

# The ESSE Messenger



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# The ESSE Messenger

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**Editor:**

Dr. Adrian Radu  
Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania  
Faculty of Letters  
Department of English  
Str. Horea nr. 31  
400202 Cluj-Napoca  
Romania  
Email address: [esse.messenger@outlook.com](mailto:esse.messenger@outlook.com)

**Cover drawing:**

Mădălina Slova (10 years), Nicolae Bălcescu High-School, Cluj-Napoca (Romania), 2016

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## What's for supper tonight?

Translating food in children's literature.

The French translations of Nesbit's *Five Children and It*  
(1906 and 2004).

Mary Bardet

University of Roehampton (UK)

**Abstract:** This paper looks at the importance of cultural context when translating food items in children's literature. Using the two French translations of E. Nesbit's *Five Children and It* as a case study, it examines the changes in translating norms between 1906 and 2004 and the key role played by food when translating for children.

**Keywords:** Nesbit, Cultural Intertextuality, Food, Translation, Children's Literature.

Food has always been an integral part of children's literature. The powerful emotional connection between children and food can be readily witnessed through Rat's generous picnic baskets in *The Wind in the Willows* (Grahame, 1908); the lavish spreads provided throughout Enid Blyton's work and J.K. Rowling's heavily laden banqueting tables at Hogwarts. Vivid descriptions of food and mealtimes, gleaned from our early readings, are frequently carried forward with us into adulthood and our recollections of the decadently rich food depicted in literature often supplant memories of the storyline itself. These forceful images frequently become so firmly engrained in our minds that they intertwine with our own childhood memories: did I actually taste that slice of cherry cake and sip that ice-cold milk, or merely experience it through the pages of a book?

Consistent with Barthes notion of *jouissance* (Barthes, 1975), the sensory perceptions triggered by food in literature enhance the pleasure of reading a text, yet they are also irrevocably linked to the reader's own cultural background. Translators must be acutely sensitive to the array of cultural resonances present within a text and make highly strategic decisions as to how to present these to the target audience. The two French translations of *Five Children and It* (1902) stand almost one hundred years apart and thus form an excellent platform through which to explore the complex nature of children's literature in translation and the effect of time and place on cultural intertextuality. Intertextuality concerns the dynamics of a text and the cultural, linguistic and literary codes embedded within us, as readers. These enable us to interpret its meaning in a particular time, place and context. Text is not simply seen as a 'container of meaning, but as an intertextual space in which a number of elements are combined, absorbed and transformed' (González-Cascallana 2012: 98). By looking at where modifications occur between source and translated texts, we can examine the strategies chosen

by translators when dealing with cultural intertextuality; the norms governing their decisions and how these may have changed in course of the past hundred years.

Reading about food in literature provides us with a wealth of information about social values and manners of a particular period. Characters have no need to eat in order to stay alive and therefore food is effectively symbolic. Mealtimes themselves create a strong mimetic effect, which serves to emphasize underlying cultural and ideological tendencies dominant at the time of the production of the text (Daniel, 2006: loc112). My current research into Edith Nesbit's work in translation has led me to closely examine changes in cultural intertextuality when adapting a text for a new audience. In particular food and drink, which are notorious cultural dividers; a delicacy in one country may be considered inedible in another and, as such, translating food in children's literature is an extremely demanding process. It is ineffective to simply substitute one dish for another and translators must find the correct blend of associations, allusion and imagery to help the reader culturally connect to any given dish. Given the important role played by food in children's literature there is a huge potential for food-translation errors: translating food terminology is not simply a linguistic exercise but a cultural journey in itself.

The reader of a translated text should experience as closely as possible the same emotions as those experienced by the reader of the source text. In order to do this the translator has to make subtle adaptations to the cultural context of the text, adapting it to their target audience and deciding on the appropriate degree of domestication or foreignisation to be employed. Whilst domestication brings the source text closer to the culture of the target audience, foreignisation allows cultural elements of the source text to remain in the translated text and it is immediately recognisable as a translation. The extent of domestication or foreignisation of a text depends largely on the degree of tolerance permitted in the target audience (Gonzalez-Cascallana, 2012: 99). This may vary over a period of time, even within the same culture, as can be clearly seen in the two French translations of *Five Children and It*.

Like so many children's books, food is an important component to the storyline of *Five Children and It*. The children's adventures are strung between one meal and the next and their ill-fated wishes often get in the way of regular nourishment, as food becomes invisible, inaccessible or unobtainable. Nesbit's novel is widely considered a pivotal work in British children's literature and several generations of British writers have openly acknowledged the influence it has had on their own work. The novel was introduced to the French public via a translation by Jeanne Heywood entitled *La Fée des Sables* (1906). First serialised in *Mon Journal* in eighteen shortened episodes, between February and June 1906, it was then published in its entirety as part of the Hachette collection *Bibliothèque des écoles et des familles*. Despite this early exposure to the French market, this major work of Nesbit's languished forgotten on the library shelves for the greater part of the twentieth century. Finally, in 2003, *Gallimard Jeunesse* decided it was time for a fresh edition and commissioned Bee Formentelli to begin a new translation of *Five Children and It: Une Drôle de Fée* (2004), later retitled *Cinq Enfants et Moi* (2007).

With food featuring heavily in each and every chapter, transferring this epicurean information to a new readership via translation was a serious endeavour. Unlike translators of adult literature, translators of children's books are generally permitted a far greater freedom which allows them to adapt, abridge, delete or manipulate the text, as long as they adhere to Shavit's fundamental principles of affiliation:

1. Adjustment of the text to make it suitable for the child reader, according to the prevailing educational norms of society.
2. Adjustment of the plot, characterisation and language, in accordance with society's perception of a child's reading ability and level of comprehension at a given time.

The hierarchical relationship between these two principles varies depending on the underlying dominant cultural ideas of the period (Shavit, 2009:112). Translators therefore not only have to decide on the correct balance of domestication or foreignisation needed, but the text also needs to conform to norms of the target culture. Toury's theoretical model looks at preliminary and operational norms and provides a framework for studying literary translations by placing translation norms on a continuum between acceptability and adequacy. Toury labels the translator's choice of position between these poles the 'initial norm'. For a children's translation to behave like an original in the target system, it has to maintain a high degree of readability and fluidity and the initial translation norms are therefore consistently high in terms of acceptability (Puurtinen 2006:56-57). This in turn may have serious consequences on the stylistic adequacy of the final translation.

To look at the consequential effects of acceptability and adequacy norms when translating children's literature, let us turn to Nesbit's work in translation. In the course of their work translators occasionally come across lexical gaps in language: a word or expression that simply doesn't exist in the target language. This proved to be the case with 'ginger beer': the fizzy beverage so heavily featured in British children's books prior to 1960. There is no equivalent soft drink available in France and so the translators had to find a viable solution. Neither appeared to be able to decide on one exact term that could be substituted consistently for ginger beer. In Heywood's 1906 translation it is first translated as "*bierre*"/beer (1906:40). In this episode, the elder of the children, Cyril, purchases the drink from a tavern. The possibility of children buying beer would have been culturally plausible to the target audience of the time and the adjacent text has therefore been suitably altered. Nesbit's moral comment in the sentence "It's not wrong for men to go into pubs, only children" (1996:39) is removed and replaced by "*Pour un homme ce n'est pas mal d'entrer dans une auberge*" / It's not wrong for a man to go into a pub (1906:40). However, in the following chapter, our young heroes take a bottle of ginger beer with them as refreshment and this time Heywood translates ginger beer as *limonade*/lemonade (1906:55). To the target audience lemonade would be a more culturally appropriate item for the protagonists to be carrying with them and the translator has made an appropriate shift in language. However, as both beer and lemonade also exist in the source culture, adequacy has inevitably been sacrificed for acceptability.

In the later 2004 translation, Formentelli goes through an equally tortured process searching for the appropriate lexical term to use. She initially translates ginger beer as “*limonade au gingembre*”/ginger lemonade (2004:53) then as a “*boisson gazeuse au gingembre*”/ a fizzy ginger drink (2004:53), before finally settling on *limonade*/lemonade (2004:54). Although she tries to keep the essence of the text, by evoking the gingery-taste, she struggles to find a term that fits comfortably within her own norms of accessibility and adequacy. Ginger lemonade and a fizzy ginger drink may actually sound rather exotic to the young French reader and we therefore lose the traditional, slightly old-fashioned sentiment that the term ‘ginger beer’ may incite in young English readers. Linguistic gaps inevitably lead to a loss of one or more functions of a text. In this instance yielding to acceptability has led to a diminished emotional function in the French translation.

Generally Formentelli makes very few cultural adjustments when translating food items. Wherever possible she tries to stay true to her ideal that reading a book in translation should be “an adventure into a foreign country” and as such she tries to maintain as far as possible the “strangeness of the original [...] and not to erase or to soften too much the cultural differences” (Formentelli, 2015). One of the techniques she uses to maintain this high degree of foreignisation is the addition of footnotes. Formentelli uses this practice in all of her translations, successfully navigating her readers through the text by clarifying cultural shifts and explaining archaic terms through clear explanations at the bottom of the relevant page. Footnotes immediately lift the translator’s veil of invisibility, they cut through the fluidity of the text and the reader has to emerge from the story and take the time to process this additional information. It is at this point that the translator’s voice is most clearly heard over and above any other voices present in the text and the reader is conscious that they are reading a text in translation.

With three of the nine footnotes in Formentelli’s translation referring to food and mealtimes, the importance of correctly translating food in children’s literature is once again emphasised. Formentelli clarifies the use of the word *dîner* (2004:32), adding a footnote to explain the traditional timing of mealtimes in Britain at the beginning of the twentieth century: breakfast in the morning, followed by dinner at noon, tea at five o’clock and supper in the evening. For her young readers in France, dinner refers uniquely to the evening meal, whilst in Britain it is still possible to use lunch or dinner to refer to the meal eaten in the middle of the day. The other two footnotes are attached to “*sagou*”/sago (2004:130) and “*siphon*”/soda-water siphon (2004:209) and give clear precise explanations of these items. The 1990’s Puffin editions, on which Formentelli’s translation is based, have no such clarifications. However the latest Penguin Puffin Classics edition of *Five Children and It* (2008) now has a glossary of thirty-nine words and expressions that may be unfamiliar to contemporary English readers, including an explanation of the aforementioned sago pudding and soda siphon! Whilst footnotes may break the fluidity of the reading process, they provide the reader with vital information needed to decipher the text at the precise moment needed. However, not only have Penguin relegated their extra information to a glossary hidden at the back of the book, but no page numbers have been given to link the terms in the glossary back to the text. It is highly unlikely that a young reader would voluntarily stop reading in the middle of the

book and flip to the back with the vague hope of finding an explanation for an archaic expression. Although excessive footnotes are generally to be discouraged, a moderate number of well-placed footnotes may ease comprehension and allow for a greater degree of foreignisation.

Like all translators Formentelli uses a wide-range of translating techniques, occasionally turning to domestication and replacing an English food item with a more recognisable local equivalent. Changing the item to one that fulfils a similar function in the target culture, but is more familiar to the target audience, may allow for a neater transfer of cultural content. Formentelli translates 'penny buns' (1996:43) firstly as "*petit pains au lait*"/milk rolls (2004:59) and then as "*petit pains aux raisins*" (2004:60,) as if unsure as to which is the better cultural fit for the target reader. In fact both are suitable: they are both appropriate equivalents in the target culture and score highly on the acceptability continuum for young readers. Likewise 'sponge cake' is given the more recognisable name of "*gateau de Savoie*" (2004:54). The remaining food items are largely untouched and simply translated word-for-word from English into French. Formentelli thus manages to provide a cultural snapshot of food eaten in Britain at the beginning of the twentieth century. Her readers would be very much aware that they are holding a book written over one hundred years ago and as such would expect menus to differ from their own. With increasing exposure to foreign culture through the mass media and an expanding global market, many of the food items mentioned are now familiar in the target culture and simply need to be translated into French, with little need for domestication.

Heywood's earlier translation took a very different approach. Her target audience were contemporaries of the children portrayed in *Five Children and It* and sweeping changes were made to the menus, resulting in a high degree of domestication. The bland nursery food of Edwardian Britain was replaced with delicacies suitable for Heywood's young bourgeois readers in France. Nesbit's "minced beef" (1996:209) is transformed into a delightful dish of "*bœuf en daube*" (1906:156); the children drink hot chocolate for breakfast, instead of tea, and a healthy green salad is served to the children to accompany the cold veal and potatoes of the source text. Heywood clearly moves away from adequacy norms in order to comply as closely as possible with the received cultural norms at the time of translation. In this early part of the twentieth century the second of Shavit's principles clearly dominates translating norms. By progressively domesticating the text Heywood increases readability by adjusting plot, characterisation and language to fit the target culture.

Other foodstuffs were also carefully altered by Heywood and finely-tuned to fit the target reader's expectations and cultural norms: the children no longer buy penny buns at the baker's, but purchase the more familiar "*brioche*" (1906:44) at the *pâtisserie*; cold tongue has been replaced by the more palatable "*jambon*"/ham (1906:79) and Nesbit's pie becomes a classic "*tarte aux pommes*"/French apple tart (1906:79). Heywood successfully manages to capture the spirit of the book by changing Nesbit's serving of left-over cold mutton or hash to the equally unappetising French dishes of *Lentilles et bouilli froid*/lentils and cold boiled meat (1906:53) [1]. Here Nesbit's uninspiring choice of food serves to illustrate the monotonous passing of time, when nothing exciting appears to happen and even mealtimes cannot be relied upon to spice up the day. Heywood's

insipid dishes arouse the same tepid emotions, and readers on both sides of the channel could no doubt understand the anti-climax of expectantly sitting down to dinner, only to be served up uninspired dishes formed from the remnants of previous meals.

However, Heywood has altered some meals beyond recognition and, amusingly, the meals prepared at the gypsy camp have been transformed into dishes more suitable for consumption by her young middle-class readers. Nesbit's plain menu of a "bird, rather like a chicken but stringier, and boiled rabbit" (1996:75) have been transformed into "*la poule au pot traditionnelle et du lapin sauté avec des oignons*" / traditional chicken casserole and sautéed rabbit with onions (1906:67). These are certainly more familiar, and definitely more appetising, to Heywood's young readers, but rather out of keeping with the humble, makeshift meal detailed in the source text. Instead of reproducing the image of the poacher's ill-gained loot cooking haphazardly over a smoky campfire, the reader is presented with recognisable dishes that could be simmering away in their own kitchen at home.

Reading about meals in fiction provides us with a wealth of information about the social values and customs of a particular period. However, the wider the time gap between source text and translation, the more willing the target reader is to acknowledge that food habits have changed over time and thus accept cultural differences in food, allowing the translator a greater opportunity for foreignisation. Nevertheless, there is a fine balance to be struck between adequacy and acceptability when translating for children. Indeed, there may be a case to be argued for a certain degree of domestication when translating cultural intertextuality: for if you have never tasted a madeleine, can you really appreciate Proust?

### Note

[1] Not to be confused with *la bouillie*, which is a gruel-like substance made from cereal.

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# Of Neverland and Young Adult Spaces in Contemporary Dystopias

Anna Bugajska

Tischner European University, Cracow

**Abstract:** The article discusses the recurrent Neverland topos in selected young adult dystopias through the prism of Michel Foucault's heterotopia theory. The chosen texts – Neal Shusterman's *Unwind* Dystology (2007-14) and Nancy Farmer's Matteo Alacrán series (2002; 2013) make explicit references to Barrie's classic novel, thus validating the investigation into deeper relations between the Edwardian text and the contemporary dystopias of the southern American border. Following dystopianizing Neverland by McCaughrean's *Peter Pan in Scarlet*, the authors exhaust the paradoxical nature of Neverland's utopia, creating diversified, heterotopian spaces, which become the backdrop for the disquieting adventures of revised Lost Children.

**Keywords:** Neverland, utopia, dystopia, heterotopia, young adult

In the old days at home the Neverland had always begun to look a little dark and threatening by bedtime. Then unexplored patches arose in it and spread, black shadows moved about in them, the roar of the beasts of prey was quite different now, and above all, you lost the certainty that you would win. (Barrie 135)

Neverland, since its appearance in *Peter Pan and Wendy*, has become a by-word for the utopian space of children's dreams: "more or less an island", where "believing" is "making", and in which marvellous adventures are organized in a predictable circle. (Barrie 86) Quite soon in the narrative, though, when the Darlings arrive in Peter's abode, it turns out that the "unexplored patches" and menacing shadows they were pre-sensing by bedtime in their homes, do exist. Neverland, although sharing some features with classical utopia, reveals at the same time the paradoxical nature of the *eu*-topic dream, arrested between future and "never", real and make-believe, safe and threatening, known and unknown, hope and despair. (Oțoiu 252, Vieira 4) These spaces of uncertainty provide rich field for exploration and reinterpretation, both in fiction and literary criticism.

The tensions existent in the original Neverland have been reheated numerous times, as Peter Pan's story developed into a sprawly, rather than compact world of intertextual relations. In adolescent dystopian fiction, which has gained overwhelming popularity in the recent decades, the Neverland topos has reappeared in various shapes: as Glade in *Maze Runner* (2009), Prettytown in *Uglies* (2005), or Perdido Beach in *Gone* series (2008-13). One could assume that after *The Lord of the Flies* (1954) the dystopias would utilize the same pattern of corrupting the paradise of "coral islands". However, the authors do not necessarily follow in the footsteps of Golding's depiction of the breakdown of civilization in the face of one's dark desires. What they borrow from the turn-of-the-century children's fiction is the initial assumption of a group of parentless teenagers who seek or realize around them their particular Neverlands in concrete

locations. From the start, then, the Neverlands are defined as “spaces-and-no-spaces”: a fusion of the mental state and the physical actuality.

In this light, the concept of heterotopias, forwarded by Michel Foucault in 1967, emerges as a particularly useful theoretical framework for the discussion of contemporary dystopian Neverlands, understood as concretized mindscapes. The term, borrowed from medicine, originally referred to the presence of one tissue within the other. Even at this very basic level one can see how apt a metaphor it offers for young adult fiction: the juvenile dystopias, frequently dealing with victimization of teenagers, do present them as a foreign body in the bosom of the society, or else as somehow deviant or “divergent”. Further in his definition, Foucault offers even deeper possibilities of interpretation by transposing the notion to the realm of culture. Heterotopia would signify a special space for Otherness: whether for those experiencing some sort of transformation or initiation (heterotopia of crisis) or for those rejected by the society because of breaking its rules (heterotopia of deviation). (Bădulescu 2, Foucault 4-5, 8, Vieira 18) Both of these are relevant for young adult literature, which features characters at the liminal stage of their lives and not infrequently rebelling against the existing social order. As Neverland itself has been recognized as a heterotopia (Tatar 26) and provides space both for maturation (children) and deviation (pirates), the bridge between the types of juvenile fiction in question is easily established. Worth noting, though, that whereas the heterotopia of crisis would seem natural in juvenile fiction, contemporary dystopias do not underscore a coming-of-age, pubertal dimension of the young adult experience that strongly. Rather, as will be shown in the discussion below, the authors tend to veer towards the search for one’s own identity, intimately connected with the feelings of alienation and disappointment with nursery-room dreamlands.

It is understandable, then, that the space is immediately problematized: the narratives, focusing on the volatility and mobility, do not allow for anchoring Neverland to one particular location. This remains in agreement with the fact that heterotopias often exist as oxymoronic places-and-no-places, emanating their fragility and transitoriness, as exemplified by the mirror, the train, the boat, or the boarding school. One could venture that heterotopias emphasize the travelling, nomadic stage of reaching utopias. (Bădulescu 4, 7, Foucault 3, Vieira 7) Naturally, such virtual realities are abundantly present in juvenile dystopian fiction, which portrays teenagers on trains or hovercraft, as Runners or avians. The authors do reach also to the technological realm, designing such ambiguous digital spaces as podcasts or MMORGs.

In the following paragraphs I would like to focus on the discussion of the Neverland topos in contemporary young adult dystopias through the lens of Foucault’s theory. For the vastness of available material, I am going to refer to two authors who directly invoke Barrie’s novel: Neal Shusterman (*The Unwind* Dystology, 2007-14) and Nancy Farmer (*Matteo Alacrán* series, 2002, 2013). I intend to limit the analysis only to those heterotopias which – like the Peter Pan novel – focus on the Lost Children, making them the dominant community of their Neverlands. As far as Shusterman’s cycle, such spaces are constituted by: the Airplane Graveyard, harvest camps (especially the Happy Jack Harvest Camp) and the Stork Brigade of Mason Starkey (an instance of a “nomadic” Neverland).

When it comes to Farmer's novels, prominent examples are the Plankton Factory and the land of Opium (together with Paradise in Chiricahua Mountains).

Both authors build tightly intertextual spaces, with multiple and creative references to literary and cultural phenomena, as diverse as French existentialism, Disney movies, Saint Francis' teachings or the frontier juvenile literature. As far as children's literature, the novels are deeply rooted in the oeuvre of such authors as Beatrix Potter, Frank L. Baum and Lewis Carroll, frequently with direct references. However, quite naturally, it is *Peter Pan and Wendy* that emerges as the master story behind the tales about rejected kids in utopian context. The original setup is remade, some elements of it displaced, but it is still recognizable. Shusterman offers a Southern Gothic look at the problem of Lost Children, placing his novel in the futuristic American South, where teenagers between 13 and 18 are given up by their parents to serve as donors for transplants. Those who run away form an AWOL community, trying to escape death from the hands of Juvenile Authority and parts pirates until they reach maturity and are protected by law. Farmer, on the other hand, takes up the issue of illegal immigration over the Mexican-American border, and her characters – explicitly called Lost Boys and Girls – are mostly the children of immigrants, caught on the border, frequently orphaned and forced to work in Aztlán (Mexican) “paradise” or a drug empire they ironically dub “Dreamland”.

Whereas the original Neverland is a mindscape (Oțoiu 238), not connected with the societal displacement of Otherness to some physical location, the dystopian authors point to very concrete places where the adolescent are removed. It is particularly well-visible in Shusterman's novels. Some of the AWOLs that manage to contact the Anti-Divisional Resistance movement are sent in crates or coffins to the Airplane Graveyard in Arizona, which haven the Juvenile Authority allows to exist, because it keeps the remaining Unwinds – children designed to be “unwound” into parts – rare and more expensive (Shusterman 2013, 127). The place is initially run by the Admiral, but later by Connor Lassiter, the main character and a legendary AWOL, making it a teenage version of Neverland, almost completely cut off from adult supervision. It is worth keeping in mind, though, that even there, like in the original version of the master story, the young community is threatened, not only from the outside, but also from the inside. The seemingly supportive ADR movement proves to be as manipulative as the Juvenile Authority or Proactive Citizenry, and there is dissent among the youths living in the Graveyard, which leads to the final dissolution of the community.

Both the external and the internal menace can be referred to the piratical tradition of Neverland, with novel versions of Hook and Starkey, and the organization of “parts pirates”. Connor's nemesis is Nelson, a “Juvie” who was tranquilized by the AWOL with his own gun. Like James Hook, he pursues Connor, trying to take his revenge upon him, until he reaches a sad end. The controlling, superego principle Nelson represents is shown as deeply corrupted: on his way, he is gathering the eyes of children he catches and transplants them into his own sockets. The ironic reference to the one-eyed British Admiral plays up the maritime allusions, rooting the adventures of Connor in the original heterotopian symbols (a boat, Foucault 9). Starkey, the pirate-usher, is reborn as Connor's rival, organizing his own group of Unwinds that brutally fight against

the system. Similarly to Hook in *Peter Pan*, his hand is damaged, as he manages to escape justice by crushing his own wrist. He ends up cooperating with the anarchist groups in the United States, whose aim is to “create chaos for chaos’s sake” (Shusterman 2015, 273).

Although, as can be seen, the criminal associations of Nelson and Starkey are quite strong, the majority of dystopian “pirates” represent law enforcement, making the transformation of the Peter Pan story particularly subversive. It remains in agreement with what Foucault notices about contemporary times: that together with the death of the age of sails, pirates are replaced by the police (Foucault 9). Such a change necessitates repositioning of heterotopia to the place connected with “discipline and punishment”, as the force imposing normativity is challenged. Whereas originally the pirates were those who created their deviant kingdom (Madagascar), which made them the symbols of Otherness, shaping Neverlands, the police haunt utopian spaces like destructive spectres of the oppressive system. They no longer constitute the creative principle, but rather the destructive one. Even if the Graveyard is created under the police supervision, the Juvenile Authority do not simply provide a convenient enemy within the boundaries of fantasy, but they step outside those boundaries, closing the Lost Children in an elaborate prison.

It is partly explained by the character of the Children. The community inhabiting the Graveyard is a large amalgamation of troubled teenagers, rejected by their parents for various reasons, thus creating a heterotopia of deviation. They either display violent behaviour or have criminal tendencies, do not make satisfactory progress at school, were unwanted in the family from the start, were brought up to be donors because of religious reasons, or are orphans given up as budget cuts in State Homes. Whereas Barrie’s Lost Boys find themselves in Neverland because of the negligence of their nannies, the teenage population of the Graveyard is painfully aware of being consciously rejected. Not only does Shusterman explore various dysfunctions in families which result in the rise of the “feral teens” (Shusterman 2014, 396, Shusterman 2015, 133), but also he draws attention to the discourse of the media, stigmatizing teenagers as a mob (Shusterman 2014, 305, 49-50, Shusterman 2015, 39, 44), and making from them not a group of an initiatory crisis but of deviation, thus fit to be locked up in a sequestered space. They suffer from the same bitter resentment unruly Peter does, barred from his home and replaced by some other kid (Barrie 206).

Obviously, a junkyard is not a real-life solution to the problem of violent youth, as far as space is concerned, although novels such as Mulligan’s *Trash* (2010) signal that the actual experience of living among scrap is one of the teens from poorer parts of the world. Shusterman’s novels, taking place in affluent America, make use of the plane graveyard as extended metaphor. It is worth relating it to Neverland’s context: as Maria Tatar writes in her introduction to the Centennial edition of *Peter Pan*, the aspect of flight is crucial to the vision of Barrie’s imagined world – a part of utopian dream of every child (Tatar 22). Shusterman hints, then, that one of the basic childhood dreams gets broken: young adults cannot land safely in Neverland, because the airport and the airlines – the “fairy dust” – no longer exist.

All around them, *everywhere*, are airplanes, but there's no sign of an airport—just the planes, row after row, for as far as the eye can see. Many are from airlines that no longer exist. She turns to look at the jet they just arrived on. It carries the logo of FedEx, but this craft is a sorry specimen. It seems about ready for the junkyard. Or, thinks Risa, *the graveyard* . . . (Shusterman 2009, 179)

“So why are we here?” Noah asks as the rescue party pulls down the main aisle—the busiest “street” of the Graveyard, flanked by a series of large aircraft that make up the core of their living space, each one named by Unwinds who have long since left. Names like Crash Mamma, for one of the main girls’ dorms; the ComBom, a veteran World War II bomber that’s become their computer and communications center; and of course IHOP, the International House of Purgatory, where new arrivals like Noah stay until they’re given a job and integrated into the Graveyard.

“The Graveyard’s where you’ll live until you turn seventeen,” Connor tells Noah. (Shusterman 2013, 77)

The images are particularly relevant to the post-9/11 world, with passenger airliners’ carcasses defying the optimistic vision of Brothers Wright’s invention, so cheerfully followed by Edwardian children. Whereas the society pushes out the “deviant” adolescents, making it a heterotopia of deviation, the graveyard becomes also a heterotopia of crisis: a place which you stay in until you mature and are admitted as a rightful member of the community that ousted you. This double-sidedness of the heterotopian coin is true in the majority of cases in young adult dystopias. In fact, it is claimed that the two sides are not so clearly separable and often signify the same thing (Wilkinson). The confounding of the boundaries between the two will be visible in the examples discussed below.

However, the maturation dimension is noticed by the teens themselves, rather than the adults. It is observable that the dystopian state fails to recognize the crisis stage of the teenage population, labelling youths as misfits and banishing them to spaces associated with imprisonment and death, rather than education and growth. Another example of such proceedings are harvest camps designed for a comforting passage to the idealized “divided state” (Shusterman 2013, 9, 19, 36, 63). Instead of an institutionalized heterotopia of crisis (like a boarding school, Foucault 4), Shusterman builds up a state heterotopia of deviation where the “dysfunctional”, unruly Unwinds are gathered to await the operation (Shusterman 2013, 9, 60). Unlike the Graveyard, where the pretences of freedom are held against dire backdrop, places like Happy Jack Harvest Camp are “located in spectacularly scenic locations”, the rooms are maintained in pastel colours, and the staff wear Hawaiian shirts and “sunshine yellow scrubs”. (Shusterman 2009, 265) Just like the grafts people get are supposed to remain invisible, the reality of the camps is hidden behind a holiday resort facade. Unwinds who do not manage or do not want to escape being dismembered end up in paradise-like places, where they live carefree until their operation. This particular Neverland, although seemingly dominated by underage population, is run by adults who try to engineer the illusion of happy childhood most of the kids did not share. Only those brought up to be unwound – tithes – seem to embrace the sugarcoated culture of death and play into the lie (Shusterman 2009, 273, 179-84). Like the original Neverland, the camps are communities whose members either choose to “believe in fairies” and keep up the utopian vision or have to face the despair of their

abandonment by the closest ones to certain death. Finally, they can aim at destroying the illusion and finding another space to inhabit.

This is the choice Mason Starkey makes. He is one of kids who are “storked” by their biological parents at the porch of somebody else’s house, and then are given up by the ones that bring them up. He forms from them the Stork Brigade, capitalizing on the destruction of the Graveyard and carrying on attacks on harvest camps. His Lost Children are travelling with him around the South-West America to retain their freedom, at first assuming heterotopian guises anchoring them in the adult world: Camp Red Heron and the Egret Academy. With painstaking care Starkey builds up the images of perfect pupils in the care of trusted teachers, which have no fixed place – they are held together by a common name and an array of leaflets. Soon enough, though, it turns out that “we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another” (Foucault 3). Self-banished to the semblances of elite schools, the youths find it increasingly difficult to hide behind the adult-designed heterotopia. The rift between the social expectations and the internal need for authenticity of young adults is too broad for the illusion to be upkept by a single sleight of hand: it takes a sequence of disguises, all of them transitory and unsatisfactory.

As Oțoiu (245) writes in his essay on *Peter Pan*,

All these projects seem to be less about the needs of the children and more about the expectations that society has for them. The child is not regarded as an individual per se, but as a potential future citizen. The child is a blueprint of an adult, a construction site, and one fraught with the many perils of deviation, vice or idleness; and these must be fought vigorously, with means that seem to often run against the child’s present well-being.

Starkey realizes that Neverland is not to be realized as a physical place. It is basically an adult dream: wishful thinking back on grown-ups’ own childhood as well as rose-colored visions of the world they create: “clean-cut, blond, well-groomed” and “ethically responsible” people living in a “high-end retreat” (Shusterman 2014, 196-7), who in the end turn out to be a group of scared kids in “the claustrophobic confines of the abandoned mine” (Shusterman 2014, 262). This is why he “kicks the dark stone walls. He kicks the rotting beams. He kicks everything in sight, searching for something breakable” (262), ready to self-destruct to be acknowledged by the society which continues to ignore his existence. The militaristic name the group adapts still-frames the irresolvable conflict within the society, and positions children as disposable cannon fodder (even in Starkey’s eyes, Shusterman 2014, 263). The Stork Brigade becomes yet another tragic heterotopia of deviation, baring the paradoxical, ill-constructed relations between adults and children (Foucault 8).

Admittedly, the pretences of contemporary dreamworld – sports facilities, high-speed Internet, quality arcade and TV nested in popular holiday destinations – serve in *The Unwind* Dystology mostly to introduce ironic contrast with the moral corruption of those who build it. The spaces described above rather exist around the “Lost Children” than are their own creation. Even Starkey’s group – a heterotopia grounded in the common “stork” label rather than a place – are

deprived of their own vision and sense of direction, which underscores the dimension typical of dystopias: that of despair and disillusionment.

Conversely, in Nancy Farmer's Matteo Alacrán novels hope in a utopia (America or Atzlán) or a echronia (in the future) is the propellant for the characters' actions. The "brave new world" they naively imagine emigrating from their homelands is so deeply ingrained in their minds that it is not affected by the slave labour they are forced to perform and the loss of their relatives. The orphaned children that end up in Mexican factories firmly believe in the existence of a better place where their parents are waiting for them: "My dad's living in the United States. He's got so much money, he can't even fit it into his pockets; and he's going to send for me as soon as he buys a house." (Farmer 2002, 271) However, instead in American capitalist heaven, to which they were trying to get, they end up in the Plankton Factory, organized like a Marxist utopia around the principles of equal distribution of labour and resources. Similarly to Unwinds in the harvest camps, the child slaves in factories are seen in terms of marketable goods and the ceilings of production they can hit. When found unproductive or rebellious, they are sent to the Boneyard to die. The escape from poverty, the chief reason for immigration pointed to by the author, does not lead the characters to the land of plenty, but to a multilevelled limbo, designed to host another alien group within the bosom of the society. Farmer's Lost Children are thrice banished to a heterotopian space: as children, as orphans, and as would-be immigrants.

The children are arrested on their journey to Neverlands in a yet another heterotopia of deviation. "He learned that the Keepers were in charge of people who couldn't take care of themselves. They took in the orphans, the homeless, the insane and molded them into good citizens. The orphans were known as Lost Boys and Lost Girls, and they lived in different buildings." (Farmer 2002, 267) What makes the children different and lost is the lack of parents but also the attitude of these parents: they rejected Mexico (Aztlán) and strove to ameliorate their existence, thus denying the vision of a Latin American utopia. Therefore, the orphans find themselves in a no-place, which contradicts their identities and makes them ask questions about the feasibility of utopian projects. The children's world splits into "Latin" and "American", full of paradoxes and absurd. The Plankton Factory is American, but no paradise; it is their homeland, but is denying them their place in it. Once disillusioned, the children seem to disembark the system obsessed with idealized vision that promises they will one day reach the Golden Isles. "What if we don't want to reach the shore?" asks Chacho (Farmer 2002, 273), preferring to remain in the imaginary heterotopia of a boat, ever floating and never running on the rocks of disappointment. The belief in a better world is so pervasive that it keeps the children journeying, refusing to accept the physical reality offered by the Factory's Keepers. It shows how hope is inherent in heterotopian spaces, and that those who choose to remain in them, attempt to bypass the dystopian world that surrounds them.

Among the Lost Children is Matt Alacrán, the main character. In his homeland, Opium, he wanted for nothing: his escape was not due to poverty but to the threat on his life. He hoped to reach a Franciscan convent in San Luis where he could seek help from his friend María. This space is idealized by him to motivate his friends to help him escape the Factory. Matt's imagined Neverland is "a castle on a hill", full of girls singing religious hymns and eating toasts and

honey (Farmer 2002, 345-6): deeply rooted in his early childhood, a mélange of American Dream, fervent religiosity and abundant food. Even though the Plankton Factory is close to San Luis, the proximity makes the contrast between one space and the other even harsher:

Matt tumbled to his knees on hot sand. He sucked in air and immediately regretted it. The smell outside was even worse. It was like thousands of fish rotting and oozing in the hot sun. Matt gave in to the inevitable and emptied his stomach. Not far away Chacho was doing the same. "I was in purgatory. Now I'm in hell," he groaned.

"Make it stop," sobbed Fidelito.

Matt pulled himself to his feet and dragged the little boy toward a building shimmering in the heat. All around, Matt saw blinding white hills and crusted pools stained with crimson. (Farmer 2002, 279)

The motif of decomposing sea creatures and polluted water is used repetitively in the novels, especially *The House of the Scorpion*, whenever Farmer designs the space for Otherness. The foul smell and toxic exhalation surround the "eejit" – chipped labourers' – pens (Farmer 2002, 172), the border region (the Colorado River, Farmer 2002, 346-8), the Gulf of Colorado (whales' cemetery – the Boneyard) and the Plankton Factory. Whereas Shusterman focuses on the link between the Lost Children and technology, Farmer makes a parallel between the young and the natural environment. This dimension obviously recalls the deep connection between the children in the Peter Pan novel, who live under the Never Tree, and the purity of Nature. In this, the original Neverland was a utopian space, untouched by the wrongs of industrialization. Farmer, however, cannot ignore the ecological crisis the contemporary world experiences. By reserving the conditions of heat and pollution for the Other spaces, she underlines that the question of ecological disaster the world is currently facing is being shoved under the carpet: banished to a heterotopian waiting room, not to spoil the artificial image of a happy society. What is more, the author shows how children and young adults are sometimes found repulsive and how they are discriminated: associated with bad smell, decomposing bodies and troublesome surplus (plankton). Consequently, the question of a "clean", sterile and controlled production of new beings looms in sight and is explored by the author.

Although Matt makes friends with some of the Lost Children, he is alienated even within this group. Firstly, he comes from the drug empire (Opium), which is perceived by others as a haunted, demonic land. Secondly, he displays high manners since he was brought up in the house of the chief drug lord, El Patrón. Thirdly, and most importantly, he is a clone – an unnatural creation made from the cells of El Patrón to provide parts for transplants. As much as the society has come up with heterotopias for orphans, immigrants and youngsters in general, there is no defined space in the society where a clone could be fitted. As Pence claims, "Indeed, use of the words "the clone" is now pejorative and to write "an army of escaping clones" differs little from using such language as "a bunch of white chicks" or "a bunch of queers.'" (195) When Matt lived in Opium, he was often treated like an animal and even kept in a room filled with chicken litter. As was the case with the Mexican orphans, the space for those of undecided identity is here presented through the metaphor of decomposition:

First he attracted wasps to a chunk of apple. Then he lured a glorious, buzzing fly to a piece of spoiled meat. It sat on the meat, just as though it had been invited to dinner, and rubbed its hairy paws as it gloated over the meal. Afterward Matt discovered a writhing mass of worms living in the meat, and he watched them grow and eventually turn into buzzing flies themselves. (Farmer 2002, 44)

“That got you, didn't it? Wait'll I tell your girlfriend how cute you are now. You smell like a pile of dung.”

Matt felt idly beneath the sawdust for something he'd been feeding to bugs. It was an entire orange. At first it had been green, but time had turned it blue and very soft. Worms filled the inside, diverting Matt with their wiggly bodies. (Farmer 2002, 45)

The mouldy orange Matt throws at his bully is an ironic defiance of the Californian Dream of a man-made paradise, with distant echoes of Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. It also foreshadows the following events of the cycle: the boy that was denied humanity and locked in a sphere between people and animals finally inherits El Patrón's empire and, together with it, the drug lord's heterotopia of deviation, hosting criminals, immigrants and artificially created beings.

Opium was initiated as the realization of El Patrón's childhood dream of power and wealth, which he achieved through extreme control (chipping people) and slave labour (immigrants). When after the drug lord's death Matt finds himself a juvenile boss of the crime world with few adults to support him, he embarks on his own utopian project. He intends to remove the chips and free the slaves, however, apart from these, he wants to build a Neverland for himself and his friends. In his idealistic vision, he would marry María and provide the Lost Boys with everything they could wish for. As his friends arrive in Opium, he organizes a party that brings to life all their dreams:

Ton-Ton, Chacho, and Fidelito were coming on the next train, and their eyes would drop out when they saw what Matt had arranged. They would have a circus, a professional soccer game, a rodeo, guitarists from Portugal, and food undreamed of by boys who had lived in a plankton factory. Ton-Ton had eaten ice cream only a few times in his life, and Fidelito had only seen pictures of it. So many wonderful experiences lay in store for Matt's compadres. He had only to stretch out his hand, and whatever he wanted was his. (Farmer 2013, 203)

Matt's utopia is much more akin to Barrie's Neverland than other similar spaces in adolescent dystopian fiction, in that it is not a testing ground or a prison created by adults but an enclosed area to host childhood dreams and give protection to the abandoned. Like Neverland, it denies the wrongs of the outside world, surrounded by an impassable barrier which only Matt can open. The last remnants of unspoiled Nature are kept in a biosphere, which the boy intends to spread on the whole of his country (Farmer 2013, 183, 404), while the rest of the world struggles with ecological disaster. In Barrie's world, pirates and American Indians, non-existent in reality, were removed to the realm of nursery dreams: by borrowing Peter Pan convention, Farmer seems to suggest that biodiversity and lack of pollution are in the same position as the romanticized, lost past to which Edwardians looked back with nostalgia.

A special place is reserved for cloned children. Besides Matt, there are other clones in Opium: those who survive are El Bicho, Mbongeni and Listen. Matt and

El Bicho are direct descendants of El Patrón, with the latter displaying violent, antisocial tendencies. Listen and Mbongeni are Africans, with Mbongeni mentally retarded. In such a composition Farmer shows the equalization of various socially discriminated groups and removing them to a place “in the heart of El Patrón’s empire” (Farmer 2013, 104), but at the same time out of consciousness. The clones are living in Paradise, a medical facility in Chiricahua Mountains, awaiting their turn in the succession of disposable bodies. Matt immediately notices the transformation of an ultimate utopian space into a high-tech Pandora Box of crime and disease (e.g. stocks of bio-warfare): “*I wonder if you can get sick in heaven.*” (Farmer 2013, 404) By using a quotation from Emperor Jehangir (1569-1627, Pandit 35) - “If there is Paradise on Earth, it is here, it is here, it is here” (Farmer 2013, 106) – Farmer displaces this Neverland to an Indian location, metonymic for an exotic no-place. The similarity between this social idealization of imprisonment, with subsequent denial of any segregation, and the reality described by Shusterman (harvest camps) is striking. It reposes on the same principle of illusion so essential to heterotopias: “their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory...” (Foucault 8) The double consciousness of the society when it comes to people of different race, gender, ethnicity, the sick, the cloned or otherwise “alien” or “illegal”, is gathered in Farmer’s narrative in this ironic children’s “paradise”, where the fountain of youth spouts real water over kids’ smiles carved in stone (Farmer 2013, 126).

To finish the discussion of heterotopian spaces in the two cycles, one needs to note that, in contradistinction to Neverland, which is an imaginative creation upbuilt over the cultural heritage, the places in which Shusterman and Farmer choose to implant the link between contemporary dystopias and Barrie’s novel are rooted in physicality. The image of cemetery grows out of the actual Airplane Graveyard, the image of the holiday resort springs from Happy Jack campsite, and the orphanage from Mexican *maquiladoras*. The authors show the disquieting realities of these ordinary spaces as if in a distorting mirror: whereas writers like Ballantyne, Barrie or Golding displaced Neverlands and nightmares far from the actual everyday experience, “second to the right, and straight on till morning”, Shusterman and Farmer bring these close at hand.

All of these are, incidentally, located around the Mexican-American border. The liminality of this setting invites further heterotopian associations. San Luis in Matteo Alacrán cycle is a mirror city – lying on two sides of the border – and Opium is a mirror-country: Matt experiences American reality through Latino lenses (e.g. *Pedro el Conejo* story, for Potter’s *Petter Rabbit*). Starkey’s AWOLs briefly enter Mexican airspace to return to the U.S. under the signature of another plane and land on the Salton Lake (in itself a mirror). These relations, confusing and disorienting, are – as Foucault claims – necessary for the reconstitution of identity.

From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there. Starting from this gaze that is, as it were, directed toward me, from the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am. The mirror functions as a heterotopia

in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there. (Foucault 4)

In Shusterman's *Dystology* the Lost Children are recognized and admitted to the society, and most of them reconstitute their identity. It is best visible in Connor's being unwound and rewound into himself again, and his making up with his parents. Graveyards and camps are not necessary anymore. Farmer, on the other hand, leaves the ending open, with Matt still closed in his own heterotopia. The author implies that heterotopias are necessary to the functioning of human beings: they provide spaces which host people, things and concepts that are incompatible with the society. Matt, as Don Sombra, plans to retain his Neverland, recognizing that people either are not yet ready to embrace Otherness or they never will be (Farmer 2013, 404). Just like Peter needed his Shadow, the boy intends to be the shadow of the outside world, ruling over those who do not have a place to go to.

The analysis of Neverlands in the two dystopian cycles showed that the transformations the topos has undergone inscribe themselves well into the heterotopian theory of Michel Foucault. The prevalence of heterotopias of deviation and recurring motif of cemetery are typical for dystopian convention. It could be seen that in young adult context the space of deviation is usually also the space of maturation (heterotopia of crisis); however, not necessarily. The characters naturally grow during their adventures, but this aspect is played down by the authors to foreground contemporary social issues: the phobia of "feral" teenagers, of new children (physicality – the smell – and overpopulation), coupled with the fears of new technologies, terrorists and ecological disaster. The "unexplored patches" of Neverland may likely conceal heterotopian caches ready to be used by the coming generations as spaces of Otherness – not spoiling the utopianism of Neverland, but introducing balance, allowing it to exist.

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# When do you stop being a young adult and start being an adult?

## Writing the blurry borders of childhood in Kevin Brooks's young adult novels

Virginie Douglas

ERIAN, University of Rouen, France

**Abstract:** This essay focusses on the subcategory within children's literature which is closest to "adult" or mainstream literature — young adult (YA) literature —, a thriving branch of the children's book market. The analysis of the YA novels by British author Kevin Brooks, an author who writes for teens, young adults and adults will show to what extent the writing aimed at young adults endeavours to convey the sense of ambivalence and in-betweenness in themes, setting, style and genre, thus challenging previously-constructed representations of childhood and of children's books.

**Key words:** British children's novels, young adult literature, Kevin Brooks, childhood vs adulthood

British author Kevin Brooks is considered as one of the rising stars in the category within children's literature called "young adult (YA) fiction", a category that has sparked a great deal of interest lately. Like several of his fellow young adult authors (Peter Dickinson, Adèle Geras, Philip Pullman, Patrick Ness, etc.), Brooks both writes for young people and for adults, a fact which emphasizes how blurry the border between the two categories can be. What is more remarkable is that, on the whole, his career proves the usual publishing pattern wrong. His adult fiction is composed of two series of detective novels, the Johnny Delgado series (2006-2008) and the Private Investigator John Crane series (2011-2013); but within his children's fiction, apart from the Travis Delaney series of detective novels (2014-15), which is aimed at younger teenagers or even tweens (i.e. from about eleven to fourteen), Brooks's work only comprises standalone YA novels, as well as five short "dyslexia-friendly" novels rather aimed at teens, contradicting the general tendency to seriality which seems to have come to characterize most juvenile fiction lately. The eleven YA novels (i.e. aimed at sixteen- to twenty-year-old readers roughly), published almost at an annual rate, are those which interest us most as, from his 2002 debut novel *Martyn Pig* to his novel *The Bunker Diary* (2013, recipient of the 2014 Carnegie Medal), they all put the young adult (whether the protagonist, narrator or reader) with his/her specificities at the heart of the book. (Brooks, Kevin. *The Bunker Diary*. London: Penguin, 2013)

This paper seeks to examine in what way Kevin Brooks's novels for young adults can be set apart from those aimed at adults and can therefore be related to the category of children's literature. Although the different categories in his writing evidently share themes, motifs and, often, setting, the two kinds of fiction seem to diverge from each other in several ways. We shall pay particular attention to the way the YA novels depict the transition from childhood to adulthood

through characters falling into adult age as they fall in love, and/or experience extreme violence or metamorphosis. We will show how, by exploring the complexity but also asserting the strength of the young adult, Brooks addresses and redefines that specific older child that has only existed in children's literature for a few decades. We shall then argue that his exploration and reassessment of the adolescent is carried out not only thematically but in the writing itself, which turns out to be more innovative, unconventional and metatextual in the YA than in the adult fiction.

### Exploring the ambiguity and complexity of the young adult

Focusing on the young adult, an in-betweenener

Before going any further, it is necessary to define what is meant by "young adult". Kevin Brooks gives his own answer through the young female narrator's voice in *Lucas*, who announces that her widowed father writes books for "teenagers, or *Young Adults*, as the bookshops like to call them" (Brooks, Kevin. *Lucas*. Frome: Chicken House, 2003: 21-22). Brooks — whose voice is clearly behind Caitlin's here — therefore considers the phrase "young adult" as a synonym for teenager or adolescent. We should add that the expression "young adult", which is indeed a rather recent creation, probably also means to insist on the present blurring of the age groups, the crossover dimension of today's literature and culture and the tenuousness of the distinction between adolescence and adulthood. It tends to be applied to older teenagers, while the word "teens" is used for slightly younger readers.

Brooks's YA novels therefore very logically focus on protagonists who are young adults, generally speaking between fourteen and seventeen but most of them fifteen or sixteen years old. As is common in a vast majority of YA novels, the story is told by a first-person young adult narrator (boy or girl), who may be the eponymous hero of the story, as in *Martyn Pig* or *iBoy*, or the young character who falls in love with the protagonist in the title, as in *Lucas* or *Candy*. Identification is taken a step further in *The Bunker Diary*, in which the first-person narration takes the form of a diary which Linus, who has been kidnapped and held captive, as well as several other people, by a captor they know nothing about, writes day after day in order to keep track of time and avoid losing his mind. It should be noticed that although the protagonists and narrators all belong to the same age range, they can be from very diverse social backgrounds. (Brooks, Kevin. *Martyn Pig*. Frome: Chicken House, [2002] 2005; *iBoy*. London: Penguin, 2010; *Candy*. [2005] London & New York: Scholastic, "PUSH", 2006.)

So Kevin Brooks's typical protagonist is first and foremost characterized by his age and his belonging to the young adult age group. And yet, what is striking in the novels is that the characters are recurrently portrayed as being half-way between childhood and adulthood, both in their looks and behaviors, rather than being a precise age. For example, the adults the young protagonists are faced with, even their next of kin, are at a loss as to whether they are dealing with children or adults or neither of them. In *Candy*, Joe, the narrator, remarks about his father, who becomes stricter when the boy starts behaving strangely after falling in love with Candy:

I could hate [...] the way he treated me like a kid but expected me to behave like an adult. Why can't you make up your mind, Dad? I wanted to say. Either treat me like a kid or treat me like an adult but don't keep treating me like something in between. (Candy, 107)

Even the young narrators themselves often find it difficult to pinpoint the age of the young persons they meet or fall for. It is the case for Candy, whom the narrator does not recognize when he meets her for the second time, at the zoo, and thinks she looks a simple, very young girl compared with the “dolloed-up” Candy he had first met a few days earlier. This uncertainty about age is also true of the eponymous hero in *Lucas*, a mysterious boy who appears one day on Hale island and whom the narrator Caitlin becomes very fond of. Neither the reader nor Caitlin gets to know Lucas's exact age. As many young adult characters in Brooks's novels, he looks both youthful and experienced:

I remembered picturing his face and trying to guess how old he was. Thirteen? Eighteen, nineteen, twenty...? Now that I could see him at close quarters, it still wasn't easy. He *looked* quite young. That boyish face with its smooth, beardless skin. Those innocent eyes. That lean, almost underdeveloped frame...” (*Lucas*, 89-90)

So although the emphasis is laid on the transition from being a child to being an adult and on character development, this transition is never depicted as something linear or neat. When Joe finally gets involved with Candy, who turns out to be a prostitute and a junkie, helping her run away from her pimp, he describes the changes he is experiencing as a “seesaw”, an alternation of moments when he feels a child and moments when he feels he is “Joe the Man” (*Candy*, 217). Similarly, in *Black Rabbit Summer*, the young narrator explains to his mother that he is feeling funny, using meaningful terms: “It's like I'm *in between things*, you know, like I'm not quite sure where I'm going.” (Brooks, Kevin. *Black Rabbit Summer*. London: Penguin, 2008: 11. My emphasis.) So a large part of the YA novels is devoted to conveying the in-betweenness of the characters' state, the fact that they belong both to childhood and adulthood, and are part of a continuum. The young protagonists are shown through their double-sided dimension: they are drawn towards adulthood and indeed many of them have the same adult-like weaknesses that we find in the older protagonists of the adult novels. This is why there is no clear-cut difference between Brooks's adolescent and adult characters, in the same way as there is no sharp contrast between his YA and his adult novels, only slight distinctions.

The word and notion of “adolescent” itself, which — as Alison Waller points out in her work — were “invented” at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly by Granville Stanley Hall (Waller, Alison. *Constructing Adolescence in Fantastic Realism*. London: Routledge, 2009; quoting Hall, Granville Stanley. *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relation to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education*. New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1904), but only became commonly used in the middle of the century, has a very enlightening etymology, in the sense that it points to a transition rather than a fixed state. Indeed it comes from the same Latin verb as the word “adult”: in the present participle, the verb *adolescere* gives *adolescens* (i.e. “who is growing up”) whereas in the past participle, it gives *adultus* (i.e. “who has grown up”). It is this

process of transition, of becoming, which makes adolescence so difficult to define and delineate, and which has also led to such fruitful renderings, in YA fiction, as, among many other recent examples, the variations on the theme of metamorphosis in Ian McEwan's *The Daydreamer* (1994) or the striking metaphor of the *daemons* in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy (1995-2000), these small animal companions who materialize their human counterparts' inner selves and are shape-shifting until they settle for a fixed shape at puberty.

Time and space as the expression of the in-betweenness of young adults

In Kevin Brooks's YA novels, time and space play an essential part in bringing out the in-betweenness of adolescents. They are carefully crafted and create the unique atmospheric background of his fiction. The important stages of the action always occur in places that are in-between spaces, either by their location (like the island — or rather peninsula — of Hale in *Lucas*, “joined to the mainland by a short causeway known as the Stand, a narrow road that bridges the estuary”, which is actually the same fictitious location as the setting in the adult detective story *Until the Darkness Comes*, 2012) or by their unofficial, out-of-the-way or even shady status: young people are recurrently drawn to derelict or isolated places, whether they are themselves part of the underworld or whether they are brought to this underworld through their wanderings. In *Black Rabbit Summer*, in which two young people go missing after a group of teenage friends meet at night for old times' sake, the action mainly focuses on three places:

- what the group of youngsters, including the narrator, Peter, calls “the den”, a hideout they built out of boards and branches some years back and where they decide to meet up one last time,
- the fairground, as the teenagers decide to go to the funfair that has stopped temporarily in their town after meeting up at the den: the fair, with its carnivalesque dimension, allows people to snap and everything to start going very wrong
- and the wasteground, where the narrator keeps going back in spite of its dangerousness and where he is eventually assaulted by a gang of kids. This in-between space, which allows things to go berserk, is described by the narrator as “a weird kind of place”, which is “almost as if it's a separate little world, with its own unique atmosphere and terrain” (*Black Rabbit Summer*, 206).

These places materializing the teenagers' in-between state are highly reminiscent of other settings in YA literature, in particular the wilderness of the former coal mines in David Almond's *Kit's Wilderness* (1999), where the teenagers meet up in their den to play a game called Death.

The representation of time is also particular, between feverishness and overactivity on the one hand, and an occasional tendency to laziness and inertia in the young characters on the other. Most often once the action has started it takes place in a short period of time. What seems very characteristic of Brooks's YA novels in connection with the treatment of time — and that is much less

relevant to his adult novels — is the sense of an impending disaster. This reinforces the impression of gravity associated with the young adult, whereas the detective stories for adults, although fraught with danger as well, have a somewhat lighter tone. To a certain extent, it is possible to see Brooks's YA novels as tragedies. We could argue that his novels rather conform — even if loosely — to the Aristotelian dramatic rules of the unities of time, space and action. Admittedly the action does not occur over one day only but it always remains limited to a short span of time, from one week (in *Martyn Pig* as well as in *Black Rabbit Summer*) to a little more than two months (in *The Bunker Diary*). The naming or counting-up of days is important in the novels, especially in *Martyn Pig*, where each chapter bears the name of the day of the week, the action beginning on a Wednesday and coming to an end on the following Wednesday, i.e. on Christmas day. In *The Bunker Diary*, too, as in any diary, the date is given at the beginning of each chapter/entry in a vain attempt on the narrator's part to keep track of time despite their captor's endeavour to hamper the prisoners' perception of time by fiddling with the clocks.

The narrative itself concentrates on one storyline and a few interconnected events at most in these novels, so that it complies with the unity of action too. Fate is recurrently alluded to as if once the wheels were turning it was impossible to stop them, as Joe, the narrator in *Candy* points out: “[...] something was about to happen. I don't think any of us knew what it was, but we knew it was there.” (*Candy*, 125-6) To a certain degree, this sense of urgency is reminiscent of the fast pace and intensity of adolescence. In her article “Youth Paused: Epiphanies in the Seed-Time of Life”, Alison Waller remarks that it is “a concern common in writings on youth that it is a brief moment or series of moments in the broader pattern of a whole life.” (Waller, Alison. “Youth Paused: Epiphanies in the seed-time of life”. Afterword to *PEER English: Journal of New Critical Thinking* 7 (2012): 97) The rapidity of this transition from childhood to adulthood is made obvious by the acuteness of the events the characters experience in the space of a few days in the novels. Like Melvin Burgess or, in a very different way, Philip Pullman, Brooks offers a vision of youth as a period of life which is crucial, priceless and constructive; he is one in a few YA authors who wish to promote a positive perception of an oft-criticized state.

### Asserting the strength of the young adult

#### The end of the Romantic child

In a way that is reminiscent of Melvin Burgess's treatment by the media, Brooks has often been attacked for the choice of themes in his novels, which seems to some conservative critics to be outside the sphere of children's literature. *The Bunker Diary*, in particular, caused all the more controversy at it won Brooks the prestigious Carnegie Medal in 2014. In this novel built as a diary, young Linus, the narrator, is one of six people without any connection or common point who are kidnapped one after the other and kept imprisoned in what looks like a bunker by a man they never see and whose motivations they fail to understand.

All the disapproval the book gave rise to is epitomized in Lorna Bradbury's June 2014 article in *The Telegraph*, the gist of the journalist's criticism being summed up in the title and subtitle:

*The Bunker Diary: why wish this book on a child?*

The winner of this year's Carnegie Medal for an outstanding book for children is a vile and dangerous story. Kevin Brooks's book contains heroin addiction, attempted rape, torture and murder. (Bradbury, Lorna. "*The Bunker Diary: why wish this book on a child?*". June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014. <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/10920101/The-Bunker-Diary-why-wish-this-book-on-a-child.html>>)

She then goes on to claim that Brooks's book won "on shock value rather than merit" and is "a uniquely sickening read" (Bradbury, Lorna. "*The Bunker Diary: why wish this book on a child?*", *ibid.*). Although this is a very limited vision of an outstanding novel, it is true that the background of the narratives involving the young protagonists is often rather grim in Brooks's books. And, interestingly enough, it is often more grim than in *The Bunker Diary*: alcohol, drugs, violence (whether verbal or physical, particularly sexual) and even death and murder (in *Martyn Pig*, 2002, where the eponymous narrator accidentally kills his own father, in *Black Rabbit Summer*, in *The Road of the Dead* and in *The Bunker Diary*) are recurring elements in the novels for young adults, as they are in the detective fiction for adults. (Brooks, Kevin. *The Road of the Dead*. Frome: Chicken House, 2006) Brutality and violence are not much less graphic in the YA novels than they are in the adult books, especially in scenes where young characters are described being beaten up.

The adjective "gritty" is one of the terms most frequently used in connection with Kevin Brooks, and indeed whether the action takes place in rural areas, small towns or big cities, the author likes picturing the underworld and its dangers in a realistic, straightforward, unsentimental way. But why should he shy away from using themes and contexts which have stopped being taboo in children's literature since the rise of realism and of the problem novel? Especially as it has often been argued that the media available to the young becoming ever more plentiful, violence and other formerly forbidden topics are already accessible to young adults or indeed young teenagers and are often more graphically described in film or on the Internet than in books. These grim, realistic topics and themes have become part of the cultural world of the young to the extent that the discussion about their suitability has arguably become obsolete.

This is why we can consider that the *Bunker Diary* controversy was not so much about the themes and the setting themselves: it is worth noticing that the underworld with its violence, which is present in many of Brooks's novels both for adults and for young adults, had not seemed so problematic to critics until *The Bunker Diary* was published. What seems problematic in the book is more probably the lack of hope, which underlines the highly moral view that adults still have of children's literature. In his acceptance speech, Brooks explained that it had taken him ten years to publish *The Bunker Diary*, because it was repeatedly turned down by publishers who thought its disheartening outlook made it unsuitable for a juvenile audience.

The problem at the heart of this debate is therefore the ending of the book: the unfinished last sentence suggests that the young narrator has probably died. Brooks clearly positions himself in the now well-established tradition of YA literature which, from S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* (1967) or Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War* (1974) in the United States to Melvin Burgess's *Junk* (1996), *Lady: My Life as a Bitch* (2001) or *Nicholas Dane* (2009) in Britain, has stressed the necessity to create a new kind of writing for this formerly neglected "in-between" age-group, proclaiming the end of the "Romantic" child built by generations of earlier children's writers. The young protagonists in Brooks's novels are no longer innocent and as in most YA fiction the endings range from "unhappy" to "moderately happy".

In an interview of Kevin Brooks for *Books for Keeps*, Nicholas Tucker suggested to the interviewee that *The Bunker Diary* might have gone too far, by asking whether there is anything that cannot be written about for young readers. To which Brooks answered:

In my experience young people today are quite capable of thinking about and resolving pretty well everything for themselves. And violence is part of the world in which we all live. I know that books still have the power to affect lives [...] I believe there are limits to what one can and should write about, but *I don't consider I have ever got near those myself*. So long as I feel I am writing thoughtfully, showing readers the consequences that can arise from particular self-destructive impulses, if that is part of the main story, then that is what I shall continue to do. (Brooks, Kevin and Nicholas Tucker. "*The Bunker Diary* wins children's book prize", BBC website, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014, <<http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-27975153>>. My emphasis)

Brooks goes on to show that his picturing of brutality is not motiveless, but on the contrary has a moral purpose: to make young readers aware of the extreme pain that violence can cause. Adolescents should not be protected from being shown what the real world is like. And indeed, like many of his predecessors in the field of YA fiction, Brooks confirms the inadequacy of over-protecting the child audience – or at least the older readers among them. He endorses the idea that young readers "don't need to be cosseted with artificial hope that there will always be a happy ending" ("*The Bunker Diary* wins children's book prize", *ibid.*). The mere fact that this book won the 2014 Carnegie Medal is in itself highly significant of the evolution of the perception of children's literature.

Despite its distressing ending and its very bleak outlook, one can disagree with the critics who consider that there is no hope in *The Bunker Diary*. One of the distinctions between Brooks's adult and YA novels may be the unconditional trust the author seems to place in young adults. Even if Linus fails in his repeated attempts at saving the group of prisoners, he is striking by his bravery, kindness, wisdom and maturity towards the others: although he cannot achieve a happy outcome, he proves to be a true hero and a leader. And this is also true of many of the young adult protagonists in the other novels, who tend to waver between ordinariness or awkwardness and heroism.

In addition to this positive feature of the novels, it should be noted that the gritty dimension is also sometimes alleviated by occasional touches of magic realism in some of the characters that gives a certain transcendence to these

adolescents, especially the outcasts among them. The title character in *Lucas*, or the narrator's friend Raymond in *Black Rabbit Summer*, in particular, seem to be endowed with some sort of supernatural gift in spite of — or thanks to — their oddness or marginality. Their intuitive knowledge of nature and of the world bestows a slightly uncanny sense of benevolence, thoughtfulness and intuition on them, which counterbalances the somewhat gloomy atmosphere of the novels.

The end of the Romantic view of creation

Kevin Brooks, through his insistence on publishing *The Bunker Diary* without altering its pessimistic ending, thus takes his distance from a traditional kind of children's literature based on a traditional vision of the child as an innocent, untainted being. In *Introducing Children's Literature from Romanticism to Postmodernism*, Deborah Cogan Thacker and Jean Webb argue that the Romantic thought and aesthetics of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was decisive in the development of children's literature and influential in shaping the image of the child (character and reader) that it offers. (Cogan Thacker, Deborah and Jean Webb. *Introducing Children's Literature. From Romanticism to Postmodernism*. London: Routledge, 2002). In constructing an ideal image of the child as unspoilt and as connected with the sublime in nature, Romanticism helped isolating him/her from the adult, imbuing much of children's literature with nostalgia for a lost innocence, something Jackie Wullschläger clearly showed about the Golden Age of children's literature (Wullschläger, Jackie. *Inventing Wonderland: The Lives and Fantasies of Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear, J.M. Barrie, Kenneth Grahame and A.A. Milne*. London: Methuen, 1995) and which Perry Nodelman summarizes as follows:

Since children's literature is written by adults no longer children, no longer innocent, and since it seems to focus so much on what is beautiful about innocence, children's literature is a literature of nostalgia. [...] Children's literature in this tradition — or any text for children read by adults in this traditional way — represents what Valerie Krips identifies as an act of "returning to a past in which the problems of adulthood are by and large unknown." (Nodelman, Perry. *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature*. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008: 192; quoting Valerie Krips, *The Presence of the Past: Memory, Heritage and Childhood in Postwar Britain*. New York: Garland, 2000: 16)

This nostalgic literature based on a construction of the child is precisely what Brooks rejects. Significantly, one important literary influence on *The Bunker Diary* the author has acknowledged is that of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954), a novel which, though it was not aimed at a child or young adult readership, had a great impact on the development of YA literature in the sense that it highlighted the fact that children are not naturally good. And yet, in *The Bunker Diary*, although the reader is confronted with the same claustrophobic atmosphere as in Golding's novel and witnesses the same madness that arises from being kept with other people in an enclosed space, the only two underage characters, Linus, the seventeen-year-old narrator, and Jenny, the nine-year-old little girl who is kidnapped after him, are by far the wisest, most sensitive persons in the group.

Almost inescapably, Brooks's YA characters can be said to turn into adults as a consequence of the often violent, traumatic experiences they go through, but in spite of the tragedies involved, this is not felt as the loss of something precious in early childhood. It thus appears that in Brooks's fiction the end of the Romantic child, which is proclaimed through a truthful depiction of the young adult, is paralleled by the end of a Romantic vision of literary creation. In an article entitled "Every Story Tells a Story that Has Already Been Told", Michael Prusse comments on the wide-ranging use of intertextuality and intermediality in Kevin Brooks's *iBoy*, arguing that such form of writing challenges the idea of the purity of the work of art:

The persistent Romantic mythology "of original creation and of the originating creative genius" [...] vociferously proclaimed by the key protagonists of the Romantic age such as Wordsworth or Shelley, has contributed to a widespread perception of adaptations as second-class. (Prusse, Michael. "Every Story Tells a Story that Has Already Been Told: Intertextuality and intermediality in Philip Pullman's *Spring-Heeled Jack* and Kevin Brooks's *iBoy*". *CLELE Journal* 2.2 (May 2014): 1-21; quoting Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York: Routledge, 2006: 4.)

Brooks's novels are not adaptations but they make extensive use of intertextuality, discarding a Romantic vision of literature as original, unpolluted creation devoid of all influence in the same way as it discards the image of the Romantic child as out of the reach of evil.

### Proclaiming the specificity of YA fiction

The metatextual dimension of Brooks's YA fiction

Brooks's multi-layered writing is an assertion of his status as a YA writer. His use of intertextuality becomes metatextual insofar as it is to be taken as a commentary on his work. Generally speaking, his books are self-reflexive, highly literary, in the sense that they are pervaded with references to other works, perhaps even more so in the YA works, in particular through the presence in the diegesis of books belonging to this category — whether actual or fictitious. The eponymous narrator of *Martyn Pig* is, in a way, a YA version of Roald Dahl's precocious bookworm Matilda (1988) because he loves reading, and feasts on whodunits, contrary to his uneducated alcoholic of a father who never opens a book. Martyn discovers Sherlock Holmes at the age of ten and becomes very keen on detective fiction: the book is even an example of a structural use of intertextuality to the extent that the narrator points out that his taste for whodunits has a consequence on the action in an ironic statement: "In a funny kind of way, it was *The Complete Illustrated Sherlock Holmes* that killed my dad." (*Martyn Pig*, 24). His knowledge of murder mysteries then helps the boy get rid of the corpse without being noticed. Similarly, in *Lucas*, Brooks uses the narrator, Caitlin, to acknowledge one of his influences, making it an element in the story at the same time. For Caitlin, Lucas, who lives in a den he has built for himself in a wild part of the island, is reminiscent of the boy who decides to go and live in the wilderness in *My Side of the Mountain* (1959), an American YA classic by Jean Craighead George the young narrator has read and loved. This *mise en abyme* of stories within the stories does not only

allow the author to pay a tribute to the YA authors to whom he feels in debt; it also enables him to move from intertextuality to metatextuality, using references as a way to reflect on his writing within the book.

The awareness of being a YA author is thus stressed by the occasionally ironical or self-derisive metatextual dimension in Brooks's novels for young adult readers. The most straightforward comment on what writing YA fiction involves occurs in *Lucas*, when the first-person narrator states that her father, a YA author, writes "the kind of books that get nominated for prizes but never win, the kind of books that get rubbished by all the papers for being immoral, for setting a bad example, for contributing to the destruction of innocence in the youth of today." (Lucas, 21-22.) Here, the narrator clearly acts as a spokesman expressing what the author had expressed or was to express in similar terms on several occasions, notably in his acceptance speech for the Carnegie medal, a prize whose awarding to Brooks proved the part about "never win[ning]" wrong.

A highly innovative, hybrid kind of fiction

One novel that stands apart in Brooks's output, *iBoy*, can be regarded as a metaphor of Brooks's YA writing. In this book, which can be described both as a science-fiction novel and as a re-working of the superhero story, sixteen-year-old Tom wakes up from coma after an attack by a gang discovering that fragments of the iPhone thrown at him from the top of a building have remained embedded in his brain, making him a hyperconnected person and granting him powers that allow him to seek revenge for his friend Lucy, who was raped. Intertextual references abound in *iBoy*, both within the text itself and in the epigraphs complementing the chapter titles written in binary code (they are numbered 1, 10, 11, 100, 101, etc.) with more "textual" headings. And although they include anything from classic literature (from Aristotle to Arthur Koestler) to the kind of sentimental fiction the boy's grandmother writes for a living, or to popular culture like song lyrics and comics, or to factual, documentary non-fiction texts, these references are all put on the same level in a playful, iconoclastic way that reflects the mass of undifferentiated texts today's reader has access to, especially thanks to the Internet. Brooks pushes the intertextual game even further in Chapter 1101, whose epigraph is a quotation from his own previous YA novel, *Killing God* (2009).

Like the novel whose hero he turns out to be, once he has become permanently hyperconnected thanks to the iPhone fragments in his skull, Tom, aka iBoy, can be likened to a jigsaw puzzle made of dozens of heterogeneous texts. The link between the boundless knowledge Tom (or Western society) has access to and the ever more tenuous frontier between human beings and machines is made obvious by the opening quote from Chapter 1000, which is taken from David J. Chalmers's foreword to *Supersizing the Mind* (2008) by Andy Clark:

The iPhone has already taken over some of the central functions of my brain. It has replaced part of my memory, storing numbers and addresses that I once would have taxed my brain with. [...] The iPhone is part of my mind already... the world is not serving as a mere instrument for the mind. Rather, the relevant parts of the world have become parts of my mind. My iPhone is not my tool, or at least

it is not wholly my tool. Parts of it have become parts of me. (David J. Chalmers, quoted in *iBoy*, 69)

Brooks's *iBoy* makes young Tom Harvey the literal embodiment of this description. This new version of the cyborg offered by the hybrid boy is not only interesting insofar as it offers a grave, thoughtful, deeply moral yet amusing 21<sup>st</sup>-century revision of the super-hero narrative; it also epitomizes the act of writing for young adults. The hybrid boy represents the necessary adaptation to a culture no longer based on the book only but on all modern media, as well as the necessary levelling and recycling of canonical and popular literary references. The boy's powers are due to the mingling of all the technologies he has access to, but his hybridity also entails innovation and novelty in the way to behave as a superhero: the reflection on power and the way to use it without going beyond the bounds of morality is underlain by the echoing of E.M. Forster's "Only connect" by Brooks's "I was connected" (*iBoy*, 40), which reminds the reader of the dangerousness of knowledge without a strong moral safeguard. In this respect, the protagonist's realization that he "could hear phone calls, [he] could read emails and texts, [he] could hack into databases... [he] could access *everything*." (*Ibid.*) strikingly evokes multi-award-winning YA novelist Patrick Ness's depiction of "the Noise": in the *Chaos Walking* science-fiction trilogy (2008-2010) people can permanently hear the stream of all men's thoughts. This, in addition to being an efficient narrative device, is a convincing materialization of the overall excess of information in today's society, a peculiarity also pinpointed in *iBoy*.

So not only does *iBoy*'s hybridity emphasize the double-sidedness, the in-betweenness of young adults already mentioned. It also reflects an original way of playing with genre conventions which is recurrently exemplified in Brooks's fiction, and much more so in the YA stories than in the more conventional adult crime stories. The detective story or the thriller are categories which Brooks's YA novels come very close to, and yet they are not exactly whodunits: the author grants the reader the pleasure of recognizing the codes of a genre, but at the same time he offers a creative reworking of these generic conventions.

Brooks's YA novels, with their subtle differences from the adult novels, succeed in conveying the indecision and ambiguity that characterize young adulthood. The choice to write novels that do not belong to series or that cannot be easily categorized shows that although young adults are very close to adulthood, they still belong to a distinct, specific sphere in which in-betweenness itself is a defining element. In his effort to adjust form to the ambivalence, quirkiness and marginality of the world of young adults within the diegesis and to convey some of the blurriness of frontiers, the author achieves more originality and literariness in the YA than in the more clearly circumscribed adult novels.

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# Responding to Ian Falconer's *Olivia Saves the Circus* (2000)

## A literacy development project of an EFL class in a state primary school of Greece

Maria Emmanouilidou

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, School of Primary Education

**Abstract:** The omnipresence of images in the new semiotic landscape necessitates the redesigning of the curriculum so as to cater for the needs of our students. Picture books are an ideal way to engage students in literacy practices without *suffocating* them under the pressure caused by standardized testing. The present paper deals with a teaching intervention in a Year 6 EFL class in Greece where the students had never dealt with picture books before. The *transactional process* (Rosenblatt, 1978) between the students and the picture book *Olivia Saves the Circus* (Falconer, 2001) induced the development of literacy skills, otherwise neglected through the English textbooks.

**Key words:** EFL teaching, picture books, transactional process, efferent/aesthetic stance, multimodal texts

### 1. Introduction

The Greek educational system focuses mainly on the cultivation of the verbal and logico-mathematical skills of students at the expense of visual literacy or critical literacy skills, since the principal concern of teachers is to prepare students for exams. Therefore, their academic achievement is assessed primarily through their writing skills, as is the case in various national testing systems (Bearne, 2003; Minarik, 2000). Furthermore, teaching English as a foreign language (EFL teaching) is highly exam-orientated in Greece since holding a language certificate might ensure professional success and achievement of social purposes, what Baynham (1995) calls *functional literacy*, namely accessing and accepting the dominant forms of communication in an uncritical way as “something given and natural” (Baynham, 1995: 2). Accordingly, the state-mandated English textbooks focus on teaching decontextualised linguistic skills and EFL teachers adopt the *bottom-up* approach to reading, rather than emphasizing on the engagement of readers with whole texts where context plays a crucial role for making-meaning (Baynham, 1995).

However, it is our duty as teachers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to take into account our students' *cultural capital* (Bourdieu, 1990) and try to bridge the gap between home literacies, where reading books is a socio-cultural practice of paramount importance (Heath, 1982; 1983) and school literacies, where the emphasis is primarily on teaching standardized written form and decontextualised learning practices (Hilton, 1996, Marsh & Millard, 2000).

### 2. Picture books as aesthetic objects

The interaction with a multiplicity of texts, including picture books, encourages the individual and critical response of students, promotes student-centered and

co-operative learning, while also appealing to their consciousness and senses. As Rosenblatt (1993) suggests “Reading is a transaction, a two-way process, involving a reader and a text at a particular time under particular circumstances” (7). Accordingly, during the reading process the reader *responds* to an *object*, which can be a play, a book, a poem, or a picture book, from an *efferent* or *aesthetic* stance (Rosenblatt, 1993). The *efferent* stance implies that the reader adopts a “factual perspective” (McLaughlin, and DeVogd, 2004: 52) while getting involved in this transactional process that is the reader is in a constant pursuit of information, as it would happen while reading a textbook. On the other hand, the *aesthetic* stance is a more personal process, where the readers respond to the literary text after having explored their inner feelings, ideas and attitudes (Rosenblatt, 1993).

The aesthetic experience stemming from the interaction with picture books is described by Doonan (1993) as “close looking in context” (18). The picture book as an aesthetic object arouses a plethora of feelings and ideas through the interplay of words and images. These ideas wait to be discovered, thus stimulating the reader emotionally and cognitively. While being engaged in the reading process, the reader should be open-minded and active so as to unlock hidden messages. The appeal of picture books to our brains and hearts can be a very stimulating experience for both children and adults.

Nodelman (1988) defines the picture book as a “[...] a subtle and complex form of communication” (20). Given that the pictures in picture books constitute a form of visual art, a perspective also shared by Doonan (1993), their saturation with meaning requires skilful and knowledgeable viewers/readers to decode the messages inherent in the combination between the two modes, the verbal and the visual. Therefore, the *implied viewer/reader* face the challenge of dealing with the *childlike* and the *sophisticated* while responding to picture books (Nodelman, 1988: 21), since apart from being merely decorative and pleasurable, pictures help clarify texts and challenge the active reader/viewer.

### 3. The present study

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation completely ignores children's literature (cited in Pressley, 2007). In a similar vein, EFL teaching in state schools in Greece does not even mention children's literature or picture books as part of the mandated curriculum, due to the fact that the Greek educational system is highly-exam orientated and focused on the written word as a primary form of communication. However, the change in the communicational landscape challenges this notion and necessitates the construction and transmission of messages through the interplay of words and images. In the words of Gunther Kress (Kress, 2000: 337) this rising importance of multimodality can be summed up as follows:

It is now impossible to make sense of texts, even of their linguistic parts alone, without having a clear idea of what these other features might be contributing to the meaning of a text.

In this light, the aim of this paper is to investigate the ways in which students responded to Ian Falconer's "*Olivia Saves the Circus*" (2001) since they had never worked on picture books before in authentic English.

Specifically, the objectives of the study were threefold: (a) to refrain from curricular mandates adhering strictly to the exclusive use of the English textbook, (b) to enhance students' multimodal visual literacy skills, and (c) to deconstruct gender stereotypes by allowing a new *super heroine* to emerge through the construction of their own multimodal texts.

As a result, the classroom-based study was guided by the following research questions: (a) To what extent do the students respond from an *efferent* stance and/or *aesthetic* stance while being exposed to authentic material in English which is the primary foreign language taught in Greek state schools? (b) Is it feasible for students to deconstruct the underlying messages and read critically, both the verbal text and the images when mother tongue interference can hinder the construction of complex messages combining verbal and visual elements? (c) How do the students' socio-cultural experiences affect the production of their own multimodal texts? (d) Can the students critically evaluate the material they are being exposed to?

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Participants

The participants in this study are twenty sixth grade students of an EFL class in a state primary school in Thessaloniki, Greece, who started learning English as a foreign language in the third grade, but had never been exposed to authentic material before. The school is located in an urban area in Thessaloniki and concerning the level of the students, they are what we call a *mixed-ability* group, in the sense that quite few of them are very competent in both written and oral skills, whereas others struggle to communicate. Furthermore, quite a few of them are bilingual (one girl is from Russia and four boys are from Albania). The socio-cultural and linguistic diversity of the students provides ample ground for conducting studies about how students can acquire literacy skills and also learn to speak/write in English in ways unrestricted by curricular mandates, adhering to the exclusive use of the English textbook.

### 4.2. Material of the research

The materials used in the study consisted of: (a) the children's book "*Olivia Saves the Circus*" by Ian Falconer (2001) and a video presentation of the same book available on the following link <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I\\_Ru3d3ht3s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_Ru3d3ht3s)>, (b) a gap filling worksheet to examine the students' improvement of linguistic and listening skills after listening to the story, (c) a worksheet with critical questions focusing on Olivia's personality and her relationship to the other characters in the book, (d) the compilation of the compositions produced by the students compiled in a booklet with the title "*Olivia's Adventurous Life*", and (e) a questionnaire through which students evaluated the procedure upon completion of the project and which was also a way

of discovering whether they were familiar with authentic material in the target language.

#### 4.2.1. Analysis of "*Olivia Saves the Circus*"

In "*Olivia Saves the Circus*", Olivia, the main character of the book is an unconventional, to the point of being anarchic, humanized pig who challenges the power exerted upon her by her teacher and her mother. In this sense, Olivia represents a real life personality, whereas in EFL course books characters are usually "nice, decent, and characterless" (Crystal, 1987: 15). In the course of the story, she is represented as a super-heroine assuming a really responsible role in a circus by replacing all the people working there since they were sick with ear infection. Consequently, from a humble student, Olivia becomes an acrobat, a lion tamer, a juggler, a clown, a tight-rope walker, etc. At least, this is the story she recounts to her teacher and classmates when it is her turn to tell the class about her vacation.

Our emotions are evoked in the book through the sharp contrast of the saturated red colour, used for Olivia's accessories, with the otherwise dull colours which dominate in the book, like grey or white, which are used for the portrayal of the other characters, like her mother, the teacher, or her classmates. In this sense, Olivia celebrates her *difference* and projects her femininity, since her accessories and her personality always make her stand out compared to the other pigs in the book.

A great amount of the success in the book lies in its use of *irony* in the sense that "the words tell us what the pictures do not show, and the pictures show us what the words do not tell" (Nodelman, 1988: 222). Such an example is quite obvious in the double-spread page where Olivia frowns when she has to wear her "really boring uniform", whereas on the top right-hand side of the page the Queen is celebrating in a way inappropriate for her class. Apparently, Olivia's facial expression conveys the message that she is not in accordance with the Queen's choice to inflict this attire upon school children.

Another instance of *irony* lies in the fact that as readers/viewers "[...] we know something more and something different from what we are being told" (Nodelman, 1988: 223). Therefore, we know all along in the story that Olivia is lying, both to her teacher, when she is narrating her story in class, and to her mother when she responds "Nothing" to her question concerning her school day and what they did there. Neither character seems to know the truth, still the reader/viewer is fully aware of Olivia's 'unrealistic reality' or 'real-like fantasy', and even though lies are totally unacceptable for young children, we still feel quite sympathetic for Olivia.

#### 4.3. Design of the teaching intervention

The present study was conducted within a sociocultural framework for which action research was implemented, since the classroom was shaped to achieve a social goal (Stotsky & Mall, 2003), namely to assign super powers to a pig who is female, whereas superheroes are usually portrayed as male characters (Marsh & Millard, 2000). The overall organization of the teaching intervention is built on

an *introductory phase*, a *main phase* and a *follow-up phase*. A succinct description of each phase is provided in the sections that follow.

#### 4.3.1. *Introductory phase*

The *introductory phase* was divided into three sub-stages. Concerning the first sub-stage of the *introductory phase*, classroom discussion was initiated by the following incentive question: “*Who is your favourite superhero?*” Batman, Superman, Spiderman and Iron Man were the most popular answers. The discussion proceeded with the following question: “*What if I told you that a female pig is a super heroine?*” In this way, the teacher tried to establish intertextual ties with the popular genre of comic, where, however, most superheroes are white, male and involved in acts of violence in order to save humanity (Marsh & Millard, 2000).

The above questions led to the second sub-stage, where the children watched an animated version with puppets of “*Olivia Saves the Circus*”, so as to familiarize themselves with the plot of the story and improve their listening skills in the target language by listening to the narrator and the characters. Besides looking at the moving images, the use of video in the classroom helps consolidate the notion of multimodality since the messages are transmitted through the co-articulation of multiple modalities such as spoken language, image and sound. Furthermore, the video is an ideal way to motivate the students and engage them in active learning (Bromley, 1996; Marsh & Millard, 2000).

Since the students did not have their own print version of the picture book, the video presentation was followed by a read-aloud session where the teacher paused while reading in order to show the images accompanying the relevant page being read. *Whole-class instruction* in the form of a read-aloud activity is a substantial social event since it engages both students and teachers in shared literacy events and discussions (Reutzel, 2007; Yocom, 1993). Upon completion of the read-aloud event, the teacher passed the book around in class and encouraged the students to take a better look at the images.

The introductory phase was completed with the gap filling worksheet (Appendix A) which is a summary of the story of Olivia. The purpose of the worksheet was to examine whether the students were able to follow the story, although they did not have their own books, and test their improvement in terms of linguistic skills, such as vocabulary or grammar (Cohen, 1968).

#### 4.3.2. *Main phase*

The *main phase* of the teaching intervention was divided into two sub-stages and was more challenging concerning the critical skills of the students. During the first sub-stage, the personality of Olivia was under scrutiny. Some light was also thrown on the other main characters in the picture book, namely the teacher and her mother, since they try to restrict Olivia's spontaneity and independence, thus representing the power of suppression inflicted upon children.

The questions addressed to the students were the following:

- How is Olivia distinguished compared to the other pigs presented in the book?

- Look at the illustrations very carefully and find five (5) adjectives which best describe Olivia's personality.
- Why does Olivia wish to stand out?
- Why doesn't the teacher accept Olivia's personality?
- What can you say about Olivia's relationship to her mother? Look very carefully at the scene where Olivia is jumping on her bed.

The questions were adjusted to the linguistic competence of the students, however, they were also translated in Greek so that all of them could comprehend the content. So as to ensure greater participation, the teacher encouraged the students to answer in Greek if they found it too hard to articulate their thoughts in English. Still, out of the twenty students in class, only ten students (two boys and eight girls) handed in their answer sheet, a fact which proves that students find it very difficult to switch codes when exposed to authentic children's literature in the target language. It is, however, encouraging that one of the participants who handed in an answer sheet was a girl, suffering from severe dyslexia, who had hardly ever participated during the lesson while using the English course book. Although her answers contained a lot of mistakes, we discern an effort to participate in the literacy project. Furthermore, the students have not had prior experience to *reading the pictures*, and the teacher encouraged close observation of the images in order for the students to decode the implicit messages and respond. In spite of the small number of answers, those given demonstrate mature and critical thinking and they will be described briefly.

Regarding the first question, the students remarked that Olivia embraces her 'difference' and does not want to be like the other pigs. Her red accessories seem to be her trademark and by wearing them she turns her otherwise boring uniform into something unique. It is quite significant that students pointed out the dominance of the red colour for the depiction of Olivia, since red colour stimulates the senses of the readers/viewers and signifies passion and liveliness (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2002; Nodelman, 1988; van Leeuwen, 2011), attributes associated with Olivia.

The second question enhanced the vocabulary of the students in the target language, since the provoking personality of Olivia urged the students to ask for numerous words in their mother tongue to be translated in order to describe her. Some distinctive adjectives provided were the following: (1) cool, (2) rebellious, (3) disobedient, (4) imaginative, (5) restless, (6) different, (7) naughty, (8) helpful, and (9) talented. Although the questions asks for adjectives to describe Olivia's personality, the teacher also accepted full sentences using nouns, for instance, some of the students wrote that "Olivia is a dreamer" or "Olivia has a very vivid imagination".

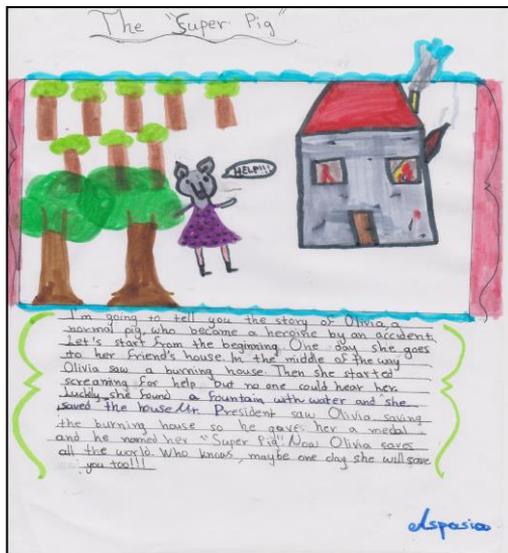
The answers to the third question focused on the issue of suppression and subjection. Therefore, the students replied that her wish to stand out exhibits an attempt to escape from routine and the control imposed upon children by teachers and the school system. Her red accessories differentiate her boring black and white uniform from what the other students wear. In this sense, Olivia is provocatively clad and her attire, becomes a political *praxis* (Freire, 1970) in order to challenge an unjust and suppressive school policy. This can also be

associated to the fourth question revolving around the teacher's unwillingness to accept Olivia's personality. The students described the teacher as a conservative, strict and suspicious person who cannot listen to Olivia's stories, either because he is convinced that they are horrible lies or because Olivia's popularity and power to draw the 'audience's'/ the students' attention, make him seem inferior in front of his class. Furthermore, her fascinating stories make the teacher divert from the imposed curriculum, which is probably unacceptable for a conservative person like him.

Concerning the final question which focuses on Olivia's relationship to her mother, the variety of the given answers proves, first of all, that the students interpreted the scene where Olivia jumps on the bed and her mother asks her to sleep from a very different perspective. Second, it is quite explicit that the relationship of the students to their own mothers might have affected their judgement. Therefore, some of the students commented that Olivia is disrespectful of her mother and does not seem to be afraid of her. On the contrary, another student commented that Olivia got scared when her mother told her to stop jumping and sleep because the way her mother was depicted in that scene made her appear really scary and determined to impose her will upon Olivia. Some students thought that the scene was funny, whereas others detected the irony in Olivia's final remark "Maybe" responding to the mother's question: "Who do you think you are – Queen of the Trampoline?" Finally, a really ingenious answer covers the entire spectrum of this relationship by commenting that Olivia is playful and naughty which sometimes arouses her mother's disapproval. Nevertheless, Olivia's relationship to her mother is ordinary, since all mothers and daughters occasionally disagree on certain issues concerning proper behaviour and discipline, nevertheless they always love one another.

Bearing in mind the analysis of Olivia's personality and the restraints that sometimes are imposed upon her by her teacher and her mother, we proceeded to the second sub-stage of the *main phase* where Olivia emerges as a social agent through the students' multimodal compositions. The students were asked to reconsider Olivia's depiction as a heroine and redesign the text by placing her in a different social framework, thus constructing meaning in a different context representing a new social reality, what Cope and Kalantzis with the *New London Group* (2000) call *transformed practice*. This process of *recontextualization* allowed the students to re-assess the role of Olivia, and by extension the role of woman in society, who can undertake multiple roles.

The second sub-stage was initiated with the following question: "*How could Olivia be portrayed as a heroine?*" This was followed by a brainstorming session where the teacher elicited students' responses concerning Olivia's depiction. Some of their suggestions included the representation of Olivia as an environmentalist, as a heroine saving a school bus from a serious road accident or as an activist saving dolphins from sea pollution. Figure 1 is an example of a multimodal text created by one of the girl students.



I'm going to tell you the story of Olivia, a normal pig, who became a heroine by an accident. Let's start from the beginning. One day she goes to her friend's house. In the middle of the way Olivia saw a burning house. Then she started screaming for help, but no one could hear her. Luckily, she found a fountain with water and she saved the house. Mr President saw Olivia saving the burning house so he gave her a medal and he named her "Super Pig." Now Olivia saves all the world. Who knows, maybe one day she will save you, too!!!

Figure 1: The "Super Pig"

All in all, there were twelve multimodal texts created. Some of the most imaginative stories revolve around Olivia saving a kite on a windy day, helping a band find their missing instruments, saving the summer from an evil man who wanted the world to be cold and snowy, and saving a hijacked aeroplane. Three of the texts were in the comic format. The number of texts produced shows an increase in participation on the part of the students, since during the first sub-stage where they were asked to respond to critical questions, only ten students handed in their papers. As Marsh and Millard (2000) suggest, drawings allow students to develop original ideas and this can be further extended into writing.

When all the students finished their multimodal texts, there was a voting procedure in order to find a title for the booklet where all the students' work would be compiled. The title chosen was "*Olivia's Adventurous Life*" (Figure 2) and was suggested by one of the girls in class who thought that Olivia's life, as described by the students, had been far too daring, therefore emphasis should be placed on the adventure factor of the stories. When the students saw the results of their work compiled in the booklet, they felt really content since they had never participated in a literacy project in English before.

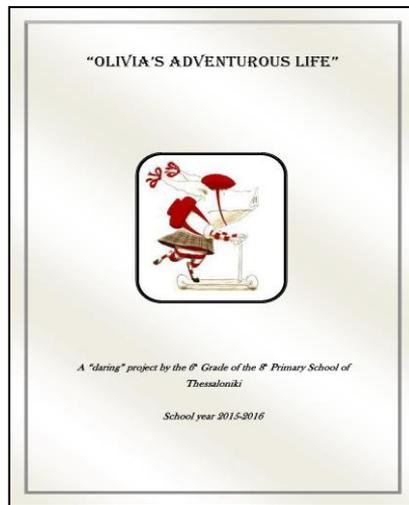


Figure 2: "Olivia's Adventurous Life" - The booklet cover

#### 4.3.3. Follow-up phase

During the *follow-up phase* the students were asked to evaluate their literacy experience after the teaching intervention by filling in a questionnaire. The evaluation questionnaire invited information concerning the aesthetic appeal of the book on the students. Part of it also focused on the assessment of the various activities included in the teaching intervention. Hence, the evaluation questionnaire constituted part of the *formative assessment* of the students (Scriven, 1967), since on the one hand they were involved in a meta-cognitive process of reflection on the material accessed and produced, and, on the other hand, the teacher was given the chance to evaluate the linguistic improvement of the students on the aspects of vocabulary, grammar and syntax, in an alternative way that does not focus on a fierce grading system, thus allowing them to function in an anxiety-free zone.

The questions addressed to the students were the following:

- Did you like the book or not? Justify your answers.
- Was this your first experience of reading picture books in English in class?
- Would you like to repeat the project? Justify your answers.
- Which element attracted you most in the story? For instance, Olivia's personality, the images, the plot, etc.
- Did you enjoy creating your own story about Olivia?
- Which part of the project did you enjoy the most? Drawing, writing or both? Give some information about your experience. For instance, was it interesting, boring, creative, etc.

As with the previous worksheet challenging the students' critical skills, the questions were adjusted to the linguistic level of the students and also translated in Greek, so that all of them could comprehend them. This time seventeen out of the twenty students handed in their paper and this is proof that the more we

progressed in the project, the more motivated the students were. Ten students answered all the questions in English and their answers were really detailed and justified, three students provided very short answers, but this was still encouraging considering that they hardly ever participated in class while dealing with the English textbook, and four students gave their answers in Greek since they wanted to express their opinion, but they found it quite hard to articulate their thoughts in English.

Concerning the first question, fourteen students were in favour of the book because they thought it was funny and interesting. The fact that Olivia's 'difference' is highlighted as an asset, also intrigued the students. Three of the students did not like the picture book, on the grounds that it was for younger children. One of the students wrote that she found the images quite scary, and this shows that while responding to a book from an *aesthetic* stance, negative criticism might also come up as a result.

With respect to the second question, all the students admitted to being exposed to reading authentic material in English for the first time.

Most of the students, thirteen in total, replied that they would like to repeat a similar project. The grounds for their answers was that they liked English literature, they enjoyed reading and writing adventurous stories, that they improved their linguistic skills, especially vocabulary, and they also thought that working on a project made them feel like a team, since there was a lot of oral team work involved while discussing particular aspects in the course of the project, for instance, the vocabulary they needed to express their thoughts, Olivia's personality, etc. Since that was the first experience of the students working on a project, apparently there were numerous questions that the teacher had to answer.

Olivia's personality was the element which attracted the students most in the story. Nine out of the seventeen students provided this answer. Three students thought that the images were fascinating and only one thought that the plot was really exciting. Two students wrote "I don't know", but apparently they did not understand the wording of the question, whereas two students did not answer at all.

As far as the fifth question is concerned, it is evident that not all the students comprehended the question since fifteen out of the seventeen students admitted to enjoying the process of creating their own stories, whereas two of the students were negative. The number of responses is incongruent with the number of multimodal texts that were handed in during the second sub-stage of the *main phase* of the project. Still, the students who were aware of the meaning of their responses justified their answers and wrote that while creating their own stories they felt very inventive, creative and they had the chance to use their imagination to portray Olivia.

Finally, as regards the final question of the questionnaire, three students responded that they enjoyed both writing and drawing, and they could not discern which part of their experience was more interesting. Four students enjoyed drawing more than writing, whereas three students chose writing over drawing. One of them claimed that she wanted to be a writer and composing her text was good practice, whereas one student confessed that he could not draw very well, therefore writing seemed to be a better option. Three students did not answer the

final question, whereas four students wrote “I don't know”, which was a common answer to the questions that the students did not comprehend.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

The completion of the teaching intervention leads us to the conclusion that more literacy practices involving picture books should be included in the EFL teaching curriculum since the students benefited from their exposure to the authentic material in multiple ways. In spite of their lack of familiarity with children's picture books in the foreign language, as this was evidenced through the analysis of the final questionnaire, the students were motivated and intellectually engaged during the classroom practice.

Refraining from curricular mandates, oriented primarily on the instruction of literacy as a neutral and technical skill, as well as fragmented reading and writing through a bottom-up approach, the students improved their linguistic skills, such as vocabulary, speaking, reading and writing, in a holistic manner stemming from the *aesthetic* transaction with the text, especially the response to the images contributing to the portrayal of Olivia.

Furthermore, as active/critical makers of cross-modal meanings the students were able to construct meaning through their own texts where their semiotic options were motivated with respect to the ways they position the readers/viewers in order to accept Olivia, and by extension femininity, in the role of a *super-heroine*, a role which is usually denied in traditional gender biased comics through the projection of male superheroes (Marsh & Millard, 2000).

Finally, the designing of the teaching intervention enabled the teacher to construct a *dialogical classroom* by shifting the teacher-learner hierarchy towards the *teacher-as-learner model* (Scott, 2004:177), since a lot of useful conclusions were drawn concerning prospective collection of material which would appeal to the students and would take into account their identities. The teacher, in the role of facilitator, juxtaposed to Olivia's teacher who tries to impose his perspective upon her, cultivated trust among students and herself, since every aspect of the entire practice turned out to be much more productive and fruitful than it usually happens with English textbooks dealing with “generally unreal and dull” situations (Crystal, 1987:15). In this light, we can be optimistic that teachers and curriculum reformers will realize that the material intended for students can be made more valid if it is adjusted to their interests, concerns and socio-cultural reality.

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## Appendix

### Gap filling

Fill in the gaps with the words provided.

●audience ●took ●artist ●coolest ●has to ●Luckily ●imagination ●didn't  
 ●rides ●her ●were ●walked ●gets ●drew ●sleepy ●stories ●wasn't ●Before  
 ●rode ●whip

Olivia is the \_\_\_\_\_ pig in the world ...

\_\_\_\_\_ school, she makes pancakes for her brothers and then she \_\_\_\_\_ dressed. She \_\_\_\_\_ wear a really boring uniform but of course she always accessorizes. She \_\_\_\_\_ her scooter in order to get to school.

Olivia has a very vivid \_\_\_\_\_ and she always blossoms in front of an \_\_\_\_\_. Therefore, when in class, she always tells the most interesting \_\_\_\_\_ ...

One day, Olivia saved the local circus...

"One day my mum \_\_\_\_\_ me to the circus, but all the circus people \_\_\_\_\_ sick with ear infections. \_\_\_\_\_, I knew how to do everything . I \_\_\_\_\_ tattoos on my body with a marker. I used my \_\_\_\_\_ and tamed a lion. I \_\_\_\_\_ on tight-rope. I even \_\_\_\_\_ a unicycle and became a trapeze \_\_\_\_\_ ... Unfortunately, my grand finale \_\_\_\_\_ very successful because my dogs weren't very trained..."

Olivia's teacher was very suspicious and he \_\_\_\_\_ believe \_\_\_\_\_, but she was still very cool!

Then she went back home... and kept on ... dreaming... You see, Olivia is never \_\_\_\_\_!

# The Provision of Children's Literature at Bishop Grosseteste University (Lincoln)

Sibylle Erle and Janice Morris  
Bishop Grosseteste University (Lincoln)

**Abstract:** Bishop Grosseteste University (BGU), located in uphill Lincoln, was founded as an Anglican teacher training college for women in 1862. In 1962 it was named after the medieval Bishop Robert Grosseteste, renowned as a Church reformer and academic. In 2012 the institution, a University College since 2006, was awarded University status and the name changed to Bishop Grosseteste University. Although education and teaching courses still feature prominently, BGU now offers a wide range of subjects and qualifications. This professional article written by Sibylle Erle (Senior Lecturer in English) and Janice Morris (Teaching Resources Librarian) is a case study of the complexity of English Studies in the U.K., showcasing the provision of Children's Literature at BGU.

**Keywords:** Children's Literature, provision, teaching, teacher, research, assessment, collection, resources

Children's Literature, a second-year module, was created and taught by Dr. Sally Bentley until 2006. The module is mentioned in *Teaching Children's Fiction* (2006), edited by Charles Butler who also comments on the range of undergraduate Children's Literature modules at that time, listing Bentley's module as an example for "education students intending to become teachers". Bentley describes it as: "An 'overview' course in children's literature, including novels from a range of genres and periods (from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to contemporary Young Adult novels such as *Dear Nobody*), and a range of picture books by authors such as Sendak, Burningham, and Browne. Assessment: Seminar papers and a Timed Assessment." (Butler 2006: 189, 190) Children's Literature is still a very successful module; it attracts highly positive feedback. It has, however, changed substantially over the years in its approach to student learning, academic content and assessment. These changes are a reflection of the institution gaining University status in 2012 as well as the fact that the English Unit submitted to the RAE (2008) and the REF (2014). This focus on research has superseded the teacher education-oriented approach to both the module's delivery and content. Teaching is now research-led.

Until 2006 Children's Literature existed in two versions: one was delivered to BA Single Honours students and the other to the Combined Honours cohort. Due to BGU's long standing tradition of teacher education, the institution has always offered a whole range of assessments, oral and written, across the degrees to build up students' skills and knowledge. What the above mentioned "Seminar papers" entailed was an improvised oral presentation for the small cohort of Single Honours students. The much bigger group of the Combined Honours, on the other hand, had a substantially longer group assessment. It was a group presentation with a peer-teaching element. Students had to work and present in groups and were required to translate some of their academic work into a peer-teaching context. To prepare students for this component of their assessment, the

lectures, which were normally 1.5 hours long, were interactive and group activities in seminars varied. Students were set independent study tasks. They had reading instructions for the workshops or questions for the seminars. I always tried to make students think about the pedagogic reasons behind the chosen exercises. During assessment students' choices of group tasks for their peers were highly imaginative. They were supported by additional teaching and learning materials which had to be handed in after the group presentation. The presentation groups received one mark and one feedback form. Individual marks were an exception. In the late 2000s, when BGU offered options to students the Single Honours module was phased out. Single Honours students were invited to opt into the Combined Honours version. Students would choose to do so, if they wanted to become teachers.

After revalidation, when the module moved from the first to the second semester, the peer-teaching element of the assessment ceased to exist. This change in direction had to do with the budding research culture at BGU. The module, once exceptional on account of its delivery, came to resemble the other English modules more and more. Other alterations were that the groups, formerly consisting of up to seven students, would no longer receive a group mark. When I joined BGU in 2006 cohorts were smaller; the group mark was a means to acknowledge team-effort. Students formed their own presentation groups, based on friendship groups. Due to clashes in personalities or working styles, group work was often frustrating as well as productive and rewarding. Since student numbers had grown, it became a challenge to continually support the group work through tutorials or *ad hoc* meetings. With the prospect of individual marks the group process became easier to manage. Students were less anxious about their marks and were, as a result, more comfortable with the group work component. After the revalidation in the late 2000s the module began to evolve. Changes in timetabling led to one-hour lectures and 1.5 hour seminars. The module grew from 12 to 14 taught weeks, including two weeks for oral assessment, and an exam in week 15.

What stands out about Children's Literature now is that the module is student as well as research-led. The module still has lectures on specific themes, periods or critical approaches, such as the history of literature for children, Fairy Tales, Fantasy, Morality/Spirituality and text-image relationships. The taught component revolves around a reading list of normally 12 texts, starting with, for example, Sarah Fielding's *The Governess* (1749) and Mary Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787), and including poems by Isaac Watts and William Blake. The content now reflects my own research interests, such as Romantic literature, poetry, cultural materialism and reception studies. I also work on visual culture, which – with respect to the module – is reflected in the emphasis given to illustrations as well as picture books. The lectures are still concept driven. They promote intellectual flexibility and only touch on the texts to be discussed in the seminars. The aim is to raise questions about the seminar texts rather than just provide information about them. Lectures normally explore publishing contexts and publication histories to allow students to critically situate the texts they are studying. Issues to do with gender, race and sexuality are invariably introduced and discussed, focusing on modes of address and ideologies. Supported by Blackboard our VLE, students receive specific guidance

on secondary reading as well as advance preparation and thinking tasks. These tasks can form an integral part of the lectures or the seminars. The rationale behind this approach is to empower students to assess the suitability of specific approaches, such as biographical, textual and critical readings as well as reader response, for their analysis of literature written for children or young adults. The main goal of the sessions, in short, is to build students' confidence and to support their independent thinking. When it comes to choosing texts for the assessment, students need to have a sense of ownership of their projects.

Specific guidance on the oral assessment is given in weeks 1 and 4 of the module. In preparation for the assessment (weeks 7 and 8) students are expected to organise themselves into working groups by week 4 (3 to 5 students). Each group has to agree on a topic and each student is expected to present on at least one text and for 10 minutes in front of a small audience, including their peers and the assessor. The work for the group presentation is argument-driven. Students are encouraged to follow their own ideas but they have to be flexible; they have to weigh up their own interests against those of the group and plan their presentations accordingly. The argument of each individual presentation needs to link back and engage with the overarching argument. To give one example: if students choose the topic death, they need to agree on how each presentation will contribute to a critical analysis of the representation of death in contemporary literature for young adults. Each individual needs to find their own focus or angle to achieve this goal. Apart from insisting that students explore their research questions during tutorials, the assignment brief advises them to build their project around a theme, genre or issue. Students are expected to use ICT and are encouraged to consider film adaptations. They have to hand in individual reference lists as well as a print-out of their PowerPoint. To support the research component of the module, which invites students to work on new texts, Janice Morris, who is in charge of the Teaching Resources Collection (TRC), is included into the process. The tutorials, guiding and running alongside the group work, are part of an ongoing dialogue between academic and librarian. While some stick to the tried and tested authors, many seek out more obscure and less well trodden paths and the collection easily supports their choices.

The Teaching Resources Collection (TRC), originally founded for primary and secondary trainee teachers, is now used by all BGU students and staff. Students intending to work in education and students of children's literature have increasingly become dedicated users of the collection. The link with the Children's Literature module has grown and developed over the years.

When the Library was extended in 2012, we created a bespoke room for the TRC. This highlighted the importance of the collection and, together with the carefully chosen design and layout and the wonderfully illustrated panels by Jackie Morris and Ruth Brown, a space has been created that is highly regarded by students and staff alike. The TRC has two sections: the Teachers' Resources Collection and Children's Resources. The former includes National Curriculum documents, government reports, reading and phonic schemes, educational textbooks, teaching handbooks and lesson planning guides. The latter includes picture books, fiction and non-fiction books, big books, dual language books, feature films, audiobooks, resource packs, artefact boxes, novelty books, puppets,

Storysacks® and journals. Within the Children's Resources we keep the Children's Literature Collection (CLC), the focus of this article. The purpose of this collection is to promote quality children's literature to BGU staff and students, to support their teaching and learning and to develop their knowledge of children's literature as well as their academic abilities. Created over the last 40 years, the CLC holds approximately sixteen thousand books and is wide ranging and inclusive. In the fiction and the picture book sections all the major authors and illustrators are represented. In addition, we have complete collections of the Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Medal winners starting in 1936 and 1955 respectively. Our facsimile collection of Osborne Early Children's Books provides examples of pre-twentieth century children's literature. While our students can expect to find the classic authors, illustrators and poets, we are also painstaking in our efforts to keep the collection current. Each year we purchase the winners from a range of prizes and awards. So the CLC reflects the development of British children's literature over many decades. Geographically, although the emphasis is on British literature there is a good selection of American fiction, world fiction and books translated into English as well as dual language texts. While fantasy and other genres are represented there are a number of themes running through our collections. Not only do we want our collection to be comprehensive and well balanced, we also want it to reflect diversity and equality.

In creating the collection we have used a variety of methods to guide and inform the selection: Children's Literature Journals, published bibliographies, prizes and awards, and professional organizations all inform our choices. Here are a few examples: *Books for Keeps* and *Children's Literature in Education* are useful journals which highlight various concerns and academic issues in relation to children's literature. The School Library Association (SLA) and the Federation of Children's Book Groups (FCBG) regularly publish bibliographies on a wide range of subjects. The United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA) Book Award, chosen by teachers; the Carnegie and Greenaway Medals, chosen by librarians; and the FCBG, Children's Book Award, chosen by children, give a comprehensive picture of contemporary children's literature from three very different but equally valuable perspectives. In addition, professional organizations, such as the National Association for Teachers of English (NATE) and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) provide information to support the promotion and teaching of children's literature.

However, it is important to consider and reflect on other factors that have influenced the development of the collection. Externally, government policies have had a considerable impact on its nature. The introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988 highlighted specific authors and books that schools should study; these all had to be present in our collection to support our teacher training students. The new National Curriculum, introduced in 2013, while stressing the importance of phonic knowledge for the teaching of reading, also emphasizes reading for pleasure and enjoyment. Changes in society and its values also impacted on the collection. For instance the emergence of teenagers as a distinct group, rapid technological change, appreciation of our increasingly multicultural society, acknowledgement of the rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people and, very recently, government admission of the importance of emotional wellbeing and mental health have all led BGU librarians, down the

years, to select novels and picture books that reflect and explore the ways in which we live.

Internal changes at BGU also played their part in shaping the CLC. Changes in the student body, changes in the subjects taught and the qualifications awarded, combined with BGU's increasing focus on research, have all impacted on the collection. It has to support the demands of a whole host of courses. The introduction of early years education programmes, for example, have meant an increase in books for very young children. The recognition of our globalized economy and the need to internationalize the curriculum has triggered purchases, highlighting these issues. Academics' requests for particular texts to support their teaching and their specific research interests have also resulted in very positive contributions to the collection's development. Sibylle's promotion of poetry within the children's literature module has developed our poetry collection significantly.

Librarians over the years have also played their part in fashioning the collection. In my own case (and I have no reason to doubt that my predecessors were any different) my qualifications, experience and background have all affected my approach to stock selection. I am indebted to the specialist children's librarians employed by Walsall Library Service in the early 1980s who convinced me of the importance of children's literature. This was reinforced when I worked for Wiltshire School Library Service where I met personally or in print the authors, writers and children's literature experts who have helped form my vision for literature for children. Anthony Browne was the first author/illustrator to make me give picture books the attention they deserve. Other influences included Elaine Moss's seminal work from the 1970s which promoted picture books for older children and addressed the misconception that they are just for babies. Aidan Chambers produced wonderful books on engaging and encouraging children to read, and Teresa Cremin's work on teachers as readers has guided and supported my enhancement activities with students. All have been an inspiration and are integral to how I develop the CLC. Although we take care to create a comprehensive and balanced collection it is impossible to eliminate these haphazard, and unpredictable influences. The CLC has been shaped by passing trends and reflects the interests, knowledge and values of all those who come into contact with it. Unlike many children's literature archives and specialist collections, it does not focus on a particular period or a single author. I consider that this is its strength. It has the breadth and depth to sustain our current teacher training students as well as our children's literature students and the potential to support many and varied research interests.

For final year English students, the number choosing to do their dissertations on children's literature is always high. Over the years, their research has focused on genres as well as important issues, such as disability, mental health and gender. As for our academics, Sibylle's interest and research in visual culture, mentioned above, has been illuminated by our extensive collection of picture books. Dr. Richard Woolley has used the collection to inform and provide examples for his book *Tackling Controversial Issues in the Primary School*. He also worked with myself and students on our BA Primary Education course to create the annotated bibliography, *The Family Diversity Reading Resource*:

100+ picture books to value children's families annotated bibliography of picture books. While Early Childhood Studies lecturer, Mary-Louise Maynes, has used the CLC to support her doctoral research on how children respond to books which challenge the boundaries of fiction and non-fiction.

To enhance our students' experience I work very closely with my academic colleagues to develop various activities. Such collaboration ensures that these are relevant and rigorous, adding to the students' experience rather than just being incidental to it. For example, each year we arrange for an author/illustrator to visit and work with English literature students, studying picture books on the children's literature module and also students on the Education Studies module, focusing on the value of 'informal' educational experiences. Afterwards, English Literature students interview the visiting author/illustrator for *Hullabaloo!*, a bi-annual paper and online children's literature newsletter published by the library which is celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. For the second year running English Literature students from the Professional Placement module have written, edited and published the spring/summer issue of *Hullabaloo!*. Along with bibliographies and leaflets developed in house and our Children's Literature LibGuide, *Hullabaloo!* helps to inform, and entertain our community at BGU. Finally, students who want to immerse themselves in children's literature have the opportunity to take part in shadowing the major book awards. Previously we have concentrated on the Carnegie and Greenaway Awards. This year a group taking Education Studies are meeting regularly to discuss the books shortlisted for the United Kingdom Literacy Association Book Award. What does the future hold? We very much hope that we can grow postgraduate work on literature for children, while continuing to support and inspire students of the undergraduate course.

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# The Wickedness of Feminine Evil in the *Harry Potter* Series

## Promoting Moral Development through the *Via Negativa*

Eliana Ionoaia

University of Bucharest

**Abstract:** Evil and power are characterized by intentionality and there seems to be a connection between the two, as evil requires power in order to be enacted, while power when exercised as a means may lead to injustice and evil. The corruption of power creating evil characters can be applied to Bellatrix Lestrange and Dolores Umbridge, the two foremost villainesses of the *Harry Potter* novels, as well as to Rita Skeeter. Since the world in which these characters move is a realm immersed in magic, the fact that the two of them are witches is only relevant insofar as it mirrors the witches of fairy tales.

**Keywords:** Evil, intentionality, distanciation, proximity, instrumentality, children's literature.

### 1. Power of Evil

“There is no good and evil, there is only power and those too weak to seek it” (Rowling 1997: 211) – Voldemort's words uttered by Quirrell in the first volume of the *Harry Potter* series were the starting point for an investigation of evil and power in these fantastic novels addressed to children. Both evil and power are characterized by intentionality and there seems to be a connection between the two, as evil requires power in order to be enacted, while power when exercised as a means may lead to injustice and evil. The intricacies of power and evil are interconnected and cannot exist one without the other. Moreover, the moral dimension of the novel reveals, in true Victorian vein, the fact that evil does not go unpunished, therefore providing not just moral paragons whose example ought to be followed in the characters of Harry Potter, Albus Dumbledore or Remus Lupin, but also reprehensible characters that show the corruption of evil and power, acting as warnings for the young reader and constructing the *via negativa* of moral choices.

Machiavelli theorized power as a means, since in his view, the value of the end is unimportant in comparison with the efficiency of the means employed in attaining it. A vital characteristic of power is that of ego-enhancement as theorized by Dennis Wrong – which proceeds from “the ability to control other people's lives and even to induce fear in them” (Wrong 226), thus it is the sense of self-importance which results from the status created and the praise and esteem conferred by others. This is what is understood by power over, the concept of power I am most interested in for my purposes since it is closer to the category of evil present in these fantastic novels.

The corruption of power which creates evil characters can be applied to Bellatrix Lestrange and Dolores Umbridge, the two foremost villainesses of the *Harry Potter* novels, as well as to Rita Skeeter, representing a milder form of evil. The three villainesses cross the line between good and evil, morality does not seem to be an issue of concern or a hindrance for them and they seem to apply the

philosophy present in the above mentioned quote in their evil-doing, without any regard for victims, while using any means available to achieve their ends. If most people have a set of inner restraints and inhibitions preventing them from acting on every impulse, these restraints seem to be abolished in the case of our villainesses, leading to a flawed mechanism. Bellatrix Lestrange, Dolores Umbridge and Rita Skeeter's proclivity to succumb to evil, either under the form of rule-breaking or due to temptation, proves indomitable; hence evil seems to be intrinsic to their very nature. They portray a behavior which indicates no remorse, no regard for feelings or well-being of others and self-serving tendencies in their conduct. Since the world in which these characters move is a realm immersed in magic, the fact that they are witches is not relevant. However, the fact that the *Harry Potter* world includes both evil wizards and wicked witches is worth examining. In addition, the varied degrees of evil, which characterize our three witches, are also relevant since, in Sirius Black's words: "the world isn't split into good people and Death Eaters." (Rowling 2003: 302) Significantly, the real world cannot be divided along such clear-cut lines either. The novels, though fantastic in genre, do include a streak of realism in terms of the moral relativism portrayed in them. The young readers are supposed to understand that no one is absolutely good or absolutely evil, that both men and women can display moments of lapsed morality, and that acting without regards to consequences is not a good choice.

Bellatrix Lestrange is the epitome of evil: a Death Eater and Voldemort's second-in-command bent on coercing everyone in range to do her bidding; Dolores Umbridge embodies legitimate authority gone awry, while Rita Skeeter exemplifies the power for manipulation of the press and its employment in one's self-interest. Thus, the choices these characters make are illustrative of situation some of us could encounter in everyday life, positing that the paths Bellatrix Lestrange, Dolores Umbridge and Rita Skeeter follow are not advisable since they lead to punishment, opprobrium and even death.

## 2. Defining Evil

Defining evil should be the first step of my investigation of female wickedness in the *Harry Potter* novels, however, as Zygmunt Bauman states, this is, if not a hopeless endeavor, at least an immensely difficult one. Therefore instead of defining evil as it appears in the *Harry Potter* novels I will simply try to identify those instances of evil as theorized by other scholars, instances of evil which make an appearance in the plot. Bauman relegates the concept of evil to Kant's category of the *noumena* – since it is both unknown and unknowable and the question of evil's nature is essentially unanswerable: in his words evil is "unintelligible, ineffable and inexplicable (...) the kind of wrong which we can neither understand nor even clearly articulate, let alone explain its presence to our full satisfaction" (Bauman 54). My negotiations with evil will touch upon sociological, political, philosophical and psychological conceptions of this notion.

Arne Johan Vetlesen defines evil as an intentional infliction of pain and suffering on another person while causing severe and predictable harm to that being. (Vetlesen 2) Thus, if a human being deliberately chooses to act in such a way as to cause pain and suffering to another human being, and if that person's choice is deliberate and the actions are perpetrated knowingly while aware of the

potential injury it will inflict, then that person may be termed evil. According to Weiner and Simpson as quoted in Duntley and Buss, “the intent to do harm is an integral part of the definition of evil” (Weiner and Simpson qtd. in Duntley and Buss 107), in fact it would be impossible to think of an act as evil if there was no intention to harm anyone. Thus an evil act is in fact an intentionally cruel, unjust or selfish act which harms another person. Only through intentionality can the category of evil be seen as the reverse of good and be perceived as censurable, mischievous and undesirable. Knowledge of good and evil is valuable in the case of both good and evil persons since, in order to intentionally act in a wrongful manner one must know the difference between the two. This is the reason why, in the case of violent reactions of children or animals, their interpretation is not one of evil, but one of lack of knowledge and awareness. The *Harry Potter* novels attempt to make children aware of the knowledge of good and evil and of the choices one ought to make. The evil female characters examined in this paper are anything but praiseworthy, consequently, children readers would find it hard to identify or empathize with them (the same is true about the male evil characters). Since young readers cannot admire such characters, they would reject their model of behaviour.

One merely needs to consider the various instances Bellatrix Lestrange tortures or kills other characters in the *Harry Potter* novels in order to categorize her as evil – the Aurors Frank and Alice Longbottom are permanently crippled by her willingness to use the Cruciatius Curse in order to torture some information out of them, Hermione is left shaken after being tortured by Bellatrix using the same curse in *The Deathly Hallows*, while Sirius Black and Nymphadora Tonks are left dead after encounters with her in duels in *The Order of the Phoenix* and *The Deathly Hallows*, respectively. Her prodigious skills in duels and extensive knowledge of the darkest of curses and spells are a credit to Voldemort, since Bellatrix acknowledges in front of Harry that the Dark Lord was the one who taught her magic (Rowling 2003: 811). Her power can only be seen as power over, since the force of her spells and her knowledge make her a redoubtable enemy for most and a valued ally for Voldemort. Bellatrix seems to have a preference for killing family members, since Sirius was her cousin and Tonks her niece, while those people not akin to her simply earn a show of skill through torture. She also enjoys torturing other people and she pursues Tonks with her mind set on committing murder, in order to ‘prune’ her family tree, both at the beginning of the seventh volume, as well as towards the end when she finally gets her ‘wish’. The evil acts Bellatrix commits during the novels are always deliberate since in Harry’s own words she is a witch of “prodigious skill and no conscience.” (Rowling 2007: 374) Bellatrix is not bothered by the suffering of others, but she enjoys it, thus being able to commit evil deeds such as torture in the immediate proximity of her victims and without feeling any type of remorse. Her power enhances Bellatrix’s good opinion of herself since she knows full well that she can control those around her, not only through the Imperius Curse, but through the fear she engenders. The other Death Eaters respect and fear her confirming the status she herself thinks she deserves to hold. Young readers would presumably feel fear when reading about the deeds of Bellatrix Lestrange, simultaneously learning that the sort of intolerance she exhibits cannot be desirable at any level; thus, they would learn to avoid such behaviours.

Dolores Umbridge, during her time at Hogwarts as teacher of Defense against the Dark Arts, High Inquisitor and headmistress, proves herself to be cruel in her punishments of students and condoning morally questionable behavior in using Veritaserum and intending to employ the Cruciatus Curse on students in order to obtain information. Umbridge is well aware of the harm she is inflicting upon students such as Harry who is punished for telling the truth about Voldermort's return by making him write lines with a quill that uses the writer's blood and inscribes the lines into the skin – thus Umbridge favors torturous penalties. Umbridge is not squeamish about looking her 'victim' straight in his/her face while inflicting pain such as that of the above mentioned punishment. She has no pangs of guilt for her interrogations of Muggle-born wizards and for claiming that they are not magic at all and that they have stolen their magic and their wands from other wizards. In addition, she uses her power as a Ministry official (she is the senior undersecretary to the minister) to send the Dementors to Privet Drive in order to attack Harry and silence him and her authority as High Inquisitor to torture students and keep a close eye on the teachers. Dolores Umbridge uses her power over the other wizards at Hogwarts and elsewhere malevolently since she enjoys the control her position confers on her and rejoices in the fact that she can strike fear in the hearts of others. It is made abundantly clear that Dolores Umbridge supports Voldemort's ideas about the purity of race through her opinions about half-breeds and 'Mudbloods': she drafts anti-werewolf legislation, she campaigns to round up and tag merpeople, she insults Centaurs and writes a leaflet entitled "Mudbloods and the dangers they pose to a peaceful pure-blood society" while she is the head of the Muggle-born Registration Commission in *The Deathly Hallows*. Dolores Umbridge's actions as a bureaucrat and her version of Aryanism seem to legitimize an interpretation of this character as a possible Eichmann, a thoughtless bureaucrat present in the middle of what could have been a genocidal purging of Muggle-borns. Her self-esteem and highly held opinion of herself is further increased by boosting her pure blood status in the last novel of the series by appropriating Slytherin's locket and claiming that it was a family heirloom of her relatives the Selwyns: "The 'S' stands for Selwyn... I am related to the Selwyns... indeed, there are few pure-blood families to whom I am not related." (Rowling 2007: 215) Dolores Umbridge is another instance of the reprehensibility of intolerance and of Machiavellian behavior. Her lies and intractability, as well as her pride and arrogance, make her a negative example. Moreover, as a teacher, her offensive behavior makes her culpable of cruelty towards children. Instead of providing an example for children in terms of desirable conduct, she provides a negative example of what not to do.

The third villainess – Rita Skeeter – uses her 'power' over the masses as a shaper of public opinion in accordance with her own interest. Rita fabricates information in order to write appealing stories in the *Daily Prophet* and *Witch Weekly* – beginning with what was supposed to be an article about the Triwizard Tournament champions, but ends up as a fictitious, rampant with falsehood, story about Harry's life. The articles that follow – concerning Hagrid and Hermione – include mostly information based on vicious rumors and the slightest possible amount of truth. The same goes for the article she writes towards the end of *The Goblet of Fire* claiming that Harry is dangerous and disturbed. Rita Skeeter uses questionable means of acquiring information – such as spying on potential

sources while she is transformed in a beetle (her Animagus form) as well as using memory charms, as in the case of Bathilda Bagshot for obtaining the information for her book *The Life and Lies of Albus Dumbledore*. The last of the articles written in *The Goblet of Fire*, gives the Minister for Magic ammunition to discredit Harry Potter in the following novel in the cycle – *The Order of the Phoenix*. The press takes Harry as its target since Fudge attempts to damage his reputation in order for people to disbelieve his account of Voldemort's return. The dishonest and furtive approach to her work shows a work ethic that ought to be rejected. In addition, readers also see the consequences of her words on Hermione and Harry, therefore children are encouraged to reject such conduct.

The *Daily Prophet's* slander of Harry is based on Rita Skeeter's article, thus her particular form of scandal-mongering journalism, with little regard for the truth, understating genuine news in favor of attention-grabbing headlines with the aim to sell as many newspapers as possible, is criticized by Rowling. It is this type of sensationalist, yellow journalism that leads the masses to believe whatever they are told without analyzing the information they are fed. Rita Skeeter's actions and words in the fourth and seventh novels are objectionable, however she somewhat redeems herself by grudgingly agreeing to help Harry in *The Order of the Phoenix*. When under threat to be revealed as an Animagus, Hermione convinces her to lend a hand in undermining the authority of the Ministry of Magic as well as that of Dolores Umbridge. The reason why I conceive of Rita Skeeter as evil is the fact that her conniving, scheming articles are untruthful for her own self-interest, not because of a lack of sources, and Rita is very much aware of the results she attains with her writing – including the suffering of those she lies about. Skeeter deliberately misinforms the public and intentionally lies about some of her 'subjects' in order to achieve vengeance and have them suffer for opposing her. This is the case for the article she writes for *Witch Weekly* regarding Hermione Granger, and the result is that Hermione receives hate mail from numerous readers of that very article – including letters containing bubotuber puss which cause her hands to erupt in boils. Hagrid is also harmed, though mostly psychologically, when, after Rita Skeeter writes her article, he receives hate-mail urging him to jump in a lake if he still has some decency (since his mother was a monster who had killed innocent people). Thus, children readers are also encouraged to take the press with a grain of salt, instead of believing everything they might read later in life in newspapers or see on television. They are made to understand that the subjectivity of the press inscribes it with the writer's belief system.

### 3. Intentionality of Evil and Distanciation

The intentionality of evil mentioned by Vetlesen is merely an issue to be discussed when dealing with evil. Vetlesen also differentiates between evil and immorality, since he does not conceive of the two categories as interchangeable equals considering that evil is the absolute worst in terms of wrongdoing, while lying or stealing do not even come close, though they are not admirable. Vetlesen also discusses Stanley Milgram's experiment regarding human obedience from the 1960s that has revealed the individual's disposition to please those in authority. (Vetlesen 3) Milgram's experiment exposed the unpremeditated character of evil

in our times, since circumstances could lead to unintended evil as a side-effect of obedience to authority (such as collateral damage in the case of armed conflicts, when innocents as well as insurgents die), thus the evil so characteristic of our age could be termed interactional rather than moral. (Vetlesen 5) The interactions of human beings – including their willingness to discard their sense of responsibility in morally questionable situations – are discussed in terms of agency. This readiness in renouncing one's moral responsibility leads to indifference, to a pursuit of one's self-interest and to a lack of empathy. The *Harry Potter* novels provide a warning for young readers in the sense that they are made aware of the possibility that in their lives they might, at one time or another, be placed in situations in which they might be tempted to set aside their sense of responsibility and morality, yet the warning shows them that this is not advisable.

In the case of Milgram's experiment, the vast majority of the teachers who thought they were participating in a learning program in which they used electric shocks to punish incorrect answers obeyed and administered the shock. The 'victim' was removed from their sight and the teachers could distance themselves from the suffering they inflicted. (Vetlesen 17) This distancing between the subject of the experiment and the suffering inflicted, i.e. the consequences of their actions, reduced the strain felt by the teachers when they had to administer the shocks and lessen their disobedience. Milgram argued that this led to a vanishing of responsibility and a departure from morality which was not felt as such since the teachers considered the experimenters accountable for what they were being asked to do. (Vetlesen 18) Milgram's agentic state, "the state in which the agent finds himself once responsibility has been shifted away by his consent to the superior's right to command," (Vetlesen 18) was what enabled the teachers to carry out the experimenters' wishes and restrict their sense of responsibility and ignore the moral standards to which they usually subscribed.

This theory of distancing from one's victims as an enabler of inflicting pain was put into practice by the Nazis. Hannah Arendt's account of Eichmann's trial in her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: a Report on the Banality of Evil* shows that Eichmann as a bureaucrat had no direct contact with those he was condemning to death in concentration camps through the Final Solution. What interested Arendt in Eichmann's behavior was the fact that in him morality and legality seemed to be merged. According to him, if ordered, he would have condemned his own father to death due to his idealism and faith in the orders received as well as in his superiors. He blindly followed orders without any empathy for those he was condemning, even if in every other aspect of his life (according to experts such as psychologists and even priests) he was a moral human being, quite admirable and desirable in his human relationships. Eichmann could not claim a lack of conscience or declare himself legally insane. In a society which created two different, separated moralities – for the Gentiles and for the Jews, the norm for the Germans was to oppress Jews and reduce their rights through laws, while the Jews tried to stay out of their way and keep a low profile and not become conspicuous. Hannah Arendt states that: "Evil in the Third Reich had lost the quality by which most people recognize it - the quality of temptation." (Arendt 183)

#### 4. Wickedness of Feminine Evil

In the *Harry Potter* novels, the degrees of evil represented by female wickedness in its three instances – Bellatrix Lestrange, Dolores Umbridge and Rita Skeeter – are intricately linked to the issue of distance from those subjected to pain and suffering. While Bellatrix Lestrange enjoys the suffering of her victims and thus feels the need to observe her victims and their suffering (mostly physical pain), and Dolores Umbridge does not seem to mind Harry's suffering during detention (perhaps her name is suggestive of her being partial to suffering and pain), Rita Skeeter is never near her 'victims' and the pain she induces is mostly psychological. Thus on a scale including proximity at one pole and distancing at the other, Bellatrix is located at the end characterized by closeness and Rita at the opposing end, while Dolores is found somewhere in the middle. In light of Hannah Arendt's theory of evil, Dolores Umbridge can be matched with Eichmann in that she legislates against half-breeds and supports purity of race, while following orders from the Minister of Magic and enforces control over seditious forces (the Jews were claimed to be rebels) and encourages the ethnic cleansing of wizards by eliminating Muggle-borns who are seen as impure.

Veltesen presents C. Fred Alford's definition of evil: "Evil is pleasure in hurting and lack of remorse" (Veltesen 106) thus linking evil to sadism and to the absence of guilt. Sadism seen as evil is conflated with pleasure in damaging someone else's opinion of themselves through humiliation, neglect or ridicule, damaging the victim's feeling of self-worth. The notion of evil attributed to Alford views wickedness as relational and individual and in terms of sadism. If we are to consider the villainesses of the *Harry Potter* novels in terms of Alford's theory of evil, both Bellatrix Lestrange and Dolores Umbridge seem to feel pleasure in hurting others and not to feel any type of guilt for inflicting pain. Their power over those around them enhances their self-esteem, while through their actions and deeds they manage to decrease the sense of self-worth perceived by their victims. For instance, Bellatrix defeats several opponents in more than one of the duels she participates in which boosts her self-esteem, Umbridge rejoices in Harry's suffering due to the punishment she apportioned to him in writing lines and his fear and suffering are what improves her sense of self-worth. In the case of Rita Skeeter, her self-esteem is enhanced due to her Quick-Quote Quill, which flatters the possessor.

Susan Neiman theorizes evil by using two paradigms – the Lisbon and the Auschwitz ones. She considers that evil can be either caused by nature as in the case of earthquakes, floods and droughts, thus using Lisbon (in effect this refers to a fire and a tsunami following an earthquake in Lisbon in 1755); or stemming from human cruelty, such as in the case of Auschwitz. The second paradigm is relevant for the discussion of evil in the *Harry Potter* novels since the evil perpetrated in these books is human in character. (Neiman 29) It is the human choices favored by Bellatrix Lestrange, Dolores Umbridge and Rita Skeeter that lead to reprehensible outcomes. These consequences originate in the character of the three villainesses. The foremost feature of evil characters is not, as one might suppose, their inherent propensity to perpetrate wickedness but an "inversion of normal human sentiments" (Haybron 142) which may be understood as moral decadence as well as cruelty. Such behavior is displayed by the evildoer

embodying a subversion of the empathy and sympathy normal human beings feel. Evil characters behave in characteristic ways (Haybron 143) since they:

- a. convince themselves that certain appalling actions can be subordinated to a legitimate aim, Rita Skeeter acts as if the information she puts forth in her articles about Harry is essential for the magical community. Fudge would tend to agree since he uses Skeeter's article towards reaching his own goals, however Rita's apparent sympathy for and empathy with wizarding concerns, is simply a show of self-interest, and not true concern for the others, but a perversion of empathy and sympathy. The initial interview at the time of the weighing of the wands, reveals Rita Skeeter's lack of sympathy for and empathy with Harry's past suffering, since her questions about his parents stem from a desire to obtain a sensational, front-page-material story, a story that in the end has absolutely nothing in common with Harry's answers to her nosy questions. (Rowling 2001: 267-8, 276)
- b. subscribe to a perverse ideology, for example, Dolores Umbridge's prejudice toward part-humans whom she sees as "dangerous half-breeds" (Rowling 2003: 243), "filthy half-breeds, beasts, uncontrolled animals." (Rowling 2003: 755) She drafts legislation against half-breeds – as she does for werewolves (Rowling 2003: 302) – and writes virulent articles against Muggle-borns: "Mudbloods and the Dangers They Pose to a Peaceful Pure-Blood Society." (Rowling 2007: 205) Umbridge's subscription to what may be termed racism, xenophobia or Aryanism in turn, originates in her fear of beings she does not understand. She is thus instrumental in creating the Muggle-born Registration Commission at the forefront of which she is to be found in the seventh novel of the series as well as proposing that merpeople are rounded and tagged. (Rowling 2003: 302)
- c. suppress their conscience, for example, Umbridge's use of the Veritaserum on students which proves unsuccessful, her plan to employ the Cruciatus Curse on Harry:

'I am left with no alternative... This is more than a matter of school discipline... This is an issue of Ministry security (...) You are forcing me, Potter.... I do not want to... but sometimes circumstances justify the use... I am sure the Minister will understand that I had no choice...' (Rowling 2003: 746)

and her dispatching Dementors to eliminate Harry without the knowledge of the Minister for Magic:

'What Cornelius doesn't know won't hurt him (...) He never knew I ordered dementors after Potter last summer, but he was delighted to be given the chance to expel him, all the same (...) Somebody had to act (...) They were all bleating about silencing you somehow – discrediting you – but I was the one who actually did something about it.' (Rowling 2003: 746-7)

Umbridge, in the vein of Machiavelli, considers that the end justifies the means, thus she is willing to break the law and use the Cruciatus Curse on Harry in order to attain the information she longs for.

## 5. Instrumentality and Self-destructiveness of Evil

Baumeister and Vohs theorize the roots of evil as *instrumentality* in regard to the employment of evil as a means to an end which may lead to obtaining what one wants, especially if it is required to influence others to comply; *threatened egotism* referring to the idea of saving face – being censured which leads to violence; *idealism* referring to an attempt at making the world a better place and discarding those who stand in the way; and *sadism* concerned with the derivation of pleasure from harming others. (Baumeister and Vohs 100) Evil is definitely instrumental in these novels since it originates from the characters' choices to act in a certain way in order to attain their goals (Bellatrix does not mind torturing people to find out the information she needs, Dolores does the same as well as using heinous punishments in order to attain control over others, while Rita uses her Animagus form as well as memory charms in order to find out the information she needs to write her articles and books), while threatened egotism is present in Skeeter's attempt to get back at Hermione for making her lose face. Idealism is present in Umbridge's character since she deems that the wizarding world would be better without Muggle-borns and half-breeds and acts in a way consistent with her beliefs. Sadism is salient in Lestrage as well as Umbridge since they enjoy torturing others.

The Bible discusses the self-destructiveness of evil through the Deuteronomic choice set before people: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life that both thou and thy seed may live." (Deuteronomy 30:19) Thus those who choose life and blessings are those who may live, whereas those who choose cursing – in other words evil – reject life. Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* also depicts evil as having a destructive effect on the evildoer since wickedness cannot make one happy and it already provides a punishment for the evildoers since their power comes from weakness for only the good are strong: "wickedness makes a man miserable" (Boethius 91); "wickedness is itself the punishment of the wicked" (Boethius 88); "evil men are capable of evil, but this very power of theirs comes not from strength, but from weakness" (Boethius 86). While Bruno Bettelheim considers that "evil intentions are the evil person's own undoing" (Bettelheim 141), in other words not just the acts, but the intentions behind them count towards vanquishing evil.

In the *Harry Potter* novels, Bellatrix Lestrage, Dolores Umbridge and Rita Skeeter meet with their downfall precisely because of their evil character. Bellatrix Lestrage meets with her demise during the final battle for Hogwarts in the seventh novel at the hands of Molly Weasley who feels compelled to defend her only daughter once Bellatrix's curse nearly hits her. If Bellatrix was not so bent on using unforgivable curses and if she understood the power of a mother's love, she would not have tried to kill Ginny and she would not had felt over-confident in her battle with Mrs. Weasley. These two facts prove to be her downfall. The reader is already aware that Bellatrix does not know what motherly love feels like since she maintains in a discussion with Narcissa Malfoy, her sister, and Snape that if she had a son she would be proud to have him subject himself to Lord Voldemort and do the latter's bidding. (Rowling 2005: 39)

In the case of Dolores Umbridge, we see her defeated in *The Order of the Phoenix*, when the herd of Centaurs drags her away after she dares call them

names to their faces. Her prejudice against half-breeds proves to be her downfall in this case. In the seventh volume her future is not mentioned, however J.K. Rowling answered some of her fans' questions referring to the future lives of her characters online on the *Leaky Cauldron* website: "She was arrested, interrogated and imprisoned for crimes against Muggle-borns" (Rowling interview. Web) was the author's answer in this case, thus proving again the self-destructiveness of evil in that, due to her hate for Muggle-borns and the action she endorses because of it, Dolores Umbridge finally pays for her crimes.

Rita Skeeter meets her downfall due to her stubbornness in paying back Hermione for sassing her while in Hogsmeade – the article she writes about 'Harry's love interest' and the consequences it has for Hermione, physical as well as psychological – determine her to become unrelenting in her attempt to discover Rita Skeeter's secret when it comes to her communication with her sources and her method of spying on people. Hermione is in the end able to ascertain that Skeeter is an unregistered Animagus and to capture her. This is the reason why Rita has to stop using her quill for a whole year – with the exception of an article for the *Quibbler* with Harry's interview and account of what happened the previous year during the third task of the Triwizard Tournament.

## 6. The Sociopathic Behaviour of Villainesses

The sociopath is the final category of evil I will look into for my investigation of female wickedness in the *Harry Potter* novels. Some individuals either lack restraints or have a flawed set of restraints which conditions their behavior in society, consequently constituting a typology of evil – that of the sociopath. This is a category worth examining since Bellatrix illustrates the psychopath in the novels. Adam Morton defines the sociopath in terms of his/her absence of inhibitions and lack of reluctance in hurting others: sociopaths disregard

the wishes, rights, or feelings of others. They are frequently deceitful and manipulative individuals. (...) [They] show little remorse for the consequences of their acts (...) [or] they may simply indicate complete indifference. (...) Sociopaths primarily lack certain emotions: sympathetic pleasure at another's happiness, dismay at another's sorrow, remorse at having brought trouble to another. (Morton 48)

Thus, it may be said that Bellatrix, as sociopath, is typified by self-serving behavior; she lacks a conscience and the ability to empathize. She is dysfunctional in society since she does not restrain her behavior, nor does she feel remorse when transgressing moral norms of behavior and harming other individuals. Her mode of behavior is that of manipulation and indifference towards others, as she cannot relate to the happiness or sorrow of those around her. She is Voldemort's most fanatical follower and she will stop at nothing in order to serve him. Bellatrix, in fact, would gladly sacrifice her offspring to Voldemort's service and she feels no guilt for – in fact she is proud of – torturing Frank and Alice Longbottom until they became permanently incapacitated. She gladly went to Azkaban for her actions meant to track Voldemort down after his disappearance, and she is unabashedly swollen with pride in that she had been one of the few Death Eaters who did not deny their allegiance to the Dark Lord. She is clearly fond of the

Cruciatus Curse which goes to show her proclivity for sadism and her penchant for violence and she relishes its use, while explaining to Harry that this curse has little effect if coming from someone who does not mean it. Thus she shows no remorse and mercy, no empathy or sympathy and her moral code seems to be skewed.

Richard J. Bernstein discusses several types of evil which are relevant for this investigation of instances of female wickedness in Rowling's novels: these are the odious deeds of those misguided by prioritizing one's sympathetic feelings; of those whose primary incentive is to further their career (the performance of duties gains precedence); of those who mock and defy the moral law and of those who do evil for evil's sake. (Bernstein 42) The two categories most salient in these novels are the evil of those whose primary incentive is to further their career which is the case of both Rita Skeeter and Dolores Umbridge and of those who do evil for evil's sake as in the case of Bellatrix Lestrange.

## 5. Conceptualizing Evil in Children's Literature

J.K. Rowling conceptualizes evil in her *Harry Potter* novels through both male and female characters. Bellatrix Lestrange, Dolores Umbridge and Rita Skeeter reveal varied conceptualizations of evil and power over that are to be avoided. Thus, the novels present the *via negativa*, or what not to do, through these characters. The hero does not only experience death and destruction, but also victory over the enemy. These fantastic novels are realistic from the point of view of morality since good and evil is never absolute in real life. The fact is that the more realistically good and evil are portrayed, the better they are perceived later by children in the real world. J.K. Rowling's novels are meant to assist children internalise the concepts of good and evil leading to "a moral education which subtly, by implication only, conveys to [them] the advantages of moral behaviour, not through abstract ethical concepts." (Bettelheim 5) He discusses fairy tales as a source for this subtle education, but the same is true for these novels, as the moral code of the books is not overt but may be extracted from the characters' patterns of behaviour.

Bruno Bettelheim discusses the purpose of fairy tales as that of encouraging the reader of any age to discover a way out of crisis situations and to rediscover themselves, similarly to the hero in the fairy tale. In addition, the fairy tales offer consolation and hope to the child. J.K. Rowling uses the same strategies of fairy tales in her fantastic novels addressed to children. She creates a protagonist that remains a human hero, with flaws and weaknesses and that has to face hardships. Through them the child is offered a means of recognition of the difficulties he is facing, and a way to achieve a moral education by implication, rather than through ethical concepts. The author offers the child new dimensions of the imagination, new comprehension of the world and a better direction in life. (Bettelheim, 7) The child is shown ways to reach a sense of selfhood as well as how to deal with the struggles and difficulties life will set in his path. These novels will show children how obstacles can be overcome if met steadfastly, in order to emerge victorious. (Bettelheim, 8) Thus, they also encourage the reader to make an effort and show that such an attitude will prove successful. The hero initially seems to be an ordinary person involved in everyday life and through his/her achievements

becomes extraordinary, from young and inexperienced s/he becomes an adult with a family of his/her own, strengthening the expectations of readers that they too can achieve this goal.

The exemplary behaviour is achieved by engaging the imagination of children in a cultural pattern of human development in which the hero deals with one problem at the time. (Bettelheim, 12) They illustrate a moral dichotomy of good and evil, in which evil will always be defeated; and the deserving protagonist will rise in the world. The child will choose the side of good not because evil is punishable, but because it does not pay. (Bettelheim, 9) Thus, the child will identify with the heroes and reject the negative characters, believing that a well-deserved reward will come his way in his own life if he chooses to act morally, whereas any opponents he might face will be punished. The need for justice is satisfied in the fantastic novels by Rowling, which teaches children that good behaviour is rewarded and negative behaviour is punished.

The distinction between good and evil is transformed into a sort of guidebook of how to act and how not to act. Providing only positive is not sufficient, since children readers also have to perceive the reverse. These novels promote morality the young reader requires a role model in life, thus identifying with the hero of the story, rather than with negative characters whose behaviour is seen as blameworthy. The hero of stories based on a good versus evil paradigm "is most attractive to the child, who identifies with the hero in all his struggles" and these identifications are entirely the work of the child, with the result that "the inner and outer struggles of the hero imprint morality on him." (Bettelheim 1989, 9)

## 6. Conceptualization of Feminine Evil

In conclusion, the three wicked witches in Rowling's novels Bellatrix Lestrange, Dolores Umbridge and Rita Skeeter constitute different conceptualizations of evil and power over. Bellatrix Lestrange, a sociopath for all intents and purposes, epitomizes the idea of power-for-power's sake and evil-for-evil's sake since she simply enjoys suffering in others even more so when she is the one inflicting it. Dolores Umbridge symbolizes the power of legitimate authority went awry and the evils it encourages and she is an instance of the thoughtless bureaucrat who obeys the superiors while creating legislation which legitimizes control. Rita Skeeter – while a lesser representative of evil – through her untruthful and biased writing – employs the media's power over the masses in order to manipulate the public's opinion through her perception of facts and opinions. These three female characters act towards achieving their goals in a deliberate manner and do not feel any pangs of guilt for their actions – whatever consequences these may have.

In the *Harry Potter* novels, the heroic protagonist lives in a fictional world in which good and evil are portrayed quite realistically, since no good character is completely good and flawless, while in most of the evil characters some sort of human sentiment is present to some extent, as we see in the case of Narcissa Malfoy. The role models who exude moral fortitude provide examples of admirable conduct and the evil characters offer behaviours that ought not to be followed. Thus, the moral relativism of the novels reveals realistically the behaviour of people in the world. The use of the *via negativa* reveals the sins, lack of free will, cowardice, enmity, a solitary and uninvolved existence, lies, hatred

and despondency that ought to be rejected. Through these positive and negative models the novels encourage moral conduct through individual choices under unfavourable circumstances and promote moral development in young readers. The fictionality of these fantastic novels addressed to children is not an impediment in teaching children, through subtle moral education, the choices that ought to be made in our everyday lives.

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# The Moral Meets the Marvellous

## Grimms' Didactic Fairy Tales

Nada Kujundžić

University of Turku (Finland), University of Zagreb (Croatia)

**Abstract:** The paper proposes to examine the notion of didacticism in Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children's and household tales, 1812/15–1857), more specifically didactic fairy tales. The broad discussion of some general issues regarding didactic literature is followed by a study of fairy tales containing superimposed didactic insertions and those in which the didactic agenda is supported by the story structure and content. Fairy tales belonging to ATU 480. The Kind and the Unkind Girls have been selected as an illustration of the latter.

**Key words:** ATU 480, didacticism, fairy tale, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*

### 1. Introduction

The term “didactic tale” commonly refers to narratives intended to instruct the reader/listener, especially in terms of how (s)he should conduct him/herself (cf. Bausinger). The lessons inscribed in these tales can be presented implicitly (the consequences of the main characters' behaviour, the ways in which their surrounding responds to their actions) and/or explicitly (concrete instructions on how to behave, i.e. on what is or is not socially and/or morally acceptable, are voiced by the characters or appended to the story in the form of a moral). Utilizing both negative and positive fictional examples, didactic tales illustrate and promote the values and behavioural patterns that a given narrating community deems acceptable, ideally encouraging the reader/listener to adopt them (Hameršak, *Pričalice* 124). In that sense, these narratives promote moral perfectionism, defined by Andrew Miller as the need to perfect oneself not only by “following rules, commandments, laws, guidelines”, but also (in fact, even more so) through exposure to positive/negative examples which are (somewhat simplistically put) either imitated or avoided (3).

Deciding which narratives should be labelled as didactic may prove to be quite problematic, as some didactic potential may be discerned even in narratives which appear to be completely unconcerned with teaching lessons, such as humorous or jocular tales. As Jackie Stallcup argues in her analysis of children's novels penned by the popular British author Roald Dahl, humour, or more specifically, the choice of character traits and modes of behaviour which are singled out for ridicule, may be seen as a means of condemning certain characteristics/behaviour patterns and praising others. In other words, the mockery and punishments (whether literal or metaphorical) ridiculed characters are exposed to may be interpreted as a condemnation of the traits and behaviour patterns they display (Stallcup 44, 46). Even formula tales, which are seemingly interested in little else besides the repetition and accumulation of episodes, characters, etc. (cf. Kujundžić, Wienker-Piepho), may be said to have some

didactic potential. For instance, since the death of the hen in Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's story of the same name ("The Death of the Hen", KHM 80) is a direct result of her refusal to share food with the rooster, the tale may, to an extent, be interpreted as a warning against greed and selfishness. However, tales which are (perhaps) unintentionally or even "accidentally" instructive (tales in which lessons appear almost as a side-effect of the story) and those that contain isolated, often superimposed instances of didacticism should be distinguished from tales with an overall didactic thrust, i.e. those in which characters' (un)successful adherence to certain rules and behavioural patterns, and possession/lack of specific traits are essential to the plot (Hameršak, *Pričalice* 119).

To further examine the notion of didacticism within children's literature and the different forms didactic tales may assume, we turn to Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's widely popular collection of stories, the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children's and household tales, 1812/15–1857; hereafter *KHM*). The issue of didacticism is especially pertinent to the *KHM* as the Grimms, having identified children as their target audience, began encoding their stories "with morals, messages, and lessons in etiquette" (Tatar, *The Annotated Brothers Grimm* 143, n. 3). As a result of these efforts which permeate the 50-odd-year long editorial history of the collection, which encompasses seven "large" (*Große Ausgabe*) and ten "small" editions (*Kleine Ausgabe*), the *KHM* as a whole is marked by a "strong didactic undercurrent" (Tatar, *Off with Their Heads!* 63) [1]. In other words, some degree of didacticism (including religious instruction) – whether implicit or explicit, "natural" or superimposed – is found in a large number of the 211 tales featured in the Grimms' collection, regardless of genre.

Although the *KHM* contains a large number of generically diverse prose narratives, ranging from animal tales and legends to formula tales and parodies, the genre most commonly associated with the name "Grimm" (to the extent that the two have become almost synonymous) is that of the fairy tale. It is precisely this genre that presents the main focus of our paper. After a brief introductory part which will address some general issues related to didacticism and its connections to children's literature, we turn our attention to the place of fairy tales within the tradition of didactic literature. Our goal is to examine two types of (supposedly) didactic fairy tales: those which contain superimposed, often isolated didactic insertions added by the Grimms, which are not always supported by the narrative logic, and those in which the didactic agenda is supported by both the structure and content. The latter will be discussed on the example of the *KHM* fairy tales classified in the Aarne-Thompson-Uther Index of international folktales as belonging to the tale type called The Kind and the Unkind Girls (ATU 480).

## 2. Changing notions of didacticism

Given their moral and educational use, didactic tales are commonly perceived as part of children's literature and a significant factor in the process of socialization. When discussing didactic tales it is therefore important to bear in mind the shifting notions of the child and childhood, as well as the resulting changes in trends in children's literature (Hameršak, *Pričalice* 155, 158; Immele 19). The notions of what children should be taught, i.e. which social norms and values

should be communicated via literature, are shaped by numerous cultural, social and historical factors, even the social status of the implied child reader (cf. Vallone), and as such also subject to change [2]. The concept of didacticism and didactic literature is thus dependent on numerous factors, such as the cultural, social and historical context in which the narratives originate. Since didactic tales inevitably reflect the specific value system of the narrating community, the passing of time and shifting nature of social norms and values, or, alternatively, the tales' transference into different communities, often result in the eradication of their moral and instructive overtones. Consider, for instance, the fairy tale of Beauty and the Beast. Some scholars read the first literary versions of this story – Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve's 362-page novel published in 1740 and its shorter, 1756 version penned by Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont – as a combination of a didactic and consolatory tale intended for young brides-to-be. At a time when arranged marriages were the norm and young women frequently had to marry unknown (often considerably older) suitors, "Beauty and the Beast" may have served to both ease the female readers' fears and anxieties regarding marriage (to a metaphorical beast) and impress upon them the importance of performing their duty through the fictional example of the dutiful fairy-tale heroine who agrees to live with a monster in order to save her father. Furthermore, the underlying reward-and-punishment pattern (the patient, diligent and obedient heroine is rewarded, while her selfish and greedy sisters are punished) clearly illustrates the narrating community's understanding of "(im)proper" behaviour for young women [3]. Since the institution of marriage and the role of women have undergone radical transformations since the days of Madames de Villeneuve and Leprince de Beaumont, the consolatory potential and behavioural and moral lessons of "Beauty and the Beast" do not resonate as strongly (if at all) with contemporary audiences, who seem to be more interested in the romantic and supernatural aspects of the story (as evidenced by the numerous film, stage, literary, TV, etc. adaptations) (Tatar, *The Classic Fairy Tales* 26–27; Warner 273–299; Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 48, 56).

Similarly, the story of the blood-thirsty Bluebeard and his inquisitive wife has also been redefined in terms of its didactic potential. The rendition of the tale published in Perrault's *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (Tales and stories of the past, 1697) and accompanied by two versed morals [4], was traditionally viewed as a warning tale about the fatal consequences of disobedience and curiosity (Röhrich, *And They Are Still Living* 66; Tatar, *Secrets beyond the Door* 7). The notion of curiosity as one of the cardinal female sins (prominent in foundational myths such as those of Eve and Pandora) was further explicated in the centuries following the publication of Perrault's tale, particularly through editions with such telling subtitles as "The Effect of Female Curiosity" or "The Fatal Effects of Curiosity" (Warner 244). However, this "cautionary tale with a moral pointed toward the wife" (Tatar, *Secrets beyond the Door* 53) has lost its staying power as a story of a disobedient woman who should be punished for going behind her husband's back (perhaps in both the literal and metaphorical sense – namely, some scholars interpret the breaking of the promise made to the husband and subsequent entrance into the forbidden chamber as a symbol of infidelity and sexual transgression; cf. Tatar, *Secrets beyond the Door*).

Contemporary readers (whether male or female) are more likely to be concerned about the gruesome contents of Bluebeard's bloody chamber than the act of ignoring its owner's explicit wishes, deeming the husband's rather than the wife's transgression as the more problematic one (Tatar, *Secrets beyond the Door* 21; Warner 243).

Different variants of the same tale may assume different functions, such as conveying important lessons. A famous case in point is the story of Little Red Riding Hood which in its oral form (the so-called "Story of Grandmother", recorded in 1885 – but presumably much older – and published by French folklorist Paul Delarue in 1951; Tatar, *The Classic Fairy Tales* 3) is an entertaining story about a trickster heroine who outsmarts the predator, full of bawdy and scatological elements. In contrast, literary versions of the tale – most notably those published by Perrault and the Grimms – purport to teach lessons about the importance of avoiding various "wolves" in disguise (Perrault) and heeding parental warnings (Grimms). The Grimms seem particularly vigilant in this respect as they not only scatter explicit lessons throughout the story (at the end of the story the heroine herself admits her mistake and confirms that she has in fact learned her lesson: "Little Red Cap thought to herself, Never again will you stray from the path by yourself and go into the forest when your mother has forbidden it"; Grimm, *The Complete Fairy Tales* 95), but also add a sequel to the story in which the titular heroine proves that her brush with death has taught her something. Namely, she meets yet another wolf, but manages (with the help of her grandmother) to outsmart him.

Before we turn our attention to concrete examples of (supposedly) didactic tales published in the Grimms' collection, it is worth pointing out that this brief introductory discussion on didacticism is by no means meant to be exhaustive. Rather, our aim is, on the one hand, to illustrate the problematic and shifting nature of didacticism and, on the other, to (hopefully) highlight the fact that the lessons and morals that permeate the Grimms' tales are shaped by the specific historical, social, cultural and political context in which the Brothers lived and worked, their personal value systems and literary and political agendas, as well as the tastes of their intended audiences.

### 3. Superimposed didacticism

The notion of superimposed didacticism and what might be termed the didactization of essentially non-didactic texts may be traced on the example of a genre that has, through the years, been consistently and persistently transformed into a "moralizing and socializing instrument" (Warner 14) – the fairy tale. Although they probably originated as entertainment for adults, fairy tales gradually entered the (then burgeoning) domain of children's literature at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup>/beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As Marijana Hameršak notes, it was only after children had been established as the primary audience for the fairy tale that the genre's propensity for entertainment started being utilized (and consequently modified) for educational purposes (*Pričalice* 114, 129) and the "marvellous" became intertwined with the "moral". This tendency is to some extent identifiable in the fairy tales of Charles Perrault (even though, as Zohar Shavit points out, his morals are quite ironic, and his audience adults; 13–14) but

is perhaps best exemplified by the writings of Madame Leprince de Beaumont. Recognizing the value of fiction in service of education (Harries 87), Beaumont is often cited as the author of the first overtly didactic tale, "Beauty and the Beast". According to Jack Zipes, the shift from entertainment to education – or, to borrow Maria Tatar's vivid phrase, "from the fireside to the nursery" (*Enchanted Hunters* 167) – coincides with the shift from oral wonder tales (told purely for entertainment purposes) to literary fairy tales (tales with a didactic agenda). Fairy tales thus became a tool of socialization, promoting the specific "mores, values, and manners" of a given narrative community "so that children and adults would become civilized according to the social code of that time" (Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 3). Even though, as Tatar maintains, didacticism is "alien to the spirit of fairy tales" (*The Classic Fairy Tales* 5), the genre nevertheless continued to develop its newly attained pedagogical character (Warner 211), with new tales being written in an explicitly didactic vein and existing ones embedded with social and moral messages. A prominent place in the latter tradition belongs to none other than the Grimms and their *KHM*.

In their attempt to maximize the didactic potential of the *KHM* stories, the Grimms often create explicit links between character traits of (fairy-tale) protagonists/antagonists and their success/downfall (this is especially true of female characters). The supernatural or, to use Tzvetan Todorov's designation for the specific type of supernatural found in fairy tales, the marvellous, "chooses" the character on which to bestow its assistance, typically by testing him/her first. By highlighting the characters' positive/negative traits, the Grimms create links between character traits/modes of behaviour and outcome (the characters' destinies are presented as direct results of the traits and behaviour patterns they display), indirectly offering up protagonists as models for identification (Tatar, *The Classic Fairy Tales* 6). For instance, the youngest son in "The Golden Goose" (*KHM* 64) is rewarded and "chosen" for success because he proves himself to be magnanimous and kind by sharing his food with a grey dwarf; in contrast, his older brothers who treat the dwarf badly are destined to fail. In a similar vein, "The Water of Life" (*KHM* 97) relies on the reward/punishment pattern to promote/condemn certain character traits and uses the character of the helper (also a dwarf) as a mouthpiece for communicating explicit moral lessons: the hero is rewarded because he has behaved "in a proper manner" (by politely answering the dwarf's question) and was not "arrogant like [his] faithless brothers" (Grimm, *The Complete Fairy Tales* 328), who are punished for their rudeness and condescension by being trapped between two mountains. Sometimes, it is the third-person narrator who additionally highlights these links; for instance, in "The Poor Miller's Apprentice and the Cat" (*KHM* 106), the narrator comments on the smugness of the two older apprentices who are convinced that they will inherit the mill: "we shall see what happens to men like that" (351). By having the good, pious, submissive and hard-working Cinderella (*KHM* 21) marry the prince and her two vain, abusive and lazy stepsisters suffer a gruesome punishment (doves peck out their eyes), the story makes it quite clear which character traits should be emulated/rejected. To stress the point even further, the Grimms add explicit instructions on how to behave, uttered by Cinderella's dying mother: "Dear child, be good and pious. Then the dear Lord shall always assist you, and I shall look down from heaven and take care of you" (79). It is worth emphasizing

that the link between (un)desirable character traits and outcome is particularly prominent in the case of female protagonists, who must prove themselves good, obedient, pious and diligent. Such a requirement is significantly less emphasized in the case of male characters, who often “earn” the help of the marvellous even when they do not seem to be particularly deserving and/or even display characteristics deemed unacceptable for female characters, such as laziness (cf. Bottigheimer). This value system is perpetuated and reinforced by all the *KHM* genres, with the notable exception of humorous tales, which turn it on its head by rewarding the traits which are typically condemned, such as laziness, stubbornness and disobedience (Uther, *Handbuch* 517). Only in this type of tale can a lazy girl prosper (“The Three Spinners”, *KHM* 14) or one who has lost everything consider himself lucky (“Lucky Hans”, *KHM* 83).

Additions introduced by the Grimms do not always fit well with the logic of the story. For instance, Maria Tatar points to what she considers to be a significant plot hole in the supposedly didactic tale of “Little Red Cap” (*KHM* 26). Namely, Tatar writes, the heroine’s punishment makes little sense as she does not actively disobey her mother: the bottle of wine that the mother makes such a fuss about does not break, and the dreaded straying from the path is not what brings the girl face to face with the wolf; on the contrary, the straying from the path takes place *after* the fatal encounter and at the suggestion of the wolf (Tatar, *The Classic Fairy Tales* 5). Despite the Brothers’ attempts to convince the reader otherwise, there is actually “no clear causal connection between the violation of the mother’s prohibition and its punishment by the wolf” (Tatar, *Off with Their Heads!* 35–36) [5]. This type of superimposed didacticism (adding explicit morals which are not necessarily supported by the story logic), writes Tatar, is typical of the Grimms’ stories: “Instead of integrating a moral into the plot, [the Grimms] simply superimposed a lesson on a story that, in its original form, often just told how beauty triumphs over ugliness or how the underdog can turn the tables on the privileged” (59).

A similar superimposition is found in the first story in the *KHM*, “The Frog King”. Despite the Grimms’ attempts to add didactic overtones in the form of the king’s musings on the importance of keeping promises (“If you’ve made a promise, you must keep it”, “It’s not proper to scorn someone who helped you when you were in trouble”; Grimm, *The Complete Fairy Tales* 3, 4) the story itself does not support this lesson. On the contrary: not only does “The Frog King” fail as a didactic tale about the importance of keeping one’s promises, but the central conflict is actually resolved because the heroine *breaks* her promise. Although she complies with her father’s wishes and unwillingly does the frog’s bidding, the haughty princess cannot bring herself to let the amphibian into her bed and, disgusted by such a proposition, throws him against the wall (it could be argued that the narrative actually teaches a different lesson, that of not admitting males into a young girl’s bed). The breaking of the promise effectively breaks the spell cast on the titular frog king and the deceitful princess is ultimately rewarded for not keeping her word through marriage to a royal suitor.

#### 4. Rewards and punishments

Depending on the concrete narrative strategies employed to promote/discourage certain types of behaviour, two sub-types of the didactic tale can be distinguished: cautionary (warning) tales and exemplary tales (cf. Tatar, *Off with Their Heads!*). To reinforce what the narrating society deems appropriate behavioural patterns and moral values, cautionary tales depict the consequences of “inappropriate” behaviour (Kvideland 190–191; Uther, *Handbuch* 104). By relying on negative examples and depicting the often gruesome and horrifying fate that befalls those who behave “badly” (by being disobedient, breaking social rules, etc.) these narratives effectively warn the audience against such modes of behaviour/character traits. In other words, the key strategy employed by this type of narrative is intimidation: they “enunciate a prohibition, stage its violation, and put on display the punishment of the violator”, thus modelling behaviour by “illustrating in elaborate detail the dire consequences of deviant conduct” (Tatar, *Off with Their Heads!* 25). The “vices” most frequently singled out for criticism in the Grimms’ collection (for instance, in stories such as “Mother Trudy”, KHM 43; “The Stubborn Child”, KHM 117) include disobedience (usually prompted by excessive curiosity) and stubbornness (cf. Kujundžić 2012). Since cautionary tales are predicated on what Marc Soriano terms the pedagogy of fear (30), i.e. they scare the audience into obedience, they are sometimes referred to as scare tales (Röhrich, *Folktales and Reality* 48).

Unlike cautionary (warning) tales which focus on the transgression of moral and social boundaries, exemplary tales focus on the commendable behaviour and patient suffering of the protagonist who is presented as a “paragon(...) of virtue” and model for the reader (Tatar, *Off with Their Heads!* 42). While cautionary tales focus on punishments and negative examples (the narrative focus is on characters who should *not* be imitated by the reader/listener – if anything, the reader/listener is encouraged to behave in the exact opposite way), exemplary tales are interested in rewards and positive, imitable examples, presented as identification models for the (child) audience (e.g. the patient, selfless and self-abnegating heroine of the Grimms’ “The Star Coins”, KHM 153).

However, the two modes of instruction – via negative/positive examples – described above are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they may be presented back to back within the same story in order to highlight the message that the narrative aims to communicate. What is perhaps the most explicit form of this type of “double” didacticism is found in stories that belong to the tale type ATU 480. The Kind and the Unkind Girls (for a detailed analysis and extensive list of tales belonging to this type, see Roberts). The contrasting nature of the two girls – the “kind” one being the embodiment of virtue and proper behaviour, and the “unkind” one her polar opposite – is revealed as they are placed in identical situations (they are usually required to help a supernatural character), but act in completely different ways. The fact that the “kind” girl is richly rewarded for her goodness, diligence and the compassionate manner in which she treats the supernatural character (e.g. she does household chores for him/her, shares food with him/her, etc.), while her “unkind” counterpart is punished for her malice, laziness and selfishness, reveals in no uncertain terms what the narrating community considers to be (un)desirable character traits and behaviour patterns.

The tale thus promotes/discourages specific values and behaviours “by instituting a system of rewards for one type of behaviour and punishments for another” (Tatar, *Off with Their Heads!* 56). Seeing that they utilize both negative and positive examples as part of their didactic agenda, reward-and-punishment tales present a kind of blend of the cautionary and exemplary tale.

Three tales in the Grimms’ collection belong to tale type ATU 480: “The Three Little Gnomes in the Forest” (KHM 13), “Mother Holle” (KHM 24) and “Saint Joseph in the Forest” (KHM 201/KL 1). The three little men in the first tale are eager to reward the “kind” girl for her good manners, for sharing food with them and sweeping their back yard (she is made to grow more beautiful every day, given a royal husband and made to have gold coins fall out of her mouth every time she speaks). In contrast, the rude and arrogant behaviour of the “unkind” girl who refuses to share food and do household chores is met with disapproval and punished accordingly (she becomes increasingly uglier, has toads spring out of her mouth whenever she speaks and ultimately dies “a miserable death”; Grimm, *The Complete Fairy Tales* 48). The desirability of the traits demonstrated by the “kind” girl are further highlighted through their association with beauty and gold, which usually function as indicators of value of the greatest order within the narrative world of the fairy tale (cf. Lüthi). “Mother Holle” also relies on the distribution of rewards/punishments to express (dis)approval of specific character traits (Jason 145): while the “kind” girl who has proved to be kind-hearted and diligent by serving in the household of the eponymous Holle is showered with gold, her lazy and rude counterpart is covered in pitch from head to toe.

The first of the ten “children’s legends” or “religious tales for children” (*Kinderlegenden*), first published in 1819 in the second edition of the Grimms’ collection (Tatar, *Off with Their Heads!* 85), is possibly the least religious of them. Even the Grimms themselves describe “Saint Joseph in the Forest” as essentially “The Three Gnomes in the Forest” sans the gnomes (*Kinder- und Hausmärchen* 1108). The tale follows a typical kind-and-unkind-girl pattern, substituting marvellous tester-figures such as the previously mentioned gnomes or the mysterious Holle with a (nominally) religious one. Although Saint Joseph’s humble origins and status as protector of children make him the ideal helper to a poor persecuted girl (Uther, *Handbuch* 408), there is nothing particularly religious about him, the tests he puts the girls to (preparing and sharing food, choosing sleeping quarters, sharing money) or the rewards/punishments he metes out (the “kind” girls are given bags of money, while the “unkind” one is punished first with physical deformity and later with death) (Tatar, *Off with Their Heads!* 85). The only noticeable, religiously-intoned addition to this story – in comparison to the previously mentioned, “non-religious” variants of the same tale type – is the heroine’s piety (the main characteristics of the heroines in the other two tales are their beauty and industriousness), demonstrated by her actions (she prays before going to bed) and the appearance of a guardian angel.

Although the reward-and-punishment pattern is typical of fairy tales, various genres in the *KHM* use it as a framework for evaluating characters’ actions. Built around the juxtaposition between a girl who is the model of virtue and one who is her exact opposite, the realistically-intoned “The Leftovers” (KHM 156, classified in the ATU Index under anecdotes and jokes) uses a system of rewards and

punishments to promote socially desirable behaviour. The diligent and thrifty “kind” girl (her positive traits are evidenced by her ability to use her mistress’ leftovers to spin a dress for herself) is thus chosen over her lazy counterpart to be the bride of a young man, despite her humble social background. Partly based on the reward-and-punishment model, the Grimms’ “The Lazy One and the Industrious One” (KHM 33b), a story found only in the second volume of the first edition of the *KHM* published in 1815 (the story was omitted from subsequent editions because the Grimms considered the embedded structure to be “too contrived”; *The Complete Fairy Tales* 745), is a unique example of a narrative that depicts two partially intertwined plots which function as mirror images of each other and uses a story-within-a-story structure to convey moral lessons to both the protagonists and audience (Uther, *Handbuch* 437). The frame story features two traveling companions: one is faithful and hard-working, the other carefree and pleasure-seeking. After a period of separation, the two are reunited under the gallows where they happen to come across two talking ravens (mirror images of themselves): one cheerful and determined to provide for himself, the other bad-tempered, lazy, and relying on God to provide for him. After a beautiful maiden kisses the industrious raven he turns into a handsome man and reveals that he and his brother had been cursed by their father, and forced to live as ravens until the kiss of a maiden breaks the spell. However, the shabby appearance and overall gloomy disposition of the second raven proves to be too off-putting for any maiden, so the lazy brother ultimately dies in his animal form. The didactic nature of the events they have witnessed is not lost on the traveling companions: “The journeyman who had been living loosely took a lesson from this, and he became industrious and proper and took good care of his companion” (Grimm, *The Complete Fairy Tales* 639). The audience is thus presented with two positive (one explicitly rewarded, the other unaffected by the embedded story as he is already a model of virtue) and two negative examples (one punished, the other shamed and frightened into mending his ways). Comparisons between this story, a rare instance of a reward-and-punishment tale featuring male characters (although the reward-and-punishment pattern is limited to the raven sub-plot), and “female” reward-and-punishment stories discussed previously reveal that, in the *KHM*, notions of what it means to be industrious and even, to an extent, what it means to be religious, are gender-coded. While female characters prove their industriousness by serving others (e.g. in “Mother Holle”), male characters in this story achieve the same goal by supporting themselves through their own work, i.e. by being not only hard-working but also self-reliant. Furthermore, male industriousness (or lack of it) has a strong moral and religious dimension as God is said to only help those who help themselves. No such moral dictum exists for female characters. While the lazy raven is punished for his complete lack of initiative and over-dependence on God to provide for him, many female characters in the *KHM* are expected to do just that. Putting all your trust in God and waiting for a miracle is deemed unacceptable for male characters, but seen as a sign of piety in the case of female ones. The (male) raven who expects to be “provided for by heaven” (Grimm, *The Complete Fairy Tales* 638) eventually dies, but the young girl in “The Star Coins” who trusts that “the Good Lord would look after her” (469) is abundantly rewarded (for an in-depth discussion on gender-

coded norms, character traits and behaviour patterns in the *KHM* tales, see Bottigheimer).

## 5. Concluding remarks

In this paper, we examined the trends found within what might (almost paradoxically) be termed didactic fairy tales in the Grimms' collection. Firstly, we focused on the Grimms' editorial strategies of creating links between characters' traits and behaviour and their fates, and adding didactic insertions such as morals to their (fairy) tales, even in cases when these are not supported by the narrative logic. Secondly, we used the example of the Grimms' fairy tales belonging to tale type ATU 480 to discuss narratives in which the didactic agenda is supported on the level of structure (the reward-and-punishment pattern) and content (characters' adherence to/departure from social/moral norms and values drives the narrative). The rich and diverse topic of didacticism in the Grimms' collection is by no means exhausted by these two examples. Future research might therefore examine strategies of didacticization, or the relationship between didactic tales and other genres, particularly moral and religious tales, which also have a strong didactic undercurrent. Other possible lines of inquiry include the comparison between different versions of same tale types (some of which may or may not be didactic) and especially comparisons between different editions of the same *KHM* story, with the aim of closely examining the Grimms' editorial strategies, ideology and (didactic) agenda.

## Notes

[1] For more on the editorial history of the *KHM* see, e.g. Bottigheimer, Briggs, Rölleke, Tatar (*Hard Facts*), Zipes (*The Brothers Grimm*).

[2] For a more detailed discussion on didacticism and ideology in children's literature, the reader is referred to, e.g. Gillespie, Hameršak (*Pričalice*), Miller, Myers, Shavit, Tatar (*Off with Their Heads!*), Wilkie-Stibbs. For a more extensive discussion on the history of childhood and changing notions of the child, see, e.g. Ariés, Hameršak ("History, Literature and Childhood"), Heywood.

[3] The didactic potential of the tale is by no means exhausted in the heroine's relationship with her father/future husband. Jack Zipes, for instance, suggests the possibility of reading the sudden impoverishment of Beauty's family as punishment for their social pretensions and arrogance. The modest and industrious heroine who (unlike her siblings) does not actively attempt to improve her stature and seems generally unconcerned with material gain, is the one who eventually marries into a higher class. The tragic fate of the sisters who are petrified and forced to bear witness to Beauty's happiness, Zipes writes, may be read as "a warning to all those bourgeois upstarts who forgot their place in society and could not control their ambition" (*Breaking the Magic Spell* 9).

[4] The first moral, in particular, is seen as an indictment of curiosity: "Curiosity, in spite of its charm,/Too often causes a great deal of harm./A thousand new cases arise each day./With due respect, ladies, the thrill is slight,/For as soon as you're satisfied, it goes away./And the price one pays is never right" (Perrault 19). However, as Tatar notes, the second moral (addressing contemporary concerns) undermines the first one (perhaps only applicable to days of "long ago") by portraying husbands as docile and women as the possible "masters" of the house (*Secrets beyond the Door* 24–25): "Provided one has

common sense/And learns to study complex text,/It's easy to trace the evidence/Of long ago in this tale's events./No longer are husbands so terrible,/Or insist on having the impossible./Though he may be jealous and dissatisfied,/He tries to do as he's obliged./And whatever color his beard may be,/It's difficult to know who the master be" (Perrault 20).

[5] Despite these flaws in the story's logic, the effect of Perrault's and the Grimms' didactic transformations of what was originally a "hopeful oral tale about the initiation of a young girl" (Zipes, *The Trials and Tribulations* 7) is so great that many scholars, most notably Marianne Rumpf, categorize "Little Red Cap" not as a fairy tale (in the ATU Index it is classified under Tales of Magic – ATU 333. Little Red Riding Hood), but as a cautionary or warning tale.

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### Abbreviations

ATU = Aarne-Thompson-Uther Index

KHM = *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children's and household tales)

KL = *Kinderlegende* (Children's legends)

# Nursery rhymes

## Pieces of the children's literature puzzle in translation

Catalina Millán  
Universitat de València

**Abstract:** Nursery rhymes are being found increasingly in translational situations, normally in intertextual translations, yet there is no framework or specific study of how they should be translated. This paper aims, on the one hand, to explore the theories related to children's literature translation that could be applied to nursery rhyme translation, and on the other hand, to identify the particular idiosyncrasies of nursery rhymes that may have an effect on their translation. Several examples are analyzed from different media (comic, children's book and film) in their translation from English into Spanish and new study possibilities are proposed.

**Keywords:** nursery rhyme, translation, Spanish, English, children's literature

Nursery rhymes. Or, as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* would have it: "verse customarily told or sung to small children" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2016). Without doubt, their name refers to the kingdom of childhood and their impact upon the nursery. They have been considered instruments for children to learn, poems, messengers of darker news and hidden historical facts, and adult plays on morals of their time. So how exactly do nursery rhymes fit into children's literature and why speak now about their translation?

These questions resonate when a scholar tries to find traces of nursery rhyme references or analysis through children's literature research. Slowly the references are becoming broader, but what can mainly be traced are theories that address oral literature and folklore contrasting it with printed literature and books considered to be children's classics, as well as very many questions about the idea of childhood itself and, subsequently, how children's literature should be defined. Juan Cervera underlines the idea of "the literary piece is the artistic creation expressed in words, even if they haven't been written, but have spread by word of mouth" (Cervera, 1991:10) as well as Marisa Bortolussi's idea that children's literature is "the artistic piece destined to a child reader" (cited in Cervera, 1991:11). Without doubt, and regardless of their origin and specific development, nursery rhymes constitute an integral part of the definition of children's literature and have a prominent space in children's literature library sections, book stores and general lore.

When speaking specifically about the child reader, Cervera mentions, in words of Perriconi that children's literature is "a communication act, of an aesthetic nature, between a child addressee and an adult sender that has, as an objective, the increased awareness of the child and has, as a medium, the creative and playful abilities of language; and which should answer to the demands and needs of the readers" (cited in Cervera, 1991:13)

## Canonical structures and oral tradition

There are several studies on the differing status of oral culture and literature, considering a specific 'written oral tradition' in children's literature that can't be analyzed in the same terms adult literature is, since it repeats motifs, characters and plots or else have no character at all; many of these theories having been compiled by Emer O'Sullivan (O'Sullivan, 2005:13-51) Therefore the characteristics valued in literature are not common in children's folklore – and should not be studied the same way. There have been several influential studies and compilations on nursery rhymes throughout history, from *The Nursery Rhymes of England*, published in 1886 and written by James Orchard Halliwell to Iona and Peter Opie's *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* first published in 1951. Opie & Opie underline the fact that these compilations have been "collected principally from oral tradition" (Opie & Opie, 1969:V) and already present a continuous question: where do nursery rhymes start and end? What is included and what is discarded? And, once a selection is made of the most representative nursery rhymes, what variations are studied and which are discarded?

This idea connects to the study of canonical art forms as seen in Maria Nikolajeva through her studies of Yuri Lotman. Nikolajeva herself considers that children's literature can be seen as an example of canonical art, therefore interpreting most signs as conventional, "that is, the relation between the sign and the signified is based on some form of agreement between the sender and addressee" (Nikolajeva, 1996:55). Lotman considers canonical texts as the perpetrators of culture, mentioning that:

canonical art has played an enormous part in the history of art and culture (...) it is necessary to investigate not only the structure of canonical texts but also the hidden information sources which make a seemingly simple and well-known text a powerful mechanism of human culture. (Lotman, cited in Nikolajeva 1996:58)

Lotman considers that this idea "encourages us to investigate the deeper meanings of the texts. What did the text – a folktale, a myth, a rite, a picture – mean for the group of humans who created it? How did it function in a community? This question can be very difficult to approach, since it can most often not be answered on the premises of the text itself" (Lotman, cited in Nikolajeva 1996:56). It is important, therefore, to try to find out the function of each canonical text – and in this context, each rhyme - in their society, as well as their pragmatic and social meanings.

But are nursery rhymes canonical? Some exist with a melody, some are recited; the themes, structures and origins are different, yet, in the English language, they are all grouped together in anthologies and used for the same purpose: children's early years' entertainment. Therefore, their conventional signs (rhyme, rhythm, nonsense sounds) as well as some repeating characters could be considered to be based on some "some form of agreement between the sender and the addressee", easily recognizable as nursery rhymes and, therefore might fulfill the intentionality of canonic texts as "the evoking force" of non-canonical texts (Lotman, cited in Nikolajeva 1996:56).

In contrast, when speaking directly about folktales, Nikolajeva comments that these “also differ from children’s literature in terms of communication. They belong to a fundamentally different type of culture – the oral one. When children listen to a narrated folktale, the communication process differs radically from that involved in reading” (Nikolajeva, 1996:14).

### Where do nursery rhymes and children’s literature translation theories converge?

Being that nursery rhymes are, in fact, a significant part of children’s literature yet those that have earlier origins –one out of every nine, as studied by Opie & Opie - belong to the oral tradition and were not even originally intended for a child audience, then what studies and analyses have been done relating to children’s literature that can be applied to nursery rhymes and their translation? And which ones would not apply? An overview of the most significant points of children’s literature studies will be reviewed with their application towards nursery rhymes as a goal: intentionality of the texts and its implication in translation choices; situation in the general literary system and its relation to it; ambiguity, ambivalence and dual nature.

Firstly, there are discussions already in such basic issues as what should children’s literature, or even childhood be considered. Being that most of these studies refer to the actual reception of the children, to what the child is actually being read or reading, we can safely assume that nursery rhymes coincide with general children’s literature analysis here (Lerer, 2009; Cervera, 1991; Hazard, 1983; Shavit, 1981). Nonetheless, it is interesting to take into account that contemporary approaches to children’s literature studies make a point, as quoted from O’Sullivan saying that “the child can’t be spoken about as a singular entity; class, origin, gender, geopolitical location and economic circumstances are all elements which create differences between real children in real places” (O’Sullivan, 2005:9).

Regarding the studies on children’s literature in translation; the intentionality of the text, or whether children’s literature is mainly didactic, is one of the main points of analysis. Reiss & Vermeer (1996), Hatim & Mason (1991) and their citations of the work of Jiří Levý... most all translation theoreticians have placed the text into context and, therefore, have asked what the intentionality of the text was. This has subsequently brought of the issue of whether the text, in translation, should be adapted to the target reader –the domestication, presented already by Schleiermacher - or kept as faithful as possible to the source text and culture.

When this is focused on children’s literature, most theories point towards the idea of children’s literature belonging to both the field of literature and education. This approach implies that the translator can focus more on the translation specifics and their impact on cultural references and less on the theory of intentionality of the text, but they are also choosing to reduce all intentionality of the author into one: didactic function. The focus on the didactic function brings an entire new area of children’s literature translation studies, which is that of adequating the text to the reader. There have been many confrontations against reducing the intentionality of the text to only one and translating to serve this single goal and this entire article could be dedicated just to this topic – but what

is interesting is how this idea connects to the reflection of culture in children's literature.

This means another field of analysis is where to place children's literature in the general literary system. This study, whether it comes from a semiotic perspective - and speaks about semiospheres - or from the polysystem theory - and speaks about systems, repertoire and ambivalence-, generally focuses on the reception of children's literature by the child and, subsequently, by the adult. These analyses consider very interesting points of view on the evolution of children's literature and its relation to the general literary system which are also not to be studied here in depth, although their recurring idea of texts that belong to the fringe of children's literature (and might overlap with adult's literature) may be considered transgressive in their initial reception but eventually become the model for "a whole tradition" (Nikolajeva, 1995:40).

Of these theories, two points should be underlined that could be useful for the translation and analysis of nursery rhymes. On one hand, Zohar Shavit (1986) presents a dichotomy for the presentation of a text in the literature polysystem: when a text appears in the polysystem it occupies a position in a synchronic way that might change diachronically: it's for adults or for children; it's canonized or non-canonized. When a text can't be positioned into one of these opposing descriptions easily, it's considered a diffuse text: it answers affirmatively to several rules for opposing models. An example would be a text considered or labeled as a classic of children's literature that is continuously read by adults.

Shavit labels these types of text ambivalent: texts that can be read by two groups of readers with different results during the same time frame. Shavit presents several important questions such as: What does a writer achieve by producing an ambivalent text? What is the structure of the ambivalent text and how does it function in each system? How is the text realized differently at the same time by two different groups of readers (in this case, children and adults)? In other words, how does the structure enable the text to address two different audiences?

On the other hand, Nikolajeva presents several concepts that are interesting towards a multicultural translation following her analysis of the reception problematic. She picks up the ideas presented by Oittinen, where the focus is set on the reader instead of the translation itself. Again, this presents the dichotomy of approaching the text to the reader or the reader to the text. Oittinen considers that "the (translators) should be able to recreate the idea of the book (as interpreted by the translator) in the target language" (Oittinen, 2006:35)

What is most interesting about Nikolajeva's analysis of reception and translation is the idea of translatability. She considers that the translation must take into account the interpretation of all semiotic levels: for example the everyday things and their possible reception depending on the common actions of the target culture, or even the linguistic level with the use of dialects, colloquialisms, etc. Nikolajeva comments that these can be changed without generally affecting the story. However, relationship signs (those that have to do with the social conventions of each culture) are more difficult to translate; they are "both more complex and usually more dependent on the narrative" (Nikolajeva, 1996:32). Therefore she considers there is a "zone of untranslatability" which is determined by the target reader rather than by the

source context” (Nikolajeva, 1996:34). In her opinion, the conclusions speak about the lack of semiotic experience children have, therefore making it more difficult to translate children’s literature. This affects the way that European children’s literature is accepted or rejected in the US, for example – although the origin of the US children’s cultural background might be traced back to European roots. The solution, Nikolajeva considers, has to do with the concept of “creative misunderstanding”:

according to Lotman, the foremost condition for a fruitful interaction of cultures is “creative misunderstanding”, mutual non-translatability – that is, the existence of an active boundary zone where cultures intersect. In this theory, elements of foreign culture that are either too familiar or too alien are most likely to be rejected, while a well-balanced mixture of “native” and “exotic” is the best recipe for ensuring the success of a literary phenomenon in another culture (1996:35-36).

It is also interesting to note that she mentions that “the ‘children’s code’ and the ‘adult code’ change throughout history, converging, diverging and overlapping at various points. The best example of this process is the way I which so many books comprehended as ‘adult’ become part of children’s literature” (Nikolajeva, 1996:62).

The next point, therefore, is related to the double address or ambivalent nature of the texts of children’s literature: the separation of the adult author, adult selector and the child addressee. The repercussion of this “intrusion” of adults in the world of children’s literature, whether in its production or its translation, will impact the text. This asymmetry reveals the need to speak about censorship and diachronic changes in the chosen nursery rhymes – could some of the changes have been generated directly by the target group (children) through play, repetition and manipulation?

Up to here, these theories echo in nursery rhymes. Rhymes are used to teach and educate the child, whether it be in basic vocabulary, utterance and rhythm or even action and movement. This idea connects with that of a multicultural translation: does the target language have existing rhymes with similar functions and/or characters? How could these be used and/or chosen? How would it affect translating for a multicultural child/adult? And, of course, does it even matter that much if these translation examples are intertextual?

When referring directly to culture, the reception theory (and its proposal by the semiotic perspective or the polysystem theory) encompasses several issues that appear when translating a nursery rhyme. It highlights the heterogenic nature of literature and culture, and strives for the inclusion of diachronism and synchronism to the literary system. It contrasts the study of a literature example or system with a particular time and space, instead of considering the literature object of study static and unmovable. Since the polysystem theory intends to position the text inside the culture that surrounds it, it is not only a piece of literature that is studied, but that which it represents: was the society of the time using it for something? Who was writing it? How was it perceived diachronically? But it is also a very good backing theory towards the analysis of the origin of nursery rhymes, especially those that belonged to the adult literary or oral system and then were absorbed by the children’s sphere.

Dating nursery rhymes can be extremely complicated, due precisely to their oral tradition. Opie present an example through the rhyme “Pat-a-cake”, which appears in the comedy *The Campaigners* by Thomas D’Urfey in 1698. The rhyme is declaimed by a character that embodies old age and tradition, referencing thus to the long oral tradition that already existed at that time of using this song to entertain and teach children previous to its apparition in writing (Opie & Opie, 1969). “Thirty days hath September” has been documented as part of the oral tradition from the 13th century, and “London Bridge” has been dated to the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Vocca, 2001). “The King of France”, which is spoken about in 1694, was already known by Victorian nursery carers, although it had never appeared in writing previously. “If all the world were paper” appears for the first time in writing at the end of an adult anthology and doesn’t appear again in writing until 1810. “The carrion crow sat on an oak”, for example, doesn’t appear in writing until 1798, but it is know that it used to be recited during the reign of Charles the 1st of England. (Opie & Opie, 1969:111-112).

This brings up the question: should there be a specific analysis of “adult history” in the chosen nursery rhymes – and, if so, how has it affected the child’s perception of the rhyme? Should there be a larger-scale analysis of children’s reception of historical rhymes?

### What are the specific idiosyncrasies of nursery rhymes?

The issue of their origin is not necessarily unique to nursery rhymes, since the concept of “won-over” literature exists in general literature origins. However, their heterogenic origin and collections, with a vast dating that encompasses up to four centuries and how, nonetheless, they are collected and edited as a single corpus might affect their interpretation and translation. On one hand, due to the fact that other cultures possess some of these nursery rhymes, where some might actually have been originated, and this could give place to situational translation. On the other hand, the use of canonical figures and patterns can be questioned, for example in the wide spread use of the tetrameters feet or the recurring figure of Jack as a main character of several rhymes.

The oldest verses might have Latin origins or have been originally told in another medieval European language. On another hand many rhymes have a Teutonic origin and a German or Scandinavian equivalent which could give way to a comparative study of rhymes published in Germany, France, Scandinavian countries and Anglo-Saxon countries, where common themes might appear with a similar verse structure (Eckenstein, 1906). Opie & Opie mentioned also the possibility of many of these rhymes having traveled throughout Europe by direct translation in more modern dates, normally during war occupation times (Opie & Opie, 1969). For this reason, several rhymes coexist –with variations- in many different European cultures at the same time.

The fact that nursery rhymes are a type of poetry will also affect their analysis and translation, and new fields related to the translation of children’s poetry are currently being developed. This would be connected to their musicality and the possibility of finding melodies and musical patterns that are repeated throughout European children’s literature and - who knows? - maybe at a larger scale. This could become a research field of its own.

### Why should their translation even be studied?

Films, books, songs... even the melodies of children's toys world-wide include nursery rhyme references. These references might have originated in other European cultures (such as "Brother Jacob" or "Twinkle twinkle little star"), but are currently being exported from the English-speaking culture.

These situations exemplify two different trends: the fact that nursery rhymes need to become intercultural and translatable, and the fact that, regardless of a historical and a well-established repertoire in a cultural system, the globalized market will impose the cultural heritage of the dominating society in entertainment possibly modifying the target culture's models and identities. Seth Lerer defines it as "a largely Anglophone focus for children's literature study (Lerer, 2009:9)" and O'Sullivan offers data on the international exchange of children's literature and the amount of translations from culture to culture (O'Sullivan, 2005:65-73).

This also applies to Lotman's consideration and analysis of literature as a semiosphere, when he considers:

Children's culture can take over new codes from adult literature directly, but children's codes can also come from other semiospheres than adult literature (for instance, film, comic strips or computer games). Therefore, children's literature can possess codes that are totally absent from adult literature (Nikolajeva, 1996:65).

### Nursery rhymes in translation: from English to Spanish

Here are some very different examples of nursery rhymes found intertextually which have required being translated.

*Castle Waiting*, written and illustrated by Linda Medley, is a graphic novel that has received two Eisner awards, in 1997 and 1998. It includes numerous nursery rhymes portrayed in their entirety throughout the novel as well as characters that belong to children's literature. *Castle Waiting* has been translated into Spanish (Norma), Italian (by Comma 22), French (Delcourt), Portuguese (Via Lettera), Polish (Kultura Gniewu), and Dutch (Oog & Blik) The intertextual use of nursery rhyme and fairy tale characters, quotes and references could be considered a trend in current comic book writing, with their use in several Vertigo DC series such as *Fables* and *The Sandman*.



Slugabed, slugabed,  
barley butt,  
your bum's so heavy  
you can't get up!



¡Dormilona,  
dormilona, de la cama no  
puedes levantar porque  
eres tan culona!

“Slugabed” or, in its original version, “Piss a bed”, is one of those scatological rhymes that were mostly censured in the Victorian nursery rhymes’ publications (Goodenough et al., 1994). *Piss a bed* is a medieval expression that refers, in several European languages, to the diuretic effects of dandelion. In colloquial French, the flower is known *pisse au lit* or *pissenlit* and its English translation became the popular name for the plant, *piss-a-bed*. In other languages the following names can be found: *piscialletto* en italiano, *mexanacama* en gallego, *pixallits* en catalán o *meacamas* en español (Harper, 2014)

The rhyme was originally published in Tommy Thumb’s *Pretty Song Book* in 1744 with the following version (Goodenough et al., 1994:17):

Piss a bed, piss a bed,  
barley butt  
your bum is so heavy  
you can't get up.

The fact that the rhyme was also quoted in James Joyce’s *Ulysses* might be illustrative of its impact in English culture. Linda Medley’s *slugabed* variation has

a North American origin, and appears in illustrator and author Wallace Whitney Tripp's book *Rose's Are Red, Violet's Are Blue: And Other Silly Poems* that includes several Mother Goose rhymes as well as rhymes by known authors such as Lewis Carroll and Gertrude Stein. It can also prove to be a good example of the censorship applied to scatological references in North American children's literature (O'Sullivan, 2005:85-91). In the translation into Spanish, the rhythm has been completely lost by prioritizing the semantic translation, and the rhyme has changed location. The translation of *your bum's so heavy* for the term *culona* is a great use of a creative substitution that picks up the target cultural reference. The fact that there is a preexisting rhyme in the target language that uses this term “¿A dónde vas culona?”, could make for an interesting use of situational translation or a combination of the target rhyme and the semantic translation that is backed by the visual information. Already in this translation several issues are seen: the rhythm is lost, and so is, therefore the musicality, compensated by a consonant rhyme. But, does a similar rhyme exist in Spanish that could be used instead? Or is there a rhythm that could correspond with the English feet?

This meter and correspondence issues also arise in another rhyme that can be found in its entirety in translation, “Twinkle twinkle little star”. It has a very different history, yet is also connected to the transit of European culture. Having appeared in written for the first time in 1761 in French, it was also not intended originally for children, but was translated and adapted into English by Jane Taylor and published in 1806 in the book *Rhymes for the Nursery* (Opie & Opie, 1969:397-398). The correspondence into other languages gave an array of Christmas songs, and the melody was picked up by Mozart for his composition K. 265/300e, also known as *Twelve variations on Ah vous dirai-je, Maman in C*. In Spanish, it originated the song *Campanita del Lugar* (Bells of this place). Interestingly, this has created a new version of the original rhyme in Spanish dating from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as a response to the English translation. On many occasions, it might have been needed to explain a visual support where stars, instead of bells, are represented. Just as an example, “Brilla, brilla estrellita” is found in most Spanish learning materials, and is sung by children's character Barney. A different situation arises: a rhyme that previously exists in Spanish but had originated in a different language is re-translated into Spanish from English with different lyrics to respond to the English cultural needs.

Perhaps where nursery rhymes have been most present, however, is in titles of films, book chapters and onomastics. Dreamworks' *Puss in Boots* is a perfect example. It is a spin-off from *Shrek*, the 8th highest-grossing franchise of all time and the highest-grossing animated franchise, which also uses several nursery rhyme characters and references; had more than 2.4 million admissions just in Spain and was nominated as Best Animation Film by the Academy Awards (Box office mojo, 2014). *Puss in boots'* main characters include Humpty Dumpty, Jack and Jill and Little Boy Blue. So, how are these characters – and their references-translated into Spanish? Well, they're simply not. All names in the Spanish translation stay the same. Humpty Dumpty makes sense, since there is no nursery character that is an egg and many of the children that are studying English might encounter the original rhyme in class. The characters of Jack and Jill and Little Boy Blue appear with a reference to their rhyme, with the additional translation difficulty of the images (the horn appears in Humpty's hand):

Jill: Ever since you fell down  
that hill  
and broke your crown,  
you have been talking crazy

Desde que te abriste la  
cabeza al caer por esa colina  
solo dices tonterías.

Humpy: If you're going to  
blow your top,  
you blow your horn instead,  
right?

Antes de soltar un  
soplamos sopla un ratito  
el cuerno.

The humor is completely lost in using these characters and not changing their name or reference setting. Jack and Jill could've easily taken the names of other Spanish rhyme or joke characters (Jaimito, Mambrú, Antón Pirulero) and any explanation with a reference to these Spanish characters could take the place of the hill accident, since it is merely mentioned by Jill. Being that the character of Little Boy Blue is portrayed as completely blue in the film, other ways of finding an effective punch line could've been explored. In Spanish language there are several well-known rhymes that refer to cats ("Estaba el señor don Gato", "En la calle 24") yet there is no reference to them at all.

### ...And now what?

Nursery rhymes have been analyzed through the point of view of children's literature and translation theories. Most of the general ideas proposed converge with the analysis of nursery rhymes. Children's literature analyses illustrate topics such as intentionality, diachronic changes in target audience and censorship, the changing position in the literary system, the dual address and the difficulty in translation that leads to either adequating or considering a creative translation taking into account the reception of the text by the child. Nursery rhymes would also need to add a study of their own idiosyncrasies such as their own possible canonical structures or figures, their multi-genre nature (as poem and song) and their multicultural background.

When confronting the translation of an entire nursery rhyme, a framework should be created. The framework needs to contemplate the cultural background and intentionality of the text as well as the rhyme and rhythm patterns. When translated intertextually for an adult reader, such as in *Castle Waiting*, *Ulysses* or films such as *Puss in Boots*, a situational translation could be favored. Consequently, the research on target nursery rhymes and a correspondence could be made for several different languages. This could support the creation of a translation of cultures that is not reduced to a single English cultural interference as is criticized by many children literature translators and academics.

How to do this? The first step could come from the analysis of the translations that have already taken place answering questions such as: how have the translators solved some of these situations? Are unique nursery rhyme idiosyncrasies such as rhyme, rhythm and musicality taken into account? Are there any canonical figures or are nursery rhymes used as a set reference to a cultural idea of the source culture (as is done in titles and with onomastics)? When

this analysis is done, an effective and conscious correspondence into the target culture could be found.

This would prove to be a great anthropological study of the translator's own culture and help promote a structured corpus such as Mother Goose/nursery rhyme in the target language. For a culture as vast and varied as the Spanish one, spanning three continents, and where nursery rhymes and children's songs have varied origins with diverse cultural influences and paraliterary intrusions, this work could prove to be crucial and would give easy response to translating onomastics, general references and rhyme structures. Nonetheless, a focused, more specific analysis of how current translations have been approached can also give insight towards an interesting framework or even the study of variations in Spanish language.

An analysis on the reception of nursery rhymes by children might also prove to be interesting. The writing patterns for poetry and lyrics in English and Spanish differ greatly so, how could a translator compromise? What can be learned from studies on the translation of poetry?

And, of course... one could simply write books and books on whether nursery rhymes are, or not, children's literature.

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## Tales of Long Ago as a link between cultures

Smiljana Narančić Kovač  
University of Zagreb

**Abstract:** This paper presents the circumstances of the appearance and early reception of *Croatian Tales of Long Ago* in the English-speaking world, and discusses the endurance of these tales, primarily in the British culture. Their reception in other cultures is briefly described. The book consists of original literary fairy tales related to Slavic mythology and folklore, genuinely created and masterly told by Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić. She wrote a number of pieces for children and young adults, two of which are international children's classics. Her works have kept their freshness and appeal to the present day. [1]

**Keywords:** *Tales of Long Ago*, translation, reception, Croatian children's literature, literary fairy tales

A hundred years ago, in 1916, a little book comprising six longish tales was published in Zagreb, Croatia. It enriched the corpus of Croatian children's literature and very soon became a highly acclaimed and widely read international classic. *Tales of Long Ago* (*Priče iz davnine*), translated into English as *Croatian Tales of Long Ago* only eight years after its first appearance, is still widely read and cherished around the world, just as it was in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The author of these tales, Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić (1874–1938), comes from a family of Croatian scholars, politicians and authors. A self-educated scholar and writer herself, fluent in several languages and a mother of five children, she left many traces in Croatian culture and literature and is still inspiring new generations. Prior to the *Tales*, she published another children's classic, the novel *The Strange Adventures of Hlapich the Apprentice* (*Čudnovate zgone šegrta Hlapića*), in 1913. Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer lists both books in her *Lexicon of classics of children's and young adult literature* (*Klassiker der Kinder-und Jugendliteratur* 136-139). Both have been translated into many languages. *Hlapich* was translated into Slovak in 1940 and into Slovene in 1965, but its international adventure truly started in the 1970s, with its appearances in English, and later in Esperanto in 1998; the most recent translation, into Turkish, appeared in 2014 (cf. Croatian Association of Researchers).

The English translation of *Croatian Tales of Long Ago* by Fanny S. Copeland was illustrated by Vladimir Kirin and published in parallel by George Allen & Unwin, Ltd. in London and by Frederick A. Stokes Company in New York in 1924. (The latter is sometimes given as 1922, but it is a mistake; only the title pages differ, and all the illustrations are dated 1924.)

Before turning to the circumstances of the appearance of the English edition of the *Tales* and its early reception in the English-speaking world, we will briefly summarise individual tales and give basic information about their origins and traits.

## The tales

The first Croatian edition of the *Tales* in 1916, and its English translation of 1924, contained the following titles: *How Quest Sought the Truth* (*Kako je Potjeh tražio istinu*), *Fisherman Plunk and His Wife* (*Ribar Palunko i njegova žena*), *Reygoch* (*Regoč*), *Bridesman Sun and Bride Bridekins* (*Sunce djever i Neva Nevičica*), *Stribor's Forest* (*Šuma Striborova*) and *Little Brother Primrose and Sister Lavender* (*Bratac Jaglenac i sestrice Rutvica*). It also contained *Notes*. The third Croatian edition (1926) was extended by two more stories: *Lutonjica Toporko i devet župančića* (*Toporko and his nine brothers*) and *Jagor* (*Yagor*). These were translated into English in 2006 by Vlatko Broz (assisted by Sonja Bičanić and Harvey Forge) for an interactive multimedial edition. In further text, the tales are referred to by short titles: *Quest*, *Fisherman Plunk*, *Reygoch*, *Bridekins*, *Stribor's Forest* and *Primrose*.

In *Quest* three brothers are instructed by All-Rosy (who brings light and sunshine), to stay with their grandfather Witting as long as he lived, 'until you have repaid your grandfather for all his love to you' (*Croatian Tales...* 15). Rampogusto, the king of goblins, wants to harm Witting and sends three hobgoblins after the brothers to turn them against their grandfather. The brothers forget All-Rosy's advice. The two elder brothers, guided by their hobgoblins, leave in search for wealth and power, and then return planning to kill Witting. The youngest brother, Quest, is determined to discover the truth about what he was told, because 'truth comes before all things' (33). He leaves his grandfather and remains in solitude for a long time trying to remember 'the truth', until All-Rosy comes again to reprimand him for his behaviour. Alas, before going home, Quest falls into the river and drowns. The old man forgives his grandsons for their evil deeds and neglect, and gives his life so that he can lead Quest into the All-Rosy's Castle. The two elder brothers become 'valiant men and true' (52), and Rampogusto is defeated.

In *Fisherman Plunk*, 'Plunk is sick and tired of his miserable life' (57), and asks the Dawn-Maiden, who appears in a silver boat with golden oars, to help him out. She sends him a poor girl for a wife. Plunk is never satisfied, not even when they get a son. He sends his wife to find the way to the Sea King's Castle. One day her son disappears and she becomes mute. With the help of the Dawn-Maiden, Plunk finds the Sea King, and his baby son. The child does not recognise him, and orders him about. Plunk is captured under the sea and hopeless. His wife, instructed by a nice hind (roe deer) on her mother's grave, sets on a dangerous adventure to save her husband and son. She tricks three monsters on her way and finally succeeds. The little family forgets past misfortunes and they live in peace and simple domestic happiness.

*Reygoch* is a story about Curlylocks, a little fairy, and the giant Reygoch, who lives at Frosten and spends his time counting the stones of this cold city. Curlylocks has a very fast horse that takes her all the way to Frosten. On her way she notices two beautiful villages. When she meets Reygoch, she invites him to join her in her search for those villages. They meet a group of little shepherds. One of them, Lilio, tells them that people from both villages have been spiting and plotting against the other village, and as a result, both villages are being flooded. Curlylocks instructs Reygoch how to stop the flood by sitting down into the hole

in the flood bank, and he then dries the villages by making a hole in the ground where water disappears. Children discover that an old couple 'who had been the only sensible people in the two villages' (133) is saved, and together with them, they establish just one, common village where they can live in peace. Curlylocks stays with them, and Reygoch returns to Frosten.

*Bridekins* is a complex tale about a miller's daughter Bridekins, who grinds wheat free of charge for an old woman, Muggish, so that she can make bread for her grandson, the Sun. Muggish has the power to turn into different animals and promises to help the girl should she need it. One day a princess loses her keys. Bridekins has a chance to become her lady-in-waiting if she finds the keys. Young men are also searching, for their reward would be the princess's hand. Bridekins meets Oleg the Warden, and gives him the keys she has found with Muggish's help, but he falls in love with Bridekins and refuses to marry the princess. Bridekins and Oleg flee together, and Muggish and the Sun help them escape the vengeful princess and her army. Finally, the Sun appears at their wedding and gives away the bride.

In *Stribor's Forest* human characters have generic names, unlike the fantastic creatures. A young man finds a snake in the woods, which turns into a beautiful girl. He brings her home to his Mother, as a daughter-in-law. The girl abuses the old woman inventing impossible tasks for her, and the son keeps his wife's side. The Mother is inconsolable and she does not see a way out. One evening, sparks fly out of the hearth and turn into merry Brownies, the house elves, who cheer the old woman up. Wee Tintlinkie, one of them, tricks the daughter-in-law into revealing her true nature, but the son's heart is hardened and the young couple sends his mother away into a cold winter night. The Brownies help again by taking the old woman to Stribor, the wise and kind lord of the Forest. He promises to give her back her youth; however, she would forget she had a son. On hearing this, the Mother says that she would rather live in misery and have a son than have 'all the riches and happiness in the world and [...] forget my son' (183). Upon this, the enchantment ends, the daughter-in-law turns back into a snake, and the son is forgiven.

*Primrose* is another tale with many characters and a complex plot. Two children, Primrose and Lavender (in the source text, she is named after another plant, rue, i.e. herb-of-grace) become keepers of two valuable objects, a golden girdle and a golden cross. These were left to their mother by a princess who fled with her baby son because she was forced out of her own castle. Lavender is taken by a huge Eagle high up the terrible Mount Kitesh, an enchanted place occupied by a Fiery Dragon and Votaresses, evil fairies. Primrose follows his sister. After many dangerous encounters with wicked creatures and animals, which he safely overcomes because he is protected by both his innocence and the cross, he finds Lavender on a little island in the middle of a mountain lake. In the meantime, Relya, now grown-up son of the princess, follows the children to regain his mother's property (the girdle and the cross). On his way, he fights the Fierce Dragon and defeats it. He saves the children, and brings his mother the princess to them so that they can all live together. Finally, the wicked lords who occupied his mother's castle perish, and Relya is asked by the people to be their prince. Later on, he marries Lavender, and Primrose grows up 'into a brave and handsome youth' (254).

## How the *Tales* came about

*Stribor's Forest* is the first of the 'tales of long ago' Brlić-Mažuranić wrote. It was published separately in 1914, in a monthly magazine for young people (*Mladi Hrvat* 163-170). It seems to have been inspired by Brlić-Mažuranić's reading (she was studying the mythology of the old Slavs, in particular the works on ancient Slav beliefs of a Russian 19<sup>th</sup>-century folklorist, Alexander Nikolayevich Afanasyev), and by an ordinary event. She described it in a letter to her son Ivo Brlić, written on 30 Nov 1929, and published in 1930 ('O postanku...'):

One winter night our home was, quite unusually, completely silent. Not a soul was about, the rooms big, dusk everywhere, mood mysterious, flames in the fireplaces. From the last room – the big dining hall – I heard: 'knock! knock!' – 'Who is there?' I asked. Nothing! Again: 'knock! knock!' – 'Who is there?' – nothing, again. With some mysterious fear, I stepped into the big dining hall, and all at once: a cheerful crack, a blast, a little explosion! In the large fireplace, in the flames, there burst a pine log – from the opening of the fireplace, a host of sparks flew towards me, as if a swarm of stars, and when I opened my arms to catch that live golden gift, they rose high towards the tall ceiling and...they were gone. – I was reading Afanasyev [...] at the time – and at that moment I remembered the 'house elves'. So that swarm of sparks-stars was caught after all – and all that in *Stribor's Forest* – and the tale came about because of them. After this tale, others came, seven more, without any specific 'genesis'. Hence, they have, just like *Stribor's Forest*, flown like sparks from the hearth of an ancient Slavic home. (Translated by SNK).

The summaries given above are only pale reflections of the rich plots of the original tales, because much is omitted in these sketchy retellings. Brlić-Mažuranić demonstrates outstanding skills in developing marvellous, yet dangerous worlds in which ordinary people become heroic, caught in the tragic web of life. There are no simple happy endings, and when they do come, it is often with or as a result of sacrifice. The worlds are populated with creatures stemming from myth and folklore, who bring their dark powers into the lives of innocent and uncorrupted protagonists such as orphaned children, poor maidens and equally poor, but wise old people. The evil forces are defeated by courage, daring, but also love, compassion and innocence of the main characters, in a way that is reminiscent of some of the tales of Oscar Wilde. Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić was often compared with Hans Christian Andersen (cf. Bučar). While she was acquainted with some of his fairy tales (most likely through German translations), her own tales are much more deeply rooted in the mystical and half-forgotten lore of times past. No wonder her tales are sometimes compared with J.R.R. Tolkien's works (Obradović 27). After all, they had the same publisher.

Brlić-Mažuranić's tales are not only the result of her imagination, but also of her exceptional expertise and knowledge of tradition, lore and Slav mythology. Many readers and critics were misguided in their belief that she only retold traditional tales. The author herself commented on such interpretations in the abovementioned letter ('O postanku...'):

Successful or unsuccessful, flawed or perfect, these *Tales* are, as much in their essence as in their performance, purely and fully my own original work. They are created around the names and characters taken from the Slav mythology and that

is the entire outer connection they have with national mythological heritage. Not a single scene or a single plot, nor a development, nor a tendency included in these tales is found in our mythology. (Whoever studied mythology at least a bit knows, in any case, that, unfortunately, our Slav mythology is in its whole just a mixture of assumptions almost contrary to reason, a field of ruins, from which, like straight pillars, just names stand out.)

It is completely another question about the inner connection that the *Tales of Long Ago* have with folk poetry. From that viewpoint, my stories really are not mine, but rather pieces of storytelling, predictions, hopes, beliefs and confidence of the whole soul of the Slavic tribe. From the Slavic land and air, from the white mists of Slavic waters and seas, from Slavic snows and blizzards, from the grain of Slavic fields, our body is created and renovated – the body of all us Slavs. And from Slavic feelings, affections, from Slavic attitudes and speculations, our soul is composed. When we, therefore, manage to dive fully into ourselves, to write something directly from our hearts, then whatever is written in that way, really is the real Slavic folk poetry. (Translated by SNK).

Researchers have found proof that Brlić-Mažuranić indeed drew from *Поэтические воззрения славян на природу* (*The Poetic Outlook of Slavs about Nature*) by Afanasyev, which she read in Russian, and from *Mythologie der alten Teutschen und Slaven* (*Mythology of the Old Germans and Slavs*) by a Czech writer Anton Thany, which she read in German, as well as from collections of Croatian folk and fairy tales and folklore in general (Bošković-Stulli, Kos-Lajtman and Turza Bogdan, Kos-Lajtman and Horvat, Engler and Kos-Lajtman). Besides, while her tales are remotely, but deeply linked with realistic landscapes and places where Brlić-Mažuranić lived or spent some time, such as the town of Ogulin, her birthplace, we must agree with Torunn Selberg and Nevena Škrbić Alempijević when they state that these tales are really ‘located in an unworldly, nameless and mythical landscape’ (192).

The extraordinary magic and the specific style of these tales engages readers and lures them into fantastic worlds that become relevant and real. The wisdom of the teller who shares deep and dark human experiences, exposes the complexity of family and friendly relationships and tests the morality, endurance and courage not only of the characters, but also the readers, represents storytelling at its best. Carefully chosen words, vividly depicted scenes sketched in a few masterly moves, the rhythm and suspense, as well as clearly cut characters, have earned these tales much praise, and its author four nominations for the Nobel Prize in Literature in the 1930s (Zima).

### The book in English and early reception

It is most fortunate that the tales were rendered into English by a highly competent translator, who knew Croatian and was well informed about the source culture. Fanny S. Copeland (1872–1970), Scottish by birth, educated in London and Berlin, studied languages and music. The year 1915 finds her as secretary to a Croatian politician, Dr Ante Trumbić. (He was the president of the Yugoslav Committee, which consisted of exiles from the Austro-Hungary who worked for the unification of the South Slavs in a single state (Clarke and Anteric 168)). From the 1920s on, Copeland spent most of her life in Slovenia, from where she also established contacts with cultural circles in Croatia and other countries joined in

the state of Yugoslavia, first a monarchy and then a socialist federation. It is certain that her superb and faithful translation made it possible for the *Tales* to be published in London and New York and receive a wide and positive response in the English-speaking world.

As mentioned above, the London (and New York) edition of the *Tales* was adorned by black-and-white drawings and colour plates by Vladimir Kirin (1894–1963), a Croatian artist. His illustrations perfectly match the atmosphere and spirit of the tales and contribute to their appeal. They are original, attractive and unprecedented among Croatian book illustrations of the time, but they are also evocative of Arthur Rackham. Kirin spent a couple of years (1919–1921) in London studying graphic design. It is almost certain that he was familiar with Rackham's work, especially with his great success, the illustrations for *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* published in 1906 (Barrie). (The Croatian edition of this book, translated by Dr. Ivana Rossi, appeared in Croatia, with Rackham's illustrations, very soon after Kirin had returned home, i.e. about 1922 (Barrie [Barie])). It is tempting to speculate that Kirin might have brought the original to Croatia and that it was the copy that was soon translated).

The book of *Croatian Tales* was ready for the demanding English readership, and indeed, it was noticed immediately. Ivan (Ivo) Brlić, writing about his mother in 1953, mentions as many as forty English publications that brought acclaiming reviews of the *Tales*, a letter by Rudyard Kipling 'full of gratifying admiration' and a review by Seton-Watson (214). The latter is in fact a brief recommendation, signed by initials (R.W.S.W.):

To any uncles who may be in search of something Slavonic as a Christmas present we can heartily recommend *Croatian Tales of Long Ago*, by Ivana Berlic-Mazuranic (London, Allen & Unwin, 1924. Pp. 260. 7s. 6d. net.) These tales have long been favourites in their own country, and Madame Copeland, already well known for her literary translations, has produced a version which no one would suspect of being a translation at all. There are a number of attractive coloured illustrations by Vladimir Kirin, a Croat parallel to Rackham. The volume is beautifully printed and, in these days of dear books, quite unusually cheap.

According to the fifth volume of the critical edition of Brlić-Mažuranić's collected works (Brešić 180-184), some thirty newspapers and magazines reported about the new book and commented on it. Most of those papers were British, but there were also a few texts in non-British publications. They appeared in November and December 1924, except for a short notice in *The Daily Mail* (Brisbane, Queensland), published on 21 March 1925. There may have been more texts that reflect this early reception of the *Tales* in English translation, but if so, they are still buried under the layers of new information that have piled up since. Most of the newspaper clippings of the abovementioned reviews are kept in The Archives of the Brlić Family in Slavonski Brod, where Brlić-Mažuranić lived after she got married to Vatroslav Brlić, into a family with a long history and a respected legacy, like her own. The Archives contain materials and documents from seven generations of the Brlić family (1730–2000), including the manuscripts, correspondence and documents of Brlić-Mažuranić herself (Artuković).

The analysed (and available) texts are listed in the chronological order in Table 1, and they are quoted and commented below, with reference to the

numbers assigned to individual publications in the column on the left. All the clippings but one come from the Brlić Archives, from the box labelled IB93, and numbers of files where they are kept are given in the column on the right, under the box label. Item No. 18 is available online (*The Spectator*).

**Table 1.** A selection of newspapers and periodicals with texts on *Croatian Tales of Long Ago*<sup>1</sup>

No.	Date	Newspapers and periodicals	Text title (or the beginning)	IB93
1	11/11/1924	<i>Western Daily Press</i>	Croatian Tales	f 9
2	13/11/1924	<i>The Stationery Trades' Journal</i>	Some Notable Books	f10
3	15/11/1924	<i>T-P.'s &amp; Cassell's Weekly</i>	'Croatian Tales of Long Ago'	f11
4	21/11/1924	<i>The Globe</i> (Toronto, Canada)	'The Croatian Tales of ...'	f12
5	22/11/1924	<i>Saturday Revue</i> (USA)	Mr. F.S. Copeland's spirited...	f13
6	22/11/1924	<i>Leytonstone Express &amp; Independent</i>	'Croatian Tales of Long Ago'	f 14
7	27/11/1924	<i>Daily Dispatch</i> (South African, publ. in London)	Croatian Hans Anderson [sic!]	f15
8	27/11/1924	<i>Scotsman Weekly</i>	George Allen & Unwin	f16
9	28/11/1924	<i>The Morning Post</i>	'Once upon a time, very...	f17
10	02/12/1924	<i>The Daily Telegraph</i>	George Allen & Unwin	f18
11	04/12/1924	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	The author of Croatia [sic!]...	f 20
12	04/12/1924	<i>Westminster Gazette</i>	Allen and Unwin	f21
13	05/12/1924	<i>Time and Life</i>	Miss. F. S. Copeland...	f23
14	05/12/1924	<i>Yorkshire Observer</i>	'Croatian Tales of Long Ago'	f24
15	06/12/1924	<i>Nottingham Guardian</i>	George Allen & Unwin	f23
16	10/12/1924	<i>Southport Guardian</i>	Folk Tales of Wonder.!	f26
17	12/12/1924	<i>Evening Standard</i>	Among the books which...	f28
18	13/12/1924	<i>The Spectator</i> ( <i>Spectator Literary Supplement</i> )	Christmas Books: Legend and Fairy Tale	
19	13/12/1924	<i>The Star</i> (Auckland, New Zealand)	Gift Books	f19
20	16/12/1924	<i>Liverpool Daily Courier</i>	Jugo-Slavian Fairy Tales.	f30
21	18/12/1924	<i>Aberdeen Press and Journal</i>	Very readable is a volume...	f31
22	24/12/1924	<i>The Daily Chronicle</i>	King Rampogusto & Co.	f33
23	26/12/1924	<i>The Church of England Newspaper</i>	<i>Croatian Tales of Long ...</i>	f34
24	21/03/1925	<i>The Daily Mail</i> (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia)	'Croatian Tales of Long Ago'	f35

Among the analysed texts, there are very short notes that give basic information about the book, with or without a few sentences of commentary (2, 3, 7, 9, 11, 15, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23), and there are a bit longer texts, slightly more extensive critiques (4, 6, 10, 16).

The earliest response in *Western Daily Press* is anonymous like all the other analysed texts, knowledgeably written and, again, just like the other texts, it gives a positive evaluation (1):

Children could hardly wish for a more tantalising volume of fables than this translation of the Croatian author, whose tales are justly regarded as masterpieces in the country of their origin. Without attempting to estimate the degree in which the native colour of the stories has been preserved, it has to be conceded that they possess a distinctive flavour, while retaining those imperishable attributes of the fabulous – fairies, witches, ogres, dragons, etc. The value of the stories is

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Tatjana Melnik and Vladimira Rezo for their help in acquiring the newspaper clippings.

enhanced by the morals which they impart, and by the artistic simplicity with which they are written. The volume is marvellously illustrated with coloured plates and line drawings by Vladimir Kirin.

Another critic depicts the specific atmosphere of the narratives in an inspired evaluation (10):

Immersion in these tales brings us into close intimacy with delightful fairies, with mermaids who alternate benevolence with fury, with goblins either amiable or terrible, with good-natured lazy giants and gentle dancing elves. We listen in terror to the mighty roar of a sea lashed into tempestuous rage by a fearsome snake, occupant of a black cavern; we hear the sea's twin sister, the wind, screeching in musical consonance across the face of the turbulent waters; or, guided by beneficent spirits of the World of Beyond, we make excursions into abodes of perennial delight. The world which is so much with us recedes into temporary oblivion while we are lost in the adventures of, say, Fisherman Plunk and his wife – adventures in which the beautiful Dawn Maiden, who made occasional appearances from under the sea in a silver boat, played an all-potent role. What a magical gift is this of Berlic-Mazuranic of introducing us to Wonderland.

In *The Spectator* the book is praised in the section on *Christmas Books*, in a longer text titled 'Legend and Fairy Tale'. The fragment is very short, but it is specific and meaningful (18):

We come nearer to the true delight in *Croatian Tales*. 'One day a young man went into Striber's [sic] forest and did not know it was enchanted.' There we begin rightly. There is, moreover, an excellent account of a mountain guarded by seven wicked fairies, by Belleroo, a bird that roared so that the earth shook, and yet was found to be no bigger than a hen, and by a rather clumsy dragon.

Good opinion is sometimes combined with comparisons: 'These tales breathe a fresh and strange air that makes them most readable. As in Grimm or Andersen, underneath the quaint fancies lie eternal truths that arrest the imagination.' (5) The tales are assessed as brilliant, but 'little known to the world in general by comparison with the 'Arabian Nights' or Grimm's 'Fairy tales'' (10). According to another reviewer, the book is 'interesting both as fiction and as folklore', and has some advantages in comparison with Grimms' stories (14):

In many respects it is comparable with Grimm's Fairy Tales, coming as it does from a neighbouring part of the world. Here is the same population of uncouth brownies, giants, and the like; but ethically the stories are not as crude and naïve as those in Grimm's collection. 'Reygoch' is almost an allegory. It must be confessed that the simpler, quainter German legends are more palatable; but, all the same, Miss F. S. Copeland has introduced to an English public a very fascinating book, and one which should delight children and adults alike.

The name of Andrew Lang pops up in 'Folk Tales of Wonder.!', where examples reveal, most regrettably, only the reviewer's superficial knowledge and understanding of the individual tales: a description of Plunk's wife as grumbling, an erroneously given gist of this story, and a twisted interpretation of Bridekins's story placing the miserly miller into focus (16):

Andrew Lang gave us in his famous fairy books a wide range of folk tales, but he did not exhaust the subject, and though we love the old stories we also welcome the new, especially such fresh and beautifully presented folk-stories as 'Croatian [sic] Tales of Long Ago,' [...]. The subjects of these six 'long ago stories' are universal like 'How Quest sought the Truth,' 'Fisherman Plunk and his wife,' (the adventures of a romantic questing man and a grumbling wife, who almost came to disaster because they put love and faith out of their lives), 'Reygoch,' a Jugo-Slav version of 'Curlylocks and the Giant,' 'Bridesman Sun and Bride Brideikns [sic],' where the witch teaches the miserly miller a lesson; but the setting, customs, ethical motives etc. of the stories are distinctively fresh and Croat.

Another example is the review title 'Croatian Hans Anderson [sic]'. In this text the *Tales* is seen in the context of 'The Great War' which 'left many children fatherless, but it has also had the effect of setting free the genius in some of the liberated peoples.' (7) This reviewer is obviously neither aware that the tales are literary fairy tales, nor that they were originally published during the Great War, and only translated after it. Occasionally the tales are even considered to have a historical value, so that they would 'appeal to those who are interested in the old-time life and history of that part of Europe' although they are, on the other hand, described as 'naturally strange' and 'improbable' (2).

The text from *Leytonstone Express & Independent* defines the intended readership, but mentions the author only indirectly as 'the he [sic] upon whom the selection rests' (6):

In choosing a suitable volume to give a child, say between the ages of eight and twelve years, it would be undesirable to omit, considering the suitability of the book now under review. The choice of a book is naturally, to a large degree influenced by the taste of he upon whom the selection rests but whether the liking be for the sun or the moon we believe that one and all will readily recognise beauty in varying forms in Allen and Unwin's volume of 'Croatian Tales of Long Ago.' Translated by F. S. Copeland, these tales, long great favourites in the land of their origin, have been artistically interpreted. The subjects, of universal interest, are both healthy and pleasurable, whilst the entire compilation of the volume, which includes many beautiful pictures, has been admirably effected.

The tales are generally expected to be interesting to young readers: 'Young eyes and mouths will open wide' at the first sentences of the tale about Quest (9). Also, 'these are uncommonly fine fairy stories that will give many an hour's pleasure to the children and be read over and over again.' (23) The author of the two-sentence long notice, titled, with a whiff of humour, 'King Rampogusto & Co.', is sure that 'the names of the characters in these stories—All-Rosy, King Rampogusto, Bluster, Fisherman Plunk, and so forth—are enough to beguile the laziest adult into reading the book to the littlest ones who cannot read for themselves.' (22) Even though it is so condense, the comment is to the point, suggestive and efficient. Yet another reviewer claims (10):

[...] youngsters, as well as children of a larger growth, who delight in making fanciful journeys from their firesides to enchanted islands and mysterious glens, to the weird recesses of forest-covered mountains, and to gorgeous palaces under the ocean, may indulge in their dreams through the medium of the fine book now published by Messr. George Allen and Unwin Ltd.

Often the *Tales* is presented as a book of traditional folk tales, and Brlić-Mažuranić is given the collector's role, as the one who 'introduces us to an unfamiliar field of folk-lore' (5). One reviewer thinks the stories break new ground and 'are good enough to find favour [not only at home but] elsewhere, quite apart from the charm they acquire from the unfamiliarity of their setting and the introduction they give us to the folk-lore, the character and the modes of thought of Yugoslavia [sic]' (12). Another one considers them a turning point in abandoning a somewhat surprising (at least from this author's perspective) stereotype about Croats (13):

[...] These folk-lore tales, which come from the very heart of the Yugoslavian people, will be a surprise to those who have thought of the Croats only as half savage fighters. These are gentle, peaceable tales, with no hint in them of any kind of tumult, tales of elves, and hob-goblins, and enchanted forests, of men who searched for truth, and found it in strange ways. Each tale is a little parable of life, full of meaning and beauty.

A Scottish reviewer finds similarities between the *Tales* and 'our own fairy traditions', but he also discovers 'peculiar' qualities in Slavic beliefs (21):

These stories are not so old as Japanese folk-lore, and, with national differentiations, are not dissimilar to some of our own fairy traditions. Thus Beltane Night and Yuletide are known there as here, and brownies and sea-maidens are familiar figures of fairyland on land and under the sea. Peculiarly characteristic of the Slavs, however, is the idea that animals speak a language which certain humans can understand; and the pretty pictures of the dawn-maiden sailing the sea in the early morning in her boat of gold and with a silver paddle; and of the sunshine as taking the form of a beautiful youth.

According to one of the reviewers, the book is an 'excellent addition to legendary lore' and (8)

it should certainly find a new home in many young British hearts. They [the tales] combine in a singularly happy and harmonious fashion two contrasting elements. The motives, artistic form and style all bear the imprint of the ethnical genius of the Croat branch of the Jugo-Slav nation [sic], to which the author belongs, whereas the subject matter is of universal human interest.

Another review claims that while the *Tales* is 'stamped' with, this time, 'the *ethical* genius of the Croat branch of the Yugoslav nation, to which their author belongs, the subject-matter of the stories is of universal human interest' (10, emphasis by SNK). Such repetitions are frequently encountered in the analysed texts, and they imply that reviewers have largely used previously published reviews in creating their own, even when they give a deeper and well-informed account of the book, as in 10 (see above). Some are, however, almost fully quotations, such as review 15, which consists of a few sentences clearly taken from 10. A number of texts repeat the assumption that the tales are very well known and/or that they have (for long) been popular, or great favourites 'in the country of origin' (3, 7, 8, 10, 12, 15), and, in one case, 'in his [sic] [the author's] native land' (11).

Copeland's effort is widely praised; the tales are 'admirably translated' (3, 9). She has 'preserved the native colour' of the tales (8, 11), and made a text 'which reads very well' (12). She 'has placed us under a debt by her sympathetic

translation' (13). She 'translates with singular felicity' (22). She is also commended because she 'has wisely sought to render the significance of the original names in English in preference to reproducing the Slav names in English spelling' (10). Two texts mention that Copeland had the author's consent: the translator's 'work has, we are informed, the cordial approval of the author' (8). In the other review this is presented as fact: 'The author's approval of the translation is a proof that the native colour of the stories has been preserved.' (20)

The merit of Vladimir Kirin and his illustrations is also widely acknowledged. One critic discovers in Kirin's coloured plates 'a semi-Oriental decorative quality which is admirably in keeping with the stories' (5), another thinks that 'a most attractive feature of the volume is the illustrative work in gorgeous colours by Vladimir Kirin. The ten coloured plates and thirteen line drawings given are most happy in general design and detail.' (8) The illustrations are 'effective and imaginative' (21), '[b]oth plates and drawings are delightful' (23), and the book is illustrated 'with considerable spirit' (9), 'with poetic insight and imagination' (13), in other words, it is 'beautifully' (14, 20) and 'charmingly' illustrated (10, 17). (It should be noted that 10 is the only text in our sample which is accompanied by a reproduction of Kirin's work, his illustration of Witting and his grandsons). Several reviewers mention similarities between Kirin's and Rackham's work. One of them also sees a distinction: 'His black-and-white drawings are full of grotesque humours and his colour plates, which, curiously enough, sometimes call to mind the quaint fancy of Arthur Rackham, have a character which is quite their own—and, presumably, that of Croatia.' (12) The likeness between two artists is even more clearly stressed by another reviewer: Kirin's 'work might be mistaken for Arthur Rackham's[,] so marked is the similarity in style' (20).

Some comments refer to the presentation and design of the publication as a whole: 'The book is handsomely presented, quarto size, good print, wide margins, quaint and curious pictures, and is generally attractive.' (11); 'They [the tales] are tastefully bound in cloth with an illustrated cover, and are printed in bold type on good paper. The volume contains ten coloured plates and thirteen line drawings by Vladimir Kirin.' (23)

There are four reviews published outside Britain in our sample. The one published in the USA (5) is very short, and has been quoted above. The one published in *The Auckland Star* is a short paragraph within a longer text on 'Gift Books.' It relies in part on previously published reviews, and states that the tales 'are of the Hans Andersen type, and British children will have no difficulty in following the stories and enjoying them', but it also sets the book into a new category: 'the type, paper and binding of the volume add to its value as a gift book.' (19)

The contributions to the Australian and Canadian newspapers are more interesting. The former refers to 'tribal legends' in connection with the *Tales* and presents the book as a collection of folk tales of universal value that challenge 'national frontiers' (24):

Fairy tales and tribal legends are rightly having a popular run just now, and one of the most unusual and attractive of such volumes is this collection of ancient Croatian stories. The author himself [sic] belongs to the Croat branch of the Yugoslav nation, and his selection of tales is happy. Like all good fairy stories,

these have a universal human interest, and make a wide appeal for appreciation quite apart from such mundane divisions as national frontiers.

The latter review, published in *The Globe* of Toronto, seems to have been written by someone who read the book with interest and formed an opinion. This text presents an appropriate closure to the overview of the early reception of the *Tales* in English-speaking contexts (4):

Tales of fairies, goblins, mermaids, witches and dragons wonderfully told under the captions: 'How Quest Sought the Truth,' 'Fisherman Plunk and His Wife,' 'Reygoch,' 'Bridesman Sun and Bride Bridekins,' 'Stribor's Forest,' and 'Little Brother Primrose and Sister Lavender,' comprise the 'Croatian Tales of Long Ago.'

They are awesome as is befitting such tales, each with delightful eccentricities peculiar to fairy lore, and each showing the penalties that accrue from greediness and dissatisfaction. As an example, Plunk, in 'Fisherman Plunk and His Wife,' was so dissatisfied with his wife and his home environment that he wandered off to fields of promised riches only to find that

'Harum-Scarum Plunk would go  
Where the pearls and corals grow;  
There he found but grief and woe.'

The book is profuse with grotesque illustrations, beautifully done, some in delicate colourings, others in black, all real works of art. It is a book acceptable to any child, in fact is tremendously interesting to the grown-up as well, at least that is the verdict of a grown-up who has just read it.

### A lasting appeal

Copeland's rendering of the *Tales* was the first in a row of translations into other languages: Swedish (1928), Czech (1928), Danish (1930), Russian (1930), Slovak (1931), German (1933), Serbian (1952), Slovene (1955), Macedonian (1956), Italian (1957), Albanian (1957), Hungarian (1965), Ukrainian (1971), Lithuanian (1975), Bulgarian (1979), Spanish (1992), Latvian (2010), Japanese (2010), and French (2013). Individual stories have also been translated into various languages, including Finnish and Burgenland Croatian.

After such a wide initial response, the book was less visible for a while, perhaps even almost forgotten, but its appeal and endurance in the British culture was confirmed when three tales were retold by Joan Aiken in her much acclaimed book titled *The Kingdom under the Sea and other stories* (1971), reprinted in 1975, and reissued in 1984. The book was masterly illustrated in silhouette-like black-and-white drawings by Ian Pieńkowski. He was awarded the Kate Greenaway Medal for the illustrations in 1971. The title story is the retelling of *Fisherman Plunk*, somewhat abridged and simplified (the original story comprises 34 pages, and the retelling only 9 richly illustrated pages). *The Sun-God's Castle* is a retelling of *Quest*, only All-Rosy is called Daybog, and the grandsons are called Martin, Mihal and Yanek. Rampogusto becomes 'the king of the vookodlaks [werewolves].' Yanek (Quest) is not searching for truth now, he just tries to remember Daybog's instructions, and he does not get killed by accident, but is pushed by a goblin. The goblins are absurdly and comically punished by the vookodlak king so that they have to 'stand on their heads in the mud for three years and thirty days' (*The*

*Kingdom* 47), while Rampogusto orders that they should have ‘their horns cropped close, and so run about for everyone to make fun of!’ (*Croatian Tales...* 53), the punishment that really hurts. The story is not only abridged, but also altered, and the text is much more explicit than in the original tale, in which readers need to make inferences and draw conclusions on their own much more often. The third tale is *The Sun’s Cousin*, based upon *Bridekins*. The retelling is shorter than the source text, but the story itself remains faithful to the original in most respects.

While retold tales are listed on the copyright page of Aiken’s book as ‘based on stories contained in *Croatian Tales of Long Ago* by Ivana Berlic-Mazuranic’, the original authorship is hardly recognised by commentators. Thus Moira (obviously a pen-name) writes that ‘*The Kingdom Under the Sea* is a delightful retelling of eleven traditional European folk tales, most of which will be semi-familiar to modern readers, containing as they do ancient echoes of the fairy stories we all grew up with. Joan Aiken [...] tells the tales with a deft hand and a twinkle in her eye without ever losing sight of the darkness that underlies European folk mythology.’ (*The Kingdom...Pieńkowski*). Nevertheless, these retellings contribute to the popularity of the original tales, now in a new robe, and old tales in turn add their mystery and wisdom to this new, and much loved book of tales.

### Final thoughts

Brlić-Mažuranić’s tales, similar to so many pieces of British literature that have been translated from English into Croatian, have become a link that connects two cultures. Croatian children have had the privilege of reading and enjoying tales such as ‘The Three Pigs,’ ‘Goldilocks and Three Bears,’ as well as masterpieces such as *Alice in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan*, *Winnie-the-Pooh*, *Chronicles of Narnia*, and many other, more recent works, and of getting acquainted with this magnificent world of stories. The book of *Croatian Tales of Long Ago* is a rare example of an exchange in an opposite direction. Whichever direction is taken, great writers and their stories make cultures communicate and enable readers from different places to reach a better understanding, simply by sharing good literature.

Brlić-Mažuranić’s tales are now accessible more easily in English and German, through the interactive multimedial CD ROM edition. The first part appeared in 2002, and the second in 2006 (the *Tales* on CD ROM). The discs include the original texts of all the tales, their translations into English by Copeland (and Broz) and Camilla Lucerna’s translation into German. Interactive versions of stories are accompanied by animated cartoons created by artists from different countries (Al Keddie, Scotland; Ellen McAuslan, England; Nathan Juevicius, Australia; Katrin Rothe, Germany; Edgar Beals, Canada; Poline Nisenbaum, Mirek Nisenbaum and Sabina Hahn, USA; Laurence Arcadias, France and Helena Bulaja, Croatia). The project has been admired worldwide, and its authors received many awards. While some of the adaptations take their own paths and make shifts in meaning which deviate from the original tales, they remain exciting and attractive in their own right. As Edward Picot puts it in his review of the multimedial project (‘Twice Told Tales’):

Every animation on this CD – indeed, every animation in the entire project – is worth seeing for its own sake; but when they are viewed in conjunction with the

original *Tales*, and the background information about Mazuranic herself, then a much more rich and complex picture emerges. This is a project with genuine popular appeal, which is bound to engage both children and adults: but it is also a slice of literary history, a valuable reminder of the importance of fairy stories to our literary traditions, and an introduction to the work, within that genre, of one of the best-known and best-loved Croatian authors.

*Tales of Long Ago* is a hundred years old book, but it is clearly as appealing now as it was then.

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# Once a Riddle, Always a Riddle

## Oedipal Territoriality vs Anti-Oedipal Fluidity (?) in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series

Marina Pirlimpou

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

**Abstract:** Through an application of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's Anti-Oedipal model, the conflict between Harry Potter and Lord Voldemort in J. K. Rowlings' *Harry Potter* series is examined as a juxtaposition of, respectively, the Oedipal camp and the Anti-Oedipal camp as operating on the basis of intertwining desiring and power flows that run through the social body of the Wizarding World and structure it according to either their normalizing or their destructive purposes. The interpellation of Harry/Oedipus ensures the triumph of the Oedipal triangulated oppression, and the Oedipalized beginnings and ending of Voldemort/Anti-Oedipus seal his failure as his revolutionary desire is slowly shut down and consumed by the very same social mechanisms of Oedipal desire, surveillance and control he tries to subvert/command.

**Keywords:** desire, power, Oedipus, Anti-Oedipus, Deleuze and Guattari

### Introduction

Since the publication of developmental psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment* in 1976, children's fantasy fiction (including fairy tales) has been formally acknowledged as a tool to stir young minds towards the gradual acquisition of psychological maturity under the disguise of supernatural adventures. Bettelheim observes that folklore or fairy tales "offered material from which children formed their concepts of the worlds origin and purpose, and of the social ideals a child could pattern himself after" (24). Questions regarding morality, ideology, ethical or political intent manage to emerge from apparently innocuous tales that include not only the traditional children's fairy tales, but modern renditions of the genre as well, such as J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. One factor for the immense popularity of this series that ran from 1997 to 2007 is precisely this subtextual density, as it has time and again invited several interpretations on the basis of issues of gender, race, politics, and religion. Some of such oriented interpretations include gender approaches exposing the overwhelming number of male characters, and the confinement of strong heroines to "helper females" (Heilman and Donaldson 146); extensive analyses of the racial discrimination and the house-elf slavery (Peppers-Bates and Rust 113); portrayals of Voldemort as a tyrannical dictator who lacks the political virtue and harmony of the soul a true ruler should possess (Smith and Smith 133); and explorations of the relationship between christian theology, the realm of magic, and the overcoming of black-and-white dualism (Ciaccio 42). On its way to become a classic, the story of Harry Potter, "the Boy who Lived", is not merely a retelling of an age-old monomyth recounting the personal development of a boy into a hero who will fight against evil: inscribed with ideologies of power, the *Harry Potter* series exposes, as will hopefully be shown here, a stunningly

modern image of a carceral wizarding society traversed by relations of power and desire.

The exploration of two opposing forces in this society, one that stands for the Oedipal structure, and one that emerges as an Anti-Oedipal revolutionary figure is substantiated here through Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's theoretical conceptions. *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) are the two volumes comprising the larger project of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* by philosopher Gilles Deleuze, and philosopher and psychoanalyst Félix Guattari. Their conjoint work presents a materialist psychiatry that is constructed based on the relationship between the unconscious and society, and which frees desire from its negative connotations attributed to the oppressive Freudian Oedipal triangle. Desiring-production comes to substitute Freud's unconscious, and desire fully infiltrates the social production. Desire assumes different forms, either of desiring machines, which are connected to one another and to the social machines, or of a body without organs, "a surface over which the forces and agents of production are distributed" (*Anti-Oedipus* 10), and one that records "the entire process of production of desire" (*Anti-Oedipus* 11). The wizarding world as a *socius*, as a larger body without organs, is molded according to the whims of the two adversaries.

Such a schema casts, on the one hand, apprentice-wizard Harry Potter as an Oedipal subject, as the very embodiment of the good son, of the good hero, who strives to restore the power of the Oedipal structure even going so far as to cling continuously to father figures and accept to be manipulated by Dumbledore in order to restore order, reaffirming that "Oedipus is being injected into the unconscious, it is what gives us faith as it robs us of power, it is what teaches us to desire our own repression" (Seem xx). Harry Potter's invisibility is due to actions and consequences of his protectors, thus constituting him as the perfect Chosen One who remains unseen even while being completely exposed. On the other hand, it casts evil arch-wizard Lord Voldemort as an Anti-Oedipal figure who establishes a rhizomatic network of flows that poses a threat to the solidified Oedipal framework as represented by Harry Potter. Voldemort creates a personalized Body without Organs, a surface over which forces and agents are connected through the existence of Horcruxes and the branding of his followers with the Dark Mark, a surface which exists within the *socius*, where disciplinary power expands in rhizomatic schemata. He exhibits a desire that is capable of demolishing the social form, a desire that is as revolutionary as it is destructive and self-destructive. If revolution is merely "a different type of codification of the same relations" (*Power* 123), then what will be revealed here is that Voldemort's regime originates from the same power relations that traverse the institutional body, and that opposition to the Oedipal structure is one that acquires uncontrollable, monstrous qualities. His Anti-Oedipal qualities are not enough to counter the forces that run through the Oedipal structure because the Oedipalized beginnings that have slipped through the cracks bubble up in his attempt to purge the wizarding world from the stain of his own Muggle, i.e. non-magical human father, and force entry into the forbidden womb of his rebirth, Hogwarts.

Taking into consideration that the Panoptic system of this magical society comprises mechanisms that analyze and regulate rhizomatic flows, irregular bodies and heterogeneous forces, it is no longer a question of good vs evil, but of

normalizing desire vs disruptive desire. Whether for a normalizing or a disruptive process, however, power is used to put pressure on the social body of the Wizarding World. Considering that the Oedipal camp instills the terror of abnormality, and that the Anti-Oedipal camp instills the terror of chaos and annihilation, the allegorical magical community faces two different types of “evil”, one that is clandestine and meticulous, and one that is violent and radical. In this way, it offers alternative schemata for development and for the directing of a young person's drives that help a child decide their way of negotiating personal desires versus the surrounding world.

### Harry Potter and the Ineluctable Formation of the Oedipal Subject

Harry's miraculous survival at infancy from the killing curse that had eradicated countless of wizards triggers Dumbledore's decision not to have the boy grow up in an environment that would recognize him, something which “would be enough to turn any boy's head. Famous before he can walk and talk! Famous for something he won't even remember!” (*Philosopher's Stone* 20); thus oddly, instead, exposing and condemning Harry to a rather precarious and vulnerable situation. An Oedipalized social model injects a specific type of image in the core of the social body through the familial institution, plastering a unifying kind of mask on the collective social face, which represses desire and projects a particular representation of truth and freedom. In order to avoid having Harry potentially turn into an arrogant air-head that would think himself superior to others, Dumbledore subjects him to a familial environment that belittles him for the smallest of reasons, thus attempting to shape him according to his own model of proper behavior, just like another Mr. Dursley. Dumbledore's decision to shield Harry from unwanted attention has not only ended up in constituting him a legend in his absence and, perhaps, *because* of his absence, but in also sheltering him from the chance of formulating his own defenses against the blood prejudice that seems diffused across the wizarding world. Commenting on Deleuze and Guattari, Piippo explains that “they accuse the agency of family of distorting and disfiguring social desiring-production by reducing social manifestations of desire to itself, and representation of inflating itself with all the power of legend and tragedy to keep a rein on production” (72). Accordingly, Dumbledore does not free Harry from the potential consequences that may derive from the spreading of a representation of Harry's power in the form of legend and tragedy. On the contrary, he traps him within a conservative and mediocre family that will ensure the production of yet another Oedipalized neurotic subject, thus blocking the multiplicity of desire, and engulfing him in its constant and ever-present mechanisms of repression. Harry's representation as a significant figure precedes him. His tragic past from which he has emerged victorious, along with his repressed present, make him a powerful, innocent victim searching for ideals, such as love and friendship, in a reality of machinic social production.

The only thing that Harry admits to like about his appearance is “a very thin scar on his forehead which was shaped like a bolt of lightning” (*Philosopher's Stone* 27). Harry's lightning scar separates him completely from the rest of the world. His scar could be seen like a crack in the superego shield of normative social production. The lightning bolt carries several different connotations. David

Talbott mentions that “lightning leaves its mark on celestial heroes and chaos monsters, who are ‘lightning scarred,’ or ‘thunderstruck,’” and that “the lightning-scar or wound of the warrior-hero is the mark by which he is identified or recognized.” Harry’s lightning-shaped scar marks him as a warrior-hero who has survived the curse of a monstrous enemy. However, at the same time, the scar is a curse itself. The lightning scar is feared because it is carried not only by celestial heroes but by chaos monsters as well. In the Bible, Satan is supposed to appear as lightning from Heaven, and John Milton in *Paradise Lost* portrays him with “deep scars of thunder” imprinted on his face (I:601). In the same manner, the allusion to the mark of Cain signifies Harry’s special scar as a curse and protection, since the mark sets the bearer apart from the rest of the world, and whoever slays the bearer of the mark will have vengeance returned to him sevenfold (New International Version, Gen. 4:15). Interestingly enough, Voldemort’s attempt to murder Harry when the latter was an infant marks Harry as the one who will destroy all seven pieces of Voldemort’s soul, thus vengeance does return sevenfold. Foucault points out that “visibility is a trap” (*Discipline and Punish* 200). Enemies are kept at bay because they are ignorant of the power Harry might possess, but friends are kept at a distance as well for the same reason. The permanent lightning-bolt scar on his forehead leads to Harry’s ostracism, and creates what Foucault would call a “permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (*Discipline and Punish* 201) – that is, until Harry achieves a certain type of invisibility through different mediums. The scar marks him as a symbol, as the Boy who Lived, and later on, as the Chosen One. A symbol can never be truly invisible, because a symbol is always powerful. His visibility makes him a target for instant categorization, “marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognize and others have to recognize in him” (*Power* 331). Escape from such a sociopolitical fatalism seems improbable. The reason is that individuality equals subjection; subjection to the dependence of another form of power that controls one’s everyday life, and subjection to the limits of an identity that is thrust upon him.

The beginnings of Harry’s rhizome are shown almost immediately after he becomes a member of the magical community. As Deleuze and Guattari explain, a rhizome is a surface of interconnected multiplicities; it does not simply comprise roots, but bulbs as well, thus linking an underground network with a superficial network, and establishing “semiotic chains of every nature [that] are connected to very diverse modes of coding (biological, political, economic etc.)” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 7). Harry constructs a rhizome that includes both the roots of his deceased familial network and the bulbs of his newly-found network of friends and allies. For Harry, his induction into the Gryffindor House equals to the discovery of the family he never had. The first meeting with Ron and Hermione occurs inside a moving train, suggesting that a random event appears as fate when there is no alternative to it. For Harry, Ron and Hermione become a surrogate family, just like Hogwarts becomes the home he never wants to part from. He believes he is strong in his newly-created rhizome, but his dependence from it is his weakness.

Towards the end of his first year at Hogwarts, Harry comes across the Mirror of Erised, a mirror that reflects one’s deepest desire, as the word read backwards

as “desire” would also suggest. In it, Harry sees his reflection surrounded by his parents and his whole family: “the Potters smiled and waved at Harry and he stared hungrily back at them, his hands pressed flat against the glass as though he was hoping to fall right through it and reach them” (*Philosopher’s Stone* 226). Harry is almost seduced by the mere representation, the mere image of his desire. He flirts with the possibility of being completely absorbed by the distortive nature of Oedipal representation. In *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, Harry is the only one who collapses every time the Dementors, the fearsome wraiths that hunt down and punish perpetrators, approach him, while hearing echoes of his dead parents’ voices during their last moments (194). Harry retains a strong link with the rhizome he was initially part of, the one he had formed with his mother and father. Up to that moment, everyone who has met him has remarked favorably on Harry’s strong physical resemblance to his father, with his eyes being those of his mother. In this installment of the series, he conjures a Patronus, a protective charm to guard himself against the Dementors, whose shape is that of a stag, the form of the animal his father was able to transform into. Dumbledore comforts him by telling him that, “Your father is alive in you, Harry, and shows himself more plainly when you have need of him. [...] So you did see your father last night, Harry ... you found him in yourself” (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 454). He clings on the bulbs and roots of his rhizome, something that keeps him tied down to a society that is “the stronghold of Oedipus” (*Anti-Oedipus* 175). For Deleuze and Guattari, “Oedipus is a limit” (*Anti-Oedipus* 175), and Harry struggles to hold on to an identity that will preserve as many attributes as those of his father, as if trying to keep him alive by replacing him. Dumbledore bequeaths him his father’s invisibility cloak, an inheritance deriving from the Oedipal structure that can hide him from the world, granting him, therefore, even technically the ability of the Foucauldian panoptic “eyes that must see without being seen” (*Discipline and Punish* 171). The same happens when the Weasley twins gift him with the Marauder’s Map, a “map showing every detail of the Hogwarts castle and grounds” with “tiny ink dots moving around it, each labeled with a name in miniscule writing” (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 203). Significantly, the map is an object created by James, Harry’s father; Sirius, his godfather and substitute father-figure; Lupin, a close friend of the aforementioned two, professor and mentor; and Peter Pettigrew, the traitor responsible for the demise of Harry’s parents. Through the map, Harry gains a panoptic eye that has the ability to observe every corner of Hogwarts. At the same time, it also allows him to replace his father in the quartet, to be the good son that will reunite with his friends in his father’s place, and make sure that justice comes for the traitor. The moment the map is activated, “thin ink lines began to spread like a spider’s web. [...] They joined each other, they criss-crossed, they fanned into every corner of the parchment” (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 203), as if constructing a ramified, rhizomatic surface under Harry’s eye.

The Boy who Lived becomes the symbol of goodness and innocence, the Oedipalized ideal of the nice boy and the good hero. According to *Folklore: An Encyclopedia of Beliefs, Customs, Tales, Music, and Art*, “Lord Raglan’s myth-ritual theory held that the worldwide monomyth – the culture hero narrative structural pattern – reflected a birth, initiation, and death ritual for an individual” (165) in a series of patterned events, quite a few of which correspond

to Harry Potter (exceptional parents; assassination attempt at birth; then foster parents and obscurity; defeat of a dangerous enemy; and dying in a mysterious manner). Mendlesohn refers that the *Harry Potter* series follow the European fairy tale tradition according to which “leadership is intrinsic, heroism born in the blood, and self-interest simply the manifestation of those powers that ensure a return to order” (160). Harry, like Shakespeare’s spectacularly-transformed “Prince Harry” in *Henry the IV*, is made into the poor prince who has had to undergo a horrible childhood before he finds out that he comes from a wealthy and well-respected family in the wizarding world, that he is practically a legend, and that he is destined to save the world from evil. He is molded into the hero the magical society needs. Mendlesohn adds that “fairness and happiness can best be achieved when rules are obeyed and heroes decided by destiny” (160). The tombstone of destiny permits no change and no disorder, thus caging the Oedipal hero in a situation where he is doomed to succeed and remain caged. His stronghold is his stranglehold.

In *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, during the third task of the Triwizard Tournament, Harry, like another Oedipus, encounters a Sphinx who asks him to solve a riddle if he wishes to let him pass, an episode prefiguring his impending confrontation with the Tom Riddle – the teenage persona of Voldemort-. Also like Oedipus, the final polluted piece of the puzzle that will have to be eliminated is Harry himself, as one of the Horcruxes. Interestingly enough, the last leg of the Sphinx’s riddle is to figure out “a creature I wouldn’t want to kiss” (*Goblet of Fire* 683), to which Harry replies “a spider”. Taking into consideration that in folklore spiders symbolize life choices, death and rebirth, and that as fiction figures they have come to represent “bloodthirsty maternal symbols” (Coats 89), Harry seeks to escape a destiny that is already woven before him, whether that is Oedipus-Harry trying to escape the Delphi prophecy and avoid kissing the spider-mother, or Harry-the Boy who Lived trying to escape the Sybillic prophecy and avoid confronting his surrogate sire, Voldemort, in a kill-or-be-killed battle.

During his mission to find Voldemort’s Horcruxes, Harry learns of the existence of three powerful objects called the Deathly Hallows. The legend of the Deathly Hallows comes from the story of the three Peverell brothers, who succeed in cheating Death and are awarded a prize each. The oldest brother chooses the Elder wand, “a wand more powerful than any in existence” (*Deathly Hallows* 331); the second brother chooses the Resurrection Stone, a “stone that had the power to recall the dead” (332); and the third brother chooses the Cloak of Invisibility, a cloak that would enable him to go anywhere “without being followed by Death” (331). According to the story, should these three objects be united, they “will make the possessor master of death” (*Deathly Hallows* 333). Upon hearing this, Harry becomes obsessed with the acquisition of the Hallows which, eventually, wiggle their way towards him.

The symbol of the Deathly Hallows is rather significant. The three objects put together form “a straight vertical line” (*Deathly Hallows* 332) that stands for the Elder Wand; “a circle on top of the line” (332) that stands for the Resurrection Stone; and a triangle that encloses both line and circle, that stands for the Cloak of Invisibility. For Harry as the Oedipal subject, the triangle symbolizes the Oedipal pyramid, which encompasses the circle standing for the womb and the endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, and the wand standing for the phallus

that connects the top and bottom of the triangle. For Harry as a subject of power, the triangle symbolizes the social pyramid, comprising the wand standing for the power that unites vertically the upper and lower edge of the pyramid, and the circle standing for the vicious circle of the continuous regeneration of power and power relations. Lambert points out that, “as Deleuze will say, no doubt the pyramidal will subsist, but with a function that is diffuse and spread all over its surfaces” (141), explaining that “the relation of verticality [...] will always be a feature of social space, but power does not flow in one direction only, as ‘from above,’ but also comes ‘from below,’ since dominated subjects also produce the reality of the dominator-function as a moment of transcendent unification” (141). Harry is the Oedipal agent who undertakes the task of preserving the pyramidal formation, and ensuring that the verticality of power continues to produce dominated, neurotic subjects.

Towards the end of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, as Harry goes into the Forbidden Forest to confront Voldemort, he summons the spectral apparitions of parents, James and Lily, his godfather, Sirius, and Lupin, who were “memory made nearly solid. Less substantial than living bodies, but much more than ghosts” (*Deathly Hallows* 560). The spectral representations of his own memories are meant to bring him courage and comfort— by grounding him in an Oedipal existence that appears stabilizing while it actually thwarts his escape from the Oedipal continuum. Deleuze and Guattari mention that “Oedipus is born of an application or a reduction to personalized images, which presupposes a social investment of a paranoid type—which explains why Freud first discovers the familial romance and Oedipus while reflecting on paranoia” (*Anti-Oedipus* 278). Harry is the neglected and scarred little prince, assaulted by the “romanticization of origins” that hits all “paranoiacs – heroes, founders of religions” (Freud qtd. in Rydnytsky 465). Oedipal castration has penetrated Harry to such a degree that it has imbued him with a passivity that demands his inactivity while one surrogate parent after the other act for him. The conclusive chapter of the series, named “Nineteen Years Later,” recounts the successful restoration of the Oedipal order, and Harry’s return to “the safe, predictable, loving unit that he had been seeking ever since his parents died” (Kornfeld and Prothro 135).

### Confronting Voldemort: Rise and Fall of the Anti-Oedipus

A few years into his attendance at Hogwarts, Voldemort’s, a.k.a Tom Riddle’s, charismatic personality gathers around him a group with a “dark glamour” (*Half-Blood Prince* 338), “a mixture of the weak seeking protection, the ambitious seeking some shared glory, and the thuggish, gravitating towards a leader who could show them more refined forms of cruelty” (338). In other words, this group constituted the beginnings of the Death Eaters, his most devoted supporters, and the beginnings of Voldemort’s rhizome. Voldemort’s rebirth accordingly revitalizes the rhizome he had established during his first rise to power, a rhizome that was never eradicated, but merely temporarily atrophied.

Immediately after his resurrection, Voldemort’s rhizome is gradually reinstated to its former glory. As presented, “[Voldemort] looked around at the hooded faces, and though there was no wind, a rustling seemed to run around the circle, as though it had shivered” (*Goblet of Fire* 701). The cycle of Death Eaters

shivers as one body, as members of a body that move according to the general flow of energy that traverses it. Any rupture in his rhizome has already been mended by the desire that shapes anew all the lost connections. The Dark Mark that every Death Eater bears on their left hand is quite significant. Despite Voldemort's temporary defeat and disappearance, the Mark remained burnt into the skin of his followers, an old line of communication ready to be re-activated should the Dark Lord regain his power. The Dark Mark is described as "a vivid red tattoo – a skull, with a snake protruding from its mouth" (*Goblet of Fire* 699). Beyond the apparent Satanic reference, Cassandra Eason notes that snakes "have the ability to shed their skins and seemingly emerge reborn, so they are identified with the symbol of regeneration and immortality" (19). Voldemort is thus reborn in a cemetery, symbolizing life re-surfacing in a locus of death, and the snake that comes out of the skull's mouth in the Dark Mark symbolizes continuous regeneration from the very jaws of death. Colbert points out that, "'Morsmordre,' the command that makes the Dark Mark appear, means 'take a bite out of death' in French, making it a fitting call for Death Eaters" (43). It seems that Voldemort strives to achieve a semblance of immortality by strengthening the connection to his rhizome through any means possible. Even the spell of his resurrection involves a hand from his devoted minion, suggesting the polysomatic, rhizomatic nature of his "observable" or "controllable" body.

Shortly after his resurrection, Voldemort declares that his circle of followers will very soon reach its former numbers, announcing that "the Dementors will join us ... they are our natural allies ... we will recall the banished giants ... I shall have all my devoted servants returned to me, and an army of creatures whom all fear" (*Goblet of Fire* 705). Where Harry's rhizome was based on bonds of friendship, Voldemort's rhizome is kept together by his own power, and the unswerving loyalty of his servants. Dumbledore mentions that "you will hear many of his Death Eaters claiming that they are in his confidence, that they alone are close to him, even understand him. They are deluded. Lord Voldemort has never had a friend, nor do I believe that he has ever wanted one" (*Half-Blood Prince* 260). Voldemort's power and destructive desire run through his rhizome, and reinforce it from the inside. Having been completely abandoned by his parents, he operates alone, he has no scruples of attacking even his own people at the slightest hint of betrayal, and he considers fools those who trust "that their safety lay in friends" (*Deathly Hallows* 281).

While still at Hogwarts, the young Tom Riddle develops a strong interest for ways that might help him defeat death, and that is when he comes across Horcruxes. As it is explained, "a Horcrux is the word used for an object in which a person has concealed part of their soul" (*Half-Blood Prince* 464). Splitting the soul, however, demands the ultimate act of evil, which is murder. Murder splits the soul of the individual, making it possible for him to encase the torn part in an object outside the body. Voldemort does not create only one Horcrux, though, but seven, believing that it will make him even stronger splitting his soul into seven pieces, seven being "the most powerfully magical number" (*Half-Blood Prince* 466). Voldemort manages to create a personalized body without organs within the *socius*, the larger, social body without organs. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari's explicit recipe on how to make a body without organs runs along similar lines:

Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment. (161)

What Voldemort hates the most is depending on something that is out of his control. The Horcruxes represent Voldemort's experimentation with possible lines of flight from what subjects all human beings: death. The objects in which he encases parts of his soul, as well as the locations where he hides them have particular personal and historical significance, according to the schema of rhizomatic infiltration and takeover of institutional tissue. Deleuze and Guattari note that "partial objects are the direct powers of the body without organs, and the body without organs the raw material of the partial objects" (*Anti-Oedipus* 326). The preservation of Voldemort's immortality, and therefore the immortalization of his power, lies in the existence of his Horcruxes, in the pieces of his soul dispersed across the social sphere. "The seventh part of his soul [...] resides inside his regenerated body. That was the part of him that lived a spectral existence for so many years during his exile; without that, he has no self at all" (*Half-Blood Prince* 470), which means that his newborn body operates as both the raw material and the surface upon which his Horcruxes establish continuums of flows and intensities. Deleuze and Guattari speak of "a scale of intensity that goes from 0, the body without organs, to the nth power, the schizophrenic process of desire" (Seem xvii). Voldemort moves on such a scale, where he goes from a spectral existence to a powerful network of partial objects recording the schizophrenic process of his destructive desire.

Voldemort calls his Horcruxes "his treasures, his safeguards, his anchors to immortality" (*Deathly Hallows* 443). Deleuze and Guattari mention that, if a man "is in tune with his desires, if he is 'anchored,' he ceases to worry [...] about right or wrong and justice and injustice. The life that's in him will manifest itself in growth, and growth is an endless, eternal process" (Seem xxiii). For Voldemort, not having to worry about right or wrong means abandoning completely all sense of morality, of believing only in his own power, and of achieving a growth where even the detached parts of his soul constitute separate entities while being connected to one another, "like a tiny metal heart" (*Deathly Hallows* 227) beating inside their containers. Foucault states that "power [...] is infinite. [...] The rules that exist to limit it can never be stringent enough; the universal principles for dispossessing it of all the occasions it seizes are never sufficiently rigorous" (*Power* 452-453). Despite all the warnings, the limitations, and the dangers that surround the creation of Horcruxes, Voldemort transgresses both human and laws of nature; as a result Voldemort becomes immortal, and his power, transcending all restrictive barriers, becomes infinite.

The sevenfold schism of Voldemort's soul, however, literally suggests the formation of schizophrenia. Deleuze and Guattari note that "at times the schizophrenic loses his patience and demands to be left alone. Other times he goes along with the whole game and even invents a few tricks of his own, introducing his own reference points in the model put before him and undermining it from within" (*Anti-Oedipus* 14). Voldemort is the Anti-Oedipal figure, the schizophrenic body that takes control of the institutional network by infusing it

with the flows of his destructive desire and power. The first to fall is the Ministry. The previous passivity and catastrophic denial regarding the threat of Voldemort's return results in its swift taking over by Voldemort's followers, rhizome- or tumor-like, from the inside. Everyone is beginning to notice sociopolitical changes, but Voldemort's choice to remain masked "has created confusion, uncertainty, and fear" (*Deathly Hallows* 172). Voldemort's tumor-like infestation of the Wizarding society reveals that if he cannot be surveyed as a locatable body by the carceral, he cannot be controlled or punished, as even his name cannot be said out loud. At the same time, he establishes his own carceral that runs counter to the established institutional order, or takes it over like a virus. In the introduction to *Anti-Oedipus*, Seem points out that "the flows and productions of desire will simply be viewed as the unconscious of the social productions" (xviii). Every flow of social production is invested with a flow of Voldemort's racist, supremacist desire, making the political economy and the economy of the libido complementary. Voldemort's desire has inserted itself in the process of social production to the point where the social production serves Voldemort's libidinal flows.

To counter the Oedipal subject, Deleuze and Guattari propose "a new cultural anti-hero, a strange being named the anti-Oedipus" (Rydneytsky 463). They propose to substitute "the benevolent pseudo neutrality of the Oedipal analyst" (112) with their Anti-Oedipal model, "an openly malevolent activity" (112) whose effect equals that of a "shock treatment" (112). Anti-Oedipus applies to a figure that disposes of its ego, of the name of the father, of the Oedipal triangulation. Anti-Oedipus is the schizo who fashions himself to be free even from himself, free from concepts such as birth and death, free to act in his own name without asking permission, "a flux that overcomes barriers and codes, a name that no longer designates any ego whatever. [...] He experiences and lives himself as the sublime sickness that will no longer affect him" (*Anti-Oedipus* 131). Deleuze and Guattari opt for the complete destruction of ego and superego frameworks for the sake of a freely desiring unconscious. Seem explains that the revolutionary is expected to learn from the psychotic the way to dismantle the Oedipal yoke in order to introduce a radical politics of free-flowing desire bound to no restrictions (xxi). The purpose of such a radical politics is that it "dissolves the mystifications of power through the kindling [...] of anti-oedipal forces—the schizzes-flows—forces that escape coding, scramble the codes, and flee in all directions: *orphans* (no daddy-mommy-me), *atheists* (no beliefs), and *nomads* (no habits, no territories)" (Seem xxi). The schizophrenic flows of desire towards all directions serves to decentralize the power concentrated in the Oedipal, paranoid territoriality. Despite the assumption that is created that Voldemort is an example of "evil incarnate" (Lacoss 80), he is the reactionary product of an Oedipal society, the rebel anti-hero who comes to destroy everything that the traditional hero strives to preserve. Voldemort combines all anti-oedipal forces; he is an orphan created through manipulation and abandoned before he has even been born; he is an atheist because he has no beliefs outside the belief to his own power; and he is a nomad because his soul is split into several pieces scattered across the wizarding world, allowing the flux of his desire and power to move freely.

In *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, Hogwarts Professor Severus Snape describes the Dark Arts as "many, varied, ever-changing and eternal.

Fighting them is like fighting a many-headed monster, which, each time a neck is severed, sprouts a head even fiercer and cleverer than before. You are fighting that which is unfixed, mutating, indestructible" (169). When Tom Riddle becomes the Dark Lord, his existence is inscribed in an ever-changing multiplicity that resists being triangulated within the Oedipal sphere. Voldemort is the schizo that "even when he is displacing himself in space, his is a journey in intensity, around the desiring-machine that is erected here and remains here" (*Anti-Oedipus* 131). The Dark Lord is the eight-headed monster whose Horcruxes must be destroyed one by one before he can create new ones, mend the ruptures in his rhizome, and blow up the blockages of desire set up by the Oedipal order.

When Dumbledore reveals to young Tom the truth about himself, he is nothing less than ecstatic, exclaiming "I knew I was different. [...] I knew I was special" (*Half-Blood Prince* 254). As it is described, his happiness almost transforms his face, and "his finely carved features seemed somehow rougher, his expression almost bestial" (*Half-Blood Prince* 254). For the young Tom Riddle, normality is constrictive and suffocating. He despises his name because "there are a lot of Toms" (*Half-Blood Prince* 257), and he clearly loathes being one of the many. He keeps his name because he believes that his father came from a distinguished wizarding family. However, as soon as he arrives at Hogwarts, Riddle devotes himself to an extensive research of his parentage and genealogy only to find out that his father is nowhere to be found amidst the archives of magical history, proving that he was a Muggle. The insult of having been abandoned by a Muggle spurs him to drop his name and assume the identity of Lord Voldemort (*Half-Blood Prince* 339). Tom Riddle's self-stylization could be foreseen from the moment he accepted so eagerly that there was something special about him, but his personal transformation is sealed by "his overflowing rage against his traitorous father and the mother who dared die and live him alone" (Piippo 72). As regards to the concept of the family, Deleuze and Guattari explain that "the schizophrenic investment commands an entirely different determination, a family gasping for breath and stretched out over the dimensions of a social field that does not reclose or withdraw: a family-as-matrix for depersonalized partial objects" (*Anti-Oedipus* 278). For Voldemort who wishes to be "different, separate, notorious" (*Half-Blood Prince* 259), his only understanding of a family is his network of Horcruxes. His Death Eaters make up his rhizome but they are foreign entities, while his Horcruxes are parts of himself granting him his immortality.

Years later, the almost bestial beauty of the boy Tom Riddle has transformed into "a face not yet masklike" (*Half-Blood Prince* 413), but with features that had been "burned and blurred; they were waxy and oddly distorted, and the whites of the eyes now had a permanently bloody look" (413). The change of his features is completed with his resurrection, which constitutes a self-facialization process to counter the process of Oedipal facialization. Deleuze and Guattari explain that faciality is a machine that constructs a face for the body of the world, a face that comprises both a white wall, a surface of multiple meanings, and black holes, bursts of desire. The constructed face becomes a spectacle, a mask, to the point where the mask becomes the face itself. As Henry Miller comments, in order to be cured from our neurotic reality, "we must rise from our graves and throw off the cerements of the dead" (qtd. in Seem xxi). With his resurrection, Voldemort

creates for himself a mask that reflects his desire to transform himself in order to achieve a state of ecstatic happiness, destructive determination, and immortality. Voldemort takes pride in the fact that he has experimented and “pushed the boundaries of magic further, perhaps, than they have ever been pushed” (*Half-Blood Prince* 415). He does not hide his contempt for Dumbledore’s argument that love is the most powerful kind of magic, thus rejecting love as part of Oedipal idealism. Patton mentions Deleuze’s pronouncement that “the forces which defined ‘man’ have already begun to connect with new, non-human forces” (71), recalling that “Spinoza said that there was no telling what the human body might achieve, once freed from human discipline” (Deleuze, qtd. in Patton 71). Voldemort attempts to disengage himself from Oedipal bonds, from human rules and norms, and re-constitute himself completely. Deleuze and Guattari note that a man of desire “must reinvent each gesture” (*Anti-Oedipus* 131), and produce himself as “irresponsible, solitary, and joyous, finally able to say and do something simple in his own name, without asking permission” (131). Tom Riddle fashions himself the name of Lord Voldemort, “vol de mort – fly from death” (Colbert 163), a name one of a kind that reflects his desire to carve his own solitary way towards greatness and immortality, a desire so revolutionary that it penetrates the social field and “subordinates the socius or the forms of power to desiring-production” (Seem xxi).

Nevertheless, Voldemort’s death occurs “with a mundane finality” (*Deathly Hallows* 596). What is supposed to be Deleuze and Guattari’s perfect rebel model fails, and Voldemort is destroyed, because no matter how much he tries to disengage himself from his Oedipalized identity, traces of it still remain to take him down. It is true that Voldemort’s desire is so revolutionary and ruthless that it penetrates the social field, but at the same time, exactly because “the apparatus of antiproduction is no longer a transcendent instance that opposes production, limits it, or checks it; on the contrary, it insinuates itself everywhere in the productive machine and becomes firmly wedded to it” (*Anti-Oedipus* 235), Voldemort becomes exposed to a visibility of his own creation. He in fact becomes most visible and vulnerable when he goes openly to war to penetrate his own (and Harry’s) “womb,” the Hogwarts that made him into what he is, and which tellingly is protected at the time by an invisible magic bubble very much like a hymen or an ovary membrane. Not only that, but, getting his “father,” Dumbledore, killed, he goes after his “phallus,” the most powerful wand, which, however, Voldemort tragically cannot control. Deleuze and Guattari add that “desiring-production subjugates social production and yet does not destroy it” (*Anti-Oedipus* 380), which means that, in Voldemort’s case, his desiring-rampage is not enough to resist being crushed by an Oedipalized social production. Voldemort’s fatal mistake was that he multiplied himself rhizomatically while acting on a plan based on a prophecy, based on fate and determinism—bringing to the fore once more the old Oedipal riddle of individualized free will versus Pythia-ordained destiny, since, for Freud, “fate is regarded as a substitute for the parental agency” (*Civilization and its Discontents* 73). The fact that Voldemort acts on the prophecy that proclaims the birth of the one who will destroy him activates a series of random events that turn into destiny, very much like Oedipus himself did, or rather, Oedipus’ father, king Laius (making by analogy Harry into the perfect father-killer). By choosing his anchors to life to be objects of sentimental

significance, Voldemort single-handedly puts together the manual for his destruction. By using the bones of his father, the flesh of his servant, and the blood of his enemy for his resurrection, he binds himself to the father he despised and killed, he makes himself dependent on his servant, and he shares the same blood as his mortal enemy; he sets in motion the Anti-Oedipus's reterritorialization into the Oedipal structure. It is then probable that Voldemort as an Anti-Oedipal figure is a product of Oedipal desires gone wild to begin with, since "the lines of escape are still full molar or social investments at grips with the whole social field" (*Anti-Oedipus* 382). With his death, Voldemort's line of escape comes full circle, as he returns back to the womb and the Merope he so fiercely wished to never encounter again.

## Conclusion

Reality is constructed by the effect of both power and desire. It is not an either/or situation, but a case of desiring-production and social production feeding one another. In the *Harry Potter* series, magic is what connects both power and desire. Magic produces reality because magic is power and grants power, magic materializes desire, and magic is the channel connecting the rhizomatic flows that traverse both normalizing and revolutionary particles. Channeling magic, Voldemort uses the vengeful Oedipal desire as a stepping stone for the construction of a powerful, revolutionary Anti-Oedipal figure, which is exactly why he can never completely disengage himself from the influence of his Oedipalized past. Be it a Tom Riddle that can never be banished, or a path riddle-blocked, escape is futile. Voldemort is again assimilated in the endless circle of birth and death and Oedipus is restored.

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# The Immigrant Girl and the Western Boyfriend

## The Romance Plot in Young Adult Novels of Migration

Anna Stibe and Ulrika Andersson Hval  
University West, Sweden

**Abstract:** We explore a recurring motif in a number of young adult novels centered around the experiences of immigrant girls and their adjustment to life in a new country. The integration process appears to be linked to the girls' relationships with boys from the majority culture, making romance a central element of the girls' development of a new identity and sense of belonging in the new country. We will examine the intersections of gender and integration by focusing on the narrative voices of immigrant girls in three contemporary novels, Sarah Darer Littman's *Life, After* (2010), Sarah Crossan's *The Weight of Water* (2012), and Terry Farish's *The Good Braider* (2012).

**Keywords:** Migration, immigration, gender, young-adult fiction, girls

Today, significant numbers of children and young people have lived through the experience of immigration and relocation. The past decades have also seen an increase in the publication of books for children and young adults that reflect and address this experience. While working on a larger project on childhood and migration in contemporary fiction, we have found a recurring motif in a number of young adult novels which center around the experiences of immigrant girls and their adjustment to life in a new country. A striking feature of the integration process in many of these novels appears to be the girls' relationships with boys from the majority culture, making romance a central element of the girls' development of a new identity and sense of belonging in the new country. The unreflective manner in which hierarchies of both gender and culture are obscured by this motif seems problematic, in particular since the novels are marketed to a younger audience. In this article we will explore the intersections of gender and integration by focusing on the narrative voices of immigrant girls in three contemporary novels, Sarah Darer Littman's *Life, After* (2010), Sarah Crossan's *The Weight of Water* (2012), and Terry Farish' *The Good Braider* (2012).

While tracing the lives of girls from different parts of the world (Argentina, Poland, and South Sudan, respectively) the novels are all narrated by an adolescent protagonist who finds herself in a new country with new norms and cultural codes. Interestingly, like a number of other recent books for teenagers and young adults, two of the novels, *The Weight of Water* and *The Good Braider* are told in verse, and the author Terry Farish points out that she chose this form as a help to "English-language learners and others who struggle with reading" since "[verse novels] move fast and offer readers at any level a feeling of completion." (Farish 2013) In all three novels, accessibility and easy identification with the protagonist are important stylistic features, with the apparent intention of helping readers of all backgrounds to get a fuller understanding of the process of migration. However, the vision of migration and integration that is provided is heavily dependent upon a fairy tale plot where the girls are, as it were, rescued by

their Western boyfriends from their liminal existence as migrants and outsiders into being accepted as full members of the new society. The home cultures are also, to varying degrees, presented as traditionally patriarchal while the Western boyfriends come into the girls' lives as representatives of a modern and equal view of gender and sexuality. The expectations that this Cinderella-plot places upon heterosexual relationships to solve not only problems of patriarchal oppression at home, but also of exclusion in society and bullying in school, would then appear to reinforce rather than undermine some of the stereotypes the novels set out to question.

Previous studies of migration novels with young protagonists have described a tradition of formulaic "coming to America plot" where the process of integration becomes simultaneous with the process of growing up and where the novels often "rely, for the most part, on a similar narrative: the coming-of-age of girls or young women whose growth is calibrated by the stages in which they discard their associations with the places they belonged to *prior* to their coming to the United States." (George 135-7, see also Brown) In more recent migration narratives the renunciation of the home country and its culture has been less pronounced according to several studies which emphasize instead the emergence of transcultural identities where the focus lies on retaining a dual belonging (Gilsenan Nordin et al, McLaughlin, Pollock and Reken, Cuder-Domínguez). The young adult novels in this study seem to fall back upon the coming-of-age plot where the attachment to the home country is seen as an inevitable but expendable loss that is necessary for the girls to attain adulthood as well as a both symbolic and actual full citizenship in the new country.

The manner in which gender functions in this plot is predicated upon global hierarchies, which have been shown to control not only material resources but also emotional ones such as desire and attraction, and to influence aspects of private life such as marriage decisions. In studies of relationships between Western men and non-Western women as well as of the mail order-bride phenomenon Karen Pyke and Felicity Schaeffer-Grabiell have found that both Western men and immigrant women have an idealized view of Western masculinity as representing equality and freedom: "Feminist research on non-Western/non-white women's sexual relationships and romantic desires for white Western men suggests they strategically engage a discourse glorifying white masculinity to resist 'ethnic patriarchy'." (Pyke 81) It seems that this connection between longing for a Western lifestyle and forming relationships with Western men functions as a backdrop to these young adult novels, where the girls' attraction to Western boyfriends is emphasized as a path to freedom and independence. An opposition is also set up between the home cultures and the new society, as the girls are not free to pursue their love-interests without the permission of the families, a process of adaptation and acceptance that is slow to come by, indicating that parental oppression is linked to the home culture and its patriarchal traditions. According to Pyke, "the presumption of 'ethnic patriarchy' is troublesome given its origin in the very same Western ideological notions that cast Western men as egalitarian Prince Charmings who will save women of non-Western origins from the ensconced patriarchy of co-ethnic men" (84-85). While the girls' love decisions are presented as deeply personal, the ideological underpinnings suggested by their choices seem to echo the findings of such

studies which show that sexual attraction is guided not only by emotion but also by racial and social hierarchies. In the novels, these hierarchies are visible in the way that the (white) boyfriend is used as a shortcut for integration into the majority culture, while also being an emblem of conflict in the immigrant family. Although it is not primarily the patriarchal structure of the girl's family that is contested, the boyfriend asserts a normative cultural function. Yet, this is never overtly acknowledged by the characters or narrators of the novels. In the following, we will offer a reading of the three novels and their depictions of young-adult love between an immigrant girl and a white western boy.

### *Life, After*

*Life, After* (2010) is Sarah Darer Littman's narrative of a Jewish-Argentinian family and their move to the U.S. to escape the economic crisis. The narrative is told through the protagonist Dani and the story that she constructs of her life is divided into two parts, before and after. Before accounts for her early childhood, before a terrorist bomb in Argentina kills her aunt, and before the economic collapse in 2001. After, is her life after these events, with a father increasingly incapable of caring for his family, both financially but most importantly emotionally. Her family ends up moving to the U.S. where they settle near an uncle. In Argentina, Dani has a boyfriend and they make plans for their future life. However, the financial crisis causes their separation, as Roberto moves to Florida with his family, and Dani to New York.

### Masculinity

While Dani remembers how her father was before, he is now a depressed patriarch of the family. Much of Dani's existence revolves around not disturbing her father, especially not when he is having one of his increasingly common "Morose Papá Days." The father is associated with traditional masculinity as a family provider. "It was so unfair that when Papá worked, Mamá always had dinner ready for him when he got home, but now that Mamá was working and Papá wasn't, he didn't do the same thing for her." (*Life* 38) While Dani wishes her father would be more helpful in the household, she is not directly critiquing traditional gender roles. Her greatest complaint is that her father is now full of in-action.

I wanted him to sing "Aishes Chayil" to Mamá in his deep baritone on Shabbat, praising her for being a woman of worth. I wanted him to smile again, a genuine smile, not one to cover up a lie. I wanted him to be my father, instead of a stranger who didn't know me anymore. I wanted things to be like they were Before. I wanted my old life back. (47)

With the economic crisis, Dani's father's business has collapsed, and the family is getting poorer by the day. Added to the financial worries and the difficulty of even providing food for the day, large riots erupt and life becomes increasingly difficult. It is finally Dani's mother who convinces the father that the family must move to the U.S. "Would being on a new continent magically transform my father back into the Papá of Before?" Dani wonders. "Would he stop moping about the apartment; would he find the energy to be someone again?" (90) However, as soon as they get to their apartment in New York, it becomes apparent for Dani

that things are just as before: “We might have moved five thousand miles, but we were still living with the same angry man.” (104)

In the end, it is Dani who finally faces her father and lets him know the effect his behavior is having on the family. “I’m telling you to stop sitting on the sofa feeling sorry for yourself and pull yourself together. I’m telling you that you are dragging everyone in this family down and that you should take the advice of that lady from Jewish Family Services and go see a counselor before you take us down even further. Because I can’t take it anymore. It’s not fair.” (243) Her father decides to see a counselor and is subscribed medication for his depression. When one day he makes a joke, Dani experiences the feeling of magic she had once hoped to find in America. “A little fun. With Papá. It might have been the pills or it might have been the counseling, but it certainly felt like magic.” (251)

Dani’s life is highly influenced by her father and her Argentinian boyfriend. This is not to diminish the importance of her mother and her younger sister in the narrative, but while they are characters that are mostly supportive, the boyfriend turns out to be concealing the truth (he has met someone else) and the father is someone who has to be continually tampered with, lest he breaks out in fits of anger. When she finds out that Roberto has a new girlfriend in Miami, and has not told her about it, her strength seems to be gone. “Roberto had been my talisman, my secret weapon against despair. Knowing that he was somewhere in the world thinking of me made everything seem possible. But now... now I had nothing” (204).

### Language barriers and bridges

One of the first persons Dani meets at her new school is a boy named Brian. She is disturbed when she notices a “spine tingle”, and reminds herself that Roberto, at that point, is her boyfriend. Brian becomes a friend and interpreter of things American, especially different idioms which Dani has never heard of before (138).

One thing was clear to me – English was a very strange language. I would go to sleep with my head so crammed with new words and expressions that my dreams were filled with flying pigs and rainstorms of cats and dogs. I wondered if I would ever be fluent, really fluent, like I was in Spanish. (159)

Another boy that she befriends is Jon, who has Asperger’s syndrome. Similarly to Dani, he too struggles with idioms and expressions (147).

While her first friends in school are boys, the girls express animosity and Dani feels intimidated. She is wearing clothing from a Jewish charity, and as it turns out, these are clothes donated by one of the girls. Added to the perceived humiliation of charity clothing, Dani also has vouchers for lunch. Her financial inferiority is thus visible for everyone to see.

Dani is continually embarrassed about having to show people where she lives. First, she is visited by one of the girls who initially was one of her greatest tormentors, and then her new boyfriend, Brian, drives her home. Brian meets her family when he comes to take her to a school dance. Dani asks her father “please don’t scare him.... You know, by doing what you do” (254). Now that her father has returned to being more like he was before, he is polite to Brian and the two go to the dance. Brian who tellingly calls himself Dani’s “personal GPS”, continues his function of being a guide to American society and language” (126).

*The Weight of Water*

In Sarah Crossan's verse novel *The Weight of Water* a sense of home and belonging is intimately connected to gender and to a nuclear family from the very beginning. Kasienska and her mother have left their home in Gdańsk to search for Kasienska's absent father, with the help of only a postmark on an envelope. As the story unfolds, we learn that even though her parents' relationship at home in Poland had been far from ideal, with frequent fighting, her mother has not been able to reconcile herself to her husband's leaving them. She had "cried for two whole years" and then packed a suitcase, taking her daughter with her to England in spite of Kasienska's grandmother's pleas to let the girl stay in Poland with her (28). The all-female households, of three generations in Gdańsk, and then of just Kasienska and her mother when they settle in a studio in Coventry, are experienced as claustrophobic and inherently lacking. Interspersed among Kasienska's impressions of her first time in England and the provisional arrangements concerning housing, school and work, the phrase "Until we find Tata" is repeated, suggesting that for her mother, life has been put on hold in anticipation of a reunion with her husband. The underlying assumption seems to be that a recreation of home requires a recreation of the nuclear family, something that is confirmed in the development of the plot as Kasienska and her mother start to find their bearings in their new social context.

## Finding a circle of belonging

Crossan's portrayal of their situation as Polish immigrants in England brings up many of the themes that are familiar from other migration narratives. Kasienska's mother, like so many immigrant women, finds work as a cleaner in a hospital where she "doesn't have to speak to / Anyone / Usually. / In fact, they would rather she didn't. / She just has to clean and carry" (20). The daughter is similarly silenced at school, where her identity as a top student at home in Poland is irrelevant, and she is instead placed below her age group and identified as a "special needs" student because of her lack of English (57). While she eventually manages to work her way into a class with students her own age, the social exclusion continues: "Again / No one talks to me / At all. / So I sit / On my own / At the front of the classroom / Furiously trying to keep up" (69). As Joanne Brown has pointed out in her study of young adult immigration narratives, a pervading theme is that the protagonists "must find ways to survive their outsider status and find a 'circle of belonging'." (139) What Crossan succinctly demonstrates, however, is that this belonging often comes at a price, as Kasienska makes her way into the group of girls partly by relinquishing her own perception of herself and her own values. The popular girls in the class only begin to speak to her after she colludes with them in laughing at a Youtube-clip of another child being bullied (71). Though not invisible anymore, the social construction of gender is used as another excluding factor as Kasienska is teased for her short and spiky hair cut:

Girls in England  
Have long hair.  
Hair that's flat

And sits neatly  
On their shoulders [...]

Clair asks about my hair  
Why it's short.  
'Is it because you're a lesbian?'  
She wants to know. [...]

So, I decide to grow it.  
And wear a flower in it,  
So, I won't look  
Like a Polish lesbian  
Anymore. (81)

The policing of gender boundaries surrounding hair is also made internally as Kasienska notices that body hair is another aspect which marks her femininity as foreign: "I am hairy. / I did not know this until / I noticed the women / In the pool / With their velvety skin. / I am hairy." (96) Attempting to shave, she merely manages to cut herself, but her trip to the swimming pool is in other ways the beginning of what is depicted as a more constructive integration into British social contexts. Joining a swimming team where she also meets a boy, William, Kasienska starts to find the sense of belonging she had lost in the immigration process. However, the way that romantic attachment is tied up in the integration narrative raises questions about the redemptive expectations placed upon heterosexual relationships, as well as about the manner in which hierarchies of culture and gender are made to intersect.

#### A New Family and New Norms

At the same pace as the initial dream of finding Tata and returning home to Poland as a family gradually disintegrates, another dream of a new family emerges. The turning point is when Kasienska with the help of a neighbour finds her father, living together with a new woman and their little girl. Not daring to tell her mother, she keeps her discovery and her new half-sister a secret, but this secret contributes to an increasing distance between Kasienska and her mother. By now she has also fallen in love, and her new boyfriend William comes to represent both the safety of a new family and the adventure of teenage rebellion and sexual discovery. When she is invited to his home for a family party the differences between her traditional Polish upbringing and his easy-going British family are highlighted. William's grandmother joins the children in a bouncy castle "and starts to jump / And jump / And I laugh / Out loud / With William. / [...] I could not imagine Babcia / Bouncing" (180). The parents' view of sexuality is also marked as different. Kasienska's mother reacts to her mere wish to buy mascara as a sign of promiscuity and depravity:

She raised an eyebrow  
And tapped her tummy.

I didn't understand  
'Vulgar girls - always having babies -  
Don't be one of those, Kasienska,

Be a good girl.' (132)

Other norms are displayed in William's home, as his father "doesn't scowl / When we close / The bedroom door / Just says, 'Be good, kids.'" (181) When Kasienska is forbidden to go with her swimming team to a competition in London a similar opposition is set up between her parents and the new social context, as it is her father's new girlfriend who helps her defy her mother by signing the permission slip (206). While her relation to her Polish parents is then full of tensions, secrets and seemingly arbitrary demonstrations of authority, the English home, and family, is presented as a place of warmth, trust and acceptance.

Finally, then, a sense of belonging emerges, as the British boyfriend helps Kasienska accept both herself and her new home. The centrality of heterosexual relationships is further emphasised as her mother, too, starts to come to terms with losing both her husband and her home country when finding love, through a relationship with neighbour, another immigrant who has at long last found a good job as a doctor in England. In a poem entitled "Resurrection" Kasienska notes how meeting a new man seems to have brought her mother back to life:

Mama is alive again  
A little bit alive

She isn't singing.  
But now and then she  
Hums  
Without meaning to. (222)

In a parallel manner, one of the first meetings between Kasienska and William was depicted in a poem with the title "Life Saver" making it clear that romance is presented as a solution to the loss of purpose and of identity that Kasienska and her mother experienced as they migrated to England. Heterosexual relationships then seem a salvation not only from the ordeals of migration, but also from outdated views of gender and parenting in the home country.

### *The Good Braider*

*The Good Braider* (2012) by Terry Farish is a story about a young girl from war-torn Sudan. Like Kasienska, Viola lives with her mother and her grand-mother. She also has a younger brother. Viola (or Keji) is told by her mother that "All the men in Sudan will want to marry you" (19) which drastically changes when Viola is raped by a soldier from the north. "I will send you away," her mother says. "Why were you on the road at *night*... What kind of a girl would be on the road at *night*? You have brought us shame." (34) Not only is Viola blamed for being raped by the soldier, but the threat of being sent away lingers with her. When her younger brother tells her that they might go to America, Viola wonders "What if my mother leads / everyone on the airplane / and I am left, bound to the war." (38) For Viola, escaping the war is essential.

Viola's wish to escape Juba is not only to get away from the war, but to be allowed to be a child again.

"Habuba," I say, "am I a child? I mean in America,  
would I be a child? Because if I am a child,

maybe I can go to school. I know English” A little.

...

“You will be a child,” Habuba says.

I want to hug every bone of her....

I will go to school and dig for the English  
inside my head. (45)

Viola dreams of America, “where uncle Marko lives.... I dream of *freedom* and move to the sound in my head of Congolese drums” (28). Even though they have a relative in the U.S., getting there is difficult. Uncle Marko finally manages to get them on a UN cargo plane to the capital in north Sudan, and then they continue to Cairo by land and water, “to get refugee status, and then – maybe – to America.” (42) Getting on the list to the plane is difficult, and at first they attempt to leave Juba by foot, but have to turn back as they do not know where land mines are placed. Leaving Juba, however, also means that Viola has to leave her grandmother Habuba behind.

Leaving and losing family and oneself in the migration process

On the journey to Cairo, Viola’s five year-old brother falls ill from unclean water. His mother and sister manage to get him to a refugee camp in Cairo, but once there he succumbs. With the traumatic experience of fleeing war and losing her brother, Viola tells a friend in the camp “I am not who I used to be. / We were three, like three strands. / We lay, three of us, on the steamer, warming each other. / Without the third, I don’t know what to do.” (82) When they finally manage to fill in their refugee applications, they are told they will be called for an interview. Yet, as they hear from others in the camp, many have waited for years. For Viola and her mother, the process takes two years, before they finally get the cards that mean they are eligible for resettlement (87).

Straddling two countries

When they arrive in Portland, Maine, they are shown the three rooms they will live in. For Viola and her mother, this is a tremendous change from the crowdedness of the Cairo camp. Viola’s transition into Portland is also eased by having relatives there. Her cousin Jackie tells her about life there, and when Viola comments on the difference to Juba, Jackie remarks: “If you live in Kennedy Park, you remember. The elders make sure you remember. Your mother makes sure you remember.” (99) When Viola’s mother is able to buy a satellite dish, the neighbors convene at their house to watch Al Jazeera news.

Viola has to get a job after school, and on Saturdays she babysits. She thinks her mother makes her do extra work so that she “will have no time to find a world away from her.” (119) Maybe, she muses, “if Francis were with us, my mother would let a little bit of me be in Maine.” (120) As a young immigrant she has to negotiate “not only the boundaries of puberty, but also those of nation and language” (Ruth O. Saxon xix). Viola meets a “red-haired boy” (113) in school. The red-haired boy is Andrew, and he calls Viola at home. “No boy can call this house!” her mother proclaims, before hanging up. Yet, Andrew comes to visit at Viola’s apartment, and Viola asks him to teach her how to drive. Not so much because she needs to drive herself, but because if she knew all the laws then she could

teach her mother (who is driving without a license). Meeting Andrew is however not something she can let her mother know about. “‘If you try to meet with a boy,’ / [her mother] says softly, / ‘I will say, *There* is the door. *Go*. / I will give you a ticket to Africa.” (136) The mother thus constrains Viola’s ability to make herself at home in the country.

I am waiting to feel alive.  
I am waiting for myself  
to catch up with  
my body.  
My mother  
holds me tight. (137)

Yet, Andrew becomes her ticket to a life in America “if I have an American friend, / I might wake up feeling like I live in Maine / instead of waking up *every* morning in Africa.” (148) Andrew also encourages her to talk about her past life in Sudan.

“If they did not kill you, they did other very bad things.  
Things like torture. And kidnap. And rape.  
A girl is very valuable as a new bride.  
A girl will bring much wealth to her family.”  
“Already knew you were worth a lot,” he says.  
“Me,” I say, “Not so much.” ...  
“I am no longer valuable.”  
“What’s that mean?” he says.  
I shrug. “Girls are not safe in Sudan.” (152)

While Viola initially fears she will have scared off Andrew by telling him, in a circumvent way, about the rape, she is happy to discover that he still wants to be her friend. Yet, the feeling soon changes, as she realizes her mother has seen her with the boy.

The third part of the novel starts with “*Now the war comes back to me. Again, there is only the war.*” (157) Viola’s mother holds her hand over a pot of boiling water, with the intention of putting her hand into the water as a punishment for bringing shame to the family. Viola is rescued by another girl, who like her has been told the emergency number, “Call 911!” (158) With the arrival of two police officers, the two cultures also clash. When an officer asks Viola if her mother has caused her wounds, the mother simply proclaims “She is my daughter ... Get out of my house.” (159) Viola tries to hold on to her mother when she is taken away, her intention of calling 911 was only to stop the burning, not to lose her mother. Viola tries to explain to the officers: “You do not understand, in Africa –” “She is not in Africa,” they reply. (161) As the room fills up with other persons from Juba, one of the mothers tells the police: “You see, ... all the mothers discipline their children. In our families it is the mother who decides” (162). Eventually, Viola is released from hospital and her mother is also allowed to return home. The condition is, however, that another member of the community moves in with them and acts as Viola’s guardian.

In the weeks before Viola returns to school, her dream of being both American and Sudanese seems invalid. “Before I wanted to be American. / Now, if someone asks, I say I am Sudanese.” (170) She also thinks that Andrew is avoiding her because she told him about the rape. When she returns to school and ends up

confiding her traumatic experience of rape to a trusted teacher, she says “I’m not in Sudan and not really in Maine. / Or maybe I’m in both of them / at the same time. / I’m in someplace I’m making *up*.” (185) Yet, her transition into a real America is made possible when her mother one day says: “The elders say we must” – she pauses – / “educate ourselves in American ways. / You are eighteen. / You can talk to that boy.” (203)

### Integration and Patriarchy

In the three novels discussed, the young girl protagonist has migrated with her family to another country where she falls in love with a boy from the majority culture. The boy acts as a guide into the new culture, in *Life, After* the boy is called both “personal GPS” and somewhat jokingly takes as his mission to give her “the full American cultural experience.” (*Life* 263) In *The Good Braider* the boy provides a possibility to learn to drive, a classic figure of freedom in contemporary America. In *The Weight of Water*, the boy raises Kasienska’s self-esteem. Yet, the girls are dependent on, and have to wait for, their families’ acceptance of the boyfriends. The relationships, when allowed by the parental generation, indicate that the girls are managing to bridge the cultures.

As immigrants, the girls find themselves belong to a certain category of youth at school. They take ESL classes at school, and Kasienska and Dani, both used to a somewhat more affluent lifestyle, have to flaunt their poverty by using lunch vouchers in school. For Viola, on the other hand, moving into the charity-furnished apartment is a huge step up from the refugee camp she has been in over the past two years. Both Dani’s and Kasienska’s mothers take up low-end cleaning jobs to support their families, while Viola’s mother and Viola herself work on a chicken-line. They belong to an international community of service workers.

Belonging to a community is also of importance in the novels. Dani and her family do not seem to associate much with other Argentinian immigrants, except for the uncle who sponsored their move. Yet, as members of the global Jewish community, they receive help from the local Jewish Family Services, both in the form of furniture and clothing, but also counseling. Kasienska and her mother find a cheap apartment in a building full of other immigrants. While at first her mother seems to dislike their neighbors, a friendship soon develops when it becomes clear that their situations are not so different from each other. For Viola, the Sudanese community in Portland, Maine steps in and takes responsibility for both her and her mother when adjusting to the new culture and when the adolescent daughter proves too difficult for the mother.

Yet, the reliance on a white/Western boyfriend to enable successful integration into the majority culture simultaneously risks diminishing the view of the girls’ own capabilities. They have been through difficult experiences and are portrayed as strong characters, yet their need for a boyfriend in order to fit in appears to be complicit with rather than question some of the stereotypes of both female lack of agency as well as the Western man as a “Prince Charming”.

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## Reviews

Aimee Pozorski. *Roth and Trauma: The Problem of History in the Later Works (1995-2010)*. London and New York: Continuum, 2011. xiv-175 pages, ISBN 9781441185112.

Velichka Ivanova  
Université Paris-Est Créteil, France

Pozorski's *Roth and Trauma: The Problem of History in the Later Works (1995-2010)* is premised on the conviction that Roth's fiction conveys "an important historical dynamic" (ix). As she notes at the outset, his recent works revisit the ideals of American democracy "in order to unpack the darker secrets of American identity" (viii). In the Preface, Pozorski sketches her personal connection with Roth's oeuvre. Like no other novelist, she observes, he expresses a sense that "American democracy was traumatic in its emergence, and as a result, has a traumatic effect on the nation and the world—a trauma whose effects resonate today" (ix). The study thus adopts trauma theory as a mode of inquiry of the recent fiction. It takes up in chronological order each of Roth's novels from *Sabbath's Theater* (1995) to the Nemeses Tetralogy.

The first chapter outlines the theoretical roots of trauma studies. Pozorski points out that traumatic events are marked by disjointed temporality and by resistance to verbal articulation. In discussing the structure of time in trauma, she stresses its cyclical character. In addition, trauma's time is both retrospective and prospective - it refers to the past and simultaneously scripts the future. It thus introduces a "radical change in the way we understand the relationship between time and consciousness" (23). Pozorski finds trauma theory particularly fruitful to address Roth's recent works because both their content and their form correspond to the dual definition of trauma described above - their non-linear structure is analeptic and iterative; at the same time, they question the ability of language to express catastrophic events.

The analysis begins with *Sabbath's Theater* because it marks a turning point in Roth's career. In 1989, he returned to the United States after fifteen years of living in London and working on the Penguin series, *Writers from the Other Europe*. *Sabbath's Theater* represents his turning back to "American stuff" (Roth qtd. in Pozorski 31). It also signals, Pozorski suggests, his turning back in history - back to the puritanical and revolutionary origins of the United States. The second chapter thus focuses on the image of the American flag, particularly in *Sabbath's Theater*, where the symbol of the flag connects the death of Sabbath's mistress Drenka, which takes place in the present, to the death of his brother during World War II. Pozorski shows that Roth self-consciously depicts the flag "in ways that might also defile it - through sand, through urine" (30). She demonstrates that the image of the sullied flag subverts America's founding ideals whereas Drenka's malapropisms, with their sexual connotations, subvert the

principles of America's Puritan beginnings. *Sabbath's Theater* is thus about "what America has come to mean since its founding days" (29).

The questioning of the Puritan values of America's founders addressed in the second chapter continues in chapters 4, 5, and 6, focusing on *I Married a Communist*, *The Human Stain*, and *The Dying Animal*, respectively. According to Pozorski, "our failure to confront the traumatic past initiated by the Puritans haunts us in the present time" of these novels "through McCarthy's appeal to democratic purity," through the Clinton scandal with Monica Lewinsky, and through the cultural consensus which followed the 1960s sexual revolution (67). The analysis underscores "Roth's concern about the ways our founding principles have been, paradoxically, 'tainted' by Puritanical fear" (111). This questioning is complicated by an investigation of the traumatic nature of America's birth in the Revolutionary War. Both themes are further explored through extensive close readings of *American Pastoral*, *I Married a Communist*, *The Plot Against America*, and *Exit Ghost*. Pozorski's minute analyses of temporal strata, speech and consciousness representation, specificities of verbal articulation, and proximity to the vocabulary of trauma, demonstrate that in each of these works, Roth investigates "how far we have strayed from the founding ideals" (67). She contends that "the catastrophic event that drives the plot and the whole of American history is the foundation of the nation itself - a founding, a war, we have never quite possessed - a gesture toward democracy that we have never fully grasped" (11).

The final chapter takes up the "tetralogy of the grave" which expresses, in both form and content, "a dramatic wearing away of the body, of the corpus, of the work" (147, 152-3). Focusing on *Nemesis*, Pozorski interprets this compression as an allegory of what is left of the meaning of life in twenty-first century America: "A direct obsession with the nation's founding has seemed to drop out of this final text, and it has been replaced with the death of the individual, or many individuals, at the hands not of failed ideals, but of a murderous God" (153). The study ends with an unanswered question: "What is being, or necessarily must be, buried: a fantasy of omnipotence, possibly, of a government that recognizes equality, of the trust in human empowerment over all?" (153). Indeed, the end invites readers to reconsider critically the ideals and realities of American democracy.

In this way, *Roth and Trauma* contributes to the ongoing conversation among critics who focus primarily on Roth's representation of Jewish American life, on the one hand, or on his representation of Post War II America, on the other hand. Pozorski's innovative approach to the significance of history in Roth's recent fiction from the perspective of trauma theory, and her passionate prose - an echo of Roth's own fervent engagement with the ideals and failures of America - will doubtless appeal not only to students and scholars of contemporary literature and trauma studies, but also to the general reader. Readers of this book will comprehend Roth - and through his fiction, contemporary America - in novel and creative ways.

David Gooblar. *The Major Phases of Philip Roth*. London: Continuum, 2011. 179 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4411-6970-9

Till Kinzel

TU Braunschweig, Germany

Recent years have shown a flowering of critical literature on Philip Roth, without doubt one of the major American writers of the late 20th century. Most readers, however, would hardly claim that his recent novels are on a par with his most accomplished novels from the 1970s up to the American Trilogy (*American Pastoral*, *I Married a Communist* and *The Human Stain*) and books like *Sabbath's Theater* and *Operation Shylock*. In fact, Roth's most recent novel, *Nemesis*, clearly shows a marked falling off of narrative vigour already in the somewhat lame, reportage-like first sentences, the like of which cannot be found in his earlier books.

One would therefore suppose that a consideration of the major phases of Roth's work has something to say about this issue. In his study of Roth, David Gooblar surveys the span of Roth's works mainly up to and including the American Trilogy, mentioning later books only very rarely. Perhaps these later works do not really count as a major phase? One suspects that Gooblar does not think a closer critical analysis of these later works will add significantly to our understanding of Roth, even though some of these books surely merit a more sustained critical attention (*Exit Ghost*, *Everyman*). But be that as it may – what Gooblar does for Roth in this admirably clear book is to highlight the co-presence of inward and outward movements in his texts beginning with *Goodbye, Columbus*. He thus tries to negotiate the two tendencies that have been either described as Roth's interest in the creation of subjectivity (Debra Shostak's approach) or in his "appropriation of literary models and discourses" (Ross Posnock's approach) (6).

In order to give some structure to this movement back and forth between inwardness and outwardness, Gooblar chooses to construct clusters of books that represent Rothian preoccupations, although he concedes that there is some overlap. In contrast to Shostak and Posnock, furthermore, he prefers a chronological approach, since Roth himself is obviously very much "attuned to the way a writer's life and career make a compelling narrative" (7). Finally, Gooblar takes Roth's openness to the culture around him as point of departure for opening up "unexpected cultural connections" that will shed new light on his works (7).

One such contextualization is the cultural high-mindedness and seriousness connected to the so-called New York intellectuals (a topic already explored by Wiebke-Marie Wöltje's "My finger on the pulse of the nation". *Intellektuelle Protagonisten im Romanwerk Philip Roths*, Trier: WVT, 2006). Gooblar follows this theme of seriousness up to *Portnoy's Complaint*, a novel that breaks with seriousness by highlighting the comedy of seriousness in Alex Portnoy's overweening desire to be taken seriously, particularly by non-Jews of the female kind, the so-called shiksas. Not the least for this reason Gooblar is right to suggest that *Goodbye, Columbus* and the following works present a rather restricted view

of seriousness, whereas *Portnoy's Complaint* represents an almost limitless widening of the concept of seriousness (55).

As analyzed by Gooblar, the period “after Portnoy” is characterized by a confrontation with images of Kafka, Anne Frank and Freud, but it is Kafka and Frank who are the two “Jewish ghosts” that virtually haunt Roth’s writings of this period (58). Roth, however, appropriates them in a way that cannot be understood as a mere influence but rather as an illumination of an outward move in his career that became increasingly experimental. *Our Gang*, *The Breast* and *The Great American Novel* are the three still somewhat underrated experimental books published in the early 1970s. Regrettably, Gooblar does not remedy this deplorable critical neglect but moves right on to those books like *My Life as a Man* and *The Professor of Desire* and the Zuckerman novels which would come to be recognized as expressing the “characteristic Rothian voice” (61).] Roth’s intense confrontation with Kafka soon turned into a more comprehensive fascination with the other Europe as exemplified by the Czech, Polish etc. writers whom he edited in English translation for Penguin. (Much more could be said about this than any of Roth’s critics have done so far). Anne Frank’s haunting presence in Roth’s *The Ghost Writer*, furthermore, could be seen as evidence that American Jewish writers do not choose to deal with the holocaust in their fiction since it is inescapably there anyway (87).

As for Freud, Roth’s initial emphasis on the ways that “Freudian self-interpretation could be a great boon to a writer’s creativity” (98), gives way to a more skeptical interrogation of its limits in *The Anatomy Lesson*; and it is only in *The Counterlife*, which Gooblar regards as a watershed in Roth’s oeuvre (109), that the author “finds a way for Zuckerman to escape the strictures of the self as Freud conceives it” (99). In this novel, characters try to escape the very essence of their selves and they do this in part by narrating their lives differently. As opposed to Freudian notions which point to a true underlying self, selves are here understood as narratives – and these can be changed rather easily, it would seem. Definitive Freudian meanings of a fixed past become fluid and polysemous.

In further chapters Gooblar offers a brief but subtle reading of Roth’s autobiographical or pseudo-autobiographical texts from *The Facts* to *Operation Shylock*, followed by a succinct but necessarily very selective reading of the American Trilogy. Gooblar stresses its thematic continuity with earlier works, denying any break from these, but even Gooblar has to acknowledge that Roth’s engagement with America has taken on a new importance and significance beginning with *American Pastoral*.

Even though Gooblar gives short shrift to the later novels as well as to some other books, there is no question that his concise book on Roth is a fitting tribute to this formidable writer whose status in world literature will not depend on whether he will ever receive the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Mike Marais. *Secretary of the Invisible: The Idea of Hospitality in the Fiction of J.M. Coetzee*. Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2009. 249 pages. ISBN 978-90-420-2713-8.

Roberta Gefter  
University of Trieste, Italy

The common opinion that J.M Coetzee is one of the greatest living writers in the English language is partly grounded in the radical - and often disturbing - quality of his problematization of the ideas of responsibility, of alterity, of freedom, of the role of literature, and, ultimately, in his championing of the essential ambivalence of literature. Mike Marais' *Secretary of the Invisible* deals with a specific aspect of this author's abiding concern, "an alterity that is figured as being absolute in its irreducibility" (xiii). This dense, interesting and competent study explores the idea of hospitality as a key concept which intersects some of the most recurrent and important concerns of Coetzee's oeuvre: the irreducibility of the other and the writer's allegiance to it, the public role of the writer, the relationship between the literary text and history, the literary text and love, the writer and his text as a home for the other.

From the opening pages of the book Marais puts forward a premise which addresses the most authoritative figure of Coetzee's criticism, Derek Attridge, whose reading of the concept of the other refuses transcendence in favour of a situated, constituted ontology. While Attridge stresses "that otherness is always perspectival and that it is always produced. In other words, there is no transcendent other" (*Ethics of Reading* 99), Marais treats this concept in Coetzee's writing as metaphorised by the invisible, transcendent, impossible to accommodate. The book is structured in seven chapters, from the early fiction of *In the Heart of the Country* and *Waiting for the Barbarians* to the most recent *Slow Man*, with a short introduction and a conclusion. Coetzee's books are discussed without introduction and this makes it difficult for the non-seasoned reader to master the text, so that its reading target is decidedly a postgraduate and a specialist one. On the whole, Marais' book succeeds in contributing a new perspective – or, more precisely, in enriching a conceptual area - in the ever-expanding array of critical utterances on Coetzee, mainly in its subtle, sophisticated investigation of a crucial thematic network that testifies to the deep – and radically problematic - humanism underscoring Coetzee's work, and its main strength lies in the subtlety and sophistication of most of its textual analysis. From the opening pages, in fact, Marais claims the definition of close reading for his approach, while making a point of specifying that his is a formalism imbued "with a sense of the historicity of form and its implications in history" (xv).

Reading as a strategy of engaging with the other is a foremost and recurring theme in Marais' analysis: prominent among other contexts is the investigation of the relation with this encompassing category that is created in literary writing, involving both writer and reader. When the writer fails to speak the unspeakable and represent the invisible, it is the reader's turn to take on this burden. From the early fiction up to *Summertime*, Coetzee writes books whose intentional lack of closure demand to be completed, or at least coped with, by the reader himself,

with a compelling, disquieting force that cannot be equated to modernist and postmodernist antecedents.

As to the most important theoretical frameworks of the book, Marais uses Derrida and Levinas' theories on hospitality to elucidate Coetzee's conception and literary unravelling of this theme. It is especially Derrida's unconditional hospitality, an unlimited form of hospitality as the only possible sense of the term, that constitutes the real touchstone of the critical readings. The author examines Coetzee's preoccupation with this ethic of writing by tracing the evolution of the related metaphors of inspiration, mastery and following: "even as they invite it, Coetzee's novels resist being followed" (xv), reminds Marais, arguing that for Coetzee the writer who is in history must follow the invisible rather than the visible. However, the most prominent metaphor in Coetzee's writing is probably that of the lost child: lost, abandoned, deformed or unborn, the child is always the catalyst of an existential quest for truth and of ethical anxieties. The "child image", Marais argues with regard to *Waiting for the Barbarians*, "signifies what has been reduced by the forms of history. History is the loss of the child." (51).

In *Foe*, there is an analogy between Barton's lost child and the true story she does not know but wants to find out and tell. Marais argues that since her quest is without term, her responsibility is infinite too. Barton's experience of hospitality is complex and multi-dimensional; from the hosting of Crusoe's alterity to the bearing of the island's alterity, through the writing of its story. Marais refers to Levinas to elucidate Barton's inspiration by the otherness of the island. *Foe* displays, in Marais' analysis, what is perhaps one of the most radical and disturbing, affecting traits of Coetzee's fiction, the attempt at exposing the reader to the work's uninvited visitors, thus passing him/her the burden of bringing to life the unknown.

In the central chapter of the book, devoted to *Age of Iron*, Marais focuses on Coetzee's fictional treatment of the anti-Apartheid period referring to Adorno's conception of philosophy in *Minima Moralia* as necessarily bound to view life from a messianic perspective, as "part of the damaged life that must be revealed from the redemptive standpoint" (104). Mrs Curren's treatment of Vercueil, as a visitor who arrives uninvited, is read in the terms of the ethics of hospitality, (though not of the unconditional type championed by Derrida) in a context of self-entrapment symbolized by the house. On the contrary, the novel is considered on the basis of a "very close analogy between self and text" (105) as testifying to how South African literature can involuntarily perpetuate the power relations and the distortions of Apartheid state by reproducing them. This literature thus "actively participates in its own deformation" (108), even while the South Africa that comes across lacks precisely "an ethics of generous hospitality" (102). In Marais' view, however, *Age of Iron* manages to distance itself by that very damaged life from which it originates and remains situated precisely through an aesthetic ability to relate to alterity.

Marais' evaluation of *Slow Man* as interrupting the story dictated by the invisible which features in the preceding novels and thereby turning it into a different story, mostly in the terms of a self-parody of the writer's responsibility, proves worthy of consideration in the lights of Coetzee's latest fiction, *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007) and *Summertime* (2009). This output has been variously received, but generally praised in its challenging complexity especially from the

point of view of narrative and rhetorical sophistication, which nonetheless Marais unexpectedly labels “perfunctory” (193), briefly touching upon these titles at the beginning of the last chapter, and inexplicably downsizing their complex, even intentionally captious structures, especially in the case of *Diary*. “Narrative minimalism” (193) and “impatience with narrative” (194) are in fact but the formal veneer – I think here too dismissively labelled - of a literary achievement in which Coetzee has continued to address the capital questions that he has always privileged.

*Secretary of the Invisible* is not an easy read, nor could it be, given the elusive complexity and the haunting emotional and intellectual quality of Coetzee’s work, which, as Derek Attridge was probably the first to point out, are at the root of his greatness as a writer and as champion of the value and the meaning of literature today. There are passages, however, occasionally in some chapters, where close reading informed by critical theory becomes redundant, or rather obscure and less persuasive. This is the case when Marais delves deep into the heart of the matter he has been unravelling, or in parts of his chapters on *Foe* and *Age of Iron*, but above all in the last chapter on *Slow Man*, where the analysis becomes encumbered by an excess of sophisticated speculation which no longer accommodates a proper close reading. All of which is, though, a minor diminishment in the overall texture of the book, and one which mainly affects its readability, rather than its critical depth and scholarly standing.

Graham Holderness. *Nine Lives of William Shakespeare*. London: Continuum, 2011.

206 pages. ISBN 978-1-4411-51858 (hb).

Paul J.C.M. Franssen  
Utrecht University, the Netherlands

Holderness’s book is a most original contribution to the genre of the Shakespeare biography. In his introduction, Holderness acknowledges the great amount of speculation that goes into almost any work on this topic, arguing that “there is no such thing as a speculation-free biography of Shakespeare” (12). Unless all biographers were to show the restraint of, say, a Samuel Schoenbaum, whose *Documentary Life* could perhaps stand as a monument of sound scholarship in the genre, it could hardly be otherwise. There are few facts to go around, particularly pertaining to Shakespeare’s private life; and even where the data are fairly plentiful, as in the field of his activities as a businessman, Holderness shows that they lend themselves to several incompatible readings (88). On the other hand, a new Shakespeare biography seems to come out every year or so, partly because there is a market for them; but were they all to repeat the same basic facts, the demand would soon dry up. Even Schoenbaum, who was averse to speculation, and wanted just the facts, may have occasionally been blinded by prejudice, Holderness suggests, as when he summarily dismissed traditional accounts of Shakespeare helping to slaughter calves in his youth (65).

Holderness is aware of the dangers of speculation run wild, but pleads for what he calls “empathic speculation” (17), based on a thorough “historical knowledge of literature and theatre” (17), and taking into account traditions based on the testimonies of Shakespeare’s contemporaries and near-contemporaries. These latter sources of knowledge, in particular, Holderness argues, have been underrated, although some of them may tell us more about Shakespeare than we will ever learn from legal documents. Above all, a critical awareness of how much we are likely to be prejudiced by our own outlook on life is necessary. As one example of the approach he proposes, Holderness mentions Stephen Greenblatt’s often criticised *Will in the World*, which, he claims, always indicates where factual information stops and the imagination takes over (12).

Be that as it may, Holderness himself provides a more convincing model of how facts and outright speculation, even fiction, can be brought together in a book, while always keeping these categories distinct. His chapters all begin with the factual material on a certain aspect of Shakespeare’s life—his love-life, religion, portrait, his activities as an author, a player, a butcher-boy, and a businessman—indicated by a subheading: Facts. Here, much like Schoenbaum but arranged differently, Holderness discusses the sources of what may pass for real knowledge about Shakespeare’s life: documents and remarks by contemporaries. Most chapters then have a subheading “Traditions,” containing early testimonies from the likes of Rowe and Aubrey: what people within living memory of Shakespeare claim to have heard someone say. Although such gossip may be “partly fictionalized” already (8), Holderness regards it as a valuable source of information. He refuses to dismiss stories such as young Shakespeare having slaughtered calves or poached Sir Thomas Lucy’s deer as untrue, simply because we cannot find positive proof for their accuracy. Next comes the category of outright speculation, which summarises what biographers and critics have said about this particular aspect of Shakespeare’s biography. Each chapter then ends in a wholly fictional part, a story by Holderness illustrating one possible approach to Shakespeare’s life. This story is always marked by a distinctive style or genre, often associated with a certain period, which serves to underline its constructedness. The narrative perspective, after all, is part of what makes the meaning, and by highlighting this, Holderness shows that unmediated access to a historical figure is impossible.

Many stories feature a discovery about Shakespeare made afterwards, in the period evoked by the style and genre chosen for that story. There is one in the style of Dan Brown, about a modern scholar who finds a Shakespeare Manuscript, another about a tentative reconstruction of Shakespeare’s love affair with the Fair Friend, in the tradition of Wilde’s “The Portrait of Mr W. H.,” featuring both Wilde and Sherlock Holmes. One tale is a continuation of Nicholas Rowe’s biographical sketch, arguing that young Shakespeare was a butcher boy; another traces the provenance and loss of Shakespeare’s signet ring, a token of his faithful love for Anne Hathaway, by expanding the account by the early nineteenth-century antiquarian Robert Bell Wheler of its recovery in 1810. Two stories, about Shakespeare’s deathbed conversion to Catholicism and about his business instincts, are told in a stream-of-consciousness technique reminiscent of Joyce or Burgess, with the poet himself as focaliser; in another, a Hemingway pastiche, the love triangle of the poet, the Dark Lady, and the Fair Friend is transposed to the

Italian front during World War I, and turned into a psychological study of inter-racial attraction and disgust. Moreover, the signet ring features in three stories, in cleverly interlocking plots that yet are wholly incompatible, as the first presupposes that the ring was a sign of marital love, the second, of a gay relationship, and the third, of an adulterous passion for a Dark Lady. Holderness's ring cycle (Sherlock Holmes goes to Wagner's opera in the Conan Doyle pastiche) highlights the postmodern flavour of the entire enterprise: together, the lives revealed in the nine stories do not add up to a portrait so much as to a collage. Ultimately, the stories do not reveal anything about the real Shakespeare, but teach us a great deal about the ways our culture, as it developed over the centuries, has interpreted and manipulated the available materials to serve its own interests. Highlights include the analysis of Shakespeare the butcher boy, in which Holderness plausibly argues that a genius may spring from humble origins, and that even his experiences with handling animals may contribute to his poetic works. Wilde's style and aphorisms are imitated brilliantly in the story in which Sherlock Holmes meets Oscar Wilde, in his quest to learn the truth behind the disappearance of the signet ring. Holderness's book is by turns informative, thought-provoking, and brilliant.

Ian Brinton. *Brontë's 'Wuthering Heights'. Continuum Reader's Guides.* London and New York: Continuum, 2011. 151 pages. ISBN 978-1-8470-6457-8.

Anna Koustinoudi  
Aristotle University, Thessaloniki, Greece

Among the most widely read, studied, reviewed and translated mid-Victorian women authors, the two Brontë sisters, Charlotte and Emily, figure most prominently. Both Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* and Emily's *Wuthering Heights* stand as all-time classics, having inspired – and occasionally divided – many generations of readers, writers and professional critics since their publication, with their respective protagonists uniting almost the sum total of the universal human attributes and passions.

Ian Brinton's Reader's Guide on this most canonical, though always controversial, Victorian text is a further addition to an ever accumulating body of diverse and innovative criticism on *Wuthering Heights*, with many exquisite interpretations of it appearing all along. It is precisely because of this ongoing proliferation of critical response, however, that the task of writing yet another text on Emily Brontë's famous novel might look daunting, even redundant. As the practical and accessible Study Guide that it purports to be, it is principally intended for such audiences as the general, non-specialist reader and the undergraduate university population of various English Departments. Brinton's book generally meets students' requirements, despite its over-reliance on pre-existing scholarship and occasional lapses into plot summarising.

Like the other Continuum Reader's Guides in the classic literary texts series, Brinton's book follows a set five-chapter format – with an additional sixth chapter

on bibliographical sources and suggestions for further reading – and each one is concluded with a number of study questions. The book comprises a very brief introductory chapter entitled “Contexts”, providing information on the topographical, meteorological, historical and literary contexts that originally gave birth to and fuelled Brontë’s text. There are also frequent allusions to traumatic childhood and familial influences (including the Brontë’s juvenilia) interspersed with a number of carefully chosen quotes from such well-known Brontë biographers as Elizabeth Gaskell, Winifred Gérin and Juliet Barker that shed valuable light on the contextual infrastructure of the novel.

A second chapter on “Language Style and Form”, divided into three sections, traces the affinities between Emily Brontë’s text and Sir Walter Scott’s Scottish Border novels *Rob Roy* and *Waverly* in terms of setting, character construction, thematic and linguistic repertoire with parallel references to Emily’s own poetry, followed by a brief comparative section, emphasising the Romantic undertones and the influence of Byron’s *Manfred* on the text’s pervasive sense of exile. The concept of the Byronic hero, as reflected by the controversial Heathcliff figure, is also briefly taken up before the final section of the chapter on “The Role of the Narrators”. This is a central issue in Brontë’s novel that would have certainly deserved better attention and a more exhaustive, in depth analysis than the two and a half pages that Brinton devotes to it, given the fact that among the novel’s most compelling characteristics and/or intriguing qualities, that of its complex narrative schema, has been considered of crucial importance.

The most substantial, in terms of striking a balanced critical and instructional synthesis, and most exhaustively researched part of Brinton’s guide coincides with the book’s third – and lengthiest – chapter entitled “Reading *Wuthering Heights*”. This is structured around a number of key thematic axes, whose far-reaching import and impact have been widely addressed throughout its long critical history. The presence of such recurrent motifs as the supernatural, the debilitating traumas of childhood, the symbolic function of windows, the intensity of violence and revenge, and, above all, the eternally perplexing (and tormenting) Eros-Thanatos duality, along with the effects of religion (as vulgar religiosity untainted by education), class, societal restrictions and the novel’s distinctive landscapes and imagery are thus explored through close readings of extensive quotes from Emily, Ann’s and Charlotte, as well as from numerous other critical sources, mainly from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. It is principally through the critical readings of his chosen critics, intertwined with an array of lengthy quotes from his primary text that Brinton succeeds in imparting both a plot summary and an interpretation of Brontë’s work.

The fourth chapter examines the “Critical Reception and Publishing History” of *Wuthering Heights*, focusing on the vicissitudes of the novel’s initial publication process and on Charlotte Brontë’s defence of the novel from contemporary unfavourable reviews in her famous 1847 preface. With reference to a miscellany of literary journals of the time such as *The Spectator*, *The Athenaeum*, *The Examiner*, *Britannia* and *The Leader*, via Miriam Allot’s book *The Brontës: The Critical Heritage*, Brinton proceeds to trace the various reviews fuelled by the controversial issues raised in the text, before taking up a more recent strand of critical evaluations, again by the critics of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1980s, namely Arnold Kettle, Q. D. Leavis and Lyn Pykett. The final section of the

chapter features a very useful ten-page “Chronology of *Wuthering Heights*” by C. P. Sanger. Once again, one feels that Brinton’s own endeavour at synthesis and interpretation is superseded by his privileging those other critical voices out there.

In the book’s fifth chapter, on “Adaptation, Interpretation and Influence” Brinton discusses a number of “artistic reactions” (136) to the novel, while making extensive use of other critics’ responses interwoven with numerous quotes from the text itself. Starting with a detailed account of the earliest, 1920 silent film version directed by A.V. Bramble, he moves on to an even more detailed presentation of the novel’s 1939 Samuel Goldwyn film adaptation by William Wyler, comparing it with its “exact contemporary” (126) *Gone with the Wind*. A brief reference to a Japanese filmic interpretation of the novel *Onimaru* (1988), directed by Yuko Tanaka, intervenes, before we are taken back in time again with a French film version of *Wuthering Heights*, namely *Jule et Jim* (1962) as well as with Luis Bunuel’s 1953 Mexican version, thereafter taking us to a detailed account of the 1992 Paramount version by Peter Kosminsky. The very latest 2011 film version by Andrea Arnold naturally remains beyond Brinton’s scope, since the Reader was published in 2010. While there is no mention whatsoever of any of the numerous radio, television (there have been, for instance, some very remarkable BBC productions) and stage adaptations of the novel, Brinton’s final reference is reserved for the American poet Sylvia Plath’s personal and poetic reaction to the imposing landscapes of the Yorkshire moors, whose image, as depicted in Plath’s concluding poem, remains with the reader as a last atmospheric impression.

An extensive bibliographical section, carefully organised into sub-sections similar to those of the Reader’s chapters, and a useful, well-informed suggested list for further reading form a sixth chapter, which closes with a basic index of names. Brinton’s guide is, on the whole, an enlightening, well-researched, and, occasionally, really convincing text that serves both its instructional purposes and the general reader’s need for a concise yet informed practical introduction to *Wuthering Heights*. However the writer’s over-reliance on secondary sources and his propensity towards excessive block quoting often render his own voice and gaze heard and visible only in the interstices of his text.

Anna Duszak and Grzegorz Kowalski (eds.). *Academic (Inter)genres: between Texts, Contexts and Identities*. Vol. 6, “Studies in Language, Culture and Society”. Frankfurt am Mein: Peter Lang GmbH, 2015, 229 pages. ISBN 978-3-631-64625-0 (Print), E-ISBN 978-3-653-03984-9 (E-book); DOI 10.3726/978-3-653-03984-9

Giuseppina Cortese, Martin Solly, Elana Ochse and Michelangelo Conoscenti  
Department of Culture, Politics and Society, University of Turin, Italy

This book is the ideal companion for all scholars who participate in, and are affected by, the current “entrepreneurial” turn in higher education institutions.

The first decade of the XXI century in fact has increasingly privileged budgeting and ranking issues in the academic agenda. Research projects are examined at the level of planning and design, that is well before they get started, using a triple grid: local, national and international. Research “products” are evaluated using external parameters such as the ranking of the periodical or volume publications in which they appear. This reframing of the institutional agenda is reviving the question of genres, which lies at the heart of this volume, and turning it into an important issue in terms of a new attempt to standardize publication regimes. For instance, “contributions to scientific journals” may be fully legitimated as research “products” while, in some quarters, an aura of disbelief seems to surround the value of “edited collections”. Yet, it is precisely the latter that eventually sanction, indeed highlight transnational research networks, giving global recognition to contributions coming from local communities which may physically be far apart, the ideal trajectory in the pursuit of knowledge since Erasmian times.

The toing-and-froing now often called “glocalization” has always affected the traditional occupations of academic life, from the time when Latin was the international parlance of scholars, governing the circulation of ideas. But the new technocratic trend, in this bonding of centres and peripheries, has been placing considerable pressure towards the standardizing of individual voices and styles of local academic communities: an issue central to Anna Duszak’s groundbreaking 1997 volume, significantly titled *Cultures and Styles in Academic Discourse*. Several subsequent works by English language specialists, since then, have focussed on the threefold Gordian knot of academic discourse(s), style and identity. This volume is a welcome addition: through its distinguished editorial work the wider community can access important and innovative reflections coming from the Eastern European research traditions, methodologies and findings.

The innovative dimension which the present volume brings into the debate is its concern, on the one hand to resist homogenization by recalling the value of local intellectual milieus whose valence and diversity cannot be ignored, and on the other hand the porosity of disciplinary boundaries which everywhere seems to be outgrowing the albeit (in the past) necessary taxonomization of knowledge. Walls are crumbling, methodologies are more and more “multiparadigmatic” and individual voices construct idiosyncratic trajectories drawing on domains which are no longer neatly separate but increasingly blurred.

Genre is, then, the overarching nexus where this propensity for multiplicity – of approaches, methodologies, critical positionings – is earning new connotations. “Fuzziness”, in particular, no longer qualifies as a minus in scientific standards; rather, it stands for a fertile ground where disciplines meet, negotiate, above all gain from one another, thus producing “formal and functional fuzziness” across generic boundaries and features.

Part I in the volume, entitled *Academic (inter)genres: definitions, approaches, contexts*, elucidates the blurring both of liminalities and essentials which is conducive to a redefinition of genres as intergenres. The notion is conceptualized in a sequence of well-wrought, highly argumentative and densely, authoritatively written chapters.

Witosz focusses on the reconfiguration of discourse-genre relations, where hierarchical definitions are increasingly giving way to interconnectedness and interactional relations as complementary typologies.

Gajda investigates reflection by scientists on the “presumptive nature” of scientific paradigms, induced by a *Zeitgeist* wherein scholarly activity and discourse increasingly feel the impact of “intellectual ambience”, i.e. ontology and epistemology as well as axiology and praxis working in combination, the cognitive context elsewhere glossed as the concurrence of “ethos-ethnos”, so that crude positivism is giving way to new theories of complexity and the mutual fertilization of humanities and hard sciences.

Rzeszutko-Iwan considers how the digital turn and the accessibility of masses of data are inevitably leading to a new complexity of doing science, governed by interdisciplinarity, multiparadigmatic research methods and the variability of theories, therefore featuring scientific discourse as a “cyclical, emergent process with an open outcome”, requiring a new toolbox drawing from both science and the humanities.

Kowalski offers plentiful, finely-analyzed textual evidence on EU resolutions concerning science and society over the post-structuralist period 1980-2010, relevant to the implementation of research and technology frameworks, which reveal constant recontextualization of legislative ideologies and legislative acts under the impact of changing representations of the mutual and flexible interrelations between science and society.

Lipiński revisits the main literary genres used in ancient scientific and philosophical debate, his erudition as a classicist illuminating the early beginnings steeped in the Greek oral tradition and the growing hegemony of writing, which gradually consolidated the modern genres of scientific writing with their focus on function rather than form, and provocatively concludes that academic writers today are showing renewed experimental interest in form.

Cap is intriguingly concerned with the problematics of analyzing current generic hybridization in the light of mainstream genre theory. He conversely shows how, in public communication, such complex hybridity provides a benchmark against which the principles underlying current genre theory can be tested, and identifies five key dimensions for its critical revision.

Part II in the volume, entitled *Academic (inter)genres: global vs local, real vs virtual*, shows local, global and ‘glocal’ significance in intergenre exemplification, with a certain slant on virtual communication.

Hoffmannová analyzes a corpus of Czech and Slovak Festschriften in the light of dialogicity (intertextuality) and interactionality, showing the consistency and continuity of a genre marking a rite of passage in academic communities. Interestingly, local and perhaps more traditionally honorific features are deployed here, whereas elsewhere such traits are curtailed in favour of research anthologies, due to budget constraints and to the writing pressures on younger contributors.

Mrázková deals with peer review assessment protocols, thus approaching an academically relevant case of transition from “domestic” to more standardized international practice and showing how conventional custom and styles are invaded and hegemonized by the flatness of transnational evaluation templates.

Lehman, dealing with the paramount issue of identity, posits her important claim, that academic identity is constructed on a multi-aspectual cline between the individual and the collective, against a rich theoretical background including, among the others, British functionalists in their anthropological matrix, and writing specialists such as Bazerman and Ivanič.

Sokół investigates a corpus of Polish academic weblogs in the light of a wide international bibliography, analyzing posts in terms of (public) audience construction, its functions and discursive/metadiscursive devices, hybridization across the oral/private and the formal/impersonal stylistic choices, noting the relevance of the Comments sections in terms of participatory, socially sensitive forms of dynamic knowledge construction/dissemination across the expert/lay spectrum.

Gaiek and Szarkowska deal with CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) audiovisual scientific materials, showing how multimedia tools can be used for self-directed access and autonomous learning. An additional advantage provided by multimodal activities is that the authenticity of materials is paralleled by virtually authentic interaction settings.

Throughout the volume the iconic component is helpful in supporting powerful and profound theorization.

As linguists working on domain-specific English from one of the peripheries side by side with social and political scientists, we find this book a depository of important considerations, shedding light on a complex scenario. We appreciate the notion of (inter)genres as a source of useful insights, both theoretical and methodological, in dealing with complex knowledge systems where appropriate interpersonal and public communication is the key to access and develop true science, preserving it from the distortions of excessive technocracy as well as the fallacies of those new forms of superstition hiding, for instance, in distorted uses of the web.

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## Interview

“I don't think the world was ever disenchanting.  
It still is enchanting.”

Excerpts from an Interview with Philip Pullman  
(Part 1)

Zsuzsanna Tóth

University of Szeged, Hungary



**The interviewee:** Philip Pullman (1946- ) is a British writer of children's and young adult literature. His best-known work is a fantasy fiction based on Judeo-Christian narratives; it is entitled *His Dark Materials*, consisting of *Northern Lights* [*The Golden Compass* in the USA] (1995), *The Subtle Knife* (1997), and *The Amber Spyglass* (2000). In trans-textual relation with English canonical works of literature, among others by John Milton and William Blake, *His Dark Materials* stands out as an instructive coming-of-age story and a bold criticism of religious fundamentalism. Consequently, these novels have been honoured by several literary prizes, such as

the Carnegie Medal and the Whitbread Book of the Year Award; have caused indignation in particular Christian communities in the USA and the UK; and have aroused the interest of scholars of the humanities, especially litterateurs.

**The interviewer:** Zsuzsanna Tóth is a PhD candidate in English Literature at the University of Szeged, in Hungary. In recent years she has paid attention to the representations of the religious experience of completeness without the presence of the Judeo-Christian God in *His Dark Materials*. She is currently working on her PhD dissertation, a comprehensive analysis of the way Pullman's fiction is related to a contemporary social process, the so-called 're-enchantment' (the increasing popularity of alternative forms of religiosity because of the increasing unpopularity of Christian institutions) in Anglophone societies. The majority of her pre-arranged questions to Philip Pullman are connected to this academic research.

**The interview:** After an exchange of a few emails since July 2014, the interview was finally held on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2015, in a rainy Monday afternoon. On Pullman's kind suggestion, the conversation took place in The Eagle & Child Pub (the venue of the Inklings, an Oxford writers' group, including J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, from 1930s to 1960s), in Oxford, United Kingdom.

**Key words:** Self-representation, criticism of organized religion, superstition, inspiration, classification of literature, school of morals, criticism of literature, freedom of speech, *His Dark Materials* trilogy

**Tóth:** Do you have a consciously built self-representation [for being an author of literary fiction]? That, I mean, do you plan in advance what you will answer to some issues?

**Pullman:** No, I try *not to* plan. Because I found over many-many years of writing that I write *better*, it's more *fun*, it's more *interesting*, when I don't know what's gonna happen next, when I don't know what's gonna come up in the course of writing a story. So I prefer just to start right here, as if I'm beginning walking to the dark.

**T:** Mmhmm.

**P:** And I find always that something interesting there or I see something where I wouldn't expect it. And if it's interesting, I follow it and see where it takes me. When I first began to write novels in my very early twenties, I did make the mistake of making a plan. I thought one had to make a plan. It's obvious. You're doing a big thing, you have to make a plan. So I spent six months making a very long, careful plan of a novel I was going to write. In the end I was so bored I just threw away and wrote another novel, a different novel altogether. Ever since that I have never written... never had a plan.

**T:** Okay. I meant the question that when you [as a public figure] are *asked*, like in this situation about any issues, political issues, or about literature, or education, and in these cases, do you have to or should you plan in advance what to answer to these questions?

**P:** Again no. Because I prefer to be spontaneous, and I hope if I can answer spontaneously, I will probably tell the truth, more likely to tell the truth, than if I prepared a series of answers beforehand. Besides, a conversation, the interview, the discussion can develop in different directions and I don't want to shut those all before we begin.

**T:** I see. Have you ever said anything that you later minded? That 'Oh, I shouldn't have said it'?

**P:** [Laughing] Yeah, once I said, in answer to a question about belief in God, I think I said there is no evidence; there is no evidence to the existence of God. And the interviewer said, "Well, what sort of evidence would satisfy you?" And I said, "Scientific evidence is the only thing that makes any difference. It's the only one that matters." I wish I haven't said that, now. 'Cause I don't believe it is the only one that matters. There are other kinds of evidence as well. I mean there's evidence of, of experience, spontaneous experience, there's evidence from one's emotions and feelings, from the testimony of people who are not one's self but who seem to be reliable. There's all sorts of evidence of things not just purely scientific evidence.

**T:** I see, thank you.

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**T:** In *His Dark Materials* you have a very strong criticism of organized religion. While you were working on *His Dark Materials*, did you have a thought that you yourself censored or omitted later, because you found it too rude or too harsh?

**P:** Excellent and interesting question. No, I don't think I did. As I went through the book, as the story developed, and I saw what Lyra was fighting, I became more and more determined to criticize it as strongly as I could. And I don't think there's anything I was holding back or... No, no.

**T:** Okay. There are many similarities between you and William Blake. One of them is that both of you see Jesus as the embodiment of every virtue, and both of you define God, the Father as a tyrant and the oppressor. And my next question is concerned with this statement that in 2010 you along with others signed an open letter against the visit of Pope Benedict XVI. [1]

**P:** That's right. Yeah.

**T:** And now there is another pope, since 2013, Pope Francis, who has become famous for his humility, his concern for the poor, and yet he says that, let me quote him, "It is absurd to say you follow Jesus Christ but reject the Church." [2] What is your opinion about this pope?

**P:** Well, I was critical of the visit of Benedict, not because it was Benedict, not because it was a pope, I don't mind popes coming to this country. But I don't think we should pay for it.

**T:** I see.

**P:** If they want to come, they should pay their own way. But he was a guest of this country and I thought, well, we don't need to do that.

**T:** I didn't think of that.

**P:** No, that's all right, it wasn't very clear in the articles that came out. As far as Pope Francis is concerned, he seems to be a different kind of man altogether. As you say, a much more humble man, a much more... much less interested in the splendour and the grandeur and the wealth of the Church, and more concerned with the poor. And this is a good thing. I'm sure he has several points on which I would disagree with him, but he seems to me like a good man.

**T:** Do you think that he will bring or establish new reforms in, for instance, the clerical hierarchy of the Church?

**P:** Well, he has, I think he says he'd like to, but the clerical hierarchy of the Church has had two thousand years to become extremely strong, extremely resistant to any change that diminishes their power and their wealth and their glory. So I think he's got a struggle on his hands. It won't be easy for him.

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**T:** Do you say that Christian organized religion, I mean the Anglican Church, or the Catholic Church, becomes less and less significant now in the United Kingdom?

**P:** I think the influence of the Catholic Church is becoming less powerful than it was. Not only in Britain, but also in Ireland. Particularly because of the issue of child abuse, by... sexual abuse by Catholic priests, which has caused a great scandal, a *huge* scandal, and the Church is much less respected than it was. A sign of it you see in a recent vote that Ireland had in favour of same-sex marriage, which would have been *impossible* to imagine only ten years ago. But things have changed so much that the influence of the Catholic Church has become less and less important.

**T:** But, well... the Catholic Church and the Anglican Church will *never* disappear. Don't you think?

**P:** I don't think they will ever disappear. One reason is that they do, at their best, what religion has always done; I suppose they provide comfort and consolation for people in times of trouble, they provide a sort of series of rites of passage, you know, staging posts in life: baptism, marriage, death, funeral, and so on. And the

Church will always do that sort of thing. Nothing has replaced it yet and I can't see it being replaced for a long time.

**T:** Okay. Thank you.

**P:** The problem, I mean you might have a question about something, the problem with the Church is not what it believes, the problem with the Church when it gets its hands on political power. That's the problem.

**T:** Yes. Very early Dante had the same problem with the Catholic Church.

**P:** Dante. [Laughing]

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**T:** Do you think that people need a little every-day magic in the form of superstition?

**P:** Yes. I do. I am very superstitious in spite of being very rational about things, yes, I am superstitious. I know it's absurd but I think it's... it is something that helps us with things that aren't entirely predictable. People who have *risky* occupations, sailors, actors, are very superstitious quite often. You don't know what storms the ocean is gonna bring so you don't whistle on a ship because it's very bad luck. You don't know how the audience is gonna behave tonight so you wish your fellow actors "Good luck!" before you go on the stage, but you mustn't say "Good luck!," you say "Break a leg!" Things like that. I see it in myself, I see it in other people, and I think there's absolutely nothing wrong with it.

**T:** Is there any particular superstition that you believe in?

**P:** Yes. I have one superstition about my books... while I'm using this pen. When I write my books. Why? Because it's a *lucky* pen.

**T:** I see.

**P:** Why is it a lucky pen? I don't know. It's worked before, it must work again. Well, a lot of people have superstitions. Do you know the story about the physicist... What was the name? Niels Bohr?

**T:** No, sorry.

**P:** One of the great figures of quantum physics in the early twentieth century. He had a horseshoe nailed up over outside his laboratory. And somebody said, 'Surely you don't believe in that?', and he said 'No, I don't believe in it, but they tell me it works whether you believe in it or not.' So, I think that's right.

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**T:** You have been asked several times about writing a story and inspiration. Once you said a very-very interesting definition of how you are inspired, and in completely mystical terms. And can I read it aloud?

**P:** Yes, please.

**T:** "As I write, I find myself drifting into a sort of *Platonism*, as if the story is there already like a pure form in some gaseous elsewhere." [3] So, someone has the impression that there is this sense of obligation, a 'should' that you cannot escape from, and the author's task seems to bring the story into the world, into the surface, and to give it flesh, and so the teller is subordinate to the tale. So, given that you are a materialist, it seems to be a little bit strange.

**P:** Well, yes, I'm a materialist, but matter is more mysterious than we think. And matter is *conscious*, for example.

**T:** Yes?

**P:** We know that matter is conscious because I'm made of matter and I'm conscious. And the same is true of you. And that being the case, why should we think that my pen is not conscious, for example? My pen has done a lot of work, and it has been in my hand while I've been writing lots of things.

**T:** [Laughing]

**P:** Now this is maybe, this is where it becomes a little fanciful. But... I am superstitious, I do accept things like that, you know, the word 'enchantment' came up earlier on, didn't that?

**T:** Yes.

**P:** To me the world, I don't think the world was ever disenchanting. It still is enchanted. So I'm quite happy with that sort of thing. I'm quite happy to be thought a mystic or whatever it is.

**T:** In this Platonic concept, there is a kind of phenomenon called 'illumination' or 'epiphany,' and would you define this sort of Platonism, while you are writing, as epiphany?

**P:** An epiphany is a sudden realization of something...

**T:** Mmhmm.

**P:** ... Yes. Well, the Platonism that I am conscious of when I write is a little slower than that. Sometimes, though, after you've been thinking about a problem for a long time: "How does she get from here to there? What is it, why does she go there? What's it making her go there? I want her to be there, but I can't... she doesn't seem to want it. What is it?" I mean, you think about it and you write down various suggestions and you go for a walk and you come to the pub and you have a drink and everything.... And *eventually*, when you're sitting in your chair, and you suddenly: 'Oh, yes, that's the reason, of course, she has to go there to find him! Why didn't I think of that before?' That feels like an epiphany. But it's also the result of a lot of thinking and a lot of wondering, a lot of trying things out. But it often does come suddenly.

**T:** So the key to this epiphany is divine creative power.

**P:** Yeah. Things can come very soon, very easily, very quickly, or they can come after a lot—a long period of effort. But the recognition when they do come is identical, I think. For example, the question of daemons in *His Dark Materials*. I couldn't get the story started until I realized that Lyra had a daemon. Whom she could talk to, and they could argue, and discuss things, and it was... It makes telling the story a lot easier. But when I thought... and first all the daemons changed shape, adults' as well as children's. And then I wrote a chapter or so, I thought, "Well, what's the purpose of this? What are these daemons doing in the story? How are they helping?" And: "I don't know. They helped *me* write it, but they don't help the story at all." And suddenly, I realized, yes, they do, because children's daemons can change and adults' demons don't. [4] That's... that was a real epiphany. Of that sort.

**T:** I see.

**P:** But it had come because I'd been thinking about it and thinking about it and thinking about it.

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The Part 2 of this interview will be published in this year's Winter issue (25-2) of the *ESSE Messenger*.

## Notes

[1] "Harsh judgements on the pope and religion," *The Guardian*, 15 September 2010.

Accessed on 20 February 2016,

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/15/harsh-judgments-on-pope-religion>.

[2] "Pope's Mass: It's absurd to say you follow Christ, but reject the Church," *ROME REPORTS, All the news and videos on the Pope and the Vatican*, 30 January 2014.

Accessed on 20 February 2016, <http://www.romereports.com/2014/01/30/pope-s-mass-it-s-absurd-to-say-you-follow-christ-but-reject-the-church>.

[3] Quoted from: No author, *New Humanist*, vol. 117, issue 1 (March 2002): no page. In Hugh Rayment-Pickard, *The Devil's Account. Philip Pullman and Christianity* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2004), 24.

[4] Quoted from: No author, *New Humanist*, vol. 117, issue 1 (March 2002): no page. In Hugh Rayment-Pickard, *The Devil's Account. Philip Pullman and Christianity* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2004), 24.

[4] In *His Dark Materials* this difference between the ability of children's daemons and that of adults' daemons signs a natural passage from childhood to adulthood, from ignorance to experience and knowledge: growing up.

## Mapping Black Studies in Spain

### New Methodologies and Empowering Critical Practices

Mar Gallego  
University of Huelva<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. Introduction

The institutionalization of Black Studies has come about through a gradual but assertive shift within Spanish academia over the last two decades. Mainly coming from either Anglophone or Francophone disciplines, the impact of Black Studies has been crucial for developing a multicultural agenda, both in specialized research and in new curricular trends for many Spanish scholars in recent times. My main argument ties up the proliferation of Black Studies scholarship in this country to the adoption and development of new methodologies that attempt to cover a wide spectrum, from race-oriented to intersectionality theories.

Moreover, I would like to investigate the ways in which these new methodological approaches have ultimately affected the very texture of Spanish scholarship, providing the suitable scenario whereby to enact a much needed reflection upon the uses (and abuses) of Spanish identity and gender politics engaging with ongoing debates on migration and European convergence. Thus, I intend to chart, on the one hand, the significant historical evolution of the field in Spain, but also the divisions along disciplinary lines on which the Spanish academic profession is based,<sup>2</sup> and on the other, the way in which Black Studies have also been instrumental in empowering generations of scholars and critics to shape alternative notions of subjectivity and belonging in the midst of the current redefinition of what it means to be European in a context of crisis.

In 2007 I first tackled the topic in a research seminar on “European new perspectives on the Black Atlantic” at the University of Huelva.<sup>3</sup> Back then, my research targeted both English and French-speaking disciplines, but seven years later, as a continuation of this topic, I decided to focus only on English-speaking

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<sup>2</sup> I would argue that the adoption of Black Studies paradigms should have brought down frontiers between disciplines, but that does not seem to have been the case in Spain.

<sup>3</sup> This Exploratory Workshop was funded by the European Science Foundation and by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Research, whose main aim was to “(re-) examine the concept of the Black Atlantic and . . . the impact it had had on our Cosmopolitan societies” (Ledent and Cuder 2012: 12).

scholars, coming either from Black British or African American Studies as their curricular origins, especially aware of the legacy of Paul Gilroy's influential paradigm of the Black Atlantic that certainly seems to speak to Spanish faculty. Judith Misrahi-Barak (2012: 253) aptly captures the importance of Gilroy's innovative enterprise "to correlate postcolonialism and African American studies and foreground the circulation of ideas and people over four centuries".<sup>1</sup> In the Spanish context of the time, Gilroy's study fostered groundbreaking alliances between Postcolonial and African American Studies. Indeed, Gilroy's theoretical framework continues to inform Spanish scholars' claims on Spain's prominent role in the contemporary critical debates on the African diaspora. The other theoretical perspectives that have profoundly marked Spanish scholars' endeavours are gender-oriented, being either Black Feminism, Black Masculinity studies or intersectionality theories.

In order to evaluate the impact of Black Studies, I conducted a survey among the colleagues in the field for over two months, and what I am presenting here are some of its most noteworthy results that will undoubtedly serve to clarify the current state of Black Studies and their degree of institutionalisation in Spain, especially after the introduction of new curricular plans initiated in most Spanish universities around 2009. The survey was sent to colleagues selected as key informants<sup>2</sup>, who have been (and will remain) active in the field for a significant number of years. Out of a pool of fourteen scholars, eleven actually replied. Interestingly enough, they are all women, so we can even talk about a gendered perspective underlying the investigation.<sup>3</sup> The survey was divided into three major interest areas: theoretical considerations, more practical information about the teaching of subjects/modules, and a third part concerning the application of innovative teaching methodologies, under the umbrella of the changes that the process of European convergence has undoubtedly occasioned in the Spanish context.

## 2. Theoretical insights

Focusing firstly on research and how their research practices have been moulded by the theoretical insights provided by Black Studies conceptualizations, most responses textualize the way in which these paradigms are crucial and pervasive in their research (e.g., Tally), even to the point of having changed their discipline by generating a stronger framework for comparative analysis (Cuder), and a fresh perspective, with the introduction of new topics and writers (García-Ramírez). Especially relevant has been the impact of Gilroy's (1993) *Black Atlantic* theory,

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<sup>1</sup> On this topic, also see John Gruesser's excellent study *Confluences: Postcolonialism, African American Literary Studies and the Black Atlantic* (2005).

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1.

<sup>3</sup> I sincerely express my gratitude to the colleagues that responded to my call, for their collaboration and valuable opinions on the drafted version of this article: Justine Tally (University of La Laguna), Pilar Cuder (University of Huelva), Isabel Soto (UNED), Marta Sofía López (University of León), Olga Barrios and Ana M<sup>a</sup> Fraile (both from the University of Salamanca), Silvia Castro and Inmaculada Pineda (from the University of Málaga), Emilia Durán (University of Oviedo), Paula García-Ramírez (University of Jaén) and Asunción Aragón (University of Cádiz).

which has determined many of them to be in constant dialogue with that critical axis ever since (Soto), facilitating the interpretation of the work of Black Atlantic authors. More specifically, there has been a shift of focus from African American literature (or Black British for that matter) to a wider area, that of the connections among the literatures of the African diaspora (Fraile), and especially of issues of diasporic identity and literatures (Durán).

The informants also consider these theoretical principles as a key to reading the overlapping Black cultures all over the world, since they keep influencing each other, despite their multifariousness (López); these theoretical principles are also viewed as extremely useful in dealing with Afro-Latinidades in the Americas and with Black Atlantic feminisms (Durán), contemporary African American drama (Barrios and Pineda), and the application of race/ethnicity categories to their research (Aragón). In sum, the research of the informants has been considerably enhanced by these theoretical paradigms, which have increased awareness of and interest in patterns of exclusion that are central to Black Studies (Soto and Castro). I completely endorse Fraile's view that "Spanish scholars have participated actively and passionately in the shift toward diaspora paradigms in the last decades."

Only a few of the informants explain that the Black Atlantic models are indeed productive but need to be reassessed due to certain oversights that characterize them: the exclusion of Langston Hughes and, more egregiously, of non-Anglophone nations (Soto), the concentration on only the other two sides of the triangle - African and European - (López), or the neglected gender perspective as noted by Aragón, Gallego, Cuder and Castro, to name a few (see Gallego 2012: 233-234).

It is clear that Black Studies is still a limited field in Spain, and what derives from the survey is that some colleagues are not even familiar with other researchers' contributions to Black Studies as a whole, or prefer to cite African and African American scholars rather than Spanish ones (Barrios). Soto also observes the lack of acknowledgement of Spanish scholars and the way in which the teaching and administrative loads of University teachers in Spain do not encourage sustained research. However, I would argue that their contributions have effected a significant change in Black Studies, expanding and enhancing them. Dating as far back as 1995, as Tally reminds us, Spanish scholars initiated an "ever-expanding transnational dialogue with American scholars" with the first CAAR (Collegium for African American Research) conference that took place in Tenerife. This initiative was followed in 1996 and in 2002 by the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conferences on the African Diaspora, organized by Barrios and held at the University of Salamanca.

- Despite all odds, there are many relevant scholars as documented by this article. The informants (mentioned in the parentheses below) pointed out the general topics to which these scholars, whose names are given in the References, contributed:
- New perspectives on Morrison using sophisticated critical approaches by theoretical authors like Foucault, Bakhtin, the French Feminists, by

Cultural Studies and New Historicism, and Gender Studies (Tally, Fraile, Gallego);

- Black British and Black Canadian writing and the relations between African American culture and writing, as well as with British culture (Cuder, Fraile);
- Exclusion of Iberian powers from accounts of Atlantic slave trade and race-making from the early modern period onwards (Soto);
- Multidisciplinary approaches to Black theatre in the US and South Africa (Barrios);
- Emergence and consolidation of Afro-European Studies as a new field (López);
- African Canadian writing through the lens of “glocality”, emphasizing its relational character, but also specificities and different African Canadian sensibilities (Fraile);
- Engagement in wholeness, spirituality and healing practices (Castro);
- Women’s performative art and practices in the Dominican and other Caribbean diasporas (Durán);
- Influence of black music in African American Drama (Pineda);
- Growing visibility of African literatures in Spanish, progressively incorporated into the international canon; establishing connections with Hispanic Black literatures in the Caribbean and Latin America (López and Gallego);
- Expansion of the field of African Literature in English (García-Ramírez);
- Focus on the construction of sexual and gender identities, migrant and diasporic subjects (Aragón, Gallego, Cuder, Castro, Durán).

In addition, García-Ramírez also draws our attention to the contribution of web pages that are promoting these studies among Spaniards: <http://www.africafundacion.org/>, <http://www.guinguinbali.com/>, or Casa Africa. Among the researchers, there are interesting groups like the AfroEuropeans already mentioned or The Autonomous University of Madrid research groups on African Studies.

### 3. Teaching practices: Subjects/Modules

Moving now to the influence of Black Studies paradigms on their teaching practices, most colleagues coincided on the inspiration these paradigms have provided, pointing out once again the enduring influence of Gilroy’s vision (López) to open new perspectives that, once there, could not be easily overlooked or ignored. The questioning of the dominant status quo provides students with a new and broader approach to literature, a “mainstream” cultural production (Tally), also offering a more integrated viewpoint that does away with constraining binary oppositions, in favour of multifaceted and polyhedric interpretations. As mentioned above, there has been a shift of focus also in the teaching practice, from African American/Black British literature to a wider area that includes the links between the literatures of the African diaspora, and

especially the issues of diasporic identity and literature (Cuder, Fraile, Gallego, Barrios, Castro, Soto).

My research was also meant to reassess the state of current programs and subjects dealing with Black Studies or African diasporic literatures and cultures over the last five years, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, whether compulsory or optional courses. Comparing these statistics with the 2007 tables, one may notice that the number of subjects has certainly declined, which clearly is in conflict with the need for more courses that address these crucial topics at this precise historical juncture. Nonetheless, in general terms, we can say it has decreased mostly because the new degree in English Studies has drastically reduced the number of both obligatory and elective courses, mainly due to the readjustment of the curriculum from five to four years, and to a smaller number of electives.<sup>1</sup>

For instance, in the cases of the Universities of La Laguna and Huelva, this number has dwindled as a consequence of the reduction of courses – compulsory and elective – in American Literature (Tally, Gallego), whereas at the University of León it has been reduced from two to one subject within Postcolonial Studies at the undergraduate level (López), and in Málaga it has also been cut down, which favoured the promotion of colleagues who have research interests that are not in Black Studies (Pineda). At the University of Oviedo it has also clearly decreased (Durán). However, a special case is the University of Jaén, where the number of Black Studies-oriented subjects has increased with the introduction of new degrees, but García-Ramírez fears another reduction with the coming structure of 3+2 years of study. Aragón says it has remained the same at the University of Cádiz. Practically, there are very few required courses that appear in the syllabi of the various Spanish universities.

At the graduate level, there are fewer courses taught at Master's or PhD level than in 2007. However, their number seems to have increased at the University of Málaga, because of the implementation of the distinction between Master's and Doctoral programmes that started in the academic year 2006-07 (Castro). An interesting example of a diverging pattern can be found at the University of Salamanca, where the number of doctoral subjects on African diasporic literature has also been restrained, but the total load in Black Studies teaching has “expanded to a wider audience as part of a compulsory module at undergraduate level for under 200 students per year” (Fraile). One would certainly hope that the number of research and teaching networks among faculty members would increase our awareness of the need to create and sustain more undergraduate and graduate courses that include Black Studies dimensions. Wishful thinking?

#### 4. Innovative teaching methodologies

Part of my initial argument was that the teaching load was necessarily linked to the introduction of particularly innovative classroom practices or curricular innovations. Most responses cover a wide range: Soto thinks that “merely

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<sup>1</sup> Most Humanities degrees consisted of five years up to 2009, right now BA degrees cover four years. However, the conservative government is preparing yet another educational reform that will reduce it even further to 3 years, plus a two-year Master's degree.

introducing racial issues to students was innovative,” and I adhere to her view, because in post-Franco Spain these issues were notoriously brought to the forefront in the first place. In present-day Spain the main contention continues to be that they are extremely relevant, as they contribute to encouraging one’s respect for otherness and to making one more aware of the challenges of diversity (given Spain’s continuous contact with migratory movements/subjects coming directly from Africa and many other origins, plus our colonial past).

Asking questions about race and ethnicity is necessary in order to understand notions like diversity and multiculturalism (Castro), and to promote respect for “otherness” and “other” cultures (Tally), as well as to highlight the fact that these discussions help to create parallelisms with Spain. Most of the informants share the view that the use of current events and films facilitates the comprehension of the complex historical and political situation of different countries and lifestyles. Also, López argues that the use of literary, visual or critical texts of different linguistic origins (mainly Spanish, English and French) has helped her students visualize that there indeed exists an Afro-European emergent identity.

As far as specific innovative methodologies are concerned, most contributions advocate the employment of interactive classes with group or individual presentations, or the use of a specific Moodle page with diverse activities, such as audiovisual material, academic databases (Fraile or Durán), or interactive forums (Tally). Nevertheless, these methods are not devised for or applied to Black Studies subjects only, and therefore are not necessarily original. Other practices are worth mentioning: Pineda describes her experience in an educational innovation group, in which a wide array of tools is used to improve teaching.<sup>1</sup> Aragón also works with a range of course materials: documents from the press, government, NGOs, films, fiction, videos, documentaries, etc.

Moreover, most colleagues agree on the usefulness of seminar discussions with respect to the ongoing process of immigration into Spain and its increasing ethnic diversity, as more African immigrants flock in, so there is a growing black population in Spain. As Barrios and Tally aptly remark, to create parallelisms with the Spanish situation could be one of the most significant objectives in our adoption of Black Studies perspectives. Moreover, the seminar discussions foster the students’ awareness of these issues and Spain’s role in them (Soto).<sup>2</sup>

García-Ramírez indicates the existence of an increasing number of new materials and textbooks in the field used by professors, but most of them are informal compilations (literary, filmic, musical, etc.) handed out to students, but never edited in some regular way (López). Pineda insists on the website and the blog they use in their teaching practices, which include prezis (presentations) online.<sup>3</sup> But I should also add that there seem to be no specific materials dealing

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<sup>1</sup> For example, a website (<http://www.masmultimedia.moonfruit.com/>) and a blog (<http://masmultimedia.wordpress.com/>), where they discuss their experiences. The website also has a photo gallery with pictures of their students using those tools.

<sup>2</sup> I completely agree with Soto’s vision.

<sup>3</sup> The website has over 1000 visitors, which means that many teachers and students in Higher education are interested in this topic.

with these topics produced to in Spain; this is another issue which should be food for thought.<sup>1</sup>

Whether these innovative practices have been propitiated by the process of European convergence or not remains unclear; some (López and Durán) support the idea, but certain informants (Tally, Fraile) point out that these practices are not necessarily related to the EU, since they were working in the field before the European convergence policies. Especially due to the financial crisis Spain is facing right now, there is a movement backwards: huge classes (over 100 students at some universities), staff cuts, no replacements for retired or sick teachers, no promotions, and the overall effect has been the seemingly intentional reduction of subjects in the curricula (Castro).

Focusing specifically on innovative teaching methodologies and the relation to European convergence, Durán argues that there has been a growing interest in the use of new technologies in the classroom. For Aragón, the process of European convergence has facilitated the movement of people across the EU and, with it, the interest in multiculturalism. More materials (books, manuals, reports, etc.) on multicultural education are easily available, which can be quite useful in our teaching practice.

I think it would be of interest to acknowledge two responses that spring from the informants' personal experiences outside the academia: Soto recounts her experience when watching the Venezuelan film *Pelo Malo* that had reviews overwhelmingly focusing on the boy's sexuality, but not a single one picked up the racial question, which for her was most pressing in the film. This leads her to conclude that broad social sensitivity to racial matters needs to be strengthened, but she fears a step back (or several steps back) in this and other social matters as a result of the current central government's policies and cutbacks.

López also narrates how her research group adopted the term "Afro-European" from an activist in the Spanish Black Panthers, obviously inheritors of the African American experience. This is just anecdotic, but her experience outside "the teaching machine" is that Black communities in Spain are part of the global network of Black cultures all over the world, and that different languages and discourses produced within this wide framework are being constantly redeployed by Black cultural activists and producers in our country.

## 5. Conclusion

Despite the limited scope of the survey, all of the respondents subscribe to a similar opinion in the end, supporting the idea that Black Studies or Black Atlantic theories are essential for exploring the current process of interrogation about citizenship and interculturality in Spain, as well as for acknowledging the increasing cultural diversity in this country (Pineda) and in our classrooms, for fostering critical thinking and creating the theoretical tools for understanding

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<sup>1</sup> Arguably, this may fall out of the scope of our teaching in English, as Fraile explains. Nevertheless, I argue that some of our teaching materials would also contribute to comprehending diversity issues in our multicultural classrooms, where we also encounter Erasmus students coming from many European countries, according to Aragón.

migrant struggles and needs (Durán), and also for dealing with “difference and race” (Castro).

All in all, I contend that the evolution of the field over these last five years in Spain has been far from promising, as the presence of Black diasporic studies has been diminished in Spanish universities, and there is an urgent need to reinforce their critical currency in the Spanish academia and its institutions. In the wake of a presumed post-racial era heralded by Barack Obama’s election, my approach to the impact of Black Studies paradigms on Spanish scholars puts forward two central recommendations: firstly, that academics should increase their collaboration in order to incorporate this vibrant body of theoretical and teaching practices into the current definitions of what it means to be Spanish, and, by extension, European in the twenty-first century; and second, that they should formulate a distinctive discourse on ongoing processes of migration and shifting allegiances in times of financial crisis, and thus critically intervene in the shaping of alternative politics, both at the national and global level. As committed scholars who challenge canonical models and cultural prescriptions, academics are called to claim human dignity and intellectual honesty in the face of corruption, the rise of nationalism, of new forms of racism and xenophobia, etc. More importantly, our ethical endeavours need to be reactivated in order to grant visibility to those more vulnerable, by throwing light on the darkness of dire times.

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## APPENDIX 1: BLACK STUDIES SURVEY

Dear colleague,

This survey has been designed to assess the current state of Black Studies and their degree of institutionalisation in Spain, especially after the introduction of new curricular plans initiated in most Spanish universities around 2009. The results of this survey will be presented at “The Future of Black Studies” conference hosted by the University of Bremen next April.

### 1. Theoretical framework

- In what degree do you think that Black Studies or Black Atlantic paradigms have influenced your teaching practice?
- To what extent have these theories moulded your own research?
- In which ways would you say that your research has expanded/enhanced these models?
- Can you see a significant shift in those models due to Spanish scholars' contributions? Which would you consider crucial contributions to the field?

### 2. Subjects/Modules

- What subjects have you taught over the last five years, dealing with Black Studies or African diasporan literatures and cultures at the undergraduate level? Are they compulsory or optional courses?
- And at the graduate level?
- Has the number of those subjects increased or decreased since 2009 with respect to your previous teaching load? Why?

### 3. Innovative teaching methodologies

- Have you introduced particularly innovative classroom practices or curricular innovations in any of those subjects? If so, specify.
- Would you say that those practices have helped to produce new material addressing the actual needs of multilingual and multiethnic Spain? If so, what material?
- Would you say that those innovative practices have been influenced by the process of European convergence?

- -Would you support the view that Black Studies or Black Atlantic theories are still helpful to explore the current process of interrogation about citizenship and interculturality in Spain?

Please return it by *March 15th 2014*.

Thank you so much for your valuable time and your interest in the survey.

## Guest Writers

Andrew J. Power



Andrew J. Power is Lecturer of Shakespeare and Early Modern Literature at Saint Louis University – Madrid Campus. He has previously taught at Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin, and the University of Cyprus where he was Visiting Lecturer in Shakespeare and Early Modern Drama in 2012. He is the editor of *Late Shakespeare, 1608-1613* with Rory Loughnane and of *The Yearbook of English Studies* 2014, special issue on ‘Caroline Literature’ with Rory Loughnane and Peter Sillitoe. His forthcoming monograph is entitled *Stages of Madness: Sin, Sickness and Seneca in Shakespearean Drama* (Peter Lang, forthcoming) and he is currently editing a collection of essays entitled *Early Shakespeare* with Rory Loughnane. He is the Research Dramaturge for *The New*

*Oxford Shakespeare* for whom he is compiling casting charts, doubling lists and props lists for all of the new *Complete Works* (2016).

- mooncalf -

a luminescent curve,  
a crescent curl  
a belly full of promise  
a ready cradle for a girl

an eye half lidded  
a smile on its side  
an arc of light under a door ajar

-by moonlight-  
as I come  
(trepidatious)  
to find out who you are

- Alice -

If the fixed stars should fall, or fade,  
or twinkle out,  
My love for you burns undiminished

If the world should be all ice and  
man no more,  
My love would be preserved

Should deserts grow and forests die,  
My love is undiminished

Should words fail and music rest...

- I love you -

Like a symphony but more than  
music

Like a sonnet but more than words

For an age but more than life

In my veins and more than blood

Perhaps more than I should

## Robert Moscaliuc



Robert Moscaliuc is currently a PhD student at the University of Turin, Italy, and is conducting research in the field of contemporary American literature. His current research focuses on the literature produced and developed in the aftermath of the American *War on Terror* in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Robert Moscaliuc holds a BA in English and Romanian languages and literature from the University of Cluj-Napoca (Romania), a first-level MA in American Studies from the University of Turin, and a second MA in Modern Languages and Literature from the same university. Along the years he has conducted research in various fields including the ethics of fiction, the AIDS crisis of the 1980s in the United States, and representations of Italian culture in American literature and film. He has recently conducted part of his current research at the City University of New York as a visiting research scholar.

### Strangely Vivid Dawn

#### *A novel in a series of moments and intermissions*

##### Moment One

I'm going to prepare the dinner *myself*, I told him doing my best not to sound apathetic, pressing stubbornly against that last word of the sentence. We'll have some people over, you'll see, it will be nice.

I awaited some sort of reaction, but none came, or roughly none. What I got instead was his head turning unhurriedly upwards from where it had been standing, resting unnaturally on his right shoulder, in a failed attempt to appear affectionate? Had he moved it sooner or faster I would have read more into it, sensed some eagerness at least. But no, the head moved with the taciturnity and intent of a door opening and closing somewhere on the upper floors of a deserted office building, the yawn of workers on the night shift. The head climbed through the smoke of the cigarette leaning miserably against the ashtray full of crushed butts and fossilized ashes. His cigarettes, I thought the instant I became aware of the choking smell of smoke, the ones he had once sworn to let go of (for my sake?) in a moment of utter felicity we had both shared at one point.

Occasionally, the chockfull ashtray had to be gyrated and the room spun with it. We took turns at turning it because apparently none of us had the courage or the will to empty it. There was nothing else left to do anyway, our well of desire depleted, our love vocabulary scarce. The evening sun spoke patronizingly through the dusty blinds, its speech muffled, punctuated by passing cars and the singing voice coming from the bedroom. Nothing's even right or wrong, the singing voice came and went in waves, elephant in the room goes boom.

I tried to imagine the scene, observed by a quiet audience who had previously paid to swallow the thickness of our kitchen scene dissolution, our skin darkened, once, by the lack of lighting, and then again, by their desire to smear us with their expectations. What *could* two men like us do within the confines of this

sanctimonious kitchen except grow gills and play fish? Surely, we couldn't enact their fetish for submissive wives and dominant husbands whose mental breakdowns constituted a shared family value.

Our knees caressed each other shyly underneath the table as if on their own volition, following a script over which we had no control. I felt as if we were being watched, not only by that voyeuristic audience, but also by a presence I sometimes sensed lurking deep within you, one that could detach itself from you and slide just far enough to observe the scene from a critical distance. A row of grimy coffee mugs stood in between us, an imaginary frontier erected out of a familiar xenophobia, brown testimonies penned on their innards, their inherited grief replicated infinitely downwards into the shiny celestial black of the table top. Their long white shadows like the feet of Dali's sumptuous elephants caught in gracious expectation.

Sitting around the kitchen table, we were like mourners on the rim of a hole in the ground throwing one last look at the coffin being gradually eclipsed by mud and thoughts alike, and the fear that we were going to be next.

We had been at it for a while, our tenuous relationship, and splayed there, on the table, in blunt contrast to me but most likely indiscernible to him, stood, unsheathed, my attempts at reviving it.

The mugs, as the fossilized ashes in the tacky ashtray, had been there for a while, weeks maybe, I couldn't recall. They, too, seemed possessed by significant amounts of volition. Mugs like cupped hands that had once held something, carried something to the mouth, an offering of food and unguarded indulgence, and with it the guilt of having gulped something foul, pleasurable to the tongue but foul for the rest, the portentous sign of an abundance of clutter piling up inside the guts and the mind. There was no place for them in the kitchen sink since that space too had been saturated with unwashed dishes, and not even on top of the washing machine that stood next to sink. I had developed the habit of washing only those on the top when I ran out of dishes while those on the bottom lingered there for weeks on end to the point where they seemed to clean themselves. Bread crumbs would vanish on the spot, mayonnaise and other sauces in the same grouping would put up a fight at first and then dilute resolutely, admitting defeat.

A *dinner party*, having some friends come over to that place I had come to see as our place even though he, gracious boyfriend, didn't spend too much time in it, was the ultimate comeback I presumed. Scrawled on the stonewashed fabric of that week's impending dull routine the idea of a dinner party shined with the promise of finally having something to think and fuss about for the following few days. The subdued excitement it brought resembled that of Broadway revivals, and it went in hand in hand with the kind of last resort actions suggested by the newlywed's guide to a happy marriage. Except there was no such guide for us. It was up to us to write one, and there I was, preparing the way.

The things I would do for him, you couldn't even imagine, as I can't imagine him doing the same things for me. Were we ever going to be as good for each other as we were in each other's fantasies, in the books we read before falling asleep? We lacked the grace of admitting it but we were more in love with the people we were reading about than with each other. And the people we were reading about sometimes happened to be the same. That parallelism, I believe, gave us a sense of participation in building a world that pertained to none of us individually, but

which belonged to the both of us as a couple. It was our way of coming together. There, at least, we smiled at each other.

No smile *here*, imagine, not even the idea of a smile took shape on his face, no compromise, and with this lack came the thought that we're going to go through this misery together, that long ago we had accepted it, armed ourselves against it. No reach of hands across the table, no patting on the shoulder, just the filmy veneer of that smoke coming out of his nostrils and mouth, turning him into a magical creature consumed by the overuse of his powers. Heaped on the chair, the smoke being the only thing that moved, he resembled a steam engine in recess after a long journey, the clatter of jagged wheels finally over, the cargo finally unloaded. He smoked his cigarettes with such elegance that for a very long period after we had met I thought the spectacle was intended for me to savor. And I did, most ardently.

*Who* are we going to invite?

The smoke danced above our heads, a poisonous aurora borealis.

Then, finally, a reach across the table, not to hold hands or touch in any way, but simply to poke at the dying cigarette, affect a ripple in the thin vertical smoke. *Elephant in the room goes boom.*

I'm going to prepare something fancy, you'll see, I told him, something *extravagant*. I was so enthralled by the promise of that fantasy that I couldn't even look at him anymore. Even so, I knew that for a brief moment he smiled the way people smile when they see a glimpse of happiness being enacted, or at least the desire to attain or revive it. I felt the chill of that smile growing like fern frost on a cold December morning.

### Moment Three

His father knew, of course, but the mother was still left flailing in the dark, a greater wound couldn't have been inflicted on the part of the mother. In an ideal world the child equates the womb and the other way around. A mother has to be a spotless sun, bear spotless children. To me, while in that state of confusion, she resembled a secularized Virgin Mary, her long white spindly hands clasped in her lap, watching over us as we moved around each other carefully, self-consciously, doing our best to avoid any hints at our private debaucheries.

Everything was going to be fine as long as we were able to conceal it from those we thought we would lose in case we took the wrong step while getting out of our transparent closets. With each passing day we perfected our gracious tiptoeing, thought of new ways of dismissing the obvious irrationality that seemed to have grasped our adult peers. Like that time the mother used his computer to search for something and the web browser started suggesting gay porn sites.

At the start of our relationship, the mother first came out through his mouth. I saw her figure growing inside his throat, tumescent it stood out, emerged slowly until it jumped over his teeth and out of his mouth like a runaway child. Even before seeing her, I had imagined her to be a petite woman whose face bore all the adversities life had thrown her way, and to my utter surprise she *was* petite. His body dreamed of her body and I had seen that dream heralded in his own flesh. I had seen her there, in the way he moved across the room, in the way he handled objects, in the way he held my hand, in the way he slept. I noticed it in the way his

entire face looked when seen from above, in the way his cheekbones jutted out through the skin of his face. In those moments I wanted to run. In those moments his face resembled that of a ceramic doll, white and uncanny.

Mother, this is my *friend*, and I tried to offer her my best of smiles. His ties with the mother had been almost organic ever since his childhood, only to become stronger once the divorce happened. Sitting at her kitchen table I found it almost ironic, this lack of a father figure and this small presence in the shape of a woman who loomed so large over his personality. I even imagined the two of them talking about men over steaming cups of morning coffee, and about shades of lipstick, and what scarf goes with what earrings, and what perfume should be worn on a particular day.

Our first encounter with the mother had a dreamlike texture to it, one that dissipated slowly with the break of dawn, to be finally forgotten in the days to follow. Even today, as I look back upon it, only a pale memory of the mother's clasped hands remains. Most of the times she acted as if I were invisible. I was, after all, the vengeful alien, karma returned, the immigrant intent upon occupying a space that was initially empty and was supposed to stay that way. Her Italian hospitality could go no further than the usual questions. Do you like it here? Have you made friends? Every once in a while she would acknowledge me with a smile, then move on to discussing more serious matters. That smile, I considered it as a form of courtesy, one that I appreciated for just what it was, small, and empty of significance.

None of my parents knew and yet I assured him they did, invented stories around them. Like a queer version of Victor Frankenstein, I patched together the personality of a homophobic brother who would forsake his own children had they turned out to be different. Imagine, I told him and I could hear my own voice echoing at the other end of the line, his own children. Often, while we talked and watched each other move like ghosts through the vast network of the internet, I found myself seeking that echo, almost exulting in the distancing it permitted me. I could pretend somebody else was speaking at the other end of the line, another, nobler version of me, one for whom those stories I told him were actually true. Still, despite my knowledgeable falseness, he listened sympathetically, nodding, lips moving up and down, grunting disgustedly at the sourer parts of my narrative.

The stories were true, of course, but for somebody else entirely. In some parallel universe there had to be another guy going through the same aches as my invented self did in this universe. The truth of that idea almost palpable.

Sometimes I think that one of the reasons why we, sons and daughters, strive so frantically to get away from our parents is our fear of witnessing their enduring affection for each other. Their love settled, male and female united. That fixity is plain bloodcurdling. Of course, then there were the secret affairs that went behind the trenches of family warfare, and most importantly, what hurt us most, was the fact that they were kept secret. Not in front of the kids, just pretend everything is fine. What parents don't know, or rather what they don't want to admit, is that the children *know*, first unknowingly, then hatefully.

Even after the divorce and the bureaucratic and financial hassle that ensued the mother still looked down jealously on the father's new acquisitions in terms of women. She was still the best one, still the most charming. And that perception

was uninterruptedly reinforced by her female friends. The mother smiled and laughed while the son cringed at her self-destructive parade of ego.

His father knew about him, but he did not know about *us*. There had been no man-to-man discussion about my intentions with his beloved son. No fatherly blessings had been dispensed.

One night, while the conscientious eyes of our webcams projected our bodies across the network and against the impersonal white ceilings and walls waiting persistently behind us, we had decided not to tell them. The day will come, he said. The day will come, I said. The mother had had enough of drama on her plate already. Just not now, he continued. Just not now, I continued. The parallelism felt good. We didn't finish each other's sentences, I despised clichés of any kind. Rather we mirrored them. I did it mainly because I didn't know what else to say and I tried my best to avoid awkward silences. There was a sense of reassurance in repeating his verbal constructions. I felt the remnants of the taste of his metallic words, and avoided grammatical errors in that way. At that time, Italian language still fostered secrets. I nested in his words, crawled into them like a famished traveler, and covered myself with them, fell asleep inside them.

The father had been informed at an earlier time, well before we had met, and well before the silent algorithms of dating sites had decided we were the perfect match. His life before that day was an infinite series of excuses, as was mine, because on that fateful day we admittedly lost control over our previous lives. I couldn't blame him for what happened before as he couldn't blame me for my previous failed relationships. With messianic assurance we shed that blameworthiness and moved on, desired to move on and took upon us the task of working through it together, and wasn't that something to be proud of?

The father, the womanizer who couldn't hold his tongue steady when it came to women, had forgotten about it, or pretended to have forgotten. Once, he told me, while they were in the car together, the father had made a comment about a girl crossing the street and apparently had expected the son to reciprocate in some way. The son did not and the father dismissed the whole episode with the usual phrase, kids these days, they have no idea about their potential in that department.

## Notes on Contributors

**Ulrika Andersson Hval**, PhD, and **Anna Stibe**, PhD, are currently conducting a project on narratives of childhood migration together, to which the article in this issue belongs. Andersson Hval is a senior lecturer at University West in Trollhättan, Sweden and her research has previously focused on childhood studies, in particular in relation to postcoloniality and Maori literature. Stibe recently completed her dissertation on place and belonging in Indian literature and has taught at the universities of Karlstad and Halmstad in Sweden.

**Mary Bardet** currently divides her time between Shanghai, China and Lyon, France. She has recently completed a MA in Children's Literature at the University of Roehampton and aims to continue her research into Nesbit's work in translation.

**Anna Bugajska**, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the Interdisciplinary Language and Culture Research Department of the Tischner European University in Kraków, conducting courses on Anglophone literatures and literary theory. She completed her Ph.D. thesis on the changes of imagination in the eighteenth century at the Jagiellonian University in 2012. Presented and published papers on children and young adult literature, dystopias, trans- and posthumanism, the Inklings and eighteenth-century literature.

**Virginie Douglas** is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of English Studies at the University of Rouen, Normandy, France, and a member of ERIAC (Équipe de Recherche Interdisciplinaire sur les Aires Culturelles). She is Secretary of the Institut International Charles Perrault and specializes in British children's literature and the questions of theory, narration and translation related to children's books. She is the editor of *Perspectives contemporaines du roman pour la jeunesse* (L'Harmattan, 2001), *Littérature de jeunesse et diversité culturelle* (L'Harmattan, 2013), *La Retraduction en littérature de jeunesse/Retranslating Children's Literature* (with Florence Cabaret; Peter Lang, 2014) and *État des lieux de la traduction pour la jeunesse* (Presses universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 2015).

**Maria Emmanouilidou** has been working as an EFL teacher in primary state schools since 1996. She holds a BA from the School of English of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and a Master's degree in Studies in Fiction from the University of East Anglia in Norwich, United Kingdom. She is a PhD candidate at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Faculty of Education. Her research interests include children's literature, new literacies, multiliteracies, visual and critical approaches to teaching literacy, multimodality and media studies. Alone or in collaboration with others she has published numerous articles. She is also co-author of "Magic Book", the state mandated English textbook used in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in state schools in Greece (pilot edition).

**Sibylle Erle**, FRSA, is Senior Lecturer in English at Bishop Grosseteste University Lincoln, author of *Blake, Lavater and Physiognomy* (Legenda, 2010), co-editor of *Science, Technology and the Senses* (Special Issue for RaVoN, 2008) and volume editor of *Panoramas, 1787-1900: Texts and Contexts* (5 vols., Pickering & Chatto, 2012). With Morton D. Paley she is now co-editing *The Reception of William Blake in Europe* (Bloomsbury). She has co-curated the display "Blake and Physiognomy" (2010-11) at Tate Britain and devised an online exhibition of Tennyson's copy of Blake's *Job* for the Tennyson Research Centre (2013). Apart from reception, she is working on 'character' in the Romantic period.

**Eliana Ionoaia** is an Assistant Professor at the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, English Department. Her PhD was focused on the cultural typologies in the twentieth century British fantastic novel. She teaches 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century British literature. Her interests range from mythology, history and memory to gender studies and Neo-Victorian literature.

**Nada Kujundžić** (nadkuj@utu.fi) is a PhD candidate at the University of Turku (program in folklore studies) and the University of Zagreb (program in comparative literature). Her dissertation examines the structure and role of narrative space in Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*. Her research interests include fairy tales and their adaptations, children's literature, film and oral narrative genres. She is the junior and review editor of *Libri & Liberi*, journal of research on children's literature and culture.

**Catalina Millan** is currently the Spanish, English as a Second Language and Literature instructor at Berklee College of Music Valencia Campus. She has also taught Rhetoric, Academic and Creative Writing at Florida State University during three years. She holds a M.A in Creative and Humanistic Translation as well as a M.Sc. in Education by the Universitat de Valencia. She also has specific Certifications in TESL and ELE and a BA in Dramatic Arts by the ESAD Valencia. She works as the official translator and interpreter at La Cabina Film Festival and Audition Music Project. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Children's Literature Translation through the Universitat de Valencia.

**Janice Morris** has been Teaching Resources Librarian at Bishop Grossteste University since 2003. She previously worked in higher education libraries in Wales and Nigeria, and has public library experience including 5 years as Area Education Librarian for Wiltshire School Library Service. She is co-author with Dr Richard Woolley of the Family Diversities Reading Resource: 100+ picture books to value children's families, which is shortly being revised in its second edition.

**Smiljana Narančić Kovač**, PhD is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb, Croatia. She serves as the principal investigator for BIBRICH (2015–2018), a national project about translations of children's literature. Her publications in the fields of literary study, comparative literature, narratology, children's literature, and applied linguistics include two books in Croatian, one about picturebook as a narrative (2015). She is the Editor-in-Chief of *Libri & Liberi*.

**Marina Pirlimpou** is a graduate of the Department of English Studies, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She holds a B.A. in English Language and Literature (2013) and an MA in Literature, Culture and Ideology (2015). She fully intends to pursue a Ph.D, as her research interests lie in children's fantasy fiction, power politics, and psychoanalytic theory. Her current projects include a few works in progress on children's literature, fairy tale retellings, and ideologies of power.