

problems in recognising me... But even if in the end that terrible disease led him to forget some of us, ESSE cannot certainly forget Helmut Bonheim, his work, his huge efforts in making ESSE bigger and more relevant in the European sphere. He will always be remembered with gratitude and admiration by those who understand what he did and what he tried to do. Helmut might have undoubtedly uttered those Horatian words of Non omnis moriar which bear witness to the achievements of a man committed to education, culture and research in a united Europe.

ESSE misses him, and, Heaven knows, Europe misses men and women like him.

WRESTLING WITH THE (POST)-POSTMODERNISM

Post-postmodernism: An Ugly Wor(l)d?

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That postmodernism is already dead is a truism accepted by everybody. Its end has been repeatedly stated in recent years. The most famous declaration belongs to Linda Hutcheon, who, in the epilogue to the 2002 edition of *Politics of Postmodernism*, says in a loud voice: "It's over!" (166). But if postmodernism is no longer alive and kicking, what is? Post-postmodernism, obviously. The term makes Nealon (2012: ix) feel frustrated, because it is terribly unattractive, "just plain ugly," "infelicitous, difficult both to read and to say, as well as nonsensically redundant." The truth is that it has been frequently used since the turn of the century and it is more convenient, says the same critic, than "after Postmodernism," "the end(s) of Postmodernism," "Postmodernism 2.0," or "overcoming Postmodernism." Why? Because it indicates an important mutation: 'Post' is not a marker of chronological posteriority or subsequent historical order but a sign of intensification. It might therefore be a good solution for the multiplicity of contradictory tendencies and incoherent sensibilities which characterize the present times. What Nealon (2012: x-xi) also underlines is that, if Fredric Jameson's (1991) claims that postmodernism represents the cultural logic of late capitalism, capitalism itself is the thing that has intensified most radically into "the 'just-in-time' (which is to say, all-the-time) capitalism of our neoliberal era". Among the major tasks of post-postmodernism, he also mentions the necessity

to construct a vocabulary to talk about the „new economies” (post-Fordism, globalization, the centrality of market economies, the new surveillance techniques of the war on terrorism, etc.) and their complex relations to cultural production in the present moment, where capitalism seems nowhere near the point of its exhaustion. (Nealon 2012: 15)

But how can we construct a new vocabulary when, from the very beginning, we are stuck with the first word we should agree upon: the name of the trend? Variants are so numerous that it becomes almost impossible to enumerate them all. Epstein et al. (1999: 467) believe in *transmodernism* and its new non-ironic aesthetics. Lipovetsky (2005) speaks about *hypermodernism*, whose cultural practices and social relations are linked to hyperconsumerism. Samuels (2008) proclaims that we live in an epoch of *automodernism*, in which (technological) automation and (human) autonomy are correlated by an extended exchange of information. Kirby (2009) prefers the term *digimodernism* for a world which favours the new computerized variants of textuality, while Bourriaud (2009) declares that we live in a period of *altermodernism*, a successful synthesis between modernism and post-colonialism expressed in a globalized perception, nomadism, exile, and elsewhere-ness. Velmeulen and van den Akker (2010) approach the

issue ontologically and see *metamodernism* oscillating between modern enthusiasm and postmodern irony, between hope and melancholy, empathy and apathy, unity and plurality, totality and fragmentation, purity and ambiguity. It ultimately negotiates between the modern and the postmodern in a complex loop:

One should be careful not to think of this oscillation as a balance however; rather, it is a pendulum swinging between 2, 3, 5, 10 innumerable poles. Each time the metamodern enthusiasm swings toward fanaticism, gravity pulls it back toward irony; the moment its irony sways toward apathy, gravity pulls it back toward enthusiasm.

There are many other variants for what Nealon calls the “ugly” word. Eschman (2000/2001) is convinced that *performatism* brings back all that was good and beautiful in the previous era; under the influence of Stanislav Grof’s transpersonal psychology, Dussel (2013) emphasizes the spirituality and esotericism of *transmodernism*; Ken Wilber (2000, 2006), the inventor of the integral theory in psychology and spirituality, believes in the *integralism* of the 21st century, while Childish and Thompson’s (2000) *remodernism* finds in the new multimedia practices the possibility of reconsidering traditional modernist values such as authenticity, self-expression, truth, bravery, and spirituality. Many other attempts to name the period – *neo-minimalism*, *pseudo-realism*, *super-modernity*, *maximalism*, *trans-utopianism*, *post-humanism* – are similar proofs of a frenzied delight in inventing new terms, framing new paradigms, and speculating about the future.

But if the word post-postmodernism is ugly, what is the world designated by it like? Can we say that it is ugly if it is committed to reason, authenticity, freedom, spirituality, and the ability of improving individual choices? On the other hand, can it be beautiful if younger and older generations of post-postmodernists do nothing else but “phone, click, press, surf, choose, move, and download” (Kirby 2006) on a chair in front of a screen?

It is “both-neither” (Childish, Thompson 2000). When we enter the new labyrinth established by post-postmodernism, we may either enjoy carving new directions and being thrilled by an essentially dynamic territory, or we may get lost. In both cases, we discover first that the numerous contradictory tendencies of postmodernism, illustrated by such great philosophers as Charles Jencks, Jean-François Lyotard, Frederic Jameson, Francis Fukuyama, and Ihab Hassan, are replaced by other competing and ambivalent directions, with all the positive and negative implications generated by a better living standard, technological and medical advances, computer techniques, and, last but not least, a new ecology of the mind, emerging as a new form of enlightenment. Second, we realize that traditions are no longer created as in modernism or deconstructed as in postmodernism, but acknowledged and hailed as open-ended in a new synthesis of pre-modern, modern and postmodern realities. They are revitalized in an effort to understand how the cultural, political, and economic axioms of today are related to the axioms of yesterday. Doctrines are no longer demolished but connected. Old roots diversify in new, unexplored directions, based on such ancient concepts as the Japanese *wabi-sabi* (the aesthetics of imperfection and natural wisdom) and *mono-no-aware* (the awareness of impermanence), the Portuguese *saudade* (nostalgia, melancholy), the Chinese *wu-wei* (action through non-doing), and the Indian *pranasya prana* (life-giving force) or *buddhi* (intuition).

Andrew Juniper (2003) is one of the many Westerners who believe that such ancient approaches to life breathe new meaning in the visual and decorative arts of the 21st century. The aesthetics of asymmetry and imperfection leads to simplicity, austerity, and modesty; rustic freshness adds sophistication; old age and patina generate serenity and wisdom, while the impermanence of all things oppose the Greek ideal of perfection in a beneficial way. The post-postmodernists can openly show their nostalgia for absent

people or objects. Those familiar with the Taoist *wu wei* concept cultivate the virtue of “going with the flow,” in accordance with the nature of things and events. Together with *wu nien*, the thought of non-thought, and *wu hsin*, the mind of non-mind, the active non-action places us within a larger web of interconnectedness, in a universe which encourages us to be spontaneously virtuous. In a similar way, the vital energy of life-giving *pranasya prana*, increased through meditation, develops intuition and a boundless feeling of the heart, much more powerful than the limited understanding of the mind.

These new (and simultaneously old) post-postmodern directions continue to develop rhizomatically, as Deleuze & Guattari (1980: 21) have successfully demonstrated for postmodernism, pertaining to “a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entranceways and exits.” Taken from various sources, the landmarks of this new territory form a long list, containing such items as the intuitive, relative, variable, cyclical, harmonious, natural, integrated, curvilinear, raw, unrefined, degradable, ambiguous, seasonal, gloomy, nebulous, and warm. The most important issue, however, which cannot be absent from the list, is the superabundance of information generated by the multimedia practices. It reconfigures the new super-modern subjectivity with blogs, electronic mails, online chats, and file sharing, which, associated with a rapid movement of images and ideas, diverse sources, a rapid delivery of information, and a variety of formats, suspend boundaries, limitations, and inhibitions. Moreover, the Internet Portal, based on millions of interconnected cybernetic networks, raises new problems of access, censorship, democracy, rights, neutrality, and privacy. And, at the same time, this horizontal network of nodes and knots, as Enriquez (2012: 60) discovers, is marked by “presence in absence, privacy in public and connectivity in isolation”, an ambivalence which places us on shifting quicksand.

Beautiful or ugly, our world of today is for sure very different from that of the postmodernists. The dominant economic, cultural, and political rules have changed so dramatically that even greater transformations are to be expected. Whether we will enjoy them or not is difficult to say, but undoubtedly new times require new words. Those who can invent them are invited to do so; those who cannot should follow Tom Turner’s (1995: 10) suggestion: “Embrace post-postmodernism – and pray for a better name.”

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The Posthumanist and Biopolitical Turn in Post-Postmodernism

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1. Introduction

In the last few years, a proliferation of so-called paradigm shifts has been announced, driven by ongoing fundamental technological changes. Amidst the plethora of theoretical approaches to literature and culture in the post-postmodern era, shaped by increasingly sophisticated digital and bioscientific technological resources, a few stand out as arguably the dominant cultural developments, moving the discourse of the Humanities beyond a postmodernist ethos: posthumanism, biopolitics and digimodernism¹ are amongst the most salient.

As Jeffrey Nealon (2012: xii) observes, we need a “new theoretical and methodological toolbox for responding to post-postmodernist culture”. One of the most important aspects of the post-postmodernist turn in the Humanities is that new research questions are being asked, entering previously little explored areas which, as the result of judicious interdisciplinary collaboration, will help to expand established fields and even create new ones, such as the recent area of digital humanities² and the relatively recent but already firmly established area of literature and science.³ If we live in post-

¹An analysis of digimodernism falls outside the scope of this essay. Alan Kirby’s “digimodernism” (2011) constitutes a new cultural paradigm which highlights how new digital technologies are thoroughly reshaping our cultural landscape. An example of a thoroughgoing critique of digimodernism is Gary Shteyngart’s novel *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010).

²Franco Moretti’s “digital humanities” (2007, 2013) analyse large collections of data, with recourse to models and algorithms which bring into relief salient trends and patterns in literary corpora, both geographically and textually, thus generating new perspectives with which to analyse the types of texts with which we work in English Studies. Moretti describes this new critical paradigm as “distant reading” as opposed to traditional “close reading”, focusing on the kind of literary analysis that takes into account not only big data, but also a bigger picture of the literary phenomenon, with corpora of books suggesting new paths of enquiry and revitalizing the field with new types of evidence.

³For an overview of this field see Willis (2015).

postmodernist times, we also live in a posthuman era, profoundly imbricated in technological advances and in particular in biotechnologies.⁴

The concept of the posthuman conveys many distinct ideas to different people.⁵ As an umbrella term, it encompasses the wide network of interrelated technological and bioscientific advances that are inexorably leading to a reconfiguration of the traditional idea of the human, increasingly technologised and decentred in a post-anthropocentric, symbiotic world, in a progressively more marked continuum with non-human animals and machines.

According to many thinkers, however, not only do we live in posthuman times, but indeed have done so for a long time. The rationale behind this notion proposes that, since there is always potentiality for improvement and change on the physical and mental levels, retrospectively the possibility that the human as we know it will evolve and progress into uncharted territories has always already been here. Indeed, the idea of the posthuman has been around at least since Antiquity and been given visual illustration in many mythological traditions which envisage humans like gods, possessing special physical and psychological powers. Greek mythology is profusely populated by hybrids of animal and humans, metamorphic beings, albeit ones whose transformations have been effected as forms of punishment, with Tiresias turned into a woman, Circe changing her enemies into animals or Acteon transformed by Diana into a stag for having seen her bathing and then killed by his hounds. Other metamorphic variants include Daphne turning herself into a tree to avoid being raped by Apollo, or a hubristic defiance of the gods when Icarus flies too close to the sun, despite Daedalus's warnings, and falls to his death, his wings melted by the heat, a cautionary tale about pushing science and bodily augmentation too far, without proper safeguards.

These tales evoke not only the contiguity between humans and non-human animals, but also proleptically suggest contemporary and future medical practices, where hybrids of human and animals are used to cure and prevent disease. While it is now commonplace to have certain organs from pigs transplanted into humans, including pigs' cells into human brains, pigs and mice whose brains contain human cells have already been created, a scientific experiment that can be regarded as transcending existing ethical barriers.

Contemporary updated versions of this potential contain a whole gamut of possibilities, with these and many other instances of a posthuman turn found in literature, film and the arts,⁶ which thus engage with and critique scientific practices and hubris. Hybridity, indeed, is an increasingly important concept with which to think about identity and biology in a biopolitical, post-postmodernist context.⁷ Hybridity between humans and animals has been extensively dramatized, both in a biological sense and as a literary trope, in the shape of metamorphoses which portray transitional, liminal states. In this context, the metamorphosed body can also be described as effectively posthuman. As influential geneticist, science popularizer and novelist J. B. S. Haldane (1932: 96) remarked: "Pictures of the future are myths, but myths have a very real influence in the present [...] The time will probably come when men in general accept the future evolution of their species as a probable fact [...] we cannot say how this idea will affect them. We can be sure that if it is accepted, it will have vast effects. It is the businesses of mythologists today to present that idea. They cannot do so without combining creative

⁴Biopolitics and cognitive science appear to be two of the fastest growing areas and potentially offer the greatest range of interdisciplinary avenues to be explored.

⁵See Braidotti (2013), Ferrando (2013), Fukuyama (2003), Hayles (1999), Rosendhal Thomsen (2013) and Wolfe (2009).

⁶Mads Rosendhal Thomsen (2013: 173) notes how the "posthuman theme is not only thriving in the critical perspective of contemporary science fiction studies, but also in new fiction".

⁷The contested notion of hybridity in post-colonial studies is not my focus here.

imagination and biological knowledge”.⁸ These imaginative visions have been extensively dramatized in fiction and film, often providing the blueprint and inspiration for emerging technologies.

2. The Hybrid Humanities

The proliferation of dystopian fiction since the 1990s and into the present is symptomatic of the anxieties attendant upon ethical, biopolitical concerns about the biosciences. One of the most exciting and productive recent research fields, which has also impacted some disciplines in the Humanities, is biopolitics. Indeed, it is arguably the paradigm that has become the most influential in coming to grips with the contemporary time and the near future, giving rise to such areas of reflection and intervention as biopower, biomedica, bioculture and bioart, to name only a few, areas which expand the field of enquiry of the Humanities in fruitful and dynamic ways. In their introduction to *Biopolitics: A Reader*, Timothy Campbell and Adam Sitze (2013: 5) sum this up as the “compulsion to reinterpret everything today in terms of biopolitics”. Not only is interdisciplinarity giving rise to hybrid disciplines such as bioethics, biopolitics, biohistory and others, which are facilitating encounters between literature, the arts and the sciences, but one of the very products of scientific progress is the production of hybrid creatures, foreshadowing a future in which the distinction between the human and the non-human will be blurred, first in the phenotype and maybe soon in the genotype.

In the context of this posthuman, biopolitical turn in the humanities, a representative literary text that addresses many of the current concerns in these posthuman times is Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddam* trilogy: *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013).⁹ Atwood’s post-apocalyptic society in the *MaddAddam* books dramatizes the impact of bioscientific advances, while addressing the divide between the sciences and the humanities, with the latter occupying an inferior place in the context of the overpowering technological corporations that rule the post-ecocide world, divided into the gated communities of the wealthy and the “pleeblands” (*Oryx and Crake*, 27).¹⁰ Unbridled biocapitalism characterizes this society, dominated by genetic technologies that are steering evolution in unpredictable ways, radically changing flora and fauna, as well as the future of humanity. Atwood describes the trilogy as speculative fiction for, as she explains, such fiction addresses innovations that “really could happen but just hadn’t completely happened when the authors wrote the books” (2011). Indeed, the relevance of speculative fiction is that it not only comments on contemporary trends, but also anticipates future ones, by drawing on and extrapolating from technological advances that are in the process of being developed or might be considered feasible in a not too distant future.

2.1. “Monsters manufactured!” (The Island of Dr Moreau, 71)

Along with the mythological examples given above, which provided inspiration for future visions of a transformed humanity, Atwood draws on H. G. Wells’s scientific romances

⁸H. G. Wells also moves in similar terrain when, in “The Limits of Individual Plasticity” (1895), he envisages living creatures being moulded “into the most amazing forms [...] even reviving the monsters of mythology, realizing the fantasies of the taxidermist, his mermaids and what-not, in flesh and blood” (39).

⁹Salient post-postmodernist books that would also classify as dealing with the posthuman include Jeanette Winterson’s *The Stone Gods* (2007), David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas* (2010) and Richard Powers’s *Galatea 2.2* (2010), *Generosity: An Enhancement* (2009) and *Orfeo* (2014).

¹⁰Atwood’s trilogy can also be read as dramatizing Jeffrey Nealon’s (2012) diagnosis of an intensification and saturation of postmodern capitalism, which now extends to areas of cultural activity that used to have greater autonomy. For Nealon (2012: 150), post-postmodernism “seems to take ‘intensification’ [...] as its paradigmatic ethos”.

The Time Machine (1895) and *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896)¹¹ as fundamental intertexts for the *MaddAddam* trilogy. Atwood's "mad scientist", Crake, a geneticist, creates new beings, the Crakers, who, deprived of some human features, are placed on a new evolutionary path, having "devolved", retrogressed in terms of evolution, but also, potentially, "improved" as far as the benefits for humanity and the planet are concerned, according to a eugenicist logic. Both the *MaddAddam* trilogy and *The Island of Dr Moreau*, an early example of posthumanist concerns *avant la lettre*, have given us some of the most imaginatively productive future visions of posthumanity. While the Eloi in Wells's *The Time Machine* can be usefully compared with the Crakers,¹² the Beast People in *The Island of Dr Moreau* can also profitably be placed alongside the Children of Crake, the humanoids that in Atwood's speculative fiction constitute one of the versions of posthumanity.

Entangled in a complex net of intertextual and inter-cultural references, *The Island of Dr Moreau* and the *MaddAddam* trilogy construct two interrelated visions of posthumanity. While in Wells's irreverent and impious tale Moreau works on the animals to humanize them,¹³ Crake changes humans into his vision of a new species that might rescue the planet, on the way to being destroyed by human greed leading to ecocide. Like Crake, though in a more primitive fashion, Moreau focuses in particular on the brain. He is described as having "worked hard at her head and brain" (*The Island of Dr Moreau*, 79), to "make a rational creature of my own" (78) referring to a puma he was turning into a woman, who, ironically, kills him. Crake, indeed, was able to achieve one of Dr Moreau's aims, to touch the "seat of emotions" (78), thus moulding and directing "cravings, instincts, desires that harm humanity, a strange hidden reservoir to burst suddenly and inundate the whole being of the creature with anger, hate, or fear" (78). Crake manages to modify the Crakers' brain through genetic engineering techniques, removing the "neural complexes" (*Oryx and Crake*, 305) that generate hierarchical impulses, as well as criminal and violent tendencies, taming them in line with Moreau's ambition.

2.2. "O Walker in the Sea" (The Island of Dr Moreau, 118)

"O, Snowman, tell us about when Crake was born" (*Oryx and Crake*, 104)

Despite Crake's efforts to eliminate from the brains of his subjects the capacity to sing, dream and create alternative scenarios for their existence, these characteristics gradually start to take over, under the tutelage of their leader, Jimmy the Snowman. The latter plays a similar role to Prendick in *The Island of Dr Moreau*, who, having been left alone with the Beast People after Moreau's and Montgomery's death, becomes their ruler and prophet,¹⁴ weaving fantastic tales about Dr Moreau watching them from above to make sure the Rules are adhered to, and thus keeping them in check. In Prendick's creation story, then, Moreau plays the role of Crake, who is also said to be in the sky looking after His creatures. Indeed, like the Crakers, the Beast Folk create their own mythological fables to make sense of their situation, although eventually their paths unfold in different directions: the Crakers towards greater humanity and the Beast Folk devolving to their

¹¹See Atwood's Introduction to *The Island of Dr Moreau* (2005).

¹²See Ferreira (2006).

¹³In words that could be seen as commenting on Dr Moreau's experiments, Julian Savulescu (2003: 24) writes: "Whether transgenesis and the creation of human-animal chimeras threaten humanity depends on what effects these changes have on the essential features of humanity. In some cases creating chimeras or transgenic human beings will reduce these features. But in many other cases these changes will promote our humanity. Bringing animals closer to human beings to share their genes might paradoxically improve our humanity, what is essentially human."

¹⁴Snowman is also described like Crake's "prophet" (104).

animal inclinations. Both novels thus imply related conclusions: notwithstanding Crake's efforts to eliminate the need for creation stories, the Crakers inevitably go on to want and need them, while Moreau's attempts to condition the Beast People not to revert to their original bestial drives also fail.

The Biblical turns of phrase and rhetoric used in both dystopias underscore the influence *The Island of Dr Moreau* exerted on Atwood. Both the Beast People and the Crakers often chant in ritualistic fashion, having been taught by Moreau, Montgomery and Prendick, and Jimmy, respectively. In many ways the litany of rules the Beast People intone and are instructed to follow is akin (albeit necessarily different in content, since the Crakers have no violent propensities) to "Crake's rules" (7) that Jimmy instils in the Crakers.¹⁵ Both texts can thus be considered revisionary accounts of Biblical creation scenes, with alternative Trinities: in Wells's case Moreau, Montgomery and Prendick, while in Atwood's dystopia Crake, Jimmy and Oryx constitute a more blasphemous counterpart, with the presence of a woman in the symbolic equivalent of the Christian Trinity.

**2.3. "Was he (Prendick) not made?' said the Ape Man" (The Island of Dr Moreau, 86)
Zeb "wasn't made by Oryx, not like the rabbits. He was born" (MaddAddam, 107)**

Both texts, albeit via their own and divergent satirical twists, are also Darwinian fables, first for the Victorian age and now for our present world. Humans come to be closely associated with non-human animals in Atwood's biodystopia, while non-human animals become human in Wells's, with the Crakers and the Beast People meeting somewhere in the middle of their trajectories, to then diverge markedly. A meaningful moment that underpins this very interconnectedness of human and animal occurs when Prendick, coming across the Leopard Man, and noticing his animal attitude and "its imperfectly human face distorted with terror" (94), realizes with full force the "fact of its humanity" (94).¹⁶ The bestiary in the *MaddAddam* trilogy, consisting of hybrids of different animals and sometimes human tissue, is strongly reminiscent of Dr Moreau's menagerie of domesticated beings. Many of the hybrid creatures developed in Crake's laboratory eventually end up out of control, like Dr Moreau's Beast People. The pink hybrid on Moreau's island and the pink pigeons with human brain cells, also partly akin to Moreau's Swine Men, are symbolically related creatures. Saliently, in the economy of Atwood's dystopian fable, the humanized pigeons become examples of "interspecies cooperation" (373).

Crake also introduces sundry animal genes into the making of the vegetarian, innocent and trusting Crakers, genes that become translated into enhanced physical capabilities. Oxford bioethicist Julian Savulescu (2003: 22) suggests, considering that very possibility, that "one might introduce animal genes from several different species into a human embryo. The resulting entity might have unique and desirable immunological properties or properties that render it more resistant to disease".¹⁷ As mentioned above, hybridity is arguably one of the most salient features of the post-postmodernist, posthuman turn. The Crakers already possess many non-human animal traits and the likelihood is that the few humans left, already mating with them, may go on producing babies that will eventually substantially differ from humans. Indeed, at the end

¹⁵As one of the Crakers narrates, in what can be seen as a parallel structure of rules like that the Beast People learnt: "We do not have battles. We do not eat a fish. We do not eat a smelly bone" (360).

¹⁶After all, as Savulescu (2003: 22) suggests, human-animal chimeras "might be an expression of our humanity".

¹⁷Another scenario Savulescu considers is to "transfer the gene responsible for enhanced night vision in animals such as rabbits and owls and other nocturnal creatures into the human genome. This might result in many benefits to the human race (2003: 22).

of the *MaddAddam* trilogy, three of the young women give birth to babies who are Craker hybrids and who are described as the “future of the human race” (380).

What is ultimately suggested in *MaddAddam* is that humans, even those genetically modified in a radical manner, like the Crakers, will nevertheless tend to become more and more human. In this respect, they are the opposite of the Beast People in Wells’s *Island of Dr Moreau*, where the latter, having started as animals, revert to their bestial nature despite Dr Moreau’s efforts. After all, in the last book of Atwood’s trilogy, Toby teaches one of the Crakers, Blackbeard, to read and write, reinforcing yet again the importance of narrative, storytelling, reading and writing as fundamental tools for socialization and holding communities together. On Dr Moreau’s island, similarly, one of the missionaries takes it upon himself to teach the former’s “first man” (76), made from a gorilla (the Darwinian echoes could not be clearer), who had been moulded and taught to speak by Dr Moreau as well as to read, together with some “rudimentary ideas of morality” (76).

Educating and domesticating the Crakers and the Beast Folk is clearly a priority in both tales. In this context, philosopher Peter Sloterdijk has defended, in his “Rules for the Human Park” (1999), the use of anthropotechniques to evade the diminishing impact of a humanist education, in order to “tame” citizens. His calls for the institution of a new set of normative rules (in sharp contrast to the postmodern rejection of a regimented society) can be interpreted as defending the bioengineering of a gentler, more amiable and better-natured species. If that were possible, then it would amount to an effective change of human nature. That is precisely what Crake has done, although in a much more radical fashion, eradicating the possibility of violence from the brains of the bioengineered humanoids he creates in his lab, ironically named Paradise Dome. What is at stake in Atwood’s dystopian trilogy is, accordingly, the crucial question of what a human is, what constitutes human identity itself.

In Wells’s tale, in similar fashion, Moreau explains that a “pig may be educated” (72). According to him, there is the “promise of a possibility of replacing old inherited instincts by new suggestions, grafted upon or replacing the inherited fixed ideas. Very much indeed of what we call moral education is such an artificial modification and perversion of instinct” (73).¹⁸ Significantly, both Moreau and Crake have attempted to morally enhance their manufactured creatures. Crake in particular achieved with the Crakers what Ingmar Persson and Julian Savulescu (2012), amongst others, have repeatedly hinted might be a beneficial development for humankind: moral bioenhancement. While the contemporary trend towards human bioenhancement seems unstoppable, dependent only on the availability of new technologies and the individual capacity to afford them, another type of “improvement” is being advocated by some scientists and ethicists as vital in their effort to protect humanity and, by extension, the planet: moral enhancement through pharmacological means or biogenetic technologies. Controversially, Persson and Savulescu believe that, while the science of influencing moral disposition is still mostly speculative, it will be possible, indeed “desirable” (2012: 416), with recourse to biotechnologies, to “strategically influence people’s moral dispositions and behaviour” (2012: 400).

Both the *MaddAddam* trilogy and *The Island of Dr Moreau* can be seen as compelling tales cautioning against the potential excesses of the use of unchecked and unauthorized biotechnological breakthroughs. The question is whether Sloterdijk’s and Persson and Savulescu’s perspectives are not themselves dystopian, with their

¹⁸Deeply indebted to T. H. Huxley in his “Evolution and Ethics” lecture of 1893, Wells supports in “The Limits of Individual Plasticity” (1895) the possibility that humans, regarded as raw material, may be shaped and modified by means of grafting, blood transfusion and hypnotism, techniques used by Dr Moreau to alter the animals. Significantly, the whole quote from *The Island of Dr Moreau* is taken verbatim from “The Limits of Individual Plasticity” (39).

consideration of the bio-engineering of posthumans to make them tame and obedient, indeed on a par with Atwood's dystopian vision of the Crakers, or whether they are the inevitable next step when humans take evolution into their own hands.

4. Conclusion

The so-called "post-postmodernist" turn, then, has splintered and branched into many different but often interrelated directions, in an interdisciplinary inflection that will from now on make up the new Humanities, forging new connections and alliances with other research fields that will challenge earlier, more limited and narrower practices in some Humanities disciplines. The Humanities may aptly be renamed as the Posthumanities, since most disciplines now gravitate around an increasingly postanthropocentric turn, questioning and reconfiguring the human in always vexed, complex, symbiotic, but valuable relations with cultural otherness and the nonhuman other, with biopower and bioethics, in the context of a posthumanist turn, occupying centre stage in the contemporary post-postmodernist landscape.

This very brief overview of some of the most representative new trends arising in the Humanities *lato sensu* suggests that the ec(h)osystems of contemporary literature and art are fluid, porous and interconnective, in a rhizomatic interchange of concepts, methods and valences that decisively point the way to a post-postmodern, posthuman, biopolitical, robustly digital future for the Humanities as a whole. These new paradigms need to be wholeheartedly embraced as offering new vistas and explanatory frameworks, as well as novel ways of asking some old questions and even coming up with tentative solutions.

We all have to follow rules, like the Beast Folk and the Children of Crake, since most of us live in a version of a Sloterdijkian human park, with its own sets of rules. We may, however, choose to modify them or create new ones, responding to different circumstances and ethical demands that new technologies give rise to. The novels briefly mentioned here, chosen as illustrative instances of literature's engagement with the main cultural tendencies and advances in technology and the life sciences now reshaping humans and the world, centrally intervene in the critical dialogue concerning these new trends and patterns. If bioengineering of our moral capacities succeeds, however, or our relationship with intelligent machines and digital technologies becomes ever more entangled, what sort of critical post-postmodernist, posthuman readers will we be able to be?

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Cultural Heritage and Food – New Media Narratives – New Meanings and New Identities

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1. Introduction

The immense growth of new media at the beginning of the 21st century has caused substantial changes in the old media, both in their forms and their contents. In the last two decades, food as a cultural phenomenon has become one of the most visible narrative categories in discourses of the old and new media. The space provided to various elements related to food has been enormous and is still growing. Researchers in various academic fields have begun examining the relations between culture, food and media

consumption and addressing questions connected to the role food plays in the creation of meaning in contemporary media narratives.

The study of how the meaning of food is constructed, presented and interpreted reflects the recent developments in cultural studies methodologies, marked by the end of postmodernism and emergence of a postmillennial sensibility. Numerous concepts include the 'post-postmodern' era, with an intensification of postmodern capitalism and an increasing influence of the economic sphere on everyday cultural life - hypermodernity, digimodernism, and automodernity, they all focus on the role of digital technologies and consumerism in the contemporary transformations of human relations and cultural production. According to cultural theorists Vermeulen and van den Akker (2010), categories such as altermodern, performatism, postvictimary discourse could be incorporated in the term *metamodernism*, which may be used as an umbrella term for such diverse cultural practices as digitalization of textuality, creolization of arts and performatism. Vermeulen and van den Akker (2010) believe that metamodernism finds its "clearest expression in an emergent neoromantic sensibility [...] in the return of the Romantic, whether as style, philosophy or attitude". They see its reflection in the works that replace postmodernist rationalism (sarcasm, indifference, ironic deconstruction) with the perspective of childlike naivety and a desire for metaphysical truths, and the postmodernist focus on pastiche and parody with the tropes of the irrational (nature, the primitive, sublime, mysterious). According to them, the metamodern sensibility "can be conceived of as a kind of informed naivety, a pragmatic idealism", that is characteristic of cultural responses to recent global events such as climate change, the financial crisis, political instability, and the digital revolution. They also assert that "the postmodern culture of relativism, irony, and pastiche" (ibid.) is over, having been replaced by a post-ideological condition that stresses engagement, affect, and storytelling.

2. Cultural identity and cultural heritage

The concepts that have gradually become dominant in linking the new cultural practices of metamodernism are those of cultural identity and cultural heritage. Cultural theorists at the beginning of the new millennium claim that the concept of cultural identity acquires broader meaning and more prominent status in various spheres of individual and group existence. Notions of self-identification, self-consciousness, self-definition and belonging appear on a scene which is, on the one hand, under the influence of globalisation and, on the other hand, it frames identity not only within national, but more often within regional and local perspectives. The end of the twentieth century geopolitical changes has not only resulted in the creation of a new map of Europe and its fading borders, but it has also redefined many nation states and created more culturally diverse societies within the new Europe. People in these revised states and societies feel the need to determine who they are, where they come from, and where they belong. Consciously or unconsciously, they read texts in order to find out answers about their identity, belonging, social status, etc. What they need is much more than simple symbols like flags, anthems, or coats of arms in order to understand, present and represent their new identity or identities. They need more complex mechanisms that link their present with their past, in both the tangible material sense of artefacts and the intangible mental categories of ideas, traditions, practices and events. And they look for them in various texts, media narratives including.

In their definitions of culture and society, Danesi and Perron (1999: 23) say that culture is "a way of life based on a signifying order that is passed from one generation to the next [...] and which draws on the signifying order of a first community" and that society is "a collectivity of individuals who, although they may not all have the same tribal origins, nevertheless participate, by and large, in the signifying order of the founding or conquering tribe" (1999: 24). Media narratives have played a crucial role in

the signifying practices in postmodern societies and, in contemporary society, the media represent the most important channels of cultural mediation. Moreover, cultural identity is a central category in the process of mediation and it should be understood that cultural identity here encompasses the multiperspective notion of individual or group identity, including personal, social, local, regional, national and transnational or global identities.

On its website, the Amsterdam Centre for Cultural Heritage and Identity states that

Heritage is our 'cultural DNA': material objects such as everyday objects, monuments, and architecture and immaterial forms of heritage such as values, ideas, and ritual practices are the essential building blocks of local, national, or transnational identities. Just as much as today's genetics may work to the benefit of physical health, - understanding the interactions between cultural heritage and identities contributes substantially to the quality of individual life and society. (<<http://achi.uva.nl/about>>)

In both Western and Eastern Europe cultural heritage becomes the means or a resource for understanding and expressing the present cultural identity of an individual or a group, whether personal, social, local, regional, national or transnational. As other concepts in the present context, heritage is perceived as diverse, heterogeneous, multivocal and fragmented and consequently it is often used in its plural form of 'heritages'. Heritage enables individuals and groups to understand their own culture and to understand other cultures, and, as such, heritage serves as a primary tool for the creation of intercultural communication.

Brian Graham and Peter Howard, editors of the *Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, in the Introduction to their book, focus on the present when they claim that heritage represents the present day meanings of artefacts, landscapes, mythologies, memories and traditions taken from the past. They emphasise the key role of heritage in the shaping of identities in multicultural societies. For them the study of heritage is not the study of the past. It is the study of contents, interpretations and representations of elements of heritage required by the present with the perspective to future. Consequently, for them heritage is less about artefacts and more about their meanings and their representations (2008: 1-15).

3. Media and narrative in the 21st century

Early twenty-first century discourses in general are heavily narrativised and media discourses are not an exception. Various media texts are constructed as narratives. Both old and new media have a potential to play an important role in the construction, presentation, representation and interpretation of the elements of cultural heritage – memories, traditions, mythologies, natural landscapes, and material artefacts. In the second decade of the twenty-first century, when the identification processes of a nation relate to more intangible attributes that recognise aesthetic, historic, social and other values, media enhance the movement of information, images, and values. Media create knowledge, transform it and cross boundaries in both time and space. Thousands of stories are mediated via thousands of television channels, radio stations, and via the Internet.

According to John Fiske (1987:128), the narrative is one of the cultural processes that are shared by all societies. Other theorists and researchers in the past and at present also recognize both the presence of narrative in the media discourse and its role in structuring people's sense of reality. They consider narrative to be a basic mechanism that allows people to make sense of their experience of the real. This is more than natural, because from the beginning of their existence, human beings 'draw' and 'tell' stories about their inner lives and their experience in the form of narrative. Studies of narratives in various media reveal that narratives perform numerous functions: they may be meant to entertain in some genres, or serve as an explanatory device, they may perform

informative or instructive functions as well, and, for some, the narrative also represents an important identity marker.

Thus, Lyotard (1991: 70-74) defines narrative as a mode of knowledge. But at the same time, he views narrative as means of legitimisation of media 'message'. When discussing his narrative games, he states that knowledge and information are distributed in society in the form of narrative. Consequently, the narrative pre-defines the conditions for the distribution of information and influences the performance of society as such. He further develops the idea by saying that narratives are the means through which society, the state, institutions, producers, and individuals both legitimise their statements and create public consensus for their activities. Thus media narratives are capable of supporting conformity and uniformity by offering dominant opinions, preferred ideologies, and agreed-upon models. Another author, Helen Fulton (2005: 1- 4), claims that in the present society, not only is the narrative perceived as a natural inner structure, common to all humankind, but, at the same time, it also plays one of the most important roles in acquiring economic profit, i.e. it sells a product. If the marketing aspect is taken into account, the narrative enables the sale of products by presenting the products of media to their potential customers. It is obvious that for this purpose, various narrative strategies, forms, and processes are applied also to the genres that used to be categorised as non-fiction genres: e.g. news items bring stories of events, commercials are produced in the form of small narratives, and television mode as such is dominantly narrational. Documentary genres, journalism and publicistic genres and advertising, they all provide audiences with either constructed fiction or created or re-created reality of the stories that are embedded in their discourses and that support the enormous media industry by enhancing the sales of its products.

In a more general perspective, contemporary media narrative theory focuses on both the creation of meaning in the process of signification (semiosis) and on issues of ideology. To sum up, one may use Marie-Laure Ryan's statement about narrative in the media and the factors involved in its contemporary approaches. She says that narrative is not an artefact based on language, but a mental, cognitive construct created by signs. It is constituted by pieces of reality, by setting and by agents/characters that perform their roles in actions/events and make changes in the world of the narrative. For Ryan (2004: 47), "narrative is a mental representation of causally connected states and events which captures a segment in the history of a world and of its members".

One may ask how the cognitive construct of media narratives, created by signs and constituted by pieces of reality, by setting and by characters in events, embody cultural heritage in order to construct and represent identity. The answer to the question is relatively complex. The media narrative is the space where cultural heritage is framed into the construct and is used to represent diverse and fragmented identities. The media use the link between the past and the present in order to create stories of identity for individuals and groups. Media narratives use cultural heritage to symbolize solidarity for a group, to point out to the main historical events, names and processes that influenced the cultural development of the group of ancestors and their value systems. Both tangible and intangible components of cultural heritage are constructed into contemporary media narratives. Elements of cultural heritage thus constitute the content of media narratives that serve as tools for the representation of various types of identities.

4. Food in media narratives

One of the elements of cultural heritage that dominates the construction of media narratives in the first two decades of our century is food. Newspaper articles, regular newspaper food supplements, countless magazines on food, not to mention food advertisements and food commercials in both printed and broadcast media or an

avalanche of cookbooks and food memoirs on the shelves of bookshops – all prove the consumers' obsession with aspects of food and cooking. Sections of travel guides dedicated to local food and local gourmet restaurants occupy much larger space nowadays, compared to what they used to twenty years ago. Cooking shows are scheduled as part of morning television programme structures, after prime-time slots, of both public service and commercial television channels. Moreover, audiences have the opportunity to watch food channels broadcasting non-stop not only in the country of origin but, thanks to the cable and satellite networks, also in other countries (*UK Food* in Britain, *Food Network* in the USA, *Cuisine TV* in France, or *TV Paprika* in Hungary) and there is almost no limit to the space provided for food on the Internet.

Various genres of popular television dominate the television programme structure in these two decades. Their attractiveness to the producers lies in the relatively low cost of the production due to the relatively small number of personnel and stable setting, and their success with large audiences, which brings more income from advertisers. The genres of reality television represent the most varied sphere of popular television and since the beginning of the twenty-first century they have attracted more and more audiences. Narratives of reality television genres are constructed on the basis of supposedly authentic reality, dramatizing events that supposedly happened. They claim to represent real people in real life situations and locations, resulting in a character-driven narrative. Reality television narratives provide a platform for everyday social reality. The dominant mode of the narratives is dramatic. The narratives supply dramatized stories that are directly available to the audiences and they have important cultural significance. Even if they appear to be unoriginal, banal and repetitive, they offer valuable material for understanding the world audiences live in. They select, refashion, discuss and comment on issues and problems of the audiences' personal and social life.

Reality genres of popular television use food in cultural heritage narratives in order to attract their audiences and they have the potential to contribute to the construction of identity by individuals or groups at present. They represent typical examples of postmillennial, post-postmodern era genres, with a dominant influence of the economic sphere on everyday cultural life and cultural production driven by consumerism. Metamodernist performatism defined by Eshelman (2000) finds its expression marked by the tropes of the natural, primitive, mysterious in the cultural heritage narratives of lifestyle programming, of reality and magazine television shows dealing with food and cooking on hundreds of television channels that cater for the needs and wishes of audiences of different ages, interests, hobbies, moods.

In popular television narratives, private and public spheres become intertwined. They allow private life stories to become part of the public sphere. On the other hand, television functions in the private space of an individual and its programmes have become a part of everyday life. Television characters become familiar individuals, audiences share their values and ideas with them and by representing cultural identities, there is a direct potential impact on the audiences' cultural identity. Thompson (1995: 43) claims that "we must not lose sight of the fact that, in a world increasingly permeated by the products of media industries, a major new arena has been created for the process of self-fashioning". Hybrid genres of popular television allow dramatized factual forms to use fictional heritage narratives. The blend of private and social public spheres, mixtures of dramatized forms and factual contents result in new entertainment forms of documentary narratives. One may agree with Habermas (1989) that the hybridisation of private and public spheres is a sign of decline and a sign of victory of commercial powers. In his paper *Public Discourse / Private Fascination*, Bondebjerg (1996: 35) concludes that "hybridisation and new reality and access genres is the democratisation of an old public

service discourse, [...] and the creation of a new mixed public sphere, where common knowledge and everyday experience play a much larger role.”

Narratives of popular television genres are also understood as the discourse where the local, regional and national meet the transnational and global. Morley (2000:9) discusses the impact of the media on domesticity. He agrees with numerous authors who state that media cause internalisation of daily life by allowing distant events into one's home private sphere and by allowing visits to faraway locations from the chair in the living room. If in the past individuals could only know about what was happening in their immediate environment, today people explore and experience the world through their television sets. More importantly, he continues, mass media images bring to audiences cultural forms that are 'other' forms, foreign, not their own. He further points out that, in pre-new media era, traditional cultures were viewed as rooted in time and space. Thanks to the new media, the contemporary world is mobile, and physical and imaginative mobility is fundamental for the individual's understanding of culture. Thanks to mobility, people are well-travelled, they consume various cuisines and wear fashion influenced by universal trends. They engage in cultural tourism, migrate to find better jobs and are attached to more than one physical place. Thanks to the growth of the new media, as well as to shopping centres, diverse cultures are accessible to the majority population. In conclusion, Morley (2000:10) claims that the “migration of information, myths, languages, music, imagery, cuisine, décor, costume, furnishing, above all persons” cause socio-cultural interaction to take place in a cosmopolitan global framework. Thus most individuals are Lyotard's (1991) metropolitan consumers, who use various cultural resources in the construction and representation of their own identities.

Possibly this is the reason why in cultures where the local, regional and national is saturated by the transnational and the global – whether it is foreign persons, goods, or media messages with information, images, or stories about the 'other', more and more individuals search intentionally for those aspects of their individual or group identity that are 'their own', that are local, regional, national, and belong to their own historical or present experience, i.e. to their cultural heritage. In Central/Eastern Europe, in former countries of the Soviet Bloc, this tendency can be explained as a counter response to a rather blind, uncritical admiration and acceptance of everything that was Western, foreign, different in the 1990s, when radical geopolitical changes took place in the region. After twenty years, media consumers in this part of Europe have become more critical and selective in their choices and there is visible return to local, regional and national elements. Television audiences that used to be satisfied with the imported American and German crime series, South American telenovelas and dubbed reality shows have begun to appreciate original Slovak television production or licenced Slovak formats. This trend is visible in the growing production of popular television genres by Slovak television channels, especially in the hybrid genres of reality television in the present decade and this tendency can be observed in other Central/Eastern European countries as well.

Slovak and other Central/Eastern European television companies often buy licences for formats from abroad, in which the only local, regional or national element is the persons who take part in them. Licenced dating programmes, makeover programmes, talent contests, candid camera shows, legal/court/law enforcement programmes, docusoaps, reality sitcoms or celebrity variations of programmes are created in such a way that they neither provide space for representation of local, regional or national identity, nor do they construct the discourse with cultural heritage elements. There is no or just a minimum effort in this respect visible in documentary-style programmes that

give a private look into the lives of the characters in Slovak versions of *Big Brother*, *Real Housewives*, or *The Osbournes*.

On the other hand, there are numerous genres of reality television in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Serbia, etc. that use cultural heritage narratives, and these are original or licenced formats of reality competitions, game shows, cooking shows and cooking contests. They are often part of prime-time programming and belong to the category of hybrid genres, with several series and growing audiences.

In reality competition shows, broadcast in prime-time, the character-centred narratives often concentrate on communication between characters, their quarrels full of vulgarisms and their mutual hatred or affection. Cultural heritage elements provide setting, props, costumes, and they are rather fragmented and without proper context or without more complete portrayal (e.g. *Farma* [Farm] broadcast by the commercial TV *Markíza*)¹. Hybrid genres of travel documentary shows, with a higher number of original formats compared to other reality television genres, carry more complex cultural heritage narratives. Portrayals of interesting localities in both urban and rural environments, including historic monuments, museums, galleries and unique natural sights are intertwined with visits to local traditional or new and ‘chic’ restaurants, local breweries, distilleries, cooking of traditional local meals on the spot, or visits into local households. Although full of stereotypical descriptions, they are frequently accompanied by verbal humorous interactions, inbuilt coincidences, and rather personal storytelling. The initial title and opening sequences usually carry selections of symbols of natural landscapes (e.g. mountains, peaks, sheep farming), traditional and new architecture (e.g. castles, churches, blocks of flats) and national symbols – legendary heroes, flags, coats of arms, etc. (e.g. *Vo štvorici po Slovensku* [‘In 4 around Slovakia’] broadcast by the commercial TV *Markíza*).²

Most of the game shows and cooking shows broadcast on Slovak TV channels represent licenced formats. The Slovak cultural heritage including elements of food, cooking and cuisine is present to various degrees in the content of tasks, questions and activities in various game shows, ranging from a very small proportion in, for instance, *Duel* (broadcast by public service TV *RTVS1*)³ to being an essential content building element in, for example, *Milujem Slovensko* [‘I love Slovakia’]⁴ (prime-time licenced format, broadcast by public service TV *RTVS1*), in which content of all tasks and activities is based on Slovak history, sights, language – vocabulary of regional varieties, films, music, literature, but also Slovak traditional food, drinks and traditions in Slovak cuisine. The narratives of cultural heritage in this programme are complemented by the presence and interactions of Slovak celebrities – actors, musicians, media personalities, and sports persons. The choice of national and Slovak cultural heritage symbols for the title sequence and studio setting resembles that of *Vo štvorici po Slovensku* [‘In 4 around Slovakia’] described above.

Reality cooking programmes are characterised as those that construct consumer fantasies for their viewers (cf. Ashley et al. 2004: 182). Food narratives simultaneously connect people physically, sociologically, psychologically, emotionally, and historically. The messages food narratives convey have a potential to be read and received by a majority of audiences, because food stories intertwine with audiences’ daily lives. The

¹ <http://farma.markiza.sk/>

² <http://vo4posk.markiza.sk/>

³ <http://www.rtvsk.sk/televizia/archiv/7755/75944>

⁴ <http://www.rtvsk.sk/televizia/program/37>

elemental nature of food and its connection with the body and identity forge a relationship between eating and identity (cf. Kittler et al. 2011: 3). Food fantasies are constructed into cultural heritage narratives that are sold to the viewers with the help of narrators – professional chefs, celebrity chefs or eccentric ordinary chefs. These narrators provide direct and explicit advice for the fantasy consumption or prompt the audiences to buy cook-books or other food-related products. What in fact the narratives sell to the audiences and what the audiences read as a text is a food-related lifestyle.

Slovak and other Central/Eastern European audiences have access to original, imported, (non)-dubbed formats of cooking programmes, e.g. *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares*, *Jamie Oliver* and also licenced formats of *MasterChef* or *Naked Chef*, produced to come closer to the expectations of the Central/Eastern European food-related lifestyle of the consumer. In their narratives, these cooking shows and cooking contests contain elements of Slovak cultural heritage. In the Czech and Slovak cooking shows *Ano, šéfe* ['Yes, boss'] (licenced *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares*, produced and broadcast for the Czech audiences by the commercial TV *Prima* and for the Slovak audiences by the commercial TV *JOJ*)⁵, Czech chefs (in the Slovak format *Czech chef living in Slovakia*) travel around the Czech Republic and Slovakia, trying to improve local restaurants' cooking. Episodes are situated in locations significant for the presence of Czech or Slovak cultural heritage elements – castles, churches, museums, monuments, natural beauty spots, folk traditions, etc. The Slovak cooking show *Nebíčko v papulke* ['The small piece of heaven in the cute mouth'] (broadcast by public service TV *RTVS*)⁶, subtitled 'television gastronomic Baedeker', offers narratives constructed as small stops on the grand tour of Slovakia, with the main purpose of collecting and presenting most interesting recipes from various regions and localities. The opening sequence serves as a typical example of food as a fantasy element, and each episode brings three new recipes, one always performed by a local cook. The elements of local cultural heritage are introduced by local experts – historians, museum guides, etc.

5. Conclusion

All the above mentioned reality television genres, broadcast on Slovak television channels that contain elements of Slovak cultural heritage, whether in a small proportion or as a basic, extensive or complex narrative element, have the potential to contribute to the formation of the cultural identities of their Slovak audiences. Present-day meanings of the cultural heritage embedded in the media discourse – memories, traditions, mythologies, natural landscapes, material artefacts – may contribute to the construction, transmission and transformation of the post-postmodern consumer's knowledge. The reality genre narratives that are created by signs and frame pieces of cultural heritage construct past meanings for the audiences' present day diverse identities. The past is transformed into present-day meanings in the stories created for individuals and groups. Food and other elements of cultural heritage in media discourses may transfer value systems of the ancestors into contemporary representations of identities.

The meaning of food in this process is well explained by Roland Barthes:

When he buys an item of food, consumes it, or serves it, modern man does not manipulate a simple object in a purely transitive fashion; this item of food sums up and transmits a situation; it constitutes information; it signifies (2013: 24).

⁵ <http://www.anosefe.joj.sk/>

⁶ <http://www.nebickovpapulke.sk/>

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DIDACTIC ISSUES

Poetics of Flexible Personification Gestalts in Anglo-American Literary Tradition

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1. Introduction

The article deals with a specific characteristic of English poetry – a flexible gestalt of a personified object or phenomenon – which arises from distinguishing features of the English language. Such images can be also called wandering or oscillating gestalts which foreground, in the majority of the cases, different, opposite characteristics of one and the same object, phenomenon or notion by formatting the artistic image alternately, in terms of either masculine or feminine connotations.

Personification or animation of objects and abstract notions as a verbalized way of thinking about the world is a generic feature of poetic speech that dates back to the times of mythological mapping of reality. The global personification which took place in the archaic