's and Madloch's studies, Tatyana Novikov elaborates on the issues of *Moscow 2042*'s artificial language in "The Poetics of Confrontation." Most newspeak in Voinovich's novel pertains to Moscowrep officialese, but in the case of Karnavalov (Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's fictional alter ego), the character tries to get rid of existing neologisms and replace them with coinages based on Russian words. Novikov directs our attention both to Moscowrep and Karnavalov's jargon, stating that "the novel, at the linguistic level, plays with the Soviet officialese and political jargon" (2015, 4). In her opinion, this pertains to the logic of the carnival and "calls into question the existing structures and traditional cultural myths, causing a fundamental shift in the perspective from which they can be interpreted" (Novikov 2015, 4). As in the case of some other critics, Novikov also points out the coinages in the narrative. They reflect Karnavalov's nationalism and his deep conviction that the best form of government for Russia is monarchy: "Rejecting all words of foreign origin, Voinovich's eccentric protagonist substitutes 'television' (*televizor*) with 'looker' (*gliadelka*), 'newspaper' (*gazeta*) with 'reader' (*chitalka*) [and] 'airplane' (*samolet*) with 'iron bird' (*zheleznaia ptitsa*)" (Novikov 2015, 5).

Aleksandra Zywert, in her discussion on Voinovich's writing, debates in greater detail some issues raised in the above-mentioned studies. She notes that in Moscowrep even daily newspapers are published in the form of toilet rolls and are devoted almost entirely to the leader (Zywert 2012, 320). The researcher gives some thought to neo-ecclesiastical vocabulary:

> The language and gestures of the Russian Orthodox Church have been changed. All the words referring to God have been eliminated

> and replaced with neologisms better suited to the new quasi-religion. (Zywert 2012, 325–326, my translation)

Thus, "Oh, Lord!" has been substituted with "Oh, Gyena!" and "Thank God" with "Thank Genialissimo." Zywert also writes about the issues of literature in Voinovich's dystopia. She stresses the fact that belles-lettres has become worthless under the yoke of the Party and refers it to Lenin's assertion that the communists need to be in charge of artistic freedom. Consequently, Moscowrep writers are similar to slaves and are treated like objects. The security service acts as literary critics; strict censorship has been imposed. Thus, in both Stalinist Russia and Voinovich's dystopic novel, writers are not autonomous authors. A striking aspect of all literature and journalism is the preoccupation of all writing with just one subject: panegyrising the leader. In fact, it is the only permissible theme of literary works, the main goal of which is to confirm everyone's belief and conviction that all the Communites live in the best country in existence, ruled by a great genius. Even books for children deal only with the leader's childhood and youth. Genialissimo is hailed as the most eminent writer. Anything worthwhile is falsely attributed to his talent. Zywert notes that "on that occasion, when reinforcing the cult of the leader, an outright forgery takes place: the authorship of great groundbreaking works … is assigned to Genialissimo, a genius, without exception, surpassing all his literary predecessors in talent" (2012, 337). Zywert compares this situation to the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. He was awarded the Lenin Prize for Literature, but in fact his trilogy was ghost-written by the Soviet literati. Such pseudo-literary output was a kind of tradition in the USSR. Zywert also focusses her attention on the dichotomy between paper and paperless literature in the novel. In fact, it is only the former that exists. In reality, there is no paperless belles-lettres, as there are no printers or mainframe computers to store anything anywhere. Another dichotomy persists between pre-revolutionary and contemporary literature. In the former, no-one is allowed to read the originals, whereas contemporary literary output is pure propaganda. Furthermore, literature has been altered beyond recognition as the totalitarian state works on the assumption that art should change people's lives, not just reflect it. In a comparable manner to Orwell's Ministry of Truth, in Moscowrep there are units who specialise in reshaping pre-revolutionary literature, as it is deemed highly imperfect in terms of both its form and content. Zywert points out that in the Soviet Union it was commonplace

to rewrite history, especially in the late 1930s. A good example was published in 1938, titled *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course*. In the book, Stalin presented himself as the main revolutionary and civil war leader. Simultaneously, he did not mention many other Bolshevik activists who played a crucial role at that time. Finally, Zywert refers to the wretched life of dissident writers in Voinovich's dystopia. A good example is the protagonist of the narrative. Kartsev is under pressure to make major amendments to his own books. At first, the functionaries keep egging him on, then they try to make him feel guilty. When their efforts prove futile, he is branded an enemy of the state, and a smear campaign is launched against him. The writer suffers from hunger, poverty, loneliness, humiliation and utter degradation. Finally, he even contemplates suicide. This fictional character bears a close resemblance to Voinovich. The novelist, as well as many other Russian political dissidents, also fell victim to the Soviet authorities (Zywert 2012, 334–339).

Iwona Papaj compares a fictional character with a real historical figure, focussing in particular on their purported works. More specifically, in her monograph, she demonstrates analogies between Voinovich's version of Big Brother and Jughashvili and refers to the alleged versatility of Genialissimo and Stalin:

> In *Moscow 2042*, the subject matter of books is viewed from a critical perspective. Genialissimo, who personifies Stalin, writes *Вопросы любви и пола and Сексуальная революция и коммунизм*. There are reasons to believe that this is an allusion to the emphasised thematic diversity of the Soviet leader's publications. As everybody knows, he raised the issues of linguistics, culture and poetry. For example, his statements about Pushkin influenced the studies on Pushkin. (Papaj 2008, 182–183, my translation)

Karen L. Ryan-Hayes, as with some of the authors mentioned so far, discusses at greater length certain important factors that resulted in the pitiful state of journalism and literature in Voinovich's dystopic reality. In her treatise on Russian satire, she stresses that in *Moscow 2042* the creative process has been obviated. Writers produce works devoted entirely to the leader. No-one reads the original books – only opinions about them. Furthermore, the organs of security are in charge of any literary criticism. Ryan-Hayes emphasises that in Voinovich's dystopia, socialist realism has been replaced with "communist

realism." She also draws our attention to another interesting fact. The Soviet Union suffered from a chronic shortage of paper. This phenomenon is satirically reflected in the novel. Due to a severe lack of paper, hardly any publications are printed in Moscowrep. Thus, the so-called paperless literature allegedly exists in this realm. In the case of computers the situation is even worse: There are no such machines at all. Upon his arrival at the airport, to his utter astonishment, Kartsev learns that 60 years in the future nobody really understands what floppy disks are used for. On a more pessimistic note, Ryan-Hayes observes that

> creativity seems to breed rebellion and dissidence in classical dystopian works … . *Moscow 2042* responds to this tradition with the discouraging premise that art can be utterly tamed and manipulated. (1995, 227)

On the other hand, however, the protagonist (which is a rare case in dystopian universes) helps to bring about the destruction of Moscowrep, and is then exiled from Karnavalov's monarchy, which comes as the next authoritarian state. Voinovich seems to adhere more to Zamyatin's belief in the permanency of revolution than to Orwell's vision of the dystopian reality that nobody can hope to topple. The great merit of Ryan-Hayes' monograph consists in the fact that she draws very apt comparisons between the Soviet and Moscowrep realities. One good example is her reference to the ubiquitous quality of both factual Soviet censorship and its fictional counterpart in the novel. At one point, Kartsev vehemently indicts Soviet censorship. He gives his interlocutors to understand that they cannot expect him to be a conformist. If he were such a person, he would have become a mediocre but prominent secretary of the Writers' Union, a Lenin Prize laureate, a Hero of Labour, etc. a long time ago. There would be no need for him to be a time traveller. He would never have arrived in Moscorep (Ryan-Hayes 1995, 229). The author of *Contemporary Russian Satire* also analyses the debasement of language in the narrative. She notes that, as in the case of Orwell's dystopian work, Voinovich creates "Newspeak." It is also simplified and standardised to reflect the ideological conformity of the state. What he coins is exceedingly ugly and his coinages recall Orwell's Ingsoc. At the same time, however, the writer is satirising actual Soviet linguistic practice. It is enough to give just a few examples: "sovnarkhoz" (совет народного хозяйства [regional economic council]), "raikom" (районный комитет [district committee]) or "minzdrav" (министерство

здравоохранения [ministry of public health]). In the case of proper names, the debasement of language also takes place: "All the Communites have names ironically full of revolutionary significance: Dzerzhin Gavrilovich Siromakhin, Propaganda Paramonovna Bovinak, Iskrina Romanovna Poliakov, Kommunii Ivanovich Smerchev" (Ryan-Hayes 1995, 234–235). Even the protagonist is renamed, called "Classic" by the Communites. It is worth mentioning that, for a time, a roughly analogous phenomenon did take place in Soviet Russia.

The aforementioned literary scholar Katarzyna Sobijanek also writes about the language of the "oprichniks" (the tsar's political police functionaries) in Vladimir Sorokin's vision of future Russia. She points out that their utterances contain a number of archaisms, neologisms, security service jargon and Chinese loanwords, thus stressing the importance of the Chinese language in the novel (Sobijanek 2012, 151). The scholar also notes that the monarch, wielding authoritarian power in his country, controls all news outlets and spreads state propaganda (2012, 155). There is also a reference to the role of books in the neo-*oprichnik*s' world. In the narrative, Russian literary masterpieces *The Idiot* by Fyodor Dostoevsky and *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy are burnt in the clairvoyant's fireplace. Sobijanek emphasises that in the prophetess' view only books serving a utilitarian purpose should exist. This can be a reference to Proletkult, an experimental Soviet artistic institution that aspired to create a new, revolutionary working-class aesthetics. Undoubtedly, there is also an allusion to *The Master and Margarita,* a novel by Russian writer Mikhail Bulgakov, and its famous quote: "рукописи не горят" ["manuscripts don't burn"]. Moreover, in the researcher's opinion, the books set ablaze in the story are reminiscent of the Nazi book-burning campaign in the 1930s. It is a well-known fact that in the Third Reich non-Aryan books and authors were banned (e.g. German poet, writer and literary critic, Heinrich Heine) (Sobijanek 2012, 158). Another important issue raised in *Day of the Oprichnik* pertains to the depiction of a totalitarian society where people are brought up in an oppressive atmosphere of hypocrisy, fear and outright lies. Simultaneously, the citizens of such a state are indoctrinated to think that they live in a lawful state. Sobijanek asserts that all of these factors lead to the distortion of language, stifled by ideology. In such circumstances, it is defenceless and becomes a pliant tool in the hands of the state (Sobijanek 2012, 174). She also raises the question of the demise of literature in her article titled "Прогнозирование будущего России в романе-антиутопии "День опричника" В. Г. Сорокина." To her mind, an average citizen respects books.

It is no wonder that the burning of publications both in Nazi Germany and in Sorokin's novel is supposed to intimidate people into obeying. Komiaga revels in this barbaric act, as his attitude towards it reflects his ruthless character. After all, as Sobijanek points out, book burnings are clear manifestations of totalitarianism (2009, 133). To sum up, in her view the linguistic aspect matters greatly in Sorokin's dystopia.

Alla Latynina, in her review of *The Slynx* by Tatyana Tolstaya, devotes her attention to the demise of books in this novel, which is strongly reminiscent of the situation in *Brave New World* and *1984*, where old publications are practically non-existent. She focusses her attention on the protagonist of the novel and his infatuation and obsession with books. She stresses Benedikt's weak-mindedness, which results in the Golubchiks being shaken down. The main character's strong desire to come into possession of all the available books is insatiable and it is not only he who hunts them down: "So, as the Saniturions head out looking for books (there will be arrests, for sure), Benedikt shows even his teacher no mercy: he betrays Nikita Ivanich, too" (Latynina 2003, 7).

In Huxley's dystopia, the solution to the eternal conflicts besetting mankind since time immemorial is prenatal and social conditioning at its most extreme. In this world, people cannot be at odds over anything in the vast majority of cases, as they belong to different castes in the first place. Moreover, they are programmed to avoid anything unpleasant. Thus, naturally, they abhor whatever might disturb them in any way. Still, even if they feel a temptation to clash over anything, *soma* – a new wonder drug – is always at hand. Consequently, dramatic music, fine art or great works of literature do not exist in this reality. The expression of overwhelming human emotions through music or poetry could result in unexpected feelings and could adversely affect the ignorant bliss of Huxleyan society.

John the Savage is one of the very few people in the World State who knows Shakespeare's literary works. Living outside the World State, due to his "otherness," he is ostracised by his peers (in contrast to them, his complexion looks pale, he can read and his mother behaves promiscuously). That is why his only companions in the Reservation are the playwright's works; because they have become his ticket into the world of moral values, he values them highly.

John is acquainted with Shakespeare because he is an outsider, so it is hardly surprising that almost nobody in the World State has ever heard of the great playwright. The dramatist's artistic output, so saturated with deep, extreme and

violent emotions, is incompatible with the world of triviality, infantilism and babyish nonsense and with the reality of shallow ideas and simple-minded people. The only remaining books are reference manuals.

> "Do they read Shakespeare?" asked the Savage … .
> "Certainly not," said the Head Mistress, blushing.
> "Our library," said Dr. Gaffney, "contains only books of reference.
> If our young people need distraction, they can get it at the feelies.
> We don't encourage them to indulge in any solitary amusements."
> (*Huxley* 1983, 133)

The heavy cost of such reality is a universe of complaisant people who mentally are not far from children basking in simple sensual pleasures of life. To a degree, it is a re-enactment of the Book of Genesis in reverse order. When Adam and Eve eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they become engaged in the struggle between good and evil. In Huxley's dystopia, people again return to a state of almost child-like innocence at the expense of their lack of sophistication, complex emotions and deep understanding of the world as a whole. When John asks Mond why they cannot read *Othello*, the Controller answers that they would not even understand what the play is really all about.

The only people who have access to real literature are the World Controllers, including Mustapha Mond. Because they are in charge of the World State, they need to be intelligent enough to notice if anyone wants to upset the status quo and the balance of the new political and socioeconomic reality. That gives them the right to possess the books which are inaccessible to the general public, among other things. As the old publications deal with matters such as family, God or romantic love, they are called "pornographic" by the World Controller. People are conditioned by the State to wince at the very thought of all those traditional values, which they refer to as "obscene." To sum up, as citizens of the World State do not understand deep emotions and strong or irrational feelings, real literature does not exist in Huxley's flagship dystopia. Even if it did, no-one would comprehend it.

In *Moscow 2042*, Vladimir Voinovich manages to incorporate quite a lot of humour into his narrative and, simultaneously, he depicts a future Russian society imbued with social evils and absurdities. We are dealing with two realities in this dystopian novel. The first one pertains to West Germany prior

to its reunification and to the USSR in the post-Stalinist era, with its relentless onslaught against nonconformist and dissident writers. The second one concerns the vision of the futuristic Russian capital, where communism reigns supreme in the Moscow Communist Republic.

Vitaly Kartsev, Voinovich's fictional alter ego and the narrator/protagonist, when explaining to Smerchev the difficult situation of literary men and literature in the Soviet Union, expresses a pungent criticism: "In my time there were two literatures too – Soviet and anti-Soviet. But, of course, both were paper literatures" (Voinovich 1990, 258). This utterance speaks volumes about the sad fate of Russian literature that was critical of the Soviet regime. In the Soviet Union, dissident writing was not published whatsoever. In turn, mediocre writers loyal to the communist authorities were pampered with massive subsidies, and their books were released by the thousands. Thus, this scathing attack on communist cultural policy does not come as a surprise. Dzerzhin from Moscowrep sums it up succinctly.

> They banned some writers, thereby assuring them popularity and stimulating great interest in their works. And others, on the contrary, they published in enormous editions, which was completely pointless because no one read them. A tremendous waste of paper and money. (Voinovich 1990, 248)

It is worth bearing in mind that both Kartsev in the fictional world and Voinovich in the real one have been forced into exile. Both totalitarian states feel hostile towards dissident writers. In the post-Stalinist USSR, the government spared no effort in either silencing inconvenient writers or exiling them. Voinovich, a bit comically, describes how the authorities try to deal with an embarrassing situation when Karnavalov, a famous dissident novelist, does not want to leave the country of his own free will and, finally, is secretly parachuted into a foreign country.

In the case of Voinovich's imaginary world, Moscowrep officials usually ignore nonconformist literary works even if feelings of deep hatred are expressed towards the supreme Muscovite ruler known as Genialissimo. This is not surprising, because in *Moscow 2042* great literature and professional journalism hardly stand a chance of being printed, as publishing, like most things there, is just window dressing. Consequently, nobody needs to fight against writing,

as, in fact, hardly any electronic or print publications are released. Even if they are, interestingly enough, they are printed on toilet paper and all of them refer to Genialissimo in one way or another.

> The toilet paper was, however, made of newsprint. … I grabbed the end of the roll and began pulling it toward me. And, to be frank, I was not well prepared for what I saw then. No, the roll had not been made from old newspapers. The newspaper itself had been printed in roll form. (Voinovich 1990, 137–138)

It is worth noting the parallel between the quality of press releases and articles printed in Moscowrep (which are nothing but state propaganda) and the material used to publish them. To make a long story short, under Muscovite communist rule, literature and journalism have shrunk both quantitatively and qualitatively. In terms of quantity, due to a distinct lack of paper, the state has resorted to printing on toilet paper. Thus, it is obvious what happens to them sooner rather than later.

In the case of electronic publishing, the state of affairs is even worse. To his utter amazement, Kartsev learns that the artistic teams' writing is never stored in any computers' memory.

> "No, listen, I still don't understand," I said with anxiety. "Does this really mean that everything those sergeants write isn't recorded anywhere?"
> "That's a good word for it – *recorded*," said Dzerzhin happily. "That's it exactly, none of it is recorded anywhere. A perfect, exact, and very apt definition – it is *un*recorded." (Voinovich 1990, 247–248)

It comes as a great shock to him that even the mythical mainframe (a large powerful computer which is supposed to collect and artistically blend all the authors' works) is just a big hoax.

> I imagined a vast room lit by fluorescent lights, a host of monitors with green screens, flickering signal lights of various colors, and silent people in snow-white lab coats working the keyboards. … And

> so just imagine what I felt when I opened my eyes and saw a small room lit by a single bare bulb, forty watts at best, which did not contain a computer or anything of the sort; there wasn't even a stool in the place. … "What's this?" I asked absolutely flabbergasted.
> "This is my invention of genius," said Dzerzhin with a self-satisfied grin. (Voinovich 1990, 247)

As far as quality is concerned, Moscowrep's government policy consists in restricting belles-lettres to extolling Genialissimo as a genius, in both literature and most other fields of science, technology, art, knowledge, etc. Artistic teams, acting under strict discipline, praise him to the skies. Regrettably, most journalism and literature boils down to fictive stories about the ruler's heroic virtues and amazing achievements. Needless to say, all the accounts and tales have little to do with his real life.

To his bewilderment, Kartsev learns that there is an obvious contrast between Soviet literature and the journalism of his times and their contemporary counterparts. Admittedly, the Soviet novels or newspapers were imbued with propaganda, but some authors were nevertheless able to include things like romantic love or poetry in their books or articles. Furthermore, in sharp contrast to Moscowrep (where Genialissimo is the only reference point), Lenin, the Soviet cult leader, is not the only louse falsely portrayed in Soviet belles-lettres. On top of all that, Dzerzhin strips Kartsev of his illusions that the citizens of Moscowrep are unaware of the farce they are dealing with. "What's interesting about our society is that everyone knows everything, but everyone pretends to know nothing. Is that clear?" (Voinovich 1990, 248). It is not very different to the reality of the Soviet Union, where many people saw a wide divergence between what the government propaganda machine presented and what everybody witnessed in real terms. In fact, Moscowrep stands even in sharper contrast to Huxley's dystopia, where the vast majority of the citizens of the World State would never understand even basic political, emotional or religious concepts.

Sim Simych Karnavalov, one of the novel characters, is a monarchist planning to restore tsarism in Russia, and is therefore obsessed with using only "native" Russian words and taking it all to absurd levels. For example, he calls newspapers "читалки" ["readers"] and television "гляделка" ["the looker"]. Thus, he creates and uses neologisms based on Slavic/Russian root words (e.g. "читалки" from "читать" – to read) as he thinks loanwords and other foreign/

Western influences corrupt his mother tongue and culture. It is now wonder then that he sticks to whatever he perceives as traditionally Russian. This is the status quo in the novel narrator's present time. When the plot of the narrative fast-forwards to 2042 Moscow, in Moscowrep, we encounter coinages as well. This time, however, in derivational terms they resemble often nonsensical compounds of the Soviet era.

> I was feeling the call of nature, actually two calls of nature, and, slightly embarrassed, I asked where the men's room was.
> "The men's room?" Smerchev frowned and looked inquisitively at Irina Romanovna.
> "What Classic Nikitich means is the natfunctbur," said Iskrina Romanovna with a smile. (*Voinovich 1990,* 134)

Moreover, as in the case of Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution, people are given names related to their job or in honour of something or somebody. Hence, Kartsev is called "Classic" as his novels allegedly belong to the literary canon. Furthermore, acronyms like "Moscowrep" (Moscow Communist Republic) are in use, which is still characteristic of the contemporary Russian language.

In conclusion, the reality of Voinovich's dystopia is not as pessimistic as in the case of many other works of this genre. After all, at the end of the novel, a new regime comes to power, which may be somewhat good news – for literature and journalism as well.

Similarly, in the case of *The Slynx* by Tatyana Tolstaya, at the end of the narrative the ruler is ousted in a coup and the protagonist's father-in-law seizes power. The author paints a bleak post-apocalyptic picture of the future of Russia after a local nuclear conflict. The country has regressed to a new Stone Age in the aftermath of some unspecified nuclear blast. It is cut off from the rest of the world and people have turned into two subspecies: the Degenerates, who are the genetic mutants born after the Blast, and the Oldeners, the war survivors who have achieved what appears to be quasi-immortality (apparently they do not age). The first group is endowed with the mentality of ignorant, uneducated and uncivilised bumpkins, whereas the latter are people who remember pre-war Russia and desire to restore culture to its pre-apocalypse condition. However, the crux of the matter lies in the divergence between the past and the present. As it has changed greatly, even language as a means of communication

is a barrier to a good rapport between the Degenerates and the Oldeners. The narrator explains it succinctly: "When it comes down to it, the Oldeners don't understand our words, and we don't understand theirs" (Tolstaya 2007, 23).

In Aldous Huxley's World State, language is imbued with clichés, set phrases and banal – often nonsense – rhymes. In the case of Tolstaya's dystopia, it gets distorted and simplified due to the passage of time and the primitiveness of the world after a cataclysmic event vaguely specified in the novel. In Benedikt's unsophisticated place of residence, some words and phrases that refer to very general notions get distorted or oversimplified in terms of meaning. A good example is the term *philosophy* as the study of the nature of the universe and the meaning of existence. In the novel, it is spelt *feelosophy* and pertains more to one's frame of mind.

> Today, for instance, toward evening, right at work, who knows why, feelosophy suddenly churned up inside Benedikt. Dimly, like a shadow under the water, something in his heart started to turn, to torment and call him. (Tolstaya 2007, 48)

In the novel, the Oldeners still know the words that have become obsolete because they do not refer to any real things or notions known to the Degenerates. As technological civilisation came to an end after the Blast, no-one save the nuclear holocaust survivors understands words such as *car* or *petrol* in a reality with no automotive industry.

> Now he's saying: guzzelean. It's water but it burns. Just where has anyone ever seen water burning? That's never happened and it never will. … Nothing in nature says for water to burn. Unless the Last Days are coming? (Tolstaya 2007, 226)

As this is sometimes their only link with the pre-war world, it is not surprising that the Oldeners stick so much to both the out-of-date expressions and the old traditions and customs, even if the Degenerates do not understand them whatsoever. Thus, it does not come as a surprise that the Blast survivors so meticulously hold the funeral ceremony depicted in the literary work.

In a society which is as primitive as this, books, if extant, are a rarity. Benedikt the scribe, the main protagonist, learns that at the end of the novel when

he tries desperately to track down any which may remain. Moreover, few people who are not indifferent towards the written word are not always sure if and how many of them still exist: "They also say that somewhere there are Oldenprint books. Who knows if it's true, but there's a rumor. Those books, they say, were around before the Blast" (Tolstaya 2007, 33).

In the course of the story, the central character falls in love with his books more and more and, towards the end of the plot, he realises how many factors can pose a major threat both to them and to other pieces of art: "There are threats to art all around: from people, rodents, the damp!" (Tolstaya 2007, 258). Finally, books become something priceless for him.

> A book was out of the question, better to die than give away a book. Like an idiot he went and gave the Head Stoker the one with "Slitherum Slatherum," and then he was sorry, so sorry! He kept imagining what a good book it was, how beautifully it stood on the shelf – clean and warm, and how, poor thing, it was probably lying around at the Stoker's somewhere now in a messy, gloomy, smoky izba. (Tolstaya 2007, 228)

It is worth stressing that no real publishing houses, bookshops or department stores exist in the wooden settlement Moscow has turned into. Consequently, new books – or, more precisely, manuscripts – are copied and sold at street markets. Furthermore, Fyodor Kuzmich, Glorybe, the new ruler of the land, claims authorship of all the publications existing in Tolstaya's dystopia. In fact, he has appropriated the authorship of all the manuscripts that he has allegedly written. Such a hoax does not come as a surprise in a world where people do not have any real access to trustworthy information and, what is more, to put it simply, most of them are impaired in mind and body (except for the few remaining Oldeners). Benedikt, who is the central character in the novel, labours under the illusion that Glorybe has truly written all the publications in Fyodor-Kuzmichsk. However, in the course of the narrative, he learns something he can hardly comprehend at first: The manuscripts themselves can be taken as proof of the mendacity of such statements. Obviously, it is not feasible for the same author to write continuously in completely different styles. Varvara Lukinishna points this fact out to Benedikt when she tries to pinpoint the common denominator of all the available books allegedly authored by Glorybe.

> "You know, Benedikt, poetry is everything to me. Our job is pure joy. And I've noticed something. Fyodor Kuzmich, Glorybe, he's different at different times. Do you understand what I mean? It's as though he speaks with different voices." (Tolstaya 2007, 37)

In Tolstaya's Fyodor-Kuzmichsk, the Saniturions, who are the guardians of public order, sow terror whenever the Degenerates and Oldeners come across them. In Benedikt's universe, those detained by the Saniturions never return: "Because they take you away and treat you, and after treatment people don't come back. No one ever comes back" (Tolstaya 2007, 40).

In conclusion, in Tolstaya's panorama of a futuristic rural Moscow, real books or journals are hardly available and only the few nuclear holocaust survivors realise the full extent of its vulgarity and crudeness. Except for the Oldeners, people can barely understand anything unrelated to their everyday life of country bumpkins. Only the Blast survivors cherish the hope that progress and civilisation are not completely a thing of the past.

In the case of *Day of the Oprichnik* by Vladimir Sorokin, the fictive state seems to be even more sinister than Fyodor-Kuzmichsk. In his disturbing panorama of futuristic Russia, people suffer under the yoke of an autocratic neo-tsarist regime that runs the country with an iron fist. The so-called "oprichniks" are the monarch's cruel henchmen who sow terror wherever they go. They are as ruthless as the original *oprichniki* (the tsarist guard set up in the sixteenth century to crush the real and imaginary enemy of Ivan the Terrible, the first Tsar of Russia). In a manner typical of many dystopias, literature in *Day of the Oprichnik* is obsequious to the new tsar. Many works are just panegyrics on the monarch.

> How dear Russia in you did resound,
> How by Nature your spirit was shapen,
> How abruptly your own time came 'round. (Sorokin 2011, 91)

Admittedly, unlike publications in *Moscow 2042* being totally devoted to extolling the virtues of the absolute communist ruler, writing in Sorokin's dystopia also deals with other subjects, but even then, it is imbued with high praise for the splendour, magnificence and superiority of the Tsardom of Russia. The titles of the books published under neo-tsarist rule are indicative of this fact: *The Motherland's Expanses*, *The Colour of Apple Trees* or *Song of the Chechen Mountains*.

Obviously, many articles and literary works pertain directly to the alleged integrity and virtues of the monarch, a bit similarly to the laudatory articles and pseudo-biographies of Genialissimo in Voinovich's dystopia: *His Majesty's Childhood* or *I Have You to Thank for Everything!*

As in the case of many other dystopic worlds, literature in Sorokin's novel is curtailed qualitatively. In fact, it deals with just three main themes: "On the left side there's Orthodox Church literature; on the right the Russian classics; and in the middle, the latest works by contemporary writers" (Sorokin 2011, 89). Moreover, publications are subject to preventive censorship. Even bookshops need a government permit to sell publications: "Bookstands are also standardized, approved by His Majesty and approved by the Literary Chamber" (Sorokin 2011, p. 90).

At one point, the author makes explicit reference to *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, where books are outlawed and burnt if found anywhere. Bradbury's novel depicts the destruction of the written word by firemen, whereas in Sorokin's narrative a clairvoyant and especially the oprichniks wreak havoc on belles-lettres. However, there is a significant difference between the novels in the scale of destruction. In *Fahrenheit 451*, fire brigades burn all the books they can find or come across. In Sorokin's dystopia, the tsar's courtiers do away with those deemed subversive or superfluous. "'What you looking at? You never burned books?' 'We burn only harmful books, Praskovia Mamontovna. Obscene and subversive books'" (Sorokin 2011, 114).

Komiaga, the protagonist of the novel, pays a visit to an important clairvoyant, Praskovia Mamontovna. She is portrayed as an intimidating woman speaking in riddles and accompanied by her Chinese bodyguards. The seer is tough on the classics that, in Komiaga's view, are helpful to the state because they lead to a resurgence of nationalism. In Huxley's dystopian universe, literary masterpieces hardly exist, whereas in Sorokin's world a number of them are still extant. Praskovia enjoys burning the greatest masterpieces of Russian literature (*The Idiot* by Fyodor Dostoevsky or *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy) and simultaneously recommends reading exclusively reference books and manuals (similarly to *Brave New World*).

> "Dovey, books should only be practical: about carpentry, stove-building, contracting, electricity, shipbuilding, mechanical engineering, artificial hearing, on weaving and sheaving, on casting and basting, on foundries on boundaries, on plastic and mastic." (Sorokin 2011, 114)

Thus, she shows herself to be a complete ignoramus and fraudster behind the veil of a feigned atmosphere of mystery and mysticism. She provides Komiaga with enigmatic or meaningless messages and incomprehensible puzzles when he wants to learn anything.

> One more question. I haven't ever asked it, but today something urges me to ask. A serious frame of mind. I screw up my courage.
> "So what else do you want?" Praskovia looks at me steadily.
> "What will happen to Russia?"
> She doesn't answer, but looks at me carefully.
> I wait with trepidation.
> "It'll be all right." (Sorokin 2011, 119)

When conversing with the seer, Komiaga casts his mind back to the "book and manuscript bonfires."

> I've seen many book and manuscript bonfires – in our courtyard, and in the Secret Department. For that matter the Writers' Chamber itself burned quite a bit on Manezh Square, purging itself of its own subversive writers, thereby cutting our workload. … They kept bringing them and bringing them. From other cities they came to Moscow, the capital, to burn the legacy of the White Troubles. They came to take an oath to His Majesty. That fire burned nearly two months… (Sorokin 2011, 115–116)

This deliberate act of the destruction of literature is reminiscent of the Nazi book burnings in the 1930s, when about twenty thousand books were burnt in Germany. Both in the case of Hitler's fascist regime and in Sorokin's fictional world, publications by writers deemed un-German and anti-tsarist, respectively, were doomed to annihilation. The German book burnings were just a prelude to the later calamities and crimes of the Holocaust and World War II. Perhaps Sorokin wanted to point out here that if contemporary Russia stays its autocratic and warmongering course under Putin, no good will come of it. Regrettably, the Russo-Georgian War (2008), the annexation of Crimea, the Russian military intervention in Ukraine in 2014 and finally the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine confirmed some of his worst fears.

To recapitulate briefly, journalism and literature in *Day of the Oprichnik* are subject to strict rules in terms of what can be published. Unauthorised publications are outlawed. The monarch and his courtiers are determined to crack down hard on anything that even borders on nonconformity.

For the issues discussed in this study, there are at least three important common denominators. The most obvious is linguistic phenomena: the demise and distortion of words in *The Slynx* due to the rural Stone Age character of post-apocalyptic Moscow or the newly coined terms in *Moscow 2042* related to its novel totalitarian system. The second vital denominator pertains to the physical destruction of books, the extent of which depends on the novel. In *Brave New World*, only the World Controllers can possess them, whereas in the case of *The Slynx* and *Day of the Oprichnik* they still do exist, but are liable to annihilation due to the passage of time and burning, respectively. The last important factor is the distortion or even demise of the truth. In the case of Huxley's novel, only World Controllers have access to pre-Fordian literature and journals; in Tolstaya's dystopia, a nuclear blast and the relentless flow of time are responsible for the pitiful state of affairs; and in Voinovich's book everybody knows everything but everyone plays dumb.

Even nowadays autocratic regimes wage war on books and journalism. In China, its authorities insist that "subversive" literature should be withdrawn from Hong Kong libraries. On 5 July 2020, the BBC World Service reported that

> at least nine books have become unavailable or marked as "under review," according to the South China Morning Post newspaper. They include books authored or co-authored by Joshua Wong, a prominent pro-democracy activist, and pro-democracy politician Tanya Chan. ("Hong Kong security law" 2020)

This was unquestionably a further step towards subjugating this former British colony to authoritarian communist rule. It turns out that people fight under the banner of freedom of thought and speech outside of the realm of literature as well. And the fight never ends.

Works Cited

Fletcher, M. D. 1989. "Voinovich's 'Consumer' Satire In 2042." *The International Fiction Review*, 16.2.

Hejwowski, Krzysztof, and Grzegorz Mróz. 2019. *Nowe wspaniale światy Aldousa Huxleya i ich recepcja w Polsce*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.

"Hong Kong security law: Pro-democracy books pulled from libraries." 2020. BBC. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-53296810.

Huxley, Aldous. 1983. *Brave New World*. Hong Kong: Longman House.

Latynina, Alla. 2003. "'There's Your Spiritual Renaissance for You': On Tatyana Tolstaya's The Slynx." *Russian Studies in Literature*, 39(4): 66–71.

Madloch, Joanna. 1994. "Moskwa 2042 Wladimira Wojnowicza: science fiction czy powieść rozrachunkowa?" *Rusycystyczne Studia Literaturoznawcze*, 18: 67–72.

Novikov, Tatyana. 2015. "The Poetics of Confrontation: Carnival in V. Voinovich's Moscow 2042." *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 42(4): 491–505.

Papaj, Iwona. 2008. *Rytuały językowe w satyrze Władimira Wojnowicza*. Krakow: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Pedagogicznej.

Ryan-Hayes, Karen L. 1995. *Contemporary Russian Satire: A Genre Study*. Cambridge University Press.

Sherborne, Michael. 2005. *Brave New World: York Notes Advanced*. York Press. Pearson Education Limited.

Sobijanek, Katarzyna. 2009. "Прогнозирование будущего России в романе-антиутопии "День опричника" В. Г. Сорокина." Политическая лингвистика, 4(30): 133–137.

Sobijanek, Katarzyna. 2013. *Oblicza totalitaryzmu we współczesnej antyutopii rosyjskiej*. Archidiecezjalne Wydawnictwo Łódzkie.

Sorokin, Vladimir. 2011. *Day of the Oprichnik*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Tolstaya, Tatyana. 2007. *The Slynx*. New York: The New York Review of Books.

Voinovich, Vladimir. 1990. *Moscow 2042*. San Diego–New York–London: Harcourt Brace Iovanovich Publishers.

Waddell, Nathan. 2016. "Signs of the T: Aldous Huxley, High Art, and American Technocracy." In *Brave New World: Contexts and Legacies*, edited by Jonathan Greenberg and Nathan Waddell. University of Nottingham

Zamyatin, Evgeny. 2012. *We*. New York: Harper Voyager.

Zywert, Aleksandra. 2012. *Pisarstwo Władimira Wojnowicza*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu.

An Appropriated Antipodean Monstrosity Revisited: Jane Campion's *The Piano* as a Comment on Shakespearean "Salvage and Deformed Slave" and *The Tempest*

Jacek Fabiszak
Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

Abstract: The article revisits the question of Jane Campion's *The Piano* as an adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. It is argued that *The Piano* can be considered an adaptation, but one that – in terms of adaptation studies – can be classified as both a case of appropriation (Sanders 2006) and a second-order adaptation (Lanier 2002). Special attention is paid to Campion's adaptive strategies and her treatment of monstrosity, which appears to be as ambiguous as it is in Shakespeare's play, especially in view of recent post-colonial criticism of the tragicomedy. A particularly interesting aspect is the director's rendering of the characters of Stewart (Prospero-figure), Ada (Miranda/Prospero/Caliban-figure), Baines (Caliban-figure), Flora (Miranda-figure) and the Maori characters (or spirit-of-the-island figures), in that Campion reconstitutes and restructures the Shakespearean characters by creating modern, feminist-sensitive and post-colonial adaptations.

Keywords: *The Piano*, *The Tempest*, appropriation, sexuality, monstrosity, Shakespeare, adaptation, Jane Campion

Introduction

The aim of this article is to look at characters (not just one) from Jane Campion's celebrated film, *The Piano* (1993), who bear a resemblance to the notorious Shakespearean figure of Caliban from *The Tempest*. It has long been observed that the movie is a loose adaptation of this Shakespearean tragicomedy (cf. Pilch 2013). In terms of adaptation studies, Campion's film can be treated as an appropriation (e.g. a text which is "a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain" [Sanders 2006, 26]) or an analogy

("a fairly considerable departure for the sake of making another work of art" [Wagner 1977, 226]). As a result, the adaptation takes great liberty with the source text, without even acknowledging it openly, which paved the way for Campion to radically re-imagine and creatively appropriate (Hutcheon 2006, 8) the colonial and moral politics of Shakespeare's play. The "monster" from *The Tempest* also undergoes a fundamental change: The gender of the creature is challenged (is it only Baines who is a Caliban figure in the film?) and his/her/its sexuality/exoticising practices are laid bare. The representations of Caliban's monstrosity in the film versions of *The Tempest* are also referenced. The film, in its treatment of the source text, is also an example of Elizabeth Bronfen's (2018, 19) "crossmapping," which is a "comparative reading across media and forms …. [that] demonstrates the ways in which shared concerns or issues are worked out in each media's distinctive form." The paper argues that Campion's depiction of Caliban matches Shakespeare's complexity, posing questions about the nature of the alien, alienation, civilisation and exclusion, which are so pertinent, especially in the antipodean context. Or, to resort to Bronfen's concept, the movie is a "reverberation" of the pathos gesture generated by Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (2018, 34).

The Piano as a Film Adaptation and a Heritage Film

The Piano as an adaptation can be classified in a number of ways. Since it does not directly reference its source text, it can be treated as what Julie Sanders (2006, 26) referred to as appropriation. As a result, Campion not only radically departs from Shakespeare's play, but frames it in a totally different culture: on the one hand, evoking the context of nineteenth-century New Zealand colonised by white settlers; on the other hand, informing the film with feminist and post-colonial sensitivity. Furthermore, Campion uses the film to creatively reinterpret Victorian culture, in a manner reminiscent of John Fowles' strategy in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Consequently, the director adapts Shakespeare's play, history (of colonisation and of New Zealand) and what Sanders (2006, 120) calls "We 'Other Victorians.'; or Rethinking the Nineteenth Century". In doing so, *The Piano* has been classified as an example of a heritage film:

> US and New Zealand postmodern heritage films (ANP), comprised of the three auteur films [*The Piano*, *The Age of Innocence* and *The Portrait of a Lady*] … mixed evident heritage characteristics with

> a conscious distanciation from these, both on the part of their directors and at the site of critical reception. (Monk 2011, 108)

What Monk aptly highlights is Campion's use of the genre and its critique, (just like Shakespeare used to adapt different genres and literary conventions).

The Piano is also an adaptation of a number of texts, which it references not in terms of intertextual allusions only, but as constitutive ones: these include *The Tempest* and Jane Mander's novel *The Story of a New Zealand River* (1920). Interestingly enough, neither of the texts was acknowledged by the director, which has been duly noted and discussed by critics. An example of such critical reservation comes from Phyllis Frus (2010), who observes that critics

> have complained about the jarring contrast between the period look and the postmodern sensibility of the characters in *The Piano* …. Hoeveler … believes the discordant notes struck by *The Piano* are the result of Campion's attempt to disguise the fact that her screenplay is an adaptation of a novel that she did not have the rights to – Jane Mander's Story of a New Zealand River, first published in 1920. (32)

Frus (2010, 32) also points to the large number of source (adapted) texts in the film: "a variety of literary, historical and folk texts … create a complex web of allusions, making the film highly suitable to treat as a retelling of other stories." She further adds that "Hoeveler identifies many sources for *The Piano*," which is "evidence of the film's polyvocalism" (2010, 32). Frus lists a number of such texts, which have been recognised by critics in the many reviews and scholarly responses the film has generated.

If Campion did not acknowledge Mander (or Shakespeare, for that matter), then *The Piano* appears to be Sanders' appropriation *par excellence*. At the same time, it would perhaps be worthwhile to apply yet other concepts in adaptation studies which would help specify the nature of the adaptation in Campion's film. One of them is the idea of transformation, which Frus and Williams (2010) describe as follows:

> At its most basic level, a transformation is a text that reworks an older story or stories, making a transformation very much like

> an adaptation. … But in the vast range of texts that can be called adaptations, there are some that move beyond mere adaptation and transform the source text into something new that works independently of its source. (14)

The keywords here seem to be "reworking," "moving beyond," "transforming" and "independent." These elements are similar to how Sanders approaches the general trend in adaptation studies, in opposition to the fidelity fallacy, in order to grant autonomy to adaptations as well as to claim the freedom to change the source text to virtually any degree. This is also confirmed in another observation that Frus and Williams (2010) make:

> whereas adaptations are frequently "based on" another text, transformations are often "inspired" by another text. Because they are not limited to representing a source text, they can re-imagine all sorts of new possibilities for the characters, settings or plots that audiences have made popular. Many transformations work from multiple texts, not just a single one. (16)

Moreover, the two scholars admit that radical transformations of source texts are categories of the larger and more encompassing "umbrella term" of adaptations. In other words, they too treat such texts as *The Piano* as a variant of adaptation. There is, however, a difference between adaptation and appropriation:

> Adaptation is a text that has been changed to suit a new purpose or environment (like a classic novel updated to a twenty-first-century setting). But … the new text is recognizable as a relation of the earlier text. A transformation, however, is generally drastically different from its source text, so it may not be recognizable as a cousin. … [It may be useful to] think about metamorphosis. When a caterpillar has reached maturity, it transforms into a butterfly – an entirely new form that is based on the earlier form. In literary transformations, the new text may be based on an older one, but the reader or viewer may not recognize the connection. (Frus and Williams 2010, 15)

What perhaps needs adding in the context of this discussion is the issue of reception. Hutcheon (2006, 8) views adaptation as both creation and reception: "seen from the perspective of its *process of reception*, adaptation is a form of intertextuality: we experience adaptations (*as adaptations*) as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation [original emphasis]." In other words, a very important aspect of the process of reception is the "pleasure" of adaptations, resulting from the recognition of the link between the source and target texts. In the case of appropriation and/or transformation, such recognition does not constitute part of the reception process. It is here where the most fundamental difference between adaptation proper and its variations lies.

Douglas Lanier reminds us of the variety of approaches to adaptation with reference to Shakespeare. His reflection can function as an apt summation of the problems which an adaptation scholar faces:

> We have several competing models for thinking about the structure of this transmedial set of objects we call Shakespeare: Foucault's discursive model, which stresses the interconnection between particular discursive modes of truth-making and legitimation, and the institutional agents of those modes; the arboreal model, in which "the Shakespearean text" serves as originary root and all other works are derivative offshoots; the rhizomatic model in which "Shakespeare" is a network of adaptations through a series of decentered relationships or relays, a network with nodes but no originary center); the actor-network model, which places stress upon the aggregated agency of individual producers within the network but remains agnostic on the question of a textual center. But illuminating as debates over the structure of this ever-emergent "Shakespeare" might be, what we've left largely unaddressed is the question of membership in the discourse or set or tree or rhizome or actor-network we call "Shakespeare." How do we tell Shakespeare from "not Shakespeare"? Where to place the slash? (Lanier 2017, 295)

Can *The Piano* be called an adaptation of "Shakespeare" then? Can it be legitimately considered a version of *The Tempest*? I am not alone in arguing for the

relationship between the film and Shakespeare's romance (see below). I look at the film not as a potential adaptation of Mander's novel, which draws on *The Tempest* (Lanier's "second-order adaptation," viz. "adaptations of earlier Shakespearian adaptations or performances" ([2002, 104–105]), but as an adaptation (appropriation) of Shakespeare's text, without the mediation of *The Story of a New Zealand River*. After all, the two texts belong to a complex web of sources which do not constitute a hierarchical relationship.

The argument for the film to be an appropriation of Shakespeare's play in a more literal and simultaneously metaphorical manner can be further developed by referencing Elizabeth Bronfen's idea of "crossmapping." It stresses two processes: the absorption of a formula/image/energy (as she also deploys Greenblatt's concept of social energies) and its re-emergence in a "changed" form:

> The method of crossmapping is concerned with asking why a given image formula has been confiscated and re-interpreted in a particular way, even while it is equally intrigued by what has proved to be most decisive about the affective cultural after-effects it has had. (Bronfen 2018, 37–38)

Elsewhere, Bronfen refers to crossmapping as a "process of seizing upon and appropriating past pathos formulas" (2018, 33); in other words, it is an artistic procedure which "radically" treats the source text and "re-charters" it in a new context, attempting to render and re-visualise what Bronfen calls "figures of thought" and "image formulas" to evoke – or hold – *pathos* of the adapted text. It appears that Campion's film can also be looked at from this perspective as it thoroughly remediates and reimagines Shakespearean and, in a more general sense, early modern figures of thought and image formulas to preserve the pathos of the past culture. Bronfen does not provide a precise definition of these concepts; as she puts it herself:

> My own insistence on crossmapping figures of thought and image formulas for which no simple or unequivocal intertextual relation can be determined is meant to draw our critical attention to similarities between aesthetic formalizations that have remained overlooked or unchartered. (2018, 37)

Interestingly enough, an aspect of such "overlooked aesthetic formalization" can be the cultural re- and cross-mappings drawn by artists whose voice, for a variety of reasons, has been hushed or marginalised, such as female artists whose "intervention … in modern visual culture" is Bronfen's conscious choice (Bronfen 2018, 41). The choice is justified by a series of questions the critic asks:

> How do women artists appropriate traditional conceptualizations of femininity so as to both critically as well as creatively think the equation of woman with the image? … How do they develop their own voice, their own self-image, their own authenticity in a medium that has traditionally served to screen out feminine subjectivity so as to function primarily as a medium of masculine self-expression? (Bronfen 2018, 41)

Engaging in a feminist reading of Campion's film, if we read it as a version of *The Tempest* (and not only from this interpretative perspective), then we can discern that it is visibly a feminist reimagining of the play; a positively understood "female gaze," and that this reading extends to the treatment of the characters Miranda and Caliban.

The Piano as *the Tempest*

As already signalled, the film did not go unnoticed as an adaptation of Shakespeare's tragicomedy. The *Guardian* critic Philip French identifies the major equivalences between characters: "Stewart is a disoriented Prospero, Baines a yearning Caliban (his name an appropriate echo), Ada and Flora two sides of Miranda" (French 2014).[1] Likewise, Tomasz Pilch remarks that

> every theatergoer who has ever watched Jane Campion's *The Piano* is likely to have noted the striking similarity of many elements of its composition to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Both take place on an island; in both of them the two contenders meet as a result of a decision of the one who reigns over the island and who effects the visit of the other, who, in each case is brought ashore by tempestuous sea waves. (2013, 145)

Fortunately enough, both critics are aware of the complexity of Campion's adaptation, especially in her treatment of Shakespeare's characters – in the film there are no one-to-one equivalences with the figures from the play. Rather, the director proposes a dynamic series of configurations: Some of the characters merge into one Shakespearean persona, others bud into a number of play-related figures.

Thus, according to Pilch (2013, 154), Ada McGrath (Holly Hunter) can be identified as Claribel, Miranda as well as Alonso, whereas her daughter Flora (Anna Paquin; what a name, reminiscing Shakespeare's betrothal masque) is Ariel and/or Miranda. The complexity of the characters and their dynamic relations, their constantly shifting roles, is also visible in the way in which Campion constructs the figure of Caliban/George Baines (Harvey Keitel) and Prospero/Stewart (Sam Neill). Baines is illiterate, has a Maori tattoo on his face, is on friendly terms with the natives and speaks their language. He, too, rapes Ada (echo of Caliban's aborted rape of Miranda in *The Tempest*). Yet, it is he who wins Ada's heart and eventually leaves the island with her and Flora (thus assuming the part of Ferdinand and, to a degree, Prospero). On the other hand, Ada's arrival on the island, with her precious piano (equivalent to Prospero's books) and daughter reminds one of a Prospero. Campion may thus invite the viewer to look for parallels with Shakespeare's play, but if she does so, she keeps them on edge; making them constantly update their findings. The film is also what Geoffrey Wagner (1977, 223) elsewhere called a commentary on (or "a re-emphasis or re-structure" of) both Shakespeare's play and its (colonial) interpretations, such as Meredith Anne Skura's (1989) now classic reading of *The Tempest*, especially in its interpretation of the relationship between Prospero, Caliban and Ariel.

The film has been found by critics to be a major adaptation of melodrama, more specifically "female melodrama" (Gillett 1995), especially in its treatment of marriage, the essential social Victorian status.

> Revisioning generic conventions, this marriage [Baines and Ada's] is not the same marriage: it is a new and transfiguring marriage. It replaces the marriage with Stewart but it also transforms the isolation and self-absorption of the heroine without, it should be added, effacing her subjectivity or forgetting her pain. (Gillett 1995, 281)

Gillett finds the ending of the film in a way surprisingly traditional and revisionist, emphasising that in the new marriage Ada is not deprived of her

feminine agency; furthermore, by regaining "her index finger" she regains the "index of her speech, sign of her tenderness" (Gillett 1995, 279). As a result, the ending of the film epitomises the nature of adaptation: "repetition without replication" (2006, 7). Similarly, Zarzosa (2010, 396) finds the film an interesting example of adapting melodrama in terms of a "social experience (or sensibility) and … representational rhetoric (or artistic expression)," which the scholar relates to the nature of "economic exchange."

Ideological Aspects of Ugliness and Monstrosity

One of the issues radically revised in a reading of the play in the post-colonial context is Caliban's monstrosity as contrasted with Prospero's (or Miranda's, etc.) loveliness and/or normalcy. Naturally, these concepts belong in the discourse and ideology and they have been used as significant political tools. It is interesting, then, to see how they have been presented in the film: What kind of monster is the filmic Caliban? How does the director shape the concept of the "savage and monstrous" slave? And how does his (her?) nature reflect the Shakespearean figure? Caliban in the play is made monstrous in a number of ways. Mostly, his monstrosity is discursive in nature: He is called different names by other "human" characters. Prospero and Miranda use vilifying strategies to control Caliban; Stephano and Trinculo find him a freak to be shown at fairs, which would indicate his physical deformity. Furthermore, we hear about the attempted rape of Miranda, which mainly proves Prospero's pedagogic incompetence, rather than Caliban's savagery. Also, because Caliban's mother was a witch who allegedly had sex with the devil, Caliban is perceived as the devil's offspring. This, too, contributes to the character's ill nature and monstrosity.

The film offers a wider spectrum of means to present monstrosity: apart from the verbal plane, the audio-visual dimension does significantly contribute to the mode of presentation (of course, these elements are to be found in theatre, as well). On top of that, one should consider in this particular case the adaptive strategy deployed by Campion, whereby the plot is set in mid-nineteenth-century New Zealand, or in a (post)colonial Victorian reality. In other words, the issue of how Campion approaches the nineteenth century imagining of monstrosity should also be considered. Finally, the film's genre and its engagement in a dialogue with other filmic genres and how it helps construct monstrosity is a problem to be addressed.

In her representation of monstrosity, Campion draws on a number of cultural indicators: physical deformity, physiognomy, language, law, womanhood and sexuality. Alexa Wright (2013, 1), while emphasising the bodily irregularity of the monster, draws one's attention to the cultural and social need to constantly verify what "constitutes acceptable human identity." Significant in this respect, next to obvious somatic deformities, is what Wright calls

> the practice of physiognomy, which was highly popular during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries [and] is based on the belief that there is a direct correspondence between a person's inner being, or character, and his or her outward appearance. (2013, 61)

This is another issue which Campion addresses in her film. Hock-soon Ng (2004, 3), in turn, emphasises another crucial feature of the monster, viz. its inability to speak a language: "although the monster is situated within language, its trademark is that it is unspeakable" (2004, 3), which in the film is visible in the case of Ada and the Maori characters as well as the hybrid figure of Baines. Michel Foucault (2003, 63) finds "the monster … the transgression of natural limits, the transgression of classifications, of the table, and of the law as table: this is actually what is involved in monstrosity." Yet another source of monstrosity is constituted by the woman, especially her departure from the precisely determined Victorian ideal: "contemporary monster narratives seem to posit the woman as the original site of horror, [though] it is ultimately not woman, but what she represents (or fails) to the Symbolic order that situates her in such an etiological position" (Hock-soon Ng 2004, 10). Finally, it is illegitimate sexuality, strictly defined by the Victorians again (also in legal terms), which may lead to deviations, to monstrosity. As Foucault reminds us,

> if it was truly necessary to make room for illegitimate sexualities, it was reasoned, let them take their infernal mischief elsewhere: to a place where they could be reintegrated, if not in the circuits of production, at least in those of profit. The brothel and the mental hospital would be those places of tolerance: the prostitute, the client, and the pimp, together with the psychiatrist and his hysteric – those "other Victorians," as Steven Marcus would say – seem to have surreptitiously transferred the pleasures that are unspoken into the order of things that are counted. (1978, 4)

The social spaces for such "abnormal sexualities" in nineteenth-century England have also been identified by Steinbach (2017, 241–244, ff.); they correspond, in the film, to the colonial "elsewhere," viz. New Zealand, where such practices are even more illegal and more acceptable, belonging to what Anna Clark termed a "twilight" moment (cited in Steinbach 2017, 244).

Abramson and Pinkerton (1995) provide the following summary of Campion's film in the context of sexuality:

> A helpless and troubled, though attractive woman is married off to an ineffectual man. Later, a second man coerces her into selling herself sexually, and somehow, she falls in love with her coercer. When her husband learns of the affair he attempts to rape her, and then, when she continues the affair, he mutilates her. Despicable? Yes. Horrific? Definitely so. Obscene? Perhaps but probably not. … To some of us … *The Piano* was merely despicable, and even more so because the woman's daughter in the film was a witness to both the rape and the mutilation. This film and the critical acclaim it has garnered aptly demonstrate the hypocrisy surrounding the issue of pornography. An X-rated movie that suggested that victims of rape and attempted rape sometimes fall in love with their victimizers would be rigorously condemned and possibly even successfully prosecuted as obscene. (168)

There is no denying that the relationships between Ada and the two men are complex, if not bordering on the perverse. It is manifest not only in the violence Ada experiences from both male figures, but also in the treatment of the naked body and sex in the film. At the same time, one must not forget that Ada, too, is capable of violence with reference to others – the two male-figures, sailors or her own daughter. Her activity and agency is perceived as monstrous in the Victorian world; it is not, however, such in the West of the 1990s or later. She is certainly victimised but does not refrain from victimising others. Hers is the position of a magus (unlike Stewart's); she is the real Prospero with her piano and music, enchanting the natives and Baines while unnerving the white settlers (Aunt Morag finds her music strange). She has a "strange" relationship with her piano and its keys (phallic symbols), which is reminiscent of the natives' copulating with trees (also phallic elements) – trees which in the eyes of the Victorian Stewart have been defiled and need to be cleansed by Flora.

Victorian culture, as Susie L. Steinbach (2017) observes, had an ambivalent approach to sexuality and sex. Whereas men's sexual behaviour, though morally condemned, was acceptable even when excessive (viz. outside matrimony or orientated towards prostitutes), women's sexual "acts and desires [were] considered … deviant" (Steinbach 2017, 241). Interestingly enough, in the case of male sexuality, two threats were believed to be particularly serious: impotence and masturbation, which were "linked to 'spermatorrhoea.' … Masturbation was a primary cause; impotence, a result" (Steinbach 2017, 242). Needless to say, these two "afflictions" constitute the film's major focus on sexuality: Stewart's impotence and the natives' masturbation with trees.

Pornography is a taboo in both our and Victorian cultures. In the former, branding a movie "pornographic" relegates it to a category that defies the standards of art cinema. In the latter, the body becomes a site of the pornographic. In Campion's film, what may be deemed sexually explicit (if this is a working definition of porn) are the relationships between Ada and her husband/Baines, which lack a romantic aspect. It is the bargaining of her body for her husband, and then the piano, which strips the relationships of any romantic element. Interestingly enough, it is Baines who rejects such a relationship in favour of a romantic one. Since Ada cannot develop affection for her husband, Stewart accepts it, from a romantic point of view, and grants her and Baines freedom. This makes Stewart a romantic character, despite his violence, which paradoxically illustrates the Victorian ideal of marriage, whose "essence … was not sex but romantic love" (Steinbach 2017, 242). Ada's monstrosity in this ménage a trois is lessened by her decision to drown the piano, the token of her magic and sexuality, as both Baines and Stewart help her discover her own sexuality.

Flora/Miranda/Ariel appears to be one of the keys to this conundrum. Witnessing the sexual encounter between her mother and Baines, which she finds deprived of music or magic, she reports it to her Victorian "father," Stewart, just as Ariel does/would do to Prospero. Stewart becomes her "papa"; although she first makes a vow never to call him by this appellation, he becomes an anchor in a troubled world, somebody who would guide her behaviour in an unstable situation. She is a child who needs stability and Stewart, a Victorian father-figure, provides her with it – Flora is desperate to locate such a figure, telling incredible stories about her father, whom she never knew. She wants to live the life of a child, not just a translator for her mother, who – as it is visible in film – chooses Baines instead of her. It thus becomes a very modern problem: Can

a single mother have a life of her own in spite of her duties to the child she is raising? It also sheds a light on single mothers, the margins of society in the Victorian era, and perhaps not only then. If she is an Ariel figure, is she eventually freed when her mother, herself and Baines leave the island? Sadly, we are never given a chance to hear her voice, as at the end of the film it is replaced with that of her mother learning to speak: a voice which in the beginning and the ending sounds very childish. If we compare her to Miranda, in turn, she is given no freedom, because her mother stays in a relationship with Baines, a legally dubious one as both Ada and Baines are formally married to others: Ada to Stewart, Baines to a wife in London who, according to him, prefers a different life, which he granted her (allegedly). Unlike Miranda, Flora cannot choose how she may live, with or without a Ferdinand figure. At the same, her new family, by challenging the Victorian model, may be considered in the eyes of a present-day viewer open and liberating.

This brings us to the (post)colonial reading of the film. Are the characters freed of their pre-colonial bonds in the new world ("Oh brave new world")? Is the natives' approach to sex and marriage an excuse to shed the obligations of the old world? It is difficult to call Baines a sexually-orientated character if he eventually plumps for old-fashioned love and affection, despite his facial tattoo and communing with the natives, who – in the film – never betray affection. Interestingly enough, they are presented in the film as embracing the colonists' culture in their clothing, the epitome of which is the top hat. They look strange in European clothing; their representation is unnerving. If they are monstrous, their monstrosity results not from their native looks, but from the mixture of the native and the colonised. Like Baines, they are mongrels, who sit astride two cultures while belonging to neither. Consequently, they produce in the recipient a sense of unease.

If Prospero in *The Tempest* embraces Caliban as his own – "this thing of darkness I acknowledge mine" – then Campion suggests that we accept the (repressed) desires of our sexuality; since they, in the end, appear to be driven by romance. Campion did not shoot a film which borders on pornography; hers is eventually a movie about affection and love, which can be triggered by sexual liberation. The "darkness" may be the initial sexuality (or alleged monstrosity), but in the end it turns out to be tenderness and love. Interestingly enough, it is the two characters who are social outcasts, deformed, who eventually achieve happiness, though – it needs to be stressed – its status is rather

precarious: Baines still has a wife in London and Ada is still married to Stewart. Their living a happy life in Nelson is utopian, as it is difficult to imagine that the inhabitants of the town (whom we never see in the film) would accept such a relationship.

Both Baines and Ada blend into the figure of Caliban – he with his lower social status, Maori marks on his face and the ability to speak their language and she with her reputation of a single mother and marital unfaithfulness, her muteness and an amputated finger replaced with a metal prosthesis. Campion thus again transfigures Ada into yet another variation of a character from The Tempest. Because we hear Ada in the film twice (in an internal monologue), at the beginning and at the ending, her voice constitutes a frame. In the final scene, she says that she is again learning to speak. Ada's voice contrasts with the character's age, as it belongs to a child. Indeed, Ada remembers her voice from early childhood, when she did speak. This contrast, however, is unnerving and creates a discord, which, I would argue, is also part of the strategy of estrangement that Campion deploys in the film. Her voice and use of sign language make her monstrous, as well.

Campion complements her treatment of the characters in the film with camera work. French (2014) observes that the film is "shot in an exquisite, painterly fashion by Stuart Dryburgh that gives the landscape an appropriately exotic look." It is not just the landscape which is thus exoticised by Dryburgh's cinematography, but in general the fictional world is presented as strange, in the formalist meaning. In the opening scene, it gradually emerges from between Ada's fingers; the director deploys many high- and low-angle shots; and there are sequences of underwater shots, i.e. the boat ploughing the waves and the piano (and Ada) drowning. Actually, Campion herself claimed that she wanted "the film to appear as if being shot under water" (French 2014). The effect is quite disturbing and it may evoke in the viewer a feeling of the uncanny (in both Freud's and Todorov's understanding).[2]

Campion treats the Shakespearean text in a most peculiar way. In a post-colonial fashion, she questions both the alleged supremacy of the colonisers and the alleged devastation of the colonised. The Maori characters in her film wear European clothing, which estranges them. Furthermore, they do not seem to suffer as a result of Stewart's land-avarice, even when it poses a threat to their hallowed land (we do not know whether Stewart managed to impose his will). They seem to be portrayed as quite in control of the situation; it is, after all,

Stewart and the colonists who find the land difficult to manage due to its lack of paved passageways and the overwhelming mud – not to mention their obsession with the myth of accumulating land. The Maori are quite free to live the life they are used to, mocking the white newcomers, which is so visible in the scene of children copulating with trees. It is sexuality – a most fundamental human drive – which becomes the symbol of vitality and life, so differently approached by the white settlers and the natives. Its prevalent lushness makes Ada find joy in a sexual encounter with Baines and Stewart in watching them have sex. Interestingly enough, Stewart, though shocked by the explicit token of his wife's infidelity and fascinated with the sex in general, is desperate to find out whether Ada spoke to Baines during their intercourse. For Stewart, it is her communication with others that marks the dimension of affection and love. Despite his initial claim that he would accept Ada as she is, mute, he finds her (in)ability to speak the measure of utmost intimacy, which he is deprived of (unlike the viewers) and which she learns for Baines in the utopian coda of the film.

At the same time, the figure of Baines is considered ambiguous from a postcolonial perspective. As Mark A. Reed argues in his critique of the ideological message of *The Piano*, Baines appropriates and, indeed, recolonises Maori culture. He is an example of a white New Zealander who goes native, the so-called "Pakeha," whose

> moko tattooed face signifies his solidarity with the Maori people, [but] may also be a sign of his ability to deceive both the Maori and the audience who desires and celebrates cultural hybridity. (Reed 2000, 108)

Reed's postcolonial criticism of the film also rests upon the representation of the Maori people, which Leonie Pihama (cited in Reed 2000) found congruent with a colonial approach:

> It is Maori women who cook for Baines in line with a colonial agenda that focused on Maori girls as house servants. Maori men are irrational, naive, simpleminded and warlike. These are the types of colonial discourses that have informed filmmakers, in particular Pakeha [white New Zealander] film makers, as to how we should be represented. These are the colonial discourses that find contemporary

> expression in feature films like *The Piano* and which are then sold to the world as an authentic depiction of our people. (108)

This "openness" of the film to different postcolonial readings is very much in tune with the critics' response to *The Tempest*.

As signalled above, language in Campion's film is strictly linked with the issue of monstrosity, Calibanism and ugliness. The characters speak in (regional) dialects: Glaswegian English, Maori and sign language. They do not speak *standard* language, whatever it may be today, rightly questioned by linguists. The director appears to refer to Caliban's "You taught me language; and my profit on't / Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you / For learning me your language!" (1.2.365–366). A plague means mutation and variety, deformity, yet variation. Caliban's language is *par excellence* non-standard. And so are Campion's characters with reference to the source text: blends, liminal, transgressing.

The article is an attempt to discuss Jane Campion's *The Piano* as an example of an adaptation in general, in light of the adaptation strategies employed by the director, and as an adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in particular. It is argued that the film, in terms of adaptation studies, can be classified as an example of "appropriation," as proposed by Julie Sanders. The adaptation occurs on a number of levels – plot, characters, ideology and Victorianism – as well as the question of monstrosity, which is the major focus of the analysis, and the manner in which this ambiguous concept is handled by Campion's film.

References

Abramson, Paul R., and Pinkerton, Steven D. (1995) 2002. *With Pleasure: Thoughts on the Nature of Human Sexuality*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

Bradshaw, Peter. 2018. "*The Piano* review – Jane Campion's drama still hits all the right notes." Review. *The Guardian*, June 15, 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/jun/15/the-piano-review-jane-campion-holly-hunter. Accessed August 15, 2019.

Bronfen, Elizabeth. 2018. *Crossmappings: On Visual Culture*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris.

Foucault, Michel. 1978. *The History of Sexuality*. Translated by by Robert Hurley. New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, Michel. 2003. *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974–1975*. Translated by Graham Burchell. London–New York: Verso.

French, Philip. 2004. "*The Piano*: Philip French on Jane Campion's haunting New Zealand period drama." Review. *The Guardian*, July 27, 2004,. https://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/jul/27/the-piano-dvd-philip-french-classic-dvd-jane-campions-haunting-period-drama. Accessed August 15, 2019.

Freud, Sigmund. 2003. *The Uncanny*. Translated by David McLintock. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Frus, Phyllis. 2010. "Borrowing a Melody: Jane Campion's *The Piano* and Intertextuality." In *Beyond Adaptation: Essays on Radical Transformations of Original Works*, edited by Phyllis Frus and Christy Williams, 30–41. Jefferson, NC–London: McFarland and Company, Inc.

Frus, Phyllis, and Williams, Christy. 2010. "Introduction: Making the Case for Transformation." In *Beyond Adaptation: Essays on Radical Transformations of Original Works*, edited by Phyllis Frus and Christy Williams, 12–30. Jefferson, NC–London: McFarland and Company, Inc.

Gillett, Sue. 1995. "Lips and Fingers: Jane Campion's *The Piano*." *Screen* 36, 3 (Autumn 1995): 277–287.

Hock-soon Ng, Andrew. (2004) *Dimensions of Monstrosity in Contemporary Narratives. Theory, Psychoanalysis, Postmodernism*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hutcheon, Linda. 2006. *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York–London: Routledge.

Lanier, Douglas. (2002) 2006. *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lanier, Douglas. 2017. "Afterword." In *Shakespeare/Not Shakespeare*, edited by Christy Desmet, Natalie Loper, and Jim Casey, 293–306. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Monk, Claire. 2011. *Heritage Film Audiences: Period Films and Contemporary Audiences in the UK*.Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Pilch, Tomasz. 2013. "Jane Campion's *The Piano*; or, Breaking Prospero's Spells." *Explorations: A Journal of Language and Literature*, 1: 145–169.

Reed, Mark A. 2000. "A Few Black Keys and Maori Tattoos: Re-Reading Jane Campion's *The Piano* in PostNegritude Time." *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, vol. 17, 2: 107–116.

Sanders, Julie. 2006. *Adaptation and Appropriation*. New York–London: Routledge.

Shakespeare, William. 1999. "The Tempest." In *The Arden Shakespeare*, edited by Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughn. Walton on Thames: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd.

Skura, Meredith Anne. 1989. "Discourse and the Individual: The Case of Colonialism in *The Tempest*." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 40, issue 1: 42–69.

Steinbach, Susie L. 2017. *Understanding the Victorians: Politics, Culture and Society in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, second edition. London–New York: Routledge.

Todorov, Tzvetan. 1975. *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. Translated by Richard Howard. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

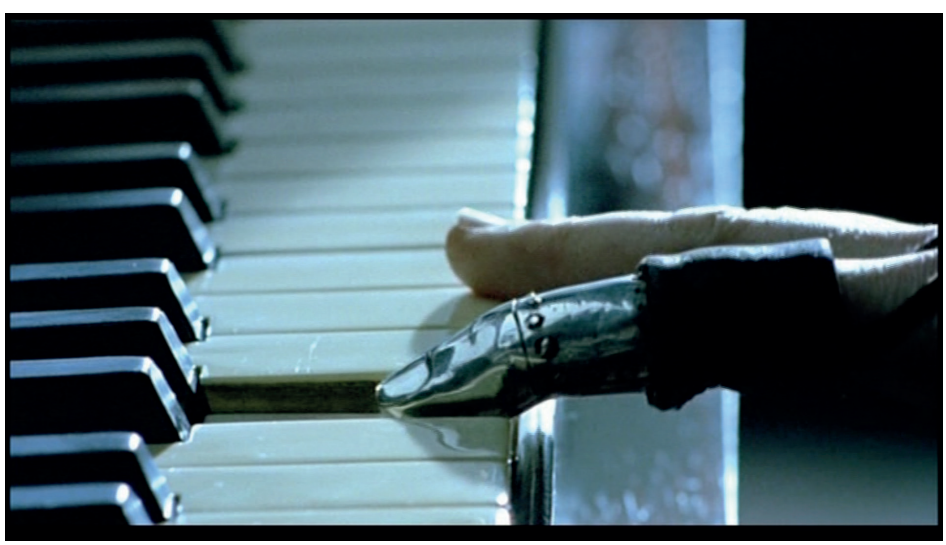
Wagner, Geoffrey. 1977. *The Novel and the Cinema*. Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.

Zarzosa, Agustin. 2010. "Jane Campion's *The Piano*: Melodrama as Mode of Exchange." *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, vol. 8, no. 4: 396–411.

(Endnotes)

[1] Interestingly enough, four years later, Peter Bradshaw, another *Guardian* critic, ignored the film's references to Shakespeare.

[2] Cf. Freud (2003) and Tzvetan (1975).



Ada's prosthesis

Baines′ moko tattoo

English and Sustainable Languages: Collective Consciousness in Bangladesh

Abdul Awal
Faculty of Philology, University of Łódź, Poland

Abstract: In modern times, sustainability plays an important role, a fact which is also valid in sociolinguistic studies. The comparison of English to other languages in Bangladesh is examined from the point of view of sustainability. It has not yet been established whether the English language is sustainable or not in the context of Bangladesh and around the world. Most studies on sustainable development neglect the relationship between sustainability and a particular country's language. The purpose of this work is to expand our knowledge of how to measure sustainable language based on specific indicators. The research first explored the development of English in Bangladesh, sustainable language and collective consciousness. Overall, these results suggest the sustainability of Bangladesh's different languages. Ultimately, this article is intended to contribute to a new perspective on the English language in Bangladesh and sociolinguistics in general. The findings should make an important contribution to the field of *sustainable language*.

Keywords: Collective consciousness, environmental language, global language, language and development, sustainable language

Introduction

This is the first study to undertake a longitudinal analysis of the English language and sustainability in the context of Bangladesh. Today, more than 6,000 languages are spoken around the world, but some 2,000 of them are spoken by fewer than a thousand speakers (Chan 2016). The English language is now considered a lingua franca worldwide for the sake of globalisation. People around the world are studying English to maintain scientific development and technology, especially since the Second World War. In Bangladesh, people started to learn English in the 18th century due to the British socio-political

engagement. In the linguistic history of Bangladesh, the English language has gradually been learnt due to people's professions, social status, globalisation and it being a lingua franca. Bangladesh's education policy has always made English lessons compulsory in order to promote global marketing, technology and scientific achievements. Though textbooks have still introduced English to learners as a global language, people have already begun to consider which language will ultimately be more sustainable in Bangladesh, because without expertise in a sustainable language an individual cannot develop a good career in the future. It is high time to consider the concept of a *sustainable language* rather than the term *global language*. The acceptance of a language in a given territory is closely related to the collective consciousness of the community there. The collective awareness of a language is always changeable in a region for various reasons. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the collective awareness of English among Bangladeshi people and the proposed term *sustainable language*.

Throughout the paper, the term *sustainable language* refers to investigations of collective consciousness of a linguistic community to consider a surviving language which will be practically sustainable in the future. The term sustainable language can be defined as the collective consciousness of people in a competitive linguistic landscape where a language will be sustained in the long run in the fields of knowledge, media, diplomacy, economics, communication and the digital world. It is a relative prediction, decided and pragmatically practiced by the collective consciousness of a particular community. This definition highlights the speakers' activities, attitude and acceptance when considering a language to be sustainable. It can be broadened to include the relationship between sustainable goals and the role of a particular language around the world. In terms of the English language in Bangladesh, the term sustainable language is accepted by people instead of *global language* or *international language*. This paper proposes that a sustainable language can be determined by certain factors which are observed by the collective consciousness of people.

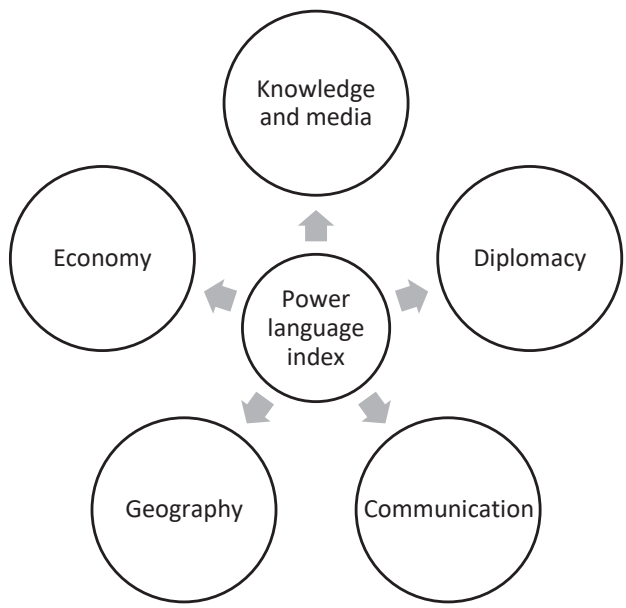
Research Background

According to Springboard for Talent: Language Learning and Integration in a Globalized World (2017), there are 7097 languages spoken around the world; 2464 of these are endangered; 23 languages dominate, spoken by over one half of the world's population; 40% of people have no access to education

in a language they understand; furthermore, 244 million people are international migrants, of whom 20 million are refuges, a 41% increase since 2000; migrants and refugees alone would constitute the 5th most populous country in the world.

Chan (2017), an outstanding fellow at the INSEAD Innovation and Policy Initiative, explained the Power Language Index (PLI). He also identified five indicators by which to judge a language's power:

1. the ability to travel widely (geography)
2. the ability to earn a living (economy)
3. the ability to communicate with others (communication)
4. the ability to acquire knowledge and consume media (knowledge and media)
5. the ability to engage in diplomacy (diplomacy)



Based on the above indicators, Chan (2017) concluded that English is the most powerful language, followed by Mandarin, French, Spanish and Arabic. Even considering China's economic success, he said that by 2050 English would be the strongest language. However, Spanish will rise to third place and French and Arabic will occupy fourth and fifth places, respectively. According to "the Power Language Index (PLI)," the English language has a rank of 1. On the other hand, the Bengali language in Bangladesh has a rank of 39. The score is 0.029.

This language strength index (PLI) shows which languages in the world can survive and become a sustainable language (Chan, 2016).

On 7 June, 2022, the Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University in Bangladesh, Md. Akhtaruzzaman told that the simpler the language, the more sustainable it is; furthermore, he suggested that the easier a language is to understand and present, the more it will remain sustainable (as cited in M. Islam, 2022). It is important to note that there is growing concern about language and sustainability in Bangladesh.

Objectives and research questions:

The objective of the research is to formulate predictions regarding sustainable language in the context of Bangladesh. Based on the collective consciousness perspective in Bangladesh, the following research questions were established:

a. What will be the job language in Bangladesh by 2050?
b. What are the main factors of a sustainable language?
c. What terms do Bangladeshi people like to use for the English language?

The research questions and objectives were formulated and investigated using both primary and secondary data, to complete the study.

Literature review:

A large and growing body of literature has investigated the English language in Bangladesh. Chowdhury and Kabir (2014) thought that English has always been a major concern in the school curriculum. Studies have associated this with the residual colonial legacy of the British education system. Hamid (2016) and Rahman and Pandian (2018) considered English language learning in Bangladesh to be a global marketing issue, which is needed for capital survival in increasingly globalised world markets. Rahman and Pandian (2018) also emphasised that the English language is necessary for technological development in Bangladesh. National education policies gradually imposed the English language, citing the need for it in interpersonal and international communication (M.S. Islam & Hashim 2019). Rahman et al. (2019) noted that the global importance of English in Bangladesh has become a top priority for preserving economic growth and building a trained workforce.

Traditionally, the term *collective consciousness* is generally understood to mean a series of shared beliefs, ideas and moral attitudes that work as a uniting force within society. A considerable body of literature has been published on collective consciousness. The collective consciousness of a nation is a consciousness shared by most individuals of the same nationality (Mathiesen,2010). Carl Jung first introduced the theory of the *collective unconscious*, which means that humans and their ancestors are connected through shared experiences (Gimbel,2020). Steve Beckow (2020) noted that collective awareness is the key to social impact on people. Emile Durkheim, a French theorist and sociologist, is credited with coining the term collective consciousness in sociology and related social sciences. Understanding what makes a society work is important for collective consciousness. He believed that primitive societies worked through *mechanical solidarity*. This is because society is somewhat simple and homogeneous (i.e. there are few differences based on race, class or profession and they are connected through shared beliefs and values. Lloyd (2007) stated that the collective consciousness of a society is formed by political acts, social constructs and contestable practices. The people of a society also develop collective consciousness about their language based on several socio-political issues.

The loss of linguistic diversity is a well-known phenomenon that linguists address in numerous ways. To give life to a language, Lewis (2014) developed a set of five conditions using the acronym "FAMED," which comprises functions, acquisition, motivation, environment and differentiation. Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations have made people aware of the longevity of language among several linguistic communities. It develops a collective awareness of which language will persist and be sustainable for these professional and future careers. For example, young people and parents of children in Bangladesh have already started to think about which language will soon be prominent, powerful, survivable, dominant and sustainable for a better professional career in Bangladesh. For example, Faroque (2016) opined that

> [e]very day there is so much scientific research, so many new theories are being published in English that it is almost impossible to translate it into Bengali immediately. What will happen in the future?

Therefore, the term *sustainable language* is used in this document to address some of the more prominent issues of recent sociolinguistics.

a. Population size and language sustainability:

The sustainability of a language depends on the global population of the speakers of the language. The more people who speak it, the lower probability of language loss. Collective awareness of a language and the number of speakers is proportional. The influence of population size on language patterns and trends is controversial (Bromham et al., 2015). Bromham et al.(2015) stated that population size can play an important role in language development. A larger population will produce more innovation and is less prone to random loss of cultural elements. Wichmann and Holman (2009) noted that at least under certain conditions, major languages change more slowly than the smaller languages.

b. Technology and the Survival of Language:

The modern world has seen great technological advancement in almost every facet of humanity (Tawil, 2019). Nations that cannot be involved in this massive technological revolution of the 21st century are in danger of losing their very existence. From the point of view of language, this combination of language and technology is called *human language technology* (Uszkoreit,2000).

Contemporary analysis claims that adequate use of technology complements development. Therefore, The *digital tool of affordability* ensures the sustainability of language through daily activities and public work (Tawil, 2019). Over the past two decades, studies of the phylo-genetic emergence of language have typically focused on grammatical characteristics (Mufwene,2013). Now, the survival of a language depends on its technological attachment to the digital world. Language technology involves computer performance in human language, whether spoken or written. Key technologies will drive the development of computing over the next decade. This includes spoken language, dialogue systems, machine translation, etc.

The development of a language also depends on the amount of language learning and language use. According to recent research, technology can be a means of creating a true and pleasant atmosphere for young language learners when it is used correctly and effectively (Iter,2015). It is thought that the more advanced a language is in the use of technology, the more likely it is that the language will be sustainable and viable in the future. Collective consciousness determines language competence by measuring the power and competence that

exist in human society. It can be called *linguistic collective consciousness*. Bangladeshis are looking for a technology-friendly language because recent research indicates that technologies have transformed human communication toward human dependence (Healey, 2016). As a result, what the language of the future will be depends on the coexistence of any language with technology. Therefore, in the field of language education, the emphasis is placed on various uses of technology. Thousands of language games, cartoons, etc. are being created all over the world for language promotion. Wealthy nations are developing technology-based online games, sites and entertainment to promote their languages. Teachers need support and training to integrate technology into language teaching (Ahmadi, 2018). Technology, the Internet, and some computer games could promote language learning if they are used correctly (lter, 2015). Therefore, it has become clear that technology is the biggest weapon in the "language war" of the present world. The further ahead people in the language group are in the positive use of this technology, the more sustainable the language will be in the future. Language learning and technology research is often referred to as computer-assisted language learning, which covers research in all forms of computer use for language learning purposes, from software specifically designed for language learning to web environments such as virtual environments, social networks and computer games (Healey, 2016). It entails activities that occur in web-based environments within language learning (Healey, 2016). In the context of Bangladesh, people rely entirely on English-language technology. Through computers, software, technology and social networks, English is gaining prominence as a modern, technology-friendly and sustainable language for people who are completely dependent on English in Bangladesh. Furthermore, the more people in Bangladesh are involved in the use of technology, the more English is established as a sustainable, acceptable and modern language.

The powerful nations of the world tried to impose their language on other countries and the people. The relationship between language and power is very old, so the languages of powerful nations spread through other nations. In linguistic sociology, this is called *linguistic* imperialism (Akteruzzaman & R.Islam,2017; Canagarajah,1999; Khan,2019; Phillipson, 2009, 1992; Rose & Conama,2018) .In this age of information and technology revolution, the languages of technologically advanced countries are constantly enriching and spreading digital content in the virtual world. Therefore, now that the competition language will be richer in digital content, the global community will

be forced to become dependent on that language. It will become one of the dominant languages of the future as well as a sustainable language in the virtual world. When analyzing the case of Bangladesh, it has to be said that most of the people in Bangladesh who access the Internet in the virtual world to take advantage of information and technology are relying on the English language and that digital content is created in English. As a result, people of all occupations in Bangladesh are learning the English language on their own through the virtual world and using the English language on their own through social networks. In fact, through this process, the idea is spreading among the people of Bangladeshi society that technology is one of the criteria that determines a sustainable language. According to the Worldwide Website Content Language Survey, the English language encompasses 63.4% of the Internet world (the virtual world). It is followed by the Russian language (8.1%). For the Bengali language, there is less than 0.1% of the total online content. Healey (2016) stated that English plays an essential role in the dissemination of primary and secondary languages around the world, especially with communication tools based on the Internet.

c. Persistence of the literature: A critical element in the survival of language:

One of the elements determining the survival of a language is its literary vastness and permanence. The literary antiquity of a language depends on the permanence and sustainability of that language. The collective linguistic consciousness of people in society believes that the antiquity of language means the future of language. For this reason, the people of Bangladesh are interested in English, Chinese, and other long-lasting Western languages. It can be compared with the Survival of the Fittest, which comes from Darwin's theory of evolution (Campbell et al., 1994; Costa, 2014; Hodge, 1874; Johnson, 1996; Lennox, 2015) with the term *Linguistic Survival Theory*. Power and politics are directly associated with the language struggle. The collective thinking of people in society holds that the longer the language of literature struggles with power and politics, the more sustainable and fit the language is. Note that the practice of literature is equally important to ensure the development of a language. Renowned literature and writers influence the sustainability of a language. For example, the Bengali Renaissance that occurred in the early twentieth century brought the Bengali language to a sustainable state. Sustainable Bengali literature by the Nobel Laureate in Literature, Rabindranath

Tagore, the poet Kazi Nazrul, Michael Madhusudan Dutta and other writers later took the Bengali language toward temporary stability.

d. Linguistic Adaptation and Survival of Language: A geocentric and web-based environment:

A language's environment is essential for its true development. The language environment can be divided into two parts: the geographical environment and the web-based environment (Healey, 2016). The sustainability of a language depends on its ability to adapt to these two environments. In addition to how eco-friendly a language is, it is also important to determine the longevity of a language. This struggle for language can undoubtedly be compared to the ecological struggle of fauna for survival in their environment. From the point of view of sociolinguistics, this can be called *linguistic adaptation*. Depending on an animal's ability to survive and adapt, the probability of it surviving in a particular environment varies. Adaptation and survival are accompanied by the same linguistic environment in society and geographical range as the ecological formulas of animals and plants, showing the power of modern language. In the context of Bangladesh, for example, the Bengali language has to survive by fighting with other languages of the surrounding lands.

Linguistic adaptation is mainly of two types; they may be called *structural adaptations* and *behavioural adaptations*. As part of structural adaptation, the Bengali language can be spoken on the territory of Bangladesh. To survive in this land, the Bengali language has always been influenced by foreign languages. By evolving a bit, foreign languages constantly accept words in their own language as linguistic suicide. This can be called *structural linguistic adaptation*. For example, The number of subcontinental and foreign words entered Bengali from Persian, Turkish, Arabic, English, French, Dutch, German, Portuguese, Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Malayalam, Tamil, Telegu, Sindhi, Chinese and Japanese languages. The largest number of Bengali vocabulary there is mainly from Persian, Arabic, and English. These foreign words are used in Bengali language with *structural adaption* linguistically. Furthermore, if Bengali people did not compromise their geographical and virtual languages (web-based environments), the Bengali language would be in lexical crisis. Therefore, the people of Bangladesh assimilate into their own language words from the languages that become powerful as sustainable languages (in terms of promotion and expansion), through a kind of collective consciousness both officially and personally.

For example:

kalama bandhu > *kalamanist* (columnist)
methar > *paricchannakarmi* (cleaner)

In the struggle for survival (structural adaptation) of Bengali words, the size of words in the language is sometimes decreasing and adapts to the influence of other languages.

For example:

sasya kana > *dana* (small grain)
khadyadrabya > *khabar* (food item)

This evolution of language is essentially a struggle in the linguistic world to make one's own language sustainable or to assimilate another sustainable language into one's own language, which has been identified as linguistic adaptation in this study.

To investigate Bengali language as *behavioural adaptation*, in the twenty-first century, with the development of feminist thought in Bangladesh, there has been a change in the way people choose Bengali words. They are beginning to think that the use of certain words also degrades women. Therefore, they are objecting to certain words, leading to a current trend.

For example:

beti > *nari* (female)
chhatri > *siksarthi* (female student)
dharsita > *saririka niryatita* (rape)
kalankita > *anakankhita* (scandal)

This type of change can be called *linguistic behavioural adaptation*.

e. Sustainable languages: Economic and social psychology perspective:

Historically, economics has been closely associated with a particular language. Economic development and growth in GDP per capita are associated with the development of language. A sustainable language is one that ensures economic

growth through education, practice and use, as determined by human collective consciousness. According to Faroque (2016), the English language was the mother tongue of those who ruled the capitalist world for the last two and a half centuries. As a result, science has been practiced in this language for a long time. According to the WEF Global Competitiveness Index, most competitive economies use English as an official language (Chan, 2016).

Most of the population in the language group believes that language sustainability is associated with economic development. Just as people change locations for economic development, so people become interested in changing their practical language in the pursuit of professional and economic development. This is a kind of voluntary *language shift*. As a result, the languages of underdeveloped and economically backward nations are less likely to develop and become sustainable. As a result, they gradually gain *social motivation* (Hamilton, 2017; Schultz et al., 2012; Pittman & Heller, 1987) to voluntarily shift their language into a sustainable language in the light of *collective consensus*. In the context of Bangladesh, the issue of this kind of language choice is very clear and visible. For example, we can say that the ethnic and indigenous peoples of Bangladesh were socially motivated to voluntarily adopt the state language (Bengali language) because they do not have professional advantages in their own language and their own language is constantly being lost, making them unable to develop appropriate opportunities in their own language. About 54 ethnic groups in Bangladesh are searching for a sustainable language due to their collective consensus. Collective consciousness and social motivation determine which language has the status of sustainable language for a given population.

More importantly, the population of young Bangladeshis is leaning towards online freelancing as a profession. According to the Information Communication and Technology Division of the Bangladesh Government, Bangladesh has 650,000 freelancers, of whom 500,000 work actively. Bangladesh also ranked eighth in Payoneer's 2019 Global Gig Economy Index (''Struggles of being a freelancer in Bangladesh'', 2021). Therefore, Training institutions in Bangladesh emphasize English, which is of great importance. The medium for freelancing work online is the English language and millions of formally educated, semi-educated or job-seeking youths have adopted English as their working language. Because of the professional collective conscience, they are adopting English as a sustainable language. The Bangladeshi curriculum and education policy, classroom teacher motivation, job preparation, training, family motivation, knowledge

of English as a prerequisite and priorities in job vacancies are all in English, and English has a special status as a collective consensus. Consequently, English has recently been established as a sustainable language instead of as a global language for the people of Bangladesh.

In the twenty-first century, the languages of wealthy countries have the opportunity to integrate into advanced jobs, economic prosperity and international financing. In the context of Bangladesh, this issue can be explained with a few more examples. Due to the rapid development of technology and trade in China in the twenty-first century, a large number of Bangladeshis have recently become interested in learning Chinese. For economic reasons, people in Bangladesh have started to think of Chinese as one of the most sustainable languages. On the other hand, English has been considered a powerful and sustainable language for the Bangladeshi people for centuries due to global marketing and globalisation, which have led to economic growth in English. The direct association of employment with global languages is now noticeable. The Bangladeshi community collectively seeks to link employment with language. For example, in recent decades, the general population of Bangladesh has become interested in learning Arabic in order to create opportunities to work in human resources in Arab countries. More Arabic-language educational institutions (*madrasa*s) are being established in Bangladesh than in the past, and the Arabic language has been introduced. Learning Arabic helps people in the Middle East find employment and experience economic growth. As a result, Arabic has become a sustainable language for the Bangladeshi people. Various government and non-governmental organizations are teaching the Arabic language.

It is clear that sustainable economic growth in the future field of employment is possible in a sustainable language. Therefore, learning sustainable languages is more important than learning a foreign language, an internal language or a global language for Bangladeshis. That is what prevails among the Bangladeshi people. In this new way of choosing languages by analysing practical languages, the selected language can be called a sustainable language. At one point in Bangladesh, only English was considered a preferred language for good professionals and better income. Hamid (2010) noted the benefits of learning English in Bangladesh as an objective of fostering human capital through English for national development. Now, people are thinking of a category language based on the sustainability of their collective consciousness of Bangladeshi society. According to World Economic Forum Report, of the approximately 1.5 billion

people who speak English, less than 400 million use it as a first language; that means over 1 billion speak it as a secondary language (Breene, 2019).

English language and prediction of sustainability:

English is the most widely used language in the world. In different countries, different languages are spoken. However, people from different countries speak English. Therefore, there are many job opportunities abroad for those who know English. America is well ahead in terms of technological and economic development in the world. The British proposal placed English in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and some parts of Africa, India and various other countries. English has also been adopted as a second language in Germany, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands. Thanks to the English language, the culture of the people of these countries is now able to be exhibited to others. Another important reason to learn English in developing countries like Bangladesh is to learn science. The language of science and technology is now prominently in English. English is also a language of the film industry. Therefore, if people learn English, they no longer need subtitles to watch movies. There will be no shortage of opportunities for them. After learning English, they can teach it to their children. If their children already know English, the family can speak in English. In the United States, those who can speak English are in high demand on the job. Their earnings are also high. Learning English will greatly help Bangladeshi people secure a job.

Emergence of Chinese Language Learning in Bangladesh: Collective consciousness for economic development

It is undeniable that in the past few decades China has become a global business hub. Chinese products form a large part of Bangladesh's trade and commerce, and their scope is growing day by day. Therefore, the number of businesses connected to China is continuously increasing in this country. Our business needs Chinese-speaking professionals to establish contact with Chinese companies. Various companies employ someone who can speak, write and read in this language with a handsome salary. Although the number of businesses has increased according to the demand of the country, the number of skilled people who know Chinese is not increasing. Because it takes time to acquire sufficient

skills in writing, reading and speaking Chinese as with other languages. Mandarin Chinese is a character-based language. A symbol is used for each word, changing over about 5,000 years. This current form is called simplified Chinese. Chinese language courses are offered at various educational institutions in Bangladesh, notably the Institute of Mother Language at Dhaka University, the Confucius Institute of North South University, BRAC University, Bangladesh Open University and Santa Mariam University etc. In addition, many people in different parts of Dhaka are teaching on their own initiative. Chinese language skill would open the doors for Bangladeshi people to prospects of versatile exchanges with China including cooperation in diplomacy, construction, industry, agriculture and technology (Weiming, 2010 as cited in ''Chinese language learning recommended in Bangladesh'', 2010). Furthermore, in Wu Qiu's opinion, many young people in Bangladesh now know China and have begun to learn Chinese because of China's technological products; Huawei, Xiaomi, Lenovo, Gionee and many other Chinese brands are popular in Bangladesh (Chengyuan, 2016). According to Soofi (2019), Learning Chinese has been a boon for a lot of youngsters in Bangladesh as Chinese language proficiency is in much demand in the job market and comes with the promise of brilliant career.

Together, these studies highlight the need for creating a new term *sustainable language* to signify the strength of a particular language's survival in a competitive linguistic area. These studies collectively outline a critical role for investigating the linguistic attitude of Bangladeshi people about the English language and their collective consciousness regarding the survival of languages in Bangladesh.

Research Methodology:

Best and Kahn (1989) pointed out that the scientific method of analysis is carried out in a more formal, methodical and thorough procedure known as research. It incorporates a more structured inquiry, which usually ends in a documented record of the procedures and a report of the findings or conclusions. The goal of a study is to use scientific procedures to find answers to questions. Based on the nature of the information, the research can be described as quantitative research, because the ratio of people in Bangladesh who are starting to consider English a sustainable language is presented as a number. The content or nature of the research subject make it pure research, as its utility is universal in its sociolinguistic scope. It is a cross-sectional study because the examples of this category are

experimental, and a descriptive survey according to the approach of the research. The research can be described as experimental on the basis of the research method because it is purely quantitative in nature and deals with future events.

Therefore, the quantitative method was chosen as the methodology for this investigation, where the qualitative, close-ended responses from the participants were collected with surveys, and descriptive statistics were used for a quantitative analysis and visualisation of the data. The quantitative method contributed to explaining the comparison between the sustainable language and English in Bangladesh, with the help of a questionnaire and in-person interviews.

The straightforward character of a qualitative methods chapter unfortunately does not spill over into qualitative research reports. At first sight, this simply is a matter of different language. So, in reporting qualitative studies, we do not talk about "statistical analysis" or "research instruments". But these linguistic differences also reflect broader practical and theoretical differences between qualitative and quantitative research (Silverman 2000, p.234).

Pandey and Pandey (2015) supported using the term *survey* for the technique of investigating through directly observing a phenomenon or systemically gathering data from a population through personal contact and interviews when adequate information about a certain problem is not available in records, files and other sources. The survey is an important tool to gather evidence relating to a certain social problem (Pandey & Pandey, 2015). The survey method is used in this research to direct the close contact of the researcher to the phenomenon under study, to collect general information, to explain language and sustainability and to investigate the opinions and changing attitudes of the people towards the English language. Based on the type of descriptive method, it is a representative social survey with structured interviews to study the research problem and collect data for predicting relationships between the variables. The study was conducted in the form of a survey, with data being gathered via interviews with close-ended, structured questionnaires.

Research Design:

According to Kerlinger (1973), "[r]esearch design is the plan, structure and strategy of investigation conceived so as to obtain answer to research questions and to control variance." Furthermore, Zikmund (1988) used the term *research design* to refer to a master plan that specifies the methods and procedures for

collecting and analysing the necessary information. Thus, research design can be described as arranging conditions for collecting and analysing data with the objective of generating sample results on the population. Exploratory design is used to conduct the research. When there are few or no previous studies to refer to or rely on in order to anticipate an outcome, an exploratory design is used. The emphasis is on gathering insight and familiarity in preparation for further. Exploratory designs are frequently used to determine how best to proceed with a study or what methodology would be most effective in gathering information about an issue. The research is designed with the following characteristics: objectivity, reliability, validity, generalisability and adequate information.

Primary data sources have been used to obtain basic information from in-person interviews. This section gives an overview of the research methods and contains a report on the procedures used in the study, including the design of the research, the selection and description of the participants, the arrangement, the instruments used for the collection of data, the analysis of data and the credibility of the study.

Participants in the study:

A total of 80 representative participants were surveyed with different educational levels from different age groups, occupations and geographical areas. The participants were selected in such a way as to represent primarily the attitude of educated Bangladeshi people. The respondents were selected to be representative of the total educated. The study involved 20 college and university students, 15 entrepreneurs or businesspeople, 20 professionals belonging to a variety of professions, 14 teachers, six school students and five unemployed persons with a certain level of education, all of whom are permanent residents of Bangladesh. To bring heterogeneity, the participants were chosen from both rural and urban areas and equal proportions of men and women were maintained in order to ensure balance in the study. These participants were asked to complete the questionnaire and were later asked to participate in structured interviews with close-ended questionnaires.

Tools of Data Collection:

A researcher needs a lot of data, tools and techniques. This research has contributed to our understanding of the sustainability of Bangladeshi language

from a sociolinguistic point of view and to an examination of the future of sustainable languages in the region. This was done through questionnaires and follow-up interviews, using a list of questions related to English and sustainable language in the context of Bangladesh. According to Goode and Hatt (1952), "[i]n general, the word questionnaire refers to a device for securing answers to questions by a form which the respondent fills in himself." To analyse and visualise the data, frequency measurement as a descriptive statistical method and Microsoft Excel were the tools or instruments used for the research.

Written questionnaires (Appendix 1):

Thirteen questions were designed for each in-person interview. The structured, close-ended survey questions used in this study were designed with driving factors contributing to the conclusions and some key questions driving the assessment of whether the objectives of this research were met. Eighty participants were surveyed to explore the sustainability of language in the region and their understanding of linguistic realities. The survey consisted of close-ended questions to investigate Bangladeshi people's changing attitude towards the English language and their acceptance of the term sustainable language.

Interviews:

Interviews with questionnaires from the research participants are another important way to collect data for the study. The interview lasted about 15 minutes, including a list of closed-ended questions about Bangladesh's linguistic situation, where the concept of *sustainable language* was demonstrated to each participant so they may better understand it and respond effectively. In an interview, a rapport is established between the interviewer and the interviewee. Structured interview questionnaires were used. The interviewers asked the participants a series of written questions and ticked boxes with their responses. This is highly structured and conducted face to face. Such interviews with questionnaires are used to receive a wide range of responses during one meeting, to lessen the impact of researcher bias and to help participants remember issues they might otherwise have forgotten.

Data collection procedure:

Prior to commencing the study, ethical clearance was sought from each participant. Eighty respondents were contacted through different channels from various parts of Bangladesh and were later invited to participate in the interview. Of the eighty participants, 41 were men and 39 were women. Most of the respondents were adult professionals. To ensure the quality of the study, a minimum level of primary education was chosen for the participants, but 99 per cent of them had at least a secondary school education. There was skilful face-to-face contact between interviewer and interviewee.

Data analysis procedure:

Statistical approaches and procedures were used in this quantitative study. Statistical approaches and procedures have earned a significant place in research because they provide solutions to problems. The analysis of the closed-ended questions entailed a descriptive statistical analysis of frequency measurements. The main purpose of the data analysis was to find the speakers' attitudes towards English and sustainable language in Bangladesh. The survey of written questions is discussed and presented in the form of charts prepared using Excel.

Limitations of the research:

Some limitations are obvious in this research, as it is based on the survey method. The sample size (N=80) is the main limitation, as it is quite small in proportion to the total population of Bangladesh. In order to minimise the impact of this limitation, heterogeneity among the participants was maintained. The research was carried out in both rural and urban regions of Bangladesh and included participants from Dhaka, Chittagong, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Khulna and Sylhet. I interviewed stakeholders and sent questionnaires related to the study. The research participants consisted only of educated people from Bangladesh. Furthermore, since the study could have been carried out covering an even wider range of rural and urban regions of the country, the results of the study cannot accurately describe the overall picture of rural people using English and sustainable languages in the context of the whole country. However, the qualitative research is an attempt to paint a picture of the entire Bangladesh linguistic situation.

Study site:

The quantitative research was conducted in both urban and rural areas of Bangladesh. The inhabitants of these regions do not face any communication difficulties in obtaining their education. Bangladesh is remarkably diverse in social and economic terms. The urban area enjoys comparative advantages in terms of communication in education, health care, etc. compared to rural communities. To bring diversity and represent the population more accurately, participants from rural regions were also selected.

Conceptual framework:

The English language and language survival have become a new trend in communication. Therefore, a new term, *sustainable language*, was proposed in this investigation. The concept of this research is based on why and how the term sustainable language is important. Furthermore, the major impacts of language sustainability are conceptualised in this research.

Results and discussion of analysis:

In the current sociolinguistic context, the terms *global language* and *international language* are insufficient to deal with the entire linguistic situation in Bangladesh. In the context of Bangladesh, people are looking for languages that will be suitable for their future career and the coming world. Therefore, a collective consciousness has risen among people to investigate the socio-political future of language with economic and environmental indicators. They are not clinging to ideological perspectives on language choice; rather, they prefer to choose a language based on sustainability predictions and indications.

The widespread promotion of the Sustainable Development Goals by the United Nations could lead to new perspectives on applied linguistics around the world. The term sustainable language can now be used as an alternative to the term global language. This period of language history can be called the era of sustainable language. At that time, people in all countries were looking for a sustainable language that would be conducive to their professional development, which would ensure a better future. The Bengali people have been searching for a sustainable language for a long time. Due to distrust towards

the mother tongue (Bengali) and the fact that the Bengali language is not fully developed, the people of Bangladesh have chosen Persian, Urdu or English as a sustainable language.

Data analysis:

As part of the descriptive statistical analysis, the primary data from the 80 participants were incorporated into the tables. Frequency distributions were drawn from the data and various bar charts were created in the survey process in order to depict the scenario of the survey and to prove the study objectives.

Gender: Male-to-Female ratio

To ensure balance and objectivity in the study, a male-to-female ratio of nearly 50:50 was maintained in the data collection process. Therefore, out of the total of 80 participants, 41 were men and 39 were women. All participants were provided the same questionnaire. Table 1, respectively, presents and visualises the frequency distribution.

Gender	Frequency
Female	39
Male	41

Table 1: Frequency of female and male participants

Age Group

Five different age groups – 14 to 18, 19 to 23, 24 to 30, 31 to 40 and 40+ were asked questions regarding the rank and evaluation of the sustainability of the English language. A certain age is required to have an understanding of the questions and then to respond appropriately, but to introduce a variety of opinions from different experiences and understandings, the participants were divided into five age groups. The relative measures presented in Table 2 show that the largest group (31.25%) belonged to the 24 to 30 age group, representing the most efficient and mature youth group.

Age group	Frequency
14 to 18	10
19 to 23	21
24 to 30	25
31 to 40	14
40+	10
Total	80

Table 2: Frequency distribution by age group

Level of education:

The education level of a respondent is another important factor that impacts an individual's decision-making when it comes to comparing languages and choosing a sustainable one. To make decisions regarding the sustainability of English as a language, education plays the most vital role because a person who has not received a minimum education will not be able to understand the significance of a particular language and its sustainability issues. Five different levels of education were listed in the survey questionnaire, prioritising respondents with a comparatively high level of education. The mode a measure of the central tendency for the category with 27 participants (33.75%) was the education level *Graduation*. The frequency distribution is shown in Table 3.

Highest education level	Frequency
Graduation	27
Higher Secondary	25
Post-Graduation	20
Primary	1
Secondary	7

Table 3: Frequency distribution for level of education

Occupation

Occupation was chosen as another factor to represent the variety of opinions among the participants. Six categories: student, entrepreneur, other professional (representing people from any job with remuneration), school students (to capture

the opinions of teenagers), teachers (representative of academicians for making decisions about the sustainability of language) and unemployed people (to capture opinions from both voluntarily and involuntarily unemployed people) of occupation were given to the participants, where even the participants from the unemployed group contained a portion of graduates and those with higher secondary or secondary school education. The largest group of participants contained 20 college/university students, primarily representing the age groups of 14 to 18 and 19 to 23; the next largest group had 15 entrepreneurs, 20 other professionals or job holders and 14 teachers (most of whom teach higher secondary school and a few primary or tertiary levels). Table 4 shows the frequency for this category.

Occupation	**Frequency**
College/university student	20
Entrepreneur	15
Other professional	20
School student	6
Teacher	14
Unemployed	5

Table 4: Frequency distribution for occupation

Issues behind the sustainability of language

The particular category of issues behind the sustainability of a language represents the main causes or factors that lead people to contribute to maintaining a language from era to era. Five main topics were listed in the questionnaire, among which 30 out of 80 participants (37.5%) chose the topic *economic/occupational/career benefits*. This indicates that most of the participants thought that if a language offers the benefits of getting more or better jobs, earning a higher income or generating more sources of income, then that language is highly likely to survive into the future. The second popular issue, selected by 31.3% of the participants, was *Population*, indicating that the more a language is practiced by people, the more likely its survival. Likewise, the more a population speaks a particular language, the more the language is practiced. The third most prominent issue was *Environment / Culture*, which indicates that an individual uses a language with the environment, people, ethnicity and culture. Table 5 represents the frequency distribution of this factor.

The main issue in sustaining a language	Frequency
Economic/occupational/career benefits	30
Environment/culture	14
Literature	3
Population	25
Technology	8

Table 5: Frequency distribution for issues behind language sustainability

It was found that there was strong evidence of the relationship between language survival and other elements, such as technology, population, literature, environment, and economy. The results, as shown in Table 5, indicate that Bangladeshi people find economic benefit to be the strongest factor of a language's sustainability, followed by population. They also consider literature the weakest factor among all to make a language sustainable.

The existence of English as a language in Bangladesh

Participants were asked what language they know well after Bengali or their mother tongue, and 71 out of 80 (88.75%) of them responded with *English*. Such a strong response regarding their existing knowledge of English is a great indicator that English is already a sustainable language in Bangladesh, at least among people who have received a secondary or tertiary education. Table 6 shows the frequency distribution of the responses for this question.

What language do you know the best other than your mother tongue?	Frequency
Arabic	12
Chinese	1
English	80
Hindi	5

Table 6: Frequency distribution for which language the respondents know best other than their mother tongue.

The most sustainable language in Bangladesh in future

In order to measure the collective consciousness of Bangladeshi people regarding language and sustainability, one of the questions asked the participants

to determine whether they think English can be sustained in Bangladesh in future. Surprisingly, 70 out of the 80 participants selected *English* from the various language options, including Bengali. Sustainability here means that the form of the language is kept intact as it is, and it is practiced the same way over the years, while one's mother tongue is practiced more colloquially, experiencing frequent changes due to variation in regional dialects and people moving between regions within the country. For a foreign language, this practice of changing is less likely due to strict grammar adoption and formal communication practices. Before filling in the questionnaire, this concept of sustainability was explained to the participants, which made them realise the sustainability of English in Bangladesh. Table 7 shows the frequency distribution of the responses for this question.

Which language do you think will be the most sustainable in Bangladesh in future?	**Frequency**
Bengali	10
English	70

Table 7: Frequency distribution for the most sustainable language in Bangladesh in future

Willingness to learn a new language

The participants were asked to observe the willingness to learn a new language other than their mother tongue, Bengali. About one third of them responded with *English*, as they felt they were still improving their skills in this language; 15 of them chose Arabic, and for business and professional purposes, 11 voted for the Chinese language. Table 8 shows the frequency distribution of the responses for this question.

If you would like to learn another language besides your mother tongue, which language would it be?	**Frequency**
Arabic	15
Chinese	11
English	26
French	4
German	10
Japanese	11
Other	3

Table 8: Frequency distribution for the willingness to learn a foreign language (bar chart)

Addressing sustainable language

The participants were asked to choose the best term to describe English as a language. English was referred to as a *sustainable language* by 53 out of 80 (66.3%) respondents. This response was highly aligned with the main research objective. Table 9 shows the frequency distribution of the responses for this question.

By what name do you prefer to consider the English language in the current context of Bangladesh?	**Frequency**
Global/ International Language	27
Sustainable Language	53

Table 9: Frequency distribution of choosing the best name for English in the current context of Bangladesh

The table shows that there has been a gradual change in accepting English as a *sustainable language* rather than a global/international language in a number of people from different classes and professions in Bangladesh.

Conclusion:

The paper attempted to evaluate the linguistic sustainability of English and other languages in Bangladesh. The main research questions were related to English, sustainable language and collective consciousness. This shows a need to be explicit about exactly what is meant by the term *sustainable language*. This was the first study to define this term, and it offered some important insights into language and sustainability. Sustainable language may be defined as a systemic process of a language which consists of some geopolitically relative elements or components: population, technology, literature, linguistic adaptation, economy and socio-psychological strength. Sustainable languages are languages that can be used in future for daily, social, economic and digital activities. This term embodies a multitude of concepts that depend on the geopolitical and social existence of the speakers. Throughout the paper, the term sustainable language is used to refer to the changing attitude of Bangladeshi learners towards the English language based on practical linguistic sustainability. The current study

has helped in the understanding of the major factors of sustainability of different languages spoken in a country. Based on the results of the current study, the collective consciousness of Bangladeshis predicts that English will be a sustainable language in Bangladesh The data show that people believe that English will become Bangladesh's most sustainable language by 2050. Furthermore, the results show that there are some main factors of a sustainable language in a country: population, technology, literature, environment and economics. This means that we must rethink the term sustainable language in the sociolinguistic field. Thanks to this research, it can be concluded that the Bangladeshi people prefer to treat English as a sustainable language rather than a global language, foreign language or international language.

References:

Ahmadi, M. R. (2018). The Use of Technology in English Language Learning: A Literature Review. *International Journal of Research, 3*, 115–125.

Akteruzzaman, M. & Islam, R. (2017). English, Education, and Globalisation: A Bangladesh Perspective. *IAFOR Journal of Education, 5* (1).

Beckow, S.(2020). What is the Collective Consciousness? *www.goldenageofgaia.com*. https://goldenageofgaia.com/2020/01/07/what-is-the-collective--consciousness/

Best, J. W., & Kahn, J. V. (1989). *Research in education* (6th Ed.). Englewoods Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

Breene, K. (2019). Which countries are best at English as a second language?. *World Economic Forum*. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/11/countries-that-speak-english-as-a-second-language/

Bromham, L., Hua, X., Fitzpatrick, T.G., & Greenhill, S.J. (2015). Rate of language evolution is affected by population size. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 112*, 2097 - 2102.

Canagarajah, A. S. (1999). *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in English Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Chan, K. L. (2016). *Power Language Index*. http://www.kailchan.ca.

Chan, K. L. (2017, May 22). *The world's most powerful languages*. www.kailchan.ca. https://www.kailchan.ca/2017/05/the-worlds-most-powerful-languages/.

Chengyuan, H. (2016, October 28). Bangladeshi brothers learn Chinese together. *The Independent*. https://www.theindependentbd.com/arcprint/details/65805/2016-10-28.

Chinese language learning recommended in Bangladesh, (2010, January 18). *Xinhua*. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/.

Chowdhury, R. & Kabir, A.H. (2014). Language wars: English education policy and practice in Bangladesh. *Multilingual Education, 4* (1). https://doi.org/10.1186/S13616-014-0021-2/TABLES/1.

Costa, J. T. (2014). *Wallace, Darwin, and the Origin of Species*. Harvard University Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt6wprf8

Faroque, G. (2016, February 18). uchchoshikkhar-madhyam-ki-hawa-uchit? [What should be higher education medium?] *The Prothom Alo*. https://www.prothomalo.com.

Gimbel, S. (2020). *Carl Jung and the Concept of Collective Consciousness*. www.thegreatcoursesdaily.com. https://www.thegreatcoursesdaily.com/carl-jung-and-the-concept-of-collective-consciousness/.

Goode, W. J. & Hatt, P.K. (1952). *Methods in Social Research*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Hamid, M. O. (2016). The linguistic market for English in Bangladesh. *Current Issues in Language Planning, 17* (1), 36–55. https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2016.1105909.

Hamid, O. M. (2010). Globalisation, English for everyone and English teacher capacity: Language policy discourses and realities in Bangladesh. *Current Issues in Language Planning, 11* (4), 289–310. https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2011.532621.

Hamilton, A. (2017). *Social Motivation*. Serious Science. http://serious-science.org/social-motivation-8756.

Healey, D. (2016). *Language Learning and Technology*. The Routledge Handbook of Language Learning and Technology.

Hodge, C. (1874). *What is Darwinism?* New York, Scribner, Armstrong, and company.

Islam, M (2022, June 7). ye bhasha yat sahaj, ta toto teksei [The simpler the language, the more sustainable it is]. *News Bangla 24*. https://www.newsbangla24.com/education/194565/The-simpler-the-language--the-more-sustainable-it-is-DU-Vice-Chancellor

Islam, M. N., & Hashim, A. (2019). Historical evolution of English in Bangladesh. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, *10* (2), 247–255.

Johnson, P. E. (1996). *What is Darwinism?* Access Research Network. http://www.arn.org/docs/johnson/wid.htm.

Kerlinger, F. N. (1973). *Foundation of Behavioral Research*, (2nd ed.), New York: Holt, Reinhart and Wilson.

Khan, C. (2019). Cultural awareness through linguicism? Questioning the roles of native English speakers in Bogota, Colombia. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *19* (2), 123–136. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2018.1486408.

Lennox, J. (2015). Darwinism, *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/darwinism/.

Lewis, M.P. (2014). *Sustainable Language Use*. Ethnologue. https://www.ethnologue.com/ethnoblog/m-paul-lewis/sustainable-language-use.

Lloyd, A. (2007). *Guarding Against Collective Amnesia? Making Significance Problematic: An Exploration of Issues. Library Trends.* http://www.thefreelibrary.com/inst+collective+amnesia%3F+Making+significance+-problematic:...-a0170113891.

Mathiesen, K. (2010). *Collective Consciousness. In Phenomenology and Philosophy of Mind*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199272457.003.0012

Pandey, P., & Pandey,M.M. (2015). *Research Methodology Tools and Techniques*. Romania: Bridge Center.

Phillipson, R. (1992) *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Phillipson, R. (2009). *Linguistic Imperialism Continued* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203857175.

Pittman, T. & Heller, J. (1987). *Social Motivation. Annual Review of Psychology. 38.* 461-490. 10.1146/annurev.ps.38.020187.002333.

Rahman, M. M., and Pandian,A. (2018). A Critical Investigation of English Language Teaching in Bangladesh. *English Today, 34* (3), 43–49. https://doi.org/10.1017/s026607841700061x.

Rahman, M.M., Islam, M.S., Karim, A. et al.(2019) English language teaching in Bangladesh today: Issues, outcomes and implications. *Lang Test Asia 9*, 9. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-019-0085-8

Rose, H., & Conama, J.B (2018). Linguistic imperialism: Still a valid construct in relation to language policy for Irish Sign Language. *Language Policy*, *17* (3), 385–404. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-017-9446-2.

Salzburg Global Seminar. (2018). *Springboard for Talent: Language Learning and Integration in a Globalized World*.

Schultz, R., Chevallier,C.& Kohls, G. (2012, May 1). *Social motivation, reward and the roots of autism.* Spectrum Autism Research News. https://www.spectrumnews.org/opinion/viewpoint/social-motivation-reward-and-the-roots-of-autism/.

Silverman, D. (2000). *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Soofi, A. (2019, September 2). Leaning Chinese creates opportunities for Bangladeshi youths. *The Daily Sun.* https://www.daily-sun.com/printversion/details/420157/Learning-Chinese-creates-opportunities-for-Bangladeshi-youths-

Springboard for Talent: Language Learning & Integration in a Globalized World. (2017). The Salzburg Statement for a Multilingual World. https://www.salzburgglobal.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Documents/2010-2019/2017/Session_586/BN_SalzburgGlobal_Statement_586_-_Multilingual_World_Bangla.pdf.

Struggles of being a freelancer in Bangladesh: The absurd cost of the so-called comfort.(2021, April 16). *Daily Star*. https://www.thedailystar.net/toggle/news/struggles-being-freelancer-bangladesh-2078253.

Tawil, H. (2019). Enhancing language learning through technology. *International Journal of English Language Teaching*, *7* (2), 1–18.

Uszkoreit, H. (2000): *Sprache und Sprachtechnologie bei der Strukturierung digitalen Wissens*. In W. Kallmeyer (Ed.) Sprache in neuen Medien, Institut für Deutsche Sprache, Jahrbuch 1999, De Gruyter, Berlin.

Wichmann, S., & Holman, E.W. (2009). Population size and rates of language change. *Human Biology, 81* (2/3), 259–274. https://doi.org/10.3378/027.081.0308.

Zikmund, W. (1988). *Business Research Methods*, Chicago: Dryden Press.

Written survey questionnaires (Appendix 1)

Question/ Key Point	Options	Response
1. What is your name ?	-	
2. Your age group	1. 14 to 18 2. 19 to 23 4. 24 to 30 5. 31 to 40 6. 40+	
3. Your gender identity	1. Male 2. Female	
4. What is your occupation ?	1. School student 2. College/university student 4. Teacher 5. Entrepreneur 6. Other professional 7. Unemployed	
5. Where do you live ?	1. Rural area 2. Urban area	
6. Your highest education level	1. Primary 2. Secondary 3. Higher Secondary 4. University	
7. Which language do you think will be sustainable in Bangladesh in future?	1. English 2. Bengali 3. Arabic 4. Hindi 5. Chinese 6. French 7. German 8. Japanese 9. Russian 10. Other	
8. Which language will be the most sustainable in professional and economic fields in Bangladesh by 2050?	1. English 2. Bengali 3. Arabic 4. Hindi 5. Chinese 6. French 7. German 8. Japanese 9. Russian 10. Other	

9. Which language do you know the best besides your mother tongue?	1. English 2. Bengali 3. Arabic 4. Hindi 5. Chinese 6. French 7. German 8. Japanese 9. Russian 10. Other	
10. If you would like to learn another language besides your mother tongue, which language would it be?	1. English 2. Bengali 3. Arabic 4. Hindi 5. Chinese 6. French 7. German 8. Japanese 9. Russian 10. Other	
11. What do you consider the strongest factor to make a language sustainable?	1. Population 2. Technology 3. Literature 4. Environment 5. Economic 6. Occupational/career benefits 7. Culture	
12. By which term do you prefer to consider the English language in Bangladesh?	1. Sustainable language 2. Global/foreign/international language	
13. Do you prefer to judge English as a sustainable language in the current context of Bangladesh?	1. Yes 2. No	

The Preferences of Teenage Readers Regarding the Translation of Cultural References in Adolescent Fiction: a Pilot Study

Jerzy Skwarzyński
John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland

Abstract: Readers' expectations should be an important factor in the process of literary translation, especially concerning fiction for children and adolescents. Their views are relatively unknown, as empirical data regarding that matter is in short supply. This paper presents a focus group pilot study among teenage readers of fiction; it focusses on the readers' preferences for translating references to the culture of the source text. The rationale for choosing the focus group method and the description of the preparation process are provided. The main aim of the paper is to assess the reliability of the project as designed and the related materials, as well as to suggest improvements; nevertheless, the results of this preliminary study are presented as well. Consequently, a methodological foundation for more focus group projects regarding this widely understudied subject is established.

Keywords: translation studies, children's fiction, young adult fiction, focus groups with adolescents, participant-oriented research

1. Introduction

Children and teenagers are often considered the most difficult readership to translate for because they are particularly discerning and unforgiving readers (Manasterska-Wiącek 2015, 24). Many scholars make assumptions about what young readers demand and need from literature on the basis of their own deliberations; empirical data regarding young readers' reactions to translated texts is in short supply, which has been highlighted in recent years (Lathey 2006, 12; Lathey 2016, 10; O'Connell 2006, 15).

The lack of relevant studies indicates a lack of interest among scholars and results in translators' unawareness of their target readers' wishes and expectations with respect to translated fiction. Consequently, the translator's power

– the control that the translator has over how a given text is represented in the target culture (Hermans 2009; Spivak 2012; Venuti 2008) – remains unmitigated or unregulated by the recipient's voice. A translated text may become a platform for conveying a translator's own ideas, interpretations or ideologies in a more or less covert form. This control, however, may be moderated by a sense of responsibility towards both the source text and the target readers. With this in mind, adopting a broader perspective that includes readers' preferences regarding what they want to read seems to be an integral part of the translation process. This is especially true of popular fiction, as the expectations of its target readership seem to be one of the obvious factors taken into consideration during the production of such texts (Botting 2012).

As the issue is exceedingly broad, any study must be limited to a more precise problem. Due to the lack of empirical evidence, a qualitative study based on a research question that would indicate the direction of future research is called for. Moreover, before more comprehensive research is conducted, a pilot study ought to be carried out to evaluate and improve the design of the project. Such a study was carried out in June 2018 among a small group of 16-year-olds; the research question was "What are the preferences of teenage readers regarding strategies of translating cultural references in adolescent fiction?" This paper aims to outline the details of the study and to present the changes introduced as a result.

In Section 2, the reasons for choosing a focus group as the study methodology are laid out. Section 3 is an overview of the design of the research project; it includes descriptions of the sampling method, the set of stimulus materials and the topic guide. Section 4 describes the pilot study session. In Section 5, the results of the study are presented. Improvements implemented in the project design for future use are explained in Section 6.

2. The method – A focus group

Appropriateness is a guiding principle in designing qualitative research (Flick 2018a, 5). Methods are chosen according to the research problem and the researcher's goals (ibid., 2), as one of the intentions of qualitative research is to "produce knowledge that is practically relevant" (ibid., 7). This often necessitates shortcut strategies, "[p]ragmatic ways of using specific methods in situations of applied research, where it may be difficult to use these methods in their full versions" (ibid., 160). Sometimes the methods are used in full, but

the standard procedures may be altered slightly in order to ensure that the most relevant data is obtained. The design of a qualitative study "should be based on reflection on the issue under study, the research question linked to it, the existing knowledge of the issue and the population" (ibid., 75).

The general idea of the study was to confront the participants with different translations of the same excerpt of a book, where each translation would represent a particular translation technique. The participants would then discuss those solutions and chose those that they find the most and least appealing.

This concept poses many challenges. It involves sharing opinions on subjects that, in all likelihood, have not been considered in depth by the prospective participants. Moreover, the environment in which they formulate and express their views must be as comfortable and natural as possible. A focus group is a method that meets these criteria. It is often used to observe participants' interactions regarding a given issue (Flick 2018a, 106; Barbour 2018, 2). It allows for discussion between the participants while the moderator assumes a minimal role (Barbour 2018, 2). Its goal is to "allow for some debate or differences of opinion" (ibid., 3) between individuals who share several relevant features (ibid., 2; ibid., 69–70).

All methods which incorporated writing were rejected because it is arguably more efficient and less daunting to develop an opinion in conversation rather than on paper. It also reduces any limitations imposed, for example, by a finite choice of options or any unintended biases found in a questionnaire. While speaking, the participants can say whatever they want without any implicit answers. It also provides a platform to validate the opinions of teenagers and to give them a voice. This has two positive outcomes: firstly, it manifests a genuine interest in what they have to say, which is beneficial for them, as attention and validation are desired by teens; secondly, it increases the likelihood of obtaining honest and detailed answers, which contributes to the success of the study.

3. The design of a research project

For a focus group project, a unique set of materials relevant to a particular study must be prepared. These include a sampling method, stimulus materials and a topic guide.

Sampling is "the selection of cases, persons, materials, etc., to study from a bigger population or variety" (Flick 2018b, 131). In focus groups, "sampling means basically the composition of groups according to the research question

and intended comparisons" (Flick 2018a, 106). For this study, the "intensity with which the interesting features, processes, experiences, etc., are given or assumed" (ibid., 52) seems to be an accurate prerequisite for participation.

The group of potential participants was narrowed down both by age and by the abovementioned intensity of a feature which, in this case, is a predilection for reading and eloquence. The focus of the study was limited to middle school (*gimnazjum*) pupils aged 12–16 years (in Poland, parents or guardians choose to send their child to school at the age of either 6 or 7). Finding teenagers who read for pleasure was a more formidable challenge. The desired material was the opinions of young people for whom reading is a form of entertainment that they pursue eagerly and often. To find such individuals, a questionnaire was developed which would help distinguish those who read often from those who do not. The English version of the questionnaire,[1] which matches the outline of the original, is presented on the following pages.

As the main part of the study was intended to be audio-recorded and the prospective participants were underage, formal consent from their parents or guardians was needed. The students were presented with consent forms and a form signed by a parent or guardian was necessary for a student to take part in the session.

Another important part of a focus group project is stimulus materials: "[p]re-existing … or specially designed materials that encourage and help to focus discussion around the topics the research is designed to address" (Barbour 2018, 172). Such material is used in focus groups only to "break the ice" or to inspire a relevant discussion (Barbour 2018, 86), but in the case of the current study, it was an integral part of the project's design.

The material needed to be translated excerpts from a recently published book written in English, targeted towards readers approximately 12 years old and rich in cultural references. *Wolf Hollow*, an American novel by Lauren Wolk published in 2016, met those criteria. Set in 1943, it tells the story of 12-year-old Annabelle and her two younger brothers. Their rural existence and daily struggle – caused by the all-encompassing war effort – are shattered with the arrival of Betty, a violent and recalcitrant new pupil, at the local schoolhouse. Her sinister exploits, confronted by Annabelle's innocence and integrity, escalate into tragedy.

1 All materials have been translated into English for the purposes of this paper. The original Polish version was used in the study.

Class (letter only):		Register number:	

A study regarding reading habits of people born in 2002

This questionnaire is the first part of the study that focuses on your reading preferences. Some of you will participate in the second part of it. For this reason, this questionnaire is anonymous – by filling out the table above you make it possible for me to identify you and invite you to the second stage of the study. Your answers will remain fully confidential.

This questionnaire aims to gather information regarding your opinions and habits. This is why I would like you to answer honestly and without considering your responses for too long.

For the puropses of this questionnaire, a "book" is understood exclusively as "a book read for pleasure and of your own accord", so set books, textbooks, or other forms of writing which you read for purposes of school classes are excluded.

1. **Do you like to read books?**
   a) yes
   b) no

2. **Do you read books on a regular basis?**
   a) Yes. Usually, when I have finished a book, I start another one immediately, or on the next day.
   b) Yes, but usually I make a gap of a few days or a few weeks between books.
   c) No. It happens that I read one book after another, but then, for a longer time, I do not read at all.
   d) No. I read books sporadically.
   e) This question does not apply to me, as I do not read books.
   If none of the above matches your situation, outline it briefly here:

.....

.....

3. **Do you read every day?**
   a) Yes. I read at least a few lines from a book every day. I hardly even happens that I do not do that.
   b) I do my best, but I do not always succeed. Sometimes I do not open the book I am reading for a few days.
   c) No. It often happens that I do not open the book I am reading.
   d) No. Finishing a book often takes me weeks or even months.
   e) This question does not apply to me, I do not read books on a regular basis.
   f) This question does not apply to me, as I do not read books.
   If none of the above matches your situation, outline it briefly here:

.....

.....

Figure 1. Page 1 of the questionnaire used in the sampling process

4. Do you read one book at a time?

a) Yes.
b) Usually yes, but sometimes I read several books at a time.
c) Usually, I read several books at a time.
d) I almost always read several books at a time.
e) This question does not apply to me, I do not read books on a regular basis.
f) This question does not apply to me, as I do not read books.

5. If you are interested in reading a book that was not written in Polish, do you read the original text or the Polish translation?

a) Usually I read Polish translations of foreign books.
b) Usually I read original versions of foreign books.
c) It is hard to say, sometimes I read Polish translations of foreign books, and sometimes I read the original versions.
d) I do not know, I do not pay attention to that.
e) I only read books by Polish authors.
f) This question does not apply to me, I do not read books on a regular basis.
g) This question does not apply to me, as I do not read books.

6. Write down the titles and the names of the authors of three books that you have read recently.

Title	Author

7. Explain briefly what you liked and disliked in the first book from your list above.

.....

.....

.....

.....

8. If you like to read books, explain briefly why.

.....

.....

.....

.....

I appreciate the time and energy that you took to complete this questionnaire.

Figure 2. Page 2 of the questionnaire used in the sampling process

Two excerpts from the book were chosen. One included a reference to a notion that had no equivalent in Polish culture: a victory garden. Citizens of Anglophone countries were encouraged to grow their own food so that the bulk of state production could be sent to the front. This war effort was referred to in state propaganda as keeping *victory gardens*.

> When I was smaller, I asked my grandfather how *Wolf Hollow* got its name.
> "They used to dig deep pits there, for catching wolves," he said.
> He was one of the eight of us who lived together in the farmhouse that had been in our family for a hundred years, three generations tucked together under one roof after the Depression had tightened the whole country's belt and made our farm the best of all places to live. Now, with a second world war raging, lots of people grew victory gardens to help feed themselves, but our whole farm was a giant victory garden that my grandfather had spent his whole life tending. (Wolk 2016, 9)

Figure 3. World War I poster promoting victory gardens in the USA (Flagg 1918)

Figure 4. World War II poster promoting victory gardens in the USA (Williams 1946)

In the other excerpt, the frontiersman Daniel Boone, a historical figure who is not widely known in Poland, was mentioned:

> "What about me?" James said, prancing into the kitchen wearing a coonskin cap. Apparently, my grandmother had started to read him a new book, presumably about the Wild West.
> "You can take some pictures, too," I said.
> "Did Daniel Boone take pictures?"
> "I doubt it," Henry said.
> "Then I don't take pictures either," James said, galloping off into his own private wilderness. (Wolk 2016, 287)

Two texts were used to see whether responses to two different classes of references – a phenomenon and a proper name – elicit different reactions. To prepare the stimulus materials, two sets of Polish translations were composed. Both excerpts were translated several times according to different techniques of translating references to real-life elements of the source culture: equivalent, barbarism, neologism, periphrasis, footnote approximation, generalisation, contextual translation and omission (Lewicki 2017, 249–263). Every translation was assigned a letter (equivalent – A, barbarism – B, neologism – C, etc.) so that the participants could quickly and clearly communicate their choices.

In the first sheet, the only difference in the translations was how the last sentence was conveyed, as it includes the concept of victory gardens. For brevity, the translations of only this sentence are reproduced below. Where necessary, explanations and English re-translations of those Polish versions are included, together with definitions of the translation techniques according to Lewicki.

Name and definition of technique	**Polish translation with commentary and/ or back translation**
Equivalent – a universally agreed upon and widely used target-language variant of a notion in the source text (e.g. names of capital cities)	An equivalent was not provided, as none exist.

Barbarism – the transfer of a unit from the source text to the target text with no changes	"Teraz, gdy szalała druga wojna światowa, wiele osób zaczęło uprawiać victory gardens, ale cała nasza farma była właśnie takim gigantycznym victory garden, którego mój dziadek doglądał całe swoje życie."
Neologism – a word created by a translator for a given translation according to derivative norms of the target text language	"Teraz, gdy szalała druga wojna światowa, wiele osób zaczęło uprawiać ogrody zwycięstwa, ale cała nasza farma była właśnie takim gigantycznym ogrodem, którego mój dziadek doglądał całe swoje życie." *Ogrody zwycięstwa* are literally victory gardens, a notion which does not exist in Polish historiography and is merely a lexical reflection of the original. Even though the words are Polish, the concept is foreign.
Periphrasis – an explanation of the problematic notion within the target text	"Teraz, gdy szalała druga wojna światowa, wiele osób zaczęło uprawiać ogrody na własne potrzeby, by odciążyć państwową produkcję, skoncentrowaną na zaopatrywaniu żołnierzy na froncie. Nasza farma była właśnie takim gigantycznym ogrodem, którego mój dziadek doglądał całe swoje życie." The word *ogrody* (gardens) was used, but the historical meaning added to it by the word "victory" in the original was explained in the translation: Many people started to grow gardens for their own use to unburden the state production, which was focussed on providing supplies for the soldiers on the front line. This made the sentence significantly longer, which is why it was separated into two. In the second sentence, only the word *ogrody* was used, since the repetition of the entire unit was unnecessary.

Footnote – an explanation of the problematic notion at the bottom of the page or the end of the chapter or manuscript	"Teraz, gdy szalała druga wojna światowa, wiele osób zaczęło uprawiać ogrody zwycięstwa[1], ale cała nasza farma była właśnie takim gigantycznym ogrodem, którego mój dziadek doglądał całe swoje życie." This passage is identical with that from the third translation (neologism), but the following footnote was added at the bottom of the page: "[1]Ogrody zwycięstwa – ogrody uprawiane przez cywilów na potrzeby własne podczas pierwszej i drugiej wojny światowej m. in. w USA i Wielkiej Brytanii, by odciążyć państwową produkcję skoncentrowaną na zaopatrywaniu żołnierzy na froncie." Back translation: "[1]Victory gardens – gardens grown by civilians for their own use during the first and second world wars in countries such as the USA and Great Britain to unburden the state production, which was focussed on providing supplies for the soldiers on the front line"
Approximation – replacing the problematic notion with another notion that, in a given context, resembles the original object or reference	Approximation was not provided as there are no notions similar enough in Polish that would support an endeavour of that kind.
Generalisation – replacing the problematic notion with the name of a class of objects represented by the reference in question	"Teraz, gdy szalała druga wojna światowa, wiele osób zaczęło produkować swoją własną żywność, ale my robiliśmy to od dawna na naszej farmie, której *mój dziadek doglądał całe swoje życie.*" Back translation: "Now, with a second world war raging, many people started to grow their own food, but we had been doing it for a long time on our farm, which my grandfather had spent his whole life tending." The notion was replaced with a general description which reflected the situation without going into historical detail.

Contextual translation – changing the sentence structure so that the problematic notion does not have to be used at all	"Teraz, gdy szalała druga wojna światowa, wiele osób samodzielnie dbało o to, by mieć co jeść, uprawiając ziemię na własne potrzeby. Robiliśmy to samo na farmie, której *mój dziadek doglądał całe swoje życie.*" Back translation: "Now, with a second world war raging, many people made sure that they had something for themselves to eat by tending the soil for their own use. We did that on the farm, which my grandfather had spent his whole life tending."
Omission – leaving out the problematic notion	The sentence was not translated.

Table 1. The "victory gardens" excerpt – explanations of translation variants and techniques (Lewicki 2017)

In the second sheet, the difference between the Polish versions is how the name of Daniel Boone was translated in the excerpt of dialogue, "Did Daniel Boone take pictures?," as it is the only one that includes the name of a potentially unknown historical figure. Below are explanations and English re-translations (wherever applicable) of those Polish versions.

Technique	Polish translation with commentary and/or back translation
Equivalent	An equivalent was not provided, as none exist.
Barbarism	"— Czy Daniel Boone robił zdjęcia?"
Neologism	A neologism was not provided, as it seems inconceivable to create a neologism of a name that was not invented by the author of the source text (let alone a name of a historical figure) which would not be nonsensical.
Periphrasis	"— Czy traper Daniel Boone robił zdjęcia?" The word *traper* (trapper) was added.

Footnote	"— Czy Daniel Boone[1] robił zdjęcia?" This passage is identical to that from the second translation (barbarism), but the following footnote was added at the bottom of the page: "[1]Daniel Boone (1734–1820) – słynny amerykański traper, podróżnik i osadnik." Back translation: "[1]Daniel Boone (1734–1820) – a famous American trapper, traveller, and frontiersman"
Approximation	Approximation was not provided, as there are no well-known pioneers from Poland who participated in the colonisation of North America.
Generalisation	"— Czy traperzy robili zdjęcia?" Back translation: "Did trappers take pictures?" The unit was replaced with a class to which it belonged. This reflects the situation without going into historical detail.
Contextual translation	"— Czy na Dzikim Zachodzie mieli aparaty?" Back translation: "Did they have cameras in the Wild West?" The sentence was restructured so that the problematic notion was not used, but the meaning and intention of James's question were conveyed.
Omission	In the last translation, the entire dialogue was omitted.

Table 2. The "Daniel Boone" excerpt – explanations of translation variants and techniques (Lewicki 2017)

The final piece of material was a topic guide, a "set of broad questions or headings that anticipates the areas to be covered in a focus group discussion" (Barbour 2018, 173). In this study, the stimulus materials are precise enough to ensure that the discussion does not deviate from the subject matter. The questions to be asked during the session are limited to variants of "Which translation do you like the most/least?" and, most importantly, "Why?" Exchanges between participants without the moderator's interference are desired.

4. The pilot study session

The pilot study started with the sampling process. A total of 167 students completed the questionnaire. The first step was to eliminate the respondents who declared that they did not like to read books. For brevity, those who answered "Yes" will be referred to as Readers, and those who answered "No" will be referred to as Non-Readers.

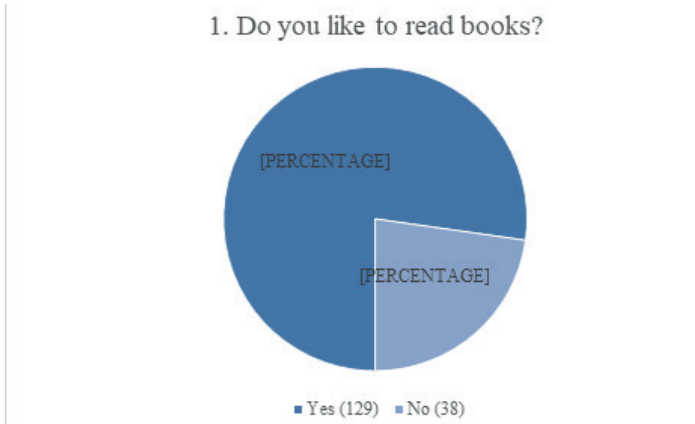


Figure 5. Answers to the question "Do you like to read books?"

The remaining questions provided insight into the reading habits of the students. Any alternative answers are summarised below the respective figures.

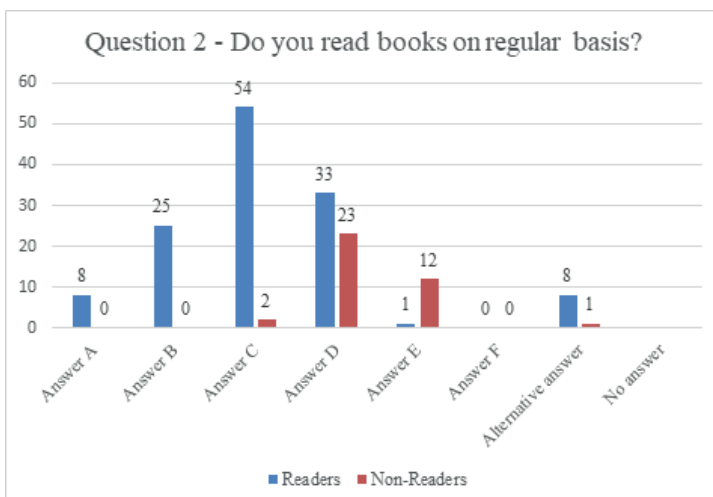


Figure 6. Answers to the question "Do you read books on a regular basis?"

Eight Readers provided their own answers, all of them stating that their reading is irregular due to a lack of free time, because school, homework and revision took up much of their time. One participant, whose answer was D, added that they usually read fiction on Wattpad and other storytelling platforms.

One Non-Reader provided an alternative answer in which they stated they had never finished a book. Another one, who chose Answer E, added that they did not have time to read.

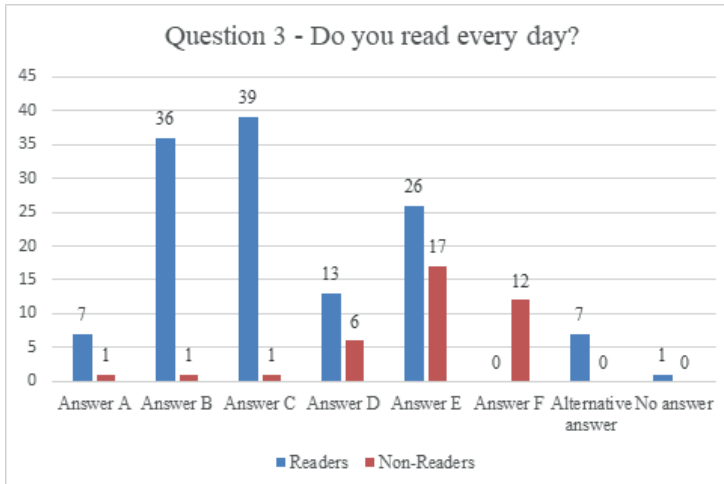


Figure 7. Answers to the question "Do you read every day?"

Only Readers provided alternative answers. They may be divided into two groups. One group was those who said that they finish a book within a few days of starting it; they also implied or stated clearly that they read every day, but with gaps between books. The other group was those who specified that this only happens if a book grips them. One participant, who chose Answer C, added that they do all their reading during the summer break, which corresponds with the alternative answers for Question 2.

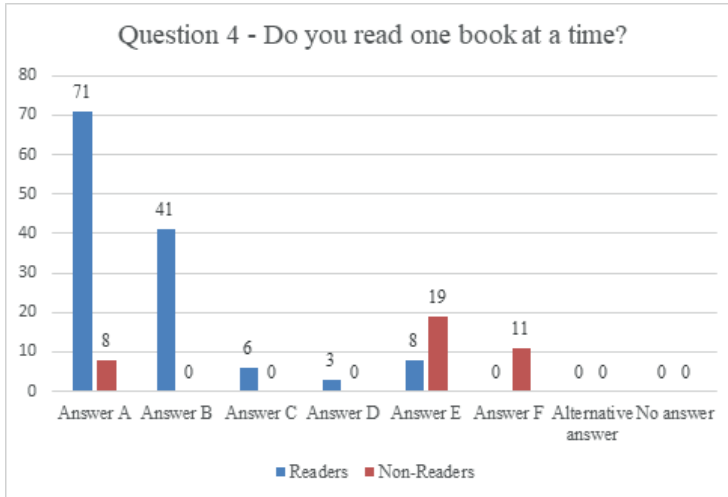


Figure 8. Answers to the question "Do you read one book at a time?"

No alternative answers were provided.

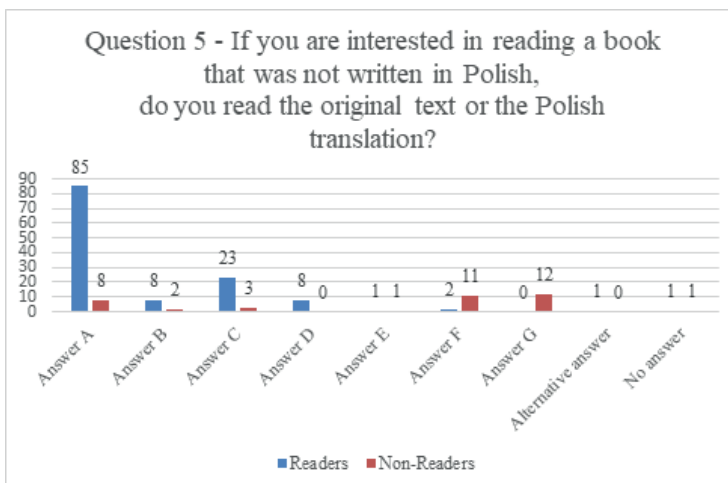


Figure 9. Answers to the question "If you are interested in reading a book that was not written in Polish, do you read the original text or the Polish translation?"

The only Reader who provided an alternative answer to that question stated that they read both versions.

The Non-Readers' answers to the remaining questions confirm that they do not spend a significant portion of their free time reading. In the open-ended questions they left the spaces empty, sometimes providing titles of books they have read (usually one or two) – often without the name of the author – and sometimes writing that they do not like books. In a few cases, they attempted to answer Question 7, but failed to write correct or complete sentences.

In Question 6, the participants were asked to write down three titles of books they had read recently and the names of the authors. The Readers' answers resulted in an extensive list of books: a mixture of popular young adult titles (e.g. novels by John Green), children's literature (the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series by Jeff Kinney and the *Nicholas* series by René Goscinny and Jean-Jacques Sempé), general "adult" fiction (novels by Haruki Murakami and *The Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger), fantasy (e.g. the Middle Earth books by J. R. R. Tolkien and *The Witcher* series by Andrzej Sapkowski), crime (e.g. novels by Agatha Christie and the *Millennium* series by Stieg Larsson) and occasional cases of poetry, horror, science fiction and non-fiction.

Although the Readers' answers to Question 6 provided an eclectic collection of titles, their answers to Questions 7 and 8 were rather uniform. Their answers to Question 7 indicated that they generally like a brave, wise and relatable protagonist who experiences captivating and fast-paced adventures in a believably depicted world. They do not enjoy irritating and boring protagonists going through the motions for no particular reason in a bloated and standardised plot.

The answers to Question 8 were even more uniform and could be divided into three categories. Firstly, there was the desire for escapism through immersion. Thanks to books, Readers could go "to a better place," "forget about the real world" and "not think about [their] problems" for a while. Entertainment is another category. Books help the Readers "relax" and "fight boredom"; reading is simply "pleasant." Books were relatively often described as superior to films, which is interesting, as films were not mentioned in the questionnaire or instructions for filling it in. Thirdly, there was the aspect of learning. Reading "expands vocabulary," "improves writing," "inspires" and "provokes thought."

On the basis of the questionnaires, 58 students were invited to the focus group session. Ten expressed a willingness to take part and presented signed

consent forms. Two groups were formed and two sessions were conducted, with six and four participants in the respective groups.

The study was audio-recorded via mobile phone. The session began with an introductory conversation about the participants' reading preferences. It was intended to make them more comfortable, help them forget about the recording device and focus their attention on the subject of books and reading. Then, the planned outline of the session was explained to them. They were made aware of their right to withdraw at any point without giving a reason. The sheets with translations of the first excerpt were distributed and the participants were given a few minutes to read them. Then, each of them said aloud which letter represented the text they considered the best. After that, they explained their decisions. Finally, we discussed their opinions on different solutions and their possible implications. This procedure was repeated when the participants discussed what they considered to be the worst solutions. The whole process was conducted once more for the second set of translations.

5. Results of the study

For both sets of translations, the preferred solutions were primarily E (footnote) and D (periphrasis). Some participants hesitated between two options, one of which was always the footnote. Regarding the worst solution, I (omission) was usually chosen, although G (generalisation) and B (barbarism) were indicated as well. In the discussions, the participants stressed that the "sense" and "emotions" conveyed in translations are expected to reflect those of the originals. "Faithfulness" and "respect for the author" were also mentioned as expected features. The idea of omissions met with strong disapproval and sometimes indignation.

A more detailed analysis of this study is redundant for several reasons. Firstly, the aim of a pilot study is primarily to test and improve the project design. Secondly, the sample was too small to even attempt to formulate research questions for subsequent studies. A similar but better-structured study with a larger sample is necessary. Thirdly, some issues with the existing design which were identified during the sessions rendered the material unreliable. The list of changes introduced in the project design as a consequence of the pilot study is included in the following section.

6. Conclusion – improvements to the project design

First of all, the wealth of data provided by the questionnaire reaches far beyond its intended purpose. Even though this material may inspire further investigation, it did not directly contribute to the specific goals of the project, so it was significantly shortened. Questions 2 to 4 were merged and transformed into a set of statements that the participants will mark as applicable or inapplicable to them. Question 5 seemed irrelevant or at least of minor significance, and thus was eliminated. Questions 6 to 8 turned out to be of the greatest importance in the sampling process, so they were left unchanged.

The examination of the recordings and the subsequent production and analysis of transcripts revealed that the way in which the study was moderated could have suggested a certain direction for the participants' train of thought. The discussion often tilted towards comparing translation techniques. The result was that instead of talking about the texts themselves, we began to talk about the role and tasks of translators (this happened in the latter part of the discussion after the participants had explained their choices). This is not advisable, as the participants were not meant to examine the subject from the perspective of translators or translation scholars, but from that of readers. The reality of a focus group session and the examination of several different versions of the same passage is artificial enough. The participants were supposed to speak from the perspective of a role they are familiar with, not a role in which they had never been and which some of them had never even considered. In further sessions, the participation of the moderator will be limited to the absolute minimum: providing instructions, asking for clarification, ensuring order in communicating and justifying choices and giving everyone an equal chance to express their opinion in the discussion.

The age range (12 to 16 years) seems unnecessarily limiting. Participants younger than 12 and older than 16 are also within the target readership of adolescent fiction and could provide valuable material for analysis. A wider age range is called for in the more comprehensive version of the study, with a willingness to read and the ability to communicate being the key aspects of the sampling process.

The participants' answers might have been influenced by their fear of being criticised by the peer group (Barbour 2018, 26), especially in the process of providing their initial choices. For example, if three of them in a row chose the same option, the fourth participant may have provided the same answer in order

to not stand out, regardless of whether it was their actual choice. This is why the participants should write down their preferred and rejected solutions and then hand it to the moderator. This may significantly reduce potential bias.

To obtain a backup copy of the recordings, two devices (a mobile phone and a separate digital audio recorder) will be used during the next sessions instead of one.

Regarding the stimulus materials, a new classification of cultural references was introduced: a general cultural reference, a proper name and an equivalent. A cultural reference is understood as a real-life object which is not a proper name and does not have an equivalent in the target language or culture (*victory garden* is an example of such a reference). The class of proper names only consisted of names that are not known in Poland and do not have equivalents (such as *Daniel Boone*). The third category is equivalents. Despite being rejected in preparation for the pilot study, this category was introduced in the improved version of the stimulus material. The respondents' opinions should not be assumed, even concerning a matter that seems as straightforward as notions with clear equivalents in the target language. This data should also be collected and compared, both with other equivalent translations across sets and with translations of units representing other classes of real-life objects within a set.

Changes were also made in terms of the number of sets of translations. Three references from a single book were not enough to provide relevant data. Three more sets were prepared: translations of excerpts from Emma Carroll's *Letters from the Lighthouse* (2017), the story of a girl who wants to escape German bombs falling on London by leaving for Devon with her younger brother, where she tries to make sense of the war and her family's secrets; Lisa Thompson's *The Goldfish Boy* (2017), a novel about Matthew – who does not leave the house and spies on his neighbours because of his obsessive-compulsive disorder – and the role he plays in the search for a toddler living next door who vanished into thin air; and Melissa Savage's *Bigfoot, Tobin & Me* (2017), a novel about two young cryptozoologists who set out to find a bigfoot in the woods around Willow Creek, California. The protagonists of all four books (including *Wolf Hollow*) are all 12 years old, which means that children around that age are the target readership. Each set contains translated excerpts from one book. One set will be used during each session, which will make it possible to identify any patterns between choices and arguments regarding different books and different cultural references. These two major alterations raised the number of units from two

to twelve, and provided a more adequate representation of many types of real-life objects and the translation challenges they may cause.

The process of preparing a wider range of materials included an examination of the existing set. The chosen neologism for the excerpt from the first sheet ("victory gardens") did not fully match Lewicki's definition, even though it is applicable and serves its purpose. Lewicki states that a neologism "is based on the models of derivation in the target language; thus it realises its potential, even though such a unit does not exist in that language"[2] (Lewicki 2017, 251). According to his understanding of the technique, a neologism should be a single new word (or a collection of words of which each is new). The literal translation of victory gardens (*ogrody zwycięstwa*) used in the set was a new notion in Polish, but neither word is a neologism. Therefore, a different solution was implemented: "*wiktorioogrody*." This is a new compound word created according to the Polish norms of derivation, which meets Lewicki's criteria for a neologism.

No changes were introduced in terms of the participants' interaction with the materials. They were not made aware of any of the above details or categorisations. This would influence their opinion, which would consequently be given from the standpoint of a co-analyst (Barbour 2018, 148–149), and this was not a role the participants are expected to adopt.

Apart from providing a replicable research design, this paper underscores the importance of conducting pilot research in preparation for participant-based studies concerning literature and translation. This is especially true with respect to fiction for children and adolescents. A practical value of such research is difficult to overestimate: The opinions of young readers could help translators make better informed decisions during the translation process. The potential for other studies involving readers of fiction is a vast and uncharted territory ready for exploration.

Works cited:

Barbour, Rosaline. 2018. *Doing Focus Groups*. London: Sage.

Botting, Fred. 2012. "Bestselling Fiction: Machinery, Economy, Excess." In *The Cambridge Companion to Popular Fiction*, edited by David Glover and Scott McCracken, 159–174. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2 Translated by the author of this paper.

Carroll, Emma. 2017. *Letters from the Lighthouse*. London: Chicken House.

Flagg, James Montgomery. 1918. *Sow the Seeds of Victory*. Poster. 56 cm x 36 cm. National Archives and Record Administration, USA. https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/sow-seeds.

Flick, Uwe. 2018a. *Designing Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.

Flick, Uwe. 2018b. *Managing Quality in Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.

Hermans, Theo. 2009. "Translation, Ethics, Politics." In *The Routledge Companion to Translation Studies*, edited by Jeremy Munday, 93–105. London and New York: Routledge.

Lathey, Gillian. 2006. "Introduction." In *The Translation of Children's Literature*, edited by Gillian Lathey, 1–12. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Lathey, Gillian. 2016. *Translating Children's Literature*. London and New York: Routledge.

Lewicki, Roman. 2017. *Zagadnienia lingwistyki przekładu*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej.

Manasterska-Wiącek, Edyta. 2015. *Dyfuzja i paradyfuzja w przekładach literatury dla dzieci*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej.

O'Connell, Eithne. 2006. "Translating for Children." In *The Translation of Children's Literature*, edited by Gillian Lathey, 15–24. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Savage, Melissa. 2017. *Bigfoot, Tobin & Me*. London: Chicken House.

Spivak, Gayatri C. 2012. "The Politics of Translation." In *The Translation Studies Reader*, edited by Lawrence Venuti, 312–330. London and New York: Routledge.

Thompson, Lisa, 2017. *The Goldfish Boy*. London: Scholastic Children's Books: Faber & Faber Limited.

Venuti, Lawrence. 2008. *The Translator's Invisibility*: *A History of Translation*. London and New York: Routledge.

Williams, Dick. 1946. *Your Victory Garden Counts More Than Ever!* Poster. 65.5 cm x 46.5 cm. Kittleson World War II Collection, Minneapolis, USA. https://digitalcollections.hclib.org/digital/collection/p17208coll3/id/19.

Wolk, Lauren. 2016. *Wolf Hollow*. London: Corgi Books.

Anna Kérchy and Björn Sundmark (eds.), 2020. *Translating and Transmediating Children's Literature* (London: Palgrave Macmillan)

Bálint Szántó
University of Szeged, Hungary

Translating and Transmediating Children's Literature, edited by Anna Kérchy and Björn Sundmark, is a collection of essays which aims to examine the translation and transmediation practices present in children's literature from a wide variety of perspectives. In the introductory chapter of the book, the editors present a novel approach towards children's literature. They compare translation and transmedia storytelling as related practices, pointing out how they both involve the transition of a text between semiotic systems. Transmedia storytelling, which involves telling a story across different platforms of media, is a widespread practice in the entertainment industry. The editors argue that due to the digital turn in the twenty-first century, newer generations come with higher levels of multimedia literacy. They are willing to trace the different multimedia entries containing parts of a certain narrative. Using these building blocks, new meanings and reinterpretations are created. In a similar vein, translation can also alter fundamental elements of a narrative. Children's literature is a genre in which imagination plays an essential role; no wonder it is heavily affected by these changes. The sixteen essays in this collection, divided into five sections, aim to delve into this phenomenon from a great range of viewpoints.

The first section of the book, "Inter-/Intra-Cultural Transformations" begins with an essay written by Clémentine Beauvais. This essay deals with the issue of *difference* as a concept that separates British and European children through literature. This issue is particularly relevant due to the recent departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union. She argues that the low amount of translated children's literature in comparison to other European countries has been a major contributing factor to the establishment and perseverance of this *difference*. Moreover, the lack of emphasis on language learning in the United Kingdom has further contributed to this issue. Beauvais suggests François Jullien's *écart* as a theoretical framework that is capable of giving a proper analysis of the role of children's literature in these cultural differences. The *écart* is a gap that serves as a common ground between cultures.

In the second essay, Hannah Felce discusses *Uorsin*, a Swiss children's picturebook written in Romansh language. She argues that the process of translation is more complex than just the movement of a text from a language to another one. In the context of minority language picturebooks, where translation is present even in the creation of the original text, she aims to challenge the binary nature of translation.

In the third chapter, Joanna Dybiec-Gajer analyzes Polish editions of *Struwwelpeter*, a German children's picturebook by Heinrich Hoffmann. Her analysis is mainly concerned with the attitude of the narrator of the text, and how it changes from a neutral stance in the original to a moralizing one in the Polish versions. Even in the most recent rewriting of *Struwwelpeter*, released with completely new illustrations, the didactic tone of the previous Polish editions is still present. This once again shows how translation is more than just a word-by-word transfer of a text between languages. The translated version is also accommodated to the target culture.

In the fourth and final chapter of the first section, Dafna Zur analyzes the role of Soviet influence in post-war North Korean children's literature. She argues that the appearance of travel writing and science fiction in the 1950s is a good indicator of this influence. Travel literature focused heavily on the Soviet Union, as it was viewed as a model for North Korea. Science fiction represented the socialist bloc's fascination with science and control over nature.

The title of the second section of the book is "Image-Textual Interactions." In the first essay of this section, Aneesh Barai discusses the issues of foreignization and domestication in the translated and illustrated versions of James Joyce's *The Cat and The Devil*. At the beginning of the essay, he defines the aforementioned terms. According to Barai, the case of *The Cat and The Devil* is a particularly interesting one, because Joyce wrote this story based on a local legend of a French town. However, he changed many details to conform to Irish child readers. Yet, Joyce retained the use of the French language at certain parts, most notably during the devil's speech. This became a challenge for French translators, who wanted to translate Joyce's text back into the language of the original legend. The illustrated French versions of the story all had their own unique takes on it. The first one went a more symbolic route by illustrating the Devil with Joyce's face and showing the mayor as the faceless representative of bureaucracy. The second illustrated version used medieval Catholic aesthetics, which is identified as the common ground between French and Irish culture. Barai draws several

conclusions at the end of the essay: he identifies cats and letters as cross-cultural bridges. He looks at the town of Beaugency (the setting of the original tale) as the critical reflection of Dublin. He also concludes that *The Cat and The Devil* acts as a "bridge" between generations by combining children's literature with modernist aesthetics. This allows child readers to develop familiarity with modernism. Lastly, he labels the two aforementioned French illustrated versions as a middle ground between domestication and foreignization.

Björn Sundmark's chapter on *The Hobbit* gives an intriguing insight into the Swedish editions of Tolkien's famous tale. In the introduction, he argues that Tolkien's works are prime examples of transmedia storytelling. Beyond Tolkien's novels and short stories, his characters had been involved in radio plays, calendars, songs, and illustrations even before Peter Jackson's film adaptations. All these additions to the original text were acknowledged as part of the complete narrative. In this chapter, Sundmark calls for the recognition of translation and illustration as integral forces of transmedia storytelling. This essay is highly relevant, because we tend to look at the characters and settings in Jackson's films as the definitive visualizations of Tolkien's novels, forgetting more than five decades of additional material that had been released before. Moreover, versions of the original text and other transmedial products published in other languages have further impacted the way societies interacted with Tolkien's works. Sundmark's intention is to look at these lesser-known releases and consider them part of the canonical transmedia narrative. For example, publishers of earlier editions of *The Hobbit* did not really know the exact target audience of the novel. The illustrations of different versions ranged from childish to horroristic, each signifying a different implied reader.

In the next chapter, Anna Kérchy inspects the (im)possibilities of translating literary nonsense. She aims to regard the interaction between verbal narrative and its illustrations and translations as transmedia storytelling. Firstly, she gives an overview of the different academic approaches to literary nonsense. Then, she goes on to analyze Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky" poem, which is one of the most famous works of this genre. According to Kérchy, translators of nonsense poems have to overcome many challenges: balancing the different layers of signification, accommodating to target audiences, staying faithful to the original text, and implementing the nonsensical effect into another culture. Due to the excessive use of made-up words, the implied reader of "Jabberwocky" is already expected to act as a translator or even as a co-author in order to decode the

meanings behind the gibberish language. In this situation, the illustration of the poem can be considered something that acts as a translation. This ties back to the premise drawn up in the introductory chapter of the book, and adds further evidence to the hypothesis that aims to present translation and transmediation as interconnected practices. The creators of the illustration translate and simultaneously transmediate the poem. Visual additions give child readers assistance in decoding the text.

The next chapter, which is the first chapter in the "Metapictorial Potentalities" section of the book, discusses the translation of peritextual elements in children's literature. The authors, Petros Pananou and Tasoula Tsilimeni, argue that translated children literature has a huge cultural significance in Greek culture. Yet, it is not a widely researched topic. Therefore, they aim to contribute to the development of translation studies with this chapter. They focus on the paratextual elements of children literature, which include all kinds of textual and visual elements of a book that are not part of the main body of work. These can involve everything from book covers and title pages to reviews and advertisements. The authors of this essay put particular emphasis on covers. On one hand, book covers have a huge influence on the reader's reception of a "foreign" text, they argue. On the other hand, they also serve as a mediator between different worlds, whether we are talking about foreign linguistic landscapes or the real and the fictional worlds. The authors use the MEAI (Multimodal Ensemble Analytical Instrument) method to perform a critical analysis of translated children's book covers. Their methodology covers many aspects of the cover illustrations in question, and is capable of giving a thorough view of its textual and visual elements. They draw several conclusions from this analysis. They point out that Greek publishers tend to prefer cover illustrations that depict young people. Darker and "scarier" cover art is often avoided, which suggests the construction of a stereotypical child-like implied reader. The authors acknowledge the fact that the implied reader of a translation can never be identical to the implied reader of the source text, but are more in favour of the foreignization of the concept. This would allow Greek children to experience other cultures through translated literature.

Moving on to the "Digital Media Transitions" section of the book, Cheryl Cowdy gives an analysis of Jessica Anthony's and Rodrigo Corral's transmedia novel, *Chopsticks*. It is a novel that is compatible with the changing reading practices of the digital age. It contains very little text, and the story is told with the use of illustrations. The publisher of *Chopsticks* has also developed a smartphone

application that adds even more audiovisual content to the story, making it a complex transmedia experience. Cowdy argues that the spread of transmedia storytelling will not lead to the disappearance to the book format; it will preserve it.

In the second essay of this section, Dana Cocargeanu analyzes the Romanian translations of Beatrix Potter's tales. She starts the essay by discussing the different academic approaches towards the analysis of digital technology in children's literature. She argues that online translations of books are generally under-researched, even though they would provide a good basis for research. They are particularly interesting because they involve both translation and transmediation. Cocargeanu aims to add contribution to the research of double mediation in children's literature. Combining the tools of children's literature studies, translation studies, and literary studies, she investigates the impact of transmediation on Potter's stories. Due to the interdependence of the text itself and paratextual elements in Potter's works, transmediation has had a significant impact on them. Cocargeanu concludes that the internet played an essential role in the popularization and public perception of Potter's works in Romania. Furthermore, the new layer of mediation alters the reading experience of the source text.

In the third and final essay of the section, Domingos Soares and Cybelle Saffa Soares discuss the Brazilian translations of transmedial *Star Wars* narratives. Their main focus is on the duality of light and dark, and how this duality appears in these translations. Using definitions created by Henry Jenkins, they analyze a wide variety of different *Star Wars* media, including games and animated series. They argue that the translation of a transmedial entry can influence how its consumers perceive the light-dark dichotomy. It can further emphasize the "goodness" and "evilness" of certain characters, but at the same time, it can also blur these lines. The authors conclude that since transmedia narratives require active participation from viewers and readers, engagement with these narratives eventually leads to the reworking of the relations within them. Translation is a crucial factor in how these relations are reconstructed. This essay is highly relevant, because it acknowledges media entries beyond the original (the films, in the case of *Star Wars*), and treats them as equal elements of one grand narrative. Due to changing behaviors in media consumption, it is particularly important to research these other transmedial entries properly, and this essay succeeds at that.

The final section of the book is called "Intergenerational Transmissions." This section focuses on the effect of children's literature on different age groups. It begins with Annalissa Sezzi's analysis of the Italian translation of *Where the*

Wild Things Are. Sezzi inspects the different voices present in these translations: the textual and contextual. She argues that when a story comes to life through an adult's voice who is reading it aloud, the narrative becomes re-interpreted and transmediated. In the next essay, Agnes Blümer examines dual address in children's literature in the post-World War Two period. She focuses on fantasy novels that carry crossover appeal, and looks for signs of ambiguity that can make adult readers interpret the text differently than children.

In the third essay of this section, Carl F. Miller discusses the Latin translations of children's literature. Although it might seem contradictory at first, considering how Latin is a dead language, he argues that Latin translations of children's literature can greatly contribute to the "revitalization" of the language. In the final essay of the section and the book itself, Casey D. Gailey delves into the world of scientific educational books for children. The books she analyzes are different from regular children's science books, because they discuss advanced topics such as quantum physics. She raises the question whether these books are really aimed at children, or if they are actually humorous parodies of scientific literature. However, she comes to the conclusion that these books are indeed meant for child audiences, aiming to raise their interest towards science.

The significance and novelty of this collection lies in several factors. Its authors take an important step by acknowledging the increasing influence of digital culture in children's literature. In an era where the connection between author and reader is no longer a predominantly unidirectional relationship, it is crucial to understand the processes in which we engage with these texts. With the rise of social media, we are exposed to considerably more information than previous generations, which changes our attitude towards media consumption drastically. No wonder that children's literature is also affected by this, and publishers are more and more willing to accommodate to this new situation. This collection of essays is a valuable contribution to the scientific discourse about translation and new media from the perspective of children's literature, and gives a profound view of the aforementioned topic in a broad scope. By looking at translation and transmediation as interrelated practices, the authors to provide addition an emerging field of research. The essays complement each other and work towards the common goal from a great range of angles.

Several questions that can arise from a reading of this collaborative effort. If we consider translation and transmediation complementary processes, how does adaptation fit into the picture? How can we look at the canonicity of the

different entries in a transmedia narrative from the perspective of the methodology utilized in this collection? There are many possible paths that can be taken for further research, and this book succeeds at providing threads for new discourses.

Autors' Biodata

Agnieszka Serdyńska received her Master's degree in Modern Literature and Culture from King's College London. She is currently an independent scholar based in Poland. Her research interests include Victorian intellectual history, as well as present-day revisitations of the 19th century across different media.

Magda Szolc is a PhD student at the University of Opole. Her research concentrates on twentieth-century Black female literature, particularly Toni Morrison's postcolonial output. In her analyses, she focuses on the problems of otherness, internalised racism, white hegemony, the trauma of slavery and their effects on marginalised Black women.

Adam Briedik is a PhD student at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, under the supervision of DrPaed. Jana Waldnerová, PhD. He is currently residing in Norway and writing his dissertation on the topic of contemporary dystopian fiction. Other topics of interest to him are transgressive fiction, postcolonial criticism and science fiction.

Fatmah Al Thobaiti is an assistant professor of Modern and Contemporary English Literature at Taif University, where she has been a faculty member since 2007. Fatmah completed her PhD at Queen Mary University of London in 2017. Her research interests lie in the areas of contemporary fiction, feminism and genre theory.

Marek Ochrem was born in Wrocław, Poland in 1966. In 1992 he received a master's degree from the Russian Department of Wrocław University and in 2001 an MA from the English department of Wrocław University. He is an English teacher at Uniwersytet Wrocławski, Wyższa Szkoła Handlowa and Wyższa Szkoła Prawa. He regularly publishes articles in *Czwarty Wymiar* and *Nieznany Świat*. His specialises in contemporary Russian and British literature against its cultural, economic, historical, political and socioeconomic background.

Jacek Fabiszak teaches cultural history, theory, theatre history and Shakespeare at the Faculty of English of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland. His research interests include English Renaissance theatre and drama and their

stage, televisual and filmic transpositions. He has published and given papers at conferences on Shakespeare's plays – one of his major publications in this area is *Polish Televised Shakespeares* (2005). He also applied linguistic and sociological tools in the analysis of drama, which resulted in the publication of *Shakespeare's Drama of Social Roles* (2001), a book that attempts to interpret Shakespeare's last plays in light of the theory of social roles and speech act theory. He co-authored *Szekspir. Leksykon* [Shakespeare: A lexicon] (2003), co-edited *Czytanie Szekspira* [Reading Shakespeare] and wrote on Christopher Marlowe, both on his plays (focussing on imagery) and their screen versions (especially *Edward II*). He is head of the Department of Studies in Culture at the Faculty of English of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań.
Contact: Faculty of English, Adam Mickiewicz University, Collegium Heliodori, ul. Grunwaldzka 6, 60-780 Poznań, Poland.
Email: fabiszak@amu.edu.pl
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3369-091X

Abdul Awal is currently a Ph.D. student at the Faculty of Philology, the Doctoral School of Humanities, at the University of Łódź, Poland. His research is focussed on linguistic imperialism and world Englishes. He is also a Virtual International Programme student in the summer 2022 semester at Justus-Liebig-Universität in Gießen, Germany. Additionally, his academic interests particularly include linguistic human rights, language policy and planning, linguistic justice, language and law, diversity management, and language planning and policy for indigenous minorities. Recently, he has participated in the "Introduction to the discourse of news media" programme at the 3rd edition of Innovation for NextGen EU International School of 1 Decembrie 1918 University, Alba Iulia, Romania. He has done a number of research training courses and workshops.

Jerzy Skwarzyński is a teaching fellow at John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, where he teaches translation and English as a foreign language. His doctoral thesis on the literary translation of fiction for adolescents was awarded distinction at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in 2021. He also holds an M.A. in Audiovisual Translation and Popular Culture from City, University of London. He has published translations in the literary journals *Akcent* and *Literatura na świecie*. His research interests include participant-based qualitative research in literary translation and psychological approaches to literary analysis.

Bálint Szántó is a first year PhD student at the Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies, University of Szeged, Hungary. He currently participates in the Literatures andCultures in English Doctoral program at the university. He previously studied English Studies with Business English specialization and American Studies. His research interests include modern American cinema, fandom studies, transmedia storytelling, digital culture, graphic novels, science fiction, and fantasy literature.

Information for Contributors

We invite our colleagues from Poland and abroad to contribute articles which would reflect their field of research and expertise. The articles will be blindly reviewed by two independent scholars prior to their publication. We hope to publish general issues as well as specific, topic-oriented ones. Our issues are open to all scholars working in English studies.

The journal encourages previously unpublished submissions in linguistics, applied linguistics, literature, cultural studies and related aspects of history. Papers should be written in English. Conference reports as well as book reviews which address similar issues are also encouraged. Proposals of edited thematic issues are also welcome.

General Information

1. Submission of an article for ***Polish Journal of English Studies*** equals accepting the following:
   - the journal publishes scholarly articles which offer new, original materials and information;
   - the journal does not offer any royalties;
   - full versions of all articles are available in the online (primary) version on the website of the journal: www.pjes.edu.pl;
   - the journal and its contents are included in appropriate databases of scholarly journals;
   - the authors are fully responsible for any information, illustration etc. included in their articles.
2. Each submitted article is first evaluated by the editorial board. Articles which do not fit the range of subject matter of the journal, do not keep academic standards, or include grave errors may be subject to desk rejection in case of which the authors will be immediately notified.
3. Articles which do not follow the editorial guidelines will not be considered for publication. Please, acquaint yourself with current Notes for Contributors on our website before submission.
4. After the initial acceptance by the board each article goes through double blind review process. Consequently, contributors are requested to submit their work in a form which allows the removal of all data of the author.

5. Each review must include unequivocal evaluation of the submitted text and clear recommendation concerning its acceptance or rejection.
6. The editorial board selects reviewers appropriate for each contribution also not included in the currently published list of reviewers.
7. The names of new reviewers are consequently added to the list which aims at including all the reviewers in the history of the journal.
8. The contributor receives reviews as soon as they are available as retains the right to respond to them in writing.
9. In case of inconclusive reviews the editorial boards retains the right to make the final decision or seek additional review.
10. The authors of accepted articles are requested to respond to the reviewers remarks in writing and correct their articles as soon as possible.
11. The online version is considered the primary (reference) version.
12. "Ghostwriting" and "guest authorship" are considered scholarly unreliability and as such they will be revealed including notifying appropriate authorities.

Notes for Contributors

13. Articles should be no longer than 6,000 words (including all in-text citations, footnotes and the "Works Cited" section).
14. Abstract (150-200 words each) along with 5 keywords should be attached.
15. Biodata (note 100-200 words in length) listing the author's education, professional experience, academic affiliations and achievements, etc. should be attached.
16. Chicago style (author-date system) should be used throughout. Major failure to comply with this requirement will result in your essay being automatically rejected.
17. Reference follows this pattern (Kowalski 2013, 37) (Name Year, Page) – any more specific bibliographic data should be included in "Works Cited" section at the end of the paper.

Examples of entries in Works Cited section:

Book with one author:

Pollan, Michael. 2006. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin.

Book with two authors:

Ward, Geoffrey C., and Ken Burns. 2007. *The War: An Intimate History*, 1941–1945. New York: Knopf.

Article in a scholarly journal:

Weinstein, Joshua I. 2009. "The Market in Plato's *Republic*." *Classical Philology* 104:439–58.

Chapter in a book:

Kelly, John D. 2010. "Seeing Red: Mao Fetishism, Pax Americana." In *Anthropology and Global Counterinsurgency*, edited by John D. Kelly, Beatrice Jauregui, and Jeremy Walton, 67–83. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

More detailed information is available at: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Remember to choose Author–Date option!

18. Short quotations (no more than thirty words or three lines of poetry) should be run on (i.e. included within the text, separated by quotation marks) and enclosed within double quotation marks. Longer quotations (more than thirty words) should appear as a separate block, double-spaced and additionally indented left and right. They are not to be enclosed within quotation marks.
19. The number of footnotes should be kept to a minimum. When simply citing the source, always use in-text citations. Footnotes may be used only to expand some thought or concepts that transcend the main text.
20. Italics (and not underlining) should be used for titles of larger works such as books, journals, films, etc. and double quotation marks for titles of shorter works such as articles, shorter poems (which are not published in a separate volume), etc..
21. The editors reserve the right to copyedit and proof-read all papers accepted for publication.
22. Book reviews should be preceded by publishing details of the book under review in the following format and order: Terry Eagleton, 2013. *How to Read Literature* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press)
23. They should NOT contain: title, abstract, keywords, "Works Cited" section, in-text citations.

NOTE! Only articles with the complete list of the required components (specifically, titled article, abstracts with keywords, complete bibliography

and in-text citations consistent with Chicago stylesheet, author's biodata) **will be considered for publication and recommended for review**. Authors are not allowed to submit any of the components separately. Otherwise, the articles will be returned to the authors until consistent with the requirements.

Papers should be submitted electronically to the Editor, Dr Anna Wołosz-Sosnowska at pjes@pjes.edu.pl, or via our contact form available at http://pjes.edu.pl/start/.

Further information is also available from the above address.

Publication Ethics and Publication Malpractice Statement

Polish Journal of English Studies (PJES) is a peer-reviewed journal committed to ensuring the highest standards of publication ethics. All parties involved in the act of publishing (editors, authors, reviewers and the publisher) have to agree upon standards of ethical behavior. The principles of Publication Ethics and Publication Malpractice Statement are based on the Code of Conduct and Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors of the Committee on Publication Ethics – COPE.

Responsibilities of the Editor and the Editorial Board of PJES

The editor and the editorial board of PJES are responsible for

- deciding which of the manuscripts submitted to the journal should be published. In making these decisions, they are guided by the policies of the journal and by legal requirements regarding libel, copyright infringement and plagiarism;
- providing guidance to guest editors, authors and reviewers on everything that is expected of them and also a description of peer review processes;
- providing new editorial board members with guidelines on everything that is expected of them and keeping existing members updated on new policies and developments;
- evaluating manuscripts exclusively on the basis of their academic and intellectual merit, without regard to the author(s)' race, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin, religious belief, citizenship, political orientation or social class;
- ensuring a fair and unbiased double-blind peer review of the manuscripts and that all information related to them is kept confidential. They also ensure that both authors' and peer reviewers' identities are protected;
- ensuring that appropriate reviewers are selected;
- developing and maintaining a database of suitable reviewers;
- ensuring that unpublished materials disclosed in a submitted manuscript are not used in an editor's own research without the express written consent of the author;

- taking reasonable responsive measures when ethical complaints are presented concerning a submitted or published manuscript.
- publishing corrections, clarifications, retractions and apologies whenever needed.

Guest Editors' Responsibilities

Guest editors are responsible for

- defining the subject matter and role of every article in a thematic issue;
- providing clear guidelines to authors regarding the topic and boundaries of their contributions and the overall design of the issue;
- ensuring, in collaboration with the editorial board, that appropriate reviewers are selected for all the articles (whether they have been commissioned or submitted as a result of a call for papers);
- establishing a timeline for draft paper submission, peer review, revision and final paper submission with the editorial board, and ensuring that all deadlines are met;
- writing the Introduction to the issue.

Authors' Responsibilities

- Authors of reports of original research should present an accurate account of the work performed as well as an objective discussion of its significance. Underlying data should be represented accurately in the manuscript. Fraudulent or knowingly inaccurate statements constitute unethical behaviour and are unacceptable;
- Authors should not submit the same manuscript simultaneously to more than one publication at a time. This constitutes unethical publishing behaviour and is unacceptable;
- Authors must ensure that they have written original works and that any work or words of others authors, contributors or sources have been appropriately credited and referenced;
- Authors submitting their works to PJES for publication as original articles confirm that the submitted works represent their own contributions and have not been copied or plagiarized in whole or in part from other works without clearly citing the source. Authors should cite publications that have been influential in determining the nature of the reported work;

- Plagiarism in all its forms constitutes unethical publishing behavior and is unacceptable;
- Authors must ensure that the manuscript has not been published elsewhere;
- Authorship should be limited to those who have made a significant contribution to the conception, design, execution, or interpretation of the reported study. All those who have made significant contributions should be listed as co-authors. Others who have participated in certain substantive aspects of the research project should be acknowledged or listed as contributors;
- The corresponding author with the journal should ensure that all appropriate co-authors are included in the author list of the manuscript, and that there is a full consensus of all co-authors in approving the final version of the paper and its submission for publication;
- Authors should disclose financial or other conflict of interest that might influence the results or interpretation of their manuscript. All sources of financial support should be disclosed;
- When an author discovers a significant error or inaccuracy in his/her own published work, it is the author's obligation to promptly notify the journal editors and cooperate with them to retract or correct the manuscript.

Reviewers' Responsibilities

- Peer review assists the editor and editorial board of PJES in making editorial decisions and, through the editorial communication with the author, may also assist the author in improving the manuscript;
- Any invited referee who feels unqualified to review the research reported in a manuscript or knows that its timely review will be impossible should immediately notify the editor so that alternative reviewers can be contacted;
- Any manuscripts received for review must be treated as confidential documents;
- Privileged information or ideas obtained through peer review must be kept confidential and not used for personal advantage;
- Reviewers must report to the editor of PJES if they are aware of copyright infringement and plagiarism on the author's part;
- Reviews should be conducted objectively, and observations should be formulated clearly with supporting arguments, so that authors can use them for improving the paper;

- Reviewers evaluate manuscripts based on content without regard to the authors' race, age, gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, religious belief, citizenship, political orientation or social class;
- Reviewers should not consider manuscripts in which they have conflicts of interest resulting from competitive, collaborative, or other relationships or connections with any of the authors, companies, or institutions connected to the papers.

Publisher's Responsibilities

As publisher of PJES, Polish Association for the Study of English (PASE)

- provides practical support to the editor and editorial board of PJES so that they can follow the COPE Code of Conduct for Journal;
- ensures the autonomy of editorial decisions;
- protects intellectual property and copyright;
- ensures that good practice is maintained to the standards defined above.

Adapted from *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais* (RCCS)
https://journals.openedition.org/rccs/5601

Open Access Statement