

DE GRUYTER

# DIALOGUES BETWEEN MEDIA

*Edited by Paul Ferstl*



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ICLA2016  
VIENNA

**THE MANY LANGUAGES OF  
COMPARATIVE LITERATURE**

## **Dialogues between Media**

**The Many Languages  
of Comparative Literature /**

**La littérature comparée:  
multiples langues, multiples langages /**

**Die vielen Sprachen  
der Vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft**



Collected Papers of the 21st Congress of the ICLA

Edited by  
Achim Hölter

**Volume 5**

# Dialogues between Media



Edited by  
Paul Ferstl

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# Table of Contents

Paul Ferstl

**Introduction: Dialogues between Media — 1**

## **1 Unsettled Narratives: Graphic Novel and Comics Studies in the Twenty-first Century**

Stefan Buchenberger, Kai Mikkonen

**The ICLA Research Committee on Comics Studies and Graphic Narrative: Introduction — 13**

Angelo Piepoli, Lisa DeTora, Umberto Rossi

**Unsettled Narratives: Graphic Novel and Comics Studies in the Twenty-First Century – A Preface — 19**

Stefan Buchenberger

***Future Imperfect: Dystopia, Time Travel, Absolute Power, and the Incredible Hulk* — 25**

Nicola Paladin

**The Participation of Will Eisner's *The Spirit* in World War II — 33**

Francesco-Alessio Ursini

**Social Control and Closed Worlds in Manga and Anime — 47**

Umberto Rossi

**The Myth of the Great War: Hugo Pratt's World War I Graphic Novel and Stories — 59**

Denise Ask Nunes

**The Toxic Heroine in *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* — 83**

Barbara Grüning

**Educating to Remember: The Public Use of Comics in Germany and Italy — 95**

Angelo Piepoli

**Gender Gaps in the Clouds: Expressive Repression and Signs of Change in Italian Comics of the 1950s and 1960s — 109**

Alison Halsall

**Visualizing the Gothic in Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* and Its Illustrated Adaptations — 123**

Lisa DeTora

**The Quantum Gaze as a Model for Simultaneous Mobilization in Graphic Narrative — 143**

Angelo Piepoli

**Wordless: Interpreting Visual Sequence as Storytelling: Towards a Semiotic-Textological Approach to Comics and Pictorial Narrative without Verbal Components — 157**

## **2 Hybridisierung literarischer Sprachen und Ausdrucksformen als Innovationsmodus**

Franz Hintereder-Emde

**Das Innovative hybrider Literatur am Beispiel Robert Walser — 179**

Michel de Boissieu

**Goethes *Faust* in Oper, Film und Manga: Die Faust-Bearbeitungen bei Gounod, Murnau und Tezuka am Beispiel der Studierzimmer-Szene — 193**

Marie-Christine Gay

**„Gossen-Orpheus“ Jean Genet: Deutsche Übersetzungs- und Rezeptionsschwierigkeiten eines poetisch-derben Stils — 203**

Timon Jakli

**Grimm 2.0 – Die Brüder Grimm in der Postmoderne — 217**

Fuminari Niimoto

**„das junge jakobli läßt den alten jakob grüßen“ – Poetik im Dazwischen der Sprachen und jenseits der Sprache in Friedrich Glausers Kriminalroman *Die Fieberkurve* — 227**

Monika Schmitz-Emans

**Dante-Comics zwischen Kanon- und Populärkultur: Spielformen der Hybridisierung und Strategien der Selbstreferenz — 235**

Friederike Schwabel

**Intermediale Formen der Sebald-Rezeption in der populären Musik — 251**

Arata Takeda

**Darstellung und Zeitlichkeit. Zu Gotthold Ephraim Lessings  
gattungstheoretischem Vermächtnis — 263**

Megumi Wakabayashi

**Schulromane von Robert Walser und Natsume Sōseki: Hybride Darstellungs-  
formen zwischen „hoch und niedrig“ — 275**

Martina Zerovnik

**Wie hältst du's mit der Liebe?**

**Vampirische Emanzipation im Abendlicht von Elfriede Jelineks „Krankheit oder  
Moderne Frauen“ — 287**

### **3 Languages of the Imaginary**

Andia Abaï-Ringgenberg, Patrick Ringgenberg

**La lumière dans les romans arthuriens et le *Livre des rois* de Ferdowsi — 303**

Fabiana Corrêa Prando

**Temporality and Finitude: The Wolf in the Fiction of João Guimarães Rosa and of  
Marcus Aurelius Pimenta and José Roberto Torero — 325**

Giovanna Gobbi Alves Araújo

***The Paulo Afonso Falls* by Castro Alves (1847–1871): Interweaving Poetry and  
Social Imaginaries — 335**

Sandra Trabucco Valenzuela, Maria Auxiliadora Fontana Baseio,  
Maria Zilda da Cunha

**Once Upon a Time and So Many Other Times: *Hansel and Gretel* — 347**

Sandra Trabucco Valenzuela, Luciane Ferreira Bonaldo

**Storytelling in Advertising: The Case of *Os Últimos Desejos da Kombi* — 359**



## 4 The State of Adaptation Studies Today

Brigitte Le Juez

**Modern Film Adaptations of Fairy Tales: An Examination of Four 2012 Versions of *Snow White* — 373**

Adile Aslan Almond

**Adapting *Hamlet* to the Turkish Screen — 387**

Bernard Franco

**Three Adaptations of *Dracula*: Friedrich Murnau, Tod Browning, Francis Ford Coppola, and the Liminal Vampire — 399**

Jia Guo

**Adaptation as Creation: From Yu Hua's to Zhang Yimou's *To Live* — 411**

Margarida Esteves Pereira

**Transnational Adaptations: The Nineteenth-Century Novel Revisited through a Transcultural Lens — 423**

## 5 International Intermediality

Carmen Concilio

**Marlene Creates: Land, Nature, and the Forest as Poetry/Museum — 437**

Eleonora Marzi

**Le texte liquide entre linéarité et causalité : les caractéristiques de l'hypertexte dans la littérature numérique — 455**

Michaela Bürger-Koftis, Ramona Pellegrino, Sandra Vlasta

**Polyphonie**

**Mehrsprachigkeit\_Kreativität\_Schreiben**

**Projekt, Portal, Community – Wie viel Web 2.0 braucht ein wissenschaftliches Webportal? — 473**

Beatrice Nickel

**Intertextualität als Intermedialität: Zum Mond fliegen mit Jules Verne, Georges Méliès, Brian Selznick und Martin Scorsese — 491**

Irina Rosenau

**Das Selbst zwischen Bild und Sprache: Marc Chagalls Autobiographie  
*Mein Leben* — 505**

Christian van der Steeg

**Pallenberg alias Schwejk: Ikonografie der Satire, 1918–1933 — 517**

Blaž Zabel

**Archaic Greek Poetry and Hip-Hop: A Comparison — 539**

Ramona L. Ceciu

**Language and Intermedial Metamorphoses in Indian Literature and Arts — 551**

Dora Nunes Gago

**Intertextual Encounters between Jorge de Sena and Manuel Bandeira — 563**

Alexander Vladimirovich Kalashnikov

**References to Music in the Translations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*  
into Russian — 575**

Giovanna Lucci

**Emma/Juremma: An Intersemiotic Translation of Jane Austen's *Emma* into  
Brazilian Culture — 587**

Ana Maria Machado

**Literature and Cinema: The Military vs. the People in the Hetero-Visiotypes and  
Hetero-Imagotypes of the 1974 Portuguese Revolution — 605**

Nilce M. Pereira

**Translational Functions of Book Illustrations, and What Dickens Has to Do with  
Them — 621**

Márcia Arbex, Izabela Baptista do Lago

**Images littéraires de l'atelier de l'artiste — 639**

Capucine Echiffre

**La conception française du lyrisme à l'épreuve du lied : l'exemple de Blaze de  
Bury — 653**



Paul Ferstl

## Introduction: Dialogues between Media

I introduce this volume with distinct pleasure, since it marks the final step in a journey that started seven years ago, at the ICLA 2013 at the Sorbonne. The decision to host the ICLA 2016 at the University of Vienna meant that, from 2013 to 2016, I had to face the biggest organizational challenge of my career, since I had the honour to support Achim Hölter, the chair of the organizing team, both as senior assistant and as ICLA 2016 program coordinator and editor. The realization of the congress, strenuous as it was, has since then filled me with a very satisfying sense of achievement, and not just a little pride. I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank my senior assistant colleague, Constanze Prasek, whose contribution to the success of this event cannot be overstated. The same applies to our numerous student volunteers.

As program coordinator, it was my responsibility to arrange slots and venues for 1,895 presentations and meetings. On Friday, July 22nd 2016, we started the general program at 9 A.M. in 44 parallel sessions. Another part of my job was communicating the program of the congress via a database, online documents, and a printed program. Weighing a total of 1681 kilograms, the printed programs mercifully arrived in time to be distributed to the individual welcome bags our guests received on arrival. This print program, however diligently prepared, ceased to provide a 100 % correct outline of the envisaged event the moment it was sent out to the printers. Cancellations, due to illness or political unrest, were of course bound to keep the program in constant flux, and although the organizing team did its best to keep the online program up to date, and to communicate the changes to the congress participants via displays on various screens on the premises, it was impossible to keep track of all changes, comings and goings. During my preparations for this introduction, I looked at the various artifacts that document the ICLA 2016. It is quite an astonishing array of media: minutiae of meetings, protocols, calls for papers, e-mail negotiations with authorities, caterers, printers, publishing houses, abstracts from scholars around the globe, peer review reports, the program database, the print file of the programs, the printed program, accounts of conference fees paid, photographs, video and sound recordings of round tables and other events, social media coverage, and so on. The vision of the congress and the building of its infrastructure are well documented, the accounting has been settled and cleared, but the event per se, all these hundreds of presentations, the bustle of the two thousand people who congregated in the University of Vienna for a summer week, remains wonderfully intangible. The organizing team tried to represent and document the action on various media, and the course of the

event at least implies that we succeeded in providing a structure to facilitate its execution. Whether a certain presentation definitely took place, however, only those know for sure who actually participated in it. Before the congress, I had read every participant's name and the title of every presentation on the program several times, and had allocated a room and a time slot to each event, meaning I was quite well acquainted with the program; but when it was all over I realized that, since behind-the-scenes duties had kept me busy, I had only attended two panels in person, and these only because I had been present because of on-site responsibilities anyway.

It may be stating the obvious to say that every participant in the ICLA 2016 experienced the event in a singular, individual way; still, doing so certainly draws attention to the interesting question of how, by what means, we may document these experiences in order to share them, to provide the basis for their sound comparison and further processing. At first, there is the idea of the event, the planning and its numerous manifestations of different states of preparation; then the event itself actually takes place, in the fleeting experience of a moment, the participation in performance; afterwards, tradition asks for a tangible object in the form of congress proceedings, preferably as a bound print volume, while innovation also asks for an open-access online format. Whether on paper in your hands or on your screen, this volume brings to you some results of the congress. The reflections on the shape of these ICLA 2016 proceedings and the underlying concept have already been sufficiently elucidated in the introduction of Volume I. Both organizers of group sessions and presenters of single papers were cordially invited to contribute, either by providing collections of articles, or by submitting single papers for peer review. I am very grateful to Mag. Sophie Mayr, Hannah Schroder, M.A., and Dr. Juliane Werner for the expertise, time and effort they employed in the gathering and processing of the resulting submissions.

It is now my honour to introduce Volume V of the ICLA 2016 proceedings, entitled *Dialogues between Media*, which presents texts that deal with the interplay of media or inter-arts studies, as well as papers with a focus on comics studies. The latter is mainly due to the inclusion of an ICLA 2016 group session on comics studies, though additional three articles within this volume from beyond that source reference comics and thus are further testimony to the fact that comics have truly arrived in mainstream academic discourse. As to be expected, *adaptation* is a key term for the studies presented in this volume; various articles discuss the adaptation of literary source texts in different target media, with cinematic versions (6) most prominent, followed by comics adaptations (4), TV series (2), theatre (1), and opera (1). Beyond adaptation, three additional papers address the relationship of literary text and image, in the form of inspiration by national cultural iconography, the image as literary topos, or in the form of illustration.

Papers on electronic literature, a multimedia art project, an online science portal, a Brazilian Volkswagen advertisement, and a comparison of hip hop and Ancient Greek poetry further show the range of this volume, and many of the strands that are woven into dialogues between media. The performing arts beyond theatre and music, however, are conspicuously absent, as is (computer or other) gaming, and much of the online world; and attention to those media beyond the arts that constitute and regulate our interactions in everyday life is quite scarce. These absences may have many reasons – a respective relative medial applicability for discourse rooted within comparative literature, the relevance of trends and valuations within our discipline, or the time necessary to digest new developments in our world. Still, one has to remember that this volume contains only a part of the ICLA 2016 presentations, and there were many that would have complemented this collection well by opening up ways into new worlds, such as that of gaming.

Among these group sessions that are not included in this volume, I would like to mention “Do you speak digital?” organized by Hans-Joachim Backe (IT University of Copenhagen), “Intermedialität: Konzeptionalisierungen und Methoden” by Anke Bosse (Universität Klagenfurt) and Claude Paul (Universität Mannheim), “Comparison and Intermediality: The Gesamtkunstwerk” by Caroline Fischer (Université de Pau), Massimo Fusillo (University of L’Aquila), and Marina Grishakova (University of Tartu), “One Theme: Different Media” by Thaïs Flores Nogueira Diniz (Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, Brazil), “Pictures for Everybody! Postcards and Literature/Bilder für alle! Postkarten und Literatur” by Simone Sauer-Kretschmer (Ruhr-Universität Bochum) (published as “Jahresband” of *„Sprachkunst“: Postkarten und Literatur, Beiträge zur Literaturwissenschaft*. Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. XLVIII/2017), “The Serialization of Literature and the Arts” by Markus Schleich (Universität des Saarlandes) and Jonas Nesselhauf (Universität Vechta), “Media, Mediation, Fiction” by Benoît Tane (LLA CREATIS, Université de Toulouse Jean-Jaurès) and Isabelle Krzywkowski (Université Grenoble 3-Stendhal, Saint-Martin-d’Hères), and “Die vielen ‘Sprachen’ der Klassiker” by Paula Wojcik (Universität Wien) and Sophie Picard (Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena) (published as: *Klassik als kulturelle Praxis: Funktional, intermedial, transkulturell* (spectrum Literaturwissenschaft / spectrum Literature, Band 62), edited by Paula Wojcik, Stefan Matuschek, Sophie Picard, Monika Wolting).

\*

Five ICLA 2016 group sessions have contributed collections of articles to this volume: “Unsettled Narratives: Graphic Novel and Comics Studies in the 21st Century”, organized by Lea Pao (Pennsylvania State University), Stefan Buchen-

berger (Kanagawa University, Yohohama), Kai Mikkonen (University of Helsinki), and David Coughlan (University of Limerick); “Hybridisierung literarischer Sprachen und Ausdrucksformen als Innovationsmodus” (Franz Hintereder-Emde, Yamaguchi University); “Languages of the Imaginary” (Sandra Trabucco Valenzuela (Universidade Anhembi Morumbi, São Paulo, Brazil), Maria Zilda Cunha (Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil), Maria Auxiliadora Baseio (Universidade Santo Amaro, São Paulo, Brazil); “The State of Adaptation Studies Today“, organized by Brigitte Le Juez (Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland), César Domínguez (University of Santiago de Compostela, Santiago de Compostela, Spain); and “Foreign Literatures in Web 3.0“, organized by Silvia Ulrich (Università degli Studi di Torino). Since the latter only consists of two papers, I have taken the liberty to include it in the section “International Intermediality“, in which I have collected the papers individual authors have contributed to this volume.

\*

The volume opens with the collection of articles submitted by the ICLA Research Committee on Comics Studies and Graphic Narrative. Stefan Buchenberger and Kai Mikkonen outline the development of the research committee from informal conference-room conversations at the Hong Kong ICLA World Congress in 2004 to its official recognition as the ICLA Research Committee on Comics Studies and Graphic Narrative in 2015, along with a short discussion of the general international transformation of comics studies into a respected, established research field. In “Unsettled Narratives: Graphic Novel and Comics Studies in the Twenty-First Century – A Preface“, Angelo Piepoli, Lisa DeTora, and Umberto Rossi describe the reception of comics in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, from their widespread rejection by the cultural establishment to their acceptance by the mainstream acceptance and their academic reevaluation. In “*Future Imperfect: Dystopia, Time Travel, Absolute Power, and the Incredible Hulk*“, Stefan Buchenberger analyzes a 1990s addition to the Incredible Hulk canon in which traditional science-fiction plot elements such as a dystopian future and time travel are employed to give a new twist to the eternal struggle between the Incredible Hulk and his alter ego, Bruce Banner. Nicola Paladin’s “The Participation of Will Eisner’s *The Spirit* in World War II” focuses on the historical context of one of the first models for the superhero tradition in the USA and argues that a strong anti-Nazi feeling, as well as pro-American intervention propaganda, constitutes a recurrent subtext throughout the adventures of the Spirit. In “Social Control and Closed Worlds in Manga and Anime“, Francesco Ursini shows how closed and controlled worlds double as settings and themes that allow authors to develop immersive narratives, discussing four manga (*Blame!*, *Nijūseiki Shōnen*, *Btoom!*, and

*Yakusoku no Neverland*) and three anime movies (*Shōjo Kakumei Utena*, *Ergo Proxy*, and *Texhnolyze*). The theme of war in a national tradition is of central interest in Umberto Rossi's "The Myth of the Great War: Hugo Pratt's World War I Graphic Novel and Stories". Examining seven graphic narratives by Pratt, the article reads these narratives in connection with the myth of the Great War as it was defined by the Italian historian and literary critic Isnenghi in 1970 in his groundbreaking monograph *Il mito della grande guerra*, but also shows these graphic narratives present readers with a bewildering mix of historical/quasi-historical characters, real and imaginary places, often establishing surprising and complex intertextual short-circuits that connect Pratt's World War I narratives, history, and the historical imagination. Denise Ask Nunes' "The Toxic Heroine in *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*" discusses interlinked concepts of ecology and heroism, new materialism, and non-human agency and their influence on our ideas of morality and consequently heroism. Barbara Grüning compares different public uses of comics to represent difficult pasts: "Educating to Remember: The Public Use of Comics in Germany and Italy" combines four case studies (the National Socialist and GDR pasts in the German memory field, and the Fascist past and terrorist/Mafia massacres in the Italian memory field) to focus on the narratives and aesthetic forms culturally legitimized in the two national public memory spaces, the cultural frames which define a specific past, and the cultural paradigms of transnational comics, thus highlighting the social actors involved in this process of collectively working memory. Angelo Piepoli's "Gender Gaps in the Clouds: Expressive Repression and Signs of Change in Italian Comics of the 1950s and 1960s" focuses on the change to the gender gap in the history of Italian comics as a sign of social change in Italy. In "Visualizing the Gothic in Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* and Its Illustrated Adaptations", Alison Halsall argues that Neil Gaiman's appropriation of the Gothic topos in *The Graveyard Book* (2008) deliberately unsettles its genre and that P. Craig Russell's graphic novel version (2014) further develops the hybridity of Gaiman's source text in more depth. Lisa DeTora suggests in "The Quantum Gaze as a Model for Simultaneous Mobilization in Graphic Narrative" that graphic narratives require different modes of looking relations when compared with the fixed, linear, and sequential and time-constrained visual system of film. Angelo Piepoli closes this section with a further contribution ("Wordless: Interpreting Visual Sequence as Storytelling: Towards a Semiotic-Textological Approach to Comics and Pictorial Narrative without Verbal Components"), employing János Sándor Petőfi's semiotic textology to incorporate textological concepts such as connexity, cohesion, constringency, and coherence in the study of comics.

Franz Hintereder-Emde introduces the section stemming from the panel he organized at the congress, "Hybridization as a Mode of Innovation", with a brief look at the notion of hybridity while focusing on the works of Robert Walser, a



Swiss author who made the combination of literary genres, association, and arabesque description a key technique of his writing. Michel de Boissieu follows with “Goethes *Faust* in Oper, Film und Manga: Die Faust-Bearbeitungen bei Gounod, Murnau und Tezuka am Beispiel der Studierzimmer-Szene”, highlighting the influence of the respective target medium on the adaptive process. Marie-Christine Gay’s “‘Gossen-Orpheus’ Jean Genet: deutsche Übersetzungs- und Rezeptionsschwierigkeiten eines poetisch-derben Stils” traces the reception of Jean Genet in West Germany, where his hybrid, often provocative style led to considerable difficulties in translation as well as fierce debates about the reception of this “gutter Orpheus”. The critical comparison between the original and German versions sheds new light on the difficulty of transposition and ultimately intercultural communication. The need for adaptation, the interventions during the production process as well as the reception by the German public are highly relevant to understanding the power and limits of hybridization as an innovative process. “Grimm 2.0 – Die Brüder Grimm in der Postmoderne” by Timon Jakli examines the ABC television series “Once upon a Time” by Kitsis/Horowitz and the comic book franchise “Fables” by Bill Willingham et al. Both adaptations make use of the serialized storytelling to weave a web of interconnected narratives from different sources (the brothers Grimm, Eastern fables, present-day pop culture), combining subtexts and backgrounds of tales and figures to create new meaning; irony and play with citations create a multi-layered narrative universe with almost infinite cultural and literary references. Fuminari Niimoto’s “‘das junge jakobli läßt den alten jakob grüßen’ – Poetik im dazwischen der Sprachen und jenseits der Sprache in Friedrich Glausers Kriminalroman *Die Fieberkurve*” contrasts Glauser’s detective novel *Fever* (1938) with its adaptation as radio drama (1990) in order to highlight Glauser’s strategy to reveal multiple identities and moreover to unveil and cherish the differences in every single individual, beyond the ostensible primary purpose to present a mystery story. Monika Schmitz-Emans focuses on comics and adaptation as well – “Dante-Comics zwischen Kanon- und Populärkultur: Spielformen der Hybridisierung und Strategien der Selbstreferenz” demonstrates that comics based on Dante and his *Commedia* show two main tendencies, either the simplification of the complex work for literary beginners, or the subtle reflection of and challenging response to that complexity through specific features of graphic and pictorial media. Friederike Schwabel highlights interactions between literature and popular music in “Intermediale Formen der Sebald-Rezeption in der populären Musik”. She analyzes the reception of literary texts by W. G. Sebald in connection with a poetry reading by Patti Smith, a soundtrack by The Caretaker, and a song by the Sleeping States – varied forms of intermediality as well as their inter- and extracompositional functions can be made visible and discussed based on typologies by Werner Wolf. Arata Takeda’s

“Darstellung und Zeitlichkeit. Zu Gotthold Ephraim Lessings gattungstheoretischem Vermächtnis” traces the origin of Goethe’s and Schiller’s contention (“On Epic and Dramatic Poetry” (1797/1827)) that the essential difference between epic and dramatic poetry consists in the difference of their respective representation of time. Megumi Wakabayashi (“Schulromane von Robert Walser und Natsume Sōseki: Hybride Darstellungsformen zwischen ‘hoch und niedrig’”) presents the second examination of Robert Walser within this section, comparing his school novel *Jakob von Gunten* (1909) with Natsume Sōseki’s school novel *Botchan [The Fool from Tokyo]* (1906), highlighting how Walser and Sōseki both criticized educational institutions as instruments for manipulation of public opinion in times of militaristic nationalism while succeeding in subverting the binary opposition between “high and low” literature. This section on hybridization concludes with Martina Zerovnik’s “Wie hältst du’s mit der Liebe? Vampirische Emanzipation im Abendlicht von Elfriede Jelinek’s ‘Krankheit oder Moderne Frauen’”. The article reads Elfriede Jelinek’s play *Illness or Modern Women* (1987) along with one of the text’s main references, the novella *Carmilla*, and reflects on how love affects the personality and sphere of action of the characters within a patriarchal system.

The section “Languages of the Imaginary” is opened by Andia Abaï-Ringgenberg’s and Patrick Ringgenberg’s “La lumière dans les romans arthuriens et le *Livre des rois* de Ferdowsi”, a comparative study of the literary, esthetic and symbolic employment of light in medieval Western chivalric romances (twelfth and thirteenth century) and Iranian epic poetry from the beginning of the eleventh century. In “Temporality and Finitude: The Wolf in the Fiction of João Guimarães Rosa and of Marcus Aurelius Pimenta and José Roberto Torero”, Fabiana Corrêa Prando explores the symbol of the wolf in João Guimarães Rosa’s *Fita verde no cabelo* [Green Ribbon in the Hair] and José Roberto Torero’s and Marcus Aurelius Pimenta’s *Chapeuzinho Preto* [Little Black Riding Hood]. Giovanna Gobbi Alves Araújo explores the aspect of visuality in *A Cachoeira de Paulo Afonso* [The Paulo Afonso Falls] by Castro Alves (1876) from the perspective of its dialogue with the pictorial and political construct of the Paulo Afonso Falls in the Brazilian collective imagination of the nineteenth century. Sandra Trabucco Valenzuela, Maria Auxiliadora Fontana Baseio, and Maria Zilda da Cunha analyze the adaptation of fairy tales in the TV series *Once upon a Time* in “Once upon a Time and So Many Other Times: *Hansel and Gretel*”. Sandra Trabucco Valenzuela’s and Luciane Ferreira Bonaldo’s “Storytelling in Advertising: The Case of *Os Últimos Desejos da Kombi*” focuses on a Volkswagen do Brazil’s advertising video produced in 2014 – *Os Últimos Desejos da Kombi* [Kombi: Last Wishes] – which sought to appeal to or create memories in order to strengthen or establish affective ties with consumers.

The section “The State of Adaptation Studies Today” opens with Adile Aslan Almond “Adapting *Hamlet* to the Turkish Screen” which examines the only

Turkish cinematic adaptation of *Hamlet* to date (*Kadın Hamlet: İntikam Meleği* [Lady Hamlet: The Angel of Vengeance] (1976)) within a wider historical context of Turkish Hamlets that have been adapted, staged, and produced in different genres and media with the modernizing aims of the Kemalist state in mind. Bernard Franco analyzes three cinematic adaptations of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* by Friedrich Murnau, Tod Browning, and Francis Ford Coppola, while Jia Guo examines Zhang Yimou's adaptation of Yu Hua's *To Live*. Brigitte Le Juez' "Modern Film Adaptations of Fairy Tales: An Examination of Four 2012 Versions of *Snow White*" discusses the transformative quality of adaptation (thus influencing the reception of the original source text) by examining four 2012 cinematic adaptations of *Snow White*: Tarsem Singh's *Mirror Mirror*, Rupert Sanders's *Snow White and the Huntsman*, Pablo Berger's *Blancanieves*, and Siegrid Alnoy's *Miroir mon amour*. In "Transnational Adaptations: The Nineteenth-Century Novel Revisited through a Transcultural Lens", Margarida Esteves Pereira addresses issues of adaptation from the point of view of transcultural and transhistorical film adaptations of classic nineteenth-century realist novels.

As stated above, the section "International intermediality" presents two papers from the group session "Foreign Literatures in Web 3.0", followed by papers individual authors have contributed to this volume. In "Marlene Creates: Land, Nature, and the Forest as Poetry/Museum", Carmen Concilio scrutinizes a Web project by the Canadian poet, land artist, and photographer Marlene Creates, *A Virtual Walk of the Boreal Poetry Garden* (2005), in order to assess the variety of media, forms, languages, and stances that this Web project displays to its both real and virtual audiences, also taking into consideration the existing corpus of art and literary criticism on the artist's career. Eleonora Marzi's "Entre linéarité et causalité : les caractéristiques de l'hypertexte dans la littérature numérique" discusses electronic literature, based on Michael Joyce's *Afternoon, a Story*, and Stuart Moulthrop's *Victory Garden*, arguing that the singularity of the hypertext, composed of hypertext links and nodes, has a narrative structure which differs from that of the paper format. In "Polyphonie. Mehrsprachigkeit\_Kreativität\_Schreiben: Projekt, Portal, Community. Wie viel Web 2.0 braucht ein wissenschaftliches Webportal?", Michaela Bürger-Koftis, Ramona Pellegrino, and Sandra Vlasta discuss the potential and limitations of scientific web portals in a web 2.0 context. Beatrice Nickel's "Intertextualität als Intermedialität: Zum Mond fliegen mit Jules Verne, Georges Méliès, Brian Selznick und Martin Scorsese" presents intermediality as a form of intertextuality by applying Julia Kristeva's extended concept of textuality within the framework of a comparative case study by analyzing the influence of Jules Verne's moon-fiction *Autour de la lune* (1869) on Georges Méliès's silent film *Le Voyage dans la Lune* (1902), which has in turn affected Brian Selznick's best-selling novel *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (2007)

adapted by Martin Scorsese in his 3D-movie *Hugo* (2011). Irina Rosenau examines the relationship between text and image in Marc Chagall's *Ma vie*, 1921–1931. Christian van der Steeg's "Pallenberg alias Schwejk. Ikonografie der Satire, 1918–1933" analyzes the journalistic and literary reception of the 1928 Piscator theatre adaptation of Jaroslav Hašek's satirical novel *Die Abenteuer des braven Soldaten Schwejk* (1926). A comparison of two different oral traditions is presented in Blaž Zabel's "Archaic Greek Poetry and Hip-Hop: A Comparison", which considers how research in hip hop scholarship could contribute to knowledge of archaic Greek poetry, with an emphasis on rhythm or flow, and intertextuality. Ramona L. Ceciu argues in "Language and Intermedial Metamorphoses in Indian Literature and Arts" that in multilingual cultures, transactions between language, culture, and the arts require a constant multiperspectivism as well as new enquiries that need to constantly alter language itself and its processes of intermedial transference into new, evolving literary/artistic idioms. "Intertextual Encounters between Jorge de Sena and Manuel Bandeira" by Dora Nunes Gago analyzes the echoes of the modernist Brazilian poet Manuel Bandeira in the poetry of the Portuguese writer Jorge de Sena. Alexander Vladimirovich Kalashnikov's "References to Music in the Translations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* into Russian" is based on three Russian translations containing thirteen cases of musical references. Giovanna Corrêa Lucci analyzes the reimagining of the novel *Emma*, translated into another context, in "Emma/Juremma: An Intersemiotic Translation of Jane Austen's *Emma* into Brazilian Culture". Ana Maria Machado's "Literature and Cinema: The Military vs the People in the Hetero-Visiotypes and Hetero-Imagotypes of the 1974 Portuguese Revolution" focuses on the implications of different media and codes in the images of the Portuguese 25 April Revolution in the Luso-French-Brazilian Sérgio Tréfaut's documentary *Outro país* (2000) and Lídia Jorge's recent novel *Os memoráveis* (2014). Nilce M. Pereira examines book illustration from the perspective of translation studies, as intersemiotic translation exemplified by illustrations in three novels of Charles Dickens ("Translational Functions of Book Illustrations, and What Dickens Has to Do with Them"). Márcia Arbex' and Izabela Baptista do Lago's "Images littéraires de l'atelier de l'artiste" explore the literary topos of the studio in nineteenth- and twentieth-century French literature. Capucine Echiffre focuses on Blaze de Bury's reflections on the influence of the German *Lied* on French literature in the 1840s ("La conception française du lyrisme à l'épreuve du lied : l'exemple de Blaze de Bury").



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**1 Unsettled Narratives:  
Graphic Novel and Comics Studies  
in the Twenty-first Century**



Stefan Buchenberger, Kai Mikkonen

# The ICLA Research Committee on Comics Studies and Graphic Narrative: Introduction

**Abstract:** The community of scholars and students working on comics studies in the International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA) was born during informal conference-room conversations at the Hong Kong World Congress in 2004. What started out as a chance meeting of a few scholars interested in comic books has become, through the following iterations of the ICLA world conference and, in very recent years, other major events organized by fellow academic organizations, a constantly growing and truly international group of researchers of comics and graphic fiction in all their different forms. The founding of this group, which was officially recognized as the ICLA Research Committee on Comics Studies and Graphic Narrative in 2015, mirrors in many ways the general international transformation of comics studies, over the last two decades or so, into a respectable research field with all the hallmarks of an academic institution. Comics studies continues to hold much interdisciplinary promise, but it has gained a much stronger disciplinary identity than in the recent past. It is similar to literary studies and film studies in that all these fields are defined by their object of study, rather than by the disciplinary approaches used to study their objects, histories, and respective institutions. Like its neighbouring research fields, comics studies also invites debate about the meanings of its core concept: comics.

**Keywords:** comics studies, disciplinary approaches, graphic narrative, ICLA, interdisciplinarity, international collaboration, research committee, research group

The community of scholars and students working on comics studies in the International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA) was born, almost without us realizing it, during informal conference-room conversations at the Hong Kong World Congress in 2004. It was then that a few of us were thrown together on the same panel because we had papers on comics and due to cancellations at our original sessions. The ICLA Hong Kong congress had been postponed for a year from 2003 to 2004 because of the SARS outbreak, and the epidemic continued to have an effect on attendance in 2004. Thus, Stefan Buchenberger, then of Nara Women's University, and Kai Mikkonen from the University of Helsinki felt lucky to have been placed in the same session.

Stefan spoke on "Japan in American Comics: A Study of Japanese Influences in American Mainstream Comic Books and their Superheroes," and Kai's topic was



“Intersemiotic Translation and the Comic Book,” with examples from Enki Bilal’s *Nikopol Trilogy*. Tracy Lassiter, then a PhD student in the English Department at Indiana University, and today Assistant Professor of English at the University of New Mexico (Gallup), gave a paper on another panel on “Gender and Sexuality in Daniel Clowes’ ‘Gynecology’ and Hiroshi Aro’s *Futaba-Kun Change*, ‘Who Wears the Pants?’” The three of us were introduced to each other during post-panel mingling and socializing. A key person in connecting us was Luiz Guilherme Couto Pereira, aka Guile, from São Paulo, Brazil, a comics aficionado and student of Greek literature. Guile did not have a paper, but he came to hear our presentations. Thus, we started a conversation about comics, research, and what to do next.

The Hong Kong congress was possibly the first time that an ICLA congress had ever had the honour of hosting several research papers on comics. It is even possible that our three papers were the first ever presentations on comics to be accepted at these congresses, which have been held since 1955. For the next ICLA congress, in Rio in 2007, we planned and organized a whole panel focused on comics. This was a new disciplinary opening for the Association, even if few people were probably aware of it at the time. However, what needs to be chronicled about our experience in Rio is a pre-congress meeting between Stefan, Kai, and Guile in a side-street bar somewhere near Copacabana. This get-together started and proved something; it made things possible. Drinkeria Maldita has long been closed and forgotten, but we can still recall the occasion and atmosphere vividly. The three of us came to this meeting by our separate ways from different corners of the world. It was already dark in the evening – you may know how fast it can get dark in Rio in August – and it was a bit exciting, at least for one of us, to take the metro, find the right station to get off, walk out from underneath a bridge, find the bar, and get to the corner table with two guys of whom he had only the faintest memory. Once inside, what happened almost instantaneously was that we discovered so much common ground. In fact, the meeting turned into an initiation of sorts, the opening of a possible research community, and a beautiful friendship. There is no denying that cachaças and caipirinhas helped, but that does not explain the whole magic.

At the congress, on the wonderful premises of the historical campus, Praia Vermelha, of the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, there were again many “no show” clips pasted on the room doors. Nevertheless, the three of us managed to run a successful panel together, despite two cancellations. Stefan talked about hard-boiled crime fiction with reference to Frank Miller’s *Sin City* and its literary predecessors, Kai’s topic was remediation and the sense of time in graphic novels, and Guile focused on differences in visual narration between oriental and occidental comic art. We had a good audience, many interesting questions and comments, and a lively post-panel informal talk. The experience encouraged

us to move forward. Rio gave us momentum and much new energy: it became evident that we could easily grow from this and have several panels, and possibly workshops or symposia, at the next ICLA congresses, if we so wished. We could even plan joint publications in the future. Rio also proved to us that comics studies could put the fun back into comparative literature. One unique aspect of comics studies, at least in its early years of development, has been its emphasis on the joys of reading and its interest in fandom and comics culture, combined with serious scholarship.

After our first coordinated panel in Rio de Janeiro, things really took off in Seoul at the nineteenth ICLA congress, held at the Chung-Ang University from 15 August to 21 August 2010. Our symposium, organized by Stefan and aptly called “Graphic Narratives: Animations, Comic Books, Cartoons, and Graphic Novels,” took up no fewer than four sessions, with twelve papers being presented. Trying to include more or less all the major different fields of graphic narratives, we were also able to assemble a truly international group of speakers, from Ireland (David Coughlan), Italy (Barbara Grüning and Angelo Piepoli), Japan (Noriko Hiraishi), Finland, Brazil, and the US – just to name those who would become permanent members of the group – in what turned out to be our first major participation at the ICLA. The papers presented would also be collected for the first time, published in a special section of the *International Journal of Comic Art* 13.2 (2011) under the title “Graphic Narrative and Global Ground.” The editor, John A. Lent, was very helpful throughout the process, especially after the earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan in March 2011, which made it impossible for Stefan to continue working on the publication, which was thankfully finished by Tracy and Guile. They were assisted by our latest addition to the team, Lea Pao, who at the time was a PhD candidate and would become another core member of our group.

So, after coming together as a truly international research group in Seoul, we set our goals even higher for the twentieth ICLA conference, which was held at the University Paris-Sorbonne from 18 July to 24 July 2013. Organized by Kai under the title “Comparative and Narrative Approaches to Comics Studies,” our symposium occupied the maximum number of five sessions with fourteen papers. Once again, our group grew larger, with new faces adding to an ever-widening roster of scholars of graphic fiction. This led to our group applying to become an official research committee within the ICLA. The process concluded in 2015 with Kai and Stefan as the co-chairs of the committee. Arguably one of the most beautiful cities on earth, Paris offered many cultural highlights beyond the ICLA, not least the wonderful welcome reception at the City Hall, the farewell dinner on a boat on the Seine, and a tour of the *bande dessinée* bookshops of the Latin Quarter.

Somewhat surprisingly, the next ICLA conference was also held in a major European capital, at the University of Vienna, from 21 July to 27 July 2016. Since

Lea was originally from Vienna, she was in charge of the preparations, assisted by David, Kai, and Stefan. Once again, we had the maximum number of five panels, with fifteen presentations under the heading of “Unsettled Narratives: Graphic Novel and Comics Studies in the 21st Century.” We had already been recognized by the ICLA as an official research committee, but somehow the paperwork was delayed, and so we could not take part in the executive council meeting. That mistake has since been remedied and our group now enjoys full official status. Since all the members of the group are quite busy publishing and presenting, our first official report looked, even if we say so ourselves, rather impressive, as will subsequent ones. The report and further communication between our group and the ICLA was expertly handled by Lisa DeTora, who kindly agreed to be our secretary. Vienna once again gave us numerous opportunities to renew old friendships and form new ones, especially in the beautiful courtyard of the university, where we could spend the whole day talking to friends and colleagues.

The following year saw two more meetings in Europe: the American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA) congress, held in Utrecht, and the European Network of Comparative Literary Studies (ENCLS) conference, held in Helsinki. Noriko Hiraishi, founding member of our research network, represented the group at the ICLA executive meeting during the ACLA meeting. Angelo Piepoli organized a three-day ACLA seminar entitled “Who’s Bad? Representing Heroes, Villains and Anti-Heroes in Comics and Graphic Narratives,” while Lisa DeTora organized “Embodiment at the Margins: Theorizing Embodiment and/as Subjectivity in Literature and the Arts I,” including a panel devoted to the work of the ICLA Research Committee on Comics Studies and Graphic Narrative.

The ENCLS meeting on “Fear and Safety” saw further work by Umberto Rossi, who organized “Between Fear and Safety: Post-Memory in ‘European’ Comics and Graphic Narratives” with Kai Mikkonen. Its first session included Riccardo Capoferro (Sapienza University of Rome), Takayuki Yokota-Murakami (Osaka University), and Lisa DeTora. The second session included presentations by Shiamin Kwa (Bryn Mawr College), Emanuela Zirzotti (Sapienza University of Rome), Marco Petrelli (Sapienza University of Rome), and Umberto Rossi (Rome). This work continues the truly global character of the research group as well being a further commitment to collaboration and ongoing engagement between our members.

The founding of our ICLA research group mirrors in many ways the general international transformation of comics studies into a respectable research field over the last two decades or so. Today, comics studies has all the hallmarks of an academic institution, with national and international research associations, peer-reviewed journals, conferences, teaching positions, research teams and units, and of course a very lively publication scene in various venues, including many book series dedicated to the field by major academic presses. One of the

few areas where the field is still in its developing stage is the number of university departments and professorships devoted to it. Comics studies also continues to hold much interdisciplinary promise, even if the field has gained a much stronger disciplinary identity than just ten years ago. In the context of comparative literature, one thing that comics studies and our research committee can do is contribute new perspectives and pose interesting challenges to the very concept of literature. Charles Hatfield (2010) claimed that comics studies cannot have a disciplinary identity for two reasons: “one, because the heterogeneous nature of comics means that, in practice, comics study has to be at the intersection of various disciplines (art, literature, communications, etc.); and, two, because this multidisciplinary nature represents, in principle, a challenge to the very idea of disciplinarity.”

Today, this claim seems much less obvious, and perhaps even dated. Comics studies is similar to literary studies and film studies in that all these fields are defined by their object of study, not by the (countless) disciplinary approaches that may be used to study, discuss, and analyse their objects, histories, and respective institutions. Like its neighbouring research fields that focus on literature, theatre, or film, comics studies also invites debate about the meanings of its core concept: comics. Theories in all of these fields are, typically, interdisciplinary. Scholars in all of these fields also have varied disciplinary backgrounds and multidisciplinary interests.

What started out as a chance meeting of a few scholars interested in comic books has become a truly international group of researchers of comics and graphic fiction in all their different forms. At the same time, comics studies has become an established field of study which is no longer browbeaten by scholars of so-called serious literature. ICLA 2019 as well as other international conferences will continue to see rising interest in the study of graphic fiction and non-fiction, not least through the activities of our group, which, we are sure, will continue to prosper. “Excelsior!” (Stan Lee).

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**Dr Stefan Buchenberger** is a professor at the Department of Cross-Cultural Studies of Kanagawa University. He earned his PhD in Japanese Studies from the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich. He is co-organizer of the annual symposium on comparative literature at his university. He writes regularly on graphic fiction, mystery and detective fiction (his second major field of study), and on popular culture and literature in general. His publications include “Superman and the Corruption of Power” (2012), “Comic Book Villains and the Loss of Humanity” (2012), and “James Lee Burke” (2012).

**Dr Kai Mikkonen** is professor in Comparative Literature at the University of Helsinki, Finland. He earned his MA at the University of Iowa in 1991 and his PhD at the University of Tampere in 1997. His research and teaching interests include travel writing, graphic narratives and comics, narrative theory, and the theory of fiction. He is the author of *The Narratology of Comic Art* (2017) and *Narrative Paths: African Travel in Modern Fiction and Nonfiction* (2015), as well as of various articles in periodicals such as *Style*, *Partial Answers*, *Narrative*, *Word & Image*, *Image & Narrative*, *Studies in Travel Writing*, and the *Journal of Literary Semantics*.

Angelo Piepoli, Lisa DeTora, Umberto Rossi

# Unsettled Narratives: Graphic Novel and Comics Studies in the Twenty-First Century – A Preface

**Abstract:** Comic art and graphic narrative constitute a varied and multifaceted chapter in the cultural history of the contemporary age. When comics gained a foothold on the mass-media scene, they appeared as an object that was new, and indefinable. As is often the case when facing a novelty, there was a reactionary response. In fact, the slippery nature of the emerging medium resulted in widespread rejection by the establishment and a variety of negative connotations. Labelled for much of the twentieth century as a genre intended for children, or as second-rate cultural products, or even as morally harmful, in recent times, comics have begun to be re-evaluated by academics, particularly in the West. Even though today there remains a tendency to emphasize the literary value of individual works rather than their nature as sequential art, many negative connotations of the past have given way to an increasing need to understand how the comics medium works and what makes graphic narration so peculiar.

**Keywords:** academic re-evaluation, comics studies, cultural bias, cultural studies, graphic narrative, graphic novel, history of comics, semiotics, Umberto Eco, unsettled medium

## 1 The fate of comics

The fate of comics is a varied and multifaceted chapter in the cultural history of the contemporary age. Labelled for much of the twentieth century as a genre intended for children, as second-rate cultural products, or as a morally harmful narrative form, it is only in very recent times that comics have begun to be re-evaluated by academics, particularly in the West. In fact, with cultural effects that are still easily appreciable today, these narrative forms have become increasingly interesting to academics even as they have expanded to include more, and more serious, concerns. Importantly, this history of discredit cannot be generalized globally; in this respect, scholarship and culture in the West have lagged behind those of other communities. The key example is in Japan, where the reputation and diffusion of comics among different age-groups allowed the medium practically to replace traditional literature. Thus, a global account of the place of comics

and other graphic narratives must balance this more advanced and established appreciation of the comic art against the stigma applied to English-language products and other main comics traditions, such as the Franco-Belgian, Italian, or Argentinian ones.

The ever-widening place of comics in academic communities globally has relied on specific traditions and, significantly, an expansion of the form in the US specifically. While illustrated stories for children – arguably a form of graphic narrative – were appreciated earlier at least for their educational value in many nations, comics narratives (of the type associated with the sequential art of the *bande dessinée*) obtained substantial international attention from critics and academics only following the publication of the two volumes of Art Spiegelman's *Maus* in 1986 and 1991, collecting the chapters that appeared as inserts in the magazine *Raw* beginning in 1980. The debate generated by this comics memoir encouraged the multiplication of essays on comics titles, a phenomenon that would be boosted about a decade later by the English-language edition in two volumes of another comics memoir, *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi. These personally and politically powerful narratives took up themes and experiences of international significance in a style that was at once verisimilitudinous and comics-like: the works looked graphically like comics for young readers, but handled important and emotionally devastating conduct with genuine maturity.

Considering that many other noteworthy comics works had been produced before these two graphic novels, the reasons for such notable interest may lie in a fortunate combination of factors. On the one hand, it could be argued that an older highbrow debate opposing literary fiction and genre fiction reverberated in the field of drawn narrative, and that the appearance of two significant works with a literary profile was therefore successfully able to awaken interest in comics and allow connoisseurs, scholars, and critics to finally make it appear legitimate. *Maus* was a moving historical biography on the experience of the author's father as a survivor of the Shoah – what in many countries is called the Holocaust – while *Persepolis* was a fascinating historical autobiography, narrating the author's growth during and after the Islamic Revolution in Iran. These events were not only of local or personal importance: the narrated and illustrated experiences inform global views of ethics, morality, and equality. On the other hand, the particular historical moment should be taken into account in each case. *Maus* was released during the last phases of the collapse of the Soviet Bloc and the fall of the Berlin Wall; *Persepolis* appeared at the turn of the new millennium, at a crucial moment in the dialogue (or confrontation) between the West and the Islamic world, which included a revived debate on the condition of women in a changing world. In addition to that, the style of both *Maus* and *Persepolis* is not realistic in itself, but rather mimics the aesthetics of comics for children, such as talking, humanized

animals (typical of Disney comics), which confers nonetheless a powerful poetical value on the two works and, to borrow from Scott McCloud, enhances readers' identification with the protagonists. Thus, the artists were able to skilfully use the characteristics of the comics medium in order to present controversial information in a less threatening way.

In effect, these works opened up possibilities for further artists and writers to treat material of personal, political, and international importance. The truthfulness of these particular stories is also critical as a watershed event. Social, historico-cultural, and geopolitical factors had conspired to keep masterpieces such as *El Eternauta* or *V for Vendetta* in a sort of shadow; they were capable of conveying crucial cultural critiques, but without the traction that victimization by Nazis or conservative religious reform conferred on *Maus* or *Persepolis*. And *El Eternauta* and *V for Vendetta* are just two previous works that criticized the contemporary political situation but were unable to set the step-change in motion. Hence, it is not unreasonable to say that it was necessary to wait until the time was ripe and the right works were published for comics to achieve a wider and stronger scholarly reputation.

That *Maus* and *Persepolis* were a watershed in the academic history of comics and graphic novels stems not only from their ability to draw additional graphic narratives into academic discourse, but also from the fact that an existing intellectual tradition was available to undertake the necessary theoretical work. Whilst the millennium change brought an international burgeoning of scholarly publications dedicated to comics studies, continental studies on graphic narrative, comics, and the comics medium go back to the sixties; their roots can be found in the field of semiotics and cultural studies. In 1963, at a time when comics were generally disregarded by Italian academia as second-rate popular literature meant for children and immature (or almost illiterate) adults, Umberto Eco wrote in his preface to the volume *Arriva Charlie Brown! [Here Comes Charlie Brown!]*:

It is not true that comic strips are a harmless amusement, which, though created for children, can also appeal to adults, seated in their easy-chairs after dinner, a bit of escapism to be enjoyed without harm and without gain. The mass culture industry produces comics on an international scale and distributes them on every level [...]. The comic strip is commissioned from above, it operates according to all the mechanisms of hidden persuasion, it presupposes in the consumer an attitude of escape that immediately stimulates the paternalistic aspirations of the producers. And, as a rule, authors conform: thus the comic strip, in most cases, reflects the implicit pedagogy of a system and acts as hidden reinforcement of the dominant myths and values. (Eco 1994, 37–38)

Eco added that there are also comic strips with an insightful satirical value, such as Jules Feiffer's works, and deeply poetic comic strips such as George Harriman's *Krazy Kat* or *Peanuts*, whose poetry originates from a lyrical repetition of the



same theme in different comic-strip variants day after day. A revised version of the preface would be included the following year in Eco's *Apocalittici e integrati* [Apocalyptic and Integrated], where the author also performed a sociological-cultural study of the myth of Superman and a semiotically relevant analysis of Milton Caniff's *Steve Canyon*. Eco's essays gave great impetus to comics studies in Europe and worldwide, not only of a semiotic or a socio-cultural nature, but also from various other scholarly perspectives, such as the pedagogical, the psycho-cognitive, and the literary.

Comics studies today still confronts many of the same cultural problems and questions the medium had to face originally. When comics gained a foothold on the mass-media scene, they appeared as an object that was new as well as indefinable. As is often the case when facing a novelty, there was a reactionary response: comics were something new, but also slippery and indefinable. The result was widespread rejection by the establishment and a variety of negative connotations. Even though today there remains a tendency to emphasize the literary value of individual works rather than their nature as sequential art, many negative connotations of the past have given way to an increasing need to understand how the comics medium works and what makes graphic narration so peculiar.

## 2 The contributions

The wish to highlight the very unsettled nature of narration in a highly unsettled medium brought the ICLA Research Committee on Comics Studies and Graphic Narrative to choose, for its first ICLA panel as a formally constituted group, a title that displayed the distinctive character of our subject of research in the evolving landscape of narrative media. Organized within the framework of the 2016 ICLA conference in Vienna, the panel "Unsettled Narratives: Graphic Novel and Comics Studies in the 21st Century" hosted presentations that addressed the questions raised by comics and graphic narratives from various perspectives, following the tradition of the research team since the 2004 ICLA conference in Hong Kong. The papers published here reflect work on US comics from a non-US perspective (Buchenberger and Paladin) and on comics in various national traditions (Ursini, Rossi, Ask Nunes); work that considers the transformation and reception of comics either in national traditions (Grüning, Piepoli) or as adaptations of the Gothic (Halsall); and more theoretical considerations (DeTora, Piepoli). We hope that readers enjoy the collection of papers, which has arisen from the hard work of our contributors as well as of colleagues from within the comics studies and graphic narrative research community who kindly served as advisors and peer-re-

viewers, especially Kai Mikkonen, David Coughlan, Adnan Mahmutovic, Takayuki Yokota-Murakami, and Riccardo Capoferro.

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**Dr Angelo Piepoli** received his PhD in Information and Communication Theory from the University of Macerata in 2007. He is a scholar of semiotic textology and the history and techniques of comics. He acted as a research collaborator at the former Department of Social Change, Legal Institutions, and Communication, and as a teaching assistant for courses in semiotics and applied semiotics at the former Faculty of Communication, at the University of Macerata, where he collaborated with the linguist and semiotician János Sándor Petőfi. He has published various contributions on comics studies in journals such as *Heteroglossia* and *IJOCA*, as well as in volumes such as *Il '68 Diffuso*, *Prospettive di Semiotica del Testo*, and *Imaginaire et Idéologie du Plurilinguisme Littéraire et Numérique*. He acted as editor-in-chief, programme director, and writer at Radio Università di Macerata, where he presented *Splash Page!*, a radio programme on comic art and publishing. He is a founding member of the ICLA Research Committee on Comics Studies and Graphic Narrative.

**Dr Lisa DeTora's** interest in graphic narrative research began with an edited volume, *Heroes of Film, Comics, and American Culture* (2009). Her education includes a PhD and MA in English (University of Rochester), graduate certificate in Women's Studies (University of Rochester), and an MS in Clinical Bioethics (Albany Medical College). As an assistant professor at Hofstra University, Dr DeTora teaches for curricula in writing studies and rhetoric, medical humanities, narrative medicine, and advanced scientific writing at undergraduate and graduate levels. Dr DeTora publishes in various journals on medical rhetoric, technical communication, comparative literature, and biomedicine. Her recent activity in graphic narrative research includes organizing seminars about embodiment and visual narratives of medicine at the American Comparative Literature Association congresses (2015 to 2018).

**Dr Umberto Rossi** is an independent scholar, teacher, and literary critic with wide-ranging intellectual interests – notably war literature, science fiction, Philip K. Dick, Thomas Pynchon, and J. G. Ballard – who has published and presented numerous papers in Italian and English. He has recently edited a collection of essays on Thomas Pynchon’s *V.* (with Paolo Simonetti), *Dream Tonight of Peacocks’ Tails* (2015). A consistent contributor to the Research Committee on Comics Studies and Graphic Narrative at the ICLA, Dr Rossi has also organized numerous seminars and panels. In 2017, he co-organized a series of panels, “Between Fear and Safety: Post-Memory in ‘European’ Comics and Graphic Narratives,” with Kai Mikkonen for the European Network of Comparative Literary Studies conference held in Helsinki. These panels included scholars from across the world. The conceptualization of these panels drew on Rossi’s interests in war literature and graphic narrative.

Stefan Buchenberger

# ***Future Imperfect*: Dystopia, Time Travel, Absolute Power, and the Incredible Hulk**

**Abstract:** This article considers a recent graphic novel and its ability to create new challenges for an invincible superhero. One of the greatest difficulties in writing the Incredible Hulk was always to create challenges for him: his most dangerous adversaries, like the Leader and the Abomination, also created by gamma radiation, are just different versions of himself. However, in 1992, Peter David, together with the artist George Perez, created one of the most memorable stories of the green giant with the two-part prestige-format series *Future Imperfect*. In this text, the Hulk came face-to-face with a monstrous future version of himself, the Maestro, the absolute ruler of a post-apocalyptic world where all the other superheroes had long since perished. Compared to the two Hulk foes mentioned above, the Maestro takes the idea of the mirror-image villain a step further, as he is the monster hiding inside the original monster: all the madness of the Hulk, of which we have only seen glimpses so far, comes to life. *Future Imperfect* uses traditional science-fiction plot elements like a dystopian future and time travel to give a new twist to the eternal struggle between the Incredible Hulk and his alter ego, Bruce Banner. As destructive as the Incredible Hulk can sometimes be, his monstrous future self reaches new heights when it comes to madness, which in return makes him even more powerful, since the Hulk gets stronger the madder he gets.

**Keywords:** the Abomination, absolute power, Bruce Banner, dystopia, *Future Imperfect*, George Perez, Incredible Hulk, the Leader, the Maestro, Peter David, superheroes, time travel

## **1 Introduction**

In 1992, one of the most prolific writers of *The Incredible Hulk*, Peter David, together with the superstar artist George Perez, created one of the more memorable stories featuring the green giant, *Future Imperfect*, in a two-part prestige format. In this comic, the Hulk faced a monstrous future version of himself, the Maestro, the absolute ruler of a post-apocalyptic world where all the other superheroes had long since perished. Only by luring the Maestro back in time to the exact moment when the first gamma explosion turned Bruce Banner into a raging monster could the Hulk beat his future self, uncreating him at the moment of his own creation.

One of the greatest challenges facing Hulk writers, from a story point of view, has always been to give him a real opponent, since “Hulk is the strongest one there is” – as he would often point out after beating an adversary into pulp. Two of his more memorable adversaries, the Leader and the Abomination, are thus just different versions of himself, likewise created by gamma radiation – the Leader having had his intelligence and the Abomination his strength amplified by it – both accidentally, also mirroring the origin of the Hulk. The Maestro, however, takes the idea of the mirror-image villain a step further, as he is the monster hiding inside the original monster: all the madness of the Hulk, of which we have only seen glimpses thus far, comes to life, without his human alter ego to stop him. David, together with the artist Dale Keown, would come back to this idea in the one-shot prestige-format *Incredible Hulk: The End* (2002). Here, the Hulk and Banner are the last beings on earth, wandering through the wasteland left by the last war, with Banner reminiscing about their life together, seeking release from it. Finally, with Banner having died, the Hulk seems to have had his biggest wish granted: “Hulk just wants to be left alone.” However, he soon finds out that without his alter ego he is truly alone, in a way he never wanted to be, missing an essential part of himself.

In this article, I would like to show that *Future Imperfect* is on the one hand a science-fiction story with its use of a dystopian future and time travel as central plot elements. However, on the other hand, *Future Imperfect* adds a new twist to the eternal struggle between the Incredible Hulk and Bruce Banner, who, like their Victorian predecessors Dr Henry Jekyll and Mr Edward Hyde, constantly vie for the same physical space.<sup>1</sup> As destructive as the Incredible Hulk can sometimes be, his monstrous future self reaches new heights when it comes to anger and madness, which in return makes him even more powerful, since the Hulk gets stronger the angrier he gets. The background of *Future Imperfect*, which positions the Maestro as the lone survivor of the superbeing community, taking whatever he likes because he is simply the most powerful being left, also contains a strong political message: in 1992, after the end of the Cold War, the hubris of the world’s lone remaining superpower led to winner-takes-all policies that had terrible consequences, and the only thing that could have beaten it would have been it itself.

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<sup>1</sup> See Buchenberger (2020) for an analysis of the dichotomy between Bruce Banner and the Hulk.

## 2 The origin of the Hulk

When Stan Lee and Jack Kirby created the Incredible Hulk in 1962, everybody's favourite green giant was actually grey and, like one of his famous predecessors, the Frankenstein monster, was created from different parts, in this case not of corpses but from classic monster lore. The basic story concept came from Robert Louis Stevenson's (2002) classic horror novella, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*,<sup>2</sup> while the monster itself was reminiscent of the aforementioned creature created by Dr Frankenstein, with a naive gentleness that could turn into a monstrous rage in a second. The original Hulk also only appeared at night, which further linked him to other, classic monsters like vampires or werewolves.<sup>3</sup> Many manifestations of the green giant were to follow, since the basic plot of the simple-minded brute brutalizing his enemies (or, to quote the monster himself: "Hulk Smash!") presented obvious narrative limitations and ensured that further, and more inventive, variations of this human-monster dichotomy were needed. As yet, this has not happened in the cinematic interpretations of the Hulk, where he continues to be a more or less mindless brute. Amongst other interpretations, a new Gray Hulk appeared in 1986 (created by Al Milgrom); he later became a Las Vegas mobster, calling himself Mr Fixit, as the Gray Hulk was thought to have died in a nuclear explosion triggered by his gamma-spawned arch-enemy, the Leader.<sup>4</sup>

## 3 Future Imperfect

In 1991, it seemed like the Hulk had finally made peace with himself. All the facets of his split personality had come together in *The Incredible Hulk* #377 (1991) as the so-called smart or composite Hulk, with Banner being portrayed as somebody suffering from multiple personality disorder who finally had been healed (see Sacks 2016). This seemingly sane incarnation of the Jade Giant would then go on to fight against his future incarnation, the insane and amoral Maestro, juxtaposing not weak-but-smart (Bruce Banner) against strong-but-dumb (the Hulk), as in the original Hulk stories, but strong-and-smart against strong, smart, and mad, in a matchup that would take the green giant to his breaking point.

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<sup>2</sup> The Hulk even fought Mr Hyde in *The Incredible Hulk* #368 (1990).

<sup>3</sup> See Lee (1989).

<sup>4</sup> The Gray Hulk reappeared for the first time in *The Incredible Hulk* #324 (1986). He was seemingly killed in *The Incredible Hulk* #345 (1988), and appeared as Mr Fixit for the first time in *The Incredible Hulk* #347 (1988).

As shown in *The Incredible Hulk: Future Imperfect* #1 (1992), in the aforementioned post-nuclear war future, all other superbeings are long dead and gone, and only memorabilia remain, collected by the Hulk's former sidekick, Rick Jones. Amongst these memorabilia are Captain America's broken shield, Thor's hammer, various costumes, and the adamantium-covered skeleton of Wolverine. This gives the one surviving superbeing, the Maestro, total control over what is left of human civilization in the aptly named township of Dystopia. As one citizen explains: "He takes what he wants. Does what he wants. Lives for his own amusements and gratification. If he favors you, great. If not ... forget it." There is, of course, a group of resistance fighters, led by the great-granddaughter of long-time Hulk ally Rick Jones, who as a teenager was saved by Bruce Banner from the gamma explosion that created the Hulk. Using the villainous Dr Doom's time machine, the resistance manage to bring the Hulk into the future to rid themselves of the Maestro.

This, however, proves to be quite difficult, as the Maestro is not only more brutal and ruthless than his predecessor, but also more powerful, since "the madder you get ... the stronger you get ... and you're completely mad," as the Hulk has to admit in their final battle in *The Incredible Hulk: Future Imperfect* #2 (1993). However, before the Hulk gets killed by his mad counterpart, he manages to send the Maestro back in time to the exact time and place of the gamma explosion that turned Banner into the Hulk, where the Maestro seemingly perishes in a nuclear inferno. This is a classic science-fiction time travel plot twist, connecting the origin, future, and end of the Incredible Hulk in one moment. But, as we all know, according to the logic of comic books, the Maestro would eventually make his comeback, as will be taken up later.

*Future Imperfect* uses the classic science-fiction trope of travelling back and forth in time in order to change history, preventing an often dystopian or post-apocalyptic future from happening. Examples are plentiful both in belletristic science fiction – as, for example, in Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976), where the protagonist travels back in time and kills a young Adolf Hitler – and in comics themselves – as the *Old Man Logan* (2016–2018) series from Marvel Comics, in which an older Wolverine comes back from a dystopian future to an alternate universe ruled by supervillains in order to prevent it from happening. This trope has always been a major plot element utilized in Marvel's X-Men universe, and also features prominently in the recent *X-Men: Days of Future Past* blockbuster film, which is based on a storyline in *Uncanny X-Men* #141–142 (1981) with the same title. While in the film it is Wolverine who travels back in time to change the future, in the comic this role falls to Kitty Pride, who escapes from a mutant concentration camp to stop this hellish future before it can happen.

In *Future Imperfect* #2, this plot device is handled in an innovative way. The Hulk's having been brought into the future in order to defeat the Maestro is only the first level of exposition for the theme of time travel: the trope itself is also mocked, as when the Hulk and the Maestro start theorizing about how the Hulk's suicide would also erase the Maestro, as the future self of the Hulk, from existence. This causes headaches for one of the Maestro's underlings, who cannot keep up with the myriad possible time paradoxes that might or might not occur. On the plight of this minister, the Maestro ironically comments: "That is a hazard with time travel theorizing." The death, or what looks like the death, of the Maestro is also accomplished by means of time travel that links the creation of the Hulk with the destruction of his evil future self, emphasizing the cyclical nature of time, an idea which is reinforced when a dying Rick Jones remembers the moment when he had caused Banner to become the Hulk (by recklessly entering the gamma-bomb test site), using the exact same words he used in *The Incredible Hulk* #1 (1962) when Banner rescued him from the blast: "The kids bet me I wouldn't have the nerve to sneak past the guards."

## 4 Things to come

So far, the reasons for the Hulk's turning into the Maestro remain a mystery, but in a recent incarnation as the chemically enhanced genius Doc Green – who does not, incidentally, like to be called Hulk – the character seemed to yet again be on the perilous road towards becoming his own worst enemy. Having already created one evil version of himself (a malicious artificial intelligence), Doc Green is afraid of becoming the murderous Maestro. As shown in *Hulk* #1–16 (2014–2015), he refuses to have his new-found intelligence stabilized, choosing instead to become mindless again, in order not to endanger others.

But the logic of comic books tells us that at some point the Hulk will transform into the Maestro, which should in turn result in another interesting epic. However, this has not happened so far, as the latest incarnation of the Hulk goes in quite a different direction, with Bruce Banner having – apparently – been killed and the child-genius Amadeus Cho taking over as the green giant.<sup>5</sup> The character of the Maestro played a major role in the recent *Secret Wars* crossover event, which featured a new version of the dystopian world described in *Secret Wars: Future*

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<sup>5</sup> See the death of Bruce Banner in *Civil War II* #3 (2016) and the first appearance of Amadeus Cho as the new Hulk in *The Totally Awesome Hulk* #1 (2016).



*Imperfect* #1–5 (2015), where his grab at ultimate power is once again thwarted. He is also one of the leading characters in the series *Contest of Champions* (2015–2016), where he becomes the godlike ruler of the remains of Battleworld, confronting various heroes in a gladiator-style battle scenario (see Richards 2016).

This spin-off of the *Secret Wars* #1–9 (2015–2016) limited series is in continuity, but so far remains a fringe title. However, a different version of the Maestro has since appeared in the aforementioned ongoing adventures of Wolverine, in *Old Man Logan* (in which the Maestro has a different origin, linking him to Mark Millar’s original storyline in *Wolverine*).<sup>6</sup> Writer Ed Brissson unites Millar’s rampaging gang of hillbilly Hulks from Logan’s dystopian future (who kill his whole family before he himself kills the original Hulk) with the aforementioned and likewise dystopian future of the murderous Maestro. Here, the Maestro becomes the leader of a cabal of Hulks, reminiscent of a murderous cult in the vein of Charles Manson, that tries to destroy humanity before Logan stops them. The Maestro, however, will return.

## 5 Conclusion

*Future Imperfect* is an innovative take on the story of the Hulk that uses classic science-fiction plot elements like a post-apocalyptic dystopian future and time travel as a means to prevent this future, while also creating an interesting new villain that is actually a variation on an old one. This is a spin-off of the concept of the enemy within (with the Hulk lurking inside Banner’s mind, waiting to take control) that is taken to the next level, with the monster inside the monster being even more powerful for not being bound by any kind of compassion for other beings. The dichotomy of man vs monster, or rather, in this case, human vs inhuman monster, also echoes the end of the Cold War, as the “smart Hulk” is able to make moral choices, whereas the Maestro is the personification of absolute power without any moral restraints. The results are disastrous for what is left of the world.

The concept of the smart Hulk using his intelligence to make moral choices in a political context was one of Peter David’s main ideas for his take on *The Incredible Hulk*. In the *Little Hitler* storyline, the Hulk is confronted with the moral

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<sup>6</sup> See *Old Man Logan* #25–30 (2017), *Wolverine* #66–72 (2008–2009), and *Giant-Size Old Man Logan* (2009) for the storyline introducing this version of Logan, aka Wolverine.

choice of what to do with a ten-year-old boy who, in another version of the time travel theme seen in *Future Imperfect*, is destined to become the next Hitler, with disastrous consequences for the world.<sup>7</sup> In the end, however, he does not have to make this decision, as the boy is seemingly left brain-damaged after accidentally being run over by a group of people. In the three-part *War and Pieces* storyline, the Hulk is confronted with another major moral choice, as he must decide what to do with the brutal dictator of the fictional Arabic country of Trans-Sabal.<sup>8</sup> Once again, the ethical decision is taken out of his hands, as the dictator is shot and killed by a masked gunman, who is later revealed to be Rick Jones.

However, in *Future Imperfect* the Hulk has to pull the trigger himself, and he kills the Maestro in order to save his own life, the people of Dystopia, and the future of humankind. A choice this profound is only rarely made by costumed superheroes, who, while often faced with moral dilemmas, most often like to find ways to avoid them. For example, Spider-Man expressed this dilemma faced by a superhero in such situations; after escaping the need to kill the Green Goblin, he says: “I would have become like him--a-a murderer!”<sup>9</sup> The Hulk’s physical and moral victory over the amoral Maestro leaves the world of Dystopia a better place, something that, sadly, cannot perhaps be claimed about the post-Cold War world we all live in, damaged as it is by the amoral choices of those who had the power to enforce those choices, but not the moral aptitude to think or care about the consequences of their actions.

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<sup>7</sup> *The Incredible Hulk* #386–387 (1991).

<sup>8</sup> *The Incredible Hulk* #390–392 (1992).

<sup>9</sup> In *The Amazing Spider-Man* #122 (1973), Spider-Man is on the verge of killing the Green Goblin for murdering his girlfriend Gwen Stacy, but refrains from doing so.

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Nicola Paladin

## The Participation of Will Eisner's *The Spirit* in World War II

**Abstract:** This article considers one of the first models for the superhero tradition in American comics. Among his most distinctive traits, the Spirit's patriotic aura tends to move against the background of his persona. However, openly or not, from the first few publications of *The Spirit*, Will Eisner often alludes to the historical context of the time, in particular the possibility that the US might intervene in World War II. As the article discusses, although the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor can be identified as the turning point in Will Eisner's attitude to World War II, it is arguable that a strong anti-Nazi feeling, as well as pro-American intervention propaganda, constitutes a recurrent subtext throughout the adventures of the Spirit. The article highlights the significant metaphorical and factual references, characters, and settings related to World War II in the adventures of the Spirit. Thus, the Spirit can be considered as the connecting element between the imaginary Central City and the battlegrounds of World War II: a concrete enemy and an evil personification of Nazism were transposed into comics in order to better shape the fictional enemies of the vigilante hero.

**Keywords:** comic strips, propaganda comics, *The Spirit*, war comics, Will Eisner, World War II

One of the most controversial, provocative, and ambiguous elements of Frank Miller's poorly rated 2008 film version of Will Eisner's *The Spirit* is the representation of the protagonist's nemesis. Miller chose Samuel L. Jackson to play the Octopus, proposing a double reinterpretation of Eisner's original villain. First, in the film, unlike the comic strip, the Octopus is visible; second, he is also an overt Nazi sympathizer. This latter aspect constitutes the peak of Miller's provocation, because it places an Afro-American Nazi in defense of Aryan white supremacy. There were several negative reviews of the film (Lovece 2008; Sergi 2014), and Miller struggled to interpret some of the ambiguities that his mentor had left unresolved in the original text, in particular the Octopus's invisible face and his ambiguous relationship with Nazism. Although implicit, the Nazi element is a fundamental aspect throughout the adventures of the Spirit and often closely intertwined with the narratives in which the protagonist is involved.

Interestingly enough, on a superficial level of reading, one might think that *The Spirit* strips generally avoid representing war and the political ideologies

of their times. Indeed, patriotism constitutes one of the most marginal features of the Spirit, and it tends to move to the background of his persona. However, be it covertly or overtly, since the first publication of *The Spirit* in 1940, Eisner often alluded to the historical context of his time: in his introduction to *The Spirit Archives* #1, he declares that “many stories were related to and triggered by current events” (Eisner 2000, 9). Although hidden in plain sight, World War II is significant in Eisner’s strips, a choice which may possibly trigger several implications, including an authorial plea for US intervention in the conflict against the Axis powers, and certainly showing, by extension, traces of how Eisner was deeply “imbued with a sense of patriotism” (Andelman 2005, 75).

In this sense, Eisner’s personal trajectory is strongly interlaced with his authorial one. On the one hand, being a second-generation Jewish American immigrant, he had personally experienced anti-Semitism in the US, and was relegated to menial jobs along with several of his fellow cartoonists (for example, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby). On the other hand, as some of his subsequent graphic narratives would show,<sup>1</sup> he was empathetically, culturally, and genetically committed to the destiny of Jews in a Europe that was being washed away by the Fascist wave. No wonder that he enlisted,<sup>2</sup> along with the majority of the Jewish American cartoonists, as an expression of support firstly for the Jews, and only secondly for the US. In this way, the Nazi component functions as a device which defines both the good and the evil characters, confirming John E. Moser’s words when he maintains that

in any genre of literature, the antagonist plays as important a role as the protagonist. Not only does the villain provide the tension that fuels the story, but, by way of contrast, he illustrates the characteristics that make the leading character heroic. The world of comics is no exception; where would Spider-man be without the Green Goblin, the Fantastic Four without Doctor Doom, or Thor without Loki? (Moser 2009, 24)

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**1** Eisner’s preoccupation with the Shoah is particularly evident in *A Contract with God, A Life Force*, and *To the Heart of the Storm*.

**2** Eisner was drafted in 1941 and assigned to the newspaper of Aberdeen Proving Ground, where he worked on instructional comics: he was involved in the production of *Army Motors* and started the project *PS, the Preventive Maintenance Monthly*. In his *Comics and Sequential Art*, Eisner would later suggest a tentative definition of instructional comics, suggesting that “we can divide the functions of Sequential Art into two broad applications; instruction and entertainment. [...] but there is an overlap because art in sequence tends to be expository. For instance, comic books, which generally confine themselves to stories designed exclusively for entertainment, often employ instructional techniques which buttress the exaggeration and enhance the entertainment” (Eisner 1985, 139).

Brian Klotz expresses the same viewpoint and specifically addresses the narrative potential of the Nazi: “In addition to providing a perfect form of ‘evil’ to pit against their figures of ‘good,’ the war allowed Jewish-American creators to become more connected with the US as the ‘us versus them’ mentality shifted in a way that placed them, for once, into the former category” (2009, 11).

In the light of such a double relation, references to the war in Europe in *The Spirit* constitute a political and chronological substratum that permeates the majority of the Spirit’s adventures and combines to define both protagonist and antagonist. For example, the figure of Eisner’s Octopus is never explicitly labeled, but is often supported by former Nazi officers or allies; as a consequence, the blurred nature of the Spirit’s nemesis has a Nazi connotation. In other words, the Octopus is reframed as the enemy, not only because of his own nature of villain but also because he is powered up by a tangible and historical exemplification of evil, which corroborates his vague shape and character. The implied presence of the Nazis in the Spirit’s universe functions as a booster to characterize the Octopus as *the* bad guy, since he is related to the bad guys of the time par excellence. Stan Lee confirms this transposition: “As comic writers, we had to have villains in our stories. And once World War II started, the Nazis gave us the greatest villains in the world to fight against” (quoted in Kaplan 2010, 58).

In a sense, the Nazi threat even looms over Eisner’s fictional Central City, which is thus an additional metaphorical battleground of World War II. However, the threshold between the implicit and the explicit in Eisner’s representation of the Nazi should be identified with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. As Jeremy Dauber clarifies, the tragedy and the subsequent US declaration of war on the Japanese Empire constitute a turning point in how Eisner, and Jewish American cartoonists in general, dealt with the conflict by depicting the Nazis as political enemies of the US<sup>3</sup> and not only as persecutors of the Jews (a practice which, in fact, was widespread in the US as well, although in different measure): “It may not be surprising, then, to see how quickly and frequently Eisner and his most popular character began to express, first guardedly and then openly, anti-Nazi and pro-war sentiments” (Dauber 2006, 285). The presence of Nazism in *The Spirit* strips does materialize after this shift, but it is a visible element – albeit only alluded to – even before official declarations of war; in this way, *The Spirit* pre-

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<sup>3</sup> Scott Cord reports that “the American people’s anger and rage after the Japanese bombing of the Pearl Harbor naval base on December 7, 1941, created a powerful desire to avenge this devious attack. The comic books, which had already shown Americans fighting the Axis in limited ways for several years, now shifted into high gear. Comics, like other popular media, now attempted to rally the populace to support the troops, conduct recycling and war bond drives, and to hate the enemy” (2011, 47).

sents a consistent anti-Nazi substratum which certainly tends to conform to the oscillations of US public opinion about the European situation, and never ceases to emerge recurrently.

Hence, by presenting some passages in which Nazism and World War II reverberate in *The Spirit* both before and after Pearl Harbor, the purpose of this essay is to demonstrate the fundamental part played by Eisner's rendering of the war in defining and connoting his characters, both negatively and positively. In other words, my aim is to show how the transposition of the Nazis into comics in Eisner's strips robustly impacts the fictional enemies of the Spirit, who can, in turn, be configured as an embryonic sentinel of liberty and one of the first "exceptional" comics characters who symbolically protects American democracy. This influence is generally veiled, especially if compared to other American comics of the period (a difference that is apparent even in Eisner's *Blackhawk*, and that is very evident in Jerry Siegel's *Superman*, and in Joe Simon and Jack Kirby's *Captain America*); however, references, both metaphorical and direct, meaningfully permeate the Spirit's stories on several levels, producing allusions to the Third Reich, hinting at elements of the historical background of those years, or literally offering the subject matter for the Spirit's adventures.

Following a pattern similar to his Nazi villains, Eisner's representation of World War II is "hidden in plain sight," present *in absentia*, and it may be defined as a narrative strategy of "telling the war' by not telling it" (Rubeo 1998, 117). In this sense, I adapt Ugo Rubeo's analysis of William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* to Eisner's implicit depiction of the war. Although in his "How Not to Tell the War: William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*" Rubeo certainly focuses on a totally different historical and literary context – the American Civil War and Faulkner's novel – he addresses the question: "Why would Faulkner create a novel centered on the tremendous, all-pervading impact of the Civil War upon the South, while at the same time willfully erasing the same central event from the novel's plot?" (Rubeo 1998, 117). Later on in his work, he discusses the presence of "missing centers, with veritable magnetic poles that, while vital to the plot, the narrative fails to tell" (Rubeo 1998, 119), and which are revealed by details and nuances.

The most common elements that denote Eisner's allusions to Nazism before the US joined World War II are sporadic but recurrent hints, and although they do not explicitly refer to Hitler and Germany, they are certainly meant to be easily associated with that particular imagination. For example, in *The Death Dolls*, published on 4 August 1940, the Spirit is threatened by a scientist named Yagor who has constructed an invincible robot soldier that looks like a German trooper. It wears a helmet (similar to that of the Wehrmacht uniform) and has empty, inexpressive, round eyes, which may recall the goggles of a World War I gas mask. The story does not contextualize the "death doll" in terms of military arms production

(although Yagor wishes for a massive future use of his invention, which reminds us of the “war machine” rhetoric) or references to Germany. Nonetheless, it is quite clear that Eisner characterizes the android through traits that are universally recognizable in relation to the iconography of World War I (the Kaiser’s soldiers) and in parallel to Nazi equipment. In addition, after a lot of fighting and shooting, Yagor’s robots are unexpectedly destroyed by the policemen of Central City, and not by the Spirit, as any reader would have expected. A possible way to interpret this choice is to read it as a slight juxtaposition of the imagination to which the robots belong and US military force, represented by the police who, in this case, substitute for the Spirit in protecting the city and its population. The Spirit fights the real criminal of the story, Yagor, whereas the robot may be read as a sort of external military threat that looms over America, and only a joint action of all the US military forces can prevent such a menace from becoming concrete.

Allusions to the European situation in the adventures of the Spirit frame the socio-political context of the time, but even when the relationship between Europe and America does not constitute a pivotal element of the plot, Eisner develops his strips on a common historical ground which presents blurred but frequent references to contemporary affairs. For example, in the story *Orang, the Ape Man*, published on 1 September 1940, the splash page contains a small image of a ship landing in America (bottom-right corner), and a blue tagline frames the story by revealing that Europe is “war smashed” (Eisner 2000, 112) and that several European scientists are trying to escape and seek refuge in the US – two relevant pieces of historical information on which Eisner’s fiction is built. This is the only panel in the entire strip to openly refer to the European refugees; however, it is explicit enough to provide readers with important spatial and temporal coordinates that should allow them to easily connote the US as a hospitable port for war victims.

However, Eisner’s connotative framing process of *The Spirit* strips is not limited to marginal references and details visible at a microscopic level, such as the blue tagline or the allusive appearance of the death dolls. Often, World War II is employed on the macroscopic level as a backdrop for the Spirit’s actions. For example, *Dr. Prince Von Kalm*, published on 17 November 1940, reminds of the case of *Orang, the Ape Man*, as it proposes a historical summary of the current situation in Europe, mentioning the war and the refugees. More specifically, the story starts by reporting how an invented country named Slavia has fallen under the plague of dictatorship, forcing the former president to escape to the US. The historical framework of the story is outlined in the first panel through the words of a refugee who exclaims: “Ah! The statue of liberty ... Freedom! I wonder if the people of America realize how fortunate they are!” (Eisner 2000, 189). Later, the Spirit travels to Slavia to rescue Von Kalm’s daughter and fights the new Slavian dictator, depicted in a military uniform similar to that of German



officers in World War I. In addition, other details establish a visual connection to the German Reich: the Spirit eludes the surveillance of two of the dictator's guards, both wearing a helmet with a small spear on top, generally defined as a *Pickelhaube*, in a clear example of what Ross J. Wilson observes about World War I British political cartoons that “highlight the dynamics of memory”: “these representations do more than perpetuate a singular vision of the past; they mobilise these images in the present” (Wilson 2015, 84). “Presentist” references emerge also when the Spirit and Von Kalm's daughter fly away from Slavia: the reader is finally provided with more precise details about locations in a pink tagline which says: “Over Switzerland ... high across occupied France, and through the fogs of the North Atlantic” (Eisner 2000, 88). The expression “occupied France” explicitly refers to “current events” that inspired Eisner: in this case, the “blank contour” implied by the missing centre is clear enough to allow an automatic association with the Nazi invasion, an assumption that is somehow automatic even though Germany and Nazism are never mentioned throughout the adventure. Narrative traces of Eisner's factual missing centers are constant; however, their presence and significance are clarified by some specific strips whose plot content is not merely revealing but explicitly related to the Nazi threat.

One of the first strips in which Eisner's anti-Nazi commitment emerges is *Conscription Bill Signed* (27 October 1940). At the beginning of the adventure, the Spirit claims that he is going to enlist, but his friend and sidekick Ebony White argues that “we ain't at war. War is in Europe” (Eisner 2000, 168). Ebony does not clarify what war he is referring to. Allusion is precisely what animates the Spirit's reply: “Look at it this way. Suppose some big bully is going around picking fights with everyone. He hasn't picked on you yet, but he will, as soon as he licks the fellow he's fighting now ... What would you do?” (Eisner 2000, 168). With these words, the protagonist seems to be preaching a preventive moral mission intended to contain the bully's actions, and in October 1940, this kind of discourse naturally applied to Nazi Germany, not only in light of all the acts of aggression that followed the invasion of Poland but also because of the politics of intimidation that had progressively characterized German foreign policy since 1933, thus configuring Hitler as an inveterate “big bully.” Interestingly enough, references to Germany, the Nazis, or Hitler constitute missing centers: they never occur in the entire story. As a consequence, the enemy is referred to in generic terms and its shape is defined only through peripheral and apparently negligible details.

The US Army enlists the Spirit as a spy to prevent the enemy's espionage and sabotage attempts; he succeeds in stopping the villains twice. During the second skirmish between the protagonist and his antagonists, one of the spies urges the others: “Out to the car, while Adolf finishes off the Spirit!” (Eisner 2000, 172). Up to this point, no mention has been made of Germany, an omission which

makes the detail even more resonant: with the historical benefit of hindsight, it is obvious that the enemy spy is named after Hitler, but from Eisner's perspective, this choice reveals at the same time an explicit personal stance against Nazi Germany (choosing to position Hitler in antithesis to the Spirit) and an allusion to contemporary political affairs (by choosing to name one of his villains with the most famous German name of the time).

At the end of the story, another explicit reference to the Third Reich pops up. After fighting and knocking down Adolf, the Spirit pursues the enemy spies, helped by Ebony White, who shows up like a *deus ex machina* on the Spirit's auto-plane and knocks the spies down by throwing several objects and tools at them. When the Spirit arrives, carrying the fainted Adolf, he finds Ebony waiting for him, patrolling the entire party of enemies, all of them fainted, and the sidekick claims "Mist' Spirit boss, dese heah spies am a result o'ma private blitzkrieg!" (Eisner 2000, 173). "Blitzkrieg" reflects a very specific lexical choice: it obviously refers to the famous World War II German military method of invading a territory as quickly as possible, frustrating any attempt at defense through a dense concentration of armored and motorized resources aided by close and powerful air support. Beyond the tactical comparison between Nazi strategies and Ebony's assistance of the Spirit, alluding to World War II through the mention of blitzkrieg can be connoted as an implicit act of pro-intervention propaganda: the fact that Ebony uses the term demonstrates a significant evolution in his attitude toward war matters. As a matter of fact, if at the beginning of the strip Ebony is presented as a metaphorical isolationist, opposed to any involvement in the current foreign situation, in the end he proves to be fully committed to the moral mission the Spirit had been preaching at the beginning of the story.

The Spirit and Ebony set up a dialogical propagandist progression in which the former is presented as idealistically devoted to the cause of liberty against any oppressor, whereas the latter embodies a shift from a sceptical and conservative position of reflexive neutralism to an orientation of regenerated – and consequently stronger – patriotism. Technically, such a debate remains on a theoretical level, as references to Germany and to contemporary issues are avoided, and the war is generic, never specified as a "world war." In light of this "iceberg-effect" process of omission, the name of the spy and the mention of blitzkrieg assume a deeper meaning: if read against the grain, they provide the reader with some details which suggest a bigger but unmentioned frame. In a word, these two references constitute an example of the textual details that allow the detection of missing centres concerning the situation in Europe, to which Eisner refers by telling World War II without telling it.

The propagandist component glimpsed in Ebony's words is reinforced and somehow institutionalized by the last panel of the strip. The Spirit and Ebony

stand in front of a shining sunset, and the Spirit declares: “Well Ebony, I’m working with Uncle Sam now ... working to preserve on earth the one place where men may live in freedom and in peace ... America!” (Eisner 2000, 174). The syntax of the panel configures the conclusion as the prologue for a subsequent set of strips in which the protagonist will be fighting for freedom: the light of the sunset implies a natural and successful conclusion of the adventure, but it also alludes to a subsequent dawn and, consequently, to the beginning of a new day in which freedom in America will have to be protected. The aura of the words in this passage reminds us of the genesis of the more explicitly patriotic Captain America: right after Steve Rogers’s body has been transformed, Dr Josef Reinstein (the inventor of the Super Soldier Serum) baptizes him, Captain America, declaring that he should be called “Captain America, because like [him], America [should] gain the strength and will to safeguard [its] shores” (Simon and Kirby 1941). *Conscription Bill Signed* appeared five months before the first issue of *Captain America*, and its tone is indeed echoed in Cap’s genesis and, in particular, the well-known rhetoric of freedom and democracy; however, if the first decade of *Captain America*’s publication history was entirely devoted to fighting the Nazis (the iconically immortal first front cover of Cap punching Hitler in the face functioned as an unequivocal programmatic summary), in *The Spirit* this element would constantly remain tangential to the main narrative of the vigilante.

The fundamental turning point in the Spirit’s trajectory along his anti-Nazi subnarrative can be identified in the story *Keep Mum on Ship Movements*. The strip was published on 17 January 1943, and it constitutes one of Eisner’s most explicit adventures in terms of anti-Nazi propaganda, reminding of Jeremy Dauber’s theory, namely confirming a clear change from a story whose ideology was almost entirely veiled before Pearl Harbor, to a different kind of plot, in which narrative centers cease to be “missing” and become visible. In *Keep Mum on Ship Movements*, the Spirit escorts an American first-aid mission whose aim is providing food and supplies to Greece during World War II. Once the mission is accomplished, while on the way back to the US, the ship is attacked by a Nazi submarine; after being initially overcome, the Spirit leads a revolt of the prisoners, rescues the Americans who have survived the attack, and imprisons the Nazis. Unlike other stories, in this case, the characterization of the villains is entirely obvious.

On a general basis, the identity of the villains is defined from the very beginning of the story, for one of the members of the supply mission says: “If a Nazi sub doesn’t find us, I’ll see my boy, tonight!” (Eisner 2001, 35). On a specific level, this contextual information is developed through some unmistakable details; their role is not to clarify a frame that is already clear per se (once the Nazis are labeled as such, the reader can immediately locate the scenario they belong to and the implications derived from being a Nazi in 1943), but they certainly suggest how

much Eisner had blurred and veiled in his work before an officially recognized opposition to Nazi Germany in American public opinion. In particular, three elements well represent such a general evolution in the perception of World War II. Two of them are visible just as the Nazi submarine's crew is presented: first, a black swastika (on a yellow sign) is evident behind two sailors and an officer; second, both subordinates respond to their superior's order by saying "Heil Hitler." The additional element is the enemies' accent: in *Keep Mum on Ship Movements*, Eisner is able to coherently maintain a strong and recognizable German accent in the Nazi characters throughout the strip. These three elements even appear in the same panel, showing a massive difference from previous strips such as *Conscription Bill Signed* in terms of the signifiers that Eisner uses to define the villains; the convergence of these symbols instantaneously builds a stereotype of the average Nazi German soldier, connoted by a universally known symbol, a commonplace Nazi phrase, and a mimicking/mocking accent. In this way, the identification of the Spirit's antagonists is immediate, as is their relationship to the Third Reich.

However, the Nazis, as presented by Eisner in this case, contradict a traditional relationship between the hero and the antagonist. As a matter of fact, in this particular case, Eisner's Nazis here interrupt a tradition as old as Greek epic poetry, in which the more negative connotations of villains result in a more positive depiction of heroes. In *Keep Mum on Ship Movements*, on the one hand, the Spirit and his companions represent the best of human qualities, such as courage, virtue, generosity, patriotism, and commitment to the ideals of freedom and democracy; some of them even give their lives in defense of those values. Yet Nazis are not fearsome and infallible champions of evil, cruelty, and injustice; they are presented as ridiculous, parodic, and even comic, but certainly not as an implacable incarnation of evil. Eisner has the Spirit ridicule his enemies: during the last fight for control of the German submarine, the protagonist quickly assaults some mariners who end up with their trousers unbuttoned and unable to move and fight. While being imprisoned, a Nazi officer shouts an order to his subordinates, telling them: "Don't stand like dummies! Fight!" (Eisner 2001, 39), thus defining the German soldiers as "dummies" and making explicit the narrative effect Eisner pursued when characterizing his villains. Toward the end of the story, the Nazis are placed on a lifeboat and towed to a US port. From the submarine, they hear the Americans singing a song that mocks Hitler and the supposed Aryan supremacy, and when a mariner seems not to understand the Americans' sarcasm, a furious officer – holding his head in his hands – urges him to stay silent. The scene is more reminiscent of a gang of bullies being punished than of a unit of German prisoners in World War II, thus suggesting Eisner's explicitly derisive representation of Nazism right up to the very last panel.

Although Eisner often claimed to have addressed *The Spirit* to “grown-ups” (2000, 8), this mode of representation openly trivializes the figures of the villains rather than demonizing them. The peculiarity of Eisner’s ironic style determines an evident detachment from other cartoonists and the conventions of other comics series. Personal authorial traits certainly contribute to shaping *The Spirit*’s uniqueness in dealing with Nazism, but most importantly, they concur combine to delineate a significant sarcastic image of the Third Reich, which can thus be contrasted through laughter as an alternative mode to tragedy. Often, the “enmity” of the Spirit’s antagonists is comic, parodic, very much unlike the stigmatization inherent in other cartoonists’ depiction of the Nazis. Red Skull, for example, Captain America’s arch-enemy, epitomizes a completely different stylistic and narrative logic: not only does he have superpowers, but his very appearance conveys the exacerbation of traditionally negative traits such as the self-evident reference to the Western iconicization of death, reinforced by an excessive chromatic definition which overtly clashes with the Octopus’s invisibility.<sup>4</sup>

Visuality confirms Eisner’s nonconformist position both as an author and as an opponent of Nazism, yet his presentation of the Nazis does not reduce the importance of the American values represented by the Spirit and his fellows. In the conclusion of the adventure, once they land in the US, the Spirit says goodbye to his companions and delivers a propagandist and hopeful prediction about the war against the Axis powers, as he argues that “because of their unsung courage, there’ll be a brighter world when tomorrow comes” (Eisner 2001, 40). This message contains several implications: by exalting the valor of his countrymen, the Spirit wishes for a good ending of the war; however, his companions are nameless and, indeed, defined by the protagonist as “unsung heroes,” an act of tribute which does not seem a way to do justice to all those unidentified ordinary American patriots who devoted and were devoting their lives to freedom, but rather a way to propagandistically celebrate the valor of the American people as the actors in a collective and homogeneous effort against evil in the name of freedom.

In both phases of Eisner’s representation of World War II, the role of the Nazis as enemies of the Spirit performs the fundamental task of defining the protagonists of each strip that deals with Nazism. Either ferocious or ridiculous, every Nazi antagonist negatively defines not only Eisner’s hero but all the American characters that are involved in the stories: antagonists and protagonists constantly tend to position themselves on two opposite extremes, such as good and evil, courage and cowardice, or even victory and defeat. In this sense, following the traditional Western opposition between a hero and an anti-hero inherent in war literature, the relationship Eisner seems to weave between his Nazis and the

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<sup>4</sup> I recommend Forget (2006) and Moser (2009) .

Spirit is a conscious counterpoint that might be read as an attempt to underline a veiled form of moral supremacy, symptomatic of the American exceptionalism to whose consolidation World War II strongly contributed.

The moral celebration of the US portrayed in *The Spirit* does not necessarily evoke the Manichaeian distinction implied by conventional war and superhero comics of the same period. *The Spirit* unveils a progressive step-by-step construction of the “right side:” for this reason, the moral shape of characters and enemies is defined progressively (or not defined at all) during each strip; the ethical spectrum of good and bad guys is not outlined from the very beginning, and requires the reader to follow the moral *Bildung* which some characters undergo.

Following this “strategic fantasy,” the (im)moral dimension and the evil factual agency of Eisner’s Nazis do not simply function as terms for comparison in order to identify what elements characterize a hero; they also show a generative potential to transform and sometimes even create the hero, precisely through a counterfactual act of definition. One could label such a process an experience of “regeneration through violence” (Slotkin 2000), which constitutes a textual technique whose aim is to enable the reader to better identify who’s who and the virtue and the value of each character who is positively or negatively significant in every story. This authorial strategy can be detected in the majority of the Spirit’s strips where the Nazis are connoted, both abundantly and implicitly, and, albeit in different measure, both before and after Pearl Harbor.

Nonetheless, one particular strip confirms the function of World War II and the Nazis as, respectively, the “wilderness” and “savages” that one is required to face in order to achieve a moral regeneration. *Tony Zacco* appeared on 23 May 1943. The story deals with the Spirit being ordered to chase an Italian American outlaw named Tony Zacco. The Spirit pursues him “somewhere overseas” (Eisner 2001, 178) and finds him enlisted in the US army during World War II, under the name of Antonio Zaccarelli. When the Spirit is finally able to catch Zacco, the soldier is sent into the field; the Spirit follows him and they fight and defeat the Nazis together, but Zacco is mortally wounded. At the end of the story, the Spirit goes back to Central City, where he updates Dolan and they honor Zacco’s sacrifice in the war against the Nazis, claiming that he had “lived a criminal ... But he died a real American!” (Eisner 2001, 184).

Zacco is presented as an ambiguous character for the greater part of the adventure in the sense that his criminal past somehow shines through despite the unusual setting where the Spirit confronts him. However, Zacco’s regeneration is possible despite his inglorious and dishonest deeds, but it requires a testing enemy more cruel than Zacco himself has ever been, and that is the purpose of the Nazis, “the greatest villains in the world to fight against,” as Stan Lee puts it; in other terms, their cruelty is so irredeemable that it can prove Zacco’s soul and redeem it,

a confrontation that is visible in two situations. First, when Zacco leads a squad with the aim of conquering a German machine-gun nest, the Nazis exhibit a white flag, pretending to surrender, but they trick the American soldiers and shoot them. Second, the Spirit joins Zacco in the final combat against the last few Nazi troops and, while fighting boldly, Zacco is shot from behind and killed in action. On a general basis, the story presents more action than significant dialogue: given the specific staging of the context and its actors, the reader is well provided with coordinates to comprehend the ideological position of the main characters. In this sense, Eisner is accurate in classifying Zacco as a criminal from the very beginning, but he relocates him in a metaphorical quest, which will eventually give him back his honor as a US citizen, and not a single passage in his recuperation of honor could have been possible without a proportional enemy to fight.

In conclusion, Will Eisner's *The Spirit* can be reasonably positioned among the canonical American superhero comics with respect to how the hero is presented fighting the Axis powers, thus confirming what Gaia Cocchi argues about the superheroes' commitment to the cause of freedom in World War II: "Conversely to what happened during the First World War – totally (or almost totally) ignored by comics heroes – both European and American comics characters are enlisted, often directly by their propaganda departments, on every front" (Cocchi 2014, 78; my translation). Nonetheless, any attempt to associate Eisner's authorial trajectory with a general tendency should not disregard the stylistic and thematic uniqueness which permeates his entire production and certainly emerges from his war comics. His mode of representing wars (probably with the slight exception of *Last Day in Vietnam: A Memory*, published in 2000), is blurred, subtle, and implicit, and focuses predominantly on peripheral aspects of war (for example, Eisner's military manuals – *Army Motors* and the *Preventive Maintenance Monthly* – almost never deal with the combat zone).

The Spirit's participation in World War II can be reasonably included among the works that follow an unconventional and ambiguous way of representing the war "by not telling it." Beyond any possible implication deriving from the chronological and cultural context in which Eisner worked, the majority of *The Spirit* strips both laterally and frontally dealing with World War II contain evident blank spaces from which the explicit references to the conflict are erased and configured as missing centers. Inevitably, or rather intentionally, each of those centers leaves behind details and fragments of information enabling the reader to reconstruct and identify their previous content, both in terms of plot structure and ideological – apparently unspoken – interpretations.

However, in light of the scarcity of World War II-related strips, it is arguable that *The Spirit* does not work as a means of propaganda, at least if compared to other contemporary ones about anti-Nazi superheroes of the time: in this respect,

*The Spirit's* universe is too wide and variable to obey the strict logic of consensus-building. Moreover, Eisner never fully let himself be contained or caged by any of his works, a spirit that is evident even in the instructional comics that he produced for the US Army: for example, as I have suggested elsewhere (Paladin 2017), *PS, the Preventive Maintenance Monthly* does instruct soldiers about the correct maintenance of military material, but it also represents average US soldiers as a mass of blunderers, a depiction which – far from being patriotic – does not do justice to the army that defeated Germany and Japan in World War II. Yet Eisner's position in *The Spirit* is always clear, though episodic, and it may well be related to his ethnic interest in what was happening to the Jews in Europe at the time.

Considering the period of its publication, what emerges from the most political among the *Spirit's* adventures is the narrative function that Eisner attributes to the Nazis. Before the US moral appropriation of World War II intensified (a progress fostered by progressive acknowledgment of the existence of concentration camps), the Nazis were not culturally represented as an incarnation of evil. Eisner (along with Lee, Simon, and Kirby) was one of the first artists to position the Nazis as villains in total opposition to American values, configuring them as irredeemable and total enemies. The vagueness, which characterizes this depiction, is the revolutionary element introduced by Eisner: all the Nazis are enemies, and whoever identifies himself or herself with American ideals should fight them. Eisner's contribution to this tradition was to make the Nazis a crystallized, eternal, and irredeemable public enemy. This interpretation may partially confirm John E. Moser's assumption about the capacity of a villain to positively characterize a hero; however, the most important contribution that Eisner injects into American culture is the fact that an absolute hero does not necessarily need superpowers as long as the evil itself is to be considered a superpower. As a consequence, with the Nazis being an incarnation of evil, such a superpower becomes collective, potentially extendable horizontally to all Hitler's supporters, in a word, "banal." It does not necessarily require symbolic supervillains (such as Red Skull or Captain Nazi) because it dwells in the apparent irrelevance of average hopeless characters, whose existence (and representation) justifies the action and thoughts of supervillains.

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Francesco-Alessio Ursini

# Social Control and Closed Worlds in Manga and Anime

**Abstract:** This article considers social control and closed worlds in various manga, providing an answer to two theoretical questions: to what extent do closed worlds and immersive narratives dovetail within science-fiction manga (and anime), and can a general “range” of possible interpretations be outlined? The article answers these questions by using *Shingeki no Kyojin* as a point of reference, given its near-prototypical closed-world setting, for discussing four other manga (*Blame!*, *Nijūseiki Shōnen*, *Btooom!*, and *Yakusoku no Neverland*) and three anime (*Shōjo Kakumei Utena*, *Ergo Proxy*, and *Texhnolyze*). Like the point of reference, these works also blend themes and aspects from other seemingly distinct genres. In these works, closed and controlled worlds double as settings and themes that permit authors to develop immersive narratives.

**Keywords:** anime, closed worlds, manga, *Shingeki no Kyojin*, world-reduction

## 1 Introduction

*Shingeki no Kyojin* [Attack On, Titan] (Isayama 2009–) is a manga that chronicles the stories of a group of humans living in a kingdom surrounded by giant walls, the last bastions against the “Titans.” These humanoid giants have only one goal: eating humans. Survivors inside the walls, hence, live in a condition of captivity and dread. As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that sinister forces are using the Titans as a tool of oppression in order to control the world within the walls. The protagonists’ struggle to become free of this tight control, thereby discovering the secret underpinnings of this closed world, acts as the driving force pushing the plot forward.

*Shingeki no Kyojin* represents a specific type of approach to world-building, defined as the creation of a narrative world in which a story takes place (Wolf 2014, 3–41). The author first creates a closed environment via a process of world-reduction (Jameson 2007, 276–278), which results when an apocalyptic event reduces a pre-existing world to a limited space of survival (here, the world within the walls). The narrative result is a closed world: a world in which well-defined boundaries and rules determine the characters’ actions and the overarching plot (Wolff 2014, 101–150). In the case of *Shingeki*, the author defines the rules governing this closed world as involving forms of social control (Innes 2003, 3–23): characters are pris-

oners of the authorities controlling this world. Therefore, a driving force of the underlying narrative is the protagonists' wish to escape their walled prison by discovering the underlying rules that govern this world.

Although influential, *Shingeki no Kyojin* is certainly not the first manga to use this type of setting. Science-fiction manga and anime such as *Terra e ...* [Towards the Terra ...] (Takemiya 1977–1980) and *Shin Sekai Yori* [From the New World] (Kishi 2008) also feature closed worlds under the control of a shadow government. This setting can be traced back to classic dystopian science-fiction works such as Patrick McGoohan's *The Prisoner*, featuring a mysterious village as a closed world (Murphy 2009). Closed worlds in manga (and anime) also represent a standard narrative strategy for creating immersive narratives, in which readers/spectators experience a story through a first-person perspective (Schodt 1996, 7–14; Groensteen 2013, 90–110; Ursini 2017a). Therefore, two theoretical questions arise: to what extent do closed worlds and immersive narratives dovetail in science-fiction manga (and anime), and can a general “range” of possible interpretations be outlined?

The goal of this article is to answer these two questions by using *Shingeki no Kyojin* as a point of reference, given its near-prototypical closed (and controlled) world setting for the story. We then discuss four other manga (*Blame!*, *Nijūseiki Shōnen*, *Btooom!*, and *Yakusoku no Neverland*) and three anime (*Shōjo Kakumei Utena*, *Ergo Proxy*, and *Texhnolyze*). We chose these works from the hundreds of works with similar features for two reasons. First, these works also blend themes and aspects from other seemingly distinct genres (*shōjo*/romance, horror, contemporary settings; see Bryce and Davis [2010, 34–36]). Second, they offer evidence on what variations of this theme can be attested. Before we move to the analysis, we introduce two theoretical notions that play a role in our discussion.

First, we conceive comics as a semiotic system in which the visual and textual modes interact to present stories and their respective worlds and protagonists (Groensteen 2013). Manga and anime can then be conceived as subsystems with their culturally specific rules and modes of presentation (see also Schodt 1996, 3–30; Power 2009, 3–34). Second, within narrative theory, the notion of narrative/fictional worlds has been connected to the notion of “possible worlds” (Ryan 2006). Possible worlds are generally conceived as worlds that include a different state of affairs than the real one we “inhabit.” Fictional worlds, in this respect, can be interpreted as worlds that authors can create to speculate on “real”-world issues (Ryan 2006; Latham 2014).

Authors, then, can decide the modes and rules for the presentation of the story, defining the degree of accessibility that holds between readers and fictional world. The more information readers can access about the fictional world, the more they can understand how that world works. Conversely, immersive narra-

tives feature more restricted levels of access to the fictional world, which can increase as the story unfolds (Schodt 1996, 7–30; Power 2009, 8–34; Bryce and Davis 2010). Often, when closed and controlled worlds are used as the setting for a story, the story tends to be presented as the protagonists’ struggle to discover the “secret” rules governing worlds and their control systems, and to break free from that control. Readers can also experience increasing levels of accessibility by reading how protagonists discover the secrets of their own fictional worlds. Having set out these theoretical tools, we turn now to the analysis.

## 2 *Shingeki no Kyojin*

*Shingeki no Kyojin* presents the story of Eren Yager, his stepsister Mikasa Ackermann, and their friend Armin Arlert against the Titans, mysterious humanoid giants that keep humans within the walls (Yamazaki 2015; Ursini 2017a). As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that the Titans act as a control tool that the creators of the world inside the walls use to keep the population in check. The royal family controlling this world were part of the Eldians, an ethnicity who brutally ruled the known world. When this group was overthrown, most of the survivors were led to the world within the walls by force, and brainwashed into forgetting their origins and history. Eldians surviving outside the closed world were reduced to an oppressed minority and forced to live in ghettos. To avoid any uprisings, any rebels inside and outside the walls were turned into Titans, and used as a threat to the citizens living inside the walls.

Crucially, readers can discover the several “secret” rules underpinning this world because of Eren and the other protagonists’ struggle to escape and see the external world. The protagonists start with no real knowledge of how the closed world works, and can only discover its secret rules when they are able to wrestle free of this form of control. Since the story is narrated from a “pure” immersive perspective, it presents a case in which readers initially have no access to the rules and only acquire this information as the plot unfolds.

In this regard, *Shingeki no Kyojin* represents a quasi-prototypical model of a closed, controlled world that determines how protagonists can act and how the plot can develop. Thus, control over protagonists’ actions doubles as a metanarrative theme. It determines the degree of accessibility that readers have to this closed world, and the number of “secrets” that are revealed as the story unfolds. Crucially, the *Shingeki* world also presents a deeply dystopian view of a closed world, since this world is the result of an elite group wishing to completely control the lives of other citizens. Thus, immersive perspective and closed, dystopian

world become two themes that are tightly entangled, as befits dystopian narratives (see Murphy 2009).

### 3 *Blame!*

*Blame!* is a manga by Tsutomu Nihei (1998–2003), an author known for his use of hard science-fiction and cyberpunk themes (Johnson 2013; Ursini 2017b). It chronicles the story of Killy, a mysterious individual who seeks the Net Transfer Genes, a tool to access the Netsphere (i.e. the future Internet) so that he can regain control of “The City” and stop its incredibly chaotic development. As the series unfolds, it is hinted that The City is a gigantic Dyson sphere that started on Earth and slowly reached Jupiter’s orbit. The Safeguard, the sentient cyborg guardians of The City, are attempting to exterminate all remaining humans, as they wish to preserve the chaotic growth of this world. Since humans are scattered across an immense amount of space and since each level in The City is isolated from the other levels, humans have virtually no understanding of how this closed world works, how it originated, and why the Safeguard are such a threat to their survival. Thus, the world in which Killy moves is a world reduced to one immense prison for humans.

World-reduction in *Blame!* is a consequence of a governmental urban development programme gone awry. Instead of creating a “smaller,” tightly controlled world, the unchecked programme creates an immense and hostile environment. Crucially, readers can gain access to these facts only through careful reading of the few hints in the story and through the prequel *Net Sphere Engineer* (Nihei 2004). Killy’s discovery of the secrets governing this world is slow and often very indirect. Given the scarcity of information that he can gather during his quest and the sparse text accompanying the illustrations, readers must infer most of the principles and rules governing The City. For instance, Killy discovers his true nature as a “hacked” Safeguard when he loses an arm in a fight, and through later revelations about his ability to use the beam-graviton emitter, an immensely powerful laser gun.

Overall, *Blame!* represents a closed-world setting in which the immense size of the world (i.e. much of the solar system) contrasts with the randomly built levels and claustrophobic layers through which the protagonist wanders. *Blame!* presents a story in which the protagonist might or might not become free of this control: the ending is ambiguous in this respect. The chaos of The City and the brutality of the Safeguard act as themes that explore how the collapse of social structures and organizations can turn a world into an inhospitable dystopia for

its creators (see also Johnson 2013, 200). Hence, the radical use of an immersive perspective is even more tightly connected to the use of a dystopian, controlled (and closed) world in this work.

## 4 *Nijūseiki Shōnen*

*Nijūseiki Shōnen* [Twentieth-Century Boys] (Urasawa 1999–2006) tells the story of several childhood friends, headed by the protagonist Kenji, who write a wacky “book of apocalypse” in their secret base as children during their lazy summer days. Due to an unlikely series of events, their prophecies are enacted in real life, so that the world falls into a state of chaos. Japan falls under the total control of the Tomodachi (Friend[s]) party. In the final two volumes of the series, Japan is divided into small segregated communities, with each community being surrounded by walls. The Tomodachi party controls each community via cameras, and carefully prevents information from outside the communities from seeping into them. Only the military intervention of UN forces can overthrow this dictatorship. When Kenji beats their leader, Friend, the normal status of affairs is recovered (Yamada 2014).

Crucially, this series can be seen as fiction only lightly tinged with classic science-fiction elements (e. g. Friend has immense psychic powers). However, it involves a form of world-reduction: from the “real” world to the distorted world (i. e. Japan) in which Friend progressively gains more control. This controlled world, in turn, is created via the formation of a political party on a national (Japanese) level, which, however, covertly influences events around the world. Rather than forcing citizens into a closed environment, Friend and his party use the “open” system of democracy to create this world. Furthermore, the protagonists know the key steps of this world-reduction plan, since they are based on the apocalyptic scenario they wrote as bored kids. Rather than discovering the secret underpinning that led to the creation of this closed, controlled world, they must remember how they designed it.

Overall, *Nijūseiki Shōnen* represents an open-world setting that slowly converges into a closed world, at least within the limited space of the final volumes. Once the creation of the Tomodachi’s world is complete, only Kenji and the other members of the original gang are free from this totalitarian system. Hence, the driving theme behind the story is how the protagonists fight against the emergence of a closed, controlled world that is their own child-vision of a highly dystopian future. In a sense, the protagonists try to take *back* control of their own vision of the world, since Friend distorts this vision into a bizarre, totalitarian dystopia.

As in the previously discussed cases, an immersive perspective is used to bring readers to experience the creation of this closed world and the oppressive system that creates it.

## 5 *Btooom!*

*Btooom!* (Inoue 2009–2018) tells the story of Ryōta Sakamoto, a twenty-two year-old NEET who is one of the strongest players in *Btooom!*, a MMORPG that mostly features one-on-one battles in futuristic settings. After being kidnapped, Ryōta finds himself on a deserted island alongside other *Btooom!* players, forced to enact a real-life, very dangerous version of the game on this island. The culprit behind this situation is Tyrannos Japan, the company which designed *Btooom!* and wants to develop a grisly reality show based on the battles under the auspices of a global conglomerate known as Themis. Players who can achieve eight kills are allowed to return to their normal lives, although it is suggested that the company closely monitors “returnees” to avoid information leaks. Ryōta and other prisoners are thus forced to kill other participants in order to have the chance of leaving the island and its deadly environment.

*Btooom!* presents fictional elements that nevertheless do not steer the series into science-fiction territory. The story is set in a near future, but no significant technological improvements or historical changes are shown. The island, however, acts as a closed world and can be conceived as a reflection of simulating, in “real life,” the closed world and the rules of the MMORPG used as an inspiration (see also Wolff 2014, 202–276). Furthermore, the protagonists discover their status as selected “prisoners” early in the series. However, the reasons why they have been selected remain obscure, to them and to the readers, until the later volumes in the series. Thus, while the protagonists are aware of how this closed world works, and how they can eventually escape from it, the reasons for their imprisonment act as driving forces in the story, and as secrets that protagonists (and readers) must still discover.

Overall, *Btooom!* presents a closed, controlled world setting from which the protagonists must escape. Their survival depends on reaching this goal, and determines their actions and the unfolding of the plot. A crucial aspect of the story is that the island on which the protagonists are confined is also a deeply dystopian, “survival of the fittest” microworld which is created as the testing ground for the game as a global control system. Hence, this work presents another case in which an immersive perspective and a closed world result in a story with strong dystopian themes.

## 6 *Yakusoku no Neverland*

*Yakusoku no Neverland* [Promised Neverland] (Shirai 2016–2020) presents the story of a group of orphans who live in a boarding school, which offers the best pedagogic tools for children to achieve their full potential. Emma, Norman, and Ray are three such children, who discover the grisly secret behind this orphanage. This place is a “human meat farm” from which demonic creatures harvest children who reach their twelfth year of age, that is, the time at which they graduate. The three protagonists, upon discovering this horrendous truth, spend their time before graduation finding the means to escape from this false “Neverland.” They also try not to reveal their knowledge of how this closed world works, while at the same time trying to discover how the “external” world works.

One central feature of *Yakusoku no Neverland* is the fact that the three protagonists spend most of their time carefully analysing the rules of their closed world/boarding school, studying in detail how this prison-like environment works. From the very beginning, they are aware that the boarding school lacks most technology associated with the twenty-first century, since no radios, TVs, or other communication devices can be found. However, the three protagonists have less than two months before they are sold to the demons. Hence, their battle of wits with the demons involves a steady sequence of revelations about how this closed world works.

Overall, *Yakusoku no Neverland* presents a closed world in which the child-protagonists find stringent reasons to escape its environment. Differently from the other manga discussed so far, the revelations regarding the world setting and rules are presented from the series’s inception and at a steady pace. This formal narrative aspect notwithstanding, though, *Neverland* nevertheless presents a case in which an immersive perspective and a closed, controlled world aptly dovetail to create a deeply dystopian story.

## 7 *Shōjo Kakumei Utena*

*Shōjo Kakumei Utena* [Revolutionary Girl Utena] is a multimedia production that includes a manga (Saito 1996–1997) and an anime series (Ikuhara 1997). The anime differs considerably from the manga, not least because it features a closed-world setting that motivates our analysis. *Utena* presents the story of the eponymous character, a tomboy who attends a prestigious private school in which the student council seems to wield considerable power. Part of this power involves controlling the “rose bride,” a girl named Anthy, and using her as a passive receptacle for



the desire of any member who is the current champion duellist. Utena becomes a duellist to save Anthy and, in so doing, falls into a complex web of schemes and betrayals that govern this scholastic world.

*Shōjo Kakumei Utena* is a highly allegorical and thematically complex series with a subtle approach to gender and romance, the main foci of previous research (see Kotani [2006] and the references therein). However, scholars have rarely discussed the fact that the anime series is set on the private school's campus, which is implied to be a closed world/city. For instance, dormitory rooms are apartments in town, city borders are never shown, and the vice-chancellor seems also to act as the governing mayor. Crucially, Utena only fights to free Anthy from this control rather than to free herself: she acts as the unlikely "Prince Charming" of the story for altruistic purposes. Thus, she does not seem interested in challenging other aspects of this closed world/school, whether they involve forms of control or not.

Overall, *Shōjo Kakumei Utena* presents a closed-world, vaguely science-fiction setting in which the protagonist fights for the freedom of her friend and deuteragonist, rather than for herself. However, although Utena challenges the "rose bride" system, the world/school she lives in seems to lack a dystopian nature. Thus, it also lacks the dystopian edge that we observed in the previously discussed works, even though it features an immersive perspective. The story is always narrated from Utena's perspective. Overall, *Utena* seems to offer a variation on a theme influenced by *shōjo*/romance themes, and presents a closed world which does not necessarily act as a system that controls and oppresses the protagonist.

## 8 *Ergo Proxy*

*Ergo Proxy* (Murase 2006) is an anime series of twenty-two episodes, directed by Shukō Murase and written by Dai Satō. *Ergo Proxy* presents the story of Re-l Meyer, an investigator from the city of Romdeau. This and other sister cities are domed arcologies and totalitarian technocracies in which humans dwell after an unspecified ecological disaster struck the Earth millennia before. Re-l must investigate a Proxy, a mysterious artificial human possessing vastly superior physical and intellectual skills, and committing apparently pointless and gruesome homicides. In her investigation, she discovers that Proxies are modified humans descended from the creators of the domed cities and are preparing the world for the return of these humans from their extraplanetary exile. Re-l and her colleague Vincent become involved in a series of events that brings down the cities' totalitarian government. They then prepare themselves to fight their "creators," who will attempt to regain a purified Earth from Re-l, Vincent, and the other humans.

*Ergo Proxy* is a series with rich philosophical, cyberpunk, and religious undertones (Jackson 2009). The series presents a specific use of a standard type of closed world in science fiction: a domed city as a self-sufficient arcology (Wegner 2014). Although the rules governing Romdeau are accessible to Re-l (and the spectators), because of her role in this system, the series of homicides that the Proxies perform lead her to discover the reason why these totalitarian arcologies were built in the first place. Furthermore, much of the story is set outside Romdeau, since Re-l and Vincent try to travel to Mosk to discover Vincent's origins and their relation to the Proxies. Re-l and Vincent's investigative duties yield to their resolve to discover the truth behind their closed world, which in turn leads them first to escape from its control and then to collapse the system.

Overall, *Ergo Proxy* presents a dystopian combination of closed and open worlds, even if reduced to barren environments (i. e. the domed cities and the outside world). The rules of this “mixed” world strongly influence, but do not completely constrain, the characters' choices and the plot structure. Furthermore, the different medium of presentation (anime) does not affect the presentation of this world setting. Nevertheless, since the story is firmly couched in a dystopian, cyberpunk setting, the use of the closed world(s) theme and an immersive perspective are tightly intertwined.

## 9 *Texhnolyze*

*Texhnolyze* is an anime series by created by Chiaki Konaka and Hiroshi Hamasaki (2003). The story presents the odyssey of Ichise, a twenty-two year-old prize fighter who lives and fights in Lux, an underground city governed by a criminal syndicate (Organo). Ichise is forced to have sex with the syndicate leader's mistress, but breaks away when the woman almost gouges out one of his eyes. After being maimed for this act, he receives prosthetic limbs (i. e. “texhnolyze” technology), and he is thrown into a long journey into the secrets of the city and the outside world, which ends in the annihilation of both.

*Texhnolyze* presents a deeply dystopian, nihilistic, and inherently cyberpunk interpretation of a closed-world theme, with several elements taken from various religious sources (Jackson 2009). For instance, Lux is revealed to be a thinly disguised metaphor of Dante's vision of hell, mixed with elements of Naraka (the Buddhist “hell”). Its citizens can in theory leave the city, since the Organo syndicate only controls economic matters with an iron grip. Nevertheless, the bleak underground world and the rudderless lives that most citizens live suffice to induce despair and hopelessness. Ichise's quest is not centred on discovering

this world's secrets, but rather on discovering who framed and killed his father, a surface-dweller. In so doing, however, he sets in motion the events that lead not only to the downfall of Lux but also of the external world.

Overall, *Texhnolyze* presents a closed-world setting in which the protagonist does not directly fight against the control imposed on him. Rather, he tries to achieve a freedom that also involves accidentally discovering how this literal “hell” on Earth came into being, hence challenging the system itself. Thus, *Texhnolyze* presents a radical interpretation of the closed world as a dystopian (cyberpunk) theme and as causally connected to an immersive perspective. Spectators witness not only Ichise's journey and discovery of Lux's secrets, but also Ichise's reluctance to access this lethal and unwelcome information.

## 10 Discussion and conclusions

The picture that emerges from the above set of manga and anime regarding the use of closed, controlled worlds suggests that this theme acts as a general constraint on the plot. Protagonists are often in a condition of oppression (e. g. *Shingeki no Kyojin*, *Ergo Proxy*), if not at risk of death (e. g. *Blame!*, *Btooom!*) as a result of living in these reduced worlds. As in the case of *Blame!* and *Yakusoku no Neverland*, the initial state of ignorance of protagonists (and through their eyes, readers) corresponds to their lack of access to the rules underpinning each world. Crucially, closed worlds seem almost invariably to be portrayed as dystopian environments. Closure seems to act as a key narrative method for defining a dystopian setting, as it permits authors to explore themes of oppression and control. Manga and anime from various science-fiction derivations present ample evidence corroborating these analyses of dystopian settings (Wegner 2014, 463).

In this regard, *Nijūseiki Shōnen* and *Texhnolyze* present two alternative interpretations: their protagonists respectively try to prevent the creation of a closed world or escape from this world to discover other secrets. *Shōjo Kakumei Utena* presents a third variation on this theme, certainly connected to its dual status as a *shōjo* anime. This single piece of evidence suggests that closed worlds are not necessarily dystopian in nature, but may explore a fine-grained continuum extending to utopia (Wegner 2014, 464). Nevertheless, these works also confirm that immersive narrative and closed worlds are usually connected in science-fiction anime. This is the case, we suggest, because the resulting immersive narratives can guide readers in the exploration of these worlds and the speculative themes they explore (see also Ursini 2017c). Part of the dystopian nature of these

works, then, lies also in exploring how freedom from control invariably comes at a high price, if successful (see Murphy 2009, 476).

In conclusion, closed, controlled worlds created via world-reduction double as settings and themes that permit authors to develop immersive narratives, with readers experiencing varying degrees of access to these narratives. Such worlds can often take the prototypical form of dystopias, which have been amply explored in science-fiction works of various varieties. *Shingeki no Kyojin* seems to provide a prototypical cross-genre example of a model that has been used in science-fiction manga and anime. However, the other works discussed in this article show that there is ample variation within this model. This analysis can thus be interpreted as a first, preliminary step towards a more thorough and formal account of this theme in manga, anime, and other media. Due to space limitations, however, we leave such an account to future research.

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Umberto Rossi

# The Myth of the Great War: Hugo Pratt's World War I Graphic Novel and Stories

Quando ho voglia di rilassarmi leggo un saggio di Engels, se invece desidero impegnarmi leggo Corto Maltese [When I want to relax I read an essay by Engels; when I want something more serious I read Corto Maltese].  
(Umberto Eco, quoted in Pratt 1994, 345; my translation)

**Abstract:** This article examines seven graphic narratives by the Italian graphic artist and writer Hugo Pratt. The article reads these narratives in connection with the myth of the Great War as it was defined by the Italian historian and literary critic Isnenghi in 1970 in his groundbreaking monograph *Il mito della grande guerra*. However, these graphic narratives present readers with a bewildering mix of historical/quasi-historical characters, real and imaginary places, often establishing surprising and complex intertextual short-circuits that connect Pratt's World War I narratives, history, and the historical imagination. This reading can help us to understand why a comparative approach is unavoidable when dealing with graphic narratives, especially those dealing with historical events – like World War I – which impacted several countries across more than one continent.

**Keywords:** Corto Maltese, Hugo Pratt, myth, post-memory, World War I

## 1 Introduction: Comics studies and war literature studies

Comics studies is not, or should not be, conceived as an island, entire of itself; it may benefit from other, older disciplines, and may in turn contribute to their development. This is what Kai Mikkonen maintains in his recent monograph *The Narratology of Comic Art*:

One key finding in this study is that narratological insights into the organisation, presentation, and mediation of stories cannot be transferred from one medium to another without due modification. Thus, it is hoped that this investigation can contribute to narratology in general, for instance, with regard to the emerging field of transmedial studies that looks at narratives in different forms of expression, communication, and art. (Mikkonen 2016, 2)

In other words, while narratology (born to analyse literary narrative texts with a hopefully scientific objectivity and reliability) may be useful for tackling comics, the comics scholar should never forget that narratological interpretive tools were not originally made for a hybrid form like comics. Therefore, the comics scholar should be ready to reshape these tools when needed in order to make them suitable for understanding comics and their workings; moreover, this process of reuse and readaptation may help us to enhance narratology, widening its scope and enabling it to deal with other forms of narration that are not purely verbal.

If this is true for narratology, it may well also be true for other strongly interdisciplinary research fields such as war literature studies, which straddles military history, trauma studies, traditional literary criticism, narratology, psychiatry, and politics (just to mention a few of the fields that impinge on the academic study of war narratives, regardless of their national or historical background). I have tried to map the complex theoretical territory of this field in *Il secolo di fuoco* (Rossi 2008, 16–45), but it is quite evidently an area of academic research that can only benefit from widening its scope by working on war films, television series, and the visual arts, including, of course, graphic narratives. This may lead to a reconsideration of the basic concepts and interpretive strategies of war literature studies based on how they can or cannot be applied to war comics, a rethinking that may improve those concepts and strategies.

## 2 Why Pratt?

The Italian graphic artist and writer Hugo Pratt is not just one of the greatest figures in the pantheon of the sequential art; he belongs to that group of comics artists whose *oeuvre* is staggering in terms of dimensions, complexity, and the richness of its intercultural connections and echoes. Moreover, he is one of those acknowledged masters of the art that have played an important role as a source of inspiration for younger practitioners, just like, say, Will Eisner or Hergé. No wonder that his most famous character, Corto Maltese, was quoted by Frank Miller in *The Dark Knight Returns*, where a rogue South American country bears his name. With his bewildering ability to conjugate adventurous stories with multilayered sophistication, to deftly mix historical characters with fictional ones and have them interact with one another, and to reconstruct in detail geographically and historically remote settings, Pratt is probably the greatest forerunner of Alan Moore; but, unlike Moore, his storytelling skills are coupled with an awesome drawing and painting style. His watercolour tables are impressive, and many of his frames can be easily appreciated as stand-alone paintings, some-

thing which allows us to compare him to another brilliant comics artist, Alberto Breccia.

Moreover, Hugo Pratt is an artist who often dealt with war and presented his readers with an accurate visual depiction of it. He set his stories during World War I (as we shall see) and World War II – one must mention his highly sophisticated series *Gli scorpioni del deserto* [The Desert Scorpions] (1969–1993), as well as his *Ernie Pike* series (1957–1958), not to mention the war comics he drew for the British publisher Fleetway from 1959 to 1963, based on stories written by unnamed writers. Pratt also depicted the Indian wars of the nineteenth century (*Sergeant Kirk* [1953–1959], written by Héctor Oesterheld) and the Seven Years War (*Ticonderoga* [1957–1958], also by Oesterheld). Such war narratives are almost always adventurous, yet absolutely not – as we shall see – escapist. They do not subscribe to any warlike and warmongering enthusiasm; they present readers with a series of complex moral and political dilemmas and a wide-ranging network of cultural references (Cristante 2016). All in all, any critical discourse about war and comics must necessarily deal with Pratt's *oeuvre*.

### 3 Why the Great War?

World War I narratives have been studied and analysed since the beginning of war literature studies, which we can place in the mid-1960s (despite its forerunners), when *Heroes' Twilight*, Bernard Bergonzi's groundbreaking 1965 monograph was published, soon followed by the now-canonical *Il mito della grande guerra* by Mario Isnenghi (2007 [1970]),<sup>1</sup> and *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) by Paul Fussell, to name some of the most prestigious. These seminal studies focused on World War I literature, so that the vast (and growing) corpus of Great War narratives may be considered as the birthplace of war literature studies and its testing ground.

If we want to apply the critical toolbox of war literature studies to such a classic of the sequential art as Pratt, the best opening move is to work on the seven graphic narratives Pratt set during the Great War; moreover, all those stories belong to the cycle of Corto Maltese, the most famous character created by this Italian comics artist. Interestingly, the stateless sailor and adventurer first appeared in Pratt's graphic novel *Una ballata del mare salato* [The Ballad of the Salt Sea], published in 1967 in the first issue of the *Sergente Kirk* magazine, the

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<sup>1</sup> Preceded by his *I vinti di Caporetto nella letteratura di guerra* (1967), which was then enlarged and enhanced and became *Il mito della grande guerra*.



first of his narratives set during World War I. Six Corto Maltese stories were later published in the French magazine *Pif* (Editions Vaillant): *Le Songe d'un matin d'inver* [A Midwinter Morning's Dream] published in 1970; then *La Lagune des beaux songes* [The Lagoon of Beautiful Dreams], *L'Ange à la fenêtre d'orient* [The Angel at the Eastern Window], and *Sous le drapeau de l'argent* [Under the Flag of Money], all published in 1971; and lastly *Côtes de Nuits et roses de Picardie* [Côtes de Nuits and Picardy Roses] and *Burlesque entre Zuydcoot et Bray-Dune* [Burlesque between Zuydcoot and Bray-Dune], both published in 1972. Remarkably, all these works were published in the same years in which Bergonzi, Isnenghi, and Fussell were busy reinterpreting, deconstructing, and criticizing World War I narratives, at a time when – also due to the protests against the Vietnam War – anti-war and anti-military attitudes were widespread and increasingly radical.

The plots of these stories are quite different, set between 1914 and 1918 (with the possible exception of *The Lagoon of Beautiful Dreams*, which takes place in an undetermined time during or shortly after the end of the war), and feature Corto Maltese among their characters (though not necessarily as their protagonist). To read these graphic narratives, we will have to borrow a critical concept originally devised by Mario Isnenghi, that is, the myth of the Great War.

## 4 *Il mito della grande guerra*

Isnenghi's analysis of the myth of the Great War aims at understanding how a quite heterogeneous group of Italian writers who were directly or indirectly involved in the war (some of them – like Carlo Emilio Gadda or Curzio Malaparte – well known, others – like Attilio Frescura or Carlo Salsa – almost forgotten in 1970) collectively built a myth or mythology of the war, based on their personal experiences, their previous upbringing, their ideological positions, and their social class and educational background. Isnenghi's myth of the Great War is a sort of collective macrotext, reconstructed thanks to a brilliant use of comparative analysis even though it only deals with Italian writers (this, added to the sad fact that *Il mito della grande guerra* has never been translated into English, explains its lack of fame abroad).<sup>2</sup> Moreover, Isnenghi showed how each writer presented his readers with his own version of the myth, be it in favour of the war or against it, authoritarian or anti-authoritarian, militaristic or pacifist, even though common

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<sup>2</sup> Only recently have non-Italian scholars started paying attention to the Italian Front, as witnessed by such monographs as Thompson (2009).

images, figures, themes, and motifs can be found throughout the corpus of texts discussed in his monograph.

Of course, the myth of the Great War changes over time, as Maheen Ahmed (2015) has noticed, and has very different connotations in different countries and cultures. For example, poppies have been charged with powerful historical and cultural significations in the UK. On the other hand, the word *Caporetto* is quite familiar to Italians as a term evoking catastrophe, but I doubt people from other countries can reconnect it to what happened in October 1917 around the town of Kobarid in what is now Slovenia. Moreover, our reading of this macrotext – or parts of it – has changed over time and will surely change in the future. However, having researched Great War literature in a comparative (i. e. transnational) perspective, I maintain that the myth of World War I has a truly worldwide dimension, and that a complex, multidimensional network of intertextual connexions ties together all the purely verbal texts that contributed to its making, regardless of their language, nationality, genre, or stylistic peculiarities.

Elements from this macrotext often surface in Pratt's Corto Maltese graphic narratives. These comics, as we shall see, present readers with a bewildering mix of historical and imaginary figures, mythical places, and quite a few characters who are at the same time historical and mythical.

## 5 Memory and post-memory

Memory is a key concept in the discussion of World War I literature, be it individual or collective. When it comes to Pratt's Great War narratives, though, personal memories are of course out of the question: this Italian comics artist was born in 1927. His graphic narratives would not have been taken into account by the first generation of war literature scholars, who were interested in literary works written by men who had fought; they were looking for witnesses, be they sincere or deceitful, interested or disinterested. But a new category, introduced by Marianne Hirsch (1992–1993) in her discussion of Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, can help us to reconsider narratives by authors who cannot have directly experienced that war: the concept of postmemory. As Hirsch explains on her website *POSTMEMORY.net*,

“Postmemory” describes the relationship that the “generation after” bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before – to experiences they “remember” only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right. (Hirsch n.d.)

Originally applied to the offspring of Nazi camp survivors, postmemory can also be a useful concept when dealing with the children of war victims, be they combatants or civilians. Besides, the Shoah was conceived by the Nazis as a form of racist warfare; hence, Holocaust narratives can be considered as part of war literature (Rossi 2008, 278–283). Postmemory calls for a radical widening of the field of war literature studies – one as important and necessary as the inclusion of female writers and non-combatants who, even though not manning the trenches or going over the top, were nonetheless involved in the Great War and often played a very important role in the construction of its myth. Moreover, even though Hirsch originally focused on Spiegelman’s *Maus*, a graphic narrative made possible by the familial transmission of memory (a process depicted in its very frames, showing the author being told about the Shoah by his father, an inmate of Auschwitz), she also discussed W. G. Sebald, the author of *Austerlitz*. The novel is analysed by Hirsch as a remarkable case study of post-memory insofar as its protagonist, the orphan of Czech Jews who disappeared during World War II and were almost certainly murdered, slowly and painfully recovers fragmentary memories of his childhood (Hirsch 2012, 40–52). Sebald’s own story is quite different from the one told in the novel, as the writer does not stem from a Jewish family and there are no familial connections to the tragic past depicted in *Austerlitz* (his father was actually a Wehrmacht officer). Hence, Hirsch also contemplates a transmission of memory, a post-memory that is not channelled through family ties. And this is what may have occurred to Pratt vis-à-vis the Great War.

## 6 Heroes and anti-heroes

The myth of the Great War is made up of places, dates, events, but also people – some of them of truly mythic, heroic status. One of them is unquestionably Manfred von Richthofen, aka the Red Baron (Pratt 2009a [1972], 8; see fig. 1).

This air ace, who died at twenty-six, credited with eighty victories, has a lot to do with comics, thanks to Snoopy and the Peanuts. Yet, while Charles Schultz managed to make von Richthofen famous all over the world without ever showing him and his fighter plane, Pratt drew a black-and-white portrait of the German fighter pilot that is a good likeness. These frames, taken from Pratt’s 1972 story *Côtes de Nuits and Picardy Roses*, show the Red Baron at his most mythical and romantic, laying down a bunch of roses on the wreck of an enemy aircraft he has just shot down.

But, unlike the American EC comics studied by Jean-Mathieu Méon (2015) in his article “A War Like Any Other ... Or Nobler?” which contributed to create



Fig. 1: © CONG SA.

the myth of the chivalric, romantic air aces of the Great War in the 1950s, Pratt envisions the war in a much more complex fashion. The hero will be ultimately defeated, and slain, by an anti-hero. Pratt knew all too well that the Red Baron had been killed by a British .303 rifle bullet (curiously, a bullet that has a lot to do with war comics, thanks to Garth Ennis and Jacen Burrows), almost surely fired by a British infantryman whose name will forever remain unknown. He then conjures up Clem, an alcoholic New Zealand soldier, whose aim is unerring only when he is stone drunk (Pratt 2009a [1972], 29). The archetypal male hero, fully in control of his flying machine and unbeatable, is thus defeated by a comedic and emphatically modernist anti-hero.

## 7 Facts and fiction

Such a mix of carefully balanced facts and fiction, history and myth, real and only apparently real characters bespeaks the unmistakable postmodernist character of the Corto Maltese stories. And genre-bending, or genre hybridization, has a lot to do with postmodernist fiction (and comics). Another example will effectively illustrate the workings of Pratt's own variety of genre-bending. In this frame, taken from *The Angel at the Eastern Window* (Pratt 2013b [1971], 8; see fig. 2a), we have a fairly accurate drawing of a German fighter aircraft, which can be easily identified as an Albatros D.I by comparing it to photographs available on the Web ("Albatros D I" n.d.; see fig. 2b).

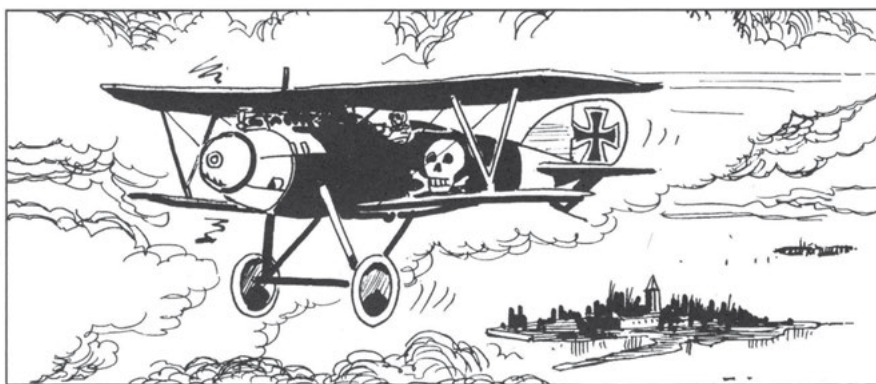


Fig. 2a: © CONG SA.



Fig. 2b: Albatros D.I

Pratt was so keen when it came to drawing aeroplanes, ships, machine-guns, and trains – what we might call the machinery of war – that he often relied on a trusted helper, the Italian comics artist and architect Guido Fuga (Marchese 2006, 83), who specialized in accurately reproducing aircraft (to an astonishing level of detail, as witnessed by the frames of *The Desert Scorpions*). But such faithfulness to history goes hand-in-hand with something quite different in the same story. At

the beginning of the story, the accurately drawn Austrian fighter flies dangerously low over a house (Pratt 2013b [1971], 8; see fig. 3).



Fig. 3: © CONG SA.

Isn't this old, dark building, with a single lighted Gothic window, something out of a horror story? Isn't this old house, standing in a lagoon, something that would not be out of place, say, in Moore's *Swamp Thing*? In fact, when Corto Maltese enters the house, there is a clearly horrific scene (Pratt 2013b [1971], 25; see fig. 4).



Fig. 4: © CONG SA.

“Ma è una diavoleria!” cries Corto. *Diavoleria* means both “devilry” and “monkey business” or “shrewd trick.” In fact the threatening, evil giant is nothing other than a giant puppet, aimed at scaring and shocking intruders, set up by a ring of Austrian spies.

## 8 Pratt’s *trompe-l’œil*

There are other instances in Corto Maltese stories of such graphic and textual sleights of hand in which real and unreal are suddenly swapped: for example, *Burlesque between Zuydcoote and Bray-Dune* begins as a shadow theatre but then abruptly turns into a very concrete war story (Pratt 2013a [1972], 9; see fig. 5). The moment of transition is sudden.



Fig. 5: © CONG SA.

The story begins as a fable, but then we realize it is a show for the soldiers. Yet magic reappears in the story when the (probably Irish) singer and spy Melodie Gael tries to hypnotize Corto Maltese (Pratt 2013a [1972], 27; see fig. 6).



Fig. 6: © CONG SA.

Corto is able to resist as his mother, a Spanish Rom, was a witch, and his father, a Cornish sailor, was the grandson of a Manx witch. But there is also another sort of magic at work in the story, helping Captain Rothschild to resist Melodie's mesmeric powers: Rothschild is a French lawyer of Jewish descent who has studied penal law but has also been initiated into the secret readings of the *Zohar*, that is, the *Sefer ha-Zohar*, a thirteenth-century book which is considered the foundational work of Jewish mystical thought, Kabbalah (Pratt 2013a [1972], 28). This enables him to counter Melodie's mesmeric powers.

Another example of such a bewildering mix of historical and visual accuracy and pure fantasy can be found in *A Midwinter Morning's Dream*. The old man and the woman in the lower right frame of figure 7 are Merlin and Morgana (Pratt 2009b [1970], 25), who team up with Corto to thwart a German submarine raid. Here, Pratt is drawing on British legends that are much older than the Great War.

All this should make us aware that, when we are dealing with the historical events as mirrored in Pratt's comics, we always have refracted images where painstaking and meticulous visual reproduction goes hand-in-hand with fantastic invention, with magic, with a supernatural world beyond our own. But Pratt is certainly a complex man, a cosmopolitan artist in whose artistic practice (and life) different cultures from several countries mix or clash. Pratt was born in Italy but moved to Ethiopia (then an Italian colony) with his parents at ten; he worked in Italy, France, Argentina, and the United Kingdom; and, moreover, he was a tremendously voracious and eclectic reader.





Fig. 7: © CONG SA.

## 9 Pratt's post-memory

The contrast between the historical reality of the war and the fantastic elements of the plot in these Great War stories may also refer to a more intimate rift in Pratt's upbringing, one which we can understand in terms of Hirsch's post-memory in its familial version. Hugo Pratt's father, Rolando, whose family was of Anglo-Saxon descent, was a colonial police officer who died in a POW camp in Dire Dawa in 1942. One may well suspect that Hugo's lifelong interest in exotic places, war, soldiers, and armies has some relation to the figure of Rolando. On the other hand, the fantastic element seems to come from his mother, Evelina Genero, who stemmed from a family of converted Jews (Marranos) and was interested in esotericism. One might even venture into a psychological or psychoanalytical interpretation of his war stories, in which the horrors and inhumanity of war are some-

what counterbalanced by the powers of imagination. If rationality leads to war, death, destruction, then occultism might be a way out (and we know that Pratt did not simply use magic and esotericism as ingredients of his graphic narratives; he was also interested in these disciplines, and directly involved in them – one aspect of such involvement being his initiation into Freemasonry).

Pratt's complex background calls of course for a comparative approach because of the interaction of history and imagination, facts and fiction, rationality and irrationality in his graphic narratives. It is not just a matter of his narratives drawing on different genres such as adventures, spy stories, war literature, fantasy, and travelogues; there is also, as we have already said, his upbringing, which took place in a colonial context drawing on different cultures (Italian, Ethiopian, English, US). But then, Pratt was also a supreme practitioner of comics, mixing images and words, and drawing on literature, the visual arts, cinema, and drama; moreover, as a cartoonist, he was strongly influenced by Milton Caniff, an American comics artist who had in turn researched Chinese culture to create his celebrated series *Terry and the Pirates*.

## 10 Tapping the transnational myth of the Great War

It is especially the transnational aspect of Pratt's comics that must be underscored, since, as Giovanni Marchese has demonstrated in his 2006 monograph *Leggere Hugo Pratt*, the corpus of texts deliberately and overtly quoted by Pratt in his graphic narratives is absolutely and radically transnational. An interesting example is the imaginary writer Hernestway (Pratt 1999 [1971], 25; see fig. 8), one of the characters of *Under the Flag of Money*.<sup>3</sup>

Since Hernestway is an ambulance-driver and has written an unsuccessful novel whose title is *A Farewell to the Battalion*, he is an easily identifiable avatar of Ernest Hemingway, the author of *A Farewell to Arms*, one of the classics of World War I literature. This is Pratt's own way of making readers aware of the intertextual and hypertextual nature of his graphic stories and novels.

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<sup>3</sup> The Italian title is *Sotto la bandiera dell'oro* [Under the Flag of Gold], perhaps because its translator thought money was too vulgar. Unfortunately, the Italian edition of the six Corto Maltese World War I stories does not clearly say if the texts in the balloons were translated from the French by Pratt himself or somebody else. But this is also true for the Italian edition of the Fleetway World War II comics, published as *Eroica* and *Supereroica* by Edizioni Dardo. In a visual art such as comics, translators are often invisible.

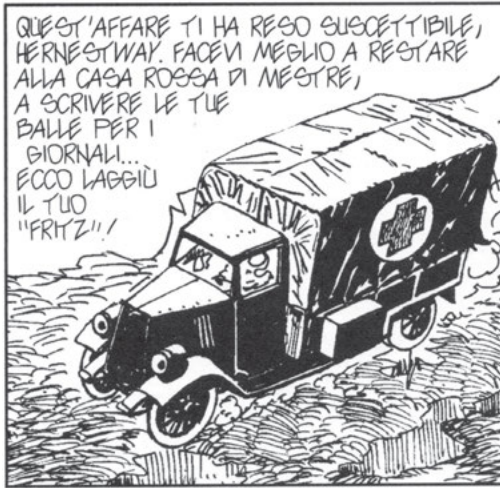


Fig. 8: © CONG SA.

All in all, we can envision the myth of the Great War as a sort of narrative cloud made up of heterogeneous materials (fiction, memoirs, autobiographies, newspaper/magazine articles, history books, etc.) surrounding a disappeared event in the past: like the hydrogen nebulae created by a supernova, they are remains of a devastating conflagration. Pratt's graphic narratives feed on the materials of the narrative cloud; but they do it in many different – sometimes beguiling – ways.

Sometimes it is a matter of accuracy. Consider a page from *Under the Flag of Money* (Pratt 1999 [1971], 18; see fig. 9): the uniforms of the Austrian artillery observer on his balloon, the Scottish fusiliers, and the Austrian Uhlands are painstakingly reproduced, and this is something Pratt did not leave to his collaborators. It is, of course, a matter of verisimilitude, based on accurate research. The faithful reproduction of uniforms and equipment also has the function of stressing the point of the story, in which Corto Maltese masterminds the recovery of treasure in a war zone, carried out by soldiers belonging to different armies who are sick and tired of the war and agree to split part of the treasure after deserting. In a very anarchic and individualistic way, it is a rebellion against the great carnage of World War I.



Fig. 9: © CONG SA.

Sometimes quotation has quite different purposes, as in *The Lagoon of Beautiful Dreams*, a story whose protagonist is not Corto Maltese but the character on the right of the frame in figure 10, Lieutenant Stuart (Pratt 1998 [1971], 10).



Fig. 10: © CONG SA.

Stuart is a British army officer who has deserted from his regiment, has escaped to South America, and is stranded on the shore of a deadly tropical lagoon infested with malaria. The dreams are those brought about by malaria fever, of course; Stuart, when Corto meets him, is dying. A very interesting detail is the badge of Stuart's regiment, found by Corto after the Englishman has died (Pratt 1998 [1971], 37; fig. 11).



Fig. 11: © CONG SA.

It is a fairly well reproduced badge of the Artists Rifles, an old regiment of the Royal Army, still existing today as 21 Special Air Service Regiment. Is this just a matter of verisimilitude again, or was Pratt aware that one of the most famous British war poets, Wilfred Owen, had been trained as an infantry lieutenant in that regiment? Though Owen's rejection of the war and its horrors was confined to his expressionist poems, as he (unfortunately) never deserted the British Expeditionary Force in Flanders, the state of mind expressed in Owen's lines is remarkably in tune with Stuart's predicament.

## 11 The lagoon and its ghosts

Moreover, once we deal with the intertextual dimension, we may legitimately wonder whether Pratt was not inspired by a French short story, "Le Déserteur" [The Deserter] (1934), by Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, a dialogue between an anonymous narrator (possibly the writer) and a Frenchman who deserted during World War I and escaped to South America. Drieu La Rochelle is a controversial right-wing intellectual figure who, during the Nazi occupation of France, aired anti-Semitic ideas; yet his collection of short stories *La Comedie de Charleroi* [The Comedy of Charleroi], which includes "Le Déserteur," is considered a classic of Great War literature, expressing a sceptical and embittered attitude to the war and the mythology of patriotic heroism.

The structure of *The Lagoon of Beautiful Dreams* is quite interesting: Corto Maltese only appears at the beginning and end of the graphic story. Most of the plot consists of Stuart's visions, conjured up by malaria fever, which give the story an uncanny atmosphere, a sort of comics version of the modernist stream of consciousness. People from Stuart's past life appear, like Colonel Leighton, the commander of his regiment (Pratt 1998 [1971], 14; see fig. 12), or Archer, the jockey who rode Gladiator II, the horse on which Stuart bet all the money he had stolen from his regiment when he deserted.



Fig. 12: © CONG SA.

Stuart also meets his mother, the classic Victorian lady, having tea with her friend, Mrs Mallory (Pratt 1998 [1971], 17; see fig. 13).



Fig. 13: © CONG SA.

One has then to wonder if this might be a reference to the legendary British mountaineer George Mallory, who disappeared on Mount Everest in 1924 and whose corpse was only found well after Pratt's death in 1999. Mallory was quite famous as he was portrayed by W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood as Michael Ransom in their 1936 play *The Ascent of F6* (a not unlikely source).

A door suddenly appears, then a German tank appears behind the door (Pratt 1998 [1971], 19; see fig. 14): this is a definitively oneiric moment that takes Stuart back to the trenches.

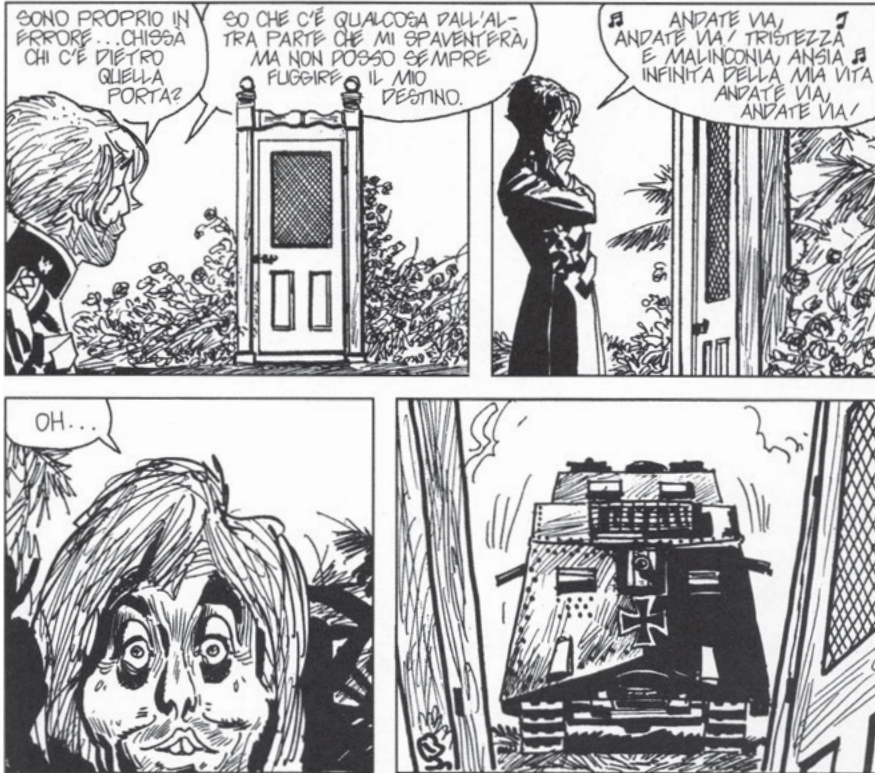


Fig. 14: © CONG SA.

What follows is a sequence of quite realistic World War I trench combat, one of the few in these graphic stories, where war rages in the background but the frames mostly focus on what happens behind the lines. Stuart heroically lobs a hand grenade into the tank, killing most of its crew (Pratt 1998 [1971], 26). And yet this scene may never have taken place, for it is the product of malaria fever and – of course – Stuart's burning regrets. Pratt, however, cannot resist the temptation to insert a literary quotation even in this moment of pure action.

The name of the German tank commander is Rilke (Pratt 1998 [1971], 29; see fig. 15) – no wonder, then, that Stuart asks him whether he is a relative of the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke (whose lines appear in other comics by Pratt).





Fig. 15: © CONG SA.

The gentlemanly attitude of Rilke should be highlighted, as he congratulates Stuart even though he was completely burnt after the tank's ammunition blew up. The class difference between the two officers and the soldiers is also stressed in the conversation. Moreover, the destruction of the tank makes up for Stuart's desertion, bespeaking the officer's sense of guilt. Stuart's visions are eminently consolatory.

Last but not least, Stuart meets his intended, Evelyne, in a graveyard (Pratt 1998 [1971], 33; see fig. 16), possibly one of those war cemeteries that are scattered along the Western and the Italian Front. Here, memory and imagination are hard to tell apart: moreover, the oneiric world evoked by malaria fever is coming apart; Stuart is dying, so his intended is inviting him to reach her in a graveyard.



Fig. 16: © CONG SA.

All in all, these powerful pictures seem to me to echo Kurz's final delirium in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. According to Marchese, Joseph Conrad is one of the most powerful influences on Pratt's graphic narratives, and the *Lagoon* is one of Pratt's most Conradian stories. Besides, Umberto Eco said that Corto Maltese "is a Lord Jim with all the features, the regrets and the ambiguities, but without the defeat, in short a Lord Jim who won the gamble" (quoted in Marchese 2006, 19; my translation).

## 12 Hugo Pratt, postmodernist comics artist

All this takes us back to the idea of a myth of the Great War, to be understood in a wider meaning than the phrase had in Isnenghi's monograph, one that feeds Pratt's graphic stories. Pratt's use of accurate historical reconstruction and literary quotations and hints, of real and imaginary figures, suggests a very important idea, namely: to conjure up a past age, one needs to take into account the hard facts, but also the collective imagination of that age – what we call *l'immaginario* in Italian. Remarkably, this is exactly what one finds in the historical and counter-historical novels of one of the major postmodernist writers, Thomas Pynchon; it could already be found in the historical episodes of his debut novel, *V.*, published in 1963. I doubt Pratt had read it when he first drew Corto Maltese as a secondary character in his graphic novel *The Ballad of the Salt Sea* in 1967; I do believe, however, that the idea was in the air. On the other hand, Pratt's Corto Maltese stories seem to anticipate what another important comics writer, Alan Moore, was to do in his *League of the Extraordinary Gentlemen*, surely in a most systematic fashion, but also against a much less cosmopolitan and transnational horizon.

In any case, it is by reading these stories from the perspective of war literature studies that the peculiar blend of historical materials and fictional invention becomes evident, hence helping us to place Pratt and his *oeuvre* in a wider artistic and cultural context. One may then ask what added value this reading produces for war literature scholars. An answer may be found if we go back to the beginning. Although it is set in the Southern Pacific, that is, a place one does not immediately connect with the Great War, *The Ballad of the Salt Sea* ends with the execution of a German naval officer, Lieutenant Slütter, accused of sabotage and treason. The military court's ruling is actually highly questionable, as Slütter is a prisoner of war and has done what everybody else around him is doing, fighting for his own country; it is as questionable as other executions depicted in classics of the Great War, such as Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, Emilio Lussu's *Sardinian Brigade*, or William March's *Company K*.



Fig. 17: © CONG SA.

I find it remarkable that Pratt chose not to show the moment when the firing squad shoots and the .303 bullets ravage Slütter's body (Pratt 2012 [1967], 189; see fig. 17); he focuses on Pandora Groovesnore instead. She is one of the protagonists of the graphic novel, much younger than Slütter and possibly in love with him. The young survive; mature men die. Perhaps Pratt is staging, in an anamorphic fashion, with a powerful series of temporal and spatial displacements, the death of his father Rolando in an Ethiopian concentration camp, a death which may well have haunted his whole life and his *oeuvre*. Remarkably, Slütter is – like Rolando Pratt – fighting on the losing side; and, having allied with the merciless pirate called The Monk, he is also fighting on the wrong side, like Pratt's father, who was an officer in the PAI, the Police of Italian Africa, an instrument of Fascist colonialism and imperialism.

All in all, Pratt was a victim of war when he was very young; and this is another reason why another war – not the one he actually witnessed – keeps surfacing in the frames of his graphic narratives. Once again, it is a matter of war, of memory, of trauma, of bereavement. Pratt's postmodernist World War I stories access the Great War not through personal, direct memory but by means of post-memory – surely through the experiences of the author's parents and relatives; but these stories unavoidably depict World War I by keeping World War II

as a sort of unsaid, invisible subtext – a very personal and intimate one – that we must nonetheless read and take into account.

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Denise Ask Nunes

# The Toxic Heroine in *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*

I've always felt that we blind ourselves by looking at the world simply in terms of "purity" and "corruption."  
(Miyazaki 2013, 2: 440)

**Abstract:** This article considers ecology and heroism. Hayao Miyazaki's *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* depicts Nausicaä, the ecological heroine of the Anthropocene. Through concepts developed in new materialism, such as vital materialism and trans-corporeality, it is possible to investigate the agency of the non-human and how it can redefine our ideas of morality and consequently heroism. Nausicaä's material self, her body and its direct interaction with matter, the forest, and insects, redefines her moral code. The material and the moral are merged, and it is by acknowledging this material agency that she acts, or lets the Earth act through her. By valuing the purity of the insects and the forest over her own human impurity, she surrenders to whatever fate the planet has for them. Nausicaä suggests that the role of the heroine is renegotiated in Anthropocene fiction because her own free will is replaced by the will of the planet. She becomes the vessel of planetary agency and condemns humanity to extinction in favour of planetary flourishing.

**Keywords:** agency, corruption, ecocriticism, ethics, Hayao Miyazaki, Jane Bennet, purity, Stacey Alaimo, trans-corporeality, vital materialism

## 1 Trans-corporeality in the Anthropocene

In Hayao Miyazaki's manga *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, we are confronted with a different kind of heroine: the ecological heroine of the Anthropocene. This is a divided heroine who, on the one hand, is deeply enmeshed within the wonders of the toxic forest that surrounds her, but who, at the same time, feels great love for her fellow humans. Nausicaä's ability to immerse herself in nature evokes Stacey Alaimo's new materialist notion of trans-corporeality "in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world" and which "underlines the extent to which the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from 'the environment'" (2010, 2). Trans-corporeality is based on Karen Barad's intra-activity, which argues that objects do not pre-exist their relations

but emerge through *intra-actions*. In other words, there are no separate objects, only phenomena, and these phenomena are “the ontological inseparability of agentially *intra-acting* components” (Barad 2007, 33). The emphasis does not lie on objects or components in themselves, because these do not exist apart from *intra-actions*, but this “relational ontology” (Barad 2007, 93) emphasizes enmeshments, which defines matter as agentive. A relational ontology allows us to investigate the agency of the non-human and how this can challenge our idea of morality and, consequently, heroism.

This essay intends to show how Miyazaki’s work creates a different kind of heroine who, through a trans-corporeal immersion in the world, can go beyond mere human morality and is able to save the planet. The heroine of the Anthropocene acknowledges the world’s material enmeshments, and, as will be shown throughout the essay, these intimate enmeshments can redefine her moral code. Instead of only seeing humans as moral subjects, she perceives insects and the planet as objects that are worthy of moral concern. In this manga, it is particularly the notion of toxicity that illustrates the porosity of the human body and allows Nausicaä to expand her understanding of the material world.

The central event that laid the groundwork for Miyazaki’s story was the Minamata Bay mercury poisoning disaster (Cavallaro 2006, 48), which means that toxicity and the subsequent fear of it play a crucial role in the story. In the Minamata disaster of 1956, a Japanese chemical company dumped waste water with high levels of mercury into the bay, and both fish and humans eating the fish were subsequently severely poisoned. High levels of mercury were found in hair samples from the affected humans, and the poison caused severe neurological damage (Harada 1995, 7). Human bodies thus became containers of the poison, and the trans-corporeal reality of this event is painstakingly evident. The scary outside is now inside, and the human body cannot be perceived as a fixed boundary but should be seen instead as a “mediating membrane” (Alaimo 2010, 15). However, whilst humans became sick, contaminated marine life learned how to absorb the poison and continued to reproduce, showing evidence of a wonderful resilience (Cavallaro 2006, 48). The toxic forest in *Nausicaä* is inspired by these resilient fish that learned to adapt and flourish with the poison.

Ecological matters challenge the human mind in many ways, which is why, as I will later argue, it is important to emphasize human limitations, which could potentially slow down the fast pace of human progress. However, what is most interesting is that it might be humans that are the ones less fit to adapt to these rapid changes, as was clearly shown by the Minamata Bay disaster. Insects can mutate and go through many generations in a matter of weeks, whilst humans, on the other hand, adapt much more slowly. Humans change their environment quickly in order to suit their desires, but they are ill-suited to adapting to their

own changes. This is also what we can see in *Nausicaä*. Humans struggle and die in the toxicity they themselves created, while the insects and the Ohmu flourish.

The story takes place a thousand years after the so-called Seven Days of Fire, which saw most of human technology disappear and the Earth be transformed into a wasteland. The Seven Days of Fire were caused by the God Warriors, giant humanoid robots with nuclear power that humans created. The Sea of Corruption (*Fukushōi*) is a giant toxic forest that spread after the disaster; it was born in the polluted wastelands created by civilizations long past and it has pushed humans to the peripheries of the landmasses. People live in small divided kingdoms, and all share a religious belief that the “Blue-Clad One” will come and save them from the terrible fate that awaits them in the toxic miasma that spreads from the forest. Only insects, such as the great Ohmu, and plants can survive in the areas with high toxicity.

The world that *Nausicaä* inhabits can best be described by the term “Anthropocene.” The term was coined by Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer (2000), and is nowadays a somewhat controversial concept. It is used to illustrate how “human activity has so altered the history of the Earth that it has become necessary to declare a new epoch to signify this impact” (Trexler 2015, 1). From this perspective, it is a very useful concept for *Nausicaä*, since the apocalypse was brought on by the man-made God Warriors who destroyed the world. The remnants of these old technologies can be seen, covered in vegetation, in the toxic landscape.

The reason why this concept is so important is that it allows *Nausicaä* to be redefined as a heroine. This toxic Anthropocene, first created by humans, continues, in turn, to shape both humans and the landscape, and it raises several questions. What is agency in a world of intra-acting phenomena? How is a hero supposed to morally navigate a toxic landscape? Can a hero save both humans and the planet? And if the heroine chooses to care for the planet, what happens to humanity? How do we know what is right and what is wrong in the Anthropocene? These questions will be developed in five major thematic threads: toxicity, purity/corruption, non-human agency, morality, and heroism.

## 2 The *Fukushōi* of Eden

As observed earlier, toxicity is central to the illustration of Barad’s intra-activity; however, in *Nausicaä*, the concept is further critically analysed through a non-binary stance on the ideas of purity and corruption. By questioning, on the one hand, how we morally evaluate purity and corruption, but also how they can be



easily reversed, Nausicaä opens up to a more inclusive morality that considers even insects and plants to be moral subjects.

Nausicaä comes to understand that the plants are not toxic but their toxic properties come from the Earth itself, which was once poisoned by humans. The plants are, in other words, removing the toxins from the Earth and helping to purify the planet. In “Toxic Discourse,” Lawrence Buell identifies toxicity and the fear of a poisoned world as major discursive elements in the environmental justice discourse. He argues that this discourse includes the “mythography of betrayed Eden” (Buell 1998, 647). The world that is subsequently presented is thus disenchanted “from the green oasis” and “is accompanied or precipitated by totalizing images of a world without refuge from toxic penetration” (Buell 1998, 648). This is exactly the image that is superficially presented in *Nausicaä*. Life in *Nausicaä* is a constant struggle against poison and the spreading toxic forest, and in the very first scene Nausicaä describes it as a “forest of death” where humans cannot walk “unmasked for even five minutes, or our lungs would decay” (Miyazaki 2013, 1: 11). However, the forest she stands in is filled with both plants and insects, which is why the anthropocentrism in this statement becomes so apparent when it is combined with the images that illustrate such a different reality. “A forest of death,” the Sea of Corruption, as the people call it, and yet so teeming with life and wonder. Even in this first scene, we can see how toxicity, corruption, becomes a relative concept. Precisely because humans cannot survive in the forest, an intra-acting reality can take into account not only the human networks, but also the non-human ones. Therefore, if one is able to dispense with the human-centred perspective, toxicity, or in this case the toxic spores from the plants, does not have to be condemned as evil because the spores would give rise to new, albeit non-human, forms of life. Additionally, it is in the midst of all this corruption and toxicity that Nausicaä finds the most peace: “It’s like a dream ... How could the bottom of the forest be so pure?” (Miyazaki 2013 1: 126). Nausicaä is able to find a toxic purity in the middle of the Sea of Corruption. In the above example, despite the threat of the poisonous spores, it is possible to not condemn the forest as a forest of death if one simply changes the perspective from the human one. As stated before, Miyazaki challenges the notions of purity and corruption in order to emphasize their anthropocentric focus and their subsequent ethical limitations.

On the other hand, in the following scene it is purity that is questioned instead. In the middle of the second volume, Nausicaä wakes up in a fragrant bath in what seems like a Garden of Eden: “a peaceful place” (Miyazaki 2013, 2: 415). If toxicity presents the mythography “of betrayed Eden,” then the return to this pure garden towards the end of the story should have been a respite from toxicity. However, the pure garden is toxic to Nausicaä. What needs to be understood here is that, to survive after the Seven Days of Fire, the human body was

altered in order to be able to live in a polluted world. Before Nausicaä entered the garden, she was submerged in a special bath. Had she not been, her lungs would have decayed from this purity as well. This means that Nausicaä, just like her fellow humans, now changed to better survive in a toxic environment, would be unable to live in a pure, pre-Seven Days of Fire world. Humans cannot enter the toxic forest because it would kill them, and they cannot breathe in the pure air of the garden. In relation to the above quote by Buell, then, the green oasis is no longer an option for humans, and toxic penetration is the very stuff of life and has become part of the human body itself.

The emphasis on Nausicaä's body is central to the analysis. The tale of the "Blue-Clad One" in *Nausicaä* identifies this character as an angel/apostle/prophet-like creature with white wings and walking on a field of gold who is meant to save humanity from this toxic world. When the young monk Chikuku says that Nausicaä is the apostle, he is told, "Don't be silly. That girl is just a heathen. And those wings [the Mehve] are a kind of kite used by the people of Eftal," to which he responds: "Of course the apostle is a human being. If she had wings growing out of her back she'd be a monster" (Miyazaki 2013, 2: 71). It is precisely this human corporeality that allows her to be the heroine of the Anthropocene because she has to be immersed in the world's materiality, in its toxicity, allowing it to reveal itself as she moves through it, not looking down on it from an omniscient perspective.

As we can see, toxicity is a particularly poignant example of Stacey Alaimo's new materialist notion of trans-corporeality which, as stated earlier, is inspired by Karen Barad's intra-activity. Where we normally think of objects as interacting, that is as separate entities affecting each other with a clear cause-and-effect pattern, intra-acting "recognises that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action" (Barad 2007, 33). Beings emerge within phenomena and are always relational. Alaimo takes these ideas into the human corporeal realm, in which we can no longer see bodies as "self-contained units; all are permeable, accumulating the various toxins that disseminate from innumerable sources" (2010, 135). Nausicaä's understanding of this artificial juxtaposition of body and environment is particularly clear in the scene when she is swallowed by one of the Ohmu.

The Ohmu are giant insects and the most important secondary characters. In one scene, the Ohmu choose to sacrifice themselves in order to save the planet from a human scientific experiment gone wrong. Nausicaä wants to join them, but instead of allowing her to sacrifice herself, they save her by swallowing her. She enters "the abyss" inside the Ohmu, but this journey is a simultaneous trip into her own Being. She enters her own desert landscape and has to escape from it by moving through her internal forest. Her friend Selm rescues her by using her "internal forest as an entrance. Your forest is deep. I've never been on such a rich

journey” (Miyazaki 2013 2: 230). This internal forest truly illustrates the porosity of the body as a boundary. While many fear the toxicity because it will poison them, Nausicaä’s awareness of an intra-acting reality allows her own internal Sea of Corruption to flourish. However, an important thing to keep in mind is that it is not the environment that intrudes upon the biological body: intra-activity argues that the environment is already inside. The toxic forest is part of Nausicaä, and, in a trans-corporeal sense, she is the forest too. Because agency is networked and continuously shifting, trans-corporeality is not in any way a conscious choice; this scene simply shows that it is the nature of reality to be enmeshed.

### 3 The toxic heroine

The previous scene brings us closer to understanding Nausicaä’s different kind of heroism. She has a “dual” nature that stems from her trans-corporeal connection to the planet, which puts her actions in a questionable moral light. I write “dual” here because that is how she herself understands it for most of the story, but the truth that she repeatedly discerns is that reality is not binary.

As Nausicaä walks in her internal forest with Selm, she is told that this forest is inside her heart: “Inside my heart? And the barren land too? [...] The darkness is inside me, too. If this forest is inside me, then that desert is mine as well” (Miyazaki 2013 2: 220–223). Inside herself, she has both the lush forest and the dark threatening desert. When she sees these two aspects inside her own Being, she starts to understand that both purity and corruption are part of life.

Purity and corruption are not only concepts used to indicate a level of toxicity; they hold moral connotations as well. This discussion is, however, very difficult to get straight for the simple reason that it isn’t. The notion of purity and corruption, good and evil, is clearly problematized in the manga, which shows that the limited binary perspective we have right now is highly problematic; however, we seem to have even greater difficulties when it comes to thinking in a non-binary way. Nausicaä understands that both purity and corruption are necessary parts of life and is therefore able to problematize these concepts, but she is on many occasions unable to keep this non-binary perspective in mind. Instead of defining the forest as a Sea of Corruption, she sees it and the insects as the pure and moral whilst humanity is the corrupt and evil, and Nausicaä herself is no exception.

It is from her own corporeal human impurity that she judges the corrupt human race. Apart from the forest and the desert, Nausicaä also finds a vast and pure field inside her heart. When she walks on this field, she steps on a flower and says: “I’m sorry I stepped on you. Let’s go back ... to our own world. We mustn’t

contaminate this one” (Miyazaki 2013 2: 239). And when Yupa tells her about the inner parts of the toxic forest, he says: “What I found was a world of peace and purity ... so pure I felt like a monster in my mask and clumsy garments” (1: 91). In *Ecocriticism*, Greg Garrard argues that the ecocentric perspective of Deep Ecology can be seen as misanthropic (2012, 25), an idea that is powerfully enacted in *Nausicaä*. Furthermore, in *Hyperobjects*, Timothy Morton argues that the “emergent effect of the Anthropocene may include the notion that the human is inherently parasitic and polluting” (2013, 153). *Nausicaä* defines humanity as “the ugliest of all creatures. We do nothing but harm to the earth – plundering it and polluting it and burning it ... What good is it to beg for forgiveness now?” (Miyazaki 2013 2: 139). In other words, she has judged it to be too late for humans because she sees that this behaviour is not something that will end: “Peace is nothing but the endless repetition of human folly” (2: 467). As previously stated, she is unable to release herself from a binary perspective, but simply inverts the notion of purity and corruption. It is this perspective that creates the heroine of the Anthropocene. Her actions start to focus on saving the environment, and, if this clashes with human well-being, she perceives humans as expendable. She can be violent beyond her own control, and others are surprised by this immorality:

How could the Blue Clad One [*Nausicaä*] ride with the white witch [*Kushana*]? Is she not supposed to be the saviour of the masses, the oppressed, the poor? Why? (Miyazaki 2013 1: 386)

Look at your hands and tell me what you see. Blood. ... Among the dead there are those you killed yourself. How dare you feign innocence? ... You are nothing more than just another foolish, filthy human being (2: 138)

Whilst we know that *Nausicaä* has no desire to kill and wants to do what is right, that which is right from a planetary perspective is not always right from the human perspective, and these are the bloody hands the heroine of the Anthropocene has to bear. This is why I return to my initial hesitation about human dualistic thinking. Whilst *Nausicaä* says that there is no good or bad between purity or corruption, and that they are both part of life, she still does not hesitate to assign a moral value to either side, which means that, according to her own moral code, she is a devil and not a heroine.

In the final scene, *Nausicaä* is forced to see this logic of the Anthropocene through to the very end. Shuwa is a vast crypt filled with all the knowledge that is needed in order to manipulate and create new life, lost in the Seven Days of Fire. In control of this crypt is the Master of the Crypt, a complex computer that was programmed to restart a pure humanity. Here, she has to face a crucial decision: To recreate a new and pure humanity that would be capable of living upon the purified Earth, or to let the Earth itself decide the fate of humanity. *Nausicaä*

is against this artificial creation and asks, “Why didn’t those men and women realize that both purity and corruption are the very stuff of life? Suffering and tragedy and folly will not disappear in a purified world. They are part of humanity” (Miyazaki 2013 2: 510).

In this scene, Nausicaä is able to focus on the complexity at hand, and criticizes the computer’s simplified logic. In *Dark Ecology*, Timothy Morton advances his theory of agrilogistics, which defines a “specific logistics of agriculture” (2016, 42). This way of thinking causes a split because it is necessary to create a “violent and arbitrary difference between itself and what it ‘conquers’ and delimits,” that is, the nature–culture divide (43). It is possible to compare Morton’s “blind execution of [the agrilogistics] program” (66) and the computer in Shuwa. The people that programmed the computer simplified the issue and thought that a pure world, with a new, purified (i. e. non-polluted) human race, would be the solution. However, Nausicaä has understood that human folly is beyond purification and that both “purity and corruption are the very stuff of life.” The Master of the Crypt (the computer) condemns Nausicaä for her decision to kill off the planned pure human race; he calls her “an enemy of hope” (Miyazaki 2013 2: 511), once again emphasizing the different kind of heroism of the heroine in the Anthropocene.

## 4 “We don’t know what to do”

The Master of the Crypt says, “Without me, humanity shall surely become extinct. You cannot live beyond that morning,” and Nausicaä answers: “That is for the planet to decide” (Miyazaki 2013 2: 511). What the heroine of the Anthropocene does is decline the existing logical framework in favour of something new where humans cannot plan their future but have to succumb to planetary agency.

Agency is usually attributed to humans because agency is related to consciousness and rationality: “a condensed version of this parceling of characteristics would attribute agency to humans, instinct to animals, and the deterministic forces of nature to everything else” (Alaimo 2010, 143). However, according to both Barad and Alaimo, matter has agency as well. For Barad, being is agential because “agency is a doing or being in its intra-activity” (Barad 2007, 178). That is, to *be* is to be agential because agency arises in each intra-acting phenomenon. Alaimo then brings this into the corporeal realm and argues that matter is agency because it “transforms the very stuff of the human” (2010, 155). And the “porosity of organisms’ boundaries [...] has in turn prompted a reappraisal of organisms as discrete, autonomous units with relatively tidy, bounded causal patterns” (Coole

and Frost 2010, 17). Jane Bennet presents it in very simple and yet convincing terms when she writes that an “actant is a source of action that can be either human or nonhuman; it is that which has efficacy, can *do* things” (Bennet 2010, viii; emphasis in original). Some argue that to ascribe agency to matter is to cancel out the value of the concept itself because, if everything has agency, what is the point of using it as a critical concept? I would argue that this is a crucial move in environmental critique because it brings attention to the limits of both human knowledge and rationality, which, as we can see in *Nausicaä*, has significant ethical consequences.

The limits of human knowledge are reached whenever one attempts to conceptualize ecological matters, since any idea one has is bound to be incomplete. Morton, for example, defines global warming as a “hyperobject,” a term which refers to objects “that are massively distributed in time and space relative to humans” (2013, 1), which means that “thinking them is intrinsically tricky” (4). However, the Anthropocene forces us to try to think this complexity and to merge “two levels we usually think are distinct: geology and humanity” (7). In *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, Timothy Clark states that this scalar discrepancy can cause the “Anthropocene disorder,” which is the struggle of the mind to connect day-to-day issues with the globe (2015, 140). What is more: even if we were to attempt to do this, an intra-active reality would “defy our ability to model, predict or even understand” it (Morton 2013, 8). However, it is at this point of numbing hopelessness, in the face of unknowable complexity, that it is possible to actually start thinking.

In an interview, Hayao Miyazaki states that unless we “put ourselves in the place where *we don't know what to do* and start from there, we cannot think about environmental issues or issues concerning nature” (“Interview: Miyazaki on *Mononoke Hime*” 1997; my emphasis). We admit that we, as humans, do not know what to do and are therefore forced to find answers in different ways: “trans-corporeality demands more responsible, less confident epistemologies” (Alaimo 2010, 22). This insecurity simultaneously brings with it a sense of wonder, which is the basis of all the difficult decisions that *Nausicaä* has to make. She is not able to see things clearly, because, as Ian Bogost states, “wonder has two senses. For one it can suggest awe or marvel. [...] But for another, it can mean puzzlement or logical perplexity” (2012, 121). Wonder is then able to counteract what Jane Bennet sees as the disenchantment of modern life because the “mood of enchantment may be valuable for ethical life” (2001, 3). It is through a trans-corporeal openness towards her environment and each and every being within it that *Nausicaä* is able to look at the world with wonder, and through that she can realize that “sometimes ecohealth will require individuals to back off” (Bennet 2010, 122).

This is where *Nausicaä* succeeds in being the heroine of the Anthropocene. By inviting both the toxic insects and the forest into herself, she challenges what

coexistence and morality can be. She manages to live this insecurity and realizes that “material agencies can be neither adequately predicted nor safely mastered,” and this “encourages caution” (Alaimo 2010, 21). Her immersion in the world leaves her unable to plan ahead, and she moves forward on pure instinct. In an instant when the violent mould has killed numerous insects, she understands: “The insects sensed the outbreak of the mold. That’s why they were so frightened ... Don’t cry now ... you can’t cry now. You have to do something” (Miyazaki 2013, 1: 529). She moves forward, because matter propels her. In this case it is the dead bodies of the insects that do it. Her fragile, mere mortal framework is the basis for this new perspective, and it allows her to expand her idea of morality. Instead of mastering nature and trying to control the outcome, she treads lightly and listens to what the forest itself wants: she gives up her own agency in favour of the planet’s, which allows her to move forward, step by step, without claiming to understand the complexity of the problem at hand.

## 5 Conclusion: A heroine beyond morality

After realizing that the heroine of the Anthropocene has given up her own agency in favour of the planet’s, we reach the final question: how should we morally evaluate her actions? As shown earlier in this essay, Nausicaä holds no illusions regarding her actions, and in the scene in Shuwa when she has destroyed the Crypt and the potential new human race, she says, “I shudder at the depth of my sin.” Because of her ambivalent morality and the general human inability to think beyond binaries, she is sometimes defined as devil/evil/immoral and sometimes as princess/prophet/apostle. The heroine of the Anthropocene can belong to neither of these categories. The word “heroine” might, in a sense, be misleading, because notions of good and evil are simple binaries that belong to a morality that cannot survive in the Anthropocene.

In a networked reality, in which the network includes more than one’s fellow human, it is impossible to say what is right and what is wrong. A trans-corporeal reality understands that humans are no longer the only creatures to consider any more. Nausicaä is able to include the forest and its insects as well as humans in her moral circle, but her misanthropy causes her to conclude that humans are not the primary consideration. It is counter-intuitive not to define her final action in Shuwa as evil, but from a deep ecological perspective her actions cannot be judged, because what matters in the end is the survival and thriving of the planet. By re-evaluating the object of moral concern, she has opened up the ethical framework which challenges how actions are to be morally evaluated.

As noted above, Morton defines global warming as a hyperobject that emphasizes the complexity of ecocritical matters. This complexity is beyond full comprehension, and the heroine who is deeply enmeshed within this complexity is difficult to understand. My argument, however, is that her actions cannot, and do not have to be, morally evaluated. Through a trans-corporeal immersion in the toxic world she inhabits, she learns that purity and corruption are simple binaries that do not belong in the Anthropocene. By surrendering her own agency to the forest, she is no longer capable of either good or evil, since both of these are conscious choices. Without free will, and as a vessel of planetary agency, Nausicaä cannot be judged. Whether this is right or not is another question. However, like some of the followers of Nausicaä, I refrain from judging her actions: “It is no longer our place to voice opinions about the princess’s actions. All we can do now is stand by her until the end” (Miyazaki 2013 2: 269).

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Barbara Grüning

# Educating to Remember: The Public Use of Comics in Germany and Italy

**Abstract:** This article presents different public uses of comics to represent difficult pasts on the basis of four case studies: the National Socialist and GDR pasts in the German memory field, and the Fascist past and terrorist/Mafia massacres in the Italian memory field. The comparative analysis focuses on three factors of influence: the narratives and aesthetic forms culturally legitimized in the two national public memory spaces, the cultural frames which define a specific past, and the cultural paradigms of transnational comics. In the final analysis, the article contemplates not only the graphic representations of the past, but also the social actors (artists, publishers, political institutions, public intellectuals) involved in this process of collectively working memory, their symbolic and cultural resources, and their power relationships.

**Keywords:** comics, cultural memory, cultural trauma, field of cultural production

## 1 Comics and national memory fields

This article will focus on comics published from 1946 to 2017 that narrate and recount difficult pasts. As a case study, I will compare German and Italian comics dealing with the National Socialist dictatorship and the socialist dictatorship in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) on one hand, and the Fascist dictatorship and the terrorist/Mafia massacres in Italy on the other. The main goal of this comparison is to understand how the narrative structure of comics is used to strengthen or contest social constructions of a past. Indeed, by spatializing and combining images and texts, comics possess great creative potential (e.g. Maggio 2007; Chute 2008) for communicating values and meanings about a past. In Bourdieusian terms, we can argue that their visual language makes it possible for them to shape a “space of possibles” (Bourdieu 1993): a space of possible narratives about difficult pasts which pursue a structure of meanings alternative to those included in the dominant master narratives. Yet the way in which this space of possibles is actualized depends on the agents involved in the memory struggle to define the “correct” representation of a given past. The more a remembering community is crossed by internal symbolic and social boundaries, the more the potential for conflict increases. This also concerns national collectivities. Indeed, despite recent globalization processes having led to transnational forms

of memory (e.g. Huyssen 2003) and having undermined the symbolic power of nation states, the cultural production of national pasts is still fertile.

At this point, it is helpful to define memory for the purposes of this analysis. The increasing number of studies on memory in several (inter)disciplinary fields has led to a proliferation of definitions – for example, collective memory (Halbwachs 1925), cultural and communicative memory (Assmann 1999), and social memory (Namer 2000) – and perspectives (functionalism, constructivism, post-structuralism, postmodernism, deconstructionism, semiotics, and so on). For the purposes of this article, however, I will adopt three main frameworks for analyzing memory questions and their related problems.

The first framework concerns empirical investigations that focus on how collective memories are constructed through performative acts. Post-colonialist thought, in particular, influenced the concept of the “struggle for memory” as a “struggle for identity recognition” carried out by minority communities (Huyssen 1995; Edkins 2003). This gives rise to two puzzling questions that should be highlighted. The first concerns generalizing the outputs of a singular case study without dehistoricizing it. The second concerns the fact that struggles for memory are often understood in dichotomous terms, that is, in terms of dominant vs. minority groups. This prevents the identification of both the whole social structure involved in these collective conflictual memory processes and other ways of acting upon memory beyond resisting or exercising power (e.g. Rothberg 2009).

The second framework regards the classical sociological concept of memory as produced by collective groups which share a same time–space frame and interact with each other in order to construct a social framework of memory and make sense of their present conditions (Halbwachs 1925). More recently, to overcome the boundaries of local collective groups, scholars have adopted either a network or a systematic perspective. According to the network paradigm, memory processes are understood as the “free circulation of flows of narratives and ideas.” However, little attention is paid to how local social and symbolic structures influence the reception of (global or globalized) past narratives and representations. According to Luhmann’s system theory (1997), memory acts as a binary code composed of two exclusive processes: remembering and forgetting. The local dimension is embodied in the theory through the idea that the binary memory code of a social system selects the elements of the environment which should be incorporated in the system in order to enable its autopoiesis. This explanation also accounts for the capacity of the media to both archive past representations and create a sort of “amnesia” about a past. In other words, a systemic perspective on memory makes it possible to explain some basic mechanisms in the production and dissemination of the content and forms of memory. However, it is difficult to understand

the roles agents play and how they try to legitimate past narratives through their social actions and cultural practices.

Finally, according to a semiotic framework, memory is a cultural text composed of a symbolic and temporal stratification of meanings (e. g. Erll 2010). Nevertheless, this perspective often excludes the broader cultural processes which co-define a socio-historical context, often reducing it to a merely historical background.

Following Bourdieu's concept of field (2002), for this article I propose a meta-level perspective according to which past discourses and narratives not only circulate over symbolic and social (national) boundaries, but are taken over by local social groups that use them differently depending on their cultural, economic, and social resources and the social and cognitive constraints of their sociocultural contexts. This means that the contents of memory that are characterized by transnational values and/or expressed by transnational symbolic forms (like graffiti) are given new symbolism according to the specific framework which governs the field where they are received (Grüning 2016). This also allows us to assume that some similarities exist between the social space defined by the power relationships of those who remember and the symbolic space defined by their narratives. In other words, the stance taken by the actors involved in the memory process is influenced by the hierarchical system and evaluation criteria which structure the field. Furthermore, not only past narratives on one past are ranked according to the dominant (aesthetic, ethical, scientific) criteria ruling the field, but also past events occupy different levels of legitimation. By referring to a nation state, it becomes crucial to understand the role of institutions in defining and legitimating specific past representations and hierarchies in public spaces. It is also sensible to consider how artistic expressive forms are selected to narrate past events according to the position these forms occupy in the corresponding field of cultural production. Thus, with respect to our case study, the question is whether and how comics represent a legitimate way to narrate difficult pasts in both the memory and literary fields.

For this analysis, I will consider the possible influence of two transnational processes which have transformed the study of memory in literary and cultural forms since the 1980s. The first one concerns the rise of traumatic memory related to the increased importance of Holocaust narratives. Traumatic memory narratives express universal values because they deal with biographical traumatic experiences, focus on victims (juxtaposed with perpetrators), and overcome local cultural boundaries thanks to the media (Levy and Sznajder 2006; Rothberg 2009). The second one concerns the progressive cultural and symbolic legitimation of comics in narrating traumatic pasts (Dauber 2006; Buhle 2007; Chapman, Ellin, and Sherif 2015). Crucial in this shift from "low" to "high" culture was the

intellectual legitimation of *Maus* (Chute 2006; Kohli 2012). In this respect, the format of graphic novels and trauma narratives has been fundamental to legitimating comics as literature. Thus, in the following sections, I will try to illustrate how these two changes have been received in Italy and Germany and influenced the production of national comics about difficult pasts.

## 2 Italian comics: Between ritualized and standardized memory

From the post-war period until the end of the First Italian Republic (1992), Italy's public space was dominated by an anti-Fascist memory (De Bernardi and Ferrari 2004). This kind of memory was not only supported by political discourses, especially those of the radical left parties, but it was also reinforced by the prolific production of anti-Fascist novels, films, songs, and even comics. Serial comic books such as *Pam il Partigiano* (1946) and *Il pioniere* (1949–1964), or the anti-Fascist stories published in the weekly journal *La Lotta* (in 1951) and in the comic magazine *Intrepido* (five stories before 1950), were paradigmatic of how the image of the partisan as a Romantic hero played an educational role for children. The 1970s brought about three important changes: first, short narrative comics about the Italian Resistance were still published on the occasion of commemorative events (e. g. Liberation Day on 25 April); second, they were no longer drawn in politicized magazines for young people; and third, their graphic style was more accurate, as seen in *Quest'uomo deve morire*, drawn by Alfredo Castelli (1973), now considered one of the most important Italian authors of serial comics. In any case, the anti-Fascist system of values and the educational framework remained dominant. In the 1980s, a further step was taken towards the normalization of the “anti-Fascist memory,” represented by the comic book *La storia d'Italia*, edited in its multiple volumes by the well-known Italian journalist Enzo Biagi (1996). Despite only some scenes in the third volume being devoted to the Italian Resistance, the fact that anti-Fascist memory is included in a homogeneous school narrative aimed at young people and intended to strengthen civic national identity is meaningful.

The fall of the existing three-party political system in the early nineties suddenly put the legacy of the anti-Fascist memory constructed over decades into question. The frequent objections to Liberation Day as an anti-Fascist celebration and the several (auto)biographical works where partisans were denounced for their violent acts against “normal citizens” are symbolic not only of the new political climate but also of the sudden changes to the collective memory framework.

Indeed, the historical revision of the Italian Resistance was not accompanied by critical memory work but stressed the current conflicts in the political arena. However, in the last decade (always on commemorative occasions), we can detect a new wave of comics inspired by the anti-Fascist culture mainly supported by (local) civic political associations and institutions: *Eroe partigiano* (Della Santa 2010); *I figli della schifosa* (Pagliaro 2012); *Storia della resistenza in Valsesia* (Perrone and Perrone 2012), backed by the Institute of Italian Resistance in Piedmont; *L'inverno di Diego* (Baldazzini 2014); *Bandierine: Tutta una storia di resistenze* (Gallo and Pettinato 2015); *Anita* (Vasirani, Pomes, and Ronda 2015–2016), backed by the National Association of Italian Partisans (ANPI); and *Pian d'albero* (Putignano 2017), backed by the Historical Institute of the Resistance in Tuscany (ISRT). In most of the comics, the Resistance is narrated in a mimetic style. Even if the stories are less ideologized and the heroes more humanized than in the 1950s and 1960s, the graphic form and spatialization are still plain. Finally, it is difficult to find new issues diverging from a moralized “anti-Fascist paradigm,” as is the case with *In Italia sono tutti maschi* (De Santis and Colaone 2008), devoted to the conditions of homosexuals under the Fascist regime, or *L'inverno d'Italia* (Toffolo 2017), which describes the Italian deportation of Roma communities. In general, we can argue that, even in this last phase, the comics remembering the Fascist regime were little influenced by the increasing interest in traumatic pasts since the 1990s. How might we explain this?

In the 1990s, mass media began to bring attention to the political, traumatic, and violent events of recent Italian history. These past events seem to be more suitable for exploring the protagonists' psychology and introducing innovative narrative devices by mixing historical and criminal elements, especially in film, TV series, and novels. Also, in the comic production of this era, there was a great deal of interest in dealing with Mafia- and terrorist-related events (e. g. the Bologna massacre in 1980, the massacre of Piazza della Loggia in 1974, the attacks on Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino), thanks to the initiative of Il becco giallo, a comic-book publisher concerned with imparting civic values (<http://main.beccogiallo.net> [28 May 2019]). Thus, apart from a few exceptions (e. g. *La giustizia siamo noi* [Gabos and Cacucci 2010] and *Quarant'anni adesso* [Filippini 2016]) in which novels and films devoted to the same tragic past events are also made for entertainment purposes, comics which narrate recent Italian history share the main goal of educating by informing. Hence, following the continuous shift in Italian political culture from national to civic values, it seems that the increasing symbolic legitimation of graphic novels in recent decades has been mostly useful for renewing the educational role attributed to comics since the Fascist era (Zanatta, Zaghini, and Guzzetta 2009) rather than for exploring new graphical and aesthetic ways of representing past events.

Summing up, in Italy after World War II, comics that narrate difficult past events were primarily educational, irrespective of the identity or social positions of the “moral entrepreneurs” of memory. Two circumstances support this observation. First, from the Fascist period until the sixties, comics were exclusively intended for children and young people. Therefore, the morality of their content was to be controlled. The role of moral controller has been performed by the state for a long time. Second, despite the existence of comics produced for an adult audience since the 1960s, those comics were mostly erotic in their content until the 1980s. Thus, comic magazines for children (e. g. the *Corriere dei piccoli*, the *Corriere dei ragazzi*, *Tiramolla*, *Topolino*, or the Catholic comics in *Il Giornalino*) maintained a dominant position in the field of comic production for a long time, filling a moral role. Nowadays, with the success of graphic novels, the target audience of comics dealing with difficult histories is wider (also including adults). However, since these comics remain influenced by their original educational function, and unlike other mass-market products such as films and novels, artistic values continue to be neglected.

### 3 Germany: Overcoming two negative pasts

In Germany, the use of comics for narrating the past has gained a foothold in the public sphere only in recent decades. The explanation for this is twofold. First, despite Germany’s long tradition of illustrators and caricaturists, the genesis of an autonomous subfield of comic production here is more recent than in Italy. As a matter of fact, this tradition was interrupted during the Nazi regime, whereas in Italy comics played an important educational role even during Fascism. Furthermore, after World War II, comics were mostly imported from America, and they were generally classified as a mass-market product incorporating low cultural values (e. g. Jovanovic and Koch 1999; Sistic 2002). Second, in West Germany, until the fall of the Wall, a “positive memory” such as that of Italian anti-Fascism/resistance did not exist. By contrast, from the end of World War II to the Sessantotto movement in 1968 there was an elitist and critical intellectual class which influenced public opinion with discourses on the past orbiting around questions about German identity, democracy, and guilt (Müller 2000). On the other hand, everyday life was dominated by a culture of silence, with mass media and political narratives presenting a mitigated, ahistorical image of the *Heimat*. In the 1960s, a new sensibility towards the past emerged, as is highlighted by the progressive transformation of the Nazi camps into places of political education. However, only at the end of the 1970s, when the American TV series *Holocaust* was transmitted in Germany,

did mass-media production begin to be an acceptable way to remember the negative German past (e. g. Cornelißen and Klinkhammer 2004). Thus, since the 1980s, two forms of memory were developed, both aimed at transmitting universal values: the first one, marked by a “trauma paradigm,” was dominant in the broader field of cultural production and focused on individual and family biographies (e. g. Reitz’s *Heimat* trilogy); the second one was based on an institutionalized idea of historical responsibility (Habermas 1988) dominating the intellectual public sphere.

After German reunification, the new political situation also conditioned the hierarchy of German collective memories. However, the new social context was characterized by a highly conflictual political climate depending on the reunification processes themselves, which exacerbated the economic, social, and cultural differences between East and West Germany. As a result, public memory work on the GDR past rapidly defined a conflictual field mirroring the reciprocal diffidence of East and West Germans. This field was dominated by media and political-institutional interpretations and master narratives of the GDR past, causing the marginalization and delegitimization of other forms of remembering and past narratives, from (n)ostalgic museums to festivals and novels, mainly carried out by East German actors.

The first consequence of this new interest in the GDR past was a decline in the importance of narratives related to the Nazi past. If we look at comic production (with the exception of the satirical comic strips of *Adolf: Die Nazi-Sau* [Moers 1998, 1999, 2006], anticipating the spirit of the film *Der Untergang* [see e. g. Ashkenazi 2011]), the majority of graphic novels on the Nazi past appeared later than graphic novels on the GDR past. More generally, in Germany, graphic novels dealing with the traumatic experience of National Socialism took hold relatively late in the context of the international success of Holocaust comics (e. g. Weiner and Fallwell 2011), even if the educational intention of this genre (e. g. Palandt 2011) fitted with the new orientation of German public memory.

Comics on the Nazi past include a varied palette of topics, from anti-Fascist stories like *Das siebte Kreuz* (Sharp [2015], adapted from the novel by the East German writer Anna Seghers); to stories on (individual) German opponents of the regime, like *Sophie Scholl* (Sabisch and Lünsedt 2015) and *Bonhoeffer* (Stetter 2010); to stories with Jewish protagonists, such as *Die Suche* (Naumann and Heuvel 2010); to family memory, such as *Irmina* (Yelin 2014). In any case, more than highlighting a new interest in narrating the Nazi past through comics, this variety of topics points to the absence of strong master narratives on this past, probably due to the difficulty of reconciling the paradigm of cultural trauma with the fact of bearing a national collective responsibility for that trauma.

By contrast, this difficulty never existed for the GDR past. Rather, the fear of sweetening the bitter pill of the Socialist state by using the visual language



of comics (Grüning 2016) probably explains why writing and publishing comics on the GDR is mainly conceived as an institutional task which also involves the collaboration of historians and journalists. In recent decades, the institutional character of comics dealing with the GDR past has mostly been evident during commemorative events, such as the twentieth and twenty-fifth anniversaries of the fall of the Wall and the fiftieth anniversary of its construction. Indeed, for these occasions, comics on the GDR have been spatialized in commemorative places by redefining the memory landscape visually and cognitively (*Da war mal was* [Flix 2009] and *Treibsand* [Mönch, Lahl, and Kahane 2014] at the Berlin Wall Memorial, *Grenzfall* at the Zionskirche [Ulrich and Henseler 2011], *Tunnel 57* in the Nordbahnhof [Henseler and Buddenberg 2012]).

If, on the one hand, this has led to new forms of remembering tragic events, on the other hand, the link created between sacred places and graphic novels restricts the possibilities of alternative legitimate ways of narrating this past by using the visual language of comics. Indeed, most of the comics which deal with the GDR past follow the same narrative structure of mass-media master narratives, based on the dichotomous scheme outlined in table 1.

**Table 1:** Criteria for classifying narratives on the GDR past.

DOCUMENTARY	FICTION
AUTHENTIC	UNREALISTIC
TRAUMA	(N)OSTALGIA
UNIVERSAL	LOCAL
LINEAR/COHERENT	NON-LINEAR/NOT COHERENT

The column on the left describes the legitimated way of narrating the GDR past. It can be said that most of the comics on the GDR – e. g. *Drüben* (Schwartz 2009), *Da war mal was* (Flix 2009), *Grenzgebiete* (Lenkova 2009), *Grenzfall* (Ulrich and Henseler 2011), *Geteilte Stadt Berlin* (Ulrich, Buddenberg, and Henseler 2012), *Tunnel 57* (Henseler and Buddenberg 2012), *17 Juni* (Lahl et al. 2013), *Treibsand* (Mönch, Lahl, and Kahane 2014), *Herbst der Entscheidung* (Hoffmann and Linder 2014), and *Madgermanes* (Weyhe 2016) – present the following characteristics. (1) They tend to reproduce traces of authenticity (e. g. protocols of the GDR police and letters written by people who contested GDR politics). (2) They follow mimetic narrative criteria by preferring a linear and coherent narrative structure. (3) They reproduce the dominant topics of the GDR past, such as failed (or successful) attempts to escape from the GDR, the pervasive control of citizens' everyday life through surveillance, the paranoid ideological construction of social reality, and



Fig. 1: Comics exhibition, Gedenkstätte Berliner Mauer, Berlin 2011.



Fig. 2: Comics exhibition, Zionskirche, Berlin 2011.



Fig. 3: Comics exhibition, Gedenkstätte Berliner Mauer, Berlin 2014.

(dramatic) family conflicts during the peaceful demonstrations in the 1980s. In this regard, legitimated comic narratives are mostly used for teaching not only something about the GDR past, but also how to distinguish between a correct and a faulty way of remembering (e. g. Kutch 2016). By contrast, very few comics have proposed alternative ways of drawing and structuring stories about the GDR past which diverge from trauma narratives; those that do include *Das Upgrade* (Graupner and Wüstefeld 2012–2016) and *Kinderland* (Mawil 2014).

## 4 Conclusions

The analyses of comic narratives on difficult pasts in Germany and Italy have highlighted how their main function is to educate young people about the political and cultural values dominant in society at a given time. As a result, the expressive artistic potential of comics is rarely exploited because they are drawn according to heterodox criteria and goals. However, if we look at the genesis and transformation of both the memory and comics fields in the two countries, some crucial differences begin to emerge.

In Italy just after World War II, the hegemony of anti-Fascist memory (mainly supported by the Communist party) concerns also comics. After the crisis of Italy's First Republic, the anti-Fascist memory lost its supremacy, but comics grappling with the Fascist past continued to be produced mainly following the same narratives and values adopted in the past, although they now occupied a very marginal place in the comics field. This is partially due to the emergence of new narratives on the more recent past of terrorist and Mafia massacres, marked by the frame of cultural trauma. However, the fact that these comics are still oriented around a readership of young people makes their dominant educational purpose evident in this case as well.

In Germany, comics on GDR society dominate the subfield of comics covering past events. This is mainly due to two reasons. First, this second negative past contained a higher potential for conflict that was also continually expressed in the public sphere through other forms of cultural production (films, gadgets, docudramas, and so on). Second, as it belonged only to part of Germany's population, it was easier to use for traumatic narratives. By contrast, the possibility of narrating the Nazi past through comics according to the trauma paradigm is limited by the fact that, for this collective past, there still is a cultural taboo which has endured since the end of World War II.

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Angelo Piepoli

# Gender Gaps in the Clouds: Expressive Repression and Signs of Change in Italian Comics of the 1950s and 1960s

**Abstract:** This article focuses on the change to the gender gap in the history of Italian comics as a sign of social change in Italy. The article makes a brief reference to the US, which serves as an important basis for comparison with the impositions from above that comics production had to suffer in Italy; then focuses on the first clear signs of gender-role changes in the comics scene nationwide, starting in the early 1960s; and ends by noting the sexual liberation expressed in comics in the second half of the 1960s.

**Keywords:** Auteur comics, black comics, censorship, comics, Comics Code, comics history, crime comics, Fascism, *fumetti*, Garanzia Morale, gender, graphic narrative, Italian K-factor, sex comics, sexual liberation

## 1 The original sins of Italian comics

The history of *fumetti* (comics) in Italy has been that of a long, ongoing process of social acceptance as a narrative medium with the same status as other media. Throughout the last century, generations of parents and educators perpetuated the belief that it was mostly a pastime to blame, a distraction from more formative readings. The pictorial constituent as central to the narrative process was poorly tolerated initially. It is no coincidence that the original Italian comics resembled a *Bildergeschichte* (picture story) by Wilhelm Busch rather than a comic. Considered as the true vehicle of the stories' educational value, written text could only be presented in the form of captions (balloons were forbidden as they were regarded as anti-educational), as with the adventures of Bilbolbul (the first Italian comics character), published in the *Corriere dei Piccoli* starting on 27 January 1908, which consisted of a sequence of drawings accompanied by rhyming verses. US comics, published in the same magazines, were modified into a similar format, text balloons eliminated partially for technical reproduction purposes, but mostly for cultural reasons (see fig. 1).

The cultural intolerance of comics in Italy was particularly clear in the second half of the Fascist period. Clinging to the glorious past of Italian literature, official cultural institutions imposed that the drawings in comics be instrumental and



# CORRIERE dei PICCOLI

ANNO SEMESTRE  
REGNO: ESTERO  
L. 5. — L. 8. —  
L. 2.50 L. 4. —

SUPPLEMENTO ILLUSTRATO  
del CORRIERE DELLA SERA

UFFICI DEL GIORNALE :  
VIA SOLFERINO, N° 28.  
MILANO.

Anno I. - N. 1.

27 Dicembre 1908.

Cent. 10 il numero.

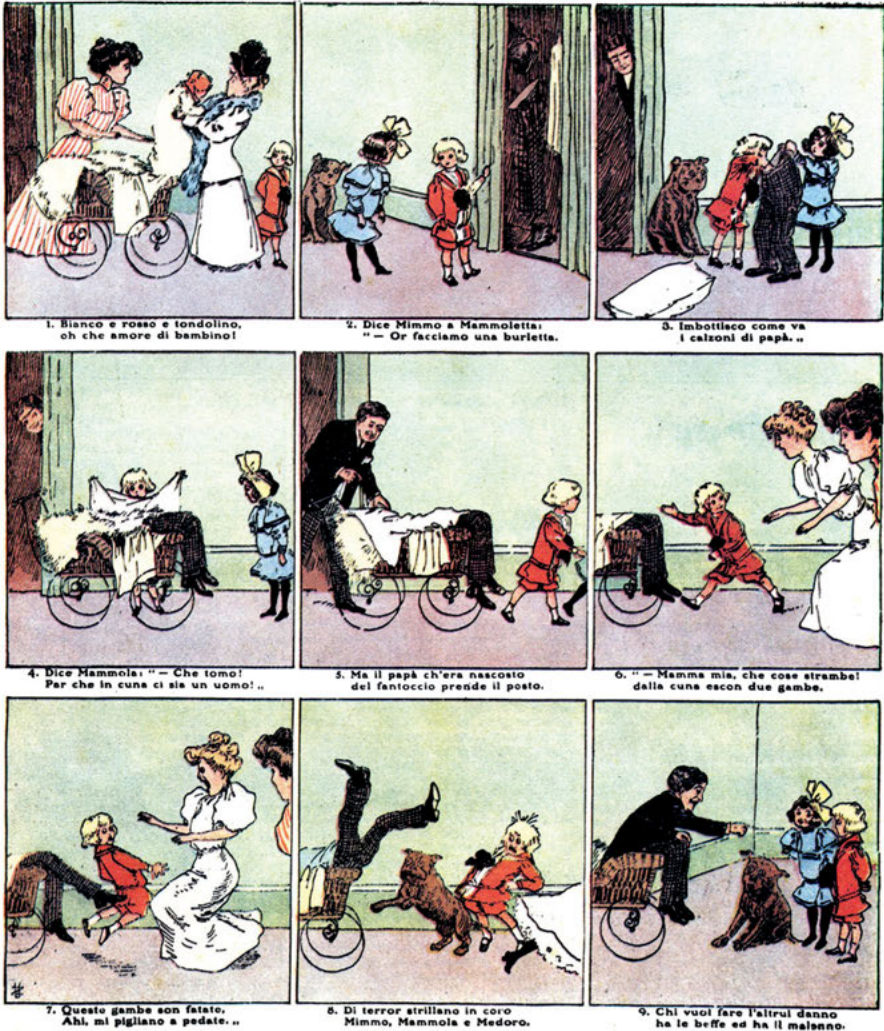


Fig. 1: Cover page of *Corriere dei Piccoli* 1 (27 December 1908). © Rizzoli.

subordinate to the text. Even as US adventure comics were becoming popular in the country, the Mussolini regime issued directives aimed at avoiding the spread of models that contrasted with its ideology. As proof of comics' power to influence popular opinion, the importing of foreign works and the use of balloons were forbidden (Guzzetta 2009, 16–18).

The independent model of American womanhood was one reason for concern. Figures coming to the fore and endorsing the values of a consumer society, such women undermined the accepted roles for Italian women: wife, mother, and worker in the service of national glory. Characters like Petronilla (the Italian Maggie, the female protagonist of *Bringing Up Father* by George McManus), ironically depicted as the typical “social climber, who strives to be fashionable and to attend high society, flaunting elegant moves and stylish hats” (Guzzetta 2009, 28; my translation), represented deviance from Italian social structure. In such a context, it is no wonder that comics heroes were men and women supported them (Guzzetta 2009, 27–31).

Things did not change much after the war. The major obstacle to the creativity of writers and artists remained conservative political power and religious cultural environments, which guaranteed the continued status quo of gender roles in printed publications, and open hostility when the authors attempted to renegotiate traditional gender roles. By the 1950s and 1960s, comics in Italy faced a campaign of hatred and impositions from above, similar to what resulted in the US Comics Code.

## 2 Censorship and reaction: A look at the case of US comics

In August 1949, the detonation of the first Soviet atomic bomb marked the end of the US monopoly on strategic nuclear armaments. Afterward, a wave of anti-Communist hysteria, fomented by Senator Joseph McCarthy, created a climate of profound civil and ideological instability in the US across all social strata. By the time President Eisenhower intervened, ending the senator's career, McCarthy had bequeathed a fierce and uncompromising conservatism to US society.

In this period, comics had already been criticized by Gershon Legman, who found a glorification of violence that he linked to the denigration of sexuality in US culture (Legman 1963 [1949]). Legman's criticism had had no significant effect on the publishing market, but, in the new climate of insecurity, *Seduction of the Innocent* by the psychiatrist Fredric Wertham (1954) triggered a wave of fierce

ensorial moralism against comics. Wertham attributed much deviance, such as juvenile delinquency and sexual perversions, to comics.

Emblematically, Wertham detected an ambiguous relationship between the adult Batman and the young Robin. Wertham described Robin as “a handsome ephebic boy, usually shown in his uniform with bare legs. He is buoyant with energy and devoted to nothing on earth or in interplanetary space as much as to Bruce Wayne. He often stands with his legs spread, the genital region discreetly evident” (1954, 191). At the expense of every female figure, Robin occupied the heart of his friend Bruce Wayne and often behaved intimately with him. The stories of the “Dynamic Duo” were regarded, in this view, as manifestly homosexual and anti-feminist. Nevertheless, Wertham found “the Lesbian counterpart of Batman” (1954, 192) in the stories of Wonder Woman and Black Cat, arguing that Wonder Woman gave a *wrong* idea of femininity to her readers (233–235).

Associations of parents and teachers railed vehemently against many comics publications. The Subcommittee of the US Senate on Juvenile Delinquency could not censor comic books without violating the First Amendment of the US Constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech and the press. To avoid government interference, comic-book publishers, similarly to the film industry with the Production Code, took matters into their own hands. In 1954, the Comics Magazine Association of America (CMAA) adopted the Comics Code (“Code of the Comics Magazine Association of America, Inc.” n.d. [1954]), strict guidelines to be applied by the Comics Code Authority. All printed material had to pass the scrutiny of the Authority, and approved works were marked with a special seal (see fig. 2).



Fig. 2: Seal of the Comics Code Authority.

Although the Comics Code did not have legal value, retailers often refused to distribute publications without the CCA's seal of approval. More than any other cultural product, comics were choked by rigid self-censorship which forbade violence, crime and its means, sexuality and its deviant forms. No criticism of established authority, or religion, or marriage was allowed; romantic relationships were canonical; the heroes were men; and even the strongest women played supporting roles. The code served to legitimize widespread prejudices, reaffirm socially accepted gender roles, and compel writers and artists to create morally and graphically simple stories, making comics into a youth product.

In the 1960s, the Comics Code came into question. A new generation of authors created an underground culture and began to circulate stories in flagrant violation of the Code, which took the name "comix." Initially produced by individual artists and sold on the street, comix ridiculed established authority, playing with its phobias; promoted alternative social models; praised sexual freedom; and rebelled against the mortification of the female figure and homophobia. This trend started alternative modes of publishing. Later versions of the Code became gradually less restrictive (see Wolk 2011) until the Comics Code Authority ceased to exist in January 2011.

### 3 Moral control of Italian comics

While McCarthyism was raging in the US, Italy was in the midst of its post-war centrist period. Here too, comics had no easy life, forced into expressive stasis by a censorship supported by intellectuals and educators. In the early 1950s, a series of publications promoted an image of comics as an inferior phenomenon, an obstacle to a smooth educational process, or even a cause for degradation. One striking case was *Pantera Bionda*, the adventures of a female Tarzan in Malaysia (first published 1948), written by Giangiacomo Dalmasso and drawn by Enzo Magni (alias Ingam; see fig. 3). The first sexy heroine of Italian comics was greeted initially with resounding success, a smear media campaign, and a shower of protests and letters of denunciation by official cultural institutions and envious rival publishers. Eventually, in part because of the judicial authority's repeated interventions, the publisher Pasquale Giurleo was forced to dress the protagonist, who had appeared in a leopard-print bikini, in a blouse and a long skirt that would lead to the demise of the publication.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> At the end of the 1930s, a similar fate had befallen Betty Boop by Max Fleischer in the US.



Fig. 3: Cover of *Pantera Bionda* 1 (24 April 1948).  
© Enzo Magni, Giangiacomo Dalmaso.

In 1951, two members of parliament, the Christian Democrats Maria Federici Agamben and Giovanni Battista Migliori, with the support of other party members, presented a draft law to establish preventive control over comics publications (Federici Agamben et al. n.d. [1949]). The Bill was not approved by the Senate, but similar initiatives were revived in 1955 and 1958, without success (Savio et al. n.d. [1955]; Savio and Manzini n.d. [1958]). As in the US, publishers acted, and in April 1961, a self-monitoring body was established within the Associazione Italiana Editori Periodici per Ragazzi (Italian Association of Publishers of Periodicals for Young). This body, the Unione Italiana della Stampa Periodica Educativa per Ragazzi (Italian Union of the Educational Periodical Press for the Young), or UISPER,<sup>2</sup> was constituted by the Catholic component of the Association and self-appointed as the evaluator of nationwide comic production. Based on a specially crafted moral code, UISPER determined which publications were good and worthy of bearing the “Garanzia Morale” [Moral Guarantee] seal on their cover (see fig. 4).

A message inside the early publications explained that these comics did not harm the moral and intellectual education of young people. It certified that a work was in line with the dominant values of society and lacked violent scenes, foul or obscene language, or depictions of inappropriate poses, attitudes, and clothing, particularly for women. Reprints of old comics were subject to retouch-

<sup>2</sup> Curiously, this acronym’s Italian pronunciation might sound like a reference to a voice of conscience.



Fig. 4: Seal of Garanzia Morale.

ing to remedy various necklines or hints of nudity judged indecent by UISPER. For example, female characters in the adventures of Tex Willer, the most famous character of popular Italian comics, were retouched to maintain the new moral standards, as in the first strip of *Il capitano della River's Queen* (cf. the original version, published in *Tex* 16 [13 January 1949] and as published in later editions, in Detti [1984, 83] and Borsotti [n.d.]).

## 4 A criminal revolution: The season of “black” comics

In the early 1960s, the Milanese sisters Angela and Luciana Giussani prompted a revolution in the Italian comics scene. In 1962, Angela founded the publishing house Astorina, and on 1 November, *Diabolik* 1, “Il Re del Terrore” [The King of Terror], first appeared on newsstands (see fig. 5). Its subtitle, “Il fumetto del brivido” [The Thrilling Comic], dispelled any lingering doubts as to the nature of this new publication. It was a comic for the adult public, intended to arouse strong emotions during a train ride, as the series intentionally targeted commuters. The pocket-sized format (12 × 17cm) revolutionized the comics scene and allowed readers to store or hide *Diabolik* with ease. The pocket format characterized all *fumetti neri* (black [crime] comics), as well as the *pornofumetti* (porn comics), which would be launched shortly thereafter, encouraging clandestine reading.

Revolution, it was said. *Diabolik* was a masked hero, but a negative hero, an unrivalled criminal who executed impossible robberies. Therefore, reader acclaim became unacceptable and censors intervened frequently, to the point of the sequestration of issue 82 (1967) on the order of the praetor of Lodi (Raffaelli 2004, 9–10). Parents and teachers forbade *Diabolik*, and moralists censured adults caught in possession of those books.



Fig. 5: Cover of *Diabolik 1*. © Astorina.

The pages of *Diabolik* narrated both the crimes of its protagonist and his fulfilment of a socially imposed civil disobedience. Diabolik's co-protagonist Eva Kant, his life companion and accomplice from the third issue, shared the background of a loveless childhood. Diabolik grew up on an island of criminals indifferent to him; Eva was the illegitimate daughter of the scion of a wealthy and noble family that had prevented the marriage of her humble mother. Eva and Diabolik were united by a sincere, indissoluble affection, fighting against a world without love that only cultivated the value of wealth. Their stories were the instrument through which the authors, as they indicated, pointed out the contradictions of contemporary society, which was an immediate attraction for many new readers, including many women, who traditionally were not the intended target of the genre. The sincere love, sensuality, and equality between Diabolik and Eva critiqued a society that claimed it held high moral principles while denying its own sexist nature.

The founding of Astorina marked the popular rise of works lacking a Moral Guarantee seal, and *Diabolik* was only the first in a series of antagonistic heroes with exotic-sounding sinister names frequently containing the letter “k” (the genesis of what Italians call the “K-factor”). The market was soon flooded with titles like *Fantax*, *Fantasm*, *Demoniak*, *Spettrus*, *Sadik*, *Jnferral*, *Zakimort*, and *Genius*, featuring criminals in tights following the model of *Diabolik*, without reaching a qualitatively similar result. The author Igor Tuveri (alias Igort) explained:

They were mostly masked heroes whose name was dressed with that malignant K. Today, after so many years [...] we wonder if the “K,” a traditionally Jewish letter, carried the somewhat racist legacy of a letter of evil; somehow infamous (let us not forget the depth of war propaganda penetration, [which was] such that an entire generation grew up with a sense of mistrust towards the Japanese, a true incarnation of the “yellow danger”). (Tuveri 2001, 8; my translation)

Compared to the Giussani sisters’ prototypical Diabolik, this slew of epigones was characterized by elements of sadism and perversion that produced a fairly wide typology of characters perpetrating socially prohibited behaviours. These characters were often devoid of psychological characterization, and the screenplays were inconsistent. Far from civil protest, these publications fit into a market laid bare by Diabolik, relying on primal human instincts for maximum economic return.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that some valuable works, like *Kriminal* and *Satanik* occupied this controversial current (see fig. 6). Published by the publishing house Corno, the two series were created in 1964 by writer Luciano Secchi (alias Max Bunker) and artist Roberto Raviola (alias Magnus), and depicted protagonists who were well characterized and engaged in clearly motivated – not



Fig. 6: Covers of *Kriminal* 1 and *Satanik* 1. © Max Bunker used by permission of the author.



gratuitous – criminal conduct. These series had accurate scripts, crafted, among other things, in order to create continuity within the series.<sup>3</sup>

Like *Diabolik*, *Kriminal* and *Satanik* seek revenge against a society that causes all evil. Anthony Logan is a victim of a tormented childhood, linked to the dark side of a capitalist, bigoted reality, in response to which he becomes *Kriminal*, “il Re del Crimine” [the King of Crime]. *Satanik* is the biologist Marnie Bannister, tormented and abused by her two beautiful sisters because her face was disfigured by an angioma. After discovering a beauty serum, Marnie turns into the beautiful, ruthless killer *Satanik*, “la Rossa del Diavolo” [the Devil’s Redhead]. After scarring one sister and killing the other, *Satanik* pursues a career of murder and lust, motivated by social revenge, the lust for power and money, hatred of women, and contempt of men.

The readers of *Kriminal* and *Satanik*, like those of *Diabolik*, were attracted by the charm of defiance against rules that society imposed to mask its fears and contradictions. Unlike *Diabolik*, who was faithful and loyal to Eva, *Kriminal* (before meeting his girlfriend Lola) and *Satanik* change partners and, in defiance of the national sex-phobia, live their stories to the full in full view of the reader. In addition, *Diabolik*’s adventures were told with traditional, emotionally minimal art that mirrored the humorous yet tense atmosphere of the series. In contrast, *Kriminal* and *Satanik* (often with the humour that would distinguish their authors’ subsequent output and send the virtuous over the edge) was elevated by Magnus’ innovative graphics and modern and ironic style. Thus, *Kriminal* and *Satanik* were blacklisted and frequently censored and confiscated. As crime and sadism spread on the Italian newsstands in the 1960s, a veritable witch-hunt instigated by uptight publishing milieus culminated with a press campaign that resulted in the cancellation of several publications and led the authors of others, including *Kriminal* and *Satanik*, to moderation.

## 5 Comics’ sexual liberation

The expression of sexual liberation was an emerging phenomenon in comics preceding the ’68 Movement. On the eve of the 1950s, the sexy heroine Pantera Bionda was forced into a premature disappearance from the Italian newsstands,

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<sup>3</sup> Another interesting fact is the meeting of the two characters in issue 90 of *Kriminal*, “Quello che non t’aspetti” [What You Don’t Expect], published on 16 March 1967. To the best of our knowledge, it is the first recorded case of a crossover in Italian comics.

and even in the mid-1960s, the pressure of the Catholic press made life tough for the provocative protagonists of the national comics scene. Mafalda, the Argentine artist Joaquín Lavado's (alias Quino) child-protagonist and icon of the time, denounced the hypocrisy and injustices caused by the stupidity of adults. In April 1965, Giovanni Gandini founded *Linus*, the first Italian comic magazine, which included European comic strips, articles, reviews, and new comics alongside the classic American Syndicated comic strips. The architect Guido Crepas (alias Guido Crepax) made his debut in the second issue with *La curva di Lesmo* [The Lesmo Curve], the pilot for a series initially starring Neutron, the man with the paralyzing gaze, alter ego of the art critic Philip Rembrandt. The photographer Valentina Rosselli began as Neutron's girlfriend, but would soon relegate her partner to the role of supporting character.

The original Italian erotic comic heroine, Valentina was intelligent, curious, open-minded, and lived her romantic adventures without constraints from her partner Philip, with whom she established a free and passionate relationship from the very beginning. References to contemporary reality were continuous: Valentina frequents the bourgeois and intellectual environment of contemporary Milan and, although her adventures are often dreamlike, her actual dreams represent the humours, desires, and human needs of real society. Unlike the canonical protagonists of comic strips, Valentina ages with her author, dealing with changes to her body and experiencing wider psychological development.

At that time, a growing distinction between *fumetti popolari* (popular comics) and *fumetti d'Autore* (Auteur comics), and their enthusiasts, began to emerge in Italy. *Fumetto d'Autore* generally referred to a product of high aesthetic quality that often had the connotation of elite comics, distinguished as an "artwork" comic from a popular product associated with works intended for children and *minus habens*. The term would characterize comic production in the years to come, and, by the second half of the sixties, seemed to be applicable to erotic comics.

From the beginning, Crepax had what it takes to be an "Auteur." But, for the guardians of morality and the public who shared their sensibilities, such distinctions lacked relevance and could not legitimize undesirable content. Therefore, Valentina's actions soon prompted a placement change for comics stories with any content of a sexual nature. The critic Luca Boschi reported that, in those years, the readers of *Linus*

proved to be essentially quite conservative and prudish; they did not approve of too many heroines, especially if they were scantily dressed. They protested even when, in 1969, *Linus* published a reportage on the exuberant Phoebe Zeit-Geist, drawn by the American artist Frank Springer: the few panels in which she was shown naked and bent over on herself, between the columns of the opening article, seemed not really suitable for a publication intended for a broad audience that could therefore fall into children's hands.



**Fig. 7:** Cover of *Gesebel* 1. © Max Bunker used by permission of the author.

The victims of this type of evaluation, the female characters likely to arouse in the reader some sinful instinct, or even some rash reaction, would usually be confined to the supplements, capacious containers with a square spine and a print run lower than the monthly magazine. Used as Indian reservations, they welcomed without any problems all materials that shared the following, weak common denominator: they could not be accommodated inside *Linus*. (Boschi 2007, 68–69; my translation)

Valentina shared this fate with the scantily dressed protagonists of the French comics by Georges Wolinski and Georges Pichard. Similarly, the amorous adventures in space of the beautiful and uninhibited Barbarella by Jean-Claude Forest, published since 1962 in France and proposed for Italy since debuting in *Linus* in 1967 (remembered for the elimination of the nipples of the protagonist), were relegated to the aperiodic supplements to the magazine.

Of course, the worst attacks targeted popular erotic comics (still labelled “comics for adults” in the 1970s) in various genres. The fantasy-erotic *Gesebel* (starting in 1966), another Bunker/Magnus creation, provided a setting between science fiction and fantasy for its audacious scenes (see fig. 7). The authors mocked prohibitions of nudity by dressing female characters with transparent clothes. *Isabella*, written by Giorgio Cavedon and drawn by Sandro Angiolini (also starting in 1966) was characterized by a progressive, although contained, sado-masochistic component. Set in seventeenth-century France, it told the adventures of a beautiful, uninhibited swordswoman seeking revenge, who often became the victim of violence.

These series continued for several years and were exported despite the interventions of the judicial authority. They combined the profitable erotic component with the image of a strong, independent woman, tired of the limitations of a bigoted bourgeois respectability, who finally managed to take the role of protagonist in a medium that was traditionally the prerogative of male readers and heroes. It seemed that society had not changed much, but fifteen years after her disappearance Pantera Bionda was avenged.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> An early version of this article was published as Piepoli (2010). The present revision includes further exploration and an extended bibliography, as well as additional checks on the works and events mentioned throughout the text.

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Alison Halsall

# Visualizing the Gothic in Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* and Its Illustrated Adaptations

**Abstract:** This article argues that Neil Gaiman's appropriation of the Gothic topos in *The Graveyard Book* (2008) deliberately unsettles its genre. No stranger to the interaction of word and image on the page, Gaiman's fascination with the visual can be seen on the first page of his novel, a page that communicates in word and image. Interestingly, P. Craig Russell's graphic novel version (2014) develops the hybridity of Gaiman's source text in more depth. Not only are these volumes a further testament to the visual potential of Gaiman's *Graveyard Book*; they also visually mirror Gaiman's approach to the Gothic: it unsettles and transforms the once-frightening world of ghosts and goblins into a world in which the child-protagonist and reader would feel at home.

**Keywords:** adaptation, Chris Riddell, Dave McKean, Gothic, graphic novel, *The Graveyard Book*, illustrated novels, interpretation, Little Nemo, Neil Gaiman, P. Craig Russell, *unheimlich*, vampires, villains, Yellow Kid

## 1 Introduction

Neil Gaiman is certainly no stranger to the Gothic – Gothic motifs and images in the form of old houses with secret spaces, ghosts, doppelgängers, dream-visions, and dark tunnels crop up in his *Sandman* series (1989–), *Coraline* (2002), *The Wolves in the Walls* (2003), and, most recently, *The Graveyard Book* (2008). Fascinatingly, the “threats associated with supernatural and natural forces, imaginative excesses and delusions, religious and human evil, social transgression, mental disintegration and spiritual corruption” (Botting 1996, 2), key thematic concerns of the literary Gothic, are not Gaiman's principal concern in his children's fiction. While Gaiman brings Gothic resonances to a range of age-groups in children's literature through this imagery, the more serious preoccupations of the literary Gothic, such as dark secrets and shameful mysteries, a focus on monstrosity and madness, desecration and blasphemy, self-alienation, trauma, and paranoia (McGillis 2008, 227), are generally played down in favour of the more explicitly visual trappings of the Gothic. More generally, Gaiman's focus in many of his children's texts is on the Gothic atmosphere and the delicious visual and

narrative opportunities it offers his young protagonists. Gaiman employs iconic Gothic visuals to create a moody, even haunted, atmosphere and setting in which to allow his protagonists to explore the intricate passages of their own identities.

His introduction of the enormous cemetery in *The Graveyard Book*, for example, invokes stock Gothic components (fog, moonlight, a funeral chapel, tombs and vaults, etc.) in a gentle way, while drawing a young reader into Bod's (the protagonist's) physical and metaphorical adventure through the use of the second-person pronoun:

The fog was thinner as you approached the top of the hill.

The half-moon shone, not as bright as day, not by any means, but enough to see the graveyard, enough for that.

Look.

You could see the abandoned funeral chapel, iron doors padlocked, ivy on the sides of the spire, a small tree growing out of the guttering at roof level.

You could see stones and tombs and vaults and memorial plaques. You could see the occasional dash or scuttle of a rabbit or a vole or a weasel as it slipped out of the undergrowth and across the path.

You would have seen these things, in the moonlight, if you had been there that night.

You might not have seen a pale, plump woman, who walked the path near the front gates, and if you had seen her, with a second, more careful glance you would have realized that she was only moonlight, mist, and shadow. (Gaiman 2008a, 12)

Gaiman transforms the Gothic, making use of the thrills and chills that popular Gothic provokes in readers in order to pursue his interest in the developmental and psychological growth of the child. This is not to say that Gaiman's Gothic settings do not provoke a sense of threat in the characters (and readers). On the contrary, the sprawling house in which Coraline faces her predatory other-mother, for example, is a perfect example of the *unheimlich* of the Gothic, a terrifyingly pleasant prison in which Coraline must outsmart her own anxieties and insecurities. Thus, in Gaiman's novels, house and graveyard become settings and even larger metaphors for the protagonists' attempts to develop agency over their own psyches and everyday lives. Gaiman redeploys the Gothic, appealing to a young reader's predilection for hauntings and horrors, while focusing on the complicated psyche of the child. This transformation of the Gothic supports Fred Botting's claim that, in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the Gothic has become difficult to define because its forms and figures have become so diffuse (1996, 14).

In the latter half of the twentieth century, Gothic tales began to achieve prominence in children's literature, preying on the instinctive fears and desires of young readers. For Michael Howarth, twentieth-century Gothic children's stories allow readers to lose themselves in the anguish of another character, supplying "the

emotional training wheels we all need to mature” (2014, 8). Karen Coats sees the children’s Gothic, typified by Gaiman’s *Coraline*, as helping children cope with the “underlying trauma” they face (2008, 77). Chloe Buckley argues that research analysing Gaiman’s “psychic Gothic” originates from and feeds back into a late twentieth-century trend of rereading Golden Age fiction as both Freudian uncanny and Gothic, a process that blurs these terms (2015, 58). Past research has sought to champion children’s Gothic literature in predominantly psychoanalytical terms, neglecting other aspects of Gaiman’s *oeuvre*, in this case, the visual adaptations of Gaiman’s Gothic.

Surprisingly little critical work has been done on Neil Gaiman’s use of Gothic tropes in his illustrated novels. *The Graveyard Book* deliberately employs motifs from popular horror and literary Gothic, motifs that in turn become a significant part of the visual appeal of the novel’s two illustrated editions (Gaiman 2008a, illus. McKean; Gaiman 2008b, illus. Riddell) and its two-volume graphic novel adaptation (Gaiman 2014) spearheaded by P. Craig Russell.<sup>1</sup> As Coats asserts: “Ethically speaking, Gaiman does Gothic old-school, that is, the demarcations between good and evil are clear, and even when the evil is within, it is soundly defeated and expelled by a problem-solving hero or heroine” (2008, 78). Although the Gothic terror of *The Graveyard Book* – provoked through the archetypal murder of a family and the predatory search for the innocent child – forms the narrative, visual backdrop, and setting of the story, Gaiman’s novel is actually more concerned with the basic values of kindness, humanity, and love than with the lurid and taboo so typical of the Gothic mode. In this way, Gaiman transforms Gothic conventions to allow his principal protagonist, Nobody (Bod) Owens, to take refuge in the strangeness of the Gothic world as he grows into adolescence. Protagonist and young reader enjoy a temporary sense of belonging in *The Graveyard Book*, one that proves that the Gothic as a genre can help rather than “shatter and discompose the [child’s] Spirits” (Townshend 2008, 18), as John Locke once claimed in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693). Although Gaiman tackles violent topics (murder, abandonment, betrayal), forcing the reader to address some harsh realities of life, the Gothic setting and atmosphere comfort rather than shatter a young reader. In turn, Gaiman’s unsettling of the Gothic provides creative possibilities for the visual artists who adapt his text. Not only are the two illustrated editions and graphic novel a testament to the visual potential of Gaiman’s *Graveyard Book*; they mirror Gaiman’s own approach to the Gothic, unsettling the

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1 My recent article Halsall (2017) compares the ten distinct visual approaches to Gaiman’s novel that exist in the two-volume graphic novel adaptation (compiled by P. Craig Russell), as well as in Chris Riddell’s British children’s edition and Dave McKean’s American edition.



once-frightening world of ghosts and goblins, and transforming it into a world in which the young protagonist and reader can feel at home. That three different adaptations of the same text can be new yet familiar at the same time also speaks to the adaptability of the Gothic in general and the ways these specific illustrated texts remain recognizably Gothic even when adapted to different contexts.

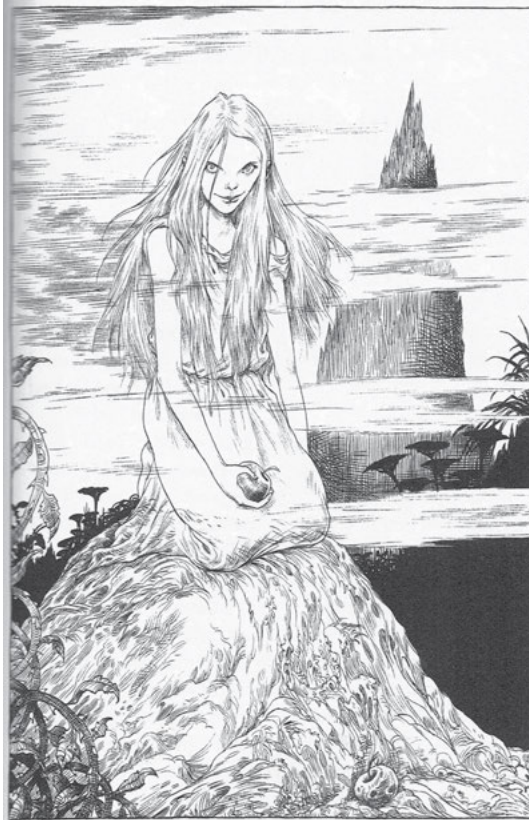
## 2 Adaptation as interpretation

In *Romanticism and the Gothic* (2000), Michael Gamer refers to the Gothic as a shifting aesthetic with an essential ability to move between and among literary and cultural forms and even media. In describing the Gothic as “culturally amphibious,” Angela Wright captures this ability of the Gothic to thrive in contemporary fiction, drama, poetry, and film because of its ability to move and transform (2007, 5). These claims continue to hold true in the twenty-first century, specifically, in literature for children. *Coraline*, *Monster High*, and the *Series of Unfortunate Events*, *Spiderwick Chronicles*, and *Twilight* saga series, are literary, visual, and filmic texts that prove that young readers and viewers retain an affinity for the Gothic, for ghosts and goblins, hauntings and horrors. Fear has become a powerful marketing tool for the promotion and sale of books and commodities, not to mention films and video games for young readers and viewers. Scholars have begun to analyse these Gothic tendencies in children’s literature, though this work remains on the periphery of Gothic criticism in general. Anna Jackson, Karen Coats, and Roderick McGillis suggest that a reader enjoys experiencing the pleasure of a shiver or a shake, confident that (s)he does not live in the strange Gothic world the children’s novel evokes (2008, 11). The critic Michael Howarth accounts for the distinctly psychological purposes that Gothic children’s texts serve. For Howarth, the Gothic genre allows young readers to process conflicting feelings about themselves and the world around them (2014, 2). For many young readers and viewers, the appeal of the Gothic is the appeal of danger: its literary, visual, or filmic world gives youngsters a space that is safe from fear, in which they can safely indulge their curiosity about evil and death.

As the critic Linda Hutcheon reminds her readers, thanks to the complexities of new media and the new platforms on which stories are now available, adaptation is always a collective process, moving from a “solo model of creation to a collaborative one” (2013, 80). This collaborative approach is certainly evident in the publication formats of *The Graveyard Book*, which match the *heimlich* and *unheimlich* of the Gothic with the familiarity and novelty of adaptation. A number of illustrated editions of Gaiman’s 2008 novel already exist, each of

which makes much of the text's Gothic elements while producing something quite distinct. Dave McKean and Chris Riddell, respectively, produced illustrations for the American and British editions of the novel. P. Craig Russell's graphic novel adaptation of Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* is even more unique in terms of the collaborative nature of the project. Each of its eight chapters is adapted visually by a different artist (or team of visual artists), and the heterogeneity of form is mirrored in the heterogeneous visuals themselves, which riff off each other (and the illustrations in McKean's and Riddell's earlier illustrated editions), while providing distinctive interpretations of Gaiman's novel. This graphic novel adaptation in particular refutes Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott's claim that "multiple ownership and multiple intentionality lead to ambiguity and uncertainty in the validity of the interpretation" (2001, 29). In fact, these ten distinct visual adaptations of *The Graveyard Book* showcase both the collaborative partnership among all of the adapters and storytelling that quite literally occurs on several platforms without compromising the thrust of Gaiman's source text. All of these adaptations embody the two central principles of adaptation that Linda Hutcheon outlines – "familiarity and novelty" (2013, 114) – that in turn signal the distinctive elements that they bring to Gaiman's evocation and transformation of Gothic tropes. These adaptations speak to the visual potential that Gaiman's source text offers and to the fine line the visual artists walk between producing something particular while remaining consistent with one another. Indeed, the novel's particular atmosphere and setting provide fertile ground for interpretation and point to the adaptability of the Gothic mode in general. In turn, these visual adaptations of Gaiman's Gothic story repurpose the novel to broaden its audience base and bring new readers to the literary and visual narrative(s).

For the illustrators Dave McKean and Chris Riddell, as well as the eight graphic artists featured in the graphic novel adaptation, adapters are first interpreters and then creators. The talents of these illustrators inevitably shape the adapted text. The British illustrator Chris Riddell illustrated the UK children's edition of *The Graveyard Book* in 2008, and his illustrations undoubtedly helped the edition make the Kate Greenaway Medal shortlist, the first time in the award's thirty-year history that one book made both the author and illustrator shortlists. Riddell's Gothic aesthetic dovetails nicely with Gaiman's Gothic themes. Beautifully detailed line drawings preface each chapter, visually announcing the fantastical creatures that protagonist Nobody Owens will next encounter. These pen-and-ink illustrations deepen the novel's Gothic atmosphere, emphasizing shadows and darkness, not to mention featuring awkward, bony bodies and the strange, Gothic creatures that Bod encounters throughout his youth. Delighting in the visual possibilities offered by Bod's descent into Ghulheim through the Ghoulgate, for example, Riddell makes much of the odd ghouls, "lean and leathery, all



'They say a witch is buried here.'

**Fig. 1:** Neil Gaiman, *The Graveyard Book*, illustrated by Chris Riddell (New York: Harper, 2008), 91.  
© Neil Gaiman.

sinews and cartilage” (Gaiman 2008b, 67), and night-gaunts (bat-like creatures) that inhabit this hellish landscape. Following Gaiman’s lead, Riddell selects images that enhance the Gothic aspect of the narrative rather than the novel’s *Bildungsroman* elements. His illustration of Liza Hempstock is a visual mixture of fairy, sprite, and witch, for example, deepening Gaiman’s initial characterization of her face as having “something of the goblin” (Gaiman 2008b, 100) in it. Riddell depicts her sitting on the unconsecrated ground in which she was buried, holding an apple, a visual nod to the rotting apple that lies beneath her, which in turn references Gothic images of decomposition. Often, Riddell’s illustrated characters look out at readers, meeting the readers’ eyes and bringing them into the story. Liza’s unabashed look captures the mixture of shyness and sass that Gaiman first introduced into her character. In turn, the subtitle under the illustration, “They say a witch is buried here” (Gaiman 2008b, 91), invites Bod and the reader to reflect on the implications of the term when faced with her image (see fig.1).



**Fig. 2:** Neil Gaiman, *The Graveyard Book*, illustrated by Dave McKean (New York: Harper, 2008), 2–3. © Neil Gaiman.

Chris Riddell's illustration of the Lady on the Grey with her "long grey dress that hung and gleamed beneath the December moon like cobwebs in the dew" (Gaiman 2008b, 149) is even more explicitly Gothic and is also reminiscent of Tim Burton's *Corpse Bride* with her corpse-like face, long flowing hair, and Victorian shroud. The Lady's sharp cheekbones, heavily lidded eyes, and gaunt figure visually evoke the spectre of Gothic fiction, enhancing the Gothic figures Gaiman makes much of in his narrative.

Dave McKean, with whom Gaiman has worked for many years, illustrated the UK adult edition and the American edition of *The Graveyard Book*. McKean's illustrations are more interactive with the text proper, often appearing above or below the typography. Presenting a very different approach in form and content to Riddell's illustrations, McKean's aesthetic enhances the source text's Gothic feel (see fig. 2).

McKean's opening page captures a reader's interest instantly through the juxtaposition of words, the dominant image of the knife, and the dark, brooding atmosphere of the page itself. On opening Gaiman's novel, a young reader falls into a world that promises to be dark and dangerous (and entirely in keeping with

the Gothic mode), but that turns out to be safe and comforting a few pages later once our protagonist takes refuge in the graveyard of the title. McKean's aesthetic is much less realistic than that of Riddell, featuring images that are more free-flowing, with oblong angles and curves rather than precise details. Early images in the novel feature Gothic mists and an *unheimlich* house that becomes the scene of the terrible murder of Bod's biological family, in turn capturing the horrific potential of the domestic that is so typical of the Gothic. Like Riddell, McKean makes much of familiar Gothic visuals in his illustrated adaptation: Gothic arches shelter Bod, and the cemetery's headstones, doorways, and wrought-iron gates establish Gaiman's distinctly Gothic setting. In contrast to Riddell's precisely rendered pen-and-ink illustrations, McKean's images are more sketch-like. Through these sketches, McKean evokes the novel's Gothic traces but minimizes their horror for the reader. Likewise, in keeping with Gaiman's tendency to render the Gothic less threatening, when McKean visualizes the ghosts that inhabit the graveyard, he renders them extremely clearly, again minimizing as much as possible the fear that such spectres might evoke in a young reader. Adapted by these two masterful illustrators, Gaiman's Gothic world allows his young readers to escape from the horrors of everyday life into the mysteriously appealing graveyard on the hill, for a time at least.

Part of the pleasure of adaptation, and the adaptation of one text across a number of different platforms, comes from the "mixture of repetition and difference" that such work highlights (Hutcheon 2013, 114) and that in turn connects with the uncanny aspect of the Gothic mode itself. Expanding on the relationship between word and image that already exists in Riddell's and McKean's illustrated novel versions of *The Graveyard Book*, the American comic-book artist and illustrator P. Craig Russell spearheaded the project of adapting the novel as a graphic novel which was published in two volumes. Each individual chapter was adapted by a different artist or team of artists, forming a total of eight distinct visual approaches to Gaiman's source text. Volume 1 features illustrations by Scott Hampton, Tony Harris, Kevin Nowlan, P. Craig Russell, Stephen B. Scott, Galen Showman, and Jill Thompson. Volume 2 includes further work by Hampton, Nowlan, Russell, and Showman, with additional illustrations by David Lafuente. Just as *The Graveyard Book* is very self-conscious in drawing from different mythologies and literary genres, its graphic novel adaptation is equally self-conscious in its use of the comics medium, including stylistic allusions to EC horror comics of the 1950s, superhero comics from the 1970s and 1980s, and contemporary Japanese manga.

Although the organization of the individual pages is quite regular, the creative potential comes from the contributors, their distinctive approaches to Gaiman's Gothic story, and their abilities to balance familiarity with novelty. Like

Riddell and McKean, these eight graphic artists mirror in visual fashion Gaiman's approach to the Gothic, which is to transform the once-frightening world of ghosts and goblins, a graveyard with all its mysterious crypts and tombs, into a world in which a young protagonist and reader would feel at home. The opening pages of volume 1 fulfil the reader's expectation of the graveyard as a Gothic space: black-splash pages featuring gradations of shadow are overlaid by a wrought-iron fence, headstones, and a spectral Bod on the other side of the fence looking out at the reader. Kevin Nowlan's adaptation of chapter 1 begins with individual frames that feature the gore of Bod's murdered family (four out of seven frames depict pools of blood, slit throats, and blood on a knife blade, for example), introducing the horrors associated with the domestic space, typical of literary Gothic. Chapter 3, "The Hounds of God," illustrated by the graphic team of Tony Harris and Scott Hampton, enhances the threats that lurk in a graveyard and its attendant spaces. This chapter captures the resentment that six-year-old Bod feels as he is left by his godfather, Silas, with Miss Lupescu, his infrequent guardian. Bod's sulkiness is captured by the exaggerated, rather unpleasant aesthetic that the graphic team employs to depict him. Fascinatingly, a transition between Harris's and Hampton's artistic styles occurs between pages 76 and 77 of chapter 3, effecting narratively and visually a change of scenery (from graveyard to Ghulheim) and in turn an enhancement of the Gothic visuals. Visually referencing Little Nemo's fall into Slumberland, Scott Hampton illustrates Bod's descent into horrifying Ghulheim, an unpleasant secondary world whose Gothicism is enhanced by the different colour palette that Hampton employs (one that features reds, browns, and purples). In Hampton's visualization of Ghulheim as a kind of Gothic hell, faces are ugly and difficult to distinguish, typical of a dream world. The characters whom Bod meets are a hodgepodge of historical figures – the Duke of Westminster, the Bishop of Bath and Wells, the Honourable Archibald Fitzhugh, the thirty-third President of the United States, the Emperor of China, and Victor Hugo. All of these figures are aesthetically unpleasant, threatening, even monstrous. Teeth are a focus in all of Hampton's visuals; the ghouls' mouths hang open and tongues loll out to signal the fact that they appear to be appetite incarnate. As scavengers and parasites, these figures inspire the repulsion that is characteristic of the Gothic. Returning home to the graveyard, Bod appreciates even more deeply how much the cemetery has become his safehaven, his home even, and this comfort is in turn reflected in the more aesthetically pleasing visuals.

### 3 Gothic villains redeployed

If we were to agree with Karen Coats's claim that, "ethically speaking, Gaiman does Gothic old-school" (2008, 78), our agreement would purely be in terms of his literal evocation of Gothic tropes and figures. In truth, the Gothic is a means to an end for Gaiman, I would argue. Grim settings and grisly occurrences are certainly present in his Gothic texts, but Gaiman's redeployment of Gothic tropes occurs on the narrative and visual levels, in effect controlling and containing the Gothic threats that plague his protagonists. In spite of this novel being set in a graveyard inhabited by ghost and ghouls, the ghosts are anything but threatening, thus turning a world of horrors and hauntings into a welcoming home. In the graphic novel, the ghosts also display a transparency and depth of focus that distinguish them from the "real" people who visit the graveyard, and the artists' attention to the ghosts' visual detail is significantly greater at first than to the "real" characters (Bod and Scarlett Amber Perkins), who resemble stock characters from comics. The arguments that the ghosts have with each other over whether they will shelter the infant Bod also minimize their threat for the reader, as their petty arguments make them objects of humour rather than horror. In inventing backstories for these ghosts, in making them more "human," if you will, Gaiman destroys any fear a young reader might feel about these spectres. In this revision of the Gothic topos, then, Gaiman's graveyard and its ghostly inhabitants paradoxically become more "real" for his protagonist and young reader; and, in turn, the danger of the reader's "real" world is pushed to the side during the reading of the story.

Gaiman's transformation of the Gothic also occurs in his characterization. Gaiman, for example, complicates the conventional Gothic villain in *The Graveyard Book* and even redeploys him as a helper figure. As the editors of *The Gothic in Children's Literature* remind us, the villain in Gothic literature is often an "ambiguously attractive character" (Jackson, Coats, and McGillis 2008, 7), but the moral lines are very clearly drawn, such that there is never any suggestion that a villain's evil might simply be misunderstood. In his novel, Gaiman repurposes what should have conventionally been the villain – the vampire, Silas – as Bod's protector and eventual godfather. Dave McKean's two illustrations of Silas mimic Gaiman's modification of the Gothic villain by depicting him as a rather ordinary-looking father-figure. More to the point, McKean destabilizes the villain figure visually even more, in that both images of Silas differ significantly from each other (see fig. 3). Whereas the first image depicts Silas as a balding, hunched-over older man dressed in an oversized coat, the second depicts Silas as a younger, hippyish man who wears glasses (see fig. 4). Neither of these images speaks to Silas's membership of the Undead.



**Fig. 3:** Neil Gaiman, *The Graveyard Book*, illustrated by Dave McKean (New York: Harper, 2008), 36. © Neil Gaiman.

Chris Riddell, in contrast, plays up Silas's vampiric state. The image of Silas that graces the cover of Riddell's edition of the novel features what appears to be a Victorian gentleman with trousers, waistcoat, and necktie. Riddell's visuals suggest that Silas is not threatening, and in fact, is more of a caregiver to the young protagonist than a threat; his physical position in relation to Bod is quite protective. In the two-volume graphic novel adaptation, the graphic artists have more fun depicting Silas as a vampire, with all of the traditional expectations that come with this Gothic figure: red eyes, clawlike hands, papery white skin, and long, flowing black cape. Galen Showman's representation of Silas, for example, is reminiscent of both Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Batman, reflecting in general the comics work





**Fig. 4:** Neil Gaiman, *The Graveyard Book*, illustrated by Dave McKean (New York: Harper, 2008), 101. © Neil Gaiman.

that all of these graphic artists have done for Marvel, DC Comics, America's Best Comics, Dark Horse, and Vertigo Comics.<sup>2</sup> In the graphic novel, Silas presents the perfect opportunity to consider Barthes's "stereophony of echoes, citations, references" (1977, 160) that distinguishes the practice of adaptation. Each of the illustrators interprets Silas distinctly by playing with the familiar characteristics of the vampire. Although, visually, Showman's Silas appears to be a villain typical of Gothic literature, in actuality he inspires confidence and provides a sense of belonging and protection, entirely in keeping with Gaiman's source text.

As Gothic tales rely on an "ambiguously attractive" villain (Jackson, Coats, and McGillis 2008, 7), Gaiman introduces a villain in his novel – the would-be murderer Jack, who is part of a fraternity of men, the "Jacks of All Trades," who wish to kill Bod because, millennia before, they had been warned of the coming of a child who would bring an end to their order and all they stood for. This Jack, however, is just a token nod to the Gothic villain in the sense that Bod's murderer is structurally needed to advance the plot. Jack is in no way flamboyant or powerful; in fact, he spends fifteen years trying to track down Bod to finish the job, as it were, and even then, he fails. Gaiman's description of the initial meeting between Jack and Silas in the graveyard deliberately highlights this contrast between villain and protector:

The man Jack was tall. This man was taller. The man Jack wore dark clothes. This man's clothes were darker. People who noticed the man Jack when he went about his business – and he did not like to be noticed – were troubled, or made uncomfortable, or found themselves unaccountably scared. The man Jack looked up at the stranger, and it was the man Jack who was troubled. (Gaiman 2008b, 13)

Fascinatingly, the descriptions that Gaiman offers of Jack and Silas are minimal and communicate more through understatement, leaving in the process much room for his future adapters to invent to suit their own particular context.

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<sup>2</sup> Kevin Nowlan's first published work for Marvel Comics was *Doctor Strange* #57 (February 1983); his character Jack B. Quick, created with Alan Moore, appeared several times in *Tomorrow Stories* under the America's Best Comics imprint. At DC Comics, P. Craig Russell inked Batman stories in *Batman Family* and *Detective Comics*. Russell's first *Elric* story was published by Marvel Comics in 1982 as *Marvel Graphic Novel* #2. Dark Horse Comics eventually published Russell's adaptation of Wagner's operatic cycle, *The Ring of the Nibelung*, in two volumes. Galen Showman collaborated with P. Craig Russell on *The Clowns* for Dark Horse Comics and *JLA: Age of Wonder* for DC. In 1994, Tony Harris rose to prominence as a comics artist with the publication of DC Comics' *Starman*. Jill Thompson is well known for her work on Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman* characters and her own *Scary Godmother* series; she has also worked on *The Invisibles*, *Swamp Thing*, and *Wonder Woman*. David Lafuente is best-known for his work on *Ultimate Comics: Spider-Man*.

The visual adaptations of *The Graveyard Book* capture the man Jack's narrative ambivalence, each in its own particular way. Riddell chooses to begin his edition of Gaiman's novel with an illustration of the man Jack, which in turn becomes typical of the Gothic aesthetic that Riddell employs subsequently. Jack's hunched-over body, the long knife he wields, and his crouching shadow emphasize the threat that this Gothic monster presents to the inhabitants of the suburban home, whom he murders seconds later. Jack's terrible threat thus introduces the narrative in this illustration. In the course of his visuals, however, Riddell mixes humour and horror, so typical of the Gothic. In one of the later illustrations for the novel, Riddell provides a portrait of the Jacks, who appear to be thugs rather than members of an exclusive, secret society. Wrestler types with bulbous noses that look as though they have been broken a few too many times hardly convey the threat that one might expect in a Gothic story, but this is totally in keeping with Gaiman's own adjustment of the Gothic. Likewise, in the graphic novel adaptation, Kevin Nowlan's visual interpretation of Jack depicts the villain as singularly unthreatening, relatively "normal" looking, if working class. Jack's cap, overcoat, and gloves do not evoke the same kind of thrills and chills that Silas's aristocratic cape would. More generally, these particular visual representations of Gaiman's villain comment on the adaptability of the Gothic in general, in the sense that each is as familiar as *The Graveyard Book* despite its novelty.

## 4 Gaiman's visualization of childhood

At the centre of Gaiman's Gothic story is its young protagonist, whose very life is threatened by this secret sect, the "Jacks of All Trades." In many ways, Bod is typical of the Gothic mode in that, initially anyway, he is established as a victim of wrongdoing, as the mysterious man Jack murders his entire family one night and devotes the next fifteen or so years trying to find him to finish the job. The visual adaptations of *The Graveyard Book* at first highlight Bod's childlike vulnerability in relation to the Gothic threat that life outside the graveyard promises. Sheltered in a crypt, sleeping in a coffin, clothed in a winding sheet, and given the Freedom of the Graveyard, Bod occupies the liminal position of living, while spending many of his formative years in company with the dead. He learns to see in the darkness, to slip and to fade. Bod learns his alphabet from headstones and from books that his godfather Silas smuggles into the graveyard, including primers and Dr Seuss's *The Cat in the Hat*. In keeping with Gaiman's development of Bod as an innocent child, Chris Riddell depicts Bod as such a spectacle of innocence, wrapped in his winding sheet, being carried along by the oddly repulsive creatures – the Duke

of Westminster, the Honourable Archibald Fitzhugh, and the Bishop of Bath and Wells – through the Ghoul-gate and down into Ghulheim. In the graphic novel adaptation, Kevin Nowlan's visualization of the toddler Bod is in turn reminiscent of Richard F. Outcault's *Yellow Kid* and Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo* in early American comic history: Bod's childlike innocence is further emphasized through the visual synecdoches of the teddy bear and the crib (see fig. 5).

Nowlan highlights Bod's vulnerability visually when he depicts Bod in front of the graveyard's imposing and locked wrought-iron gates, looking for protection after the brutal murder of his entire family. Fred Botting suggests that this representation of childhood is quite typical of the literary Gothic: "Parentless children are left to roam the wild, gloomy landscapes without protection or property and often without the secure sense of themselves that comes with proper name and position" (2008, 33–34). In losing his entire family suddenly and violently, Bod embodies two of the primary fears of children: fear of abandonment and fear of being overpowered (Howarth 2014, 11). Bod's simple, childlike, and cartoonish features thus invite the reader's identification, as the graphic artists encourage the reader's empathy for this apparent victim of horrors. As Scott McCloud affirms, "the more cartoony a face is, for instance, the more people it could be said to describe" (1994, 31). Each of the visual adaptations of Gaiman's novel emphasizes the graveyard as a safehaven, a refuge, a home, even, that quite literally offers this parentless child protection from the threats of the outside world, for a finite period of time at least. Like Bod, a contemporary young reader can find comfort in this homely (and *heimlich*) Gothic world.

More importantly, Gaiman empowers the child, emphasizing the personal agency Bod develops over the course of fifteen years spent living in a cemetery. Narrative and visual humour is one of the principal methods with which Bod demonstrates this newfound agency. Ludic moments provide liberating opportunities for Gaiman's child-protagonist. The critic Julie Cross reminds us that hysterical laughter serves as a kind of comic relief from the fearful aspects of the Gothic narrative, allowing texts to deal with children's deepest, darkest, unspoken fears in a humorous way (2008, 59). Thus, when Bod and Scarlett descend into the hill to visit the oldest grave and find the Indigo Man, a quite awesome mystical creature who tries to scare them, the youngsters yawn at his scare tactics, dissolving any fear and achieving mastery over the Gothic. While Scarlett describes the bogey as "the tattooey man," Bod inspects and finally dismisses him as being only "imaginary" (Gaiman 2008a, 54). P. Craig Russell highlights the bogey's loss of power visually by depicting the Indigo Man lying down, curling up, and fading away. Fascinatingly, Russell's Indigo Man echoes Chris Riddell's earlier visualization of this character, with its spinning eyeballs, corpse-like body, crazy hair, and sharp talons. Both visualizations of the Indigo Man clearly establish the character

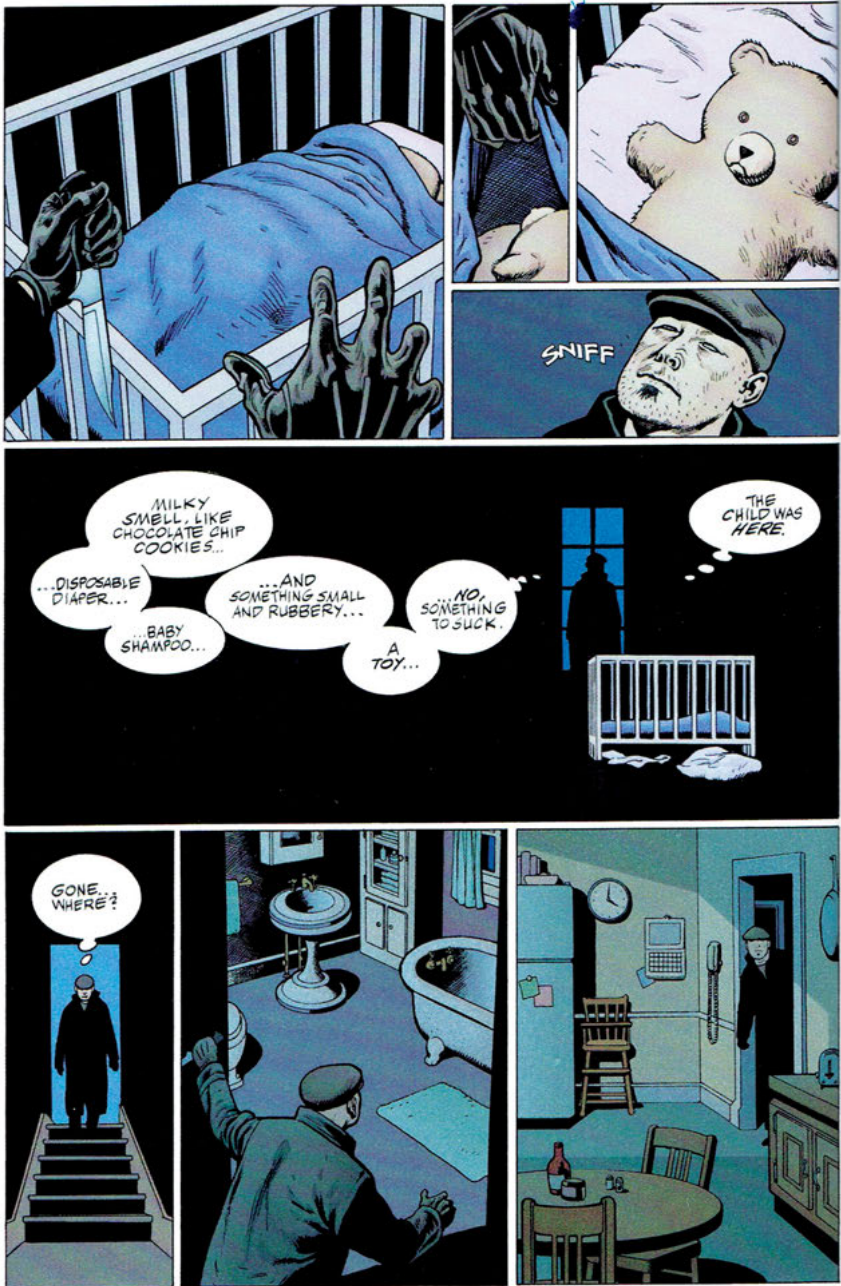


Fig. 5: Neil Gaiman, *The Graveyard Book*, The Graphic Novel Adaptation, P. Craig Russell, volume 1 (New York: Harper, 2014), 6. © Neil Gaiman.

as an exotic monster, but one that presents no threat whatsoever. In fact, this Gothic monster becomes a spectacle of ridicule, mixing humour and horror in a way that is typical of the children's Gothic. And it is Bod's mastery of this fear that prepares him to move past his desire to avenge the murders of his biological family and to go out into the world and seize his potential.

Botting's characterization of the Gothic as a "hybrid form" (1996, 14) is especially well suited to the dynamic and dialogic relationship that exists between and among the illustrated editions of *The Graveyard Book*, which are, like many adaptations, "haunted at all times by their adapted texts" (Hutcheon 2013, 6). Each visual adaptation of *The Graveyard Book* offers a plural "stereophony of echoes, citations, references," as Roland Barthes (1977, 160) once characterized adaptation, for each illustrated version openly announces its relationship to another work or works. "Adaptation is an act of appropriating or salvaging," Linda Hutcheon goes on to remind us, "and this is always a double process of interpreting and then creating something new" (2013, 20). Once a genre that inspired fear among Enlightenment theorists of the "gross stimulants" that Gothic stories offered young readers, the prevalence of the children's Gothic in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and its omnipresence in the twentieth and twenty-first, proves that fear and the pretence of fear have always held great interest for youthful readers. As such, "children's and young adult texts have become veritable playgrounds for revising and expanding the Gothic chronotope" (Jackson, Coats, and McGillis 2008, 6). Neil Gaiman makes much of this fascination with ghosts and ghouls in *The Graveyard Book*. He redeploys them, however, to foreground the process of becoming that his young protagonist experiences, the process by which Bod sheds himself of his past in his acceptance of his new agency as a young man. In turn, Gaiman's rethinking of the Gothic world and mode is exciting for the illustrators and graphic artists of his texts, who adapt his Gothic elements to their own different contexts. Mirroring in visual fashion Gaiman's revisionist approach to the Gothic in *The Graveyard Book*, these artists help to transform the Gothic world into a world of possibility for reader and viewer, in which a youthful reader is encouraged to participate in the process of making meaning.

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Lisa DeTora

# The Quantum Gaze as a Model for Simultaneous Mobilization in Graphic Narrative

**Abstract:** This article posits the operation of a “quantum gaze” in twenty-first century graphic novels. This quantum gaze refers to looking relations that change the object of the gaze, drawing on what physicists refer to as the observer effect – the verified fact that systems under continuous observation behave differently than those not under continuous observation. Building on earlier work in feminist film theory, the article suggests that graphic narratives require different modes of looking relations when compared with the fixed, linear, and sequential and time-constrained visual system of film. The graphic novel invites (if not requires) a discontinuous gaze and the management of pages, frames, and interstitial spaces as well as the diegetic space of the narrative. The article considers the possibility for a quantum gaze in graphic narrative.

**Keywords:** comics studies, Foucault, empirical gaze, the gaze, graphic narrative, medical gaze, Mulvey, quantum physics, superheroines

## 1 Introduction

The semiotic and linguistic characteristics of graphic narratives continue to pose interesting questions for researchers. The groundbreaking theorist Thierry Groensteen (2008, 2011, 2013) emphasizes the simultaneity of meaning-making among the multiple elements of the graphic narrative on each page and across pages. Similarly, figures like Scott McCloud (1993) and Will Eisner (2008), who are also comics artists, consider the impact of these elements on language and story, the things that make stories meaningful. These enquiries tend to emphasize the functions of elements on the page. Yet the subjects and characters that propel graphic narratives have long (nearly as long as they have existed) balanced their existence across multiple forms at once – films, comic strips, comic books, television – presenting another order of simultaneous mobilization. Various versions of specific characters and myriad storylines have resulted in a series of universes and multiverses, which have been both intentionally and organically constructed. In effect, readers must balance not only the different elements on the page, but also the

thematic impacts of competing narratives as well as ancillary stories that directly inform specific works.

The present discussion considers the reception of comics and graphic narratives as an additional site for simultaneous significance or the need to decipher many elements at the same time, thus extending Groensteen's work. Drawing on film and social theory, I posit the existence of a "quantum gaze" that accounts for circumstances that superimpose multiple elements in an individual book against its greater reception. This article presents a series of suppositions, starting with the unique language of comics as theorized by Groensteen, progressing through the idea of the superposition of states as a figure for looking relations, and then considering the possibility for a quantum gaze in graphic narratives.

## 2 Simultaneous mobilization as the unique language of comics

How does one make sense of graphic narratives? How do they convey meaning? How does a reader balance the myriad demands of text, image, and the interstices between them? Are the rules those of language? Of literary texts? Of narrative? Of image? Of film? Opinions vary on these scores, even (or perhaps especially) since Groensteen's groundbreaking book, *Système de la bande dessinée*, appeared in 1999. In this volume, Groensteen published an adapted collection of earlier essays, each calling for a new way to understand the semiotic function of a given element of the "decorated band," or what English-speaking audiences might call a comic strip, a semantic slippage that underscores an ongoing question in studies of the graphic narrative – the relationships between comic books, comic strips, graphic novels, manga, and other forms of graphic narrative. Groensteen himself translates *bande dessinée* as "comic art," (2008) which usefully circumvents much debate about the relationship of comic books, comic strips, manga, and graphic novels, all of which can be collected under this single umbrella term.<sup>1</sup>

Across his many publications, Groensteen describes a system – or what he calls "a set of items held together" – of comics that details models of symbolic

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of the current discussion, I consider comic strips as the short, episodic works like *Peanuts* by Charles Schulz, or *xkcd* by Randall Munroe, that appear in newspapers or on the Internet. Comic books are generally single-issue works of single stories that appear in booklet form and may be collected into larger works. Graphic novels can be collections of comic books or standalone works of longer length that tell a sustained story.

significance, which he sees as distinct from an examination of the “storytelling” modes preferred by scholars like McCloud and Eisner. As Groensteen notes in *Bande dessinée et narration* (2011), McCloud and Eisner are themselves artists and therefore more concerned with the narrative per se than with the structures that underpin linguistic or graphic representation.<sup>2</sup> In effect, McCloud and Eisner are more interested in theorizing the applications and usefulness of the system rather than the system itself. This is not to say that McCloud and Eisner do not examine or consider the language of comics, or the ways that graphic narratives produce and constrain meaning. One might consider the distinction here as that between a study of the system itself and a consideration of the best ways to use the system.

In a 2008 address, Groensteen describes the thought process behind *Système de la bande dessinée*:

I wanted to emphasize the idea that comic art is an organic totality that brings together multiple parameters and procedures, a combination of elements and codes, of which some are specific and some are not. They are all interrelated, and it is the simultaneous mobilization of all these components that constitutes the unique language of comics. (Groensteen 2008, 89)

Here, Groensteen lays out his systematic description of the comic art: multiple, combined, coded, and simultaneously mobilized. This mobilization, in contrast to the types of film language and codes described by Christian Metz (1991), must support meaning even when the reader’s gaze strays from the course intended by the artist and writer. Significantly, Groensteen questions the primacy of his analysis, while acknowledging that it is thorough and accounts for the semiotic functions of the comic art. In fact, it is evident in Groensteen’s ongoing recursive and reflexive scholarship that he considers the question of the system of comics as remaining open. It is Groensteen’s notion of simultaneous mobilization as well as its notion of language that propels the remainder of the current article. I seek to examine a model for the simultaneous coding of what Groensteen calls “the unique language of comics,” even as those comics escape the bounds of the book and enter into other cultural realms. In the pages below, I will outline some thoughts about the possible operation of what I have called a quantum gaze in the pages of graphic narratives. This notion derives from a model of gendered looking relations in cinematic forms (DeTora 2008), and therefore requires some adaptation in order to address the semiotic and cultural functions of the comic art.

I begin with an overview of the superposition of Spiderman – a discussion of a type of quantum state – and then move on to consider the operation of the

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<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to Dr Angelo Piepoli for this clarification.

scientific gaze, a model of what Michel Foucault (1994) theorized as a “medical gaze” in *The Birth of the Clinic*, before positing the operation of a quantum gaze in graphic narratives and their adaptations. It is important to note here that the comic art, the comic book, and the comic strip have long been in dialogue with each other and with other arts (see “Comics in Dialogue with Other Arts” 2013), and hence, this quantum gaze is of potentially long duration.

### 3 The superposition of multiple Spidermen

Part of the impetus for the current article came from an episode of *The Big Bang Theory* (2006), a popular US television series that depicts the lives and loves of three physicists (Sheldon Cooper, Rajesh Koothrapali, and Leonard Hofstadter) and an engineer (Howard Wolowitz), who work at Caltech, the California Institute of Technology, one of the most prestigious scientific universities in the world. These characters are avid superhero fans, and their weekly routine includes a regular scheduled visit to the comic-book store on Wednesday evenings. In season 2, episode 20, “The Hofstadter Isotope” (2006), the group, in an effort to liven up a humdrum series of social interactions, institute a new event, Anything Can Happen Thursday. As in all episodes of *The Big Bang Theory*, wacky hijinks, highly informed by physics, ensue. In this case, the episode indirectly references season 1, episode 17, “The Tangerine Factor” (2005), in which the characters use Schrödinger’s cat, a thought experiment that explains the superposition of quantum states, as a figure for dating uncertainty. Thus, both episodes play with the idea of superposition of quantum states – the notion that anything can happen – quickly entering an interesting realm when the highly-strung physicist Sheldon Cooper points out the futility of trying to buy any superhero comic book (let alone *Spiderman*) without a full understanding of the different Spidermen (Amazing, Ultimate, Spectacular), *Infinite Crisis* (Johns 2005–2006), the “New 52,” and the operation of the DC “multiverse,” another carryover from physics, which draws on Schrodinger’s hypothesis that an infinite number of alternate worlds exist in parallel.

Sheldon’s perception of “Spiderman” from the perspective of a fan who is intimately familiar with the workings of the Marvel universe seamlessly articulates its relationships with film and television and also its possible relationships with DC comics. In the Marvel Multiverse, there are many Spidermen. In contrast, Penny, the pretty waitress who lives next door, just wants to buy her nephew a birthday present. To Penny, Spiderman is a generic superhero, perhaps the image one might see on birthday-party decorations or on a movie poster. For Sheldon,

a complete understanding of the thematic superposition of multiple Spidermen is essential to picking up any volume of any Spiderman, a point of view shared by both Sheldon's friends and the real-life Marvel and DC comics aficionados at my local comic-book store (personal communications). These comic-book experts demand an encyclopedic knowledge of each book and character (including multiverses and crossovers) before making any type of definitive statement about it. For these readers, like Sheldon, the ability to superposition Spiderman as white and Black and good and evil and Amazing and Spectacular and Ultimate, existing simultaneously in many worlds, is a prerequisite for meaningful conversation because Spiderman is never fixed conceptually for them until specific contexts are understood and accounted for. Keeping in mind that this theoretical fan conversation seeks to account only for the milieu of the comic book or graphic novel, it is clear that Spiderman is many things simultaneously mobilized, whether in a single book, like *Spidermen* (Bendis 2012), or across narratives.

One might have observed that in this brief discussion of Spiderman, I have slipped in a significant term, "superposition." This term has resonance for the physics that underpins *The Big Bang Theory* as well as the simultaneous mobilization of the language of comics and a novel model of looking relations that I will detail below. I begin with physics. In quantum physics, electrons and other subatomic particles can be in many places and many quantum states at once. Further, when subatomic particles exist in multiple states at once, this overlap can create new quantum states. The possibility that multiple quantum states can exist at once, as well as the resulting creation of a new quantum state, can be referred to as superposition. This concept is related to another phenomenon in quantum physics: that systems used by humans to observe quantum states can themselves impact and fix those states.<sup>3</sup> In other words, the means of observing quantum states affects, creates, and freezes them during the period of observation. Superposition, then, is a mode of simultaneously occupying multiple states, a circumstance that can only be observed by means that alter and establish both those states and the position of the particles inhabiting them. Thus, superposition can be seen as a mode of simultaneous mobilization.

Since the means of observation in fact fixes the positions, and quantum states, of subatomic particles, freezing them in time and space, one does not understand where (or in what state) the particle is until it becomes fixed in the gaze of the researcher. And this circumstance exists because a given particle really – for whatever quantity of reality resonates for the observer – exists in myriad places

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<sup>3</sup> One reason for this phenomenon is that the scale of the researchers is so immensely large compared with the scale of subatomic particles that the system of observation exerts quantum forces.

and states at once. In other words, in quantum physics, the gaze of the researcher itself is a material condition that changes reality, establishing the state of a particle that, until that exact instant, was many different things and in many different places at once. Understanding the physical superposition of states – that is, adding an epistemological element to the material – much like the simultaneous mobilization of parameters, procedures, elements, and codes in Groensteen’s system of comics, requires flexibility and adaptation. Like Sheldon Cooper, the reader must recognize and accept multiplicity, resisting the urge to create an amorphous and unformed generic notion of Spiderman like Penny’s. And this recognition and acceptance requires both specific powers of perception – a gaze, if we will – as well as the ability to conceptually frame multifaceted elements.

Returning for a moment to Sheldon and Penny’s exchange, Sheldon’s scientific understanding frames and fixes “Spiderman” in many different states. Interestingly, the field of scientific perception can be seen as a version of what, in English, is called the medical gaze. This term derives from Michel Foucault’s discussion of perception in his *Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (1994). Foucault describes this gaze as a site where perception (*regard*) becomes language, a site where objects under the eye of the medical professional can enter the realm of knowledge. As Foucault notes, “the clinical gaze has the paradoxical ability to *hear a language* as soon as it *perceives a spectacle*” (1994, 108; emphasis in original). In other words, the empirical gaze of the physician, operating at the boundary of scientific perception, instantly renders the visible into language, simultaneously mobilizing sight and sound and symbolism. The model of medical perception can be seen to mimic Groensteen’s semiotic perception, the recognition of the simultaneous mobilization of words and images according to coded rules. An empirical gaze, Foucault’s medical gaze also provides a counterpoint for what I am calling a quantum gaze, following both psychoanalytic film theory and the quantum model of the physical world.

## 4 Looking relations as perceptual models

An observer’s ability to impact material reality provides an interesting framework for considering how looking relations can affect comic art. In psychoanalytic theories, the gaze derives from Lacan’s identification of the conditions when a patient becomes acutely aware of his construction as an object under the eye of the psychoanalyst. This therapeutic gaze also evokes Foucault’s medical gaze as an empirical perception that renders spectacle into language and frames the patient as an object of study as opposed to a thinking, feeling subject. Laura Mulvey (1975)

adapted psychoanalytic looking relations, casting man as the “bearer of the look” and woman as “the object of the gaze,” an essentially gendered model that operates in the diegetic and extradiegetic spaces of films.

Mulvey’s ideas have been critiqued and revised many times, as I have done (DeTora 2008). I suggested that a “quantum gaze” creates a new form of feminine monstrosity because a visual figure of the superposition of states complicates gender (and other) binaries, allowing for the simultaneous mobilization of multiple identities. The quantum gaze also relies on the circumstance that observations themselves change physical reality – in certain films, monsters can change forms until they are observed. In the *Jurassic Park* universe, the horror of not quite knowing what one is gazing upon extends beyond simple monstrosity because the monster can transform from female to male at will. The operation of what can be called a quantum gaze then impacts and fixes the materiality (and corporeality) of specific creatures.

In horror, a gaze that creates the material conditions of monstrosity prevents the essential identification and distancing that creates meaning. Horror films rely on the ability of the filmmaker to situate the audience in the gaze of the monster. If the gaze of the viewer itself creates the monster, the possibility for such identification is eliminated. The viewer, then, has no alternative perspective to enter, because her gaze creates all perspectives. The monstrosity of these superpositional states evokes the site of abjection in Laplanche and Pontalis’s construction of the horrific. This quantum gaze also troubles Bracha Ettinger’s idea of the matrixial gaze (1995), which blurs the boundary between the self and the other through empathy and self-awareness, lessening the essential divide between self and other, while still treating these elements as pre-existing.

In contrast, the quantum gaze creates material conditions, perhaps transcending the boundaries between knowledge and experience, which Foucault and Judith Butler (1993) have described as not necessarily reconcilable except in language. The quantum gaze hints at an inability to fully pin down any element, requiring a reader or viewer to hold many possibilities in mind at once, much like Sheldon Cooper’s superpositional Spidermen. I believe that the quantum gaze can also be a potentially interesting way to consider graphic narratives – not only visually, but conceptually. In fact, the quantum gaze may bridge the psychoanalytic gaze and Foucault’s model of the medical gaze as a site where perception coalesces into language. What remains to be seen is whether such a site exists for the specialized language of comics described by Groensteen and others.



## 5 The quantum gaze in fixed forms

As noted in “Comics in Dialogue with Other Arts” (2013), the comic art has always been informed by interactions with forms like film, cartoon, painting, and photography. Furthermore, comic art itself has long created multiple and self-referential representations of its characters. For instance, Mickey Mouse appeared simultaneously in short films, comic books, and comic strips. These representations differed significantly; the Mickey Mouse of Floyd Gottfredson’s comic strips was a rough-and-tumble adventurer quite unlike the mischievous rascal of *Steamboat Willie* (2011). Nevertheless, these disparate representations form a coherent picture in part because, as Lars Ellestrom has observed, many “media traits are transmedial” (663), sharing certain basic, universal qualities. No one describes Mickey Mouse as occupying a multiverse; instead, the character has been observed as evolving over time into the mild character described by Gerstein and Groth (cf. Gottfredson 2011). Thus, a consideration of the quantum gaze in comic art must identify characteristics that go beyond mere differences.

A few problems arise when one attempts to use film theory to read graphic narratives. In cinema, looking relations are grounded in linear time and filmic space – the viewer must watch, in order, within a proscribed perspective. The comic art, Groensteen notes, contrasts with films because it does not “create the illusion that the events are taking place as we read” (2011, 82). Hence, film theory must be adapted to the page, which may draw the reader’s eye in multiple directions. Yet such adaptations are possible in part because comics present narrative information. Narratives may account for various elements, such as plot and characters, or elements of subjectivity, which, as Kai Mikkonen in “Subjectivity and Style in Graphic Narratives” (2013) notes, must include narrators, authors, and characters. Narrative elements on the page may operate linearly, discontinuously, or in a fragmented fashion, as observed by Renaud Chavanne in “The Composition of Comics” (2015).

The idea of fragmentation provides a useful model for the quantum gaze in graphic narrative because the comic art allows for various constructions of such a quantum gaze. Certainly, such a gaze cannot perform peripherally as it may in film – visual elements cannot be hidden and revealed in real time. Yet, where film can hide and then reveal, the graphic narrative may explicitly present its quantum objects and their superpositions. Such a trope dominates science-fiction depictions of multiple universes, which are another feature of quantum physics. In fact, graphic narratives often directly examine the idea of multiple worlds. Conceptual treatments of multiverses may occur explicitly within a single narrative or across narratives. Some of these treatments rely on the level of fan or reader experience, as with the example of Spiderman above.

An explicit representation of the multiverse has been a common feature of graphic narratives since Marv Wolfman's *Crisis on Infinite Earths* (1985) reframed the graphic novel genre. Since then, both Marvel and DC comics have published images of their multiverses, universes that account for multiple worlds, manifested simultaneously. These multiverses may take the form of many worlds stacked together like the atoms in a block of salt (DC) or a London Tube map (Marvel). Additional representations include the "Multiversity Guidebook" of Grant Morrison's (2016) bestseller *The Multiversity*. Individual works that treat the subject of the multiverse, such as DC's *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, include fairly explicit images of multiple, simultaneous versions of superheroes and the untoward consequences when they collide. *The Multiversity* prefigures and supplements its guidebook with a self-referential metanarrative, which appears in *The Just*, a comic book that links multiple worlds and alters them as it is being read by other comic-book characters. Compelling images of quantum states in these narratives include the image of Superman – all the versions of Superman – simultaneously screaming and clutching his head. Because the comic art is static, the image depicts this superposition fairly explicitly, compressing the suggestions of simultaneity and motion within a single frame. Similarly, the mural-style cover art of *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, centring on the universes in which different superheroes have lived or died, converges on a point of contact, the nexus of multiple possible outcomes. These books literally figure the simultaneous mobilization that Groensteen sees as characterizing the language of comics by carefully and explicitly showing the superposition of characters and states.

Superposition in these books, and other superhero universes, occurs both visually and conceptually. Books like *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, *Arkham Asylum* (Morrison 1989), or *Civil War* (Millar 2016), are difficult to understand without extensive knowledge of the various worlds, characters, versions, storylines, and continuities in the Marvel and DC multiverses. Unlike *The Multiversity*, which renders its setting, and multiplicity, explicit, these books rely on the prior reading knowledge of their audiences. In fact, as Sheldon Cooper points out, certain books are nearly incomprehensible without a fairly deep reading knowledge of the DC Multiverse – including its establishment, abolition, and re-establishment. Like the example of Spiderman as a necessarily superpositional conceptual element for Sheldon Cooper and the inhabitants of my favourite comic-book store, nearly all superheroes exist in multiple versions, multiple worlds, and with multiple futures. Consider, for example, the X-Men or the Avengers, Batman, or Iron Man: not only do graphic narratives create many worlds – not to mention such phenomena as "Otherworlds" – but Hollywood, Disney, and television also expand on and alter these many possibilities.

The rise and power of fan culture only compounds this phenomenon, creating a series of superpositioned concepts and cultural significances – what Roland Barthes (1973) might consider myths. Thus, the superadded significance of a quantum gaze in the comic art can be literalized graphically and framed conceptually, either intentionally within a single narrative or organically, as in the events that created a need for *Crisis on Infinite Earths* and the original and new 52. I commented above that Mickey Mouse currently seems to transcend the forces that create problems of continuity and multiplicity for superheroes, operating more as a single, organic entity. It may be that Disney’s tight control over creative expression and branding were sufficient to protect the mouse from the forces that created the DC and Marvel multiverses, despite earlier variations. A further question is whether these elements – the graphic and conceptual – occur beyond superhero universes and, hence, might inform additional graphic narratives.

## 6 Quantum states beyond the superhero

One powerful example combining visual and conceptual superposition is Bill Willingham’s graphic novel series, *Fables* (2002–2016), under DC’s Vertigo imprint. The series featured an ever-increasing array of characters from global folklore and fairy tales – including a mini-multiverse of worlds – and inspired spin-off graphic novel series (*Cinderella*, *Jack of Fables*, *The Literals*, and *Fairest* [Willingham 2010, 2006–2011, 2009a, 2012–2016]), five stand-alone novels (*1001 Nights of Snowfall*, *The Last Castle*, *Werewolves of the Heartland*, *Peter and Max*, and *The Wolf Among Us* [Willingham 2006a, 2006b, 2012, 2009b, 2014]), and several prose stories. The premise for these stories is that survivors of the Lands of Fable (or Homelands), fleeing the evil machinations of a Manichaeian Adversary, settle in New York City and the Adirondacks. The primary characters include Snow White, Rose Red, the Big Bad Wolf, Little Jack Horner, Cinderella, Beauty and the Beast, and the Three Little Pigs. These characters acknowledge the existence of a sort of multiverse in the Homelands.

Karin Kukkonen notes that the characters in *Fables* operate within textual traditions of both traditional and “postmodern” (2013, 57) fairy tales. For Kukkonen, fairy tales already exist as “highly complex bodies of texts,” which become further complicated, as each new version or retelling will have “a particular rhetorical impetus, even if they seem to tell the same story” (57). In other words, every new retelling or reuse of an existing character is imbued with a unique intention or message, much like the various retellings of Spiderman in the Marvel multiverse or DC’s New 52. Further, Kukkonen notes, the rhetorical impetus of various ver-

sions of fairy tales relates “to contexts of relevance within our cultural memory,” in which “a community’s symbolism and narratives” are based (58). Here, then, fairy tales continue to grow, evolve, and change, bringing new light and new directions to well-known characters and stories – forming the type of continuity problems that characterize Spiderman and Superman but not Mickey Mouse.

Each of the characters in *Fables* is an amalgam, one that, like the superheroes I have mentioned above, occupies many and varied positions simultaneously, both within and outside the narratives of the graphic novels. In this construction, the Big Bad Wolf is a child of the North Wind and therefore simultaneously wolf/man/wind, a series of corporeal relationships illustrated by shadows or across multiple frames on a single page. Thus, these frames can illustrate superposition as well as the simultaneous mobilization of the language of comics. Similarly, the witches, like Ozma of Oz or Baba Yaga, literally transform themselves. Other characters occupy more conceptual superpositional states. For example, Snow White represents snippets of many different tales of Snow White, as do Rose Red and Cinderella. Other figures, like Prince Charming or Jack, who might have been assumed to be multiple different characters, turn out to have been one unitary person all along, manifested differently in various stories. However, and unlike Spiderman, the fables are each conscious of – and occupy – all their identities at once. Their superposition is evident not only to the reader, but also to the fables themselves.

The amalgamation of these fables results in the simultaneous mobilization of contradictory identities, such as a superposition of good and evil. From the beginning of *Fables* in 2002, the formerly evil fables, such as the various witches and the Big Bad Wolf, take on new, ambiguous, or even heroic identities. This circumstance is manifest in the Big Bad Wolf, who is constrained in his human form and recuperated into Fabletown’s police chief as part of a general amnesty program. Despite this constraint, the illustrations hint at Bigby’s suppressed nature – he casts the shadow of a wolf, even in his human form, a clear and compelling representation of superposition. Significantly, the superposition of physical states represented by the Big Bad Wolf carries forward into his progeny, who embody various states of animal, air, and human. A further superposition is evident in the Fables’ awareness of their reception out in the mundane world. Fables cannot die as long as readers have a strong belief in them, which renders Snow White and other famous characters immortal, while more vaguely defined characters like Little Boy Blue or one of the Three Pigs may be killed. Thus, *Fables* vexes more binaries even than a quantum gaze of superheroes – it remains uncertain whether characters are multiple or single, good or evil, dead or alive.

Clearly, *Fables* is insufficient as an example to support my notion of the quantum gaze, especially given Vertigo’s relationship to DC. Consider, then, rep-

representations in books such as *Maus* (Spiegelman 1986), which constantly calls the identity (and even “species”) of characters and memory into question, consciously undercutting its own narrative by the intrusion of historical details and observations. Similarly, texts like *Blankets* (Thompson 2003) or *Habibi* (Thompson 2011) examine the relationships of corporeal identity, self-identification, trauma, and gender, suggesting that these ideas can easily escape any bounds, including those of the comic frame. A growing tradition of graphic medical memoirs, both straightforward and semifictionalized, like *Stitches* (2009), also presents settings that lend themselves to a reading of the quantum gaze. Finally, graphic narratives like *Radioactive* (Redniss 2010) or *Primates* (Ottaviani 2011) explicitly illustrate the workings of various gazes, including an empirical gaze, within narratives that continually question their own representations.

## 7 Making sense of graphic narratives

The nascent field of graphic-narrative research has taken up several modes of inquiry: the historical, the cultural, the semiotic, the thematic. Each of these modes of enquiry can yield fruitful outcomes for the scholar. I have detailed above a model of significance that I have termed the quantum gaze, which can account for layered, superpositioned meanings in each of the intellectual registers I have just mentioned. Unlike the gaze of film studies, the quantum gaze of the comic art troubles the conventions of language Groensteen described as simultaneously mobilized, in contradistinction to the more linear unfolding of the cinematic narrative. Nevertheless, the quantum gaze allows for the superposition of meaning within the pages of individual books, across multiple books, and even outside the pages of the graphic narrative and into fan culture.

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Angelo Piepoli

# Wordless: Interpreting Visual Sequence as Storytelling

Towards a Semiotic-Textological Approach to Comics and Pictorial Narrative without Verbal Components

**Abstract:** This article describes how visual sequences become storytelling. The most recent research on comics language has insisted that sequentiality, rather than the juxtaposition of words and images, is the main feature of comics. Comics made up only of drawings, for example, owe to sequentiality the possibility of conferring a narrative sense on the juxtaposition of those drawings. Turning to János Sándor Petőfi's semiotic textology, this paper argues that, within the sequence, the satisfaction of textuality requirements – proper to verbal-text linguistics – such as connexity, cohesion, constringency, and coherence is what facilitates the interpretation of comic books, or parts of them, that do not include a verbal component, and make it possible to accept them as multimedia texts in a broad sense. The paper also attempts to highlight the active role of the reader/interpreter/producer in conferring narrative sense on a sequence of pictorial elements.

**Keywords:** closure, coherence, cohesion, comics, comprehensive *vehiculum*, connexity, constringency, coreferentiality, creative exercises, explicative interpretation, *formatio*, FS architectonics, graphic narrative, interpretation, János Sándor Petőfi, multimedial communicate, *relatum*, *relatum imago*, Scott McCloud, semiotic textology, *sensus*, textuality, *vehiculum*, *vehiculum imago*, wordless comics, wordless narratives

## 1 Pictorial sequences, languages, and texts

A generalized conception considers comics as literary products produced through the use of a language based on two distinct systems of signs, words and images, whose elements are combined into a seemingly indissoluble interconnection.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I owe the completion of this contribution to many people. János Sándor Petőfi is no longer among us, but he continues to deeply influence all of my writing: with him I contracted a human and scientific debt that I will not be able to repay. My deepest gratitude goes to the students who, during my experience as a teaching assistant at the University of Macerata, offered me a treas-



Accordingly, erasing one of the two systems would compromise the sense of the story or might entirely change it, especially if the verbal component is sacrificed. Interestingly, Rodolphe Töpffer, widely and debatably regarded as the “inventor” of comics, wrote in the preface to “Histoire de Monsieur Jabot”:

This little book is of a mixed nature. It is composed of a series of autograph-line drawings. Each of these drawings is accompanied by one or two lines of text. The drawings, without this text, would have nothing but an obscure meaning; the text, without the drawings, would mean nothing. The whole thing together forms a kind of novel all the more original in that it does not resemble a novel more than any other thing. (Töpffer 1837, 334; my translation)

Most recent research on the language of comics, following *Comics & Sequential Art* by author and artist Will Eisner (1985), insists on sequentiality, rather than the juxtaposition of words and images, as the main feature of comics. After Eisner, Scott McCloud proposed his famous definition: “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in *deliberate sequence*, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer” (McCloud 1994 [1993], 9; my emphasis). Yet McCloud also found the real core of comics in closure, in the “phenomenon of observing the parts but perceiving the whole” (63) inherent to the specific nature of human perception, as well as the engine that enables the elements in his definition to function. Thus, McCloud considered juxtaposed pictorial elements in a deliberate sequence without verbal components as comics.

Since the 1960s, similar issues have captivated academics interested in the study of languages and their applications. Analytic approaches to multimedial relational linguistic objects such as films, comics, or plays, expanded as scholars sought to apply linguistic methods to domains beyond verbal expression. In Europe, many have attempted to examine the double articulation in non-verbal media (Pasolini 1972, 203–204; Deleuze 1984 [1983], 25; Gubern 1975 [1972], 95) and, in the last two decades of the twentieth century, the concept of text began to be applied to semiotic relations between signifiers and signifieds entirely lacking verbal elements. In the current vocabulary of many research sectors, “language,”

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ure-trove of discoveries, new ideas, and research cues. I greatly thank Cristina Díaz Baamonde, whose kind cooperation made it possible to conduct and analyse the exercise with the primary school students. I thank Scott McCloud and Ivo Milazzo for their kind replies, suggestions, and support. A big “thank you” goes to Prof. Luciano Vitacolonna for criticism and useful advice during the drafting of the essay, and Lisa DeTora, whose excellent editing was respectful to the original content. Finally, I would like to thank Susana Díaz Baamonde for patient support before and during the writing of this text.

“linguistic,” and “text” have become widely understood in a broad sense that extends well beyond the limits formerly accepted by traditional linguistics.

Of course, interpreting texts that are not exclusively verbal or non-verbal, and verifying their acceptability *as* texts (textuality, in a broad sense), has been complicated by the lack of a unified theoretical framework that, in addition to other problems,

- in the case of a multimedial text, accounts for the peculiarities of the different media and the respective syntactic and semantic (in a broad sense) contributions of the different components to the supposed logical-conceptual unity of which they are part; and
- allows verification of the acceptability as a textual unit (in a broad sense) of texts (in a broad sense) that are multimedial or supposedly unimedial *without* a verbal component.

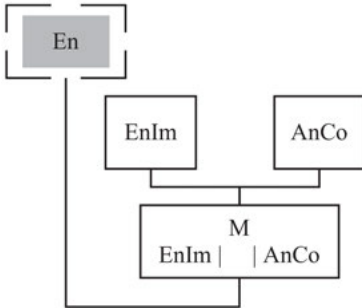
## 2 Semiotic textology: Towards a unified model of signification

My search for a unified framework of signification led to a promising answer developed by the linguist and semiotician János Sándor Petőfi. An interest in verbal texts was the starting point of Petőfi’s research. He developed various models to deal with different aspects of the analysis and interpretation of verbal, predominantly verbal, and non-verbal objects that could or could not be considered texts, the latter of which he termed “communicate” (as a noun) to avoid extensional ambiguity. Semiotic textology was Petőfi’s ultimate development:

I use the term “textology” to avoid other terms, such as, for example, text grammar or text linguistics, which refer to specific – and restricted – disciplines. I use the term “semiotic” to express the idea that, in the framework of Semiotic Textology, texts are treated as sign complexes from a syntactic (or, more generally, formal), a semantic, and a pragmatic point of view. (Petőfi 2004a, 75; my translation)

Consistent with his mathematical training, and in order to identify univocally the elements discussed, Petőfi presented his model using symbols, diagrams, and a thesaurus of Latin words (see fig. 1).

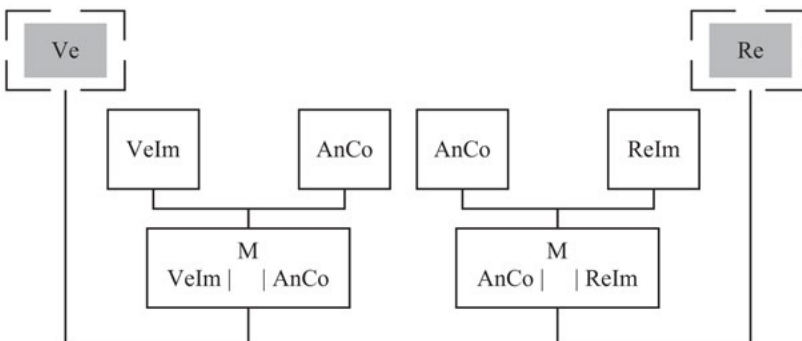
Within Petőfi’s semiotic textology, analytical approaches to multimedial objects such as comics and graphic narratives must take into due consideration the signifier – marking a clear difference from approaches, such as Greimasian semiotics, which focus almost exclusively on the signified – on the basis of a sign model that makes it possible to integrate manifestations of signs belonging to dif-



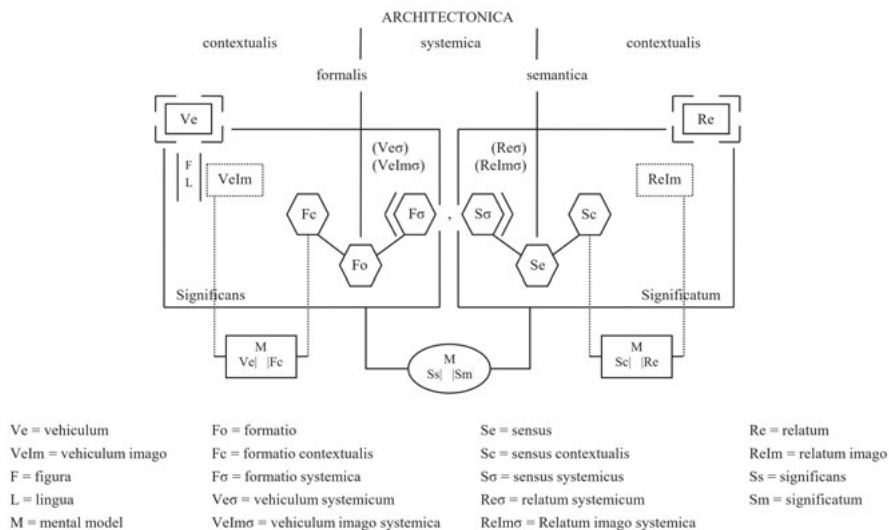
**Fig. 1:** Mental model of the perception of signifying entities (Petőfi 2001, 23).

ferent semiotic media. Petőfi started from a model of the perception of signifying entities (“En” in fig. 1) understood as non-ingenuous, meaning that “the analogous mental image of an entity (= EnIm) and its conceptual analysis (= AnCo) cannot be separated from one another” (Petőfi 2001, 22; my translation). In figure 1, “EI | M | AC” represents, in the strict sense, “a mental model of a ‘Janus Bifrons’ type constituted by a mental image assigned to the entity to be perceived and by the conceptual analysis congruent to it {EnIm, AnCo}” (Petőfi 2001, 23; my translation). The light rectangle surrounding the dark rectangle with the symbol “En” indicates an “immediate context” (23; my translation) (settings) from which the entities to be perceived may not always be separated discretely.

According to Petőfi, the next step in constructing an integrative sign model is to double specularly the model of perception in figure 1 (see fig. 2). A *vehiculum* (= Ve), whose mental image (= VeIm, *vehiculum imago*) is divisible into its physical-semiotic (= F, *figura*) and linguistic-semiotic (= L, *lingua*) *facies*, functions as the physical manifestation of the signifier within a sign. In this model, the entity constituting the real referent (within the signified) is called *relatum* (= Re).



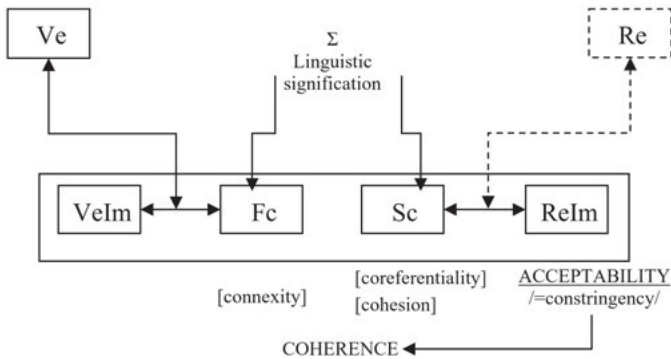
**Fig. 2:** Model of the constituents of signifier and signified (Petőfi 2001, 24).



**Fig. 3:** The semiotic constitutive factors of a sign complex (Petőfi 2004a, 79, 86).

Here, the conceptual analysis (AnCo) related to the *Ve* is called *formatio* (= *Fo*), while the conceptual analysis related to the *Re* is called *sensus* (= *Se*). As shown in figure 3, both the *formatio* and the *sensus* in turn have two aspects: the systemic (*formatio systemica* = *Fσ* and *sensus systemicus* = *Sσ*, respectively the formal and semantic architectonics assignable to a *Ve* within the epistemological framework of the given linguistic system, understood broadly) and the contextual (*formatio contextualis* = *Fc* and *sensus contextualis* = *Sc*, respectively the formal and semantic architectonics assignable to a *Ve* in the given communication situation; Petőfi 2004a, 78–79). In fact, Petőfi distinguished between contextual architectonics, related to the given context and co-text, and systemic architectonics, which include all hypothetical entities corresponding to the respective contextual entities (represented in the diagram by the symbols shown in round brackets). On the other hand, he distinguished between formal architectonics, namely the signifier (*significans*), and semantic architectonics, namely the signified (*significatum*; Petőfi 2004a, 79–80).

Petőfi thus identified the six constituent factors of a sign complex with (*Ve*), *Velm*, *Fo*, *Se*, *Relm*, and (*Re*). The elements in parentheses are not necessarily part of a sign complex, since the two parts of the model are associated with a not necessarily and/or exclusively perceptive explanation: “in some cases it is not only unnecessary but also impossible to require the physical presence of *Re* [cases of fictional signification]; and we can imagine cases in which this observation is also valid for *Ve* [cases of mystic and/or hallucinatory communication]”



**Fig. 4:** The relations between sign components and textuality criteria.  
Notes from university classes with Prof. János Sándor Petőfi.

(Petőfi 2001, 25; my translation). The last step in the construction of an integrative sign model

consists in determining the possible types of the mental apparatus  $Ve | M | Re$ , or, as it might better be termed, of the model  $Ve | M | Re$  (namely of the relation “Signifier–Signified,” or, if you like, of “signification”). The sign model [presented so far] can be applied as an “integrative sign model” since it contains no restriction as regards the aforementioned types. This is an important aspect because if we are dealing, for example, with a dance accompanied by mimicry, gestures, singing (rhythmic and melodic text) as the *vehiculum* (=  $Ve$ ) of a multimedia text, its media components signify in different ways of “signification,” but in an organic unit. The existence of this organic unit can only be guaranteed if the different types of “signification” can be modelled and integrated (“superimposed”) within the theoretical framework itself. (Petőfi 2001, 25; my translation).

We can see that this sign model can be read starting from the  $Ve$  (or its mental image) to arrive at the  $Re$  (or its mental image), in which case we would be describing the process of reception of a sign complex, or proceeding in the opposite direction, in which case we would be describing the process of production of a sign complex (Petőfi 2001, 28).

One of the main objectives of Petőfi’s theoretical framework is the explicative interpretation of sign complexes, namely the assignment of formal and semantic architectonics to the constituents of a  $Ve$ , which makes it possible to represent the static relations between the architectonic elements (structural explicative interpretation) and information regarding the logical-temporal construction of such relations (procedural explicative interpretation; Petőfi 2004a, 80). According to Petőfi, an explicative interpretation is first-degree when any constitutive element of the  $Ve$  can be interpreted literally, partially figurative when some constitutive

elements must be interpreted figuratively but others can be interpreted literally, and second-degree whenever a *Ve* is assigned symbolic significance, regardless of possible first-degree or partially figurative interpretations (2004a, 80–81). In other words, the process of assigning the architectonics “means the *creation of a world* of which the text presumably speaks at the level of first [or partially figurative] or second degree” (Petőfi 2004a, 100; my translation, emphasis in original).

### 3 Textuality criteria and the productive role of the interpreter

In semiotic textology, relations between the sign components and the properties of a text can be defined in reference to the text world assigned to a *Ve* through its specific architectonics as follows (see fig. 4).

- Connexity is the central aspect of the formal architectonics. The constituents of a connex *Ve* are linked to each other by micro- and macrosyntactic relations (“syntactic” in a broad sense, intended as formal relations). Connexity “indicates the syntactic continuity of a chain of ‘linguistic elements’ of a *vehiculum* to be interpreted” (Petőfi 2004a, 101; my translation).
- Coreferentiality is “the relation between the ‘linguistic elements’ of a *vehiculum* to be interpreted that refer to the same object and/or state of affairs that constitutes the [text] world” (101; my translation).
- Cohesion is the central aspect of the *sensus* (*Se*) architectonics. It refers to “the semantic-thematic relations between the constituents of a chain of ‘linguistic elements’ of a *vehiculum* to be interpreted; a complete *vehiculum* is cohesive in the strict sense in rare cases, but we find ‘isles with internal cohesion’ in any *vehiculum*: cohesion is necessarily united with coreferentiality” (101; my translation).
- Constringency is the central aspect of the *relatum* (*Re*) architectonics (the referential component of semantic architectonics). Constringency “indicates a continuous and complete network of states of affairs that constitute a world fragment; considering a world fragment as constringent (a network of states of affairs as continuous and complete) depends primarily on the knowledge and the assumptions and expectations of the interpreter as regards the world/s acceptable as first- and/or second-degree interpretation in a given case, and not on the ‘linguistic constitution’ of the *vehiculum* to be interpreted” (Petőfi 2004a, 100; my translation).
- Coherence is the central aspect of the acceptability of a relational semiotic object as a complete and fulfilled text. A text “can be considered coherent if

and only if the interpreter can construct a *constringent world fragment* as an interpretation for that given text” (101; my translation, emphasis in original).

Petőfi clarified that “connexity is not a necessary requirement for cohesion; likewise, neither connexity nor cohesion are necessary requirements for coherence; a *coreferential* network (even if not all the elements of a supposed coreferential network are expressed explicitly) is, by contrast, a relevant basis for the creation of a constringent world fragment” (2004a, 101; my translation, emphasis in original).

As seen in figure 4, the criteria of textuality are not limited to traditional texts. Clearly, their fulfilment in a sign complex constructed with verbal and pictorial components, like comics, is complicated by semiotic variations between these disparate elements combined in the same *Ve*, especially if their architectonic organization occurs under different systems of rules. For example, with reference to Nelson Goodman’s theory (1968, 130–154), in the *Ve* of comics texts, elements of a medium with a notational system are combined with elements of a medium without such a system. If the analysis of the verbal component makes it possible to clearly distinguish between formal and semantic architectonics, it is not equally possible to treat these architectonics separately when analysing a pictorial component, even though it is possible to find a formal organization and relevant rules of correspondence with the *Se*. With reference to the pictorial component, in the most recent phase of his research, Petőfi (2004b, 189; see also Piepoli [2010, 122]) spoke of an *architectonica formalis-semantic* (FS architectonics: *Fo* and *Se* are closely linked – entangled, I would say – and mutually dependent) in which the *sensus* is dominant (fS architectonics). Petőfi pointed out that the problem of a joint analysis of various media components occurs even when all such components have Goodman’s notational system, as in musical texts. He also spoke of FS architectonics in the musical medium, despite the fact that musical notation respects the requirements of a notational system: in the analysis of the musical *vehiculum*, the formal aspect is dominant, yet it is not possible to clearly distinguish semantic architectonics (Petőfi spoke in this case of *Fs* architectonics). However, regardless of the semiotic media included, a sign complex is generally acceptable as a communicate if, in a given or supposed communication situation, it is possible to assign to it a constringent world fragment.

To achieve such an objective, a reader cannot avoid considering, in addition to the elements physically present in the *Ve*, other elements that are absent but still assumed to be a part of it. We can consider these elements, which Petőfi (2004a, 82) called the inferential *vehiculum*, as resulting from the process of completion by inference, something similar to what McCloud refers to as closure. In my opinion, we can state that, from this perspective:

- the reader/interpreter, as well as being the receiver, is at the same time also a producer (of the inferential *vehiculum* and the consequent interpretation of the textual *vehiculum* and the comprehensive *vehiculum*);
- in the light of semiotic textology, the inferential *vehiculum* is more precisely an (inferential) *VeIm* to which the reader/interpreter assigns relevant architectonics; and
- both the production of the inferential *VeIm* and the consequent interpretation of the textual *Ve* and the comprehensive *Ve* (textual + inferential) depend on a reader/interpreter(/producer)'s knowledge, hypotheses, preferences, and psychophysical dispositions (factors that Petőfi [2004a, 84–86] called the bases of interpretation, listed here in order of decreasing intersubjectivity), as well as on their perceptual and cognitive capacities.

It is important to consider the crucial role of the inferential *Ve* (often less conspicuous in verbal texts or musical communicates, but always absolutely evident in sign complexes such as graphic narratives) in the process of interpretation/attribution of architectonics to what, in general, we could call a communicative comprehensive *vehiculum*.

## 4 Towards the analysis of wordless narration

The pivotal role of the verbal text in the context (and co-text) of graphic narratives is clearer when trying to detect what happens during interpretation. In the case of a typical comics story, for example, coreference chains are configured transversally between two media components, so that, if the verbal component is removed (and, necessarily, also its pictorial treatment), it would become impossible to assign a constringent world fragment to the resulting *vehiculum*. In the case of comics texts or any pictorial narratives with a verbal component, Petőfi spoke of equidominantly verbal multimedial texts: regardless of the relative proportion of the verbal medium, it “works” on a par with the other media of the *vehiculum* (“equi-”), but its qualitative contribution to sense is prevalent (“dominantly verbal”) – so much so that sometimes an analyst can decide to treat as a text a pictorial narrative with only a verbal title. Although Petőfi was in the process of abandoning this position, it remains understandable that words can strongly influence chains of coreference between the linguistic elements of the various media in a multimedial text. Often, the verbal *vehiculum* also significantly affects pictorial linearization (sequential mental organization of the linguistic elements that compose the *vehiculum*), which is a necessary condition for interpretation.



This is valid for the order both of the panels in a sequence and of the pictorial elements in a single panel.

In the case of graphic narratives without verbal components, the pivotal role is played entirely by pictorial components. No system of rules for images is strictly comparable to the grammar of natural languages, yet the study of pictorial languages suggests that useful systems of rules for the recognition of both their formal and semantic organization can be traced, making it possible to account in detail for the acceptability of wordless comics as expressing constringent world fragments. Thus, the criteria of textuality (pending an alternative term that does not directly refer to the sole realm of texts) can be considered a condition of acceptability for what Petőfi would call comics-communicates.

If a canonical system for an unambiguous representation of all relevant factors of the formal and semantic architectonics of pictorial languages (analogous to the canonical grammar conceived by Petőfi to make possible an intersubjective discussion on the interpretations of verbal texts) is still a work in progress, we can resort to the traditional instrument of paraphrase in natural language. It is impossible to detail completely all possible analysis of a pictorial communicate without the verbal medium,<sup>2</sup> but we can highlight some important aspects.

In the absence of words, coreferentiality chains may be created by the interpretation of distinct pictorial elements as sharing reference to the same objects/states of affairs of the relevant world fragment, a fundamental condition of the latter's constringency and, consequently, of the completeness and coherence of the communicate undergoing analysis. A possible system for probing the construction of reference chains by a graphic narrative's reader emerges through creative exercises and, once again, the verbal instrument.

## 5 Creative exercises as a litmus test of textuality

Preparatory creative exercises for explicative interpretations are used in semiotic textology to teach the interpretation of formal and semantic architectonics. These exercises are also a useful instrument for investigating the knowledge, expectations, and preferences of the interpreter that can be associated with the communicate undergoing interpretation. In relation to the latter, they simultaneously offer intelligible feedback on factors that intervene in the interpretation of the analysed *vehiculum* and in the process of accepting or rejecting it as suitable for expressing a constringent world fragment.

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<sup>2</sup> Some relevant aspects are mentioned in Piepoli (2010, 136–140).

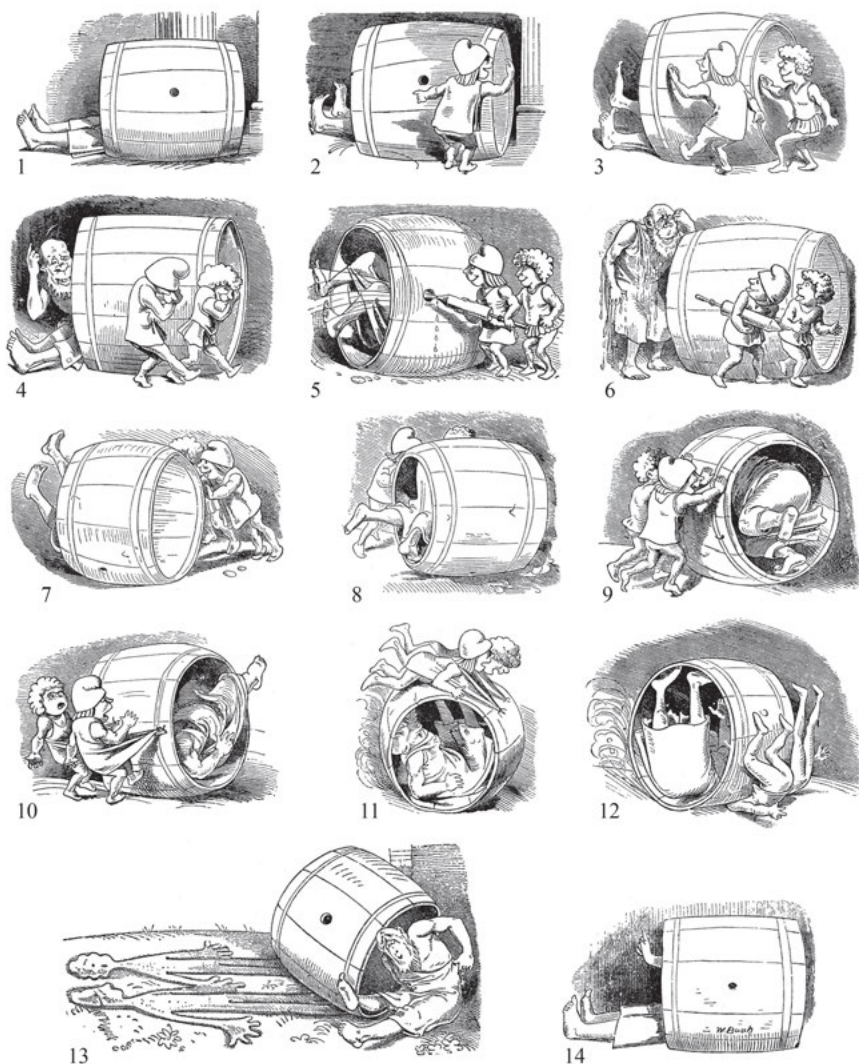


Fig. 5: The pictorial component of “Diogenes und die bösen Buben von Korinth” by Wilhelm Busch (1959 [1862]).

I modified the *vehiculum* of “Diogenes und die bösen Buben von Korinth” [Diogenes and the Bad Boys of Corinth], a communicate of the *Bildergeschichte* type by Wilhelm Busch (1959 [1862]), by removing the verbal component (fig. 5). The resulting *vehiculum* was further subdivided for an exercise given to a group of third- and fourth-year primary school students in Spain. The fourteen drawings

were numbered progressively and printed horizontally in one or two rows across three landscape-oriented sheets: 1–2–3 on the first page, 4–5–6 and 7–8–9 on two rows on the second, and 10–11–12 and 13–14 on two rows on the third, with enough blank space under each drawing for a caption. The students were asked to write few lines under each panel to tell the story told in the sequence, and give their story a title.

I reproduce two of the completed exercises.<sup>3</sup>

D. (8 years old)

The Naughty Children

1. He was a man who was vagabond and lived in a barrel.
2. There were two children who were very naughty and annoyed the vagabond man.
3. They kicked him [,] hit the barrel.
4. Then they left laughing.
5. They went to get a hose and threw water on him.
6. And they left insulting the vagabond man.
7. The two children returned and rolled the barrel back and forth.
8. They kept rolling it.
9. They did not stop rolling it
10. The clothes got hooked on the barrel of the two naughty children.
11. The naughty children rolled.
12. In the end the barrel crushed the children.
13. They looked like a carpet.
14. The vagabond man slept for an hour. The end.<sup>4</sup>

R. (9 years old)

The Barrel with Legs

1. Once upon a time there was a barrel that had legs.
2. One day a girl went to see what was happening but she did not know,
3. she called her sister to help her and then

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<sup>3</sup> I will reproduce as closely as possible the original text of each exercise in footnotes. I will use forward slashes to indicate where the students wrapped lines, which in a detailed analysis can have a structural relevance (considerations that should be made with the original *vehiculum* to hand). In some cases, it appears that line-wrap substituted for punctuation (one of them, which I inferred, can be found in one of the examples shown: it is text 3 by D.).

<sup>4</sup> “D[...] (8 años) Los niños traviesos: 1. Era un hombre que/ era vagabundo y/ vivía en un barril. 2. Había dos niños/ que eran muy traviesos/ y molestaban al/ hombre vagabundo. 3. Le daban patadas/ golpeaban el barril. 4. Después se fueron/ riendo. 5. Fueron por una/ manguera y/ le echaron agua. 6. Y se fueron insultando al/ hombre vagabundo. 7. Volvieron los dos niños traviesos/ y rodaron/ el barril para adelante y para atrás. 8. Siguieron rodán-/ dolo. 9. No pararon de/ rodarlo 10. La ropa se enganchó/ en el barril de los dos niños/ traviesos. 11. Rodaron los niños/ traviesos. 12. Al final los niños/ los aplastó el barril. 13. Parecieron una alfombra. 14. El hombre vagabundo durmió/ por una hora. Fin.”

4. And they started to wonder what would be inside and another man came.
5. And they made a hole in the barrel.
6. Then they left and the man asked himself what they were doing
7. And the girls pushed the barrel with legs downhill.
8. They pulled it over in the sand to stop it.
9. And they kept rolling the barrel with legs.
10. And they stopped it again.
11. They stopped it, the man inside was already dizzy.
12. And they crashed in the sand suddenly.
13. And the man who was inside the barrel came out.
14. Since then there has been a new man of the barrel and it will not be known who he is.<sup>5</sup>

Even a superficial analysis shows that different chains of coreferentiality were created. Both students identified the object in the centre of drawings 1–12 and 14, and on the left in drawing 13, as a “barrel,” yet they were not equally unanimous in linking other elements to the same referents.

According to D., the “man” in texts 1, 2, 6, and 14 would have the same referent represented in full in drawings 13 and 6 and partially in all the other drawings. Within the context of this interpretation, the feet and legs in drawings 1–5, 7, and 14, together with other body parts in the other drawings, belong to the same “man,” who “lived in” the “barrel” (text 1). Furthermore, D. identified the “man” as “vagabond” (texts 1, 2, 6, and 14) – possibly because the man is barefoot, poorly dressed, has a long beard and lives in a barrel. Regarding other referents, D. wrote of “two children” with the same referents represented, partially or fully (except for one of them, whose pictorial *vehiculum* is completely inferential in drawing 2), in drawings 2–13 and also verbally referred to with “they” throughout the text. Here too, we could infer that D. established a pragmatic relation between the behaviour found in the pictorial sequence and the qualification of the two referents as “naughty.”

In R.’s text, a first-degree interpretation suggests that the “legs” in texts 1, 7, and 9, and the legs drawn throughout the pictorial sequence, belong to the “barrel.” Only through a partially figurative interpretation are we able to link the

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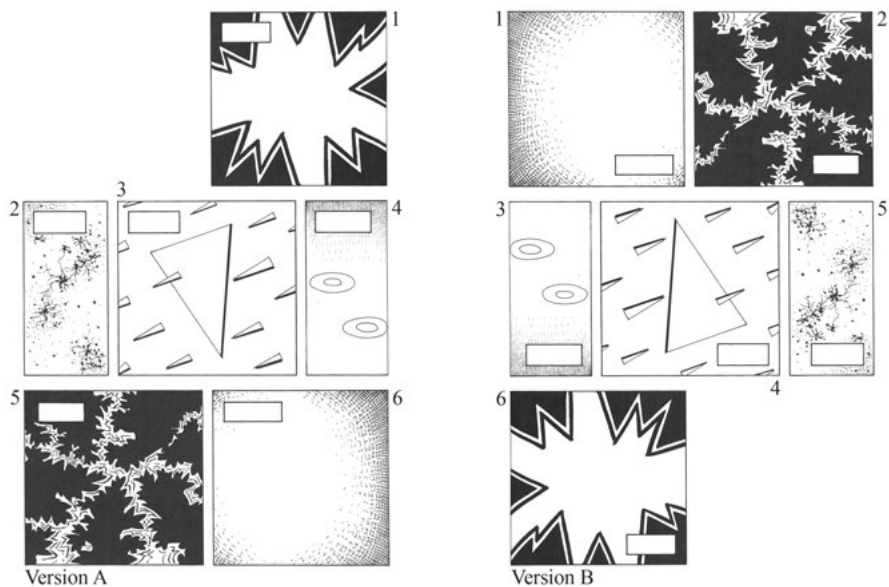
5 “R[...] (9 años) El barril con piernas: 1. Había una vez un/ barril que tenía/ piernas. 2. Un día una niña/ fue a ver lo que/ pasaba pero no/ lo sabía, 3. llamó a su hermana/ para que le ayudase/ y entonces 4. Y se pusieron/ a pensar qué habría/ dentro y vino otro/ hombre. 5. Y le hicieron/ un hueco al/ barril. 6. Luego se fueron y/ el hombre se/ preguntó qué hacían 7. Y las niñas empujaron/ el barril con/ patas cuesta abajo. 8. Lo pararon en/ la arena para/ detenerlo. 9. Y siguieron rodando/ el barril con patas. 10. Y lo volvieron/ a parar. 11. Lo pararon,/ el hombre/ de dentro ya estaba/ mareado. 12. Y se estrellaron/ en la arena de/ repente. 13. Y salió el hombre/ que había dentro/ del barril. 14. Desde entonces hay un nuevo/ hombre del barril y no/ se sabrá quién es.”

verbal and pictorial legs to the referent of the “man” in texts 11 and 13 (which we can refer to with “/man<sub>1</sub>/”). Based on what R. wrote, the referent of the “man” in his text 4 would not be /man<sub>1</sub>/ but precisely “another man” (text 4): we can refer to it with “/man<sub>2</sub>/.” Presumably, the referent of the “man” in text 6 is /man<sub>2</sub>/, too, and so is the referent of the man represented as standing in drawing 6. Consequently, the head, upper body, and arm represented on the left in drawing 4 would refer to parts of /man<sub>2</sub>/, while the legs would refer to parts of /man<sub>1</sub>/.

On the other hand, continuing to proceed by inference, the legs and hand represented in drawing 14 would refer to another referent, /man<sub>3</sub>/, according to the verbal expression “a new man” in text 14. R. linked the other subjects represented throughout the pictorial sequence to the same two referents and thought that they were children, too. In contrast to D., R. specified that they are two little girls (“una niña” [a girl] and “su hermana” [her sister] in R.’s original text), perhaps because of their hair and dresses.

Overall, the students recalled a various range of referents. Similarly to R., others considered that the legs on the left in drawing 4 belonged to one referent (“un niño” [a kid]) and the head, upper body, arm, and hand to another (“otro niño” [another kid], “el abuelo del niño del tubo” [the grandfather of the child of the tube], “un hombre feo” [an ugly man]). Overall, the other subjects could represent a boy and a girl, an elf and a girl, a girl and her brother, two elves, two boys, two girls, or generically two children; the object they handle in drawings 5 and 6 would represent a hose, a drill, or a bellows; the dark settings would refer to night time; and so on with other pictorial and verbal elements. I have said that this kind of creative exercise is also useful for investigating the knowledge of the interpreters: it is worth mentioning in this respect that none of the students linked the subject/s in the barrel to Diogenes, while some adults to whom I have shown the same modified *vehiculum* recalled the Greek philosopher from Sinope as the referent of the character in the sequence.

Despite a few problems with connexity and cohesion (possibly attributable to the developing linguistic competence of the young interpreters/producers), the verbal texts themselves remain readable/interpretable. This would indicate that the young students accepted the pictorial sequence as a complete communicate, which would be further confirmed by the fact that many of them wrote “the end” as a conclusion to their text. By comparing all the exercises of the group of students, it is possible to notice generally that a separation of the two media components appears to affect the verbal text more than the pictorial sequence, considering that the verbal part often lacks some clarifying references that can be found in the pictorial part, although it is also true that in the text we often find expressions such that in the drawings we cannot find elements with the same direct referent (such cases could also include the proper nouns some students assigned the char-



**Fig. 6:** Manipulated versions of page 120 from *Understanding Comics* by Scott McCloud (1994 [1993]). © Scott McCloud. Reprint and excerpts rights held by HarperCollins.

acters, since, until proven otherwise, there is no pictorial element in the drawing referring directly to the chosen names).

Of course, not all the sequences of drawings presented in similar exercises were always automatically considered pictorial communicates for the sole reason that the students were able to associate to each drawing a portion of a coherent verbal text. Certainly, in many cases, a narrative property was recognized in a pictorial sequence only after the completion of the relevant exercise.

In another exercise, I scanned and digitally edited a page from McCloud's *Understanding Comics*, removing a figurative panel and every verbal element from the page, as shown in figure 6. During a session of creative exercises within a lesson in the applied semiotics course at the University of Macerata, I gave the students a print of the page and asked them if they thought it could be considered as the *vehiculum* of a communicate. Many replied negatively, some were doubtful, few answered affirmatively. I asked them to convert the sequence of apparently non-figurative drawings into a multimedial communicate (multimedial text, in this case) using captions, filling in the box in each panel, and I allowed them to choose the vertical position of the page they preferred. They were not required to give it a title, and they could use the graphic space from which I had removed the panel to write their name and other data.

Two examples are shown below, one for each allowed page position.<sup>6</sup>

Version A:

- “1. There was a tremendous bang.
2. There was blood everywhere ...
3. I tried to figure out where those flashes came from.
4. Suddenly everything became quiet.
5. ... then something like an electric shock ...
6. It was the end of the world!!”<sup>7</sup>

Version B:

- “1. When you’re in the throes of nothingness ...
2. when you’re in the grip of confusion ...
3. ... and apathy ...
4. ... madness takes over ...
5. ... a murderous madness ...
6. ... that makes you lose your mind ... then you feel like breaking everything!”<sup>8</sup>

Except for a few exercises that were not completed, the multimedial texts produced, when shown to other students, were evaluated as being acceptable texts. I would like to underline that the creation of chains of coreferentiality in almost all the exercises was carried out within a partially figurative or a symbolic interpretation (second-degree interpretation). Another interesting result was that, after the conclusion of the exercise, the ranks of those who believed that the pictorial sequence alone could be considered a pictorial communicate grew, despite some of these students making it a condition that the boxes used for the captions be removed (implicitly inferring other pictorial elements below them).

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<sup>6</sup> I report two examples from Piepoli (2011, 464–468), albeit with a new, revised translation.

<sup>7</sup> “1. C’è stato un botto tremendo 2. Il sangue era ovunque ... 3. Cercai di capire da dove arrivassero quei lampi 4. All’improvviso tutto si calmò 5. ... poi come una scossa elettrica ... 6. Era la fine del mondo!!”

<sup>8</sup> “1. Quando si è in preda al nulla ... 2. quando si è in preda alla confusione ... 3. ... e all’apatia... 4. ... subentra una follia ... 5. ... una follia omicida ... 6. ... che fa perdere la testa ... allora viene la voglia di spaccare tutto!”

## 6 The need for an all-embracing analytical framework and the power of linguistic competence

The use of creative exercises can help determine whether a sequence of images fulfils a narrative function for a reader, but it cannot be fully conclusive since it does not allow one to analyse the reception of all the signifying elements and aspects of the pictorial component. The complexity of contemporary comics language, for example, implies the need for an analytical framework that also takes into account the influences of other languages and the transposition of some of their relevant rule systems to the target language, as well as a methodology that provides for the explicit presentation of their linguistic functioning in the analysed comic communicate.

The current unavailability of a canonical system for images does not prevent an interpreter from accounting for these elements using a detailed paraphrase in natural language, albeit with a lower guarantee of clarity and intersubjectivity. At this point, a professional interpretative approach is taken, since the interpreters are required not to limit themselves to using their own system of knowledge, but to try to reconstruct the set of knowledge that is considered adequate for the interpretation of the *vehiculum* in question (Petőfi 2004a, 85–86, 99–100). This knowledge includes linguistic competence in the analysed language.

The sequence shown in figure 7 was the subject of a discussion with the students who carried out the exercise in figure 6. The wordless page is part of a larger comic text that, within the framework of the story, could be considered a textual unit marked by coherence. As such, I presented it as a possible communicate and asked the students to discuss in groups and see if they could come up with an acceptable explanation. Apart from the widespread use of a second-degree explicative interpretation (symbolic interpretation), almost two-thirds of the groups spent more time telling what “was happening” in the second, fourth, and (to a lesser extent) sixth vignette than what happened in the others (or what they represented). All the variants were considered valid interpretations of an acceptable communicate. After a few lessons on film language and comics language, they repeated the same activity. This time, they were able to explain the phenomenon observed previously, making explicit that the use of panels without borders by the artist Ivo Milazzo gives a sense of greater vastness of the related scenes and emphasizes the events represented in them, and that their alternation with the bordered panels, in combination with the changes in framing, contributes to giving the story narrative rhythm and dramatic movement. Some students were also able to observe that the way in which the unbordered panels alternate with the bordered panels contributes to determining the graphic balance of the page.





**Fig. 7:** Page 85 from “Sciopero” by Giancarlo Berardi and Ivo Milazzo (1984).  
© Giancarlo Berardi, Ivo Milazzo.

This example may be useful for understanding how the acquisition of some linguistic competences allowed the students to assign various functions to the alternating technique of panel unbordering, including that of indicating suprasegmental traits so as to constitute a sort of pictorial prosody.

In conclusion, if this last example was intended to show how a refined linguistic competence affects the depth and the detail of an interpretation, the exercises carried out with schoolchildren tend at the same time to show that there is no need to share the same knowledge patrimony of grammatical rules in order to succeed in finding significance in a sequential pictorial *vehiculum*. Failure to comply with some rules of framing or a conventional sequential reading of a series of images, or even the choice to relegate variable portions of the *vehiculum* to the role of *vehiculum* settings, can be considered secondary when a reader/interpreter, young as they might be, succeeds in assigning a coherent interpretation to a sequential pictorial *vehiculum*.

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## **2 Hybridisierung literarischer Sprachen und Ausdrucksformen als Innovationsmodus**



Franz Hintereder-Emde

# Das Innovative hybrider Literatur am Beispiel Robert Walser

**Abstract:** This paper is meant to give a short introduction to the topic of the workshop „Hybridization as a Mode of Innovation“. A brief look at the notion of hybridity, which takes a prominent position in postcolonial discourse, will clarify the understanding of hybridization as it was used in our discussion. The main part is dedicated to the works of Swiss author Robert Walser. By seeking alternatives to realistic narrative, he made the combination of literary genres, association and arabesque description a key technique of his writing. Quite aware of the literary and cultural authorities of his time, his way of hybridization aimed at a playful dissolution of rigid genre limits. It also shows a tendency to subtly undermine the power structures in the society and cultural world of imperial Germany on the threshold of the twentieth century. Finally, his huge oeuvre of short prose pieces shows a sense of ‘translation’ of language in layers, which are veiled in the everyday speech of common-sense causality.


**Keywords:** Hybridität; Gattungsnorm, -mischung, -hierarchie; Macht- und Autoritätsstrukturen; Diskursivität; Sprachexperiment

## 1 Einleitung

Den Anstoß für das Thema „Hybridisierung literarischer Sprachen und Ausdrucksformen als Innovationsmodus“ gab die Beschäftigung mit Robert Walser. Sein Werk zeichnet sich in hohem Maße durch einen hybriden Charakter aus und konfrontiert unweigerlich mit der Frage nach hoher und niederer Literatur, sei es rezeptionsästhetisch mit Blick auf die Literaturkritik, sei es poetologisch durch Walsers Verwendung sowohl trivialer wie hochliterarischer Stoffe sowie seine freie Kombination verschiedener Gattungen. Zentrale Aspekte seines Werkes sollen einige Grundzüge der ‚Hybridisierung als Innovationmodus‘ beleuchten.

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## 2 Hybrides Schreiben

„Hybridisierung“ ist in der engeren Literaturwissenschaft kein sehr verbreiteter Begriff, während der Terminus „Hybridität“ im postkolonialen Diskurs ab den 1980er Jahren in Gebrauch ist und etwa bei dem Kulturtheoretiker Homi K. Bhabha vor allem in seiner Arbeit *Die Verortung der Kultur* (2000) eine zentrale Rolle spielt (vgl. Fludernik und Nandi 2001). Hier wird nicht mit dem postkolonialen Begriff gearbeitet, wobei jedoch ein kurzer Blick auf die Vorstellung des Hybriden lohnt. Im heutigen weitläufigen Sinn bezeichnen Hybride in biologischer Hinsicht die Erbgutmischung verschiedener Arten. Bei Menschen wurde von Mischling, Bastard oder Mestize gesprochen, es wurden also meist negativ konnotierte Bezeichnungen eingesetzt, die einen Kontrast zum Ideal rassischer Reinheit signalisierten.<sup>1</sup> Im griechischen Mythos hingegen bedeuten Hybride Mischungen von göttlichen und menschlichen Wesen, wobei „Hybris“ sowohl auf Vermischtes als auch auf Anmaßung deutet (vgl. Kien 2006). Die negative Wertung des Hybriden fand in der westlichen Kulturwelt vor allem im 19. Jahrhundert im Zeitalter des Imperialismus ihren Höhepunkt, als sich die spätkolonialistische Konkurrenz zuspitzte und zugleich eine wissenschaftlich untermauerte Rassenideologie entwickelt wurde. Hier wurzelt die scharfe Abgrenzung von Nationen, Ethnien und Kulturen, die durch die Ideologisierung kultureller Differenzen ein wesentlicher Auslöser für militärische Konflikte wurde, deren Höhepunkte die beiden Weltkriege bilden.

Auch im Bereich von Kunst und Literatur wurde Vermischtes stets abwertend als Minderwertiges und Defizitäres betrachtet. Die Ideologie der „reinblütigen/reinrassigen“ Art schwingt im Hintergrund bei der Ausdifferenzierung literarischer Gattungen mit. Das aristotelische Gattungsschema von Epik, Dramatik und Lyrik, die „drei echten Naturformen der Poesie“, wie sie Goethe (1781, 1787–1789) in den Noten zum *West-östlichen Divan* bezeichnet, bildete im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert die Folie, auf der sich der literarische Diskurs entwickelte. Auch wenn sich neue Formen, etwa die Oper, das bürgerliche Trauerspiel oder Prosaformen wie der Roman durchgesetzt haben, sie fanden sich stets einem Schema von reinen und devianten, von hohen und niederen Gattungen zugeordnet. Neue Genres und Medien künstlerischer und poetischer Darstellung wurden von Kulturkritik und im Bildungsbereich einer Gattungshierarchie unterworfen. In diese Hierarchie literarischer Genres sind auch jene kulturellen Macht- und Herrschaftsverhältnisse eingeschrieben, die über die Einzelkulturen hinaus das Weltbild

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<sup>1</sup> Wissenschaftlich gilt die Unterteilung des Menschen in Rassen als fragwürdig, neuerdings wurde im Erbgut des *Homo Sapiens* auch solches von Neandertalern und anderen Hominiden festgestellt (vgl. McCoy et al. 2017).

des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts bestimmten. Unter Hybridität versteht Bhabha eine „gegenseitige Kontaminierung“ (Fludernik 2001, 11) der kolonialen Verhältnisse, wodurch ein imaginiertes „dritter Raum“ entsteht, der letztlich die Vermischung der dominanten und der dominierten Kulturen ermöglicht (Bhabha 1994, 53–56). Diese Tendenz der Hybridität wird gegenwärtig bereits als Auswuchs des post-modernen Spätkapitalismus kritisiert, der etwa in Form der Unterhaltungsindustrie die Populärkultur in ihrer enthemmten Vermischung aller Stile, Formen und Kulturen als wertlos erscheinen lässt (vgl. Kien 2006).

Wenn im Folgenden von Hybridisierung die Rede ist, so geht es vornehmlich um die Auflösung oder Transformierung herkömmlicher Gattungsformen im literarischen Schreibprozess (vgl. Hielscher 2017), die gleichwohl im Bewusstsein kultureller Hegemonie und Autorität stattfindet, wie sie Kritik und Verlagswelt oder die Institutionen von Bildung und Kunst im deutschsprachigen Kulturraum repräsentieren.

### 3 Ausgangspunkt Walser

Robert Walsers Schreiben stand von Anbeginn in einem Spannungsverhältnis zu den Regeln und Gesetzen der Gattungen. Seine Tendenz zur Vermischung von Stilen und Genres provozierte immer wieder und immer noch die Frage, ob es sich dabei um eine Schreibkrise, um ein Versagen seiner Produktivität oder um ein poetologisches Konzept handele. Die Kritik hat es sofort bemerkt, etwa Widmann (vgl. Kerr 1978, 11–38) in seiner ersten Besprechung von Walsers frühen Gedichten, oder Christian Morgenstern beim Lektorieren der *Geschwister Tanner* (vgl. Walser 1975, 41–45). An Walsers Texten wurden durchaus wohlwollend eine naturhafte Naivität, aber auch ein fehlender, zumindest kurzer Bildungsweg beobachtet (vgl. Stiemer 2013, 250–251). In der Tat hatte Walser auf Grund wirtschaftlicher Probleme der Eltern auf eine höhere Schulbildung verzichten müssen, sich aber autodidaktisch vor allem literarisch umfassende Kenntnisse angeeignet. Walser wurde von seinem Verleger Bruno Cassirer mit Blick auf den Buchabsatz empfohlen, im Stil von Gottfried Keller zu schreiben (vgl. Seelig 1984, 31–32). Beides, Krisenhaftes und Kreatives, wird bei Walsers nonchalanter Gattungshandhabung eine Rolle spielen, wobei für mich der Schwerpunkt auf Letzterem, auf der kreativen Poetik liegt. Ob in der Gewissheit, sich um den literarischen Erfolg zu bringen, sei dahingestellt: Walser beharrte jedenfalls auf seinem Kurs quer zu allen Gattungen, auf der Suche, wie er es formulierte, nach einer „unbekannte(n) Lebendigkeit in der Sprache“ (Walser 1986, Bd. 20, 430). Den folgenden Überblick über wesentliche Elemente von Walsers hybrider Schreibweise gliedere ich in drei



Abschnitte: Die Auflösung und das Spiel mit Gattungsformen, das Unterlaufen von Macht- und Autoritätsstrukturen, und schließlich Übersetzung in einem ausweiteten Sinne.<sup>2</sup>

## 4 Dekonstruktion von Gattungsformen

Walters *Geschwister Tanner* (1907) wird, wie auch *Der Gehülfe* (1908), noch als realistischer Roman bezeichnet.<sup>3</sup> Aber bereits hier folgt die narrative Logik an vielen Punkten nicht mehr der realistischen Darstellungsweise, sondern es zeigt sich ein Verzicht auf Realitätsfiktion (vgl. Mohr 1994, 17). Mittels verschiedener Binnentexte wird die Entwicklung eines Erzählstranges aufgebrochen. Neben den Briefen und Traumbeschreibungen, die nicht wenig Raum einnehmen, verdeutlichen dies vor allem zwei Texte. Zum einen ist das der Aufsatz „Landleben“ (Walser 1986, Bd. 9, 146–153) des Protagonisten Simon, womit dieser während seines Aufenthalts bei seiner Schwester Hedwig Geld verdienen will. Zwar wird noch erwähnt, dass Simon den Brief zur Post bringt (Walser 1986, Bd. 9, 154), von einem Adressaten oder einer Antwort ist im weiteren Verlauf aber keine Rede mehr. Das zweite Beispiel betrifft die Aufzeichnungen seiner Jugend: „Er dachte zurück an seine Kindheit [...] und schrieb“ (Walser 1986, Bd. 9, 115). „Simon hörte auf zu schreiben. Er ging zu einer Photographie seiner Mutter, die an der schmutzigen Wand seines Zimmers hing, und preßte, indem er sich auf die Fußspitzen erhob, einen Kuß darauf. Dann zerriß er das Geschriebene [...], weil es keinen Wert mehr für ihn besaß“ (Walser 1986, Bd. 9, 124). Das Schreiben wird hier zu einer Art *acte gratuit* des Helden, der sich, eingeleitet von der elegischen Geste des Kusses auf das Foto seiner Mutter, gegen das eigene Schreiben richtet. Sowohl die sich nicht erfüllende Hoffnung auf Verdienst im ersten Beispiel, als auch die Wertlosigkeit und Vernichtung der Erinnerungen unterlaufen die erzählerische Entwicklung des Romangeschehens. Diese Texte, die der Leser eben gelesen hat, verselbständigen sich, indem sie verschwinden, genauer, indem ihr Verschwinden fingiert, die Autorschaft gewissermaßen annulliert wird. Zwar erweist sich die Realität des gedruckten Textes resistenter als die des Erzählgeschehens, aber

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<sup>2</sup> Schreiben als Übersetzung wird etwa in dem späten Prosastück „Diese zarten Bebanderten in gemalten Gewändern“ (*Aus dem Bleistiftgebiet*, Bd. 2, 475 ff) angesprochen, wo sich der Ich-Erzähler eine Übersetzung vornimmt, womit, laut Bürgi-Michaud (1996, 31), auf die Arbeit am *Räuber*-Roman verwiesen wird.

<sup>3</sup> Walser selbst bezeichnet Carl Seelig (1984, 59) gegenüber den *Gehülfen* als „ganz und gar realistische(n) Roman.“

damit wird bereits ein Gegenpol zur Vorstellung eines souveränen Romanautors geschaffen.

Auch das Ende des Romans, an dem der materiell wie sozial auf den Nullpunkt gesunkene Protagonist und eine geheimnisvolle Dame in den Schneewald hinausgehen (vgl. Walser 1986, Bd. 9, 332), ist denkbar weit von realistischer Erzähltradition entfernt; es zeigt vielmehr eine Wendung in eine Art Märchen. Es greift zwar das vorausgehende Märchen vom Bettelkind (vgl. Walser 1986, Bd. 9, 306–308) auf, aber anders als ein Märchen endet der Roman mit paradoxen Wendungen:

Sie müssen in ein Ohr hineinflüstern und Zärtlichkeiten erwidern lernen. Sie werden sonst zu zart. Ich will Sie lehren; [...] Wissen Sie, daß ich Ihre arme, glückliche Gefangene bin? [...] Ich muß Ihnen so viel sagen [...]. Kein Wort mehr, kein Wort mehr. Kommen Sie nur. – (Walser 1986, Bd. 9, 332)

Simon soll zärtlich sein, um nicht zu zart zu werden, die Frau nennt sich seine Lehrerin und zugleich seine „glückliche Gefangene“, sie will viel sagen und fordert Schweigen. Diese paradoxe Unbestimmtheit wird noch verstärkt und vollends ins Nichtsprachliche getrieben durch einen an das Ende gesetzten Gedankenstrich.

Aber Walsers Schreiben kennt nicht nur die Richtung weg von Realitätsabbildung. In seinen frühen Dramoletts und den späteren Nacherzählungen von Märchen<sup>4</sup> ist der umgekehrte Impuls zu beobachten: Realität und Gegenwart, Metareflexion und Rationalität dringen in das Märchen ein. Hat man bei den Grimms je ein so scharfzüngiges Schneewittchen wie in Walsers gleichnamiger Bearbeitung von 1901 gesehen, wenn es dem plaudernden Prinzen über den Mund fährt? „Ihr sprecht ja wie ein Wasserfall/ vom Schweigen, und schweigt doch nicht“ (Walser 1986, Bd. 14, 82). Walsers frühe Märchenfiguren beginnen zu argumentieren, sie reflektieren selbstreferentiell ihre Rolle im Märchen, ja die Gattung selbst. Das Märchen, so Schneewittchens Stiefmutter, verleumde sie: „Ach, glaub’ doch/ solch aberwitzgem Märchen nicht,/ das in der Welt begierig Ohr/ die Nachricht schüttet, ich sei toll/ aus Eifersucht, böß von Natur,/ was alles ein Geschwätz nur ist“ (Walser 1986, Bd. 14, 78).

Der Jäger hingegen führt das Märchen als Beweis seiner Unschuld an, womit Walser mit der Doppelbedeutung – Geschichte/Lüge – dieses Wortes spielt. Der Prinz bedauert wiederum, Schneewittchen aufgeweckt zu haben:

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<sup>4</sup> Vgl. Anna Fattoris (2011, 177–198) eingehende Untersuchung von Walsers häufigen Umbildungen bekannter Volksmärchen, sein Experimentieren mit Märchenfiguren und -motiven, seine Glossen und metasprachlichen Bemerkungen zu Märchen.

Verzeih der Lieb', daß sie dich aus dem Sarge nahm, dem gläsernen, worin du lagst/ mit Rosenwangen, offenem Mund/ und Atem, der Lebend'gen gleich./ Dies war ein Bild zum Sterben süß:/ Hätt' ich es doch gelassen so,/ dann kniete Liebe noch vor dir. / *Schneewittchen*: Schau, schau? Nun ich lebendig bin,/ wirfst du mich wie die Tote weg!/ Wie seltsam seid ihr Männer doch. (Walser 1986, Bd. 14, 86)

In *Aschenbrödel* (1901) bemerkt die Protagonistin, dass der Prinz recht unzeitgemäß mit Schwert und Spieß daherkomme (vgl. Fattori 2011, 182):

Ihr seid ein Prinz,/ ein Königssohn, das sieht man Euch/ an dem verschollnen Wesen an,/ das unsrer Zeit sich nicht mehr schmiegt./ Ein Mantel ist von Hermelin/ Euch um die Schulter angehängt./ Ihr tragt ein Schwert und einen Spieß,/ wie das wohl nimmer Brauch mehr ist; (Walser 1986, Bd. 14, 41)

Walsers Beschreibungsimpuls zeigt folgende Gegenläufigkeiten: Wirklichkeitsdarstellung wird durch Fiktives, Fiktiv-Märchenhaftes hingegen durch Gegenwarts- oder Realitätsfingierung angereichert. Neben der Erzähl- und Bedeutungsebene lässt sich bereits in den frühen Werken eine Tendenz zur Selbstreferentialität seines Schreibens ausmachen, die sich später verstärken wird. Sein Roman bleibt nicht in den Grenzen der meist mit dem realistischen Erzählen gleichgesetzten, überlieferten Form, während den Märchenfiguren Reflektiertheit und psychologische Charakterzüge angedichtet werden. Diese Auflösung eng gefasster Gattungsformen ließe sich ebenso mit Walsers ironischer Verwendung von Gattungsnamen wie Novelle, Märchen, Geschichten, Brief, Vorspiel, Portraitskizze usw. in den Titeln seiner Kurzprosa illustrieren. Genette (1993, 13–14) bezeichnet Texte, die sich explizit einer literarischen Gattung zuordnen, als Architexte, die er als Spezialform der Intertextualität deutet. Er behauptet, dass Texte nicht von sich aus die Gattung bestimmen, sondern Leser und Kritiker, stellt aber zugleich fest: „Das Wissen um die Gattungszugehörigkeit eines Textes lenkt und bestimmt, wie man weiß, in hohem Maß den ‚Erwartungshorizont‘ des Lesers und damit die Rezeption des Werkes“ (Genette 1993, 14). Walsers ironische Provokation, die Entscheidung über die Gattung bereits durch den Titel an sich zu reißen, ist zugleich Aufforderung an den Leser, die Gültigkeit seiner Gattungsbezeichnung zu überprüfen und sich generell Gedanken über Gattungen zu machen.

In der Forschung wird von Walsers „Verweigerung der Normerfüllung der Gattungen“ gesprochen, von seinem Aufbegehren gegen den Gattungszwang (Lamping 2011, 22), die dem Leser „Gattungstoleranz“ abverlange (Utz 2011, 37). Hier würde Walser protestieren und dagegen halten, dass nicht jeder Leser stets auf die Erfüllung der Gattungsnormen nach germanistischen Maßstäben poche und nur goutieren könne, was den Regeln der reinen Gattung entspräche. In der Tat ist der Leser bei Walsers Texten immer aufgefordert, ständig die Ebenen zu

wechseln, ja auf mehreren Ebenen gleichzeitig zu lesen, auf einer romantischen, auf einer modernen lebensweltlichen, auf einer historischen, auf einer Nonsense- und auf einer kreativ-sprachspielerischen Ebene, auf einer lautmalenden und einer reimenden. Was Peter Utz „ambivalente Lesbarkeit“ (Utz 2011, 35) nennt, deutet Fuchs (1993, 131–132) noch positiver als dialogisches Element, mit dem der Leser als Kommunikations- und Spielpartner in eine Lach- und Reflexionsgemeinschaft einbezogen wird.

## 5 Auflösung von Macht- und Autoritätsstrukturen

Mit der hybriden Auflösung der Gattungsformen und der Diskursivität des Erzählens geht eine Auflösung von Macht- und Autoritätsstrukturen einher. Betrachten wir wieder *Geschwister Tanner*, dann erleben wir gleich zu Beginn eine Machtumkehrung zwischen dem stellensuchenden Protagonisten und dem Buchhändler:

„Ich will Buchhändler werden“, sagte der jugendliche Anfänger, „ich habe Sehnsucht darnach und ich weiß nicht, was mich davon abhalten könnte, mein Vorhaben ins Werk zu setzen. [...] Sehen Sie, mein Herr, ich komme mir, so wie ich jetzt vor Ihnen dastehe, außerordentlich dazu geeignet vor, Bücher aus Ihrem Laden zu verkaufen, so viele, als Sie nur wünschen können zu verkaufen [...]. (Walser 1986, Bd. 9, 7)

Dabei wird dieser Umschlag vor allem durch einen eloquenten Wortschwall des Helden erzeugt, dem sich der Prinzipal unvermutet ausgesetzt sieht. Das Rollenverhältnis von Stellensucher und Arbeitgeber kippt vollends, wenn Simon dem Händler den Wert von Zeugnissen ausredet und ihm Mut zur eigenen Entscheidung macht:

Nein, Herr, Erkundigungen taugen in der Regel keinen Pfifferling, ich rate Ihnen, wenn ich mir Ihnen, dem alten Herrn gegenüber, einen Ratschlag herausnehmen darf, entschieden davon ab, [...] wenn Sie gedenken, mich zu verwenden, so bitte ich Sie, etwas mehr Mut zu bezeigen als die meisten andern Prinzipale. (Walser 1986, Bd. 9, 9)

Natürlich handelt es sich bei dieser Überlegenheit nur um eine flüchtige, rhetorisch hervorgezauberte Umkehrung der realen Kräfteverhältnisse, die letztlich nicht angestrebt ist. Seine eigentliche Berufung sieht Simon im Dienen, worin ein Grundmotiv von Walsers Literatur liegt.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ich gehe hier bewusst nicht auf *Jakob von Gunten* ein, worin das Diener-Motiv zu einer komplexen zeitkritischen Metaphorik gesteigert wird, da wir dazu einen eigenen Beitrag haben.

Im *Räuber*-Roman (1925/1972) wird das instabile, dynamische Machtverhältnis von Herr- und Dienerschaft, das bereits in der ambivalenten Aufspaltung von Ich-Erzähler und Räuber-Figur angelegt ist, offen ausgesprochen: Die aktiv angenommene Untergebenenrolle des Räubers verkehrt sich ins Gegenteil, sollte sich jemand die Herrenrolle anmaßen (vgl. Walser 1986, Bd. 12, 144). Dieser instabile Zustand gilt gleichermaßen für das Herrschen:

Und auf diese Weise wäre jede Herrschaft schwankend. Und die Dienenden, die, die von Schlägen getroffen werden, wären die Stärkeren, die von sich Erfüllteren. Und die Herrschenden wären die Beunruhigten, die Hilfsbedürftigen. [...] Und das Herrschen wäre eine Aufgabe, die über die Kraft ginge und sie darum krank mache. (Walser 1986, Bd. 12, 73–74)

Diese Reflexionen nehmen ihren Ausgang bei der Szene eines Handgemenges auf der Straße zwischen dem Räuber und einem Mann, der dem Räuber einen Stockschlag auf die Hand verpasst und mit einem Revolver bedroht, weil dieser seiner Frau keinen Platz gemacht hatte (vgl. Walser 1986, Bd. 12, 71–74). In dieser Passage, die eine Reihe assoziativer Reflexionen auslöst, zeigt sich der gleitende Übergang von einer zur nächsten Bedeutungsebene, der hier nur in Stichwörtern angedeutet werden kann. Unter anderem lassen sich folgende Ebenen erkennen: eine soziale im Konflikt zwischen Räuber und Herr; eine subjektive: Der Räuber sieht die geschlagene Hand als Opfer seines hochmütigen Kopfes; eine historische: Der unterlegene Räuber geht stolz von dannen, als sei es das Schlachtfeld Marignano von 1515, auf dem die Eidgenossen im Konflikt mit Frankreich einen geordneten Rückzug vornahmen; und eine Märchenpersiflage: Der des Lachens unfähigen Königstochter wird vom dummen Handwerksburschen das ersehnte Lachen entlockt, der dafür wie versprochen, wenn auch widerwillig, ihre Hand erhält. Spielerisch und assoziativ werden auf diese Weise paradoxe, poetische und komische Gedankenbewegungen initiiert.

Im *Räuber*-Roman wird ein dissoziierter Erzählverlauf entwickelt, wie er seit Laurence Sternes *Tristram Shandy* (1759–1767) zum Repertoire modernen Erzählens gehört. Nahezu alle Andeutungen und Motive, die im *Räuber* vom Erzähler zunächst fallen gelassen oder aufgeschoben werden, kommen wieder zum Vorschein, worin das narrative Raffinement der bewusst gestalteten Diskontinuität liegt. Der Text verweigert einen diskursiven Erzählverlauf, von dem erwartet wird, einfach und verständlich, dazu belehrend und unterhaltsam zu sein. Der Erzähler spricht denn auch von einem „besonnene(n) Buch [...], aus dem absolut nichts gelernt werden kann“ und das folglich keinerlei „Anhaltspunkte fürs Leben“ (Walser 1986, Bd. 12, 12) bietet. Trotz der verwirrenden Fülle an Episoden und Andeutungen behauptet er, stets den Überblick über seine Geschichte zu bewahren. Diese Verweigerung der überschaubaren Geschichte ist auf poetologischer

Ebene seine Form, sich den Zwängen der literarischen Hierarchie zu entziehen. Hier spalten sich indes die Meinungen der Kritiker: Während zum einen von „der drohenden Einsicht in die Unfähigkeit zur epischen Formerfüllung“ (Osterkamp 1991, 233) gesprochen wird, argumentiert W.G. Sebald:

In der Tat zeugt die Unverkramptheit, mit der er die beträchtlichen strukturellen Schwierigkeiten und das Changieren der Stimmungen zwischen tiefer Verstörung und eine nur mit dem Wort *Allegria* richtig bezeichneten Leichtigkeit meistert, von einem hohen Maß an künstlerischer und moralischer Souveränität. (Sebald 1998, 157 f)

Walsers Erzählweise ist dabei konsequent anti-ideologisch, insofern sie die Räuber- oder Erzähler-Gedanken ebenso aufhebt und ironisiert wie den kritisierten Ausgangspunkt der Macht- und Überlegenheitspositionen. Es geht aber nie um eine bloße Umkehr der Machtverhältnisse. In einer neuen Form des Bezugs treten Stärke und Schwäche, Macht und Ohnmacht in eine dynamische Wechselbeziehung.

Lamping macht in Walsers Kurzprosa vor allem der Bieler Zeit (1913–1920) eine Verschiebung und Flucht in die Fiktion aus und sieht gerade „in ihrer Hybridität zugleich ein Symptom der Krise“. In vielen Texten entdeckt er eine „ermüdende Aufzählung und Reihung von Wörtern, die oft nur tautologisch ist“ und einen „poetische(n) Redezwang“ verrate (Lamping 2011, 24). Im scheinbar sinnlos-tautologischen Evozieren von Naturschönheiten lässt sich durchaus ein Anschreiben gegen eine Krise feststellen, nämlich die Krise des Ersten Weltkriegs, der Europa im Chaos versinken lässt. Walser stellt dem offen formulierten Pazifismus Hesses seine eigene Art von Friedensbotschaft an die Seite, nämlich den Krieg durch die Idyllik seiner Naturstücke schlichtweg aus der Welt zu verbannen. Das 1917 erstmals veröffentlichte Prosastück „Schneien“ mag dafür ein Beispiel sein. Unablässig werden die Gegenstände und Lebewesen aufgereiht, auf die der Schnee herabfällt, wobei er die vielfarbige und -gestaltige Landschaft in ein weißes Einerlei friedlich vereint. Dann jedoch erfolgt am Schluss die Wendung hin zu einem im Krieg gefallenen Soldaten, der ebenfalls unter der Schneedecke verschwindet. Seine Frau, der dessen Schicksal plötzlich vor Augen erscheint, sitzt weinend am Tisch (vgl. Walser 1986, Bd. 5, 159–162). Stiemer (2013, 156–183) analysiert Walsers Bieler Idyllen im Kontext ihrer Publikationsform, insbesondere in der *Neuen Züricher Zeitung*. Zahlreiche Prosastücke erschienen durch einen schwarzen Strich abgesetzt im unteren Teil der Titelseite, während der Teil über dem Strich den Kriegsberichten von den verschiedenen Fronten gewidmet war. Um die Neutralität der Schweiz zu bewahren, wurden die Meldungen aller Kriegsparteien unkommentiert abgedruckt. Erst aus dieser Kombination lässt sich das Potential an Irritation und stummem Protest von Walsers idyllenhaften Beiträgen erschließen. Auch Texte wie „Der Soldat“ (vgl. Walser 1986, Bd. 16, 333–

334) oder „Beim Militär“ (vgl. Walser 1986, Bd. 16, 337–339), die sich scheinbar aktuellen Zeitthemen widmen, demaskieren zum einen stilistisch durch Wiederholungen und leere Worthülsen ironisch die Hohlheit militaristischer Ideologie. Zum anderen strafen sie im Kontrast zu den Frontberichten im oberen Seitenteil die angestimmte Kriegs- und Soldatenromantik seiner Prosatexte Lügen, worin gerade ihr kritisches Kalkül liegt.

## 6 Walsers Übersetzung von Welt in Sprache

Hybridisierung ist für Walser ein Verfahren, den Stillstand sedimentierter und fixierter Diskurse zu verflüssigen, diese neu aufzumischen. Authentische, biographische, fiktionale, intertextuelle Elemente konstituieren in ihrer Mischung und Kombination verschiedener Gattungen und Darstellungsebenen neue sprachliche Ausdrucksformen. Für Walser ist Sprache gewissermaßen eine *open source*, über die er im Sinne von Wissen, Information und Kreativität, Humor und Komik frei verfügt. Sprache ist das Medium, in dem er die durch die materielle, soziale und politische Wirklichkeit fixierten Strukturen auflöst, sie ihrer Autorität beraubt, umformt, und dieser Umformung die Gestalt seiner Texte gibt. Sein Erzählduktus zersetzt mit der Wort- und Syntaxebene die Bedeutungsebene. Er löst Wort- und Gedankengebilde ins Klangliche auf, schafft Vieldeutigkeiten, Assoziationen, Anspielungen, kurz: Er treibt die polyphone Vielschichtigkeit der Sprache hervor. Ein kurzer Blick auf die erwähnte Straßen-Szene mag zur Illustration dienen:

Er hatte der Dame nicht Platz gemacht, die mit dem Herrn ging, [...] Herrgott, wie der sich für seine Gemahlin einsetzte. [...] „Dir will ich zeigen, was Höflichkeit ist.“ [...] [D]ie arme Frau [...] schrie (laut): „Um Gotteswillen, Willi!“ Der Aufschrei durchschnitt die Luft wie ein regelrechter Notschrei. [...] ich schieße“, schrie oder rief bloß der Herr Immermann oder Immerhin. In der Tat schien er immerhin ein aufrichtiger, seiner Frau ergebener Mensch. (Walser 1986, Bd. 12, 71)

Wort- und Lautwiederholungen, Relativierungen, stereotype Reihungsketten, Neologismen, Nominal- und Verbalbildungen werfen den Fortgang logischer, zeit-räumlicher Argumentation und Beschreibung aus der diskursiven Bahn. Walser übersetzt auf diese Weise kaleidoskopische Wahrnehmungen, Erfahrungen, Beobachtungen, Urteile und Klischees in klingendes Sprachmaterial. Ein Beispiel aus *Geschwister Tanner* illustriert, dass dies bereits sehr früh Element seiner Poetik ist. Es beschreibt die Hauptfigur beim Tischdecken:

Er mußte ein sauberes, weißes Tischtuch über den Tisch breiten, daß die Falten nach oben zu liegen kamen, dann die Teller hinlegen, so, daß der Tellerrand nicht über den Tischrand hinausragte, dann Gabel, Messer und Löffel hinlegen, Gläser aufstellen und eine Karaffe mit frischem Wasser, Servietten auf die Teller legen und das Salzgefäß auf den Tisch stellen. Stellen und legen, hinlegen und anfassen und hinstellen, [...] Gläser nicht aneinanderklirren, und Teller nicht klappern lassen, aber über ein vorkommendes Klappern und Klirren auch nicht erstaunt sein [...]. (Walser 1986, Bd. 9, 199)

Wortwiederholungen und -variationen verdichten das Wortmaterial, Reim- und Klangfolgen evozieren einen sprachlichen Rhythmus, der die Tätigkeit in den Hintergrund rücken lässt.

Ein weiteres Beispiel stammt aus dem längeren Prosatext *Naturstudie*, erstmals 1916 in *Die Rheinlande*<sup>6</sup> erschienen:

Fröhliches Kindheitsland, lichte Elternerde, hohe Felsen, heitere, kleine Wege, Stadt- und Bauernhäuser. Gottes und der Menschen helle Welt und reizende, anmutige Verstecke, Büsche, Gräser, Pflanzen, Apfel- und Kirschbäume, tiefsinnig-bleiche Lilien, üppig-schöne Rosen im dunkelgrünen heimeligen Garten, Helligkeit des frühen Morgens, die du mich götterhaft mit frischer Hoffnung anblitztest, [...]. Rötliche Wolken über abendlich-bleichem See, Morgenrot, Wind, Regen und süße Mittagshitze, wie dankbar sah ich euch an, wie tief empfand ich euch, wie glücklich war ich im traulichen, zeitvergeudenden Verkehr und im liebenden Umgang mit euch. Niemals werde ich zu bereuen haben, daß ich Aug und Ohr, alle Aufmerksamkeit, Sinne und Gedanken und die Seele eifrig euch hingab. (Walser 1986, Bd. 7, 79)

Idyllische Klischees evozieren, bis zur Kitschhaftigkeit gesteigert, eine paradieshafte Naturerfahrung, die wiederum im denkbar größten Kontrast zur in den Medien geschilderten Weltkriegsrealität<sup>7</sup> steht und darin zugleich eine tragisch zu nennende Verlusterfahrung artikuliert.

Walsers Wortkaskaden, angefangen von den frühen Arbeiten bis zum *Räuber* und dem späten Werk der Mikrogramme, bilden vor allem Klänge, Assoziationen, Oppositionen, An-, Quer- und Gegenklänge, die sich dem diskursiven Geschichtenerzählen entwinden und die gerade darin die Realität in ihrer destruktiven Brutalität bewusst machen. Angesichts dieser redundanten, oft zu Prosagedichten verdichteten, in rhythmische Aufzählungen und Reihungen gesteigerten Texte

<sup>6</sup> In digitalisierter Form in der Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg zugänglich. <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/rheinlande1916> (24. Februar 2018).

<sup>7</sup> Stierner, der die Publikationssituation genau recherchiert, merkt zu den Idyllen der Bieler Zeit an: „Die beschriebenen kontextuellen Kontraste zwischen Weltkrieg und Idylle müssen somit als Ergebnisse eines produktionsästhetischen Kalküls betrachtet werden, das auf eine oppositionelle Haltung des Autors schließen lässt.“ (Stierner 2013, 172)



ließe sich sagen, Walser rappt! Walsers Prosa formt so Welt in Sprache um, indem sie musikalischen Klanggebilden, synästhetischer Malerei oder einer Sprache der Bühne angenähert wird. Sie erzeugt mittels dieser sprachspielerischen Poetik der Hybridität eine eigene Wahrnehmungsform des Sprachlichen.

## 7 Schluss

Robert Walser ging seit Beginn seines Schreibens sehr frei mit dem Sprachmaterial und den literarischen Formen um. Früh bekam er dafür von der Kritik den Stempel einer naiven Naturbegabung und eines gewissen bildungsfernen Dilettantismus aufgedrückt. Geflissentlich wurde lange Zeit übersehen, dass er durchaus über ein breites literarisches Wissen verfügte, mit dem er in so subtiler wie komplexer Weise intertextuell arbeitete. Mit Leichtigkeit kombinierte er diverse Stoffe aus Märchen und Mythologien, aus trivialer und hoher Literatur, aus Fakten des Tagesgeschehens und historischen Begebenheiten zu seinen Textkollagen. Was sich in den Augen von Vertretern der Hochkultur wie mangelnder Respekt vor der Tradition oder begrenzte Gestaltungskraft ausnahm, erweist sich bei genauerem Hinsehen als sein originärer Anspruch, neue Wege literarischen Ausdrucks zu suchen.

Walsers Versuche, über das diskursive und realistische Erzählen hinaus mit dem Wort- und Satzmaterial möglichst viele Bedeutungs-, Assoziations- und Klangfacetten anzustoßen, ähneln in manchen Zügen Experimenten des Surrealismus oder auch eines James Joyce. Bedeutungen werden sprachlich nicht mehr eindeutig festgelegt, sondern sie schwingen in einem mehrstimmigen Klangbild, sie manifestieren sich darin für Momente und lösen sich ebenso schnell wieder auf. Darin liegt auch der Verzicht auf die Anmaßung intellektueller, weltanschaulicher Autorität und Macht.

Nicht die getreue Einhaltung der Gattungsregeln, sondern das konsequente Experimentieren damit hat Walsers Werk über die Zeit hinweg modern und lebendig gehalten. Es erweist sich bis in unsere Gegenwart hinein gerade in seiner Hybridität als vielfältige Inspiration für junge Autoren und Künstler und lädt unvermindert zu neuen Entdeckungen und Übersetzungen in andere Sprachen und Medien ein. Hierin entfaltet sich das innovative Potential von Walsers Literatur. Obgleich es sich hier um seinen Individualstil handelt, konnten aus seiner Poetik wesentliche Elemente für die Hybridisierung identifiziert werden: die Skepsis gegenüber fixierten Gattungsformen, das Hinterfragen von Autorität und Werten sowie das Experimentieren mit neuen Ausdrucksformen von Sprache und Wahrnehmung.

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# Goethes *Faust* in Oper, Film und Manga: Die Faust-Bearbeitungen bei Gounod, Murnau und Tezuka am Beispiel der Studierzimmer-Szene


**Abstract:** What happens to Goethe's *Faust* when it is adapted for another medium? By analyzing the transformations which *Faust*'s study scene undergoes in Gounod's opera *Faust*, Murnau's film *Faust* and Tezuka's manga *Neo Faust*, we try to establish if these changes depend on the medium chosen for the adaptation. In Gounod's opera, the study scene is deprived of all philosophical and comical elements which Goethe had introduced into it. The libretto stresses instead a new element, absent from the original scene: the old man's longing for love. In doing so, the libretto's author, although unfaithful to Goethe, remains true to the nature of French lyrical opera. This genre requires a drama centered on a passionate and doomed love story. In Murnau's film, the comical elements of the play vanish into a frightful and dark atmosphere, Goethe's often farcical Mephistopheles gives way to a terrifying fiend, and Faust is no longer carried away by his own hubris, but seems crushed by a tragic fate. This film exemplifies the "haunted screen" of the silent movie era in Germany. In *Neo Faust*, by introducing anachronisms and elements of sociopolitical satire, the author stresses the farcical aspects of Goethe's play. This manga is a true comic strip, in the original sense of the word, which means an amusing story. Tezuka, just like Gounod and Murnau, remains true to the requisites of the medium for which he adapts Goethe's play.

**Keywords:** literarische Stoffe in verschiedenen Medien; Stoff- und Medientreue; Oper; Manga; Film; Faust-Thematik, Faust-Stoff; sozialpolitische Krise; aktueller Zeithintergrund; Unterhaltung

Goethes *Faust* (1808) ist vielleicht das berühmteste Theaterstück der europäischen Literatur. Es überrascht daher nicht, dass es von mehreren Schriftstellern umgeschrieben und von mehreren Künstlern bearbeitet worden ist. Was geschieht mit einem Theaterstück, wenn es in eine andere literarische Gattung beziehungsweise in eine andere Kunstform verwandelt wird? In diesem Beitrag werde ich die Szene der ersten Begegnung zwischen Faust und Mephisto untersuchen: Es ist die

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berühmte Szene, in der Mephisto in Fausts Studierzimmer erscheint und ihn überredet, einen Pakt mit ihm zu schließen. Ich werde zeigen, welche Änderungen diese Szene in drei verschiedenen Bearbeitungen in unterschiedlichen Medien erfährt. Die erste ist Gounods Oper *Faust* (1859), die zweite Murnaus Film *Faust, eine deutsche Volkssage* (1926), der allerdings Motive aus dem Stück von Goethe mit Elementen aus anderen Quellen verwebt (vgl. Dabezies 1972, 171), die dritte Osamu Tezukas Comic *Neo-Faust* (1988–1989).

## 1 Leidenschaftliche Liebe und Jugendlust: Gounods Opernversion

In der Oper von Gounod erfährt die Szene des Studierzimmers drei auffällige Änderungen. Zuerst ist sie gleichzeitig viel kürzer und sozusagen konzentrierter als in dem Theaterstück. Goethes Mephisto erscheint als Student im Studierzimmer, stellt sich vor, geht weg. Dann taucht er wieder auf, diesmal als junger Adliger, und schließt einen Pakt mit Faust. In der Oper erscheint er nur einmal, als Adliger. Und nachdem er den Pakt geschlossen hat, verwandelt er den alten Faust sofort in einen jungen Mann. Im Theaterstück findet Fausts Verwandlung in einer späteren Szene statt, und zwar nicht im Studierzimmer, sondern in einer Hexenküche.

Ein zweiter Unterschied zwischen dem Original und der Oper liegt darin, dass es keine Spur von philosophischen und theologischen Themen gibt. Goethes Faust versucht nämlich stets, neue Probleme zu lösen, und er stößt immer wieder auf neue Lösungsversuche: zwischen Wort und Tat, Sein und Nichts, Augenblick und Ewigkeit, Makrokosmos und Mikrokosmos, Wissenschaftler und Dichter. „Im Anfang war die Tat“ (Goethe 2000, 36), und nicht, wie es im Alten Testament geschrieben ist, das Wort. Es ist gerade diese gotteslästerliche Behauptung, die in Goethes Faust den Pudel in Unruhe versetzt und ihn sich in ein teuflisches Gespenst verwandeln lässt. Nach seiner Erscheinung nennt sich Mephisto „der Geist der stets verneint“ (Goethe 2000, 39), dann erliegt Faust der Versuchung des Nihilismus und verflucht die ganze Welt. Sie sind also bereit, ihren Pakt zu schließen, stoßen sich aber an dem Problem der Zeit. Die Zeit wird für Faust ‚vorbei‘ sein, wenn er zum Augenblick „Verweile doch“ sagt (Goethe 2000, 48). In diesem Augenblick hofft Faust, „was der ganzen Menschheit zugeteilt ist“, in seinem „innern Selbst genießen“ und so sein „eigen Selbst zu ihrem Selbst erweitern“ zu können (Goethe 2000, 50). Mephisto „selbst möchte solch einen Herren kennen, würd ihn Herrn Mikrokosmos nennen“ (Goethe 2000, 51). Aber seiner Meinung nach braucht der Wissenschaftler Faust die Hilfe eines „Poeten“, um „in Gedanken schweifen“ zu können (Goethe 2000, 51).

Die Librettisten der Oper, Jules Barbier und Michel Carré, haben aber diese philosophischen Fragen gestrichen. Ihr Faust verlangt nur eins: die „Lust“ („les plaisirs“) der „Jugend“ („la jeunesse“), oder einfacher gesagt: einen „Süßmägdeleins Kuss“ („Les jeunes maîtresses! A moi leurs caresses!“ [Barbier und Carré 1976, 16]). Und wenn er zögert, den Pakt zu unterschreiben, „erscheint auf Mephistos Wink Gretchen am Spinnrade“ („Il fait un geste. Le fond du théâtre s’ouvre et laisse voir Marguerite assise devant son rouet filant“ [Barbier und Carré 1976, 18]): Faust, brennend vor Begierde, beeilt sich zu unterzeichnen. In Goethes Stück lässt zwar Mephisto eine ungenannte junge Frau erscheinen, jedoch in einer weiteren Szene, nachdem der Pakt bereits geschlossen worden ist. Hier ist also der Durst nach Liebe nicht, wie in der Oper, Fausts primäre und einzige Motivation. Die Hauptgestalt des Stücks ist ein Wissenschaftler auf der Suche nach neuen Einsichten. In der Oper wird diese Gestalt zu einem alten Mann auf der Suche nach einer neuen Jugend.

Letztlich haben die Librettisten der Oper auch auf die komische und spektakuläre Folklore des Teufels verzichtet. In dem Stück erscheint zuerst ein „Pudel“ (Goethe 2000, 35), der sich in eine Art „Nilpferd“ (Goethe 2000, 37) verwandelt. An diesem Augenblick hört man die Wehklagen von „Geistern“: Einer von ihnen ist nämlich in dem monströsen Tier „gefangen“ (Goethe 2000, 37). Faust beginnt eine ganze Reihe von Beschwörungen, um ihn zu befreien, und endlich erscheint Mephisto. Will dieser aber das Studierzimmer verlassen? „Ein kleines Hindernis“ (Goethe 2000, 40), Fausts Pentagramm, verbietet es ihm. Er muss seinem Gast das „Gesetz der Teufel und Gespenster“ (Goethe 2000, 41) erklären, und ihn um Hilfe bitten. Weil Faust sich weigert, ihm zu helfen, beschwört der Teufel Höllengeister, die den widerspenstigen Greis durch ihren Gesang zum Schlafen bringen. Mephisto beschneidet dann das Pentagramm mit einem „Rattenzahn“ (Goethe 2000, 43) und geht hinaus. Diese folkloristische Beschreibung des Teufels mit Beschwörungen, Erscheinungen, Ungeheuern, Geistern und Höllengesetzen ist selbstverständlich spektakulär, aber zugleich komisch. Goethes Mephisto, weit davon entfernt, ein allmächtiges und schreckliches Wesen zu sein, erscheint dem Leser manchmal ungeschickt und erbärmlich. Es ist, als ob Goethe die Volkssage parodiert, die ihn zu seinem Werk inspiriert hatte. So führt er die Tradition der deutschen Wanderbühnen fort, die Fausts Geschichte auf komische Elemente, auf eine „Farce“ („la farce“ [Dabezies 1972, 47]) reduzierten.

Die Oper ist viel schlichter als Goethes Stück. Faust ist verzweifelt, weil ihm Gott nicht zum Glück verhelfen kann. Er jammert, schreit zuletzt noch „Herbei, Satan! herbei!“ („A moi, Satan! à moi!“ [Barbier und Carré 1976, 15]), und zu seiner großen Überraschung „erscheint plötzlich“ („apparaissant“ [Barbier und Carré 1976, 16]) Mephisto vor ihm. Sie verhandeln über einen Pakt: Mephistopheles lässt Gretchen erscheinen, was Faust schließlich dazu bewegt, zu unterzeichnen. Der

alte Mann trinkt ein Jugendelixier, und die neuen Partner verlassen zusammen das Studierzimmer. Die folkloristischen Elemente beim Auftritt des Teufels sind zum größten Teil verschwunden: Die Librettisten haben alle die Beschwörungen, Geister, Ungeheuer und Höllengesetze sozusagen verworfen. Mit der Folklore sind natürlich auch die Ironie und die komischen Effekte verschwunden. Der Ton des Librettos ist folglich wesentlich nüchterner als der seiner Vorlage.

Die Librettisten der Oper haben also die Szene im Studierzimmer verkürzt und die philosophischen, folkloristischen und komischen Elemente des Stücks beseitigt. Stattdessen haben sie die Begierden, Lüste und Leidenschaften der Liebe zum Hauptthema der Szene gemacht. Sie sind dem Stück Goethes untreu geworden, um den Ansprüchen der Oper treu zu bleiben. Ein französisches lyrisches Drama des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts war vor allem eine leidenschaftliche Liebesgeschichte: Musik, Libretto und Spiel sollten die Leidenschaften der Liebe so stark wie möglich ausdrücken, um die Zuschauer zu rühren, sogar zu erschüttern. In diesem Sinn werden philosophische, folkloristische oder komische Elemente überflüssig, weil sie keine direkte Beziehung zum Hauptthema haben und den Zuschauer nur zerstreuen und ablenken könnten.

## 2 Die unwiderstehliche Macht des Bösen und die Ohnmacht des Guten

Auch in dem Film *Faust* von 1926 weicht die Szene im Studierzimmer stark vom Ausgangswerk ab. Zwar wird sie diesmal nicht verkürzt, und ganz wie im Stück erscheint Mephisto zweimal. Aber die philosophischen und theologischen Fragen, die Goethes Faust dazu treiben, einen Pakt mit dem Teufel zu schließen, verschwinden ganz wie in der Oper. Murnaus Faust wird zum Opfer, aber nicht zu dem seines ehrgeizigen und übertriebenen Wissensdurstes, sondern zu dem der Manipulation eines schlaunen Teufels.

Zunächst verursacht nämlich Mephisto eine Pestepidemie. Trotz seiner Bitten bekommt Faust die göttliche Hilfe nicht, die es ihm erlauben würde, ein Heilmittel zu finden und seine Mitbürger in der Stadt zu retten. Deshalb wendet er sich zuletzt an den Teufel – also nicht, um sein eigenes Streben zu befriedigen, sondern um den leidenden Menschen zu helfen: Mephistopheles verspricht ihm „Ruhm und Macht auf der Erde“<sup>1</sup>, wenn er auf Gott verzichtet, aber Faust lehnt diesen Vorschlag ab. Der alte Mann will nur „für einen Tag“ einen vorläufigen

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<sup>1</sup> Zitiert nach der DVD *Faust. Eine deutsche Volkssage*, Living Colour Entertainment, 2009.

Pakt schließen, der gleich nach der Erfindung des Heilmittels enden würde. Der Teufel benutzt Fausts Altruismus, um ihn in eine Falle zu locken. Er gesteht ihm die gewünschte Probezeit zu und verspricht, diese mit einer Sanduhr zu messen. Da er die Sanduhr ununterbrochen umdreht, wird, ohne dass Faust dies bemerkt, aus dem vorläufigen Pakt ein endgültiger. Er ist in die Falle Mephistos gegangen. Als seine Mitbürger dann bemerken, dass er Furcht vor dem Kreuz hat, verstehen sie, dass er einen Pakt mit dem Teufel geschlossen hat. Faust entgeht knapp einer Steinigung und wird aus der Menschengemeinschaft ausgestoßen. In seiner Verzweiflung will er Selbstmord begehen. Da erscheint wiederum Mephisto. Um Faust davon abzubringen, sich zu töten, lässt er das Gesicht eines jungen Mannes erscheinen, und sagt: „das ist deine Jugend“. Faust erliegt der Versuchung, die Jugend und ihre Vergnügungen zu genießen, und lässt sich in einen jungen Mann verwandeln.

Bei Murnau scheint Faust das Opfer einer Abfolge von tragischen und ironischen Umständen oder Spielball des Teufels zu sein. Im Gegensatz zu Goethes Faust macht er nicht den Eindruck, freiwillig zu handeln, sondern vielmehr den Eindruck, immer von fremden Kräften bestimmt zu werden. Er ist kein stolzer, ehrgeiziger, von einem übermäßigen Wissensdurst getriebener Wissenschaftler, sondern ein braver Mann, der seinen Mitmenschen in der Stadt helfen will und daran zugrunde geht.

Es gibt noch einen zweiten wichtigen Unterschied zwischen dem Stück und dem Film. Ganz wie Goethe schöpft auch Murnau vieles aus der Folkloristik des Teufels. Sein Faust schlägt in einer magischen Schrift nach, geht bei Nacht zu einer verlassenen Kreuzung, er zeichnet einen Kreis auf den Boden und beschwört den Teufel. Der Kreis entzündet sich, ein heftiges Gewitter entlädt sich, ein Wagen erscheint am Himmel und sogleich ist Mephisto da. Aber während Goethe die Teufelsfolklore ironisiert, benutzt sie Murnau auf eine dramatische Weise. Die Beschwörung des Teufels und die Gespräche mit ihm finden mitten in der Traueratmosphäre der Pestepidemie statt: Faust ist Zeuge der Verzweiflung eines Mädchens, dessen Mutter mit dem Tod ringt, er sieht aus seinem Fenster die Bestattungszüge, die ununterbrochen die Stadt durchqueren, er ist mit hysterischen, vor Angst und Wut rasenden Massen konfrontiert. Überall herrschen Schmerz, Schrecken und Wahnsinn. Diese Gefühle werden noch durch die Beleuchtung verstärkt. Die Szenen finden meistens bei Nacht statt, und Murnau benutzt sehr starke Hell-Dunkel-Kontraste, um sie zu dramatisieren. Dieser *Chiaroscuro*-Effekt ist unter anderem sehr beeindruckend in der Szene der Beschwörung, wo Blitze und Flammen die Finsternis durchdringen. Auch die Figur des Mephisto steht im Gegensatz zum gelegentlich schwachen, sogar lächerlichen Mephisto in Goethes Stück. Murnaus Teufel wird immer furchterregend dargestellt. Faust scheint über dieses unheilvolle Wesen immer entsetzt zu sein: Zum Beispiel flieht Faust, als



Mephistopheles an der verlassenen Kreuzung vor ihm erscheint, angsterfüllt in die Stadt; und als er sich schließlich durchringt zu sagen: „gib mir die Jugend“, wird er sofort ohnmächtig.

In Goethes *Faust* ist die Szene der ersten Begegnung zwischen Faust und Mephistopheles eher komisch als tragisch: Ein überehrgeiziger Wissenschaftler wird von seinem eigenen Wissensdurst getrieben, einen Pakt mit einem manchmal ungeschickten Teufel zu schließen. In dem Film von 1926 wird die Komödie zu einer echten Tragödie: Ein Mensch guten Willens stößt auf eine ihm weit überlegene und schreckliche Kraft, die ihn besiegt. Darin ist dieser Film typisch für den Trend des damaligen deutschen Kinos, das Lotte Eisner (vgl. Eisner 1996) in ihrer Arbeit von 1952 „die dämonische Leinwand“ („l'écran démoniaque“) nannte. Filme wie *Nosferatu*, *Dr Mabuse* oder *Metropolis* zeigen, wie der Mensch von bösen und überlegenen Kräften unterdrückt, besiegt oder zerstört werden kann. In diesen Filmen wird, manchmal auf eine metaphorische Weise, ein tiefer Pessimismus gegenüber den sozialpolitischen Umständen Deutschlands ausgedrückt. Die Drehbuchautoren von *Faust, eine Deutsche Volkssage*, Hans Kyser und Gerhart Hauptmann, sind offensichtlich von diesem Zeitgeist beeinflusst worden. Es ist kein Zufall, dass auch in Murnaus *Nosferatu* (1922), ganz wie in seinem *Faust*, eine Pestepidemie verursacht wird. Kaum ist *Nosferatu* in die Stadt Wisborg gekommen, da verbreitet sich die tödliche Krankheit unter den Einwohnern. Diese Episode findet man aber nicht in dem Roman *Dracula* (1897), der Vorlage und Inspiration für *Nosferatu* war: Drehbuchautor Henrik Galeen hat sie sich ausgedacht. Vier Jahre später werden sich auch *Fausts* Drehbuchautoren eine Pestepidemie ausdenken. Die von einem teuflischen Wesen verursachte Pest wird in beiden Werken zum metaphorischen Ausdruck der sozialpolitischen Krise im Nachkriegsdeutschland. Weder Goethes *Faust* noch Bram Stokers *Dracula* behandeln sozialpolitische Umstände. Sie sind Dramen des Individuums. Murnaus *Nosferatu* und *Faust* können aber als kollektive Tragödien betrachtet werden. Das Individuum geht zugrunde, nicht wegen seiner eigenen Fehler, sondern wegen der kranken und hoffnungslosen Gesellschaft, in der es lebt.

### 3 Faust in Zeiten der Studentenunruhen

Dass auch der Manga *Neo Faust*, das letzte Werk des berühmten Manga-Zeichners Osamu Tezuka, vom Zeitgeist beeinflusst worden ist, liegt auf der Hand. Tezuka hat nämlich Goethes *Faust* in das Japan der Gegenwart übertragen. Die Geschichte spielt zur Zeit der Studentenbewegung im Jahr 1970. Die Hauptfigur heißt selbstverständlich nicht mehr Doktor Faust, sondern Professor Ichinoseki. Er unterricht-

tet an einer Universität in der Nähe von Tokyo. Die Szene seiner ersten Begegnung mit dem Teufel spielt in seinem Laboratorium. Der Teufel selbst erscheint zum ersten Mal als eine Studentin, die sich angeblich in das Laboratorium flüchtet, „um der Polizei zu entgehen“ (警官に見つかりたくないのです [Tezuka 2011, 32]). Indem er Fausts Sage auf diese Weise aktualisiert, schafft Tezuka eine ganze Reihe von komischen Effekten.

Diese Aktualisierung erlaubt es ihm, eine beißende Satire der japanischen Gesellschaft zu schreiben. Als die teuflische Studentin ihm vorschlägt, einen Pakt zu schließen, ist Professor Ichinoseki zuerst empört. Er glaubt, sie sei kein Teufel, sondern arbeite für jene Gauner, die unter dem Vorwand, Versicherungen zu verkaufen, „alte Leute um ihr Geld betrügen“ (老人相手の先物取引 [Tezuka 2011, 36]). Die gekränkte Studentin erwidert, dass sie alle nötigen Zeugnisse besitze und ein „echter Fachmann“ (プロ [Tezuka 2011, 36]) sei. Sie fragt den Professor, ob sie noch einmal „mit verändertem Aussehen“ (姿を変えて [Tezuka 2011, 37]) vor ihm erscheinen solle. Darauf reagiert der Professor zunehmend sarkastisch. Seiner Meinung nach tun nämlich die Studenten nichts anderes, als immer „rasch ihr Aussehen zu ändern“ (変わり身が早い [Tezuka 2011, 37]). Bald verhalten sie sich wie „Ganoven“ (ツッパリ) und fördern die Revolution, bald „nehmen sie an Vorstellungsgesprächen teil“ (入社の面談試験を受ける), um bei Großunternehmen angestellt zu werden (Tezuka 2011, 37). Tezuka verspottet hier sowohl die dubiosen Verkäufer als auch die desinteressierte Jugend ohne politische Überzeugung, womit zwei Hauptzüge der zeitgenössischen japanischen Gesellschaft karikiert werden, die Geschäftssucht und die apolitische Ignoranz.

Er beschränkt sich aber nicht darauf, die japanische Gesellschaft zu verspotten, sondern ironisiert auch die Sage von Faust. Erstens kontrastiert er oft Archaismus mit Modernismus. Zum Beispiel: Nachdem die teuflische Studentin sein Laboratorium verlassen hat, brennt Professor Ichinoseki darauf, sie wiederzusehen. Er entschließt sich, sie wieder erscheinen zu lassen. Dazu benutzt er einerseits die moderne elektronische Ausrüstung seines Laboratoriums: Computer und andere Maschinen. Andererseits aber muss er, ganz wie Faust in alten Zeiten, in einer magischen Schrift nachschlagen, einen magischen Kreis und ein Pentagramm auf den Boden zeichnen und eine Beschwörungsformel aufsagen. Solche Anachronismen verdeutlichen die Ironie, mit der Tezuka sein Thema behandelt.

Man hat außerdem den Eindruck, dass gerade die Hauptfiguren des Werkes nicht wirklich an die Folklore des Teufels glauben, ja vielmehr, dass sie sich von ihr distanzieren. Als die teuflische Studentin dem Professor ihre Identität aufdeckt, fragt er, ob sie wirklich derselbe Teufel sei, der „in den Horrorfilmen oft erscheint“ (オカルト映画によく現れる [Tezuka 2011, 34]). Nachher muss sie gestehen, dass sie wegen „des kreuzförmigen Fensterrahmens“ (あの十字架の形

[Tezuka 2011, 38]) das Laboratorium nicht verlassen kann. Der Professor macht sich lustig über sie: warum sie sich so verhalte, „als spiele sie in einem Vampirfilm“ (吸血鬼映画の実演かね [Tezuka 2011, 38])? Nach der Beschwörung erscheint der Teufel wieder als ein hübsches Mädchen, doch nicht mitten im magischen Kreis, sondern außerhalb. Das Mädchen erklärt dem empörten Professor, dass ein so schlecht gezeichneter Kreis „überhaupt keine Wirkung hat“ (効き目がないのよ [Tezuka 2011, 52]).

Ebenso ironisch und distanziert erfolgt die Charakterisierung der Hauptfiguren. Der Teufel erscheint als eine hübsche Studentin, die je nach den Umständen sehr verschiedene Gesichter zeigt. Sie wird bald zu einer typischen *femme fatale*, die einen Striptease vorführt, um den Professor zu verführen, bald zu einer schwachen und hilfsbedürftigen Frau, die bittere Tränen weint, weil sie nicht weggehen darf, bald auch zu einem Mathematik-Genie, das die schwierigsten Gleichungen lösen kann. Indem er sich von dem traditionellen Bild des Teufels entfernt, überrascht und unterhält Tezuka seinen Leser. Was Professor Ichinoseki betrifft, ist er offensichtlich eine satirische Parodie von Goethes Faust. Er scheint sich ausschließlich um schwierige wissenschaftliche Fragen zu kümmern und beschwört den Teufel, um von ihm „die Wahrheit über das Weltall“ (宇宙の真理 [Tezuka 2011, 53]) kennenzulernen. Als ihm aber das teuflische Mädchen mitteilt, „dass er in fünf Minuten sterben werde“ (あなたの残りの命はあと五分なのよ [Tezuka 2011, 53]), ändert er schlagartig seine Meinung: Die Wahrheit über das Weltall sei ihm doch gleichgültig, er möge nur schnell „wieder jung werden“ (青春に戻りたい [Tezuka 2011, 54]) und das Leben genießen.

Insofern als ein Comic ursprünglich eine humorvolle Geschichte sein sollte, ist der Manga *Neo Faust* also den Ansprüchen des Comics treu: Er unterhält den Leser dank einer Reihe komischer Effekte der Faust-Erzählung. In diesem Sinn wird diese japanische Bearbeitung durchaus auch Goethes *Faust* gerecht, obwohl ihr Autor die Geschichte in das gegenwärtige Japan übertragen hat. Im Gegensatz zu dem lyrischen Liebesdrama von Gounod und zu dem tragischen Film von Murnau hat sie Goethes Ironie beibehalten. Aber ganz wie Tezuka den Ansprüchen des Comics entgegenkommt, indem er ein komisches Werk geschaffen hat, folgen Gounod und Murnau den hauptsächlichen Trends der französischen Oper und des deutschen Films ihrer Zeit. Der eine hat den Fauststoff benutzt, um eine leidenschaftliche und pathetische Liebesgeschichte in Musik zu setzen, der andere, um einen grausamen und tragischen Mythos des Bösen zu verfilmen. Die Art und Weise, in der die Studierzimmer-Szene bearbeitet worden ist, hängt also zum großen Teil von den unterschiedlichen Medien ab, die Gounod, Murnau und Tezuka gewählt haben. Goethes *Faust* hat die drei Künstler zu einer Neubearbeitung inspiriert. Die wichtigsten Gesetze und Kriterien dieser Adaptionen befinden sich aber vielleicht weder in Goethes Theaterstück, noch in der eigenen

Einbildungskraft der Künstler, sondern in den Medien, in denen *Faust* bearbeitet worden ist: der französischen Oper des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts, im deutschen Film der 1920er Jahre und im japanischen Comic der 1980er Jahre.

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Marie-Christine Gay

## „Gossen-Orpheus“ Jean Genet: Deutsche Übersetzungs- und Rezeptions- schwierigkeiten eines poetisch-derben Stils

**Abstract:** Jean Genet's (1910–1986) unusual lifestyle and work bear witness to multiple literary, linguistic and sociological influences. What is seen today as a unique feature caused turmoil in 1960s' France. In West Germany however, the scandalous author enjoyed first a tentative and later an established success. His hybrid, often provocative style led to considerable difficulties in translation as well as fierce debates about the reception of this "Gutter-Orpheus". Genet's work always oscillates between æstheticism and profanity, as literary sentences are interrupted by obscenities or complemented by slang (the ‚argot‘ of military servants and prostitutes) in a highly productive literary process. The author also spices up the blend with the highly specialized colonial vocabulary of former French Africa. His contribution resides both in the defiance of decency and in the blending of poetic and vulgar language on the stage. These peculiarities call for an examination of the stylistic transfer from diverse cultural influences into a different normative and discursive context.

The transfer from one theatrical landscape to another is a tedious process that begins with the translation, continues throughout staging, including adaptation, and ends with the reaction of target audience and reviewers. Translation and staging in a foreign culture implies a series of dramaturgical interferences such as simplification or even falsification of the original work. These processes are exemplified and analysed through Genet's Algerian drama *Les Paravents* (*The Screens*, 1960), a play that was first published in West Germany at a time when it was censored in a France at war. It premiered on May 19<sup>th</sup> 1961 at the *Schlosspark Theater* in West Berlin while French staging was postponed by several years. Interestingly, the German publishing and dramaturgical personnel felt obliged to attenuate Genet's language and present a mild, revised version of the text. The critical comparison of the original and German versions sheds a new light on the difficulty of transposition and ultimately inter-cultural communication. The need for adaptation, the interventions during the production process as well as the reception by the German public are highly relevant to understanding the power and limits of hybridisation as an innovative process.

**Keywords:** Cultural transfer; cultural relations; Federal Republic of Germany; Hybridisation; Jean Genet; *Les Paravents* / *The Screens* (1960); Reception; Translation; Transposition; Staging

# 1 Einleitung

Im dreizehnten Bild von Jean Genets Algeriendrama *Die Wände* tauschen sich zwei Figuren über ihre trüben Perspektiven aus. Was auf den ersten Blick wie die Flucht aus einer ungünstigen Lage erscheinen mag, verbirgt jedoch im Kern einen selbstironischen, metaphorisch anmutenden Hinweis auf den Stil des Verfassers:

La Vamp: [...] il nous faudra aussi reprendre cet affreux langage...

Le Fils: Ça me fait chier aussi, mais si on veut se sauver vite, il faut que les mots aient la trouille, eux tout comme nous. En route. (Genet 1961, 148)

[Vamp: [...] dann müssen wir auch wieder in diese abscheuliche Sprache zurückfallen...

Sohn: Auch mich kotzt das an, aber wenn wir uns rasch davonmachen wollen, müssen die Worte genauso viel Schiss haben wie wir. Also weiter. (Genet 1968, 95)]

Jean Genet (1910–1986) gehört zu den „enfants terribles“ [bösen Buben] der französischen Nachkriegsliteratur. Die Stigmatisierung seiner Person als Kleinkrimineller und Homosexueller wurde in Westdeutschland als „Phänomen Genet“ bezeichnet, Publikationen und Erstaufführungen führten zu Eklats in der Presse sowie unter Literaten und Theatermachern. Genets Romane unterlagen bei ihren Ersterscheinungen in deutscher Sprache dem Vorwurf der Unzüchtigkeit und der Erregung öffentlichen Ärgernisses: Gegen *Querelle* (Genet 1955) wurde ein Verfahren eröffnet und *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs* (Genet 1960a) musste sich einem Prozess unterziehen. Die westdeutschen Erstaufführungen seiner Stücke lösten wiederum Erstaunen und Ratlosigkeit, Ekel oder gar Entsetzen aus. Der Lebensweg dieses skandalträchtigen Poeten wurde in die Tradition François Villons gestellt, sein Stil in die Erbschaft von Louis Ferdinand Céline.

In dem folgenden Beitrag soll der von vielfältigen kulturellen und sozialen Einflüssen geprägte poetisch-derbe Stil Genets im Hinblick auf seine Übersetzungen und Rezeption im deutschsprachigen Raum analysiert werden<sup>1</sup>. In der Tat wird die Vermittlung in einen anderen Sprach- und Kulturraum durch den heterogenen Sprachgebrauch des Autors zunehmend erschwert, was vorzugsweise im Rahmen von Theaterinszenierungen, anhand der Reaktionen des Publikums und der Rezensenten, beobachtet werden kann. Somit beschränkt sich folgender Artikel auf die Stücke Genets, insbesondere auf das 1960 veröffentlichte Drama *Die Wände* (vgl. Genet 1960). Die Rezeption dieses Stücks wurde bereits in zwei Artikeln analysiert (vgl. Aslan 1972 und Colin 2014), jedoch setzen sich diese nicht

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<sup>1</sup> Grundlage dieses Forschungsobjekts ist die 2016 an der Université Paris Nanterre / Universität zu Köln verteidigte Dissertation, die von De Gruyter veröffentlicht wurde (Marie-Christine Gay 2018).

mit den Schwierigkeiten der Übersetzung der Sprache Genets und deren Aufnahme im deutschsprachigen Kulturraum auseinander.

Der Analysegegenstand der Theaterrezeption bettet sich in den Wissensbereich des Kulturtransfers ein. Die Forschungsarbeiten über deutsch-französische Austauschmechanismen der Germanisten und Historiker Michel Espagne und Michael Werner (vgl. Espagne und Werner 1988) liefern vorliegendem Artikel, in Anbetracht der eingenommenen interkulturellen Perspektive, einen hilfreichen methodologischen Ansatz. Espagnes Analyse veranschaulicht, dass das erfolgreiche Ergebnis eines Kulturtransfers zum einen mehr den soziokulturellen Umständen der Empfangkultur unterliegt als denen des Herkunftslandes und zum anderen Elemente des latenten nationalen Gedächtnisses der Empfangkultur reaktiviert (vgl. Espagne 1999, 21). Zudem gehe es darum, ein „fremdes Objekt zu interpretieren, es in das neue Referenzsystem zu integrieren – meistens zuerst durch neue linguistische Referenzen – [es] zu übersetzen“<sup>2</sup> (Espagne 1999, 20). Desgleichen fordert die Theaterwissenschaftlerin Erika Fischer-Lichte, bei der Analyse eines Kulturtransfers solle der komplette Prozess des Austauschs berücksichtigt werden, eine, wie Fischer-Lichte betont, jedoch kaum verbreitete Vorgehensweise.<sup>3</sup>

Vorliegender Artikel wird sich sowohl mit den Übersetzungs- und Inszenierungs- als auch mit den Rezeptionsprozessen des Transfers von Genets *Wänden* auf westdeutschen Bühnen auseinandersetzen, um den „gesamten Prozess der kulturellen Transformation“ (Fischer-Lichte 1988, 143–144) angesichts des heterogenen, zwischen hoher und niederer Literatur pendelnden Stils des Autors zu verfolgen.

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2 „[D]’interpréter un objet étranger, de l’intégrer à un nouveau système de références qui souvent sont pour commencer de nouvelles références linguistiques, de traduire“ (Übersetzung Marie-Christine Gay).

3 „Wenn man herausfinden will, aus welchem Grund, zu welchem Zweck und mit welchen Folgen ein Drama einer fremden Kultur in Szene gesetzt wird, reicht es daher nicht aus, die verwendete Übersetzung zu untersuchen noch auch die spezielle gesellschaftliche Situation, in der die Inszenierung vorgenommen wird. Vielmehr muss der gesamte Prozess der kulturellen Transformation zum Gegenstand der Untersuchung gemacht werden: Es sind also auch die konkrete Aufführung hinsichtlich ihres Einsatzes der theatralischen Zeichensysteme sowie Dokumente ihrer Rezeption durch das Publikum zu analysieren“ (Fischer-Lichte 1988, 143–144).



## 2 Jean Genet, der „Gossen-Orpheus“

### 2.1 Ein verfluchter...

Insofern als Genets Leben<sup>4</sup> sein Werk thematisch und stilistisch tiefgehend geprägt und seine Rezeption weitgehend beeinflusst hat, soll es im Folgenden konzise dargestellt werden. Der unter westdeutschen Theaterkritikern „Orpheus aus der Gosse“ genannte Schriftsteller (Pfeiffer 1961) wuchs als Vollwaise bei einer Pflegefamilie auf und verbrachte seine Jugend in äußerst strengen und brutalen Erziehungsanstalten, wie in der Strafkolonie von Le Mettray. Dort sind die Gründe für die Themen Diebstahl, Verrat und Homosexualität zu suchen, die später zu den Leitmotiven seines Werkes wurden (vgl. Dichy und Fouche 2010). Es folgte eine zwei Jahrzehnte lange Existenz als Soldat, Fremdenlegionär, Deserteur und Kleinkrimineller; während der Streifzüge durch Europa lebte Genet von Diebstahl und Prostitution. Er fühlte sich in anderen Kultur- und Sprachkreisen zuhause und hegte stets eine Affinität für die Fremde und das Fremde, was seine zukünftige gelungene Rezeption außerhalb der französischen Grenzen anzukündigen schien.<sup>5</sup> Genets Rückkehr nach Frankreich ist von zahlreichen Gefängnisaufenthalten geprägt, während derer er seine Romane verfasste und sich allmählich einen Namen in der literarischen Pariser Szene machte. Dank des Einsatzes von Jean-Paul Sartre und Jean Cocteau entkam der „poète maudit“ [verfluchter Poet] 1944 einer lebenslangen Haftstrafe.

### 2.2 ... und fluchender Poet

Der Autodidakt Genet beachtete literarische Wertungen nicht, sondern verachtete sie: „Für die Vorstellung eines literarischen Werks hätte ich nur ein Achselzucken“, schreibt er in seinem autobiographischen Roman *Tagebuch des Diebes* (Genet 2001, 118). Sein ungewöhnlicher Stil entspringe weniger dem Streben nach

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<sup>4</sup> Bzgl. einer ausführlicheren Biografie Genets siehe die in den 1950er (Bonneyfoy 1956), 1970er (Aslan 1973) und 1990er Jahren (White 1993) erstellten Studien.

<sup>5</sup> Als sprachbegabt erwies sich der zukünftige Schriftsteller ebenfalls (vgl. White 1993, 169). Genets deutschsprachiger Verleger Andreas J. Meyer, Gründer des Merlin-Verlags, teilte mir mit, dass Genet über Deutschkenntnisse verfügte, was seinen Biografen bisher entgangen war: „Genet sprach natürlich nicht fließend Deutsch, das wäre ein Missverständnis. Er verstand Deutsch recht gut, machte aber selbst so wenig wie möglich Gebrauch davon. Ich bin überzeugt, dass er sich seine Deutsch-Kenntnisse in der Zeit seines Vagabundierens durch Europa, insbesondere durch Deutschland angeeignet hat“ (Meyer 2013).

Innovation oder Experimentieren als dem Willen, den Leser mit der Schattenseite der Gesellschaft zu konfrontieren. So heißt es einige Zeilen weiter:

Während ich verschönte, was Ihr verachtet, wurde mein Geist dieses Spiels müde (mit glorreichen Namen zu benennen, was mein Herz erschütterte) – und verweigert jede Bezeichnung. Ohne sie zu vertauschen, nimmt er alle Wesen und Dinge in ihrer ungeschminkten Nacktheit hin. Und weigert sich, sie zu kleiden. (Genet 2001, 119)

Die heterogenen, hybriden Merkmale von Genets Stil sind vielfältig. Seine oft als obszön oder gar pornographisch bezeichneten Werke schwanken zwischen poetisch anmutenden Passagen und derben, dem Volksmund entnommenen Redensarten. Edle Wendungen werden abrupt unterbrochen und mit saloppen, brutalen oder vulgären Ausdrücken versehen oder von einem anderen Sprachniveau abgelöst, dem „Argot“ der Gaunersprache oder des Prostitutions- und Militärjargons. Somit erfährt Genets Leser eine zweifache Grenzüberschreitung: Zum einen ist er auf einer stilistischen Ebene einem Peleleme diverser Sprach- und Stilebenen ausgeliefert, zum anderen überschreitet er auf einer thematischen Ebene die Grenze zu einer Gesellschaftsschicht, in der die Faszination des Bösen und des Schrecklichen ihren Ausdruck findet. Darüber hinaus schöpft Genet gelegentlich aus dem Wortschatz der französischen Kolonialsprachen des Maghreb und der Sub-Sahara, vor allem in seinen Stücken *Die Wände* und *Die Neger*. Dies führt zu einer zusätzlichen kulturhistorischen Dimension, der bei dem Transfer der Werke in andere Sprach- und Kulturkreise Beachtung geschenkt werden muss.

### 3 Kultureller Transfer von Genets *Wänden* in den deutschen Sprachraum

#### 3.1 Übersetzungsschwierigkeiten

Bei den Rezeptionsmechanismen von einem Theaterfeld zum anderen handelt es sich um einen langwierigen Prozess, der bei der Übersetzung beginnt, durch die Inszenierung – und in manchen Fällen durch eine Adaption – fortgeführt wird und erst bei der Rezeption durch das Zielpublikum und die Rezensenten endet. Auf den Ebenen der Übersetzung und der Inszenierung kann es zu Veränderungen und Interferenzen kommen, welche die sprachliche und kulturelle Vielfalt des Originalwerks vereinfachen oder gar vertuschen. Die Schwierigkeit eines solchen Unterfangens soll nun anhand einer Fallstudie, nämlich zu Genets Algeriendrama *Die Wände*, erläutert werden.

*Die Wände*, ein langes und schwieriges Werk, war in der Ursprungsversion von 1958 in 17 Bilder unterteilt. Der Titel weist auf das von Genet erdachte Bühnenbild hin: „une série de paravents sur lesquels les objets ou les paysages seront peints“ [„eine Reihe von Wandschirmen, auf denen die Gegenstände oder Landschaften aufgemalt sind“]<sup>6</sup> (Genet 2002, 575). In der Liste der 62 Figuren (von denen die Hauptpersonen Saïd, seine Mutter und seine Gattin Leïla sind), tauchen einheimische Algerier (Dorfbewohner, Arbeiter, Prostituierte, Kadis) neben Franzosen (Siedler, Soldaten und hochrangige Angehörige der Kolonialarmee) sowie deutschen und englischen Grundbesitzern auf. Der Algerienkrieg steht als Kulisse des Stückes sinnbildlich für den Kolonialismus aller westlichen Länder, für die „größte Sünde des Westens“<sup>7</sup> (Lévi-Strauss 2009, 73). Die teils konformistischen, teils verräterischen oder gar rebellischen Figuren begegnen und bekämpfen sich bis ins Jenseits – symbolisch durch das Überschreiten der Wandschirme dargestellt – und liefern dem Zuschauer ihre unterschiedlichen Sichtweisen über die Unabhängigkeit Algeriens, wobei zu betonen ist, dass Genet Partei für die Kolonisierten ergreift. Dem Autor ist es gelungen, den Krieg (1954–1962), den er als Zeitgenosse wahrnahm, anhand der Heterogenität des von Kolonisierten und Siedlern gesprochenen Französisch in Nordafrika, kennzeichnend für die dort herrschenden sozialen Ungerechtigkeiten, zu dokumentieren.

Die erste deutschsprachige Übersetzung des Stückes erschien 1960 im Merlin-Verlag unter dem vorläufigen Titel *Wände überall (Der Tod I)* (Genet 1960b), noch ein Jahr vor der französischen Fassung in den Éditions de l'Arlabète (Genet 1961). Der Verleger Andreas J. Meyer beauftragte Hans Georg Brenner, ehemaliges Mitglied der Gruppe 47 und Übersetzer von Jean-Paul Sartre und Albert Camus, mit der Übersetzung. Dieser kam insofern eine ganz besondere Bedeutung zu, als *Die Wände* am 19. Mai 1961 im Westberliner Schloßpark-Theater durch Hans Lietzau welturaufgeführt wurden; angesichts der außenpolitischen Lage eines noch immer im Algerienkrieg verstrickten Frankreichs war Genets Werk in seinem Heimatland zensiert worden.<sup>8</sup> Die ungewöhnliche, teils vulgäre, teils poetische Sprache der Figuren des Stückes wurde somit zum allerersten Mal auf Deutsch vernommen – jedoch korrigiert, zensiert, aufpoliert, da die Sprachvirtuosität des Dichters in weiten Zügen missachtet wurde und das stetige Auf und Ab des Textes zwischen Derbheit und Schönheit verlorenging.

<sup>6</sup> Übersetzung Marie-Christine Gay.

<sup>7</sup> „[P]éché majeur de l'Occident“ (Übersetzung Marie-Christine Gay).

<sup>8</sup> Anlässlich der französischen Erstaufführung 1966 durch Roger Blin im Théâtre de l'Odéon (Premiere am 16. Mai 1966) kam es zur sogenannten „Bataille des Paravents“ [Schlacht der Wände], einem der wichtigsten Theaterskandale Frankreichs im 20. Jahrhundert (Bellity Peskine und Dichy 1991).

Bei der Gegenüberstellung des französischen Originals und der ersten deutschen Fassung der *Wände* wird deutlich, dass die Heterogenität des Textes zu einem konsensfähigen Ensemble umgestaltet wird und die materiell armen, doch linguistisch facettenreichen Figuren ihres stärksten Attributs beraubt werden, nämlich der Verschiedenartigkeit der Sprechhandlungen. Die Übersetzung zeugt in der Tat von folgenden Problemfeldern: Die saloppen, vulgären oder obszönen Redewendungen werden gestrichen, das französische „Argot“ [Slang] wird ins Hochdeutsche übertragen, die französische Kolonialsprache wird dem historischen Kontext entsprechend nur ungenau wiedergegeben – wenn überhaupt übersetzt – und die poetischen Passagen werden zum Teil durch Umgangssprache ersetzt.

Diese Beobachtungen können anhand folgender Beispiele veranschaulicht werden: Im 15. Bild des Stücks ruft die Figur namens Kadidja mit Entzückung aus: „Et baver! Et chier! Et roter! Et pisser du feu! Dégueuler vos tripes!“ [„Und sabbern! Und scheißen! Und rülpsen! Und Feuer pissen! Eure Eingeweide auskotzen!“]<sup>9</sup> (Genet 1961, 193). Brenners Übersetzung ins Deutsche hingegen mildert die Schimpf- und Fäkalwörter bis hin zum Erstellen von Reimen ab und hält allein am Bild des Verdauungsprozesses fest: „Und genug Spucke zum Kauen, und genug Säfte zum Verdauen“ (Genet 1960b, 164). Genauso werden Obszönitäten von dem Übersetzer schlicht gestrichen: „Elles n’ont pas réussi à faire bander les âmes défuntes“ [„Die verstorbenen Seelen haben dadurch keinen Ständer bekommen“]<sup>10</sup> (Genet 1961, 224), erklärt die Figur der Mutter im 17. Bild. Der deutsche Text streicht indessen den schamlos provokanten Charakter des Satzes und lässt die Mutter lapidar feststellen: „Die haben sich auch nicht mit Abgeschiedenen abgeben können“ (Genet 1960b, 190).

Ausdrücke aus der Gaunersprache oder dem „Argot“-Jargon des kleinen Volkes gehen in der deutschen Fassung ebenfalls verloren. „À côté de Saïd, c’est du nougat!“ [„Gegen Saïd ist das ein Zuckerschlecken!“]<sup>11</sup> (Genet 1961, 145): Dieses sinnbildliche Eigenkompliment der Hauptfigur Saïd im 13. Bild wird von Brenner auf eine materielle Feststellung herabgestuft: „Bei Saïd [sic] gibt’s was zu essen“ (Genet 1960b, 122). Mehrfach entsteht der Eindruck, der Übersetzer sei nicht ganz hinter den Sinn einiger Begriffe aus dem „Argot“ gekommen. Als der Soldat Pierre im 15. Bild behauptet „Moi, j’ai raléjé dare-dare...“ [„Dalli dalli war ich wieder da“]<sup>12</sup> (Genet 1961, 189), wird das Slangwort „raléjer“ [zurückkommen] durch ein umgangssprachliches Synonym des Verbs „sterben“ ersetzt: „Ich hatte ganz schnell ausgeröchelt...“ (Genet 1960b, 162) heißt es bei Brenner.

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<sup>9</sup> Übersetzung Marie-Christine Gay.

<sup>10</sup> Übersetzung Marie-Christine Gay.

<sup>11</sup> Übersetzung Marie-Christine Gay.

<sup>12</sup> Übersetzung Marie-Christine Gay.

Des Weiteren sind xenophobe Bezeichnungen aus der französischen Kolonialsprache des Maghreb (vgl. Lanly 1962) hin und wieder nicht übersetzt worden, obwohl sie ein wichtiges Thema des Stücks, nämlich den Rassismus der Kolonialherrscher, veranschaulichen. Der Satz des Oberleutnants im 11. Bild „Les Bicots sont des rats“ [„Mohrenköpfe sind Ratten“]<sup>13</sup> (Genet 1961, 105) ist in der Übersetzung ganz weggefallen.

Schließlich ist festzustellen, dass Brenner oftmals darauf verzichtet hat, poetische Wendungen wiederzugeben. Im 13. Bild beschreibt der Oberleutnant in einer übergangslos poetisch anmutenden Sprache seine Soldaten folgendermaßen: „L'Orient déteint sur vous et y dépose ses tons pastels, n'est-ce pas, ses demi-teintes?“ [Der Orient färbt auf euch ab, hinterlässt seine Pastelltöne, seine Halbschatten, nicht wahr?“]<sup>14</sup> (Genet 1961, 154). Dem Kenner des französischen Theaters des 17. Jahrhunderts wird bewusst, dass es sich hier um eine Parodie eines berühmten Satzes aus Jean Racines Tragödie *Bérénice* (1670) handelt könnte: „Dans l'Orient désert quel devint mon ennui“ (Racine 1999, 455) [„Mir blieb der Orient, ein leergewordnes Reich“] (Racine 1958, 174), muss die Figur Antiochus, König von Kommagene, bei dem Wegzug nach Rom der Königin von Palästina, Berenize, eingestehen. Indem Brenner die Anspielung auf Racine mit „Der Orient verfärbt euch“ (Genet 1960b, 131) übersetzt, dadurch einen Großteil des Satzes weglässt und auf das schlichte, nur den Naturvorgang beschreibende Verb „verfärben“ zurückgreift, beraubt er Genets Stil jeglicher Poesie.

Zusammenfassend lassen sich vier Gründe für diese starken Veränderungen anführen. Erstens können sie auf ein Unverständnis des Übersetzers zurückzuführen sein, da der Sinn gewisser Ausdrücke, zum Beispiel aus dem „Argot“-Jargon, nur unzureichend oder gar falsch wiedergegeben wurde. Eine weitere Ursache ist womöglich das Fehlen von gesellschaftlichen oder kulturhistorischen sprachlichen Äquivalenzen im deutschen Wortschatz. Ferner spielte die Meinung des Übersetzers, der Intendanten oder der Regisseure, man könne dem deutschsprachigen Publikum Genets Sprache nicht zumuten, ebenfalls eine nicht zu unterschätzende Rolle. So schrieb Brenner am Anfang der deutschen Fassung in den *Vorbemerkungen des Übersetzers*:

Genets unbekümmert, aber ebenfalls bewusst verwendeten Wörter und Wendungen der ‚Analsprache‘ klingen im Französischen viel weniger anstößig oder gemein als im Deutschen; um sinnentstellende Vergrößerungen zu vermeiden, wurden sie deshalb behutsam abgemildert oder gar nur auf Andeutungen beschränkt, wenn nach Ansicht des Übersetzers der Tenor des Originals dadurch nicht verfälscht, sondern – im Gegenteil – für deutsche Zuschauer besser gewahrt schien. (Genet 1960b, Vorbemerkungen)

<sup>13</sup> Übersetzung Marie-Christine Gay.

<sup>14</sup> Übersetzung Marie-Christine Gay.

Schließlich muss in einer rezeptionsästhetischen Perspektive die durch eine vereinfachte Übertragung des Textes ins Deutsche entstandene Maximierung des Zielpublikums hervorgehoben werden. In der Tat wurde dieses für eine französische Minderheit, eine intellektuelle Elite geschriebene Stück von dem deutschen Übersetzer derart verändert, dass es von einem breiten ausländischen Publikum verstanden werden konnte.

### 3.2 Inszenierungs- und Rezeptionsschwierigkeiten

Am 19. Mai 1961 wurden *Die Wände* im Westberliner Schloßpark-Theater von Hans Lietzau welturaufgeführt. Das Regiebuch der Berliner Uraufführung lässt erkennen, dass Initiativen des Regisseurs Lietzau zu weiteren starken Veränderungen des Originaltextes führten (vgl. Lietzau 1961). So strich der Regisseur etwa ein Drittel des Stücks und tauschte holprige, ungenaue oder unpassende Textpassagen durch neue Übersetzungen aus, in Absprache mit dem deutschen Verleger.<sup>15</sup>

Der deutsche Text wurde bei der Uraufführung auf zweierlei Arten rezipiert. Eine Reihe von Rezensenten lobte ihn ausführlich und befürwortete die Abmilderung der sprachlichen Gewalt und Obszönitäten. So schrieb Walther Karsch im *Tagesspiegel*:

Und hier gebührt dem Übersetzer Hans Georg Brenner hohes Lob, weil er diesen Genet nachgedichtet hat. [...] Und wenn sich der Verlag entscheiden könnte, auch den *Balkon*, die *Toten* und *Unter Aufsicht* von Brenner neu übersetzen zu lassen, würden auch die Tauben endlich hören, dass hier ein Dichter spricht. (Karsch 1961)

Andere Theaterkritiker hingegen übten harte Kritik an der mangelhaften Übersetzung, trotz deren Überarbeitung durch den Regisseur. Der Rezensent E. G. Schäfer betrachtete die deutschsprachige Fassung gar als Raub an Genet:

Die textliche Reinigung lief auf die Probe hinaus, ob Genets Aussage auch ohne obszönen Dialog zum Widerspruch reize. Sie reizte nicht. Die Reinigung, die starken Kürzungen und die Beschränkungen des darstellerischen Registers raubten dem ‚phantastischen Schauspiel‘ den Atem Genets. [...] [D]em gereinigten Genet wurde Genet gestohlen. (Schäfer 1961)

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<sup>15</sup> Genets Verleger Andreas J. Meyer schrieb dem Schloßpark-Theater diesbezüglich: „Ich möchte aber betonen, dass es sich nur um Streichungen handeln darf. Soweit sich aus den Kürzungen irgendwelche Umstellungen als notwendig erweisen sollten, werden wir uns darüber sicherlich ohne weiteres einigen; in dieser Beziehung kann ich Ihnen bzw. Herrn Lietzau natürlich nicht uneingeschränkt und bedingungslos plein pouvoir erteilen. Aber auch hier übernehme dem Autor gegenüber ich die Verantwortung auf mich; ich nehme an, es ist Ihnen lieber“ (Meyer 1960).

Die Rezeption der Sprache Genets veränderte sich jedoch im Laufe der Jahre und der Inszenierungen.<sup>16</sup> Als 1967 der französische Regisseur Roger Blin von den Bühnen der Stadt Essen eingeladen wurde, *Die Wände* nach dem Modell seiner französischen Erstaufführung zu inszenieren, stand er kurz davor, das Projekt aufgrund der schlechten Übersetzung abzubrechen. Dank seiner französischsprachigen Assistenten Willy Herzig und Elgin Gerlach stellte er den Ton des Originaltextes wieder her. Bei der Premiere jedoch kam es zu einem solch ungeheuren Skandal, dass der Theaterintendant Erich Schumacher letzten Endes beschloss, bei den weiteren Aufführungen die Obszönitäten zu streichen, um einem revoltierenden Publikum zuvorzukommen. Nichtsdestotrotz fand die Presse scharfe Worte, man sprach von einer „Orgie des Ekels“ (Tamms 1967) und „perverse[n] Traumbilder[n]‘ auf unserer Theaterbühne“ (Essener Leserforum 1967). Kaum einige Monate später vollzog sich allerdings ein Wendepunkt in der Rezeption des Werkes. Anfang 1968 erschien anlässlich der neuen Inszenierung des Stücks durch Hans Lietzau im Münchner Residenztheater eine werkgetreue Neuübersetzung von Ernst Sander (vgl. Genet 1968). Lietzau blieb der publizierten Vorlage treu und scheute vor der harten Sprache Genets nicht zurück: Drei Monate nach dem Skandal in Essen schien das Münchner Publikum die Derbheit akzeptiert zu haben. Lietzaus Inszenierung wies einen analytischeren und realeren Charakter als die von Blin auf, welche sich in der Welt der Maskerade und des Spiels bewegte. Der Rezensent Georg Hensel schrieb damals: „Lietzaus Inszenierung ist klarer, rationaler, irdischer, grotesker, karikiertes, ‚politischer‘ als Roger Blins Inszenierung, die manieristischer ist, präziöser, irrealer, traumhafter, ästhetisch-artistischer, poetischer – dem Autor Genet eben doch näher“ (Hensel 1968). Die von Lietzau eingeführte „politische“ Perspektive schien bei den Fürsprechern der Münchner Inszenierung, vor allem bei jungen Leuten (vgl. Völker 1999, 229), auf fruchtbaren Boden gefallen zu sein, was auf die soziokulturellen Entwicklungen in Westdeutschland und die Studentenrevolten von 1967 und 1968 zurückzuführen ist.

Abgesehen von den Übersetzungsproblemen enthielten *Die Wände* eine weitere Herausforderung für deutschsprachige Zuschauer und Schauspieler. War nämlich der Verlauf der Fabel, trotz seiner Länge und hohen Anzahl an Figuren, dank der historischen Kulisse in weiten Zügen verständlich, so stellten

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**16** Nach der Welturaufführung in Berlin wurden *Die Wände* drei weitere Male auf Deutsch inszeniert: 1963 an der Wiener Volksbühne durch Leon Epp (Premiere am 25. Januar 1963), 1967 an den Bühnen der Stadt Essen durch den französischen Regisseur Roger Blin (Premiere am 18. November 1967) und 1968 am Münchner Residenztheater erneut durch Hans Lietzau (Premiere am 9. Februar 1968).

die sozio-kulturellen Referenzen Rezeptionsschwierigkeiten dar – nicht nur für die Zuschauer, sondern zuallererst auch für die Schauspieler. Die Schwierigkeit bestand sowohl in der sprachlichen als auch in der gestischen Transposition. Bei der Weltpremiere des Stücks 1961 erschien der Schauspielerin Berta Drews (in der Rolle der Mutter) der Maghreb fern und fremd, sie verfügte über keinerlei Anhaltspunkte, um sich in ihrer Figur zurechtzufinden und ihr somit gerecht zu werden. Jahre später erläuterte sie in ihrer Autobiografie *Wohin des Wegs, Erinnerungen*: „Lietzau [d. i. der Regisseur] hätte doch wissen müssen, dass diese fremde arabische Welt, umstellt von Unheimlichkeiten, einen neuen Atem, eine neue Sprache verlangte und dass dies nur langsam erarbeitet werden konnte“ (Drews 1986, 273–274). 1967, anlässlich seiner deutschsprachigen Inszenierung des Stücks in Essen, teilte der Franzose Roger Blin Drews Beobachtung. Dem Journalisten Roland Hehn beschrieb der Regisseur, worin seiner Meinung nach die Unterschiede der deutschen und französischen Schauspielkunst bezüglich einer Affinität zum mediterranen Kulturkreis bestehen:

Natürlich ergeben sich Unterschiede aus der verschiedenen Mentalität und der physischen Beschaffenheit. Bei den deutschen Schauspielern besteht eine größere Ernsthaftigkeit für ihren Beruf. Außergewöhnlich ist bei den deutschen Schauspielern die Sprecherziehung und die Schönheit der Sprache. Bei der französischen Besetzung hatten Genet und ich für die Rolle der Mutter von Anfang an an Maria Casarès gedacht, wegen ihrer mediterranen Empfindung für Poesie, wegen ihrer Stimme und ihres Lachens. Aber die deutsche Schauspielerin dieser Rolle, Edith Lechtape, wird eine Gestalt verkörpern, die, wie ich glaube, sehr, sehr interessant sein wird. Wir haben mit ihr eine Interpretation tragischer Art, und doch gelingt es dieser Schauspielerin, jenen notwendigen Humor einzuflechten, alle Arten von Witz, die hier aufzuwenden sind – und die Sprache ohne Vulgarität zu bringen. (Hehn 1967)

Vorliegende Rezeptionsstudie der Übersetzungen und Inszenierungen von Genets *Wänden* hat zum Vorschein gebracht, dass die Übertragung des Stücks von linguistischen und kulturellen Referenzen untrennbar ist. Wurde einerseits die höhere und poetische Komponente der Sprache Genets nur als Randerscheinung aufgefasst, so erschien andererseits der Transfer des niederen Sprachstils Genets zugleich als Hindernis und Maßstab für eine gelungene Integration des Werkes in die deutschsprachige Empfangskultur.

## 4 Schlussfolgerung

Die Innovation Jean Genets bestand letztendlich darin, den Regeln des Anstands getrotzt und seiner poetisch-derben Sprache einen Platz auf den Theaterbrettern ermöglicht zu haben. Wenngleich Genet behauptete, er habe nur geschrieben, um



der Gefängnishaft zu entkommen, mag dies ebenfalls ein bewusstes Experiment mit dem Sittenkodex des Theaters, mit den Empfindlichkeiten des bürgerlichen Theaterpublikums gewesen sein. In der westdeutschen Theaterlandschaft wurde auf Genets Sprachgebrauch derart heftig reagiert, dass eine Überarbeitung des veröffentlichten deutschsprachigen Textes für nötig befunden und dieser somit dem Zuschauer gedämpft und gelindert präsentiert wurde. Im Laufe der Jahrzehnte erschienen die Werke Genets in textgetreueren Übersetzungen in ihrem wahren Licht, hatten jedoch ihr Skandalpotential weitgehend verloren. War es dem ehemals als „Gossen-Orpheus“ (Pfeiffer 1961) bezeichneten Poeten einst tatsächlich gelungen, sein Publikum zu provozieren, so erklärte 1983 der Theaterkritiker Friedrich Luft anlässlich einer Inszenierung des ehemaligen Skandalstücks *Der Balkon* durch Hans Neuenfels am Berliner Schiller-Theater: „Der Text reißt nicht mehr hin. Misstrauen wir, inzwischen an schon viel Grässlicheres gewohnt, den Spielen der Grässlichkeit? Erschrecken wir nicht mehr? Ist Genet, der Dichter des Schlimmen, zu einem Klassiker geworden, schlimmerweise?“ (Luft 1983).

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Timon Jakli

## Grimm 2.0 – Die Brüder Grimm in der Postmoderne

**Abstract:** This article examines the transfer of the Brothers Grimm’s narrative world into a postmodern setting. It focuses on two examples of modern mass cultural production, namely the ABC television series *Once Upon a Time* by Kitsis/Horowitz and the comic book franchise „Fables“ by Bill Willingham et al. Both modern works follow a similar basic idea: characters of fables and folk tales are forced to live among humans. Still possessing their magic abilities, they interact with their environment and are driven by the struggle to get back to their home world. The transformation of the well-known and canonized narrative material works on different levels. Both adaptations make use of the serialized storytelling to weave a net of smaller and bigger, interconnected narratives from different sources (Grimm, eastern fables, modern day pop culture). By doing that they combine connotations and backgrounds of tales and figures to create new meaning. Both adaptations use irony and play with citations in order to mark the act of creating a multi layered narrative universe with almost indefinite cultural and literary references. Their personnel is an eclectic pastiche of many different narrative worlds, playing a carnevalesque game with identities and allusions. With their ironic perspective on handed down narration, both works offer their viewers/readers a fascinating game of decoding, while still being a reflection of the Grimm’s traditional narrative world that is driven by the desire for living “happily ever after”.

**Keywords:** Grimm; Märchen; *Fables*; Comics; Graphic Novel; *Once Upon a Time*; Fernsehserie; Postmoderne; Intertextualität

Die Märchen der Brüder Grimm waren ab der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts zum literarischen Allgemeingut geworden und auch international höchst wirkmächtig. Die Märchensammlung wurde in zahlreiche Sprachen übersetzt und Grimms Märchen gingen in das traditionelle Erzählgut vieler Kulturen ein. Die Grimmschen Märchen sind ein Beispiel für eine Sammlung literarischer Stoffe, die aus der Sphäre der niederen Literatur stammen und durch Mechanismen der hohen Literatur verändert werden, womit sie eine hybride Position zwischen hoher und niederer Literatur einnehmen (vgl. Jakli 2015, 133–136).

Im Zuge dieser Transformation dockten die Märchen an große gesellschaftliche Erzählungen an: Die Rolle der grimmschen Märchen in der Formation einer

bürgerlich-deutschen Nationalidentität wurde inzwischen mehrfach untersucht (vgl. Lampart 2004).

Doch was passiert mit dem Grimmschen Erzählinventar, wenn es in der vielzitierten Postmoderne ankommt? Die Postmoderne wird dabei nach Frederic Jameson folgendermaßen verstanden: „a cultural dominant: a conception which allows for the presence and coexistence of a range of very different, yet subordinate, features“ (Jameson 1991, 4). Jameson zufolge ist allen Postmodernismen gemein, dass sie zu einer Auslöschung der Abgrenzung zwischen Hoch- und Massenkultur führen würden. Daraus entstehen neue Textarten, die Jameson so beschreibt: „new kinds of texts infused with the forms, categories, and contents of that very culture industry so passionately denounced by all the ideologues of the modern“ (Jameson 1991, 2). In einer Zeit, in der, Jameson zufolge, „aesthetic production [...] has become integrated into commodity production [dt. Warenproduktion, Anm. T.J.] generally“ (Jameson 1991, 4), scheint es sinnvoll, die Spuren der Brüder Grimm im Feld der Massenproduktion populärer Kultur zu suchen.

Im Folgenden wird anhand der Comicreihe *Fables* (2002–2015) sowie der ABC-Fernsehserie *Once Upon a Time* (seit 2011) gezeigt, wie traditionelle Erzählformen und Stoffe der Märchen in einer postmodernen, am Massenmarkt orientierten Kulturproduktion transformiert und hybridisiert werden. Dabei wird untersucht, wie die oft als Kennzeichen postmoderner Literatur genannten Merkmale Intertextualität, das ironische Spiel mit Zitaten und Pastiche sowie die hohe Präsenz metafiktionaler Elemente kanonisierte Texte ändern oder gar neu schreiben.

## 1 Veröffentlichungsgeschichte und Marktposition

Die Comicserie *Fables* wurde von Bill Willingham (Autor), Lan Medina, Mark Buckingham, Steve Leialoha und Craig Hamilton (Zeichner) und Todd Klein (Lettering) kreiert. Sie erschien von 2002 bis 2015 in 150 monatlichen Ausgaben im zu DC Comics gehörigen Imprint Vertigo. Während DC Comics als einer der größten Verlage und Heimat von Batman, Superman uvm. vor allem ein jugendliches Publikum anspricht, wurde Vertigo im Jahr 1993 mit dem Ziel gegründet, Comics auch mit größerer kreativer Freiheit sowie mit nur für Erwachsene geeigneten Inhalten zu publizieren, die den strengen Richtlinien der Selbstregulierung (ähnlich der FSK) nicht entsprechen müssen. Vertigo machte sich seitdem einen Namen für anspruchsvolle Unterhaltungcomics – so erschienen etwa *The Sandman* oder *V for Vendetta* unter diesem Imprint.

Die Comicserie wurde zum kommerziellen Erfolg und erhielt zahlreiche Auszeichnungen – unter anderem 14 Eisner Awards sowie 8 weitere Eisner Awards für

das Autorinnen- und Autoren-Team (7 davon für Todd Kleins Lettering). Insgesamt entstanden 10 *spin-offs* sowie Pläne für eine filmische Adaption der *Fables*-Welt und für Umsetzungen als Computerspiele.

Bereits im Jahr 2005 gab es Planungen für eine TV-Umsetzung durch NBC. Der Sender verfolgte jedoch später eine andere Strategie und produzierte die Serie *Grimm* – eine Krimiserie, die in einer Welt spielt, in der Märchencharaktere wirklich sind. 2008 gab ABC bekannt, die TV Rechte für *Fables* gekauft zu haben – das Projekt wurde jedoch nicht weiterverfolgt. Stattdessen wurde 2010 eine neue Serie mit dem Titel *Once Upon a Time* angekündigt. Die Produzenten Edward Kitsis und Adam Horowitz (vorher schon bekannt durch *Lost*, *Tron Legacy*) bestritten anfangs eine Verwandtschaft zur Comicreihe, gaben dann später jedoch an, sie hätten „a couple issues“ gelesen. Kitsis sagte dazu, die Projekte spielten „in the same playground [...] [but] we feel we’re telling a different story“. Die ABC-Fernsehserie ist äußerst erfolgreich, im Oktober 2017 ging die 7. Staffel auf Sendung.

## 2 Inhalt

Die Grundidee von *Fables* und *Once Upon a Time* ist sehr ähnlich. In beiden Fällen ist die Grundidee, dass Märchencharaktere unbemerkt unter den Menschen leben und mit ihnen interagieren. Die Spannung wird nicht zuletzt dadurch generiert, dass die magischen Fähigkeiten für die Leserinnen und Leser offensichtlich vorliegen, aber trotzdem unentdeckt bleiben bzw. verschleiert werden müssen.

Die Geschichte von *Fables* lässt sich kurz zusammenfassen: In der Welt der Märchen und Sagen hat eine böse Macht (der „Adversary“) mit seinem Heer Königreich um Königreich erobert. Die „Fables“ (in diesem Fall ein Sammelbegriff für Märchen- und Sagenfiguren aus aller Welt), die der Versklavung entkommen konnten, flohen durch magische Tore in die Welt der „Mundys“ (der normalen Menschen) und tauchten dort unter. So leben sie seit Jahrhunderten unbemerkt unter den Menschen. Zusammen wohnen sie in „Fabletown“ – einer Gemeinschaft in einem Wohnblock in New York, der durch Zaubersprüche für die Mundys unauffällig gemacht wurde. Die Fables, die keine menschliche Form annehmen konnten (etwa Mary’s little lamb, Baghira der Panther), leben außerhalb der Stadt auf der „Farm“. Durch eine Amnestie früherer Schandtaten und einen Schlussstrich unter alte Feindschaften, die – ganz amerikanisch – in einer Verfassung niedergelegt sind, ist ein Zusammenleben garantiert – inklusive Demonstrationsrecht und Wahlordnung. Vorangetrieben wird die Geschichte von der ständigen Weitereroberung der Heimatgebiete durch den Adversary und die Ausarbeitung

von Plänen zu einer Rückeroberung der alten Heimat. Immer wieder fliehen Fables in die Welt der Mundys und befeuern diese Erzähldynamik weiter.

In *Once Upon a Time* wurden Märchencharaktere durch einen Fluch der bösen Königin Regina in „unsere“ Welt transportiert. In der fiktiven Stadt „Storybrooke, Maine“ sind sie – ihrer Erinnerungen an ihre eigentliche Identität beraubt – in der Unsterblichkeit gefangen und unter der Herrschaft von Regina, die Bürgermeisterin der Stadt ist. Die einzige Hoffnung ist Snow Whites und Prinz Charmings Tochter Emma Swan, die vor dem Wirksamwerden des Fluches aus dem Zauberwald gerettet werden konnte. Als einzige nicht verzauberte Person hat sie die Möglichkeit, die Erinnerungen der Charaktere wiederherzustellen. Ihr Sohn Henry (den sie nach der Geburt zur Adoption freigegeben hat und der von Regina adoptiert wurde) hilft ihr dabei und hält mit einem Märchenbuch auch den Schlüssel zur Auflösung des Fluches in der Hand.

### 3 Erzählstruktur und -stil

In *Fables* ist die Gesamtgeschichte in Erzählbögen unterteilt. Diese enthalten zum Teil unabhängige Binnenerzählungen, in die wiederum Narrationen eingebettet sein können. Die Binnenerzählungen thematisieren einerseits Vorgeschichten aus dem Leben der Fables in der Welt der Mundys (so sind Erzählungen aus dem Amerikanischen Bürgerkrieg und dem Zweiten Weltkrieg eingebettet), aber auch Episoden aus der Märchenwelt. Die Binnengeschichten sind sowohl zeichnerisch als auch typografisch von den Hauptgeschichten abgehoben. Diese Struktur verschachtelter Geschichten gibt Willingham die Möglichkeit, verschiedenste Erzählgenres zu kompilieren: So finden sich Krimis, Agententhiller, literarische Montagen (so wird etwa die Revolution der Tiere aus Orwell's *Animal Farm* zitiert) neben Liebesgeschichten, Märchen-Cameos und anderen Formen. Durch die verschiedenen Zeichner, die das Projekt umsetzen, variiert der Zeichenstil über die Episoden hinweg. Während die eigentliche Geschichte ganz im Stil der Action-Comics à la Batman und Superman gehalten ist – die Striche wirken schnell hingeworfen, es gibt „Soundeffekte“ und teils blutige Kampfszenen –, sind die Märchenepisoden karikierend dargestellt. In ihrer einfachen Bildlichkeit wirken sie schon fast wie Ausmalbilder für Kinder und zitieren damit ihre literarische Vorlage ironisch.

In *Once Upon a Time* wird in jeder Episode einerseits die Geschichte in der Jetztzeit vorangetrieben, andererseits werden durch Rückblenden die Vorgeschichten oder Handlungsmotivationen von Charakteren erklärt. Damit ergibt sich mit Fortschreiten der Handlung ein immer kompletteres Puzzle der Charaktere und der Geschichte. Die Märchenhandlung wirkt durch einen „Zuckerguss“

aus Farbgebung und Weichzeichnung ebenfalls ironisch gebrochen und abgehoben von der eher realistisch-düsteren Farbgebung der Haupthandlung.

## 4 Der Ort der Handlung als ironisches Zitat

Der Wald ist in den Märchen ein zentraler, symbolisch stark aufgeladener Raum (vgl. Ono 2007). Sowohl für *Fables* als auch für *Once Upon a Time* ist der Wald ein zentraler Bezugsort – dieser taucht aber nur noch als ironisch gebrochenes Zitat auf.

Die *Fables* leben in New York. Willingham hat New York aus mehreren Gründen ausgewählt, wie er selbst sagt:

In strictly practical terms the New York setting is perfect because a number of different artists need to be able to accurately draw the setting and visual reference of NYC is readily available, even for artists who don't live there and have never been there. [...] But, even if the choice weren't so practical, it had to be New York to best serve the story, because it's the American immigrant city. It's the place all people came to when looking to build a new life in a new world. (O'Shea 2003)

Konkret ist die Gemeinschaft an der Ecke Bullfinch Street/Kipling Street angesiedelt – wohl ebenfalls eine Reverenz an große Geschichtenerzähler der anglophonen Welt: Thomas Bulfinch (im Straßennamen verballhornt zu „Bullfinch“) war mit seinem Werk *The Age of Fables* von 1855 so etwas wie der englische Gustav Schwab; Rudyard Kipling schrieb 1894/1895 das *Jungle book*. Das Wohngebäude der *Fables* sind die „Woodland Luxury Apartments“. Der Wald wurde hier in ein Wohngebäude gegossen und ist nur noch als ironisches Zitat auf dem Türschild vorhanden. Aus dem erhabenen, mystischen Naturraum wurde ein der kapitalistischen Ökonomie folgender Ort: Die *Fables*, die ihre Schätze retten konnten oder in der Welt der Mundys erfolgreich sind, können sich größere Apartments leisten. Der Raum bleibt freilich nicht ohne Magie: Hinter kleinen Türen verbergen sich scheinbar endlose, grenzenlose Räume – hier scheint die bedrohliche Seite des Waldes als Ort des Selbstverlustes durch. Auch die Farm, auf der die *Fables* leben, die keine Menschenform annehmen können, wirkt wie ein Best-of aus Märchenbüchern, das massiv ironisch gebrochen wird. Als Rose Red die Farm zum ersten Mal sieht, meint sie: „Sort of like old MacDonald meets Walt Disney meets Munchkinland“ (Willingham et al. 2003, 11).

In *Once Upon a Time* ist es gleich eine ganze Gemeinde, die zum Zitat wird. Schon der Name „Storybrooke“ weist mit seinem Gleichklang zu „storybook“ auf die Bedeutung von Erzählungen hin, die Präzisierung „Maine“ verbürgt die



vermeintliche Echtheit. Der gesamte Ort wirkt wie eine Ansammlung von Märchenzitaten – angefangen beim Apfelbaum im Garten der bösen Königin über den versteinerten Zwerg im Vorgarten bis hin zu den Feen, die als schmückende Gartenelemente auftreten. Der verzauberte Wald ist hier zu einer Vorstadt-Gartenidylle geworden.

## 5 Pastiche oder Best-of: Das Personal

Sowohl *Fables* als auch *Once Upon a Time* bringen Figuren aus verschiedensten Erzählwelten zusammen und lassen sie interagieren. Adam Zolkover hat dies als karnevalisches Verfahren im Sinne Bachtins beschrieben (vgl. Zolkover 2008).

*Fables* geht dabei besonders eklektisch vor: Schneewittchen, Prince Charming und Froschkönig stehen hier neben Mogli aus dem Dschungelbuch, Robin Hood, Pinocchio und Figuren aus (anglophonen) Kinderreimen wie *Mary's little lamb* oder *Jack be nimble, Jack be quick*. Die Figuren werden zwar ihren Ursprüngen zugeordnet (hier ist von „Kipling-Fables“, „European-Fables“ oder „Arabian-Fables“ fast wie von Nationalitäten die Rede). Der Erzähler nimmt sich jedoch das, was er gerade benötigt, und formt daraus seine Geschichte. So sagte Willingham:

I don't consider any character from fairy tales, fables and folklore too obscure to include in the Fables comic series. The sole determining factors on whether or not something will be used are: 1) is the character or story free for use – meaning in the public domain? and, 2) do I want to use it? That's it. (O'Shea 2003)

In *Fables* werden Figuren komprimiert und abstrahiert. Willingham spürt dabei Muster in Märchen auf und packt diese dann in eine Figur. So werden die zahlreichen schönen Prinzen zu einer Figur vereint: Prince Charming ist der Exmann von Snow White, Dornröschen und Cinderella. Die zentrale Eigenschaft der Prinzenfigur – der Charme, die Strahl-/Überzeugungskraft – wird gleich wieder ironisch gebrochen, und der Prinz tritt in Fabletown als aalglatter Karrierepolitiker auf. Ein ähnliches Verfahren wendet der Autor bei „Frau Totenkinder“ an. In ihr bildet er archetypisch die Hexe aus den europäischen Märchen ab, ohne sich auf eine bestimmte Geschichte festzulegen, womit er sich gleichzeitig erzählerische Freiräume bewahrt.

In *Fables* spielt Willingham in seinem Figureninventar auch mit metafiktionalem Elementen und dem impliziten Leser: Je beliebter ein Charakter bei Mundys ist (und dabei bleibt die Frage offen, ob es sich dabei um die Mundys im Buch oder die realen Leser handelt), desto unsterblicher wird er. An anderen Stellen eröffnen Figuren Leerstellen, die der Leser selbst schließen muss, um die Hand-

lung vollständig nachzuvollziehen. Beispielsweise soll das soeben in Fabletown eingetroffene Rotkäppchen vom Sheriff Bigby Wolf befragt werden. Sie bricht in Tränen aus und sagt: „Oh my god, he was THE Wolf? The one who...?“ Und läuft weg (Willingham et al. 2004, 98). Die Brücke zum Märchen muss der Leser an dieser Stelle selbst schlagen, um die Figurenmotivation zu verstehen.

Auch in *Once Upon a Time* gilt: Es ist erlaubt, was gefällt. Die Serie warb sogar damit, die „favorite fable characters“ an einem Platz zu versammeln. Nicht zuletzt aus produktionstechnischen Gründen beschränkt sie sich auf weniger Charaktere, das Personal ist aber nicht weniger schillernd: Schneewittchen, Robin Hood, Captain Hook und Rumpelstilzchen tummeln sich in einem Städtchen.

In beiden Serien spielt Schneewittchen/Snow White eine zentrale Rolle. In *Fables* lernt sie der Leser gleich zu Beginn des ersten Bandes als tough Businessfrau kennen, die Fabletown leitet. *Once Upon a Time* beginnt sogar mit der Szene, in der Schneewittchen vom Prinzen wachgeküsst wird. Wie Franz Hintereder-Emde in seinem Aufsatz zu Schneewittchen gezeigt hat, sind der hohe Wiedererkennungswert sowie die Aufladung der Figur mit einem ganzen Arsenal an menschlichen Emotionen wesentliche Gründe für die starke Präsenz von Schneewittchen in der modernen Unterhaltungsindustrie (vgl. Hintereder-Emde 2015, 417). Die Figur ist dabei sowohl in *Fables* als auch in *Once Upon a Time* mehrfach in sich gebrochen und bedient fleißig Klischees: In *Fables* wandelt sich Snow White von der sexualisiert gezeichneten Businesslady zur verletzlichen Frau und Mutter (den Aspekt der Korporalisierung und Erotisierung beschreibt Zolkover als auffälligstes Verfahren Willinghams [vgl. Zolkover 2008]). In der Fernsehserie ist Schneewittchen in der Märchenwelt erotisch, stark und tapfer dargestellt, während sie in Storybrook als tugendhafte Grundschullehrerin auftritt.

Die Figurendarstellung kann damit als karnevaleskes Spiel mit Identitäten und Figuren gelesen werden, gleichzeitig aber auch als ironischer Kommentar zu den bisherigen Märchenerzählungen und den Figurenbildern im kollektiven Gedächtnis.

## 6 Schluss: Das Spiel mit dem Intertext

Märchen selbst sind „Kristallisationen intertextueller Bezüge und Verweise“ (Hintereder-Emde 2015, 416). Indem *Fables* und *Once Upon a Time* die narrativen Stränge bekannter Erzählungen und Märchen weiter verweben, verfremden, neu anordnen und verändern, schaffen sie etwas Neuartiges.

Beide Produktionen treiben ihr Spiel mit dem Intertext auf subtile Weise und sind voll mit Anspielungen auf ihre Quellen. Gerade das Decodieren dieser

Hinweise und das Aufblitzen verschiedener Sinnebenen und Zusammenhänge macht einen nicht geringen Teil der Faszination beider Werke aus. Der Genuss ist vielleicht mit der von Roland Barthes beschriebenen „Lust am Text“ (Barthes 2010, 11) zu erklären – einem erotischen Spiel zwischen Text und Leserinnen und Lesern aus Andeutung, Annäherung, Herauszügern und Entfernen. In diesem Spiel klingen die tradierten Erzählwelten unserer Kultur nach. Gleichzeitig sollen *Fables* und *Once Upon a Time* hier – auch wenn die zu Grunde liegenden Geschichten von ihrer Einbettung in den philosophischen und nationalen Diskurs zur Zeit der Brüder Grimm befreit sind – als Geschichten gelesen werden, die uns auf Grundfragen nach dem Verhältnis von Lebensrealität und Erzählung oder nach kristallisierten, historischen Erfahrungsgehalten in Märchen zurückbringt.<sup>1</sup>

Beide moderne Produktionen spielen mit der Sehnsucht nach einem „happily ever after“ – enthalten es bewusst vor und stellen die Idee einer heilen Welt für alle in Frage. Und vielleicht kann man *Fables* und *Once Upon a Time* nicht zuletzt auch als Geschichten lesen, in denen – wengleich auch ironisch zwinkernd – die Erzählungen der beginnenden Moderne doch nochmals in unserer postmodernen Welt anklopfen und ihren Wert behaupten.

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<sup>1</sup> Oskar Negt und Alexander Kluge sprechen in *Geschichte und Eigensinn* vom „Zeitkern“ der Märchen als von der „spezifische[n] Ökonomie der Phantasietätigkeit“, die „zu gesellschaftlichen Erfahrungen sich verhält, kurz, wenn wir beobachten, wie ein Märchen reale Erfahrung umkehrt.“ Sie sehen Märchen als Speicher kollektiver Arbeitsprozesse Erfahrungsgehalte widerspiegeln, „die die gesamte deutsche Geschichte bis ins 10. oder 11. Jahrhundert zurück kennzeichnen.“ (Negt 1981, 756–757).

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Fuminari Niimoto

# „das junge jakobli läßt den alten jakob grüßen“ – Poetik im Dazwischen der Sprachen und jenseits der Sprache in Friedrich Glausers Kriminalroman *Die Fieberkurve*

**Abstract:** With the publication of his Sergeant Studer detective novels, Friedrich Glauser (1896–1938) became known as the first crime novelist in German-speaking countries. Glauser’s detective novels are, however, not simply traditional crime-solving stories. Glauser himself insisted in his theoretical essay on this popular genre of literature, *Open Letter about the „Ten Commandments of the Crime Novel“* (1937), that the plot, which needs only one and a half pages, is less important for him than the other 198 pages, which are devoted to portraits of characters and the atmosphere around them. We should therefore focus on the elaborate descriptions in „the other 198 pages“ if we really want to investigate the prime concerns of the writer. In this paper, we compare Glauser’s detective novel *Fever* (1938) with its radio drama version (1990) and find that Glauser’s main interests in the novel lie in depicting the foreign and dialectal accents of speakers and in unveiling their multilingual identities. These points of focus are totally omitted from the radio play version, which has been simplified and turned into a mere detective story. Glauser’s primary purpose is not to solve the puzzle of a crime and identify the culprit, and thus to establish the Swiss-German mystery genre, but to reveal multiple identities and moreover to unveil and cherish the differences in every single individual.

**Keywords:** Mehrsprachigkeit; *infans* (oder Vorsprachlichkeit); Kriminalroman; Nicht-Identität; vergleichende Lektüre

Alle Werke, die Friedrich Glauser zu Lebzeiten publizieren konnte, waren Kriminalromane. Allgemein bekannt ist, dass einer der renommiertesten Krimipreise im deutschen Sprachraum, der Friedrich-Glauser-Preis, nach ihm benannt wurde. Glausers Beziehung zu dieser seit den 1930er Jahren florierenden und ungebrochen populären Literaturgattung war jedoch weder reibungslos noch eindeutig. Eigentlich sah er sich ungern als Krimiautor. Er protestierte auch gegen

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die Tendenz der Kollegen seiner Zeit, Normen des Genres zu stiften und dadurch die devianten Versuche auszugrenzen. In seinem einzigen längeren romantheoretischen Text kritisiert Glauser (2001, 215) den zeitgenössischen Kriminalroman folgendermaßen: „freiwillig verzichtet er auf das Wichtigste: das Darstellen der Menschen und ihres Kampfes mit dem Schicksal.“ Seine Kriminalromane waren bewusste Versuche, durch dieses zeittypische, niedere Genre hindurch den Kampf mit seinem schmerzlichen Schicksal zum Ausdruck zu bringen. In meiner vorangegangenen Arbeit zu Glauser machte ich anhand seines zweiten Kriminalromans *Matto Regiert* deutlich, wie der früh entmündigte und in der Psychiatrie mundtot gemachte Patient Glauser den Rahmen des Krimis benutzte, um die Machtverhältnisse seines Schicksalsorts Heilanstalt ans Licht zu bringen, und somit den Diskurs der Psychoanalyse literarisch zu unterminieren (vgl. Niimoto 2015, 237–249).

## 1 Glausers Krimi gegen den Strich lesen

Glausers Kriminalromane sind gegen den Strich lesbar. Dabei sind meiner Auffassung nach gerade die Stellen, die für den Handlungsverlauf nicht unbedingt wichtig sind, doch wert, eingehend betrachtet und ausgelegt zu werden. Glauser selber sprach sich in seinem *Offenen Brief gegen „Zehn Gebote für den Kriminalroman“* explizit für eine solche Lektüre aus: „Die Handlung eines Kriminalromans läßt sich in anderthalb Seiten gut und gerne erzählen. Der Rest – die übrigen hundertachtundneunzig Schreibmaschinenseiten – sind Füllsel. Es kommt nun darauf an, was man mit diesem Füllsel anstellt.“ (Glauser 2001, 216) Will man Glausers Hauptanliegen ergründen, sollte man Glausers Krimis von den handlungsgemäß unwichtigen Stellen her lesen. Um diese umgekehrte Lektüre an seinem dritten Krimi *Die Fieberkurve* zu praktizieren, wird hier auch die Hörspielversion zum Vergleich herangezogen. Das Hörspiel wurde 1990 unter der Regie von Martin Bopp vom Schweizer Radio hergestellt und 2007 als CD auf den Buchmarkt gebracht. Es ist nur allzu verständlich, dass dabei ganz radikal eingegriffen wurde, um den Roman mit seinen mehr als zweihundert Buchseiten auf ein Hörspieldrama mit der Laufzeit von etwa hundertzehn Minuten zu reduzieren. Dabei lässt sich die Richtlinie der Bearbeitung aus der auf dem CD-Umschlag abgedruckten Zusammenfassung ablesen:

Die Handlung spielt im Dezember/Januar 1932/33. Von einer weihnächtlichen Reise nach Paris zurückgekehrt – dort erfährt er, dass er Grossvater geworden ist –, steht der Berner Fahnder Wachtmeister Studer, der wegen einer unliebsamen Aufdeckung in einer Bankaffäre degradiert wurde, plötzlich vor seiner Bewährungsprobe. Zwei Schwestern, die eine geschieden, die andere verwitwet, sind durch eine Gasvergiftung gestorben. Pater Mat-

tias, ‚ein weisser Bruder‘, Schwager einer der beiden Schwestern, hat Studer in Paris eine seltsame Geschichte erzählt: Die Spuren weisen zurück auf den seit dreissig Jahren unaufgeklärten Gifftod einer jungen Frau. Das Schicksal der drei Frauen ist mit demselben Mann verkettet, der vor Jahren in Marokko, im Spital von Fez, an einem heimtückischen Sumpffieber gestorben ist und der, wie sich nun herausstellt, seinem Heimatkanton Bern die Hälfte seiner Ölfelder hinterlassen hat. Studer reist mit Hilfe seiner französischen Kollegen unter falschem Namen nach Marokko und kann dort den Fall zu einem verblüffenden Ende bringen. (Gläser und Bopp 2007)

Das Prinzip der Bearbeitung lässt sich mit einem Wort resümieren: Läuterung des Stücks zum spannenden Krimi, dafür Streichung für die Handlung als irrelevant erachteter Passagen. Um den Sachverhalt der Bearbeitung noch konkreter vor Augen zu führen, werden im Folgenden zwei Stellen eingehender analysiert: die Anfangsszene in Paris und die Gesprächsszene in Basel.

## 2 Vergleichende Lektüre – Verschwinden des Schlüsselsatzes

In der Buchausgabe beginnt der Roman mit folgenden Zeilen:

„Da lies!“ sagte Studer und hielt seinem Freunde Madelin ein Telegramm unter die Nase. Vor dem Justizpalast war es finster, die Seine rieb sich glucksend an den Quaimauern, und die nächste Laterne war einige Meter weit entfernt.

„das junge jakobli läßt den alten jakob grüßen hedy“, entzifferte der Kommissär, als er unter dem flackernden Gaslicht stand. Obwohl Madelin vor Jahren an der Straßburger Sûreté gearbeitet hatte und ihm darum das Deutsche nicht ganz fremd war, machte es ihm doch Mühe, den Sinn des Satzes zu verstehen. So fragte er: „Was soll das heißen, Stüdere?“

„Ich bin Großvater“, antwortete Studer mürrisch. „Meine Tochter hat einen Sohn bekommen.“ (Gläser 1998, 7)

Würde jemand sich nach der Lektüre dieser Zeilen eine Minute lang die Anfangsszene des Hörspiels anhören, so würde er sich wohl wie der Pariser Kommissär fragen: „Was soll das heißen?“ Denn darin ist gerade der merkwürdig mehrdeutige Satz des Telegramms, dessen Sinn ohne die darauffolgende Erklärung des Wachtmeisters auch der Leser nur schwer erfassen würde, spurlos verschwunden. Ohne das Telegramm stoßen die Pariser Kollegen einfach „auf unseren Großvater“ an, und die Kriminalgeschichte entwickelt sich weiter. Dabei sagt und leistet doch im Buch jener enigmatische Satz, der auf den folgenden Seiten sogar noch viermal erwähnt wird, bei weitem mehr, als Studers sachliche Interpretation verharmlosend suggeriert. Mit dem Satz beginnt im Text nämlich eine unhaltsame Bewegung der Verdoppelung: Nicht nur wird „Jakob“ in „das junge jakobli“ und in



„den alten Jakob“ verdoppelt, auch erscheint neben „Studer“ jetzt ein „Stüdere“. Der Prozess ist nicht mehr zu stoppen, auf den folgenden, mehr als zweihundert Seiten wird der Wachtmeister in verschiedene Personen zersplittert: In Paris wird er „Inspektor Stüdere“ genannt, in Basel nennt ihn eine Berner Maitschi zuerst „Onkel Studer“, dann „Vetter Jakob“, danach wird er von einer englischen Tanzlehrerin „Stiudaa“ gerufen, in Bern von seinem Kollegen „Köbu“, von seiner Frau „Vati“, in Nordafrika steht auf seinem falschen Dienstpass sogar „Joseph Fouché“, um schließlich nach der Enthüllung der Verstellung vom Maitschi, aber diesmal auf Französisch, „l'oncle Jacques“ genannt zu werden.

Der Telegrammsatz ist in dieser Hinsicht als Initiation anzusehen, die den Vervielfachungsprozess im Text in Gang setzt. Davon betroffen ist nicht nur der Protagonist. Im Text wimmelt es, als wären sie alle verdoppelt, von Brüdern und Schwestern. Studer selber sagt: „Es blieb immerhin die Tatsache, daß dieser Fall ein Fall mit vielen Geschwistern war: die Brüder Mannesmann, die Brüder Koller, die Schwestern Hornuss.“ (Glaser 1998, 154) Oder auch: „Die Leute, die darin vorkamen, hießen immer anders, als man meinte. Cleman hieß Koller, und Koller hieß Despina, wenn er sich nicht den Namen eines Heiligen zulegte und sich Pater Matthias nannte ... Was würde der Herr Polizeidirektor für Augen machen, wenn man ihm zwei weibliche oder zwei männliche Sennenhunde mitbrachte? ... Auch das würde zu dem Fall passen! Geschwister! Geschwister!“ (Glaser 1998, 155) Auch Pater Mathias, am Schluss als Täter identifiziert, wird immer wieder als gespaltenes Wesen dargestellt: „Das Zwiespältige! Es ließ sich nicht erklären, es gehörte einfach zu der Person des Weißen Vaters.“ (Glaser 1998, 72)

Meines Erachtens geht es in Glasers Kriminalroman nicht primär um die Identifizierung des Täters, sondern um die Aufdeckung des Nicht-Identischen im einzelnen Menschen, das Glaser trotz wiederholter Internierung in die Psychiatrie sein ganzes Leben lang literarisch zu verteidigen versuchte.<sup>1</sup> Wenn man wirklich wissen will, worauf es hier ankommt, muss man den Text nicht dem roten Faden folgend, sondern vom Füllsel her lesen, der im Prozess der Hörspielbearbeitung als überflüssiger Rest weggestrichen wurde. Gleiches gilt auch für die Sprachgebärden der Figuren, die ausgerechnet in der Tonfassung leider kaum mehr zu vernehmen sind.

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<sup>1</sup> Das war auch das Thema seines wichtigsten Romans *Gourrama*. Dazu vgl. Niimoto 2016, 311–323.

### 3 Vergleichende Lektüre – Verstummen der Sprachgebärden

Von der spaltenden Macht ist das am tiefsten betroffen, was die Identität des Wachtmeisters der Berner Kantonspolizei im Kern ausmacht: das Schweizerische. In einer Passage, in der eine englische Tanzleiterin vernommen wird, werden merkwürdige Sprachgefechte geführt:

Es stand aber vor der Tür eine Dame, die sehr dünn war und deren kleiner Vogelkopf eine Pagenfrisur trug. Sie stellte sich vor als Leiterin der im gleichen Hause einquartierten Tanzschule und tat dies mit so ausgesprochen englischem Akzent, daß es dem Wachtmeister schien, als komme in diesem Falle, auch wenn es der von jedem Kriminalisten erhoffte ‚Große Fall‘ war, sein Berndeutsch zu kurz: Bald mußte man Französisch reden, bald Schriftdeutsch, dann gurgelten die Basler – und nun war also Englisch an der Reihe ... Die ganze Geschichte ist hochgradig unschweizerisch [...] genauer: auslandschweizerisch, ein langes und nicht gerade wohlthuendes Wort ...

[...]

‚Gestern abend wurde bei uns geläutet‘, sagte die dünne Dame, das heißt sie sagte: ‚Gösti-örn‘ und ‚göloouitöt‘.

[...]

‚Wir in der Schweiz‘, unterbrach Studer, ‚sagen nicht ‚Nur herein!‘ Wir sagen entweder: ‚Chömmet iche!‘ Oder ‚Chumm iche!‘ Können Sie sich nicht erinnern, Frau... Frau...‘

‚Frau Tschumi.‘

Auch das noch! Dachte Studer. Eine Engländerin mit einem Berner Geschlechtsnamen!

[...]

‚Oh doch‘, sagte die Dame lächelnd, ‚eine ganze Menge... Aber verzeihen Sie, Herr... Herr... Studer...‘ (Nun, dagegen war nichts zu machen: die Franzosen nannten einen ‚Sstüdere‘ und die englische Dame sagte ein Wort, das klang wie ‚Stiudaa‘ – fast wie der Gesang eines zufriedenen Maudis...) (Glaser 1998, 54–62)

Wie Christa Baumberger (vgl. 2006, 131–136) in ihrer glänzenden Analyse von Glasers Mehrsprachigkeit ausführlich darlegt, ist hier Studers ausgrenzendes Verhalten nicht zu übersehen. Er weiß, was Schweizerisches ist, unterscheidet als Muttersprachler, was stimmt und was nicht stimmt, und fällt Urteile aus dem Innern der Sprachgemeinschaft heraus. Glaser beschreibt jedoch auch die Gegenoffensive der Tanzleiterin, deren gerade als unschweizerisch ausgegrenzte Sprechweise den Namen Studer aus seiner schweizerischen Identität hinauskatapultiert.

Obwohl die Figur des Wachtmeister Studer, vor allem nach der Verfilmung durch Leopold Lindtberg 1946, als eine Art Ikone des Schweizerischen Detektivs im Kopf des eidgenössischen Lesers verankert zu sein scheint, hatte der Autor Glaser in der Tat keinen festen Fuß in dieser Sprache fassen können. Er ist in Wien geboren und aufgewachsen und erst als junger Mann in die Schweiz übersiedelt. Außerdem war seine Mutter eine Österreicherin, der Vater stammte aus

der Französischen Schweiz. Für Glauser war Schweizerdeutsch also weder Mutter- noch Vatersprache. In einem Brief schrieb er dazu Folgendes:

Denn ich frage mich oft, warum es das Schicksal gewollt hat, daß ich ausgerechnet als Schweizer auf die Welt gekommen bin und nun ‚schweizer‘ Romane schreibe, die gar nicht schweizerisch sind, weil alles von außen gesehen ist und ich eigentlich wenig innere Beziehung habe zu den Menschen, von denen ich schreibe. (Glauser 1991, 270)

Glauser fühlte sich nicht unbedingt dieser Sprachgemeinschaft zugehörig, und gerade damit hängt der fünfmal wiederholte Gruß des Neugeborenen in *Die Fieberkurve* zusammen. Das Kindliche, das „infans“, bedeutet eigentlich die Phase der Vorsprachlichkeit, das Sein ohne Zugehörigkeit zu einer Sprachgemeinschaft. In diesem Sinne erinnert der Satz den Protagonisten immer wieder daran, dass die Bindung an eine bestimmte Sprache im Grunde nicht notwendig ist, sogar als Zufall angesehen werden darf. Der Ruf aus dem Jenseits der Sprache aktiviert das Nicht-Identische im alten Jakob. In der Tat gerät die Identität des Schweizer „Sherlock Holmes“ im Laufe der Kommunikation mit dem Unschweizerischen, Auslandsschweizerischen und Dialektalen ins Schwanken, ja sie erfährt eine Aufsplitterung. Das wäre, worauf es in diesem Roman „ankommt“, was Glauser da „mit diesem Füllsel anstellt“. Im als Krimistück geläuterten Hörspiel ist dagegen dies alles kaum mehr zu vernehmen. Was man hört, sind sachliche Zeugnisse, die lediglich zur Aufklärung des Falles beitragen.

## 4 Großvater und Enkelkind wechseln Grüße

Die Sprengkraft des Nicht-Identischen in *Die Fieberkurve* erkannte ein Autor aus Glausers Enkelgeneration besser als alle anderen: Peter Bichsel. Seine Kurzgeschichte *Jodok läßt grüßen* wurde zweifelsohne als eine Hommage an Glauser verfasst, und meines Erachtens auch als ein Gegengruß auf jenem Gruß in *Die Fieberkurve*:

Und wenn er zum Schluß auch nichts anderes mehr als Jodok sagte, haben wir zwei uns doch immer sehr gut verstanden. Ich war sehr jung und der Großvater sehr alt. [...] und alle, die älter waren als ich, aber jünger als mein Großvater, verstanden nichts und wollten nicht, daß er mich auf die Knie nahm, und als er starb, weinte ich sehr. Ich habe allen Verwandten gesagt, daß man auf seinen Grabstein nicht Friedrich Glauser, sondern Jodok Jodok schreiben müsse, mein Großvater habe es so gewünscht. (Bichsel 1996/1997, 71)

Den Großvater, der zuerst vom fiktiven Onkel Jodok sprach und dann nichts anderes mehr als „Jodok“ sagte, nennt der Ich-Erzähler schließlich urplötzlich bei

dem realen Namen Friedrich Glauser. Chalit Durongphan (2005, 172–173) begründet diese literarisch imaginierte Großvater-Enkelkind-Beziehung mit dem Altersunterschied und der allgemeinen geistigen Affinität zwischen beiden Autoren. Es ließen sich jedoch noch intimere Beziehungen der beiden Dichter herausfinden, wenn man die Texte der beiden näher analysiert. In einem Essay zu Glauser stellt Bichsel folgende Überlegung an: „Sein wiederholtes Modell, daß ein Betrunkenener in der Kneipe zu erzählen beginnt, [...] hat damit zu tun, daß Glauser nicht eigentlich erzählen will, sondern er will das Erzählen beschreiben – nicht die Erzählung ist bei ihm der Gegenstand, sondern der oder die Erzählende.“ (Bichsel 1988, 272) Mit Bichsel lässt sich feststellen, dass Glauser – und zum Teil auch Bichsel selber – wenig Interesse für die Erzählung, im Sinne von Story, hat. Er will die Erzählenden beschreiben, zusammen mit ihren Körper- und Sprachgebärden, weil gerade diese Beschreibung für ihn den Kern des Kampfs mit seinem Schicksal ausmacht: In *Matt regiert* verfolgt er den Unterschied zwischen dem „Schriftdeutsch“ im ärztlichen Diskurs und der „Mundart“ im alltäglichen Gespräch aufs subtilste, bis die ans Kriminelle grenzende Gewalt der psychoanalytischen Wissenschaftssprache ans Licht kommt (vgl. Niimoto 2015). In *Die Fieberkurve* wird der Sprechakt der Figuren zäh und detailliert geschildert, der Name des schweizerischen Helden ins Meer der Fremdsprachen geworfen, wie sein Körper in die Fremdenlegion in Afrika, bis seine vom Schicksal erzwungene Identität als Schweizer Risse bekommt. Dabei ist es jener erste Schlag auf der ersten Seite, „*das junge jakobli läßt den alten jakob grüßen*“, der zur endlosen Vervielfachung den Anlass gibt.

*Jodok läßt grüßen* endet mit folgenden Zeilen:

Ich war noch klein, als er starb, und ich erinnere mich nur noch daran, wie er einmal sagte: als Onkel Jodok noch lebte, und meine Großmutter, die ich nicht gern gehabt habe, schrie ihn schroff an: Hör auf mit deinem Jodok, und der Großvater wurde ganz still und traurig und entschuldigte sich dann. Da bekam ich eine große Wut – es war die erste, an die ich mich noch erinnere – und ich rief: Wenn ich einen Onkel Jodok hätte, ich würde von nichts anderem mehr sprechen! Und wenn das mein Großvater getan hätte, wäre er vielleicht älter geworden, und ich hätte heute noch einen Großvater, und wir würden uns gut verstehen. (Bichsel 1969/1997, 72)

Friedrich Glauser ist ein Meister der Erkundung sprachlicher Differenz im Erzählenden. Wie jemand erzählt, entgeht nie seinen achtsamen Ohren. Für ihn sagt dies viel mehr als der Sinn, die Bedeutung oder der Inhalt der Erzählung. Das erkennt Peter Bichsel, der seinerseits auch unermüdlich das Erzählen als Beweis des Lebens darstellt. Wie dem Autor Glauser bedeutete auch dem Großvater in der Jodok-Geschichte das Erzählverbot das Ende des Lebens. Mundtot-Sein ist Tot-Sein. Erzählen-Können ist Weiterleben-Können. Dieses erzählerische Prinzip

versteht jedoch niemand von jenen, „*die älter waren als ich, aber jünger als mein Großvater*“, d. h., die ausschließlich nach dem Wirklichkeitsprinzip die Sprache gebrauchen. Aber Glauser und Bichsel sind fest davon überzeugt, dass der Gruß des „jungen jakobli“ den „alten jakob“ erreichen wird, und dass der Gruß des fiktiven Jodok und damit der des Großvaters umgekehrt das Enkelkind erfreuen wird. Mir scheint, hierin verstehen sich die beiden Dichter bestens und sie grüßen sich mittels ihrer Werke auch heute noch wie Großvater und Enkelkind.

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Monika Schmitz-Emans

# Dante-Comics zwischen Kanon- und Populärkultur: Spielformen der Hybridisierung und Strategien der Selbstreferenz

**Abstract:** Comics used to be the standard example of pulp and popular culture. At the same time there was always a tendency to wrap classics in cheap and easily readable comic paper aimed at the younger or less-educated market. Meanwhile comics take in different forms of literary genres, like comic and graphic novels, which join high and low elements and question simplistic classification.

Comics based on Dante and his *Commedia* show two main tendencies. One would be the simplification of the complex work for literary beginners. The other would be a subtle reflection of and challenging response to that complexity through specific features of graphic and pictorial media. The latter tendency demonstrates the potential of pictorial and figurative expression at an appropriate level of literary verbalization. A close look at some Dante-comics will demonstrate the vital prospects of visual and figurative narration between literary tradition and new approaches.

**Keywords:** Comics; Literaturbearbeitungen; Hoch- und Populärkultur; Unterhaltungskunst; Komplexitätsreduktion; graphische Erzählung; Intertextualität und Selbstreferentialität; Literatur-Comic; Klassiker und Comic-Adaptionen

## 1 Der Comic und die Differenzierung zwischen Hoch- und Populärkultur

Die Differenzierung zwischen populären und „hohen“, ästhetisch ambitionierten Werken galt lange als maßgebliche Orientierungsgrundlage für Prozesse ästhetischer Bewertung. In diesen Rahmen passten sowohl ein eher bürgerliches Kunstverständnis samt entsprechender Rezeptionskultur als auch innovatorische Ästhetiken. Affinitäten bestanden auch zu kulturkritischen Diskursen (wie exemplarisch die Ästhetik Adornos zeigt): Was dem Geschmack der sogenannten „Masse“ entspricht und als „Massenware“ produziert wird, steht oft zumindest unter dem Verdacht, allenfalls Halb- oder Pseudokunst, Unterhaltungskunst und Konsumartikel zu sein. Die Rezeptionsgeschichte des Comics, des Comicstrips –

des Heftcomics und später auch der Graphic Novel – war von dem skizzierten Bewertungsmuster in besonderem Maße betroffen. Comics galten lange als Unterhaltungskunst ohne ästhetische Ambition, als auf leichte Konsumierbarkeit angelegte Produkte ohne Anspruch auf die Betrachtung als Kunst, ja sogar als Produkte, die den „guten Geschmack“ verderben. Von reaktionären Kritikern vor allem als jugendgefährdend eingestuft, schien die Comiclektüre der Vermittlung kulturell relevanten Wissens im Wege zu stehen, bestenfalls im Sinne der Zeitverschwendung, schlimmerenfalls als Mittel der Verdummung und Verrohung halber Analphabeten. Und doch gab es schon seit den 1940er Jahren auch solche Comics, die Wissen (etwa über Literatur und Geschichte) zu vermitteln suchten. Die bis heute erfolgreiche „Classics Illustrated“-Reihe ist ein Beispiel; sie stand allerdings im Zeichen einer „Popularisierung“ ihrer Gegenstände durch Komplexitätsreduktion. Der typische CI-Comic bot den Inhalt der dargestellten Text-„Klassiker“ in gegenüber den Textvorlagen gekürzter und reduzierter Form und setzte auf eingängige bunte Bilder im geläufigen, leicht lesbaren Comicstil.

## 2 Intertextualität, Interpikturalität, Hybridität

Im Zuge der in den letzten Jahrzehnten erfolgten Aufwertung des Comics zur allgemein anerkannten Gattung wurden verschiedene Kriterien ästhetischer Beurteilung vorgeschlagen und ausprobiert. Dazu gehören die Qualität, Originalität und Komplexität der Bilder und des Zeichenstils und des jeweiligen Textes, des Plots und der Erzählweise (etwa unter den Aspekten der inneren Konsistenz und des Einfallsreichtums), ferner die Originalität der zeichnerischen, textgestalterischen und die Handlung betreffenden Einfälle – sowie die Vielschichtigkeit und ästhetische Komplexität des Text-Bild-Hybrids Comic bzw. Graphic Novel. Parallel zu Beschreibungsverfahren literarischer Texte und bildkünstlerischer Werke wurden und werden graphische Erzählungen vor allem dann als vielschichtig, komplex und mithin ästhetisch reizvoll wahrgenommen, wenn sie in erkennbaren und deutungsrelevanten Beziehungen zur literarischen respektive zur bildkünstlerischen Tradition stehen. Intertextualität, Interpikturalität, Praktiken des Variierens, Parodierens, Travestierens, Formen des Zitats und der Anspielung sind gerade in jüngerer Zeit in den Blick gerückt, wo es darum ging, Comic-Erzählungen zu analysieren. Damit verbunden sind auch Urteile über ihre ästhetischen Qualitäten (Vgl. Bachmann et al. 2012).

Analoges gilt für die verschiedenen Ebenen und Spielformen von Hybridität. Zum einen ist der Comic ja eine per se hybride Darstellungsform bzw. Gattung, und das spezifische Zusammenspiel von Bildlichem und Sprachlichem, von

Zeichnungen und Texten, bzw. die comicspezifische Schriftbildlichkeit steht meist im Mittelpunkt historischer und theoretischer Darstellungen zum Comic und seiner Geschichte.<sup>1</sup> Zum anderen bietet die Beziehung von Comics zur Literaturgeschichte wie zur Geschichte der Bilder, Bildprogramme und bildenden Künste ein besonders breites Spektrum an Hybridisierungsoptionen. In Form von Anspielungen, Paraphrasen, Zitaten und Quasi-Zitaten können in der Comic-Erzählung Anregungen, Elemente, Versatzstücke aus verschiedenen medialen und kulturellen Kontexten miteinander verknüpft werden. Als eine Kunst der (variierenden) Wiederholung (vgl. Frahm 2010) hat gerade der Comic eine enge Affinität zum Kombinatorischen, zur Mischung von Heterogenem auf Motiv- und auf Gestaltungsebene, zur Überlagerung und Verschmelzung von Bildprogrammen, Textformen und Stilniveaus, zur Verknüpfung komischer mit tragischen Elementen, von fiktionalen Erzählungen mit informativen Absichten – kurz: zur Darstellung hybridkultureller Text- und Bildwelten.

### 3 Literaturcomics

Graphische Erzählungen, die auf Werke des literarischen Kanons Bezug nehmen, lassen sich mit Fragen der ästhetischen Wertung auf verschiedenen Ebenen verknüpfen (Vgl. Schmitz-Emans 2012). Dies betrifft erstens (per se) die implizite Bestätigung des kanonischen Rangs der gewählten literarischen Vorlage, zweitens mögliche Erörterungen der Frage, ob und inwiefern die graphische Umsetzung der Vorlage sich in der vergleichenden Gegenüberstellung „bewährt“, ob sie der Vorlage in welchem Sinn auch immer „gerecht“ wird, ob sie sich mit dieser im Rahmen ihrer eigenen Darstellungsmittel „messen“ kann (oder sich „blamiert“), sowie drittens die Frage nach der ästhetischen Bewertung der Bilderzählung als solcher, also als Beispiel graphisch-narrativer Kunst. Sinnvoll erscheint mit Blick auf die Vielzahl an Spielformen des Literaturcomics übrigens vor allem eine Differenzierung: zwischen solchen Comics, die (entsprechend dem Konzept der „Classics Illustrated“) Kenntnisse über die Vorlage vermitteln wollen, nicht aber bereits voraussetzen, und solchen, die eine Kenntnis der Vorlage oder doch zumindest ein Wissen über diese durchaus voraussetzen. Nur im letzteren Fall erscheinen ästhetische Strategien wie Parodie, Travestie und Pastiche sinnvoll, und viele Literaturcomics bedienen sich gerade dieser Strategien – teils in den Spuren von per se parodierenden oder travestierenden literarischen Genres bzw. angeregt durch literarische Pastiches.

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1 Vgl. dazu diverse Beiträge aus Stein und Thon 2013.



Einen selbstreferenziellen Zug haben Literaturcomics zu erzählenden Texten schon dadurch, dass sie sich implizit (manchmal explizit) in der Tradition literarischen Erzählens verorten. Dies geschieht allerdings unter sehr verschiedenen Akzentuierungen.

Die im Folgenden vorzustellenden Dante-Comics lassen sich entsprechend gruppieren: In Comics für Leser ohne Dante-Wissen und in solche mit entsprechendem Wissen, und sei es einem rudimentären, auf dessen Basis Anspielungen dechiffriert, Zitate erkannt, Parodien verstanden werden. Die Voraussetzungen für letzteres Wissen sind dabei insgesamt in Italien günstiger als in anderen Ländern.

## 4 Dante-Comics – Voraussetzungen und Überblick

Dantes *Commedia* ist unter dem Aspekt der Adaptierbarkeit durch graphische Erzählungen ein instruktiver Spezialfall. Erstens ist Dante einer der in dieser Rolle völlig unbestrittenen Kanon-Autoren der abendländischen Literatur – und eine graphisch-narrative Umsetzung damit ein Musterfall der Auseinandersetzung mit „Kanonischem“. Zweitens ist der Text der *Commedia* stark visuell geprägt und lädt daher zur Bebilderung ein.<sup>2</sup> Drittens lädt die Form der *Commedia* als Abfolge von Episoden dazu ein, in sequentielle bildliche Darstellungen übersetzt zu werden (Vgl. Hölter und Hölter 2017, 345). Viertens besteht seit Jahrhunderten eine enge Verbindung zwischen Textrezeption und Bebilderungsgeschichte der *Commedia*. Immer wieder haben Künstler Bilder zur *Commedia* geschaffen, was sich auf die Rezeptionsgeschichte des Werks selbst nachhaltig ausgewirkt hat.<sup>3</sup> Comiczeichner stehen daher nicht nur in einer großen Tradition, sie können auch aus reichen Beständen zitieren. Die wichtigsten Stationen der Bebilderungsgeschichte der *Commedia* – zu deren Hauptgebieten illuminierte Handschriften, Druckgraphien und Gemälde, Buchillustrationen und eigenständige bildkünstlerische Werke gehören – sind zumindest innerhalb der westlichen Kultur weithin bekannt. Dazu gehört die Bildserie Sandro Botticellis (die im Einzelnen bereits auf den Comic vorausweist<sup>4</sup>), dazu gehören die visuellen Dante-Interpretationen William Blakes (der nicht nur visuell ganz eigene Akzentuierungen vornimmt, sondern sich auch durch seinen eigenwilligen Umgang mit der Textvorlage ausweist); dazu gehören

<sup>2</sup> Hölter und Hölter 2012 (18) sprechen von der „Anschaulichkeit, d. h. der visuellen Suggestionskraft seiner Textphantasie“.

<sup>3</sup> Vgl. zu Botticelli Rehm 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Botticellis Dante-Illustrationen zeigen teilweise – analog zu den Seiten von Comic-Heften – simultan mehrere Phasen einer Geschichte oder Handlungsfolge.

die Umrissbildzeichnungen von John Flaxmann (dessen Text-Bild-Kombinationen als Vorläufer des Comics betrachtet werden können). Eine besonders bekannte, vielfach zitierte und auch für Comiczeichner besonders wichtige Inspirationsquelle ist der Zyklus mit *Commedia*-Illustrationen von Gustave Doré. Aber auch bekannte Tafelbilder (etwa von Anselm von Feuerbach und Eugène Delacroix) gehören zu den weithin bekannten Gegenständen des kulturellen Wissens. Insgesamt sind die visuellen Interpretationen der *Commedia* durch Zeichner, Maler, Graphiker wohl breiter bekannt als die (ebenfalls zahlreichen und oft in Kanonlisten aufgenommenen) Produkte der literarischen Dante-Rezeption. In ihrer Summe bilden sie einen facetten- und spannungsreichen, durchaus als ‚hybrid‘ zu bezeichnenden Bestand. Als ein Bindeglied, das zwischen Botticellis Bildern zur *Commedia* und den Dante-Comics neuerer Zeit situiert ist, charakterisieren Achim und Eva Hölter den Zyklus „Dante historiato“ von Federico Zuccari (1586), bei dem die Bilder bereits durch Texte (mit einem „deutlich sekundären Charakter“ [Hölter und Hölter 2017, 345]) ergänzt erscheinen. Spätestens mit der Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts wendet sich das besondere Interesse der kreativen Rezipienten dem „Inferno“ zu. Auch im Bereich bildkünstlerischer Dante-Rezeption kann wohl von einer tendenziellen Privilegierung des Infernos respektive der Infernobilder gesprochen werden. Dies gilt auch mit Blick auf Dante-Comics.

Diese schließen die *Commedia* dabei auf unterschiedliche Weisen an die Welt und den Verständnishorizont ihrer Rezipienten an (Vgl. Kretzschmar 2013). Zu unterscheiden sind entsprechend verschiedene Formen des Brückenschlags zwischen dem spätmittelalterlichen Text auf der einen, dem Lebensumfeld und Wissenshorizont des gegenwärtigen Lesers auf der anderen Seite. So kann es darum gehen, Dantes Text dem zeitgenössischen Leser näherzubringen. Oder darum, auf der Basis dieses Textes eine eigene, möglichst effektvolle Geschichte zu konstruieren. Oder darum, durch die parodistische Verulkung eines kanonisierten Klassikers humoristische Wirkungen zu erzeugen. Oder darum, an Lese- und sonstige Lebenspraktiken des Lesers anzuschließen, ein kulturelles Erbe auf unkonventionelle Weise zu pflegen – oder Danteske Gestaltungselemente ornamental oder als Spin-offs anderer Produkte zu verwenden.

Besondere Anschlussstellen für Comic-Adaptationen bieten insbesondere das codifizierte Aussehen des Helden Dante, seine Ähnlichkeit mit „Superhelden“ und die Serialität der *Commedia*-Episoden.<sup>5</sup> Einen Überblick über Geschichte und Spielformen des Dante-Comics hat im Jahr 2004 eine Ausstellung in Ravenna

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<sup>5</sup> Vgl. Hölter und Hölter 2012, 19. Dante ist nicht nur Autor der *Commedia*, sondern auch als Figur im Text präsent, darum ‚weiß‘ man, wie die Figur aussieht – unter Orientierung an Danteporträts. (Wobei die Frage nach deren Authentizität auf einem anderen Blatt steht.) Dante ist zudem als Jenseitsreisender ein „Superheld“, so Hölter und Hölter 2012, 19.

gegeben (Vgl. Guiducci und Cantarelli 2004). Auch eine im selben Jahr in Erlangen gezeigte Ausstellung über Dante in der bildenden Kunst bezog Comicbeispiele ein.<sup>6</sup> Darauf aufbauend, haben Achim Hölter und Eva Hölter in einer Abhandlung von 2012 einen panoramatischen Überblick vorgelegt, wichtige Analyseoptionen deutlich gemacht und differenzierte Befunde erhoben.<sup>7</sup> Dieses Panorama wurde 2017 durch weitere Beispiele und Beobachtungen ergänzt (vgl. Hölter und Hölter 2017). Aber auch diverse andere Studien zu einzelnen Dantecomics und zu allgemeinen Tendenzen haben die sich zunehmend stärker akademisch etablierende Comicforschung bereichert.<sup>8</sup>

Es gibt keine *Commedia*-Version der „Classics Illustrated“ (Hölter und Hölter 2012, 29), wohl allerdings eine stilistisch ähnliche Dante-Biographie: das Heft „Vita di Dante“, erschienen in der Jugendzeitschrift *Il Giornalino* (vgl. dazu Guiducci und Cantarelli 2004 sowie Hölter und Hölter 2012, 29). Auffällig ist insgesamt die Vielzahl eher komischer Bilderzählungen und humoristischer *Commedia*-Adaptationen im Comicstil. Dies zeigt schon eine kurze Übersicht zu einigen älteren Dantecomics.<sup>9</sup> Hier werden Danteske Motive und Episoden wiederholt mit Bild- und Figurenwelten hybridisiert, die den Comicslesern aus bekannten Reihen vertraut sind.

Zu den komischen *Commedia*-Adaptationen gehören u. a. die im Donald-Duck-Stil gezeichneten Geschichten „L'inferno di Topolino“ (in Martina und Bioletto 2001; dazu Hölter und Hölter 2012, 30),<sup>10</sup> „Paolino Pocatosta e la bella Franceschina“,<sup>11</sup> „Die schöne Francesca“<sup>12</sup> und die „Topolino Story“<sup>13</sup>. Humoris-

**6** *Himmel und Hölle: Dantes Göttliche Komödie in der modernen Kunst*. Hg. Stadtmuseum Erlangen. Erlangen 2004.

**7** Hölter und Hölter (2012) geben einen Überblick über Dantecomics bis 2012, kommentieren Beispiele und skizzieren Tendenzen. Zur Dantecomixproduktion insgesamt: Hölter und Hölter 2012, 18 f., unter Bezugnahme auf den Katalog Ravenna 2004: „In der Summe zeigt sich eine gewisse übergreifende Tendenz zum schlichten Historisieren, zur Verschiebung ins Komische oder zum für die Zeichenkunst bequemen Abschweifen ins Visionär-Phantastische.“

**8** Vgl. die rezenten Publikationen von Bosold-DasGupta 2010, Muth und Simonis 2013, Kretschmar 2013 und Gröne 2015.

**9** Zu den komischen Beispielen vgl. Hölter und Hölter 2012, 30–37.

**10** Es agieren vertraute Disney-Figuren (Micky Maus, Donald Duck, Goofy, Pluto, Tick, Trick und Track, Dumbo etc.). Zur Gesamteinschätzung vgl. Hölter und Hölter 2012, 33 f. „Die Grundidee der Disney-Adaptionen ist die Travestie. Wir dürfen also keinen Moment erwarten, eine adäquate Inszenierung des ‚Inferno‘ zu sehen, sondern lesen Dante im Modus eines heroisch-komischen Epos (...).“

**11** In: *Topolino*, 27.1.1980; Zeichner: Giovan Battista Carpi; dt. Fassung im *Lustigen Taschenbuch* 88 (1983); Angabe nach Hölter und Hölter 2012, 41.

**12** In: *Lustiges Taschenbuch* 88 (1983), 178–193; Angabe nach Hölter und Hölter 2012, 41.

**13** A cura di Gianni Bono. Vol. 1, Milano 2005, 14–16; Angabe nach Hölter und Hölter 2012, 41.

tisch geprägt ist auch Hunt Emersons Comic „Dante’s Inferno“, 2012 als Album erschienen (dazu Hölter und Hölter 2017, 348). Stilistisch damit stark kontrastierende Adaptationen gestalten die Dante-Welt als zeitgenössische Alltagswelt (so etwa Bach 1973)<sup>14</sup> oder als Horrorszenario (vgl. den Heft-Comic von Claremont et al. 1980; Angaben nach Hölter und Hölter 2012, 39). Im Folgenden ein Blick auf ausgewählte Beispiele.

## 5 Joe Lee: *Dante for Beginners*. New York und London 2001

Joe Lees Dante-Einführung gehört zu einer Publikationsserie aus Einführungscomics zu verschiedenen Wissensgebieten (u. a. zu literarischen Gegenständen), ist dabei aber stilistisch nicht einmal ein typisches Comic-Buch. Die Seiten sind nicht als Comic-Panels aus Einzelbildersequenzen strukturiert, sondern folgen einem anderen Schema: Ein relativ großer Textanteil wird durch eine Linie umrahmt; die Zeichnungen wirken mit an der Rahmung des Textes und ragen oft von mehreren Seiten in diesen hinein. Die meisten von ihnen stellen Figuren dar, und hier wiederum die meisten Dante. Würden dabei nicht gelegentlich Sprechblasen verwendet, hätte Lees Buch wenig Ähnlichkeit mit einem Comic.

Der Text, ein zusammenhängender Essay, der wie die Zeichnungen von Lee stammt, dominiert das Buch; die Bilder haben zum einen illustrative Funktion, zum anderen ironisieren sie den Text gelegentlich durch Elemente von Komik; dabei erzählen sie aber keine eigene Geschichte, sondern zeichnen Stationen von Dante Alighieris Leben nach. Lees Text und seine Bilder berücksichtigen auch den zeitgeschichtlichen Hintergrund; die Narration ist mit historischen, kulturhistorischen und soziologischen Informationen verbunden, die in unterhaltendem Stil vorgetragen werden. In diesen Rahmen integriert ist eine zusammenfassende Darstellung der *Commedia*; diese nimmt rund 80 Prozent des Buchs ein (vgl. Lee 2001, 42–175). Der Reihe nach skizziert werden die Inhalte der einzelnen Canti, zeichnerisch begleitet von einem mit Vergil durch den Danteschen Kosmos reisenden Dante. Lee schreibt in einem umgangssprachlichen Stil, und seine gezeichneten Figuren kommentieren Inhaltliches manchmal mit schnoddrigen Äußerungen,

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<sup>14</sup> Bach verzichtet auf komisch-parodistische Effekte und verweist stattdessen auf zeitgenössische Themen und Probleme. Wie Hölter und Hölter 2012, 36, treffend konstatieren, ist diese Graphic Novel „ein nur noch lose am Text [Dantes] orientierter gesellschaftskritischer Comic“. Stilistisch signifikant ist u. a. die Verwendung collagerter Photos.

aber die Information des Lesers hat offenbar Vorrang vor dem Parodistischen. Insofern exponiert sich hier der Comic als ein Erzählmedium, das Unterhaltung und Belehrung verknüpft.

## **6 Seymour Chwast: *Dante's Divine Comedy*. London 2010 (Dt.: *Göttliche Komödie*. *Eine Graphic Novel*. München 2011)**

Chwasts Bildergeschichte erzählt die Handlung der gesamten *Commedia* nach, nicht nur das „Inferno“, wobei allerdings das „Inferno“ den breitesten Raum einnimmt. Am Anfang stehen zwei informative Seiten: eine erste mit einem gezeichneten und aus zwei Textspalten bestehenden Dante-Porträt und allgemeinen Informationen zur *Commedia*, eine zweite mit einer graphischen Darstellung des Danteschen Weltbildes, das sich an ältere Darstellungen anlehnt; man sieht den Höllentrichter und die Höllenkreise, die zentrale Hölle („Lucifer's Home“), den Weg hinaus zum „Mt. Purgatory“, der vom „Earthly Paradise“ gekrönt wird (vgl. Muth und Simonis 2013, ferner Hölter und Hölter 2017, 347 f.). Die Erlebnisse der Danteschen Hauptfigur auf ihrer Jenseitsreise werden hier als eine Art „Jedermann“-Geschichte nacherzählt. Chwasts Zeichenstil ist lakonisch und kunstvoll-einfach: In Schwarz-Weiß gehalten, bietet er (partiell schwarz ausgefüllte) Umrisszeichnungen von stilisierten Figuren und stilisierten Ambientes. Diese zeigen, passend zum Sujet, manch Phantastisches (wie Teufel und Ungeheuer), enthalten aber auch viele Elemente der Alltagskultur. Dantesches Inferno, Alltagswelt und Bilder aus dem Bereich der kollektiven Imagination erscheinen überblendet. Dante tritt im Trenchcoat, mit dunkler Brille und Hut auf; ständig die Pfeife im Mund tragend und mit ausgeprägter Nase, erinnert er an typenhafte Detektivfiguren.<sup>15</sup> Vergil ist das ebenso typenhafte Pendant zu Dantes Erscheinung: Er trägt einen frackartigen Anzug, schwarz-weiße Schuhe, einen Spazierstock und einen Bowler Hat; eher korpulent und mit schmalem Oberlippenbart, ähnelt er typisierenden Darstellungen von Geschäftsleuten. Beatrice trägt ein Kostüm, das ähnlich wie die Kleidung Dantes und Vergils die 1920er Jahre asso-

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<sup>15</sup> Während all seiner Abenteuer nimmt Dante nie seinen Hut ab, allenfalls angesichts der Aussicht auf eine Dichterkrönung, die ihm eine andere Kopfbedeckung eintragen würde (vgl. Chwast 2010, 118), sowie zuletzt, in Gesellschaft von „St. Bernard“ und der „Virgin Mary“ (vgl. Chwast 2010, 126). Die Pfeife behält er aber auch hier noch im Mund. Und bei der abschließenden Betrachtung des Sternenhimmels hat er auch den Hut wieder auf (vgl. Chwast 2010, 127).

ziieren lässt; Ähnliches gilt für Lucia. Reminiszenzen an die Welt der 1920er Jahre prägen die Szenerie insgesamt stark; so treten St. James, St. John und St. Peter als Tänzer im Stil damaliger Shows auf. Gerade solche vom Plot selbst keineswegs motivierte Anachronismen, u. a. auch die einer älteren Mode angehörende Kleidung der Figuren, suggeriert, die Bilderzählung sei der geläufigen Zeitordnung nicht unterworfen: Das Dargestellte könnte zu jeder Zeit spielen. Entsprechend bewegen sich auch Menschen, Höllen- und Himmelsbewohner durch dieselbe Welt – wie bei Dante.

Auf der Textebene finden sich knappe Nacherzählungen von Dantes Jenseitsabenteuern, meist in Form narrativer Kommentare, teils in Gestalt von Sprechblasen. Oft werden die Bildmotive auch nur betitelt, Figuren und Orte etikettiert oder mit knappen Bildlegenden versehen. Anflüge von Komik stellen sich ein, wenn Sprachbilder visuell getreu umgesetzt werden, etwa indem Chwast Dante von Lucia zum Tor des Purgatoriums tragen lässt: Man sieht eine elegant gekleidete Frau, die den ‚Detektiv‘ Dante mit sich herumschleppt (vgl. Chwast 2010 72). Auf dezente Weise humoristisch wirkt aber vor allem die Kontrastierung von Danteskem Inhalt und modernen Gestalten, die Bevölkerung der drei Jenseitsreiche mit Figuren in moderner (wenn auch unmodischer) Alltagskleidung, die Arrangements von einerseits zeitspezifischem, andererseits in die ‚Ewigkeit‘ versetztem Motivmaterial. Chwasts lakonisch-stilisierender Zeichenstil hat seine eigene verhaltene Komik, aber um eine Verulking von Dantes *Commedia* geht es ihm nicht, sondern vielmehr um die Effekte, welche sich aus der Hybridisierung von *Commedia*- und von Alltagsmotiven ziehen lassen, von mittelalterlicher Imagination und Bildprogrammen einer leicht angestaubten Moderne. Als selbstreferenziell zu beschreiben wäre Chwasts Comic vor allem durch die programmatische Einebnung zeitlicher und kultureller Differenzen zwischen Dantes Zeit und dem 20. Jahrhundert: Der Comic, so signalisiert er, erzählt zeitlose Geschichten.

## 7 Michael Meier: *Das Inferno*. Kassel 2012

Meiers Graphic Novel – die zuerst als täglicher Comicstrip in der Frankfurter Rundschau erschien – erzählt die Abenteuer einer Figur, die sich Dante nennt, ansonsten aber mit dem Dante der *Commedia* wenig gemeinsam hat (Vgl. Hölter und Hölter 2017, 348 f.). Meiers Dante ist ein sportlicher Typ mit einem Repertoire von allerlei flotten Sprüchen. Auf einer nicht weiter begründeten Gebirgswandertour gerät Dante in einen unübersichtlichen Wald, wo er – analog zu der ersten Episode der *Commedia* – zum einen mehreren merkwürdigen und bedrohlichen Gestalten begegnet (einer Riesenfrau im Leopardenkleid, einem weitgehend

anthropomorphen sprechenden Löwen und einem sprechenden Wolf), zum anderen einem Helfer, der ihn aus der vom Wolf drohenden Gefahr rettet und sich als weiterer Begleiter anbietet. Es handelt sich (wie man später auch erklärt bekommt) um einen roten Schakal. Er stellt sich Dante als einstigen Dichter aus Mantua vor, ist also offenbar ein äußerlich verwandelter Vergil. Seine Rolle entspricht im Folgenden auch der Vergils in der *Commedia*. Die drei unheimlichen Wesen im Wald sind Dantes allegorischen Tieren nachgestaltet: als sinnlich-träge Frau, als psychologisierender und dabei latent gewalttätiger Löwe, als tückischer Versicherungsmakler in Wolfsgestalt repräsentieren sie ‚Laster‘, die den von Dante thematisierten ähneln. Vergil berichtet Dante auch bei Meier von seiner Mission im Auftrag Beatrices, die ihn in seiner Erscheinungsform als Dichter-Büste kontaktiert hatte (vgl. Meier 2012, 14/15). Der zusammen mit dem tiergestaltigen Vergil eingeschlagene Weg der beiden Hauptfiguren führt explizit „durch die Hölle“ (Meier 2012, 12). Bald nach ihrem Aufbruch stehen die Wanderer vor dem Eingang zur Hölle, der die aus der *Commedia* bekannte Inschrift trägt („... tu, der du eintrittst, alle Hoffnung ab“ [Meier 2012, 17]). Meiers Graphic Novel gliedert sich in einzelne, durch Zwischenseiten markierte Kapitel, analog der Strukturierung des „Inferno“ in Canti. Auch die Handlung folgt weitgehend der Episodensequenz von Teil I der „*Commedia*“. Dante und Vergil passieren die Vorhölle und geraten, Höllenflüsse überschreitend wie ihre literarischen Vorbilder, in immer tiefere Kreise der Hölle. Zuletzt gelangen sie, am Teufel vorbei, ins Purgatorio. Die einzelnen Episoden sind durch Anspielungen auf Vorlagen in der *Commedia* geprägt; Sünder, Höllenstrafen und Erlebnisse Dantes sind parallel zur Vorlage konstruiert, wenn sie auch anders illustriert und ausgesponnen werden, manches fortfällt und manches dazukommt. Ein Unterschied zum groben Handlungsverlauf in der *Commedia* ergibt sich aber insofern, als Meiers Held sich in der Hölle diversen Verfolgungen und Gefährdungen ausgesetzt sieht, denen er dann jeweils knapp entkommt, obwohl er einiges auszustehen hat. Oft helfen dabei die Erfahrungen und die Gewitztheit des vierbeinigen Vergil.

Meiers Dante-Adaptation arbeitet mit den Mitteln der Travestie: Figuren und Ereignisse der *Commedia* werden in neuem Gewand re-inszeniert. Für die Höllenszenarien und Höllenstrafen lässt Meier sich einiges einfallen, obwohl man das Muster stets wiedererkennt, gehe es nun um die Episode mit den lebendigen Bäumen (Meier 2012, 58), um den Höllenkreis, in dem die Betrüger sitzen (und wo ein Asiate gefälschte Louis-Vuitton-Taschen verkauft [vgl. Meier 2012, 83]). Minotaurus, der Kentaur, Geryon – alle spielen mit, wenn auch in modifizierter Gestalt. Höllenpersonal und Höllenkulissen erinnern an Horror- und Fantasy-szenarien, wobei der lakonisch-flächige Zeichenstil Meiers die Schauereffekte dämpft. Farblich dominieren aber Schwarz und Rot in der ganzen Erzählung. Die Verfremdung der Vorlage ergibt humoristische Effekte, wenngleich es Meier

auch offenbar nicht darum geht, die *Commedia* etwa durch Überzeichnung zu verulken. Hinzu kommen die flotte, jargonartige Sprechweise der Figuren sowie auf Komik angelegte Wiederholungen – etwa wenn anlässlich der Begegnung Dantes mit den drei gefährlichen ‚Tieren‘ im Wald jedes Mal auch Berlusconi auftritt. Die „Modernisierung“ der Höllenstrafen bringt manch komischen Effekt mit sich, etwa wenn auf das Anschauen von Kochshows als schreckliche Strafe angespielt wird oder Berlusconi als ein an verschiedensten Ecken plötzlich auftauchender Medienteufel erscheint. Dabei werden auf satirisch-parodistische Weise auch ‚ernsthafte‘ Probleme zum Gegenstand der Anspielung: brutale Nazis, Alkoholismus, Umweltzerstörung durch Industrie, dubiose Geschäftspraktiken; man trifft auf zänkische Hartz-IV-Empfänger, wird konfrontiert mit einer nervtötenden Bürokratie, mit Atommüll-Lagern, mit Hitler und anderen „Schlächtern“ (Meier 2012, 54).

Meier setzt mehrfache Hybridisierungsstrategien ein. Integriert sind der Geschichte diverse Bildzitate, so eines der Madonna, die mit Beatrice ihre Sorge um Dante teilt (vgl. Meier 2012, 15), ein Bild von Paolo und Francesca (nach einer Vorlage von Ary Scheffer, 1835; vgl. Meier 2012, 26), ein richtender Minos (nach Gustave Doré; vgl. Meier 2012, 26). Gelegentlich wird zur Charakteristik von Phantasien und Gedankenspielen der Hauptfigur Dante mit unterschiedlichen Zeichencodes und -stilen gespielt. So führt eine temporäre Verwirrung Dantes dazu, dass sich einige Panels im unbeholfenen Stil von Kinderzeichnungen präsentieren, eines auch als Abbild von Legosteinen (vgl. Meier 2012, 22). Einen selbstreferenziellen Zug hat Meiers Version der *Commedia* nicht zuletzt dadurch, dass er den Leser durch einen „Wald“ der Zeichen schickt, der durchdrungen und entziffert werden muss. Das mit vielen Herausforderungen verbundene Lese-Abenteuer angesichts eines Comics, der aus ganz unterschiedlichen Registern schöpft, erscheint als humoristisches Äquivalent der mühsamen Reise Dantes, weniger gefährlich, aber ebenfalls spannungsreich.

## 8 Joseph Lanzara: *Dante's Inferno. The Graphic Novel*. New Jersey 2010

Lanzaras Dante-Comic stellt insofern ein Kuriosum dar, als die Bilder der Bildgeschichte dem Illustrationszyklus Gustave Dorés zur *Commedia* entnommen sind.<sup>16</sup> Mittels der Doréschen Bilder erzählt der Comic die *Commedia*-Handlung

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16 „Story: Dante Aleghieri (sic) / Art Gustave Doré“ (innere Titelseite).



in großen Zügen und als Paraphrase diverser Episoden nach. Allerdings werden neue Akzente gesetzt, so durch Suggestion einer „Schuld“ Dantes – er hat, wie er Vergil erzählt, Beatrice geliebt, Gott hat sie ihm genommen, und daraufhin hat er sich von Gott abgewandt (vgl. Lanzara 2010, 13) – und die Verknüpfung der in der Original-*Commedia* erzählten Geschichte mit einem von Lanzara erfundenen Handlungsstrang: Gegen Ende der Geschichte, nachdem der Protagonist von Vergil an Beatrice übergeben worden ist, empfindet dieser die Verbannung Vergils aus dem Paradies als so schmerzlich, dass er Beatrice zu einem Fehlverhalten verleitet: Sie ‚tauft‘ den ob seines Ungetauftseins diskriminierten Vergil mit dem Wasser des Styxs und zieht damit Gottes Zorn auf sich und auf Dante (vgl. Lanzara 2010, 24–25). Zwar entführt ein Adler Beatrice (vgl. Lanzara 2010, 26), aber ebenso unerwartet, wie Dante hier ‚bestraft‘ wird, tritt auch wieder eine positive Wendung ein – mit Verzeihung und Erlösung. Dante erhält Ermahnungen von der Mutter Gottes, die ihn begnadigt (vgl. Lanzara 2010, 29) – und die Hauptfiguren können zusammen das Paradies betrachten – wie bei Doré. In die Doréschen Bilder sind Sprechblasen einmontiert; hinzu kommen gelegentliche Untertitelungen einzelner Panels. Manchmal werden Bilder aus verschiedenen Bildvorlagen Dorés zusammengeschnitten. Dies alles und die Aufteilung der Seiten in (oft halbe, manchmal ganze Seiten füllende) Panels verleiht der Bildgeschichte Montagecharakter. Das stilistisch stark abweichende Cover des Heftes zeigt eine ältere skulpturale Darstellung von Sündern im Fegefeuer, wie man sie aus katholischen Kirchen und Klöstern kennt. Es weckt, zumal in seiner blutroten Rahmung, andere Erwartungen als die von der schwarz-weißen Bildgeschichte dann eingelösten.

Lanzara erzeugt einen eigentümlichen Kontrasteffekt durch die Verknüpfung der Doréschen Dante-Illustrationen mit Sprechblasen – aber parodistisch ist seine Bildgeschichte weder mit Bezug auf Doré noch mit Bezug auf Dantes Text selbst. Auch die Modifikation der Handlung durch die reichlich krude Story um Vergils Taufe ist nicht parodistisch gemeint; Humor liegt der Bildgeschichte überhaupt völlig fern. Man könnte Lanzaras „Inferno“ als eine pastichartige Love-and-Horror-Story mit (pseudo-)metaphysischer Rahmenkonstruktion und ‚frommem‘ Schluss beschreiben, deren Verfasser Dante zwar keineswegs despektierlich behandelt, sich um den ursprünglichen Sinn der *Commedia*-Motive und -Episoden aber auch nicht wirklich schert. Der Comic exponiert sich hier selbst als ein in etwas seltsamem Sinn ‚belehrendes‘ und pathetisches Medium.

## 9 Christos Gage (Text) / Diego Latorre (Bilder) / Alessandro Benedetti (Lettering): *Dante's Inferno. Der Comic zum Hit-Videogame von Electronic Arts. Stuttgart 2010*

In dieser Comicerzählung kommt es zu einer Art Absorption des Dante-Plots durch Plot, Bildprogramm und Logik des gleichnamigen PC-Spiels. Die Handlung ist an die des Spiels angelehnt, die Figuren entsprechend profiliert. Mit den Figuren der Danteschen *Commedia* haben sie nicht mehr viel zu tun. Aus dem Dichter Dante ist ein Kreuzritter geworden, der sich auf der Suche nach seiner vom Teufel gefangengehaltenen Beatrice in die Hölle begibt – eine vage Reminiszenz an den Mythos um Orpheus. Was im Comic geschieht, sind recht krude Dinge um ein reichlich trivialisiertes und mit Höllenbildern zusammengeschnittenes Mittelalter.<sup>17</sup> Dante muss allerlei einstecken. Am Ende hat er Beatrice und sich aus der Hölle befreit und Luzifer besiegt, wie ihm Beatrice bestätigt (vgl. vorletzte Seite, unpag.). Die Bildsprache Latorres ist expressiv und dabei insgesamt eher male- risch gehalten als am Duktus von Zeichnungen orientiert. In düsteren Szenen von suggestiver Farbigkeit entfaltet sich das phantastische Geschehen um den Weg des Kriegers Dante durch die Hölle. Durchgängig unscharfe Darstellungen von Figuren und Aktionen sowie ein auf die Suggestion von Dynamik zielender Malstil unterstreichen die Beziehung der Bildgeschichte zu einem mit animierten Figuren zu spielenden PC-Spiel, obgleich die Bildsprache des Comics eine andere ist als die des Spiels selbst. Suggestierte „Pinselstriche“ und „Wischbewegungen“ wirken wie Äquivalente der Spiel-Gestik. Der Textanteil tritt an Signifikanz hinter die Bilder deutlich zurück. Er macht das bilddramatisch inszenierte Geschehen zwar verständlich, beschränkt sich aber auf eher knappe Dialoge in Sprechblasen; die Dialoge wirken oft abgerissen; auf narrative Erläuterungen in weiteren Textfeldern wird weitestgehend verzichtet, und rein quantitativ nehmen die Text- anteile auch eher spärlichen Raum ein. Es geht mehr um das Durchspielen von Situationen als um eine kohärente Handlung.

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17 Aus dem hinteren Umschlagtext: „Nachdem Dante auf dem Kreuzzug im Heiligen Land gegen die Heiden gekämpft hat, muss er bei seiner Ankunft zu Hause erfahren, dass Beatrice, die Frau, die er liebt und heiraten wollte, ermordet worden ist. Dante ist schuld daran, dass Luzifer die Seele des Mädchens gefangen hält, denn er hat sie betrogen und auf diese Art die Katastrophe herbeigeführt. Voller Schmerz, aber zum Äußersten entschlossen begibt Dante sich in die Hölle und beginnt eine gefährliche Reise, um Beatrice zu befreien. Aber welchen Preis wird er dafür bezahlen?“

Wie auch für das PC-Spiel, so hat Dantes *Commedia* für den Comic von Gage und Latorre nur ein frei verarbeitetes Substrat geboten. Immerhin finden sich Reminiszenzen an die *Commedia*-Handlung: Die Höllenwächter, der Limbus und Beatrice kommen vor – wenngleich stilistisch stark an Horrorfilme und -Spiele angepasst. Strukturelle Verwandtschaften zwischen *Commedia* und PC-Spiel – die Episodenstruktur und das Modell der Eskalation (sukzessiver Abstieg in die Tiefe bzw. Aufstieg über verschiedene Levels) erleichtern die Adaptation des stofflichen Substrats.

## **10 Jodi Picoult: *The Tenth Circle*. New York 2006. (Dt.: *Schuldig*. Dt. v. Ulrike Wasel und Klaus Timmermann. München und Zürich 2011)**

Ein Kuriosum unter den Dantecomics bietet dieses Beispiel insofern, als hier die Comics in einen Roman integriert sind. Der Roman erzählt von der 14-jährigen Trixie (eigentlich: „Beatrice“!), der Tochter des freischaffenden Comiczeichners Daniel. Daniel zeichnet für seine Tochter Comics, Superhelden- und Fantasygeschichten, Geschichten mit Personal aus unterschiedlichen Comic-Genres, aber auch aus Reminiszenzen an Dantes *Commedia*. Eines Tages wird Trixie zum Opfer eines gewaltsamen Übergriffs und erfährt, wie ‚höllisch‘ die Welt sein kann. Auch in Daniels Leben gibt es dunkle Geheimnisse. Die von Daniel gezeichneten Comicseiten mit Dantesken Motiven unterbrechen die Romanhandlung mehrfach. Auch hier wird eine Vater-Tochter-Geschichte erzählt; Protagonisten des Comics sind Duncan und seine Tochter Tracy. Luzifer hat Tracy entführt, und Duncan steigt, begleitet von einer Vergil-Figur, in die Hölle hinab. Sie passieren Cerberus, die Höllenstadt Dis, den Wald der Selbstmörder – und zuletzt findet Duncan Luzifer. Dieser erklärt Duncan die Spielregeln zur Befreiung Tracys, droht jedoch an, diese müsse sterben, wenn Duncan das Spiel verliere. Das Motiv der Befreiung eines weiblichen Opfers aus Luzifers Gewalt verbindet Picoult's Roman mit dem PC-Spiel „Dante's Inferno“ und dem darauf basierenden Comic, erinnert aber auch hier zudem an Orpheus und Eurydike im Hades. – Zwischen der Binnengeschichte des Comics im Roman und der Romanhandlung besteht insofern ein Spiegelungsverhältnis, als die Prüfungen Duncans Spiegelungen der von Daniel zu durchlaufenden inneren Prüfungen sind; um Selbsterkenntnis geht es hier wie dort; Duncan muss sich im 10. Kreis der Hölle einem Spiegel aussetzen.

Rückblickend auf diese Beispiele zeigt sich, dass gerade Comicversionen der *Commedia* Spielräume für Hybridisierungen bilden, deren Innovationspotential die jeweiligen Comic-Zeichner, -Texter und -Szenaristen im Zeichen recht verschiedener Intentionen erkunden. Neben den comicspezifischen Formen der Hybridisierung von Text- und Bildelementen sind hier Hybridisierungen zwischen modernen bzw. zeitgenössischen Bildwelten und Danteschen Imaginationen besonders prägend – so unterschiedlich sie im Einzelnen ausfallen. Aber auch zwischen verschiedenen Stilebenen und Gattungsmustern ergibt sich ein Spektrum von Komposit- und Übergangsformen. Gerade in der Konfrontation mit der *Commedia* entdecken und demonstrieren graphische Erzählungen ihre eigenen gestalterischen Potenziale. Für deren Einschätzung erscheint es als besonders signifikant, ob sie den Text der literarischen Vorlage nebst seiner langen Bebilderungsgeschichte ernst nehmen, ihn womöglich reinszenieren wollen, oder ihn als bloßen Anlass gebrauchen, um spektakuläre, meist unterweltliche, Szenarien zu entwerfen. Beide Verfahrensweisen entsprechen einem jeweils spezifischen Selbstverständnis des Comics, der sich einerseits als Erbe und Fortsetzer einer großen erzählerischen Tradition versteht, andererseits teils mutwillig mit den Versatzstücken des Tradierten spielt.

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# Intermediale Formen der Sebald-Rezeption in der populären Musik

**Abstract:** The following article deals with the reception of literary texts by W. G. Sebald in popular music. Analyzing three different kinds of musical approaches to his works in English translation – a poetry reading by Patti Smith, a soundtrack by The Caretaker and a song by the Sleeping States – varied forms of intermediality as well as their inter- and extracompositional functions can be made visible and discussed based on typologies by Werner Wolf. Additionally, a closer look into reviews discussing these works in music journals and feature sections shows that they are also reflected on as meetings with “high literature” in popular music, conveying the image of a “border crossing” between high- and lowbrow culture.

**Keywords:** Intermedialität; W. G. Sebald; Sebald und Populärmusik; Musik und Literatur; Populärmusik und Literatur; Patti Smith und Literatur

## 1 Vorbemerkungen

W. G. Sebalds Literatur wurde im anglo-amerikanischen Raum, beginnend mit der Übersetzung der *Ausgewanderten* (1992, engl. *The Emigrants*, 1996), oft mit Begeisterung von der Kritik aufgenommen, und die Werke des von Deutschland nach England ausgewanderten Literaturwissenschaftlers, Kritikers und Schriftstellers, der viele Jahre an der University of East Anglia unterrichtete, fanden Eingang in den akademischen Kanon.<sup>1</sup> Mittlerweile genießt Sebalds in zahlreiche Sprachen übersetztes Werk über die Grenzen von Literaturwissenschaft und Kritik hinaus internationale Popularität, wie nicht nur eine „amateurhafte“ Beschäftigung mit dem Autor und seinem Werk in Blogs und auf Webseiten, sondern auch eine intensive transdisziplinäre und intermediale Rezeption seiner Texte bezeugen.<sup>2</sup> Das breite Interesse für das ab 1988 veröffentlichte, überschaubar gebliebene literarische Œuvre des 2001 bei einem Autounfall ums Leben gekommenen Autors wurde in der Forschung schon oft als „Phänomen“ bezeichnet. Sebalds hybride Literatur, das Ineinandergreifen von Fakt und Fiktion, das Verweben von Text und

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1 Einen Einblick in die Sebald-Rezeption im anglo-amerikanischen Raum geben etwa die Aufsätze von Scott 2006 und Römhild 2005.

2 Zu diesen Rezeptionsvorgängen vgl. auch Wolff 2014, 14–19.

Bildmaterial, das (Post-)Moderne seines Schreibens, die in seiner Literatur auftretende Intertextualität und Intermedialität insgesamt, scheint eine breite Faszination für seine Literatur zu befeuern und auch die Öffnung zu anderen Medien, über überkommene „high“- und „lowbrow“-Grenzen hinweg, mit wachzurufen, wie auch die in der Folge behandelten musikalischen Auseinandersetzungen in der englischsprachigen populären Musik bezeugen.

## 2 W. G. Sebald bei Patti Smith

Patti Smith bezieht sich auf die Literatur von W. G. Sebald durch Lektüreempfehlungen, die im Internet auf Blogs zu lesen sind.<sup>3</sup> Sie geht auch in ihrem autobiografischen Werk *M Train* (2015) auf den Autor und sein Schreiben ein. Insbesondere *After Nature* (2002), die Übersetzung des Prosagedichts *Nach der Natur* (1988) durch Michael Hamburger, findet hier Erwähnung. Sie beschreibt, wie der Text auf sie wirkte und einen Schaffenswunsch anregt (vgl. Smith 2015, 66–68). Im Januar 2011 beteiligte sie sich mit einem Auftritt unter dem Titel *Max: A Tribute by Patti Smith* an der Veranstaltung *After Sebald: Place and Re-Enchantment. A Weekend Exploration*, die zu Ehren des verstorbenen Schriftstellers im britischen Kulturzentrum Snape Maltings stattfand. Weitere Programmpunkte waren ein Symposium und die Premiere von Grant Gees Film *Patience (After Sebald)*, dessen Filmmusik hier noch besprochen wird. In der Folge wird auf Informationen der Veranstalter *Artevents*<sup>4</sup> und *Aldeburgh Music*<sup>5</sup> und auf Berichte aus den Online-Auftritten des *New Statesman* und der *Financial Times* sowie aus dem Blog *some Landscapes* zurückgegriffen, um den Auftritt zu rekonstruieren: Smith trug eigene Lyrik und Songs sowie aus *After Nature* vor. Ihre Lesung wurde von selbstkomponierter Musik von Michael Campbell begleitet. Dieser spielte akustische Gitarre und Vibraphon. Ihre Tochter Jesse Smith begleitete sie am Klavier. (Vgl. Derbyshire 2011) Ariane Bankes beschreibt den Event wie folgt: Ein „sell-out gig in Snape Maltings Concert Hall [...] an extended riff around Sebald’s narrative poem [...] with some old favourites thrown into the mix“. (Bankes 2011) Der Blogger Plinius (2011) berichtet, Smith habe ein unfertiges Tribute-Gedicht vorgetragen,<sup>6</sup> ihre

<sup>3</sup> Zu Patti Smiths *list of favourite books* vgl. Terry (Pitts) 2011 und Popova 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Informationen zum Symposium und Fotografien sind online abrufbar: <http://www.artevents.info/latest/2010-2011/an-artevents-weekend> (17.11.2017).

<sup>5</sup> Ich danke den Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeitern von Aldeburgh Music für die Zusendung des Programms.

<sup>6</sup> Der Kurator der Veranstaltung, Gareth Evans, bestätigte in einer E-Mail (4. Juli 2016) den Vortrag eines solchen Gedichts.

„emotional aufgeladene“ Darbietung der Texte aus *After Nature*, welche die Halle mit Sebalds eigenen Versen füllte, habe jedoch den größten Eindruck gemacht. Er vergleicht ihre Performance der Texte damit, wie andere ihrer als Prosagedichte geschriebenen Lieder, zum Beispiel „Land“, musikalisch aufgebaut seien, und beschreibt, wie diese mit sanfter Begleitmusik beginnen, sich steigern und wieder zur Ruhe kommen. Sebalds Poesie habe sich für dieses Verfahren angeboten, besonders die schließenden Zeilen von *After Nature*, die Smith mit „gathering momentum“ gelesen habe. (Vgl. Plinius 2011)

Bankes und Derbyshire berichten von nahezu ausschließlich positiven Reaktionen auf den Abend aus dem Publikum, das sich zu einem wesentlichen Teil aus Sebald-Kennerinnen und -Kennern und -Liebhaberinnen und -Liebhabern zusammengesetzt haben muss. Derbyshire (2011) stellt zwar dar, dass die Zuhörerschaft so „rapt and reverential“ gewesen sei, dass ein junger Fan „flounced out in disgust“, das Zwischenspiel dürfte der generell wohlwollenden Aufnahme des Konzerts aber nicht geschadet haben. Bankes (2011) fasst zusammen: „It went down a storm [...].“ Sie bemerkt allerdings, wie „höchst ironisch“ es war, dass der „reclusive academic“ Sebald mit seinem wohl undurchsichtigsten Werk zu „standing ovations“ für einen „American rock star newly fallen under his spell“ inspirieren konnte (Bankes 2011). Smith berichtete den Journalistinnen und Journalisten am Tag nach dem Auftritt jedoch vom Einfluss Sebalds auf ihr eigenes kreatives Schaffen. (Vgl. Bankes 2011 und Derbyshire 2011)

### 3 The Caretaker: *Patience (After Sebald)* (2012)

Grant Gees essayistisches filmisches Werk *Patience (After Sebald)* folgt dem Erzähler des Romans *The Rings of Saturn* (1998, dt. *Die Ringe des Saturn. Eine englische Wallfahrt*) auf seinem Spaziergang durch Suffolk und führt dabei durch verschiedene der assoziativ und konnotativ herbeigeführten Stationen des mit Bildelementen versehenen Textes, die durch schwarz-weiße Text-Bild-Kompositionen im Film wiedergegeben werden. Im Weiteren kommen Kunstschaffende, die sich mit Sebalds Werk auseinandersetzen, zu Wort. (Vgl. Gee 2012) Für den gleichnamigen Soundtrack arbeitete der Elektronik-Musiker James Leyland Kirby, der hinter dem Projektnamen *The Caretaker* steht, mit Schuberts Liederzyklus *Winterreise*, den er sozusagen als „Ausgangsmaterial“ verwendete: Die Musik und der Gesang werden stark verfremdet und manipuliert. Die Lieder werden zerstückelt, neu arrangiert, sind einem starken Rauschen ausgesetzt und es werden „Loops“, also sich wiederholende Schleifen, eingebaut. Zum Beispiel bedient sich der Track „When the dog days were drawing to an end“ der ersten Tonfolgen für das Klavier aus dem Lied



„Frühlingstraum“, wobei der Anfang stark verlangsamt wurde und abbricht, kurz nachdem die Stimme einsetzt. Daraufhin wiederholt sich die Abfolge. Der Titel ist als Referenz auf Sebalds Text dem ersten Satz von *The Rings of Saturn* entnommen. (Vgl. Sebald 1998 [epub 2002], 3 und *The Caretaker* 2012, 4)

Schubert als Ausgangspunkt für die Filmmusik heranzuziehen, kann als überlegte Referenz Gees auf den Autor gelten, denn Sebald nahm mehrfach auf den Musiker Bezug. In einem 1996 geführten Interview im *Deutschlandfunk* hatte er sich als Musikbeitrag den Anfang des zweiten Satzes aus Schuberts Klaviersonate B-Dur (Deutsch-Verzeichnis 960) gewünscht und erörtert, was für ihn das Besondere an dessen Musik darstellt. (Vgl. Sebald 2011, 152–153) Als Hommage an Schubert und Adorno im Sinne einer zweifachen paratextuellen Thematisierung verweist außerdem ein im Sammelband *Campo Santo* unter dem Titel *Moments Musicaux* erschienener Essay (vgl. Sebald 2003, 223–239) auf den gleichlautenden Untertitel des 17. Bandes der *Gesammelten Schriften* von Adorno sowie auf jene sechs Klavierstücke, die der Komponist zwischen 1823 und 1828 geschrieben hat. (Vgl. Calzoni 2015, 180) Eine weitere Referenz auf den Musiker in Form eines Vergleichs von Aspekten der Kunst und Arbeitsweisen Mörikes und Schuberts findet sich auch in dem Essay „Was ich traure weiß ich nicht. Kleines Andenken an Mörike“. (Sebald 1998, 88–90)

Kirby hat im Weiteren mit einer sehr alten Aufnahme des Liederzyklus gearbeitet.<sup>7</sup> Die Arbeit damit erzeugt, verstärkt durch die „Rauschkulisse“ alter Schallplatten, den Eindruck, in eine nicht mehr greifbare, vergangene Welt hineinzuhören; die Atmosphäre der Musik kann man schlicht als „gespenstisch“ bezeichnen – eine Empfindung, die zu einer Gemeinsamkeit von Kirbys Musik und Sebalds Literatur hinführt. An Letzterer, mit ihren für sie typischen, in die Vergangenheit weisenden Referenzen, ausgedrückt etwa durch die in den Text montierten, alten schwarz-weiß Fotografien, die die Anwesenheit Verstorbener wieder heraufbeschwören, wird selbst oft etwas „Geisterhaftes“ sichtbar. Die Filmmusik stellt aber nicht bloß den einmaligen Versuch dar, das Gespenstische in Sebalds Werken formal zu imitieren. Vielmehr spielt die Auseinandersetzung mit der Vergangenheit und die Präsenz „spektraler“ Phänomene in jeweils eigenen Formen in der Populärkultur, wie es sich hier beispielhaft in der elektronischen Musik zeigt, genauso wie in Teilen der deutschsprachigen, zeitgenössischen Literatur eine Rolle. In Kritik und Forschung wird das in verschiedenen Kunstformen vorkommende Zeitphänomen „Spektralität“ dabei auch in Verbindung zu Derridas Lehre von der *Hantologie* rezipiert, wie er sie in seinem Werk

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<sup>7</sup> Dies berichtet der Musiker per E-Mail (5. Juli 2016). Leider ließ sich nicht mehr eruieren, um welche Aufnahme es sich handelte.

*Spectres de Marx* (1993, dt. *Marx' Gespenster*, 1995) bespricht.<sup>8</sup> Dazu kann hier in einem kurzen Exkurs lediglich erläutert werden, dass in der deutschsprachigen Literatur eine seit Beginn der 1990er Jahre immer augenfälliger werdende „Konjunktur des Spektralen“ (Philipsen 2008, 14) beobachtet werden kann. Ein dem Thema gewidmeter Sammelband nennt einleitend als Repräsentanten dafür Texte von Elfriede Jelinek, Günter Grass, Marcel Beyer, Christa Wolf, W. G. Sebald und anderen. (Vgl. Philipsen 2008, 14) Dabei geht es in dieser Literatur, in der die „Geister“ auftreten, oft um die Verarbeitung und Auseinandersetzung mit der Vergangenheit des Nationalsozialismus, aber auch der DDR und der „Wende“. (Vgl. Philipsen 2008, 14) In Beiträgen von Silke Horstkotte und Jan Ceuppens wird das Vorkommen von Toten und Gespenstern in Sebalds Literatur auch vor dem Hintergrund von Derridas Lehre von der Hantologie gelesen. (Vgl. Horstkotte 2008, 276, und Ceuppens 2008, 301) In der elektronischen Populärmusik lehnt sich die Strömung der von Kritikerinnen und Kritikern so genannten *hauntological music*, als deren Vertreter auch *The Caretaker* gelten kann (vgl. Fisher 2012, 16), namentlich sehr augenscheinlich an Derridas Lehre an. Mark Fisher beschreibt, dass für die im ersten Jahrzehnt des 21. Jahrhunderts in Erscheinung tretenden elektronischen Musikprojekte eine Abkehr von der Zukunft richtungsweisend war. Die elektronische Musik sei nur bis etwa 2005 in der Lage gewesen, futuristisch klingende Sounds zu transportieren, danach wäre es zu keiner neuen, innovativen Entwicklung gekommen. Die Erkenntnis, dass die Zukunft keine Innovation mehr bot, führte zur Hinwendung zur Vergangenheit, wie es sich klanglich eben etwa durch das Knistern und Rauschen alter Platten, formal durch Nachahmung und Wiederholung ausdrücken lässt.

Zu Kirbys Soundtrack kann man abschließend festhalten, dass er von der Kritik überwiegend positiv bewertet wurde. Herausgegriffen sei hier eine Besprechung von Gees Film im Musikjournal *skug* von Uwe Schütte, in der es zuerst wiederum zu einer distanzierten Reflexion in Bezug auf eine Beschäftigung mit Sebald in der Popkultur kommt. Unter dem für sich sprechenden Titel *Englische Wallfahrt via Kino in die Vergötterung* schreibt der Kritiker, die „Verklärungs-Maschine der Sebald Industrie“ sei „weiter voll im Gange.“ (Schütte 2012, 52) Er zeigt auf, dass der Schriftsteller sich selbst kaum bis gar nicht für Popkultur

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<sup>8</sup> Während Derrida kapitalismuskritisch darin in einem engeren Sinne das „Gespenst“ des Kommunismus beschwört, wird seine mit dem „Differance“-Begriff verwandte Gespenster-Lehre kulturtheoretisch oft in weiteren Kontexten aufgefasst. Unter der genannten „Hantologie“, im Deutschen etwa übersetzbar mit der „Lehre von der Heimsuchung“ oder vom „Spuk“ (Derrida 1995 [1996], 27), kann in allgemeinerer Bedeutung das Durchdrungen-Werden der Gegenwart durch „Gespenster“ der Vergangenheit verstanden werden.

interessiert hatte und bewertet den Film weitgehend negativ. Positiv äußert er sich jedoch in Bezug auf die Filmmusik. Er meint, dass „die Wahl von Leyland Kirby a. k. a. The Caretaker für den Soundtrack höchst treffsicher war“. (Schütte 2012, 53)

## 4 Sleeping States: „Rings of Saturn“ (2009)

Eine weitere Reminiszenz an den verstorbenen Schriftsteller und seine Literatur ist der Song „Rings of Saturn“ von Markland Starkie, den er unter dem Namen seines Singer-Songwriter-Projekts Sleeping States veröffentlicht hat. Der Song bildet den Auftakt des 2009 erschienenen Albums *In the Gardens of the North*, das in weiteren Musikstücken auch auf andere Kunstschaffende verweist, so etwa auf Franz Kafka. (Vgl. Sleeping States 2009, 2. „The Next Village“) Intermediale Referenzen finden sich in dem Song auf para- und intertextueller Ebene: Neben der fast gänzlichen Titelgleichheit mit Sebalds Roman *The Rings of Saturn* wird er auf der Webseite von *Sleeping States* in einer Anmerkung unter dem Liedtext „A response to W. G. Sebald’s novel of the same name“ genannt.<sup>9</sup> Die Lyrics thematisieren die (Un-)Möglichkeit des Erinnerns. Dabei spricht ein artikuliertes „Wir“ (und „Ich“) ein weiteres, abwesendes Subjekt an, das scheinbar nicht zurückkehren wird, „uns“ aber etwas hinterlassen hat. So heißt es in der ersten Strophe: „Every day, so many times,/ We never see you anymore./ But oh, this is what you leave us with: The coast at your cheek, a Norfolk maze/ The name of which I forget now,/ The bones of lost towns/ Lay before your gaze“. In der Folge kommt es zur Beschreibung, wie die Erinnerung nach und nach verblasst: „I’m sorry, the details drip away. But over time we have remembered less/ And even less“. Es wird deutlicher, was vom abwesenden Subjekt bleibt: „But oh, this is what you leave us with: These old memories in stories“. Als Schlusspunkt wird das gegenseitige Vergessen gesetzt, wobei letztendlich ein „Ich“ für sich spricht: „Impressions of the morning sun,/ There we will see you/ With a smile/ I will forget you/ You will forget me too“. Die unabwendbare Tatsache, dass es sich um ein endgültiges Verlassenwerden handelt, wird leitmotivisch unterstrichen. So wiederholt sich „We never see you“ insgesamt dreimal in dem Liedtext, wobei zweimal die Zeilen „Every day, so many times/ We never see you anymore“ wie ein von seiner Form befreiter Refrain an den Anfang der ersten und der dritten Strophe gesetzt werden.

Musikalisch wird der Songtext zuerst von einer melodischen Singstimme transportiert, die von einer monotonen Bassbegleitung unterstützt wird. Schließ-

<sup>9</sup> In diesem Absatz wird aus folgender Quelle aus dem Liedtext zitiert: Sleeping States, [http://sleepingstates.co.uk/?page\\_id=413](http://sleepingstates.co.uk/?page_id=413), o. Datum (17. November 2017).

lich tritt ein Schlagzeug wie zur Vorbereitung eines instrumentalen Solos in den Vordergrund. Dazu werden jedoch mehrere Instrumente und Sounds gemengt, bis eine verdichtete Geräuschkulisse entsteht, worin einzig der Bass seine Monotonie beibehält. Das Sound-Intermezzo wird schließlich langsam leiser, während Starkies Stimme wieder einsetzt und in den Vordergrund tritt.

Das Album wurde in der populären Musikkritik und im Feuilleton positiv besprochen. Eine Kritik in *Pitchfork* geht ausführlich auf den Sebald gewidmeten Eröffnungssong ein. Es wird darin von „haunting images of ‚bones of lost towns‘ and ‚the coast at your cheek““ gesprochen, die dem Song „a nostalgic and melancholy air“ verleihen würden. (Vgl. Raposa 2009) Der Kritiker zeigt sich davon beeindruckt, dass Sleeping States sich mit dem Song reifer und selbstbewusster präsentiere. (Vgl. Raposa 2009)<sup>10</sup> In weiteren Kritiken wird eine Grenzüberschreitung zwischen „high-“ und „lowbrow“ hinsichtlich der intermedialen Verweise auf die Literatur angezeigt; so meint der Rezensent im *Guardian*: „And if you can get past the literary references [...] you will find a record that’s easy to enjoy“. (Lester 2009) Auch im Musik-Blog *Whitetapes* wird in diesem Zusammenhang eine Grenze zwischen ernster und leichter Unterhaltung angesprochen, wenn der Rezensent fragt: „Sleeping States, also nur noch als Soundtrack für kulturinteressierte FAZ-Feuilleton-Leser?“ (Matthias [Herking] 2009) Der Kritiker gesteht dem Musiker zwar Anspruch zu, versichert aber: „Nein, Starkie verschließt sich nicht und gestaltet seine Songs zugänglich.“ (Matthias [Herking] 2009)

In einem Beitrag für die Musik-Webseite *The Line of Best Fit* gibt Starkie im Zuge der Veröffentlichung seines „literaturaffinen“ Albums über sein Label Lektüreempfehlungen und verweist dabei auch auf Sebalds *Emigrants*. Über sein Interesse an dem Autor erfahren wir, dass er an der University of East Anglia studierte, während Sebald dort unterrichtete. Seine Bücher habe er aber erst später kennengelernt. Die Lektüre der *Emigrants* habe eine persönliche, tröstliche Reflexion erzeugt, da die Erinnerungen an Sebalds Zuhause in Norfolk jene an die Jahre, die er selbst dort verbracht hatte, ausgelöst hätten. Er schreibt Sebalds Unfalltod, der damals in akademischen und literarischen Kreisen großes Aufsehen erregt habe, eine Tragik zu, die er nach dem Lesen seiner Literatur besser verstehen könne, und berichtet, warum er sich dagegen entschieden hat, eine Passage von

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**10** Mit diesem Verweis auf die „Melancholie“ des Songs wird in der Musikkritik ein Attribut verwendet, das auch zur wissenschaftlichen und literaturkritischen Analyse und Beschreibung von Sebalds Texten, zum Beispiel bei der Betrachtung seiner Verbindung zu Walter Benjamin, maßgeblich ist. Es ließ sich jedoch zwischen der melancholischen „Stimmung“ der Singer-Songwriter-Komposition und den Melancholie-Komplexen in Sebalds Literatur keine Verbindung aufzeigen.

*The Rings of Saturn* als Epigraph in die Begleittexte seines Albums aufzunehmen: „I didn't want the record to become too ensconced in Sebaldism (and it is possibly just the slightest bit pretentious), so instead I will put it here“, und lässt eine Passage aus dem dritten Kapitel von *The Rings of Saturn* folgen (vgl. Sebald 1998 [epub 2002], 67, und Bella Union 2009).

## 5 Conclusio

Zusammenfassend kann man zunächst festhalten, dass in der aufgezeigten Sebald-Rezeption in der populären Musik und ihren weiteren Kontexten vielfache Formen von Intermedialität auftreten.

Bei der Analyse intermedialer und kontextueller Referenzen auf den Autor und sein Werk bei Patti Smith wurde sichtbar, dass *After Nature* einen besonderen Einfluss auf ihr eigenes Schaffen hatte. Darauf verweist sie in ihren Memoiren, und bei dem oben nachgezeichneten „Tribute“-Konzert interpretierten die Künstlerin und ihre Band das Prosagedicht musikalisch.

Eine besonders vielfältige Verflechtung von intermedialen Beziehungen zwischen Musik und Literatur war im Zuge der Betrachtung des Soundtracks zum Film *Patience (After Sebald)* zu beobachten. Dabei zeigten sich zum einen intramediale Bezüge zu Schuberts *Winterreise*. Die intermusikalische Referenz verweist wiederum auf Schubert-Bezüge bei Sebald. Eine transmediale Parallele wurde sichtbar, wo in der populären Musik wie in der zeitgenössischen Literatur Phänomene der Spektralität auftreten, die von Kritik und Forschung in Bezug zu Derridas Lehre von der Hantologie gebracht werden. Außerdem hat der Soundtrack eine intrakompositionelle Funktion, da die „geisterhafte“ Atmosphäre aus Sebalds Texten durch die Filmmusik widergespiegelt und die Gesamtkomposition der Medienmischung „Film“ hermeneutisch unterstützt wird. Die komplexe Filmmusik wurde in der Kritik – so in knappen Worten bei Schütte – positiv beurteilt.

Im Fall von Starkies Song, der im Titel explizit auf *The Rings of Saturn* referiert und der das Verlassenwerden und die Erinnerung an ein abwesendes Subjekt auf der Ebene des Liedtextes thematisiert, scheint ein größerer Sprung getan, um Sebalds Literatur in die populäre Musik zu transferieren: Zeigten sich Rezensentinnen und Rezensenten in Bezug auf Smiths und Gees Arbeiten zum Teil schon kritisch, was die Auseinandersetzung mit Sebalds Texten in der Popkultur betrifft, wurde in Bezug auf Starkies Song sehr augenscheinlich die Überschreitung einer Grenze zwischen „high“ und „low“ angezeigt. Es kann die Frage, ob das Referieren auf Sebalds Literatur hier die Funktion einer – modernen Form

der – „Nobilitierung“<sup>11</sup> darstellt, an dieser Stelle zumindest in den Raum gestellt werden. Generell lag es nahe, das Interesse an Sebalds Literatur in der populären Musik schon allein durch den weit verbreiteten „Sebaldism“, wie Starkie es selbst nannte, zu begründen. Es lässt sich jedoch schwer feststellen, in welchem Ausmaß die breite Begeisterung für den Autor sich auf die Musikerinnen und Musiker im Einzelnen auswirkte. An diese Überlegungen anschließend, lohnt es sich, ergänzend die Funktion der dargestellten intermedialen Formen noch im Kontext avancierter Pop- und Rockmusik als Teil des „Avant-Pop“ zu betrachten, wie Thomas Hecken ihn beschreibt. Alle drei der genannten Musikschaffenden lassen sich durch gewisse Merkmale, die ihre Arbeiten aufweisen, dieser kulturellen Richtung zuordnen. Zu den Merkmalen zählen etwa ihre Kreativität, Experimentierfreudigkeit und Originalität, mit der sie genre- und gattungsübergreifend arbeiten und dabei „high“- und „low“-Grenzen aufheben. In Hinsicht auf die Rezeption werden sie sowohl in populären Musikzeitschriften, als auch im Feuilleton der Qualitätspresse besprochen. (Vgl. Hecken 2012, 9–12 und 66–72) Der Einbezug von Literatur in das eigene, musikalische Werk ist damit Teil einer Praxis, die Zugehörigkeit markiert und durch das Überschreiten überkommener Grenzen der Künste zugleich gesellschaftskritisch ist. Sieht man das als Erweiterung postmoderner Praktiken, wie sie sich in der Populärkultur fortsetzen, ist bemerkenswert, dass sich in der dargestellten intermedialen Sebald-Rezeption insgesamt Bezüge zu Epochen verbinden, in denen der intermediale Austausch zwischen den gängigen Kunstgattungen eine große Rolle spielt, wie mit Schubert zur Romantik, durch Sebalds Schreiben zur Moderne und – wiederum durch seine Texte und die populäre Musik – zur Postmoderne.

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<sup>11</sup> Wie intermediale Referenzen in der Literatur zur Nobilitierung des eigenen Gegenstandes eingesetzt wurden, beschreibt anhand von Beispielen Wolf 2002a, 183.

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Arata Takeda

# Darstellung und Zeitlichkeit

Zu Gotthold Ephraim Lessings gattungstheoretischem Vermächtnis

**Abstract:** Goethe and Schiller announce in their programmatic essay “On Epic and Dramatic Poetry” (1797/1827) that the essential difference between epic and dramatic poetry consists in that the epic poet presents the event as ‘perfectly past’, and the dramatic poet represents it as ‘perfectly present’. The idea appears, at first sight, conspicuously ‘new’. Traditional poetics know of no such distinction of poetic genres by their representation of time. So far as the distinction between epic and drama is concerned, from Greek antiquity through the European Renaissance up until the time of Goethe and Schiller, the criterion used was generally to ask whether the poet spoke himself or let other persons speak. How did the ‘invention’ of the time criterion in the poetics of genre occur? The article delves into the yet largely unexplored origin of the Goethe-Schillerian distinction.

**Keywords:** Gattungspoetik/Gattungstheorie; Redekriterium; Zeitkriterium

## 1 Problemstellung

Im vorliegenden Beitrag<sup>1</sup> soll es um eine, mittlerweile weitgehend überwundene, historische Fehlentwicklung in der Gattungspoetik gehen – eine Fehlentwicklung, innerhalb deren ein vermeintliches Hybridphänomen, basierend auf irrtümlichen Prämissen, problematisiert werden konnte. Solche Prämissen können entstehen, wenn zwei literarische Darstellungsverfahren, deren Kombination und Zusammenspiel eigentlich keine Hybridisierung im Sinne von Gattungsmischung darstellen, zu gattungsspezifischen Differenzmerkmalen erklärt werden.

Ein jeder, der seine literaturwissenschaftliche Sozialisation primär über die deutsche Sprache erfahren hat – sei es im Studium der Literatur in deutschsprachigen Ländern oder im Studium der Germanistik in nichtdeutschsprachigen Ländern –, wird sich an einen programmatischen Aufsatz von Goethe und Schil-

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<sup>1</sup> Eine erweiterte und vertiefende Fassung des Beitrages ist unter dem Titel „Die Verzeitlichung der Gattungspoetik 1768–1951. Zur Wissensgeschichte einer Fehlinterpretation“ erschienen in: *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 93/2 (2019): 157–189.

ler erinnern, der unter den Grundlagentexten zur Gattungstheorie standardmäßig nicht fehlen durfte: „Ueber epische und dramatische Dichtung“, entstanden 1797 aus einem brieflichen Gedankenaustausch von Goethe und Schiller über die Gattungsgesetze von Epos und Drama, publiziert erst dreißig Jahre später, 1827, in der von Goethe herausgegebenen Zeitschrift *Ueber Kunst und Alterthum*. Der Aufsatz bringt eine seiner Kernaussagen gleich am Schluss des einleitenden Satzes:

Der Epiker und Dramatiker sind beide den allgemeinen poetischen Gesetzen unterworfen, besonders dem Gesetze der Einheit und dem Gesetze der Entfaltung; ferner behandeln sie beide ähnliche Gegenstände, und können beide alle Arten von Motiven brauchen; ihr großer wesentlicher Unterschied beruht aber darin, daß der Epiker die Begebenheit als *vollkommen vergangen* vorträgt, und der Dramatiker sie als *vollkommen gegenwärtig* darstellt. (Goethe 1986, 126)

Dieser letzte Gedanke, dass Epos und Drama sich unter dem Aspekt der dargestellten Zeitlichkeit unterscheiden sollen, und zwar wesentlich und vornehmlich, erscheint auf den ersten Blick auffallend ‚neu‘. Der traditionellen Gattungspoetik ist eine solche, auf die dargestellte Zeitlichkeit bezogene, Unterscheidung zwischen Epos und Drama unbekannt. Aristoteles unterschied in seiner *Poetik* (um 335 v. Chr.) die Dichtungsgattungen in dreierlei Hinsicht: nach den Mitteln, den Gegenständen und der Art und Weise der Nachahmung (vgl. Aristoteles 1994, 5). Dementsprechend wurden Epos und Drama bzw. Epos und Tragödie unter drei Aspekten voneinander unterschieden: in Bezug auf das Versmaß, die Ausdehnung des Handlungsgefüges und, am wichtigsten, den Redemodus (vgl. Aristoteles 1994, 9; 17; 19; 57; 81). Dazu heißt es bei Aristoteles:

[...] es ist möglich, mit Hilfe derselben Mittel dieselben Gegenstände nachzuahmen, hierbei jedoch entweder zu berichten – in der Rolle eines anderen, wie Homer dichtet, oder so, daß man unwandelbar als derselbe spricht – oder alle Figuren als handelnde und in Tätigkeit befindliche auftreten zu lassen. (Aristoteles 1994, 9)

Mit dieser Beschreibung griff Aristoteles auf eine Überlegung zurück, die bereits in Platons *Politeia* (um 360 v. Chr.) angestellt worden war (vgl. Platon 1990, 205). Allein das, was bei Platon lediglich zur Differenzierung von Redekategorien gedient hatte (vgl. Scherpe 1968, 9), erhob Aristoteles zu einem grundlegenden Unterscheidungsmerkmal von Epos und Drama: Im Epos spricht der Dichter selbst – wir würden heute sagen, der Erzähler –, indem er teils berichtet, teils die Personenreden direkt wiedergibt; im Drama lässt er die handelnden Personen sprechen. Dieses so genannte Redekriterium, das danach fragt, wer spricht, bleibt in der traditionellen Gattungspoetik, von der griechischen Antike über die europäische Renaissance bis in die Zeit von Goethe und Schiller, *das* bestimmende Differenzmerkmal von Epos und Drama (vgl. Scherpe 1968, 7–14).

Wenn um 1800 ein gattungstheoretischer Text den „große[n] wesentliche[n] Unterschied“ zwischen epischer und dramatischer Dichtung ankündigt, so darf grundsätzlich erwartet werden, dass dabei das Redekriterium unumstritten im Vordergrund steht. Aber Goethe und Schiller rücken es, wenn überhaupt, in den Hintergrund ihrer programmatischen Differenzbeschreibung. Die vorhandenen Nuancen zwischen den Verben ‚vortragen‘ und ‚darstellen‘ verblassen angesichts des hervorgehobenen Kontrastes zwischen „*vollkommen vergangen*“ und „*vollkommen gegenwärtig*“.

Woher kommt dieses, so will ich es nennen, Zeitkriterium? Taucht es hier völlig unvermittelt auf unter dem Zeichen einer neueren Gattungstheorie, die sich, die ältere Gattungspoetik überschreitend, Bahn brechen will? Oder handelt es sich dabei um einen Gedanken, der bereits an anderen Orten und Stellen, durch andere Theorieschaffende, ausgesprochen worden ist? Wissensgeschichtlich ist dieser Frage, soweit ich überblicken kann, noch nicht konsequent nachgegangen worden. Das ist umso erstaunlicher, als dieses Zeitkriterium in den gattungstheoretischen Bestimmungsversuchen der Folgezeit, bis in die jüngere Gegenwart hinein, deutliche Spuren hinterlassen hat.

## 2 Das widerstandsfähige Wissen

Bei Georg Lukács, Emil Staiger, Wolfgang Kayser, Peter Szondi, Wilhelm Voßkamp und Manfred Pfister etwa – Autoren von Anfang bis Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts – spielt im Nachdenken über Gattungsdifferenzen das Zeitkriterium eine maßgebliche Rolle (vgl. Lukács 1920 [1916], 128–129; 135; Staiger 1963 [1946], 62; 87; 101; 109; Kayser 1992 [1948], 205; 207; Szondi 2011 [1956], 19; 28; Voßkamp 1971, 92; Pfister 2001 [1977], 23). Das wirft ein Problem auf. Spätestens seit den Untersuchungen Käte Hamburgers zum ‚Tempusproblem‘ der epischen und dramatischen Dichtung aus den Jahren 1951, 1953 und 1955 ist klar, dass die Unterscheidung zwischen erzählender und dramatischer Literatur anhand des Zeitkriteriums, der dargestellten Zeitlichkeit, erkenntnistheoretisch auf Abwege führt.

Hamburgers These vom ‚epischen Präteritum‘ ist bekannt: Sie besagt, dass das Präteritum der erzählenden Literatur nicht die Zeitlichkeit des Erzählgeschehens, sondern dessen Seinsweise anzeige; es bedeute keine Vergangenheitsaussage, sondern sei Ausdruck von Fiktionalität (vgl. Hamburger 1951; 1953; 1955; 1957, 27–72). In diesem Sinne stellte Hamburger fest, dass wir es bei der präteritalen Darstellung in der erzählenden Literatur nicht mit wirklicher Vergangenheit, sondern mit fiktionaler Gegenwart zu tun haben (vgl. Hamburger 1953, 332–338; 1957, 32–49). Damit war die verbreitet vertretene Vorstellung, der Epiker stelle

seinen Gegenstand als vergangen, der Dramatiker den seinigen als gegenwärtig dar, hinfällig.

Wenn Lukács, Staiger und Kayser in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts auf das Zeitkriterium zurückgreifen, um wesensmäßige Gattungsmerkmale zu beschreiben, so mag man dies mit dem Hinweis darauf entschuldigen, dass sie zu einer Zeit schreiben, die Hamburgers Einsichten nicht kennt. Aber das gilt nicht für Szondi, nicht für Voßkamp, nicht für Pfister, und es kann beileibe nicht am unzureichenden Wissensstand dieser Autoren liegen – Welch ein vermessener Gedanke! –, sondern es muss vielmehr von der überzeitlichen Widerstandsfähigkeit des Wissens zeugen, um das es hier geht: dass epische und dramatische Dichtung sich wesentlich unter dem Aspekt der dargestellten Zeitlichkeit unterscheiden sollen.

Woher kommt dieses Wissen? Wer setzte es in die Welt? Bei Hamburger spielt diese Frage keine Rolle, oder sie ist von vornherein beantwortet. Hamburger geht von dem Aufsatz von Goethe und Schiller aus, oder genauer: Sie führt das Wissen primär auf Goethe zurück (vgl. Hamburger 1951, 2; 1953, 329; 1955, 419; 1957, 28); der „Fehler“ besteht aus ihrer Sicht „seit Goethe“ (Hamburger 1951, 5). Sie scheint zu keinem Zeitpunkt die Möglichkeit zu erwägen, dass dieser Gedanke vor dem Goethe-Schiller'schen Aufsatz bereits von anderen Autoren, an anderen Orten, formuliert und artikuliert worden sein könnte. Dieser ‚archäologischen‘ Frage will ich im Folgenden nachgehen.

### 3 Unterscheidung zwischen Epos und Drama

Wir gehen antichronologisch vor. Unser Augenmerk gilt zunächst dem zeitlichen Umfeld des Erstdruckes – nicht der Entstehung – des Goethe-Schiller'schen Aufsatzes. Der Aufsatz ist seit 1827 der Öffentlichkeit zugänglich. Um diese Zeit hält Hegel seine einflussreichen Vorlesungen, darunter auch die Vorlesungen über „Ästhetik oder Philosophie der Kunst“, gehalten erstmals im Wintersemester 1817/1818 in Heidelberg, danach im Wintersemester 1820/1821, Sommersemester 1823, Sommersemester 1826 und Wintersemester 1828/1829 in Berlin. Heinrich Gustav Hothos Ausgabe von Hegels *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* (1835–1838), die größtenteils auf Manuskripten und Nachschriften aus den Jahren 1823, 1826 und 1828/1829 basiert, enthält einen Abschnitt über „Die Gattungsunterschiede der Poesie“. Eine Passage darin lässt aufhorchen – die Rede ist von der dramatischen Poesie –:

Hier wird also wie im *Epischen* eine Handlung in ihrem Kampfe und Ausgang vor uns hingebreitet, geistige Mächte sprechen sich aus und bestreiten sich, Zufälle treten verwickelnd ein, und das menschliche Wirken verhält sich zum Wirken eines alles bestimmenden Fatums oder einer leitenden, weltregierenden Vorsehung; die Handlung geht aber nicht in der nur äußeren Form ihres realen Geschehens als ein vergangenes, durch bloße Erzählung verlebendigt Begebnis an unserem inneren Auge vorüber; sondern wir sehen sie gegenwärtig aus dem besonderen Willen, aus der Sittlichkeit oder Unsittlichkeit der individuellen Charaktere hervortreten [...]. (Hegel 1970, 323; vgl. auch 474)

Wie findet der Aspekt der dargestellten Zeitlichkeit als Differenzmerkmal von Epischem und Dramatischem seinen Weg in das Gedankengebäude Hegels? Es bestehen zwei Möglichkeiten:

- (1) Hegel hat den Goethe-Schiller'schen Aufsatz „Ueber epische und dramatische Dichtung“ nach dessen Erscheinen 1827 zur Kenntnis genommen und das darin aufgestellte Zeitkriterium in seine Erörterungen der Gattungsdifferenzen im Wintersemester 1828/1829 einfließen lassen. Diese Möglichkeit wird unter anderem dadurch unterstützt, dass in den mittlerweile veröffentlichten Vorlesungsmit- und -nachschriften aus den Sommersemestern 1823 und 1826 eine entsprechende Passage fehlt. Oder:
- (2) Das Zeitkriterium taucht hier völlig unabhängig auf. Aufgrund der undurchsichtigen Materialien- und Quellenlage der Hotho'schen Ausgabe erscheint eine philologische Entscheidung über diese Möglichkeiten kaum praktikabel. Aber die Entscheidung erübrigt sich, wenn uns der Nachweis gelingt, dass das Zeitkriterium auch schon zu einem früheren Zeitpunkt in der Diskussion über Gattungsdifferenzen vorkommt.

Auf den ersten Blick verspricht die historische Sachlage wenig Erfolg. Sei es in den Ausführungen über die dramatische Poesie in Schellings Vorlesungen über *Philosophie der Kunst*, gehalten 1802/1803 in Jena und 1804/1805 in Würzburg, oder in dem Artikel über „Drama. Dramatische Dichtkunst“ in Sulzers *Allgemeiner Theorie der Schönen Künste* (1771–1774), die 1798 in der neuen vermehrten dritten Auflage erschien: Die Unterscheidung zwischen Epos und Drama erfolgt primär in Bezug auf den Redemodus, der in dem einen als erzählend, in dem anderen als darstellend charakterisiert wird (vgl. Schelling 1859, 692; Sulzer 1798, 479); das Zeitkriterium spielt dabei keine Rolle.

Bei genauerem Hinsehen stoßen wir im zeitlichen Umfeld der Entstehung des Goethe-Schiller'schen Aufsatzes auf mindestens zwei signifikante Fundstellen. Die eine Stelle findet sich in Wilhelm von Humboldts Abhandlung *Über Göthe's Herrmann und Dorothea* (1799), entstanden 1798, im Folgejahr des Erscheinens von Goethes Epos. Die Abhandlung als solche ist weniger eine eingehende Werk-

analyse als vielmehr eine umfassende Kunsttheorie. In einer Fußnote zu der Bemerkung, die Tragödie sei „die höchste Gattung der lyrischen Poësie“ (Humboldt 1799, 225) – Humboldt meint dies nicht im Sinne der „äußern Form“ von Epos und Tragödie als Dichtungsarten, sondern im Sinne der jeweils vorausgesetzten und wirksam werdenden „Stimmung“ –, lesen wir den kategorisch formulierten Satz: „Nun ist der einfachste Unterschied zwischen der Epopee und Tragödie unstreitig: die *vergangene* und die *gegenwärtige* Zeit“ (Humboldt 1799, 225, Anm. [\*]; vgl. auch 218–219; 222–223; 224).

Warum soll das unstreitig sein? Zu einer solchen Feststellung bedürfte es einer soliden Wissensquelle, auf die an dieser Stelle hätte verwiesen werden können. Woher kommt dieses angeblich unstreitige Wissen? Darüber erfahren wir von Humboldt nichts. Es klingt so, als handle es sich um ein Wissen, das in den hier adressierten Bildungskreisen mehr oder weniger in Umlauf war. Wir dürfen nicht vergessen, dass Humboldt um diese Zeit einen regen intellektuellen Austausch mit Goethe und Schiller pflegt.

Die andere Stelle steht ebenfalls in Zusammenhang mit der Rezeption von *Herrmann und Dorothea* (1797) und findet sich in einer Rezension dazu, publiziert zwischen dem 11. und 13. Dezember 1797, knapp zwei Monate nach dem Erscheinen von Goethes Epos, in vier Nummern der *Allgemeinen Literatur-Zeitung*. Der Verfasser ist August Wilhelm Schlegel. Bei einer vergleichenden Betrachtung mit dem homerischen Epos fällt darin die Bemerkung:

Das Vergangne nie als gegenwärtig vorzustellen, ist der Gattung [sc. des Epos] so wesentlich eigen, daß der Dichter [sc. Goethe], vermuthlich ohne sich besonders daran zu erinnern, jene oben bemerkte Ausschließung des Präsens der Zeitwörter in der Erzählung durchgehends beobachtet hat. (Schlegel 1797, Sp. 659; vgl. auch Sp. 648)

Goethe hat Schlegels Rezension kurz nach deren Erscheinen gelesen, bevor er den Aufsatz „Ueber epische und dramatische Dichtung“ an Schiller übersendet. Das belegt Goethes Brief an Schiller vom 20. Dezember 1797, geschrieben drei Tage vor der Übersendung des Aufsatzes. Darin teilt Goethe mit: „Seit der Erscheinung der Schlegelschen Rezension meines Herrmanns habe ich die Gesetze der Epopée und des Dramas wieder durchgedacht und glaube auf gutem Wege zu sein“ (Goethe 1990, 468).

Die vorhin zitierte Stelle dient Agnes Kornbacher mit als Nachweis für ihre These, dass Goethe von Schlegels Rezension entscheidende Denkipulse für den Aufsatz „Ueber epische und dramatische Dichtung“ empfangen habe (vgl. Kornbacher 1998). Kornbacher hat eine Reihe gedanklicher Parallelen zwischen Schlegels Rezension und dem Goethe-Schiller'schen Aufsatz aufgezeigt und damit die Frage nach dessen Datierung neu gestellt. Für unsere ‚archäologische‘ Frage ist hier von Bedeutung, dass Schlegel vor der Übersendung des Aufsatzes von Goethe

an Schiller einen Gedanken ausspricht, dessen Quelle noch bei Hamburger in dem Aufsatz gesehen wurde. Schlegel weiß, völlig unabhängig von dem Goethe-Schiller'schen Aufsatz und dem damit zusammenhängenden Briefwechsel, das Epische in Bezug auf die dargestellte Zeitlichkeit zu charakterisieren. Was kann dies bedeuten? Kornbacher macht es sich meines Erachtens ein wenig zu einfach, wenn sie daraus auf Schlegels unmittelbaren Einfluss auf eine der Kernaussagen des Aufsatzes schließt (vgl. Kornbacher 1998, 63–64). Die Unterscheidung zwischen epischer und dramatischer Dichtung anhand des Zeitkriteriums ist – das zeigt schon die kategorische Bemerkung Humboldts – von zu großer Tragweite, um nur eine kurzfristige gedankliche Übernahme und allenfalls ergänzende Erweiterung zu sein. Dieser Gedanke muss tiefere Wurzeln haben.

## 4 Unterscheidung zwischen Erzählung und Gespräch

In Schillers Abhandlung „Ueber die tragische Kunst“, publiziert 1792 in der von ihm selbst herausgegebenen Zeitschrift *Neue Thalia*, heißt es im Rahmen einer ersten Begriffsbestimmung der Tragödie:

In Tragödien werden die einzelnen Begebenheiten im Augenblick ihres Geschehens, als gegenwärtig, vor die Einbildungskraft oder vor die Sinne gestellt; unmittelbar, ohne Einmischung eines Dritten. Die Epopöe, der Roman, die einfache Erzählung rücken die Handlung, schon ihrer Form nach, in die Ferne, weil sie zwischen den Leser und die handelnden Personen den Erzähler einschieben. Das Entfernte, das Vergangene schwächt aber, wie bekannt ist, den Eindruck und den teilnehmenden Affekt; das Gegenwärtige verstärkt ihn. Alle erzählende Formen machen das Gegenwärtige zum Vergangenen; alle dramatische machen das Vergangene gegenwärtig. (Schiller 2004, 388)

Diese Passage straft alle gattungstheoretischen Überlegungen Lügen, die den Ursprung des Zeitkriteriums bei Goethe ansetzen. Zugleich stellt sie uns neu vor die Frage: Haben wir darin die ‚Geburtsstunde‘ des Zeitkriteriums in der Gattungspoetik zu erblicken, oder wird hier ein fremder Gedanke zu eigen gemacht, ohne als solcher gekennzeichnet zu werden?

Ein ähnlicher Gedanke, der dafür infrage käme, begegnet uns in Johann Jakob Engels *Anfangsgründen einer Theorie der Dichtungsarten aus deutschen Mustern entwickelt*, erschienen 1783. Engel ist unter anderem daran interessiert, über die traditionellen Gattungsdifferenzen hinaus weitere wichtige Einteilungsprinzipien für die Dichtkunst zu begründen; so verzichtet er in dem Kapitel „Von den Formen der Gedichte“ bewusst auf die Kategorien ‚erzählend‘ und ‚dramatisch‘, die er



vielmehr auf die Gattungen bezogen wissen will (vgl. Engel 1806, 535–537), und spricht stattdessen von der ‚darstellenden‘ und der ‚berichtenden‘ Form, die wie folgt charakterisiert werden:

Es ergibt sich, daß dort [sc. in der darstellenden Form] *die Sache*, an welcher sich die Veränderungen ereignen, *selbst vorgeführt*, und wir zu unmittelbaren Zeugen dieser sich eben itzt entwickelnden Veränderungen gemacht werden; dahingegen hier [sc. in der berichtenden Form] die Sache uns nicht selbst vorgeführt wird, ihre Veränderungen sich nicht in unsrer Gegenwart entwickeln, sondern ein fremder Zeuge, oder auch derjenige selbst der die Veränderungen litt oder hervorbrachte, uns von ihnen als schon geschehenen Dingen Bericht erstattet. Das einermal *wird, geschieht*; das andremal *ist geworden, ist geschehen*. (Engel 1806, 541–542)

Hier hat Engel in einem systematischen Rahmen Argumente weiterentwickelt, die er knapp ein Jahrzehnt zuvor versuchsweise vorgelegt hatte. In seiner Abhandlung „Ueber Handlung, Gespräch und Erzählung“, publiziert 1774 in der Zeitschrift *Neue Bibliothek der schönen Wissenschaften und der freyen Künste*, finden wir die „Eigenthümlichkeiten des Gesprächs und der Erzählung“ in dem prägnanten Satz zusammengefasst: „*In der Erzählung ist die Handlung bereits geschehen; in dem Gespräche geschieht sie eben jetzt im gegenwärtigem [sic] Augenblicke*“ (Engel 1774, 231–232; vgl. auch 204–205).

Auch wenn es bei Engel ausdrücklich nicht um Gattungsdifferenzen, sondern um Darstellungsprinzipien geht, die in jeder der Gattungen vermischt auftreten können: Die Parallele zu dem Gedanken, der der Goethe-Schiller’schen Unterscheidung zwischen epischer und dramatischer Dichtung zugrunde liegt, springt ins Auge. Allein die Frage nach der Originalität stellt sich hier erneut. Anregungen für seine poetologischen Überlegungen verdankt Engel unter anderen Henry Home, Lord Kames, Sulzer, Lessing, Moses Mendelssohn und Christian Garve. Die vorhin genannte Abhandlung Schillers geht hervor aus dem intensiven Studium von Kants *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790) und dem Versuch, Lessings Mitleidspoetik und Kants Theorie des Erhabenen tragödienästhetisch zusammenzudenken (vgl. Schiller 2004, 1197–1198). Ein auffälliger gemeinsamer Nenner ist Lessing.

## 5 Der sonderbare Gegensatz

Im siebenundsiebzigsten Stück der *Hamburgischen Dramaturgie* (1767–1769) versucht Lessing, eine kryptisch anmutende Stelle aus dem sechsten Kapitel von Aristoteles’ *Poetik* hermeneutisch zu erschließen. Die Stelle lautet, in Lessings eigener Übersetzung, Wort für Wort: „Die Tragödie [...] ist die Nachahmung einer Handlung, – die nicht vermittelt der Erzählung, sondern vermittelt des Mitleids

und der Furcht, die Reinigung dieser und dergleichen Leidenschaften bewirkt“ (Lessing 1973, 588). Lessing wirft dabei die Frage auf:

Wem sollte hier nicht der sonderbare Gegensatz, ‚nicht vermittelt der Erzählung, sondern vermittelt des Mitleids und der Furcht,‘ befremden? Mitleid und Furcht sind die Mittel, welche die Tragödie braucht, um ihre Arbeit zu erreichen: und die Erzählung kann sich nur auf die Art und Weise beziehen, sich dieser Mittel zu bedienen, oder nicht zu bedienen. Scheinet hier also Aristoteles nicht einen Sprung zu machen? Scheinet hier nicht offenbar der eigentliche Gegensatz der Erzählung, welches die dramatische Form ist, zu fehlen? (Lessing 1973, 588–589)

Für diesen alogischen Sprung schlägt Lessing folgende Erklärung vor:

Aristoteles bemerkte, daß das Mitleid notwendig ein vorhandenes Übel erfordere; daß wir längst vergangene oder fern in der Zukunft bevorstehende Übel entweder gar nicht, oder doch bei weitem nicht so stark bemitleiden können, als ein anwesendes; daß es folglich notwendig sei, die Handlung, durch welche wir Mitleid erregen wollen, nicht als vergangen, das ist, nicht in der erzählenden Form, sondern als gegenwärtig, das ist, in der dramatischen Form, nachzuahmen. Und nur dieses, daß unser Mitleid durch die Erzählung wenig oder gar nicht, sondern fast einzig und allein durch die gegenwärtige Anschauung erregt wird, nur dieses berechtigte ihn, in der Erklärung anstatt der Form der Sache, die Sache gleich selbst zu setzen, weil diese Sache nur dieser einzigen Form fähig ist. Hätte er es für möglich gehalten, daß unser Mitleid auch durch die Erzählung erregt werden könne: so würde es allerdings ein sehr fehlerhafter Sprung gewesen sein, wenn er gesagt hätte, ‚nicht durch die Erzählung, sondern durch Mitleid und Furcht.‘ Da er aber überzeugt war, daß Mitleid und Furcht in der Nachahmung nur durch die einzige dramatische Form zu erregen sei: so konnte er sich diesen Sprung, der Kürze wegen, erlauben. (Lessing 1973, 589–590)

Lessing erfindet das Zeitkriterium, um das Verständnisproblem dieser Stelle zu lösen. Die Auslegungsgeschichte von Aristoteles' *Poetik* hat mittlerweile gezeigt, dass dieses Problem nicht in der Struktur der Textstelle selbst, sondern in der fehlerhaften Textüberlieferung begründet liegt, die noch bis gegen Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts üblich war. Nach neuerer Textauffassung gibt es den „sonderbare[n] Gegensatz“ nicht. Lessing hätte sich seine aufwendige Auslegung sparen können. Aber die Lösung hat das Nichtigwerden des Problems überlebt: Das Zeitkriterium wurde so ein problematischer Bestandteil der Gattungstheorie.

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Megumi Wakabayashi

# Schulromane von Robert Walser und Natsume Sōseki: Hybride Darstellungsformen zwischen „hoch und niedrig“

**Abstract:** Robert Walser, a German-speaking Swiss author, wrote in Berlin a school novel *Jakob von Gunten* (1909), which is recognized to be a parody of a Bildungsroman. In this novel, Walser undermines the ideals of traditional education and dissolves the dualism between “domination and submission” through his narrative techniques. Around the same time, in Japan, Natsume Sōseki composed a school novel *Botchan* [*The Fool from Tokyo*] (1906), written in the style of entertainment literature. Behind the humorous style, Sōseki conceals his critical view of the radical modernization of Japan around the turn of the century. At a time of militaristic nationalism, both Walser in Europe and Sōseki in Japan criticized educational institutions as instruments for manipulation of public opinion in their novels, and succeeded in subverting the binary opposition between “high and low” literature.


**Keywords:** Robert Walser; *Jakob von Gunten*; Natsume Sōseki; *Botchan*; Schulroman

## Einleitung

Um 1900 erschien eine ganze Reihe von Schulromanen, etwa von Hermann Hesse und Robert Musil, die die Qualen junger Schüler im repressiven Bildungssystem der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft thematisierten. Während hier jedoch klassische Bildung und moderne Wissenschaft auf dem Lehrplan stehen, lautet das Bildungsziel in Robert Walsers Roman *Jakob von Gunten* (1909) schlicht soziale Niedrigkeit. Schauplatz ist dabei sinnfälliger Weise eine Dienerschule. *Jakob von Gunten* ist somit unschwer als Parodie des Bildungsromans zu erkennen, mit dem Walser die Ideale traditioneller Bildung ironisch unterläuft.

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Zur gleichen Zeit schrieb Natsume Sōseki in Japan seinen Schulroman *Botchan (Der Tor aus Tokio, 1906)*.<sup>1</sup> Anders als in den deutschsprachigen Werken, die vor allem von den Agonien jugendlicher Helden erzählen, ist hier die Hauptfigur ein Lehrer. Mit ironischer Komik werden die Beziehungen der Kollegen untereinander und die täglichen Geschehnisse dargestellt. Im Vergleich zu seinen anderen Romanen ist *Botchan* eher im Ton trivialer Unterhaltungsliteratur verfasst, wobei in populärer Naivität das Gute gewinnt und das Böse unterliegt. Hinter der humorvollen Leichtigkeit verbirgt sich Sōsekis kulturkritischer Blick auf die radikale Modernisierung Japans um die Jahrhundertwende, unter der auch das Erziehungssystem einem tiefen Wandlungsprozess mit starken Verwerfungen ausgesetzt war. Gerade hierin überschreitet dieser Roman die Grenze der leichten Unterhaltung.

In diesem Beitrag geht es um die Frage, warum Schulromane gerade um 1900 sowohl im deutschsprachig-europäischen als auch im japanischen Kulturraum entstanden sind. Darüber hinaus soll gezeigt werden, auf welche Weise sie jenseits des Schemas „hoch und niedrig“ durch ihren hybriden Schreibstil neue Ausdrucksformen entwickeln.

## 1 Robert Walsers *Jakob von Gunten*

### 1.1 Lehrer und Schüler

*Jakob von Gunten* ist ein Roman in Tagebuchform, verfasst von dem gleichnamigen Protagonisten Jakob, der in die rätselhafte Dienerschule „Institut Benjamenta“ eingetreten ist. Er schreibt über das Leben im Institut, über den Vorsteher Benjamenta, dessen Schwester, die Lehrerin Lisa, und über andere Lehrer und Mitschüler. Dazwischen erzählt er auch von seiner angeblich reichen Familie, vor allem seinem erfolgreichen Bruder. In der zweiten Hälfte des Romans wird allmählich klar, dass das Institut nicht mehr fortbestehen kann, dabei bleibt der Grund unerklärt. Die Zöglinge gehen einer nach dem anderen fort, Lisa verstirbt, zurück bleiben nur der Vorsteher und sein letzter Zögling Jakob. Am Ende verlassen auch die beiden gemeinsam das Institut und gehen in die Wüste.

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<sup>1</sup> Ein ausführlicher Vergleich in diese Richtung zwischen Walsers *Geschwister Tanner* und Sōsekis *Ich der Kater* findet sich bei Hintereder-Emde (2000). Namensschreibung in japanischer Weise mit dem Familiennamen vorangestellt. Sōseki ist ein Pseudonym, das in der Regel auch in der Forschung benutzt wird, der eigentliche Vorname lautet Kinnosuke.

„Institut Benjamenta“ ist eine merkwürdige Schule, wie ihre Darstellung zeigt: Die Zöglinge sind hier „nur kleine, arme, abhängige, zu einem fortwährenden Gehorsam verpflichtete Zwerge“ (Walser 1985, 64). „(M)an lernt hier sehr wenig.“ (Walser 1985, 7). „Es fehlt eben [...] an Lehrkräften, das heißt die Herren Erzieher und Lehrer schlafen, oder sie sind tot, oder nur scheinot, oder sie sind versteinert, gleichviel, jedenfalls hat man gar nichts von ihnen.“ (Walser 1985, 9) Die Lehrer an diesem Institut bringen ihren Schülern keinerlei Kenntnisse bei und der Unterricht in diesem Institut hat mit Lehre und Erziehung, Bildung und Wissenschaft nichts zu tun. Die aufklärerische Idee einer modernen Bildung findet sich hier außer Kraft gesetzt. Die Zöglinge werden diszipliniert, um ein Nichts zu werden.

## 1.2 Vorschrift und Disziplin

Es gibt im Institut Benjamenta zahlreiche strenge Schulregeln: Die Zöglinge sollen sich z. B. beim Betreten und Verlassen des Vorsteherbüros in militärisch anmutender Form, „untertänig und höflich benehmen.“ (Walser 1985, 18) Sie stecken „in den eisernen Klauen der zahlreichen Vorschriften.“ (Walser 1985, 130) Diese bestimmen aber nicht nur ihr Benehmen, sondern auch jedes einzelne Körperteil, wie folgende ins Grotesk-Sadistische getriebene Passage illustriert:

In der Unterrichtsstunde sitzen wir Schüler, starr vor uns herblickend, da, unbeweglich. Ich glaube, man darf sich nicht einmal die persönliche Nase putzen. Die Hände ruhen auf den Kniescheiben und sind während des Unterrichts unsichtbar. Hände sind die fünfjährigen Beweise der menschlichen Eitelkeit und Begehrlichkeit, daher bleiben sie unter dem Tisch hübsch verborgen. [...] Nasen von Zöglingen sollen stumpf und gestülpt erscheinen, so verlangen es die Vorschriften, die an alles denken, und in der Tat, unsere sämtlichen Riechwerkzeuge sind demütig und schamhaft gebogen. Sie sind wie von scharfen Messern kurzgehauen. Unsere Augen blicken stets ins gedankenvolle Leere, auch das will die Vorschrift. [...] Ziemlich ergötzlich sind die Ohren von uns Zöglingen. Sie wagen alle kaum zu horchen vor lauter gespannten Horchens. Sie zucken immer ein wenig, als fürchteten sie, von hinten plötzlich mahnend gezogen und in die Weite und Breite gerissen zu werden. [...] Schlägt der Ton eines Rufes oder Befehls an diese Ohren, so vibrieren und zittern die wie Harfen, die berührt und gestört worden sind. [...] Das Dressierteste an uns ist aber doch der Mund, er ist stets gehorsam und devot zugekniffen. [...] Lippen dürfen nicht prangen und lüstern blühen in der bequemen natürlichen Lage, sondern sie sollen gefalzt und gepreßt sein zum Zeichen energischer Entsagung und Erwartung. Das tun wir Schüler alle, wir gehen mit unsern Lippen laut bestehender Vorschrift sehr hart und grausam um, und daher sehen wir alle so grimmig wie kommandierende Wachtmeister aus. (Walser 1985, 55–56)

Zwar widersetzt sich Jakob dieser strengen Disziplin nicht offen, aber er ironisiert und demaskiert sie durch die Art seiner verniedlichenden Darstellung. Die



Zöglinge sollen regelmäßig das Schulzimmer sowie Säbel und Helm über der Tür sorgfältig putzen. (Walser 1985, 35) Hier hängen auch die Bilder des verstorbenen Kaiserpaares, daher handelt es sich um eine Aufgabe, die dem Putzenden ein gewisses Maß an respekt- und würdevoller Haltung abverlangt. Jakob nennt aber gerade diese ernsthafte Aufgabe abschätzig eine „Zimmermädchenarbeit“ (Walser 1985, 35), denn jeder Zögling bindet sich dabei eine Schürze um.<sup>2</sup> Ihr komisches Aussehen vergleicht Jakob mit den „märchenhaften Heinzelmännchen“ (Walser 1985, 36). Auf diese Weise wird die Atmosphäre der Erhabenheit des mit Kaiserbild und militärischen Insignien geschmückten Unterrichtsraums zerstört. Seine Beschreibung der Vorschriften und der Disziplin rückt diese ins Lächerliche und unterläuft auf diese Weise deren Unterdrückungscharakter.

### 1.3 Herrschaft und Unterwerfung

Jakob betont immer wieder den Kontrast zwischen dem riesigen Vorsteher und den winzigen Zöglingen. Er schreibt, „Herr Benjamenta ist ein Riese, und wir Zöglinge sind Zwerge gegen diesen Riesen“. (Walser 1985, 17) Benjamenta ist „allmächtig“ (Walser 1985, 140) und vor „solch ein[em] Herkules“ (Walser 1985, 18) sind Zöglinge nur „ein wenig gelbliche Blätter“ (Walser 1985, 140), die vom „Brausen und Zürnen“ (Walser 1985, 140) des Sturmwindes leicht weggeblasen werden. Es scheint, dass diese Beziehung zwischen Herrscher und Untergeordnetem unveränderbar ist, was aber keineswegs der Fall ist. Jakobs Haltung gegenüber dem Vorsteher wechselt zwischen Gehorsam und provozierender Frechheit, ja sogar Arroganz. Seine Klugheit nutzt er, um den Tyrannen bewußt in Rage zu bringen. „Seltsam, wieviel Lust es mir bereitet, Gewaltausübende zu Zornesausbrüchen zu reizen.“ (Walser 1985, 44) Tatsächlich gelingt ihm dies immer wieder, um sich darüber heimlich lustig zu machen.

Wieder horchte ich draußen im Korridor am Schlüsselloch, und wieder blieb es ganz still. Ich strecke sogar ganz läppisch und echt zöglingshaft die Zunge heraus, und dann mußte ich lachen. Ich glaube, ich habe noch nie so gelacht. Natürlich ganz leise. Es war das denkbar echtteste unterdrückte Gelächter. Wenn ich so lache, nun, dann steht nichts mehr über mir. Dann bin ich etwas an Umfassen und Beherrschen nicht zu Überbietendes. Ich bin in solchen Momenten einfach groß. (Walser 1985, 130)

Gerade Jakobs Gelächter ist es, das den Zorn des Schulleiters letztlich außer Kraft setzt, während sich der Zögling „einfach groß“ fühlt.

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<sup>2</sup> Claudia Liebrand (1999, 354–356) erläutert die Weiblichkeit der Zöglinge (*gender trouble*) und ihre Maskerade als Frauen.

Schließlich erklärt der mächtige Vorsteher dem aufbegehrenden Zögling sogar seine Liebe. „Und noch ein drittes Geständnis: Ich habe eine seltsame, eine ganz eigentümliche, jetzt nicht mehr zu beherrschende Vorliebe für dich gewonnen.“ (Walser 1985, 94) Dabei fordert er Jakob nun seinerseits dazu auf, frech zu werden. Sein Zögling kommt dem nach, indem er seinen Herrscher „eisig kalt“ (Walser 1985, 106) behandelt. Hier schlägt die Beziehung zwischen Herrschaft und Gehorsam scheinbar gänzlich um. Aber nach wie vor nennt sich Benjamenta „dein Herr“ und den Schüler „meinen jungen armen Wurm, den ich, wenn’s mich gelüstete, zermalmen könnte.“ (Walser 1985, 107) Er will seine Macht weiterhin zur Schau stellen und die Konstellation von Herrscher und Beherrschtem beibehalten. Dennoch geht von diesem „Wurm“ eine derart starke Wirkung aus, dass davon die Macht des „Riesen“ wirkungslos wird. Das Blatt, wie es im eingangs erwähnten Bild heißt, fällt zwar durch den Sturmwind sehr leicht ab, kann aber fröhlich und leicht in der Luft flattern und tanzen. Das Bild der hilflosen Schwäche kehrt sich nun ins Gegenteil einer freien, unbeschwertten Existenz. Und gerade dadurch gerät das gegensätzliche Schema „Herrschaft und Unterwerfung“ ins Taumeln.<sup>3</sup>

## 2 Natsume Sōsekis *Botchan* (*Der Tor aus Tokio*)

### 2.1 Ein Kampf gegen die Ungerechtigkeit?

Anders als bei Walser ist Sōsekis Protagonist „Botchan“<sup>4</sup> ein Lehrer. Nachdem er sein Studium in Tokyo absolviert hat, wird er Mathematiklehrer an einer ländlichen Mittelschule. Kurz nach seinem Antritt machen ihm die Schüler durch allerlei Streiche das Leben schwer. Er verlangt darum vom Konrektor, die Schüler gehörig zu bestrafen. Aber der Konrektor und andere Lehrer ignorieren seine Forderung. Nur sein Kollege „Stachelschwein“ will ihm als Einziger konsequent helfen und wird so ein Vertrauter des Neuankömmlings.

Der Konrektor und Yoshikawa, sein opportunistisch ergebener Verbündeter, handeln stets eigennützig und mit taktischen Hintergedanken. Der Konrektor raubt einem Englischlehrer sogar die Verlobte, während er diesen in eine abge-

<sup>3</sup> Auf Jakobs performative Strategie des Zusammenbruchs von semantischen Oppositionen ist Liebrand (1999, 346–348) eingegangen. Dazu auch Hiebel 1999, 240–275.

<sup>4</sup> „Botchan“ bezeichnet im Japanischen etwa Muttersöhnchen, einen ‚grünen‘ Jungen ohne Weltenerfahrung, auch einen verwöhnten Sohn reicher Eltern. Im Roman werden die meisten Figuren mit ähnlichen Spitznamen bezeichnet, wie im Folgenden „Stachelschwein“ (oder „Rothemd“).

legene Gegend versetzt. Stachelschwein, der es gewagt hat, ihn in der Öffentlichkeit zu kritisieren, wird zum Rücktritt von seinem Lehrerposten gezwungen. Der Protagonist und sein Kollege Stachelschwein beschließen, diese „Laffen, Betrüger, Gauner, Heuchler, Schwindler, Bastarde, Spitzel und Burschen, die wie Hunde aussehen, wenn sie kläffen“ (Sōseki 2000, 88), ordentlich abzustrafen. Eines Abends verprügeln sie denn auch den Konrektor und seinen Kumpan, eine aus Botchans Sicht lang fällige und gerechte Strafe. Danach verlässt Botchan die Mittelschule und kehrt nach Tokyo zurück, um als Hilfsingenieur bei einer Straßenbahngesellschaft zu arbeiten.

Auf den ersten Blick handelt es sich um einen schemenhaft moralisierenden Roman, in dem der gute Held für die Gerechtigkeit kämpft und seine bösen Gegner niederringt. Diese Konstellation der typisierten Figuren entspricht zunächst ganz dem Muster eines vormodernen Trivialromans. Jedoch ist dieses Werk in der Tat nicht so einfach konzipiert.

## 2.2 Wer gewinnt?

Wer geht aus diesem Konflikt als Gewinner hervor? Ist es der Protagonist oder der Konrektor in seinem roten Flanellhemd? Der Konrektor wird fürs Erste gedemütigt, aber nicht öffentlich belangt, und verbleibt unverändert auf seinem Posten. Er gehört in der Mittelschule als einziger „Doktor der Philosophie“ (Sōseki 2000, 16) und Absolvent der neu geschaffenen Universität der Eliteschicht der geistigen Intelligenz an. Er repräsentiert das Karrieredenken der neuen Generation der Intellektuellen und weiß sich damit auf der gesellschaftlichen Gewinnerseite. Im Gegensatz dazu vertritt der Protagonist die traditionelle Moralität mit einem naiven Gerechtigkeitsempfinden. Einerseits kann sich der Protagonist als Vertreter der Gerechtigkeit moralisch überlegen fühlen, andererseits verlässt er die Schule, d. h. er gibt seine privilegierte Stellung als Lehrer auf. Damit nimmt er einen sozialen und auch wirtschaftlichen Abstieg in Kauf. Im Kontext der komplexen japanischen Modernisierung um die Jahrhundertwende, die den Hintergrund dieses Romans bildet, greift hier die simple Frage nach Gewinner und Verlierer nicht. Sie verdeutlicht vielmehr die Spannungen zwischen traditionellen und modernen Wertevorstellungen.

## 3 Reformen der Schulbildung in der japanischen Moderne

### 3.1 Reformen der Schulbildung

Vor der Meiji-Restauration 1868, in der feudalistischen Edo-Zeit (1603–1868), gab es in allen Regionen des Landes Bildungseinrichtungen sowohl für den Kriegerstand (Hankō) als auch für das einfache Volk (Terakoya), in denen neben Konfuzianismus das Lesen, Schreiben und Rechnen unterrichtet wurden. Auch in der vormodernen Zeit bestand bereits ein über das ganze Land verbreitetes Bildungswesen, das eine sehr hohe Alphabetisierung der Bevölkerung bewirkte.

Nach der Restauration und Landeseröffnung hat die neue Regierung 1872 die allgemeine Schulpflicht eingeführt. „Das neue Grundgesetz zur Schulerziehung (Gakusei)“ orientierte sich am modernen westlichen Bildungswesen. Allerdings konnten die armen Schichten die Schulgebühren nicht bezahlen. Die Rate der Einschulung betrug darum nur 30 Prozent.

Infolgedessen wurde dieses liberale Erziehungsgesetz, das den aufklärerischen Bildungsidealen Frankreichs verpflichtet war, bereits 1879 wieder abgeschafft. 1880 wurde es durch das reaktionäre neue Erziehungsgesetz (Kaisei-Kyōikurei) ersetzt. Die Schulbildung wurde nun nach preußischem Vorbild stark vom Staat reglementiert.

Diese stark konservative Tendenz wurde noch durch das Kaiserliche Erziehungsedikt (Kyōiku-Chokugo) von 1890 verstärkt. Diese staatsideologische und nationalistische Ausrichtung wurde dabei durch den Konfuzianismus untermauert. Dadurch wurden Schülern und Lehrkräften eine extreme Vaterlandsliebe und Kaiserstreue abverlangt. Der zentralistische Kaiserstaat plante die Modernisierung von oben her und instrumentalisierte das Erziehungswesen für die Stärkung von Staat und Militär, wie es Preußen und in seiner Folge das deutsche Kaiserreich so erfolgreich vorgeführt hatten. 1900 wurde das öffentliche Bildungssystem mit der Abschaffung der Unterrichtsgebühren vervollkommen. 1905 lag die Einschulungsrate bei 95 Prozent.

### 3.2 Sōseki und das Thema Schulbildung

Sōseki (1867–1916) hat diesen Wandel der radikalen Modernisierung am eigenen Leibe erfahren: In der Grundschule erhielt er eine liberale Bildung, die aber ab der Mittelschule immer mehr von nationalistischer Ideologie dominiert wurde. 1890, im Jahr des Kaiserediktes, nahm er das Studium der Anglistik auf

und nach dem Abschluss war er an verschiedenen Schulen als Englischlehrer tätig. 1895 trat er eine neue Stelle in Matsuyama an, wo sein Roman „Botchan“ spielt.

In diesem Roman werden die Lehrer, Angehörige der neuen Elite des modernen Schulsystems, die sich in ihrer privilegierten Überlegenheit zugleich auch für hervorragende Erzieher halten, schonungslos entlarvt: „Dann gibt es noch den Dachs, der immer nur zu sagen scheint: Wäre die Erziehung ein Lebewesen und zöge sich einen Gehrock an, dann sähe sie aus wie ich. – Jeder bildet sich auf seine Weise irgendetwas ein und nimmt sich furchtbar wichtig, [...]“ (Sōseki 2000, 68) Auch die Schüler werden kritisch dargestellt: „Die Schüler hatten sich nicht etwa entschuldigt, weil sie ehrlich bereuten, sondern weil es ihnen der Direktor befohlen hatte. Für sie war das Senken des Kopfes nur eine Formsache gewesen.“ (Sōseki 2000, 93) Die arrogante Unverbindlichkeit, die bereits auch die Schüler erfasst hat und nur dem Primat der Nützlichkeit verpflichtet ist, gibt den neuen Ton an. Deutlich zeichnet sich hier ab, dass dem Autor das modernisierte Bildungswesen in Japan suspekt war.

Japan hat 1895 den Ersten Japanisch-Chinesischen Krieg gewonnen und das ganze Land verfällt einer nationalistischen Stimmung. Sie wird im Roman in der Beschreibung einer Siegesfeier mit Feuerwerk festgehalten: „Aus einer der Raketen stieg ein Luftballon auf. Darauf stand: ‚Es lebe das Kaiserreich!‘ [...] Von neuem stieg ein Ballon in die Höhe. Diesmal stand auf rotem Grund mit weißer Schrift: ‚Es lebe Heer und Marine!‘“ (Sōseki 2000, 99)

Die zentralistische Meiji-Regierung in Japan hat auf Biegen und Brechen ohne die Basis einer aufgeklärten Bildung des Individuums eine jähe Europäisierung erzwungen. In dieser Zeit der oberflächlichen Modernisierung erlitt die Schulerziehung eine Phase der ethisch-moralischen Unterdrückung und Konfusion. Die Kluft zwischen einer rein technisch-institutionellen Modernisierung und einer gewachsenen Wertekultur wurde Sōseki nirgends stärker bewusst als während seines zweijährigen London-Aufenthalts.

## 4 London-Erfahrung: Sōsekis Modernekritik

1900 begab sich Sōseki für zwei Jahre nach London, um dort zu studieren. Er wurde vom japanischen Kulturministerium entsandt und sollte sich in Europas modernster Metropole die abendländische Wissenschaft zu eigen machen, um später zur Entwicklung der japanischen Wissenschaft beizutragen. Die Moderne, die er in London erlebte, hatte jedoch eine niederdrückende Wirkung auf ihn: Die Menschenmassen auf der Straße und der Lärm der Eisenbahnen brachten

ihn nervlich an seine Grenzen.<sup>5</sup> Das zivilisierte Leben in der großen Stadt fand er unmenschlich und hässlich. Er hatte schon damals eine dunkle Ahnung davon, dass der Fortschritt mit menschlicher Entfremdung und Naturzerstörung einhergehen werde. Seine Aufgabe, sich mit der europäischen Wissenschaft vertraut zu machen, schien ihm bald sinnlos zu sein, und so verlor er auch sein Ziel aus den Augen. Während in Japan die Verwestlichung und Modernisierung drastisch vorankamen, verstand er nun nicht mehr, worauf hin sich Japan entwickeln sollte. Nervlich schwer angeschlagen, kam er im Januar 1903 nach Japan zurück. Aber seine Zweifel und Orientierungslosigkeit teilten viele Intellektuelle Japans. Die japanische Modernisierung erwies sich für sie als ein geistiges Labyrinth.

## 5 Berlin-Erfahrung: Walsers Ruhe in der Ruhelosigkeit

Während Sōseki die Großstadt in verschiedenen kurzen Prosatexten konsequent negativ beschreibt,<sup>6</sup> erscheint bei Walser die preußische Hauptstadt Berlin, in der er von 1905 bis 1913 lebte, in vitaler Lebendigkeit: „Noch nie, seit sie ist, hat in dieser Straße das Leben aufgehört zu leben. Hier ist das Herz, die unaufhörlich atmende Brust des großstädtischen Lebens.“ (Walser 1985/86, Bd. 3, 76) Diese großstädtische Lebendigkeit beschreibt Walser in seinen typischen Formulierungen des Entzückens:

Verpflichtet, verschuldet und verschwistert fühlt er sich dem sonderbaren Gerassel, Geräusche und Getöse. Das Hasten und Wehen empfindet er wie eine neblige, liebe Muttererscheinung. Er denkt nicht mehr daran, je wieder abzureisen. Mag es ihm gut oder schlecht gehen, mag er verkommen oder emporkommen, gleichviel, es ‚hat‘ ihn, er ist für immer bezaubert, es ist ihm unmöglich, dieser großartigen Ruhelosigkeit Adieu zu sagen. (Walser 1985/86, Bd. 15, 51)

Anders als auf Sōseki wirken auf Walser der Lärm und das Dröhnen der Großstadt geradezu vertraut, und die Ruhelosigkeit selber strahlt für ihn eine paradoxe

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<sup>5</sup> Sōseki schreibt z. B. in der kurzen Geschichte *Rondon Shōsoku* (*Nachrichten aus London*, 1901), dass alle Fahrgäste in der Metro Zeitungen oder Zeitschriften lasen, während ihm von der Luft und dem Gerüttel so schlecht war, dass er Brechreiz verspürte. (Vgl. Natsume Sōseki Zenshū, Bd. 10, 656.)

<sup>6</sup> Zum Beispiel in *Rondon Shōsoku* (*Nachrichten aus London*, 1901) und *Rondon-To* (*London Tower*, 1905).

Ruhe aus. Wenn man sich ins Gedränge mischt, verschwindet „das Seelenübel“ (Walser 1985/86, Bd. 15, 55).

Im Tumult der Großstadt wird wie in einem chaotischen Schmelztopf aller Dualismus aufgelöst.

Arbeit und Vergnügen, Laster und guter Trieb, Streben und Müßiggang, Edelsinn und Niedertracht, Liebe und Hass, feuriges und höhnisches Wesen, Buntheit und Einfachheit, Armut und Reichtum schimmern, glitzern, blöden, träumen, eilen und stolpern hier wild und zugleich ohnmächtig durcheinander. (Walser 1985/86, Bd. 3, 76)

Auf diese Weise wird die Ruhelosigkeit in der großen Stadt zur ureigenen Ruhe, die divergenten Gegensätzlichkeiten werden amalgamiert.

## Schluss

Um die Jahrhundertwende tendierten die Staaten Europas wie auch Japan zu einem stark militaristischen Nationalismus. Das Erziehungswesen wurde dabei zur weltanschaulichen Manipulation der Bevölkerung instrumentalisiert. Walser und Sōseki haben nahezu gleichzeitig in ihren Romanen die Bildungsinstitution Schule kritisch in den Blick genommen und bereits die Gefahren der Ideologisierung durch ihre jeweilige Darstellungsweise spürbar werden lassen.

Das Institut Benjamenta stellt eine Parodie der Ideale traditioneller Bildung dar, indem sein Bildungsziel die Niedrigkeit heißt. Es ist ein negativer Ausdruck des Bildungssystems der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft, in der man seiner immanenten Logik folgend eine höhere Stellung anstreben und aufsteigen muss. Aber Walser löst in seinem Anti-Bildungsroman dualistische Beziehungen wie „Herrschaft und Unterwerfung“ oder „groß und klein“ durch seine Sprachartistik auf und dabei verliert der Dualismus seine Gegensätzlichkeit. Auf diese Weise ist auch der Gegensatz „hoch und niedrig“ kein einfacher Widerspruch mehr. Bei Walser kann eine Höhe niedrig sein und eine Niedrigkeit hoch. Durch diesen paradoxen Wechsel stellt er den erstarrten Dualismus in Frage.

Sōsekis *Botchan* ist, auch wenn er auf den ersten Blick trivial-schematisch erscheint, kein leichter Unterhaltungsroman, worin zu guter Letzt das Gute über das Böse triumphiert. Hinter seiner naiven und unterhaltsamen Diktion versteckt sich eine ernsthafte Kritik an der japanischen Modernisierung. Sōseki, der sich im Dilemma zwischen der vormodernen, ethisch-moralischen Unterdrückung einerseits und der oberflächlichen Modernisierung andererseits sah und daraus keinen richtigen Ausweg finden konnte, schrieb einen Roman, der zwar unterhaltsam ist, aber keineswegs im Trivialen aufgeht. Bei Sōseki bleibt es strategisch unbestimmt,

was trivial, was hochliterarisch sei, er bringt auf diese Weise das dominierende dualistische Schema von „hoch und niedrig“ ins Wanken und stellt zugleich die Frage nach den ethischen Werten in Zeiten der radikalen Modernisierung.

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Martina Zerovnik

# Wie hältst du's mit der Liebe? Vampirische Emanzipation im Abendlicht von Elfriede Jelineks „Krankheit oder Moderne Frauen“

**Abstract:** Elfriede Jelinek's texts are well known for being the hybrid result of a vampiric writing process, during which the author is working up phrases, shibboleths, stereotypes, and myths, especially those of gender. The play *Illness or Modern Women*, premiered in the year 1987, centers around love as one of the great myths that are directly linked to gender issues. In the following article I read the play along with one of the text's main references, the novella *Carmilla*. Love is not only the leading theme in this text, but also in contemporary vampire literature. The latter is often seen as manifestation of a postfeminist backlash. With this in mind, the following article reflects on how love affects the personality and sphere of action of the characters within a patriarchal system. Questions of power and (self-)empowerment, of subjection and dependence, of the self and the other in the context of loving someone and being loved will be considered. I finally ask, if the success or failure of women's love can be seen as crucial to mark the passage from feminist to postfeminist approaches.

**Keywords:** Geschlechterdiskurs; Geschlechtsidentität; Liebesmotiv; Sexualität und Machtkonstellationen; Homosexualität; Androgynie; Postfeminismus; Backlash; patriarchalische Ordnung; Dekonstruktion; Stereotype; Vampir; vampirische Schreibweise

Elfriede Jelineks Texte sind das Ergebnis einer Hybridisierung diverser sowohl aus der Populär- wie auch aus der sogenannten Hochkultur entnommener Text- und Mediensorten, was die Autorin mitunter zu der Selbstbezeichnung „Vampir“ veranlasste (Jelinek und Neuwirth 1998). Die genealogische und sprachliche Komplexität sowie die gesellschaftspolitischen Einschreibungen der vampirischen Schreibweise initiieren vielschichtige Interpretationsräume und stehen im Mittelpunkt der wissenschaftlichen Auseinandersetzung mit Jelineks Werk. Auch über das Theaterstück „Krankheit oder Moderne Frauen“ erschien nach dessen Uraufführung im Jahr 1987 eine Vielzahl an Forschungsbeiträgen, die sich mit einer Rekonstruktion der Ursprünge und einer Entflechtung der hybriden Struktur des Theaterstücks beschäftigen.

Das Hauptinteresse der folgenden Untersuchung richtet sich auf eine diskursiv-motivische Lektüre von „Krankheit oder Moderne Frauen“<sup>1</sup> und einer Novelle, die zu den einflussreichsten Werken des Vampirgenres zählt: „Carmilla“ von Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu aus dem Jahr 1872, deren vampirische Protagonistin Namensgeberin für eine der Hauptfiguren in Jelineks Theaterstück ist. Anders als in bisherigen Forschungsarbeiten wird der Fokus auf ein Motiv eingestellt, das darin konstitutiv ist: das der Liebe. Es wird untersucht, wie sich das Liebesmotiv vor dem Hintergrund des Geschlechterdiskurses in einem patriarchalisch normierten Gesellschaftssystem darstellt, welche Auswirkungen die Liebe auf das Verhalten, die Identität und die Entwicklung der Figuren hat sowie welche Dynamiken und Potentiale die Liebe freisetzt oder auch unterbindet. Eine grundsätzliche Frage wird sein, welche vermeintlich geschlechtsspezifischen Merkmale der Liebe anhängen und welche Konstellationen von Macht sie hervorruft.

Die Frage „Wie hältst du’s mit der Liebe?“ bietet Anknüpfungspunkte an die Debatten der unmittelbaren Gegenwart, weshalb in einer abschließenden Reflexion ein Vergleich mit dem Vampirboom der letzten Jahre gezogen wird, am stellvertretenden Beispiel der Roman-Trilogie der *Twilight Saga* (ab 2006) der US-amerikanischen Autorin Stephenie Meyer. Die Darstellung der Frauenfiguren und ihrer Lebenswelten wurde in der feministischen Forschung häufig als Symptom eines postfeministischen *Backlashes* angeführt. Die Überlegungen gehen dahin, den Umgang mit dem Motiv der Liebe gewissermaßen als eine feministische Gretchenfrage nach dem Übergang von einem feministischen Bruch zu einem postfeministischen *Backlash* zu verstehen. Es wird also erläutert, wie die Liebe das Verhalten und das Schicksal der Protagonistinnen beeinflusst, ob sie (feministische) Identitätssetzungen und Handlungsräume eröffnet, um schließlich auf die Frage nach ihrer Signifikanz in Bezug auf das Ende und das Scheitern des Feminismus – dem Abendlicht der Emanzipation – zu sprechen zu kommen.

## 1 Mythos Liebe

Elfriede Jelinek bezeichnet ihre Texte als Textflächen, Textgewebe oder auch Textausgeburten, die einem Flickenteppich gleichen (vgl. Jelinek 2013c). In diesen werden Versatzstücke aus unterschiedlichen Vorlagen gewissermaßen aus dem Grabe der Vergangenheit oder dem Mythos oder aus einem Medium wie Nachrichten, Werbung, Film oder Musik in ein neues sprachliches Gefüge gebracht –

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1 Im Folgenden KoMF abgekürzt.

oder, mit Jelineks treffenden Worten, in ein „ordentliches Chaos“ transferiert, wie sie 2013 in einer Grußbotschaft an das Burgtheater schrieb:

Die Kunst soll jetzt endlich Ordnung schaffen, denn ich mach das nicht, das ist etwas, das mir nun wirklich wesensfremd ist: Ordnung. Figuren treten auf, ich habe sie mir nicht ausgedacht, bei mir muß immer ein anderer sie erschaffen, ein Regisseur, eine Regisseurin, ich gebe nur mein Chaos her, meine beliebigen Erfindungen, ziemlich ungeordnet, nicht einmal Wichtiges wird von Unwichtigem getrennt, ein ordentliches Chaos hat das nun mal an sich, daß nur die Natur darüber wacht, es vielleicht sogar hervorgebracht hat, und ausgerechnet in mir wollte es ans Abendlicht! (Jelinek 2013a)

Jelinek bekennt sich dazu, wie eine Vampirin zu arbeiten und aus anderen Texten das zu nehmen, was sie für ihr Schreiben braucht (vgl. Jelinek und Neuwirth 1998). Die Versatzstücke weisen weniger in die Vergangenheit und auf den Ursprung, aus dem sie entnommen wurden, als dass sie vielmehr etwas Neues, ein dichtes Gewebe neuer Kontexte, Wirklichkeiten und Bedeutungen, entstehen lassen. Jelineks Arbeiten sind Überschreitungen in zweifachem Sinne, jener der durchlässigen Textkonsistenz in Form der intertextuellen Kompilation und jener der semantischen Transzendenz, die durch eine mnemotechnische Unschärfe entsteht. Der Text ist ein zusammengeflicktes Stückwerk an aus der Erinnerung rekonstruierten Lehnzitaten und Verweisen, das sich auf einer Fläche und nicht in die Tiefe entwickelt, sich der dritten Dimension und mit ihr allfälliger Plastizität und einem tiefgehenden Sinn entzieht (vgl. Vogel 2010, 9). Die gebrauchten Sätze und Satzteile ergeben weder in ihrer Herkunft noch in ihrem Kontext noch in ihrem Wortlaut eine verlässliche Identifikationsbasis. Die Teilstücke lassen sich zu keinem konsistenten Bild zusammensetzen, in dem die Figuren aufgehen oder verschwinden könnten.<sup>2</sup> „Ich bin eine Dilettantin des Existierens. Ein Wunder, daß ich spreche. Ich bin restlos gar nichts“, bemerkt Emily (Jelinek 2013, 203). Eva Meyer nennt diesen Umstand eine „Verausgabung der Authentizität“ und findet für Jelineks Theaterstücke bezeichnend, dass darin Figuren auftreten, die ständig Aussagen über sich selbst treffen und sich dadurch gewissermaßen selbst erschaffen, ganz Sprache geworden, und eine Nähe zu alten Mythen herstellen (Meyer 2005, 100–101).

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<sup>2</sup> Jelinek stellt „Krankheit oder Moderne Frauen“ ein Zitat von Eva Meyer voran, das auf die Diskrepanz der verschwindenden Frau, die das Verschwinden nie ganz zu Ende bringen kann und es unablässig von vorne beginnen muss, hinweist: „In chinesischen Legenden steht geschrieben, daß große Meister in ihre Bilder hineingingen und verschwunden sind. Die Frau ist kein großer Meister. Deshalb wird ihr Verschwinden nie vollkommen sein. Sie taucht wieder auf, beschäftigt wie sie ist, mit dem Verschwinden.“ (Jelinek 2013 [1987], 192)

Als alter Mythos erscheint in Jelineks Stück nicht allein der Vampir, sondern auch die Cartesianische Setzung „Ich denke, also bin ich“, die ursprünglich einen Bruch mit dem Mythos markiert (Meyer 2005, 101). Jelineks Frauenfiguren wird die für diese Erkenntnis notwendige Reflexions- und Sprachmacht nicht zugestanden. Sie suchen Erkenntnis und Identität in der Liebeserfahrung zueinander und scheitern dabei an dem Mythos der Liebe als naturgegebene Verschmelzung des Mannes und der Frau. Das Liebesmotiv determiniert den Geschlechterdiskurs, es inszeniert und reproduziert die Ordnung einer heterosexuellen Dichotomie von „Weiblichkeit“ und „Männlichkeit“. Die Vampirfigur bedroht diese Ordnung durch ihre heteronormative Dichotomien durchbrechende Geschlechtlichkeit, die als biologische Geschlechtslosigkeit und Androgynität oder Aneignung von Charakteristika des anderen Geschlechts wie auch als promiskuitive Sexualität und Homosexualität auftritt. Vampirerzählungen handeln vielfach von der Suche und dem Ringen um eine *andere* Liebe oder von dem Recht und der Freiheit zu begehren und ebenso von der Verteidigung einer Idealvorstellung von Liebe und damit verbundener (bürgerlicher) Werte gegen geschlechtliche und sexuelle Subversionen (vgl. Auerbach 1995, 38–60).

Diese Aspekte zeigen sich in Sheridan le Fanus Novelle „Carmilla“, die Elfriede Jelinek als eine Vorlage diente. Das Motiv, aus dem heraus die Vampirin Carmilla bei Le Fanu handelt, ist die Liebe. Während es Dracula (wie er sich in Bram Stokers 1897 publiziertem Roman zeigt und nicht, wie er vielfach in späteren Verfilmungen interpretiert wurde) um Macht geht und jede sexuelle und erotische Annäherung aus dem Streben nach dieser motiviert ist – in Form der Aneignung von Frauenkörpern und insbesondere als In-Besitz-Nahme der Frauen der Gegner –, wird Carmillas Handeln von Liebe getrieben. Le Fanu beschreibt einen leidenschaftlichen Liebestaumel, den die Vampirin mit Laura verbindet, einer jungen Frau, in deren Landschloss sie nach einem Kutschenunfall Unterkunft findet. Eine Spannung aus Annäherungen und Zurückweisungen befördert eine innige Beziehung, die durch die betonte Darstellung von Berührungen, Liebkosungen, leidenschaftlichen Gesten und Gefühlsausbrüchen eine erotische Dimension annimmt. Le Fanus Carmilla steht für die romantische Vorstellung einer Liebe, die ambivalent zwischen Polen changiert und zugleich verzehrend und vitalisierend, fesselnd und befreiend, schwächend und stärkend ist, in der die Seelen und Körper der Liebenden eins werden. Es ist das Ideal der Liebe bis in den Tod, wie Carmilla zu Laura sagt: „You are mine. You *shall* be mine. You and I are one forever.“ (Le Fanu 2008, 264)

Der vampirische Tod wird zu einer Auferstehung in Liebe und die ewige Liebe von einer Metapher zu einer realen Möglichkeit. Bei Le Fanu unterbindet die Vernichtung der Vampirin durch eine Männergruppe die Vereinigung der beiden Frauen. In Jelineks Theaterstück leben die Frauen, die hier Emily und Carmilla

heißen, ihre Beziehung zunächst aus. Das „You and I are one forever“ setzt Jelinek bildlich um, indem sie Emily und Carmilla im Verlauf des Stücks zu einem siamesischen Doppelgeschöpf verschmilzt, einem im platonischen Mythos aufgehenden Liebespaar. Jelinek vollführt damit das Verschwinden der Liebenden im Körper der Geliebten. In der Liebeserfahrung geht das Ich in der Existenz der/des geliebten Anderen auf und wird doch erst durch seine/ihre Liebe seiend. „Die Liebe ist eine Tötung, dank deren ich bin“, schreibt Julia Kristeva von der wechselseitigen Identifikation des Liebessubjektes mit dem Liebesobjekt (Kristeva 1989, 40). Der/Die Liebende erfährt sein/ihr Ich nicht *von* dem Anderen, sondern *durch* ihn: „Ich ist, weil ich liebe.“ (Kristeva 1989, 164) Indem ich liebe und geliebt werde, vollzieht sich eine Subjektwerdung über das Ich-Ideal, das geliebt wird. Diese reziproke Identifikation kulminiert in Jelineks Zwillingsgeschöpf. Im Vergleich dazu grenzt die Autorin das Paar Dr. Heidkliff (der Emily im Zuge eines performativen Sprechaktes zu seiner Verlobten macht) und Emily voneinander ab.<sup>3</sup> Emily stellt fest: „Ich bin außerhalb von dir. Ich weiß derzeit genau, wo ich anfangen und du aufhörst.“ (Jelinek 2013, 194) Heidkliff wiederum weist darauf hin, dass seine Liebe Grenzen hat, und Emily betont, dass ihr eigenes Glück nur dort ist, wo Heidkliff nicht ist (vgl. Jelinek 2013, 195).

## 2 Vampirische Liebe als phallische Anmaßung

Der Vampirbiss steht für Sexualität und wird geschlechtsindifferent praktiziert, weshalb der Gattung Vampir in einer heterosexuellen Norm kein eindeutiges Geschlecht zuzuweisen ist (vgl. Dyer 1988). Wohl aber haftet der Figur etwas Männliches an, wie Benno Hundekoffer, Carmillas Mann, in KoMF feststellt: „Dadurch, daß meine Frau Carmilla jetzt Blut ißt, hat sie etwas Männliches bekommen [...].“ (Jelinek 2013, 240) Die Universalität dieser Begehrensnorm zeigt sich in Le Fanus Novelle unter anderem dadurch, dass Laura in Carmilla einen als Frau verkleideten Knaben wähnt, weil diese um sie wirbt und sie sich zu der Freundin hingezogen fühlt. Voller Verliebtheit spricht Carmilla „wilden Unsinn“ und ist eine „alberne, kleine Närrin“, die Laura mit Zärtlichkeiten, Küssen und Liebkosungen überhäuft (Le Fanu 2008, 263–265, 276). Auch die Dialoge, die Jelineks Figuren in ihrem Wiedergängerdasein sprechen, könnten als „wilder

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<sup>3</sup> Heidkliff ist eine Anspielung auf die Figur Heathcliff in „Wuthering Heights“ von Emily Brontë, dessen Liebe zu Catherine ebenfalls durch vampirische Entsprechungen gekennzeichnet ist. Jelineks Figur Emily verweist auf die Schriftstellerin selbst.

Unsinn“ bezeichnet werden, wobei *wild* ebenso mit *unordentlich/chaotisch* wie mit *natürlich* und *triebhaft* gleichzusetzen ist. Es ist eine Eigenheit, wie sie das Sprechen von Verliebten, aber auch das weibliche Sprechen als Überschreitung und „phallische Anmaßung“ bei Jelinek auszeichnet (Jelinek 1996).

Im feministischen Diskurs besiegelt der Vampirbiss einerseits den weiblichen Opferstatus, da sich der Vampir damit Frauen bemächtigt, andererseits ermöglicht die Vampirexistenz Stärke, Autonomie und eine Machtposition (vgl. Borrmann 1999, 236). Der Vampir verfügt mit seinen Zähnen sowohl in Männer- wie auch in Frauengestalt, so diese Geschlechter angewendet werden, über einen Phallus. Jelinek pointiert diese Verbindung der Vampirzähne mit dem Phallus, indem Emily ein- und ausfahrbare Zähne mit folgender Begründung fordert: „Ich möchte einen ähnlichen Apparat wie ihr Männer ihn habt! Ich möchte imponieren können. Ich möchte Lust vorzeigen können! Ich habe Säfte, aber die gelten im Alltag wenig. Ich möchte auch nach einem Prinzip funktionieren dürfen!“ (Jelinek 2013, 222) Das damit angesprochene Lustprinzip der unmittelbaren Befriedigung der Bedürfnisse wird in Bezug auf die Sexualität in einem patriarchalischen Dominanzsystem vornehmlich Männern zugeschrieben, während für Frauen Liebe, Fürsorge und Verantwortungsbewusstsein aus ihrer potentiellen Mutterfunktion abgeleitet werden (vgl. Fromm 1994, 18–19). Den Männern haften in KoMF dem Prinzip gemäß animalische Symbolik und triebgesteuerte, *übermannende* Sexualität an. Im Zuge der Anhäufung libidinöser Energie verlieren die Männer auch ihre Sprache und verfallen bisweilen auf ein Stammeln oder Bellen. Die Tötung der Vampirin erleben sie ekstatisch als Höhepunkt, den „kleinen Tod“: „Ja! Ja! Ja! Ja! Das Knirschen des Pfahls beim Eindringen in den Knochen, der sich windende Leib, der blutige Schaum vor dem Mund, das Erbrochene. Wir dürfen uns daran erinnern: Es muss sein. Es dient der Menschheit“ (Jelinek 2013, 236), sagt Heidekliff und paraphrasiert damit die Vorstellung des Geschlechtsakts als Vollzug des Auftrags zur Arterhaltung.

Durch die Vampirexistenz erhalten die Frauen mit dem Phallus die Fähigkeit, sich ohne Zutun des Mannes fortzupflanzen. Die Vampirfrauen bemächtigen sich des phallischen Zeugungsaktes, den Judith Butler folgendermaßen beschreibt: „Anstelle einer Weiblichkeit, die einen Beitrag zur Reproduktion leistet, haben wir eine phallische Form, die immer nur weitere Versionen von sich selbst reproduziert – durch das Weibliche, aber ohne seine Hilfe.“ (Butler 1997, 71) „Ich habe genau mich selbst noch einmal gemacht“, sagt Carmillas Mann Benno (Jelinek 2013, 204) und jubelt über die Geburt seines Sohnes:

Es entspricht genau der österreichischen Norm. [...] Kiloweis vom Besten! Güteklasse A! Mein herrliches Blut! Meine Eigenschaften auf derart kleinem Raum. Mich wundert, daß sie alle Platz haben. Hurra, ein Junge, rufe ich laut. Ein Stammhalter! Der Baum wackelt keinen Zentimeter. (Jelinek 2013, 209, 212)

Auch die vampirische Reproduktion erfolgt ohne Zutun und erschafft immer weitere Versionen von sich selbst. Die vampirische Potenz hebt humanbiologische Einschränkungen auf und ermöglicht durch (Selbst-)Ermächtigung den Ausbruch aus Rollenzuschreibungen. Anstelle ihrer vermeintlich natürlichen Bestimmung, den Kreislauf des Lebens in der Fürsorge als Ehefrau und Mutter sicherzustellen, erhalten die Frauen als Vampirinnen die Macht, ihre Blutlinie direkt ohne Zutun des Mannes weiterzugeben und ewiges Leben zu schenken. Sie werden durch die Aneignung der patriarchalischen Funktionen nicht nur ihrem Gatten, sondern auch Gott ebenbürtig. So sagt Emily in einer Umkehrung der christlichen Gabenbereitung: „Ich bin der Anfang und das Ende. Von dem ich esse, der wird ewig leben.“ (Jelinek 2013, 210)

Bei Le Fanu ist für die Männer eine Machtposition der Frauen nicht einmal denkbar, sodass diese zu keinem Zeitpunkt auf den Gedanken kommen, die rätselhaften Ereignisse Carmilla zuzuschreiben, sie sehen diese immer als Opfer. Bei Jelinek streben Carmillas Mann Benno und Emilys Verlobter Dr. Heidkliff danach, ihre Vormachtstellung zu behaupten und den Frauen die phallische Macht wieder zu nehmen bzw. diese zu verleugnen, indem sie auch die Vampirinnen auf die Funktion der Hausfrau und Mutter reduzieren. „Du bist und bleibst eine Hausfrau. Wenn du nun stirbst, bist du eine tote Hausfrau“, spricht Benno Hundekoffer die Unumstößlichkeit der patriarchalischen Gesellschaftsordnung aus (Jelinek 2013, 243). Auch Heidkliff schreibt Emily auf eine heteronormierte geschlechtsspezifische Eherolle fest: „Daß du Vampir bist, Emily, stört mich gar nicht, solange sich diese Veranlagung nicht auf mich ausdehnt und solange du den Haushalt darüber nicht aus den Augen verlierst.“ (Jelinek 2013, 224) Weder Vampirismus noch Homosexualität sind für die Männer identitätsstiftende Kategorien, die die patriarchalische Konstruktion von „Weiblichkeit“ durchbrechen könnten. Bei Jelinek scheitert der Ausbruchsversuch und entwickelt sich letztlich zur affirmativen Bestätigung der fehlenden Sprach- und Handlungsfähigkeit der Frauen im herrschenden System.

### 3 Krankheit Liebe

Das Cartesianische „Cogito ergo sum“, das Julia Kristeva in eine reziproke Erfahrung des „Ich liebe, also bin ich“ umwandelt (Kristeva 1989, 164), wird bei Jelinek zum „Ich bin krank, daher bin ich.“ (Jelinek 2013, 232) Kristeva definiert eine Form der Liebe, in der die Erfahrung geliebt zu werden souverän und gleichzeitig krank macht, weil sie eine Abhängigkeit vom geliebten und liebenden Anderen erzeugt (vgl. Kristeva 1989, 101). Diese Abhängigkeit ist eine Ambivalenz der



Macht und Ohnmacht, des Herrschens und Unterwerfens, ein Kreislauf wechselseitiger Verführung (vgl. Jelinek 2013, 242), der sich, Erich Fromm folgend, zwischen den Polen von Haben und Sein bewegt. Viel mehr noch als in der Figur Carmilla drückt sich in *Dracula* eine vampirische, Besitz ergreifende Form der Liebe aus, die Fromm mit der Empfindung des Habens verbindet: „Wird Liebe aber in der Weise des Habens erlebt, so bedeutet dies, das Objekt, das man ‚liebt‘, einzuschränken, gefangenzunehmen oder zu kontrollieren. Eine solche Liebe ist erwürgend, lähmend, erstickend, tötend statt belebend.“ (Fromm 1999, 52) Die Abhängigkeit von der/dem Geliebten kann auch als eine Macht über den/die Andere/-n ausgelebt werden und der Vampir wird zu einem den Menschen zu Tode liebenden Wesen.

Dieses Bild findet sich in „Carmilla“ und in *Dracula*, indem die wiederholte Präsenz des Vampirs eine fortschreitende Schwächung bis zum Tod zur Wirkung hat. Der wesentliche Unterschied zwischen Carmilla und *Dracula* ist jedoch, dass *Dracula* das Ziel verfolgt, eine Heerschar an Untergebenen zu erschaffen, während Carmilla den Tod als Initiation der ewigen Liebe versteht. Mit ihrem werbenden Drängen, dessen Wirkung sich Laura nicht entziehen kann und das in dem Credo „Love will have its sacrifice. No sacrifice without blood“ (Le Fanu 2008, 277) gipfelt, wird (homosexuelle) Liebe zum Vampirismus und zur Krankheit, die sie auf Laura überträgt. Laura unterliegt den Verführungskünsten der Freundin, doch ist es nicht allein die Liebe von, sondern gleichermaßen ihre Liebe zu Carmilla, die an ihren Kräften zehrt, womit Le Fanu nicht nur die tendenziöse Ausrichtung des Begehrens untermauert, sondern auch den Konflikt zwischen Lauras Gefühlen und den gesellschaftlichen Normen widerspiegelt. Carmilla steht für gelebtes, Laura für unterdrücktes homosexuelles Begehren (vgl. Rickels 2007, 126–129).

Auch bei Jelinek ist die Krankheit Vampirismus eine Liebeskrankheit. Auf die Bemerkung von Emily, sie sei liebestoll, erwidert Carmilla: „Ich bin krank, und es geht mir gut. Ich leide, und ich fühle mich wohl. Krank zu sein bedarf es wenig. Ich kann es, und ich fühle mich sehr, sehr schlecht.“ (Jelinek 2013, 233) Die Krankheit ist für die Frauenfiguren eine konstitutive Bedingung ihrer Existenz, ihre Ursache und ihr Ziel (vgl. Jelinek 2013, 232), sodass die Frau „eine einzige Geschichte der Krankheit“ ist (Jelinek 2013, 242). Dieses Schicksal ist ein weibliches Martyrium – worauf die Pfähle in Emilys Brust, die an die Darstellung einer *Mater dolorosa* erinnern, hinweisen (vgl. Kahrer 2013, 10).

Aus der Perspektive des Patriarchats besteht die Krankheit nicht zuletzt darin, dass Frauen aus den normierten Rollen auszubrechen versuchen – „Ich gebäre nicht, ich begehre dich“, drückt es Emily aus (Jelinek 2013, 208). Die weiblichen Figuren fügen sich weder bei Le Fanu noch bei Jelinek dem patriarchalischen und heterosexuellen Postulat. Jelineks Carmilla verstößt offen gegen die Fürsor-

gepflicht, die eigenen Kinder ein Leben lang zu lieben und zu schützen, indem sie von ihnen trinkt. Als Untote kehren sich die Rollen um und nicht die Kinder werden von der Mutter genährt, diese nährt sich an ihren Kindern. Carmilla sagt dementsprechend: „Ich möchte jetzt bitte wieder saugen. Ich möchte nicht, daß an mir gesaugt wird.“ (Jelinek 2013, 260) Auch in Le Fanus Novelle gibt es eine Lesart, bei der die Vampirin mit der toten Mutter Lauras gleichzusetzen ist, deren ewige Liebe ihr Kind mit in den Tod nimmt bzw. über den Tod hinaus bindet (vgl. Killeen 2011; Rickels 2007, 126–132).

## 4 Die postfeministische Gretchenfrage

Die postfeministische Perspektive zeichnet sich dadurch aus, dass sie die Differenz akzentuiert und an die Stelle der Kategorien Frau–Weiblichkeit und Mann–Männlichkeit ein pluralistisches Gender- und Identitätskonzept setzt, das unaufhörlich konstruiert, transformiert und gewechselt wird (vgl. Haas 2006). Sie ist eng mit der Vorstellung von einem Ende und Scheitern des Feminismus verbunden, da es sich bei der selbstbewussten Annahme und Auslebung von traditionellen Markierungen von „Weiblichkeit“ wie Mutterschaft, Schönheit oder Liebe letztlich um eine als emanzipatorische Autonomie getarnte Rückkehr des Patriarchats handle. Die Romanreihe *Twilight* gilt als Beispiel für diesen *Backlash*.

Die zeitgenössischen Werke des Vampirgenres kreisen zumeist um eine wie immer geartete Liebesbeziehung zwischen einer Menschenfrau und einem Vampirman. Die Frau wird von ihren Gefühlen und Leidenschaften überwältigt und geht zur Gänze in dem hypnotischen Zustand des Liebeswahns auf (vgl. Taylor 2011). Das Leben der Frauen erhält im Lieben und Geliebt-Werden Sinn und Bedeutung, das Erkennen ihrer Selbst ist vom Blick, vor allem aber auch Biss des Vampirs abhängig. Die Liebende liefert sich durch die Liebe einer Abhängigkeit von dem Geliebten aus, dessen Liebe als permanente Todesdrohung im Raum steht. Am Beispiel von Bella Swann, der Protagonistin von *Twilight*, zeigt sich: Die Liebe der Frau findet ihre größte Erfüllung nicht in der Ehe oder der Mutterschaft (die sie als Vampirin sogar konventionell vollzieht), sondern in der Unsterblichkeit, und die Sehnsucht nach Unsterblichkeit wird von dem Wunsch motiviert, in Ewigkeit mit dem Geliebten bzw. ihren Lieben zusammen zu sein.

Die stete Todesdrohung wird von Bella nicht als Gefahr wahrgenommen, sondern als eine Macht gehandelt, deren Affirmation erstrebenswert ist. Der Vampirman allerdings wersetzt sich der Versuchung, womit er und nicht das Mädchen den gesellschaftlich weiblich konnotierten Part der Beherrschung des Begehens und Verweigerung des Geschlechtsaktes mitsamt seiner etwaigen

Folgen übernimmt (vgl. Mann 2009, 140). Im Gegensatz dazu ließe sich diese ablehnende Haltung Edwards feministisch aber auch als Weigerung des Mannes deuten, seine Macht zu teilen. Nicht die Aussicht auf ewige Verbundenheit mit der Geliebten, sondern die Bewahrung und der Schutz ihrer Menschlichkeit stehen für ihn im Vordergrund. Mit dem Verlust dieser würde er auch seine einzige autonome Funktion verlieren, was aus seinem Zögern eine Entscheidung zwischen Liebe und Macht werden lässt.

Der Vampirbiss, der in einem patriarchalischen System als In-Besitz-Nahme der Frau zu verstehen ist, setzt bei Bella einen persönlichkeitsbildenden Prozess der Vollendung, Abspaltung und Identitätsfindung in Gang. Die Vampirin ist in diesem Fall nicht mehr das Phantasma der emanzipierten modernen Frau, die „krankhaft“ aus der herrschenden Ordnung auszubrechen sucht. Es findet vielmehr eine schmerzhaft Durchschreitung dieser Ordnung statt. Der Sexualakt zeichnet Bella mit Spuren der Gewalt und die Schwangerschaft bringt sie in Todesgefahr (das in ihr heranwachsende Kind saugt ihr förmlich das Leben aus). Es entsteht allerdings eine in der Forschung vielfach kritisierte masochistische Haltung, weil Bella die Verletzungen glücklich annimmt (vgl. McClimans und Wisnewski 2009; Housel 2009; Taylor 2011). Auch hier drängt sich das Bild eines Martyriums der Frau auf. Mit ihrem Vampirsein lässt die Protagonistin jedoch die weibliche Opferrolle hinter sich und bildet ein matriarchalisches Gegengewicht. Bella wird stärker als ihr Mann und zur Retterin ihrer Familie und des ganzen Clans. Es ließe sich in dieser Lesart sagen, dass der Biss, mit dem der Vampirman seine Überlegenheit und Vorherrschaft über die Frau aufgibt, diese davor bewahrt, ein Opfer der patriarchalischen Ordnung zu werden.

Die Emanzipation führt über die Liebe, die sich als Machtinstrument zwischen Unterwerfung und Beherrschung des Anderen wie des Selbst entfaltet. Die weibliche Annahme und Erfüllung der Liebe wie auch des Begehrens glücken offenbar erst nach dieser postfeministischen Wende des Diskurses. In Elfriede Jelineks Theaterstück sind die Frauen zwar auch Liebende und Vampirinnen, aber sie stehen dem patriarchalischen System doch machtlos gegenüber. In diesem unterliegt die liebende Frau in Gegenüberstellung zum begehrenden Mann trotz ihrer vampirischen Existenz, da die Kategorie Weiblichkeit, die Jelinek mit Krankheit gleichsetzt, über allen anderen Wesensmerkmalen steht. KoMF bildet somit den Diskurs über die herrschenden Strukturen ab. Jelinek dekonstruiert und montiert die Vorgängertexte und Mythen nicht, indem sie die Kategorien „Frau“, „Weiblichkeit“ usw. negiert und an ihre Stelle die Kategorie „Gender“ ins Spiel bringt. Sie gesteht ihren Figuren keine neuen Geschlechtsidentitäten und keinen Wechsel von einer Identität zur anderen zu. Die Analogie zwischen Liebe, Emanzipation, Vampirismus und Krankheit, die Identitätsfindung und Subjektwerdung über eine Krankheit, erscheinen vielmehr als eine lust- und

leidvolle performative Affirmation patriarchalischer Zuschreibungen. In diesem Sinne dekonstruiert Jelinek zwar die traditionellen Geschlechterkategorien, denn stereotype Merkmale wie männlich-aktiv-stark-nehmend-herrschend und weiblich-passiv-schwach-gebend-unterwürfig werden in der Vampirfigur brüchig. Die Dekonstruktion erfolgt aber weniger mit dem Ergebnis einer Auflösung als vielmehr einer Zusammensetzung, durch die Kategorien wie „Frau“, „weiblich“, „schwach“, „leidend“, „passiv“, „Hausfrau“ etc. gleich einem performativen Sprechakt wiederhergestellt, festgeschrieben und damit wahr gemacht werden. Es entstehen jedoch sichtbare Bruchstellen, Irritationen und Verfremdungen, die den konstruktiven Charakter der vermeintlich natürlichen Kategorien deutlich machen. Die Figur Emily spricht es aus: „Natur bin ich, erinnere daher oft an Kunst.“ (Jelinek 2013, 195)

Am Ende wird die Neuschöpfung, das weibliche Doppelwesen, gerichtet und die patriarchalische Ordnung wiederhergestellt. Die Liebe bringt den Frauen keine Rettung, ist kein Vehikel der Reproduktion, sondern eine der Todesarten, an denen Frauen zugrunde gehen.<sup>4</sup> Im letztlichen Aufgehen der beiden Vampirinnen Emily und Carmilla ineinander, der radikalen Auflösung der körperlichen Differenz, drückt sich eine Verhinderung weiblicher Autonomie, also das Scheitern des Feminismus, ebenso wie eine Absage an die postfeministische Auffächerung einer unendlichen Zahl möglicher Identitäten aus. Das Doppelgeschöpf ist ein platonischer Liebesmythos, der aber auch als Visualisierung eines zweiteiligen Genderkonzepts aus biologischem und kulturellem Geschlecht und die identifikatorische Inkorporation des weiblichen Selbst in Form von Eigenliebe dienen kann. Nichts davon ist bei Jelinek für Frauen eine Option, Identität zu finden.

*Twilight* hingegen kennzeichnet eine vollständige Abwesenheit polymorpher Geschlechtlichkeit. Es handelt sich nicht um ein Spiel mit alternativen Genderkonzepten und ein freies Changieren zwischen unterschiedlichen Geschlechtsidentitäten, sondern lediglich um einen heterosexuellen Transfer von biologistischen und kulturellen männlichen/patriarchalischen und weiblichen/matriarchalischen Vorstellungswelten in das jeweils andere Geschlecht. Auch hier fehlt die Eigenliebe der Frau. Es wirkt vielmehr ein postromantischer, postfeministischer Liebesmythos. Nicht die emanzipatorische Selbstbestimmtheit der Frau, sondern ihre Liebe zu und von jemandem ermächtigt sie und gibt ihr Selbstbewusstsein. Damit steht die Vampirin Bella auch für die postfeministische Superfrau, die all

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<sup>4</sup> Auf die Referenzen zwischen Ingeborg Bachmanns Todesarten-Projekt und Jelineks Stück wurde in der Forschung mehrfach hingewiesen. Die Liebe als Fortführung des Krieges mit anderen Mitteln, die eine Vernichtung des weiblichen Subjektes verfolgt, wird in KoMF bis zum Verschwinden der Frau durchexerziert (vgl. Berka 1995, 380–384).

die ihr auferlegten Aufgaben – inklusive Ehemann und Kinder – perfekt bewältigen kann und das in alle Ewigkeit. Eine Frau ist eine Frau ist eine Frau, ließe es sich im Hinblick auf „Krankheit oder Moderne Frauen“ und nicht zuletzt auf zeitgenössische Vampirerzählungen ausdrücken.

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### **3 Languages of the Imaginary**





Andia Abaï-Ringgenberg, Patrick Ringgenberg

# La lumière dans les romans arthuriens et le *Livre des rois* de Ferdowsi

**Résumé :** L'étude comparée des textes épiques de l'Occident et de l'Iran médiévaux demeure embryonnaire, alors même qu'une communauté de thèmes et de procédés, souvent d'origine indo-européenne, offre matière à d'intéressants rapprochements et d'utiles confrontations. Cette étude propose une approche croisée de l'emploi littéraire, esthétique et symbolique de la lumière dans les romans chevaleresques du Moyen Âge occidental (romans arthuriens du XII<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle) et dans l'épopée iranienne du *Livre des rois* de Ferdowsi (début du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle). Lumière clarté, brillance, rayonnement : cette étude aimerait évoquer la manière dont ces motifs se déclinent dans des registres sacrés, royaux et chevaleresques, et comment le recours à des métaphores de lumière, dans le discours de textes situés dans des espaces culturels éloignés (Occident chrétien et Iran islamique), débouche sur des fonctions narratives et symboliques somme toute analogue, mettant en évidence une universalité de la lumière comme motif et la parenté culturelle des textes épiques.

**Mots clés :** Ferdowsi, *Livre des rois*, *Shâhnâme*, romans arthuriens, chansons de geste, lumière, royauté, épopée.

## 1 Un motif universel dans un contexte épique

Sans lumière, rien ne serait visible, c'est-à-dire : rien ne serait. C'est la lumière qui fait voir et fait vivre ; sans elle, sans le soleil surtout, tout serait plongé dans une nuit sans fin. Rien d'étonnant à ce que la lumière ait partout symbolisé l'Existence même et qu'elle soit, d'un point de vue philosophique, l'expression la plus directe de l'Être divin. La place et le symbolisme de la lumière dans les religions a été abondamment étudié (Ries et Ternes 2002) ; il l'a moins été, en revanche, dans les textes épiques du Moyen Âge, et encore moins en termes comparatistes, dans la confrontation de la *Chanson de Roland* (fin du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle) et des romans arthuriens des XII<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, et du *Livre des rois* (*Shâhnâme*) de Ferdowsi (début du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle), œuvre fondatrice de l'épopée iranienne, et plus généralement de la littérature de langue persane (Ringgenberg 2009b). Dans ces textes, qui peuvent occasionnellement et à divers degrés participer d'une vision religieuse, la lumière est plus qu'une clarté : elle relève de catégories esthétique (la beauté est lumière) ou morale (le bien rayonne), elle est la signature de réalités surnaturelles et mys-

tiques (Dieu, les anges sont lumière), elle forme avec l'obscurité un contraste qui modèle puissamment le monde héroïque et la dramaturgie des êtres.

Nous allons tenter de différencier les différents usages de la lumière dans les textes arthurien et iranien, afin de mettre en évidence une communauté d'usages et de signes. Les études comparatives entre les romans arthuriens et le *Livre des rois* (*Shâhnâmeh*) demeurent rares, alors même que, en dépit de leur différence de genèse et de contextes culturels, ces deux traditions littéraires présentent entre elles des points de convergences et des analogies suffisamment nombreux pour que leur comparaison gagne en pertinence, soit au point de l'étude du genre épique, soit au point de vue des motifs indo-européens en présence dans ces récits<sup>1</sup>, soit encore au point de vue de l'articulation entre ces textes et les sociétés en lesquelles ils sont apparus et ont prospéré.

Pour notre propos, et pour resserrer la problématique, nous avons catégorisé les différents usages de la lumière en niveau ou registre de signification : esthétique (la lumière comme signe et critère de beauté), héroïque (la lumière dans les aventures, les exploits, les épreuves des héros), royal et cosmique (la lumière comme attribut de la souveraineté, et son influence sur le royaume, voire le cosmos), surnaturel (en lien avec une réalité magique, sacrée ou transcendante).

## 2 La beauté comme lumière

Pour Ferdowsi, la beauté de l'univers s'exprime essentiellement par la lumière, les couleurs, les femmes, le printemps, les parfums. Ferdowsi décrit ainsi Rudâbeh, épouse de Zâl et mère du héros Rostam : son corps est de l'ivoire, son visage est plus beau que le soleil, son cou est d'argent, « sa bouche est comme la fleur du grenadier, ses lèvres sont comme des cerises, et de son buste d'argent s'élèvent deux pommes de grenade » (Ferdowsi I, 243–245)<sup>2</sup>. Bref, elle « est un paradis orné de toutes parts » (Ferdowsi I, 245)<sup>3</sup>.

Cette association de la clarté et de la beauté est également un schème récurrent et structurant des œuvres médiévales : « Si le portrait idéal relève au Moyen

<sup>1</sup> La question des influences indo-européennes a été soulevée par Andia Abaï dans sa thèse de doctorat consacrée aux thèmes de la lumière et aux destins croisés de Key Khosrow et de Perceval dans le *Livre des rois* et les romans arthuriens (Abaï 2010), et plus récemment par Shahla Nosrat à propos des traditions occidentale de Tristan et Yseult et iranienne de Wis et Râmin (Nosrat 2014).

<sup>2</sup> دهانش چو گلنار و لب ناروان / ز سيمين برش رسته دو نارदान (Ferdowsi I, 242–244).

<sup>3</sup> پر آرایش و رامش و خواسته / بهشتی است سرتاسر آراسته (Ferdowsi I, 244).

Âge d'une esthétique de la proportion, il se rattache aussi, non moins que le paysage idéal, à une esthétique de la lumière. En effet la perfection de la beauté n'allait pas sans la blondeur ; une héroïne de roman se devait d'être blonde. [...] Autre élément lumineux de beauté, en harmonie avec les cheveux blonds : la blancheur et l'éclat du teint. » (Frappier 1968, 111–112).

Si la beauté est lumière, c'est que, selon une conception médiévale marquée par le néoplatonisme, toute beauté terrestre et visible est l'effet d'un rayonnement de Dieu, la réfraction – certes atténuée et épaissie par la matière – de la Beauté divine, qui est Lumière. Le « Que la lumière soit » de la Genèse (I, 3), la conception d'un Verbe qui est « vraie lumière » (saint Jean I, 9), fondent une esthétique de la beauté, enracinée dans une métaphysique, qui presque naturellement s'exprime en termes de luminosité et de carté. La déclinaison royale, héroïque ou sacrée de la lumière semble ainsi exprimer différentes intensités de manifestation, ou différents degrés de signification phénoménale, de la Beauté-Lumière divine. Dans le contexte iranien également, la beauté-lumière participe d'une vision métaphysique, nourrie à l'époque islamique par le néoplatonisme, mais qui, dans le *Livre des rois*, reprend également des notions mazdéennes ou zoroastriennes, dont le système cosmologique et métaphysique, sans être aussi fortement dualiste que le manichéisme (III<sup>e</sup> siècle), reposait largement sur une dialectique lumière-ténèbres.

### 3 Lumière royale

C'est surtout dans le *Livre des rois* que l'on trouve développée une symbolique de lumière attachée au roi et à la royauté (Ringgenberg 2009b, 92–96). Le poème épique de Ferdowsi se fait en effet l'écho d'une notion présente dans l'Iran antique, essentielle dans la cosmologie du zoroastrisme/mazdéisme, illustrée dans les bas-reliefs d'époque sassanide (224–651), par exemple Naqsh-e Rostam et à Bishâpur, représentant l'investiture divine du roi, et qui, dans l'Orient islamisé et iranisé, a inspiré nombre de royautés du monde musulman, depuis les Abbassides (750–1258) jusqu'aux empereurs de l'Inde moghole.

Dans le mazdéisme, ancienne religion de l'Iran apportée par les Indo-Européens entre le II<sup>e</sup> et le I<sup>er</sup> millénaire avant notre ère, le caractère sacré de la royauté est exprimé par l'idée de « gloire », nommée *khvarnah* en vieux perse et *farr* en persan moderne et dans le *Livre des rois* (Gnoli 1999). Dans le mazdéisme, cette lumière appartient au dieu suprême Ahura Mazda : le *farr* est la force de rayonnement de Dieu, par laquelle celui-ci crée le monde, sanctifie les hommes, donne le pouvoir aux rois, accorde la sagesse, le bonheur, la santé et la prospérité. Au

*farr* on peut attacher les concepts de gloire, d'éclat, de splendeur, de souveraineté rayonnante, de majesté flamboyante, d'illumination.

Le premier roi mythique, Kyumars, fondateur de la royauté, « était beau sur le trône comme le soleil<sup>4</sup> », et le monde était alors « rempli de splendeur, d'ordre et de lumière » (Ferdowsi I, 29) : c'est là, dans le *Livre des rois*, la première expression d'un rayonnement royal, de nature quasi surnaturelle, et qui symbolise un charisme de pouvoir et de sagesse qui s'enracine ultimement en Dieu et prend des proportions cosmiques. Une autre évocation du *farr* comme lumière rayonnante se trouve dans un épisode concernant Tahmuras, le troisième des quatre rois mythiques dont l'histoire occupe la première et la plus courte des trois parties du *Livre des rois*. Ferdowsi écrit que ce roi, devant une assemblée de prêtres, affirma vouloir enlever le mal du monde. Il choisit un maître spirituel, en la personne de Shidâsp, être pur qui lui montre le chemin du bien. Tahmuras conseille les gens, leur enseigne à prier Dieu, et Ferdowsi d'écrire que le roi était tellement purifié que le *farr* rayonnait de lui sous forme de lumière (Ferdowsi I, 45). Le poète utilise le verbe « *tâbidan* » qui signifie « rayonner », comme l'on dit du soleil qu'il rayonne, indiquant par là que le *farr* est une lumière surnaturelle qui transfigure l'être et rayonne de et autour de sa personne.

Ferdowsi évoque également le *farr* comme rayonnement lumineux à propos de Djamshid, quatrième roi mythique. Il régna longtemps, comme un roi juste et bon. Pendant longtemps, le *farr* (Ferdowsi dit le « *farr keyanide* ») rayonnait de sa personne. Ferdowsi écrit en substance que le monde était paisible et ordonné et Djamshid recevait régulièrement des messages de Dieu. Toutefois, Djamshid devint orgueilleux, oublia Dieu et se prit lui-même pour un dieu : dès lors son *farr* lumineux diminua de plus en plus et le jour devint obscur pour lui (Ferdowsi I, 53–55), car si la divinité investit le roi du *farr*, ce dernier, pour conserver son charisme, se doit de suivre une norme à la fois spirituelle et royale de comportement.

Un autre passage, cette fois emprunté à la partie héroïque du *Livre des rois*, parle également de ce rayonnement. Il s'insère dans un épisode dans lequel Giv part à la recherche du roi Key Khosrow. Il le découvre et le reconnaît grâce à la lumière qui émane de sa personne :

Le héros qui était à la recherche du roi parcourait tristement la forêt,  
lorsqu'il vit de loin une fontaine brillante, et à côté un jeune homme d'une taille de cyprès,  
et dont la vue calmait l'âme.

Il tenait en main une coupe remplie de vin, et portait sur la tête un bouquet de fleurs de  
toutes couleurs.

<sup>4</sup> به گیتی درون سال سی شاه بود / به خوبی چو خورشید برگاه بود (Ferdowsi I, 28).

Sa taille était empreinte de cette majesté que donne la grâce de Dieu, son visage annonçait l'intelligence d'un sage. (Ferdowsi II, 487)<sup>5</sup>

Jules Mohl traduit par « empreinte de cette majesté que donne la grâce de Dieu » un vers qui, traduit littéralement, dit ceci : « de son corps le *farr* divin ». Aucun verbe n'est mentionné, mais l'idée de rayonnement, de visibilité, d'éclat, est néanmoins sous-entendue, puisque Giv reconnaît immédiatement Key Khosrow à l'éclat de son apparence physique.

Cette symbolique lumineuse de la royauté est en revanche absente des romans arthuriens, dont les récits se concentrent sur les aventures des héros, même si la symbolique royale médiévale, bien avant le « Roi Soleil », a abondamment recouru au symbolisme solaire et lumineux (Boudet 2004). Il y aurait, à ce propos, une étude comparative pertinente à effectuer sur les rapports et fonctions dialectiques et symboliques entre le roi Arthur et ses chevaliers, et les rois iraniens et les héros du *Livre des rois*. Philippe Walter relève que le roi Arthur, en dépit du symbolisme axial et polaire qu'on peut lui attribuer, a « un rôle très effacé » : « Les actions d'éclat sont reportées sur les chevaliers qui donnent généralement leur nom à l'œuvre et qui se trouvent au cœur d'aventures d'exception auxquelles Arthur ne participe jamais. » (Walter 2002, 43-44). Le Roi Pêcheur, gardien du Graal, ne fait pas non plus l'objet d'une symbolique de lumière, si ce n'est d'une manière occasionnelle, et qui tient sans doute plus au rayonnement du Graal : dans la *Seconde Continuation*, Perceval, dans une forêt plongée dans une nuit d'encre, voit une « clarté intense qui se multiplie, se dilate et s'élargit jusqu'aux étoiles », et qui, il l'apprendra plus tard, « émanait d'un être de lumière, du Roi Pêcheur qui [...] avait passé la nuit dans la forêt de l'autre côté de la rivière en compagnie du Graal. » (Dubost 1991, 330). Au contraire, ce roi infirme, mélancolique, « possède tous les traits du tempérament saturnien : solitude, exil, adonné à la souffrance, mais possesseur de secrets douloureux et indicibles. » (Walter 2014, 339). Dans les romans arthuriens, c'est le Graal, dès le roman de Chrétien de Troyes, qui assume une symbolique de lumière, au caractère surnaturel et merveilleux plus ou moins explicite et accentué.

Bref, si dans le *Livre des rois*, les souverains constituent comme le pôle et l'axe de lumière qui polarise les événements, établit une relation entre ciel et terre, lie le présent à l'âge d'or des rois mythiques, dans les romans arthuriens, c'est le

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همی گشت شه را شده خواستار / سری پر ز غم گرد آن مر غزار 5  
 یکی سرو بالا دل آرام پور / یکی چشمه ای دید تابان ز دور  
 یکی جام می برگرفته بچنگ / بسر بر زده دسته رنگ رنگ  
 (Ferdowsi II, 486). ز بالای او فره ایزدی / بیدار او رایت بخردی

rayonnement du Graal qui régit la vie de quête et d'aventures des chevaliers, qui organise une géographie des désirs et des trajectoires qui – avec la christianisation du Graal, coupe de la Cène et réceptacle du sang christique – relie le temps des chevaliers à l'Incarnation du Verbe et à l'éternité divine.

## 4 Lumière héroïque

De la lumière qui est attachée aux actions héroïques des chevaliers et des rois, trois aspects principaux peuvent être mis en évidence : d'abord, l'éclat des armes dans les batailles, qui semble concentrer – à la fois littérairement et symboliquement – les notions de bravoure et de gloire ; ensuite, la lumière opposée aux ténèbres, et dont la victoire manifeste, à la fois physiquement et métaphoriquement, une victoire initiatique du bien sur le mal ; enfin, la lumière des chevaliers, leur beauté, la brillance de leurs arme et armure, qui magnifie un idéal chevaleresque.

### 4.1 L'éclat des armes dans le tumulte des batailles

Dans le *Livre des rois*, comme dans les chansons de geste et les romans arthuriens, un contraste est récurrent : dans des batailles aux proportions parfois cosmiques, où la terre semble participer aux événements par ses convulsions ou par le jeu de la météorologie, ou constituer l'écrin terrible ou dramatique des enjeux des batailles, les armes brillent, même dans l'obscurité. Dans le *Livre des rois*, alors que les guerriers iraniens affrontent des démons (les *div*), Ferdowsi écrit : « l'air s'obscurcit, la terre devint noire, le feu des épées et des massues rayonnait comme la foudre qui sort d'un nuage sombre » (Ferdowsi I, 559)<sup>6</sup>. Lors d'une bataille menée par Goshtâsp contre les Turâniens (Turcs d'Asie centrale) :

La voix des timbales se fit entendre des deux côtés, la terre était couverte de fer, le ciel était couleur d'ébène ;  
on aurait dit que la voûte du ciel s'envolerait, que la terre se briserait sous le poids des armées ;

برآمد ز هر دو سپه بوق و کوس / هوا نیلگون شد زمین آبنوس 6  
(Ferdowsi I, 558). همی آتش افروخت از گرز و تیغ / چو برق درخشنده از تیره میغ

les rochers cachaient leurs cimes, frappés de terreur par le hennissement des chevaux et les coups des haches d'armes ; [...]. (Ferdowsi IV, 457)<sup>7</sup>

Parfois, Ferdowsi associe étroitement la lumière et l'obscurité : lors d'une bataille livrée sous le règne de Key Khosrow, « l'air ressemblait à la nuit, et les épées à des flambeaux » (Ferdowsi III, 33). En évoquant l'armée du roi Key Kâvus et du héros Rostam, il écrit que « l'armée avançait de station en station ; le monde devint obscur comme la nuit, la terre devint noire, et les lances et les javelots brillèrent au milieu de la poussière comme le feu brille derrière un rideau sombre » (Ferdowsi II, 125)<sup>8</sup>. Si le contraste obscurité-lumière permet aux poètes de dynamiser ces descriptions, il permet également de mettre en valeur des oppositions cosmiques fondamentales aux multiples résonances, de « suggérer l'ambiguïté des guerres, à la fois sources de malheurs (obscurité) et occasions de gloire pour les héros (lumière). » (Ringgenberg 2009b, 26).

Cette clarté des armes apparaît fréquemment dans la *Chanson de Roland*, rédigée quelques décennies après le *Livre des rois*, et constituant la plus ancienne chanson de geste de la littérature française. Le poète aime décrire – autant du côté des chrétiens, héros de la chanson de geste, que de leurs ennemis sarrasins – le resplendissement des armures dans la clarté du jour et la beauté du soleil (*Chanson de Roland* 1990, 93)<sup>9</sup>, la brillance des heaumes « aux gemmes montées sur l'or » dans les plaines grandes et dégagées (*Chanson de Roland* 1990, 235)<sup>10</sup>. L'épée d'un héros, Olivier, s'appelle d'ailleurs « Hauteclaire » (*Halteclere*), sa garde est d'or et son pommeau de cristal (*Chanson de Roland* 1990, 116–117), et Roland tient ce discours à son épée, Durendal : « Eh ! Durendal, comme tu es claire et brillante !/ Comme tu flamboies et resplendis au soleil ! » (*Chanson de Roland* 1990, 175)<sup>11</sup>. Même en fin de journée, la lumière illumine encore l'exploit des héros : « Le soir est clair, le jour reste radieux,/ et au soleil les armes

7 زمین آهنین شد هوا آبنوس / برآمد ز هر دو سپه بانگ کوس  
تو گفتی که گردن ببرد همی / زمین از گرانی ببرد همی  
(Ferdowsi IV, 456).  
8 جهان چون شب و روز گشته سیاه / همی رفت منزل به منزل سپاه  
(Ferdowsi II, 125).

9 « Clers fut li jurz e bels fut li soleilz : / N'unt guarnement que tut ne reflambeit. » [1002-1003] (*Chanson de Roland* 1990, 92).

10 « Grant est la plaigne e large la cuntree./ Luisent cil elme as perres d'or gemmees,/ E cez escuz e cez bronies safrees,/ E cez espiez, cez enseignes fermees. » [3305-3308] (*Chanson de Roland* 1990, 234).

11 « 'E ! Durendal, cum es e clere e blanche !/ Cuntre soleill si luisse e reflambes ! » [2316-2317] (*Chanson de Roland* 1990, 174).



resplendissent,/ hauberts et heaumes étincelles et flamboient/ et les écus bien peints à fleurons,/ et les épieux, les gonfanons dorés. » (*Chanson de Roland* 1990, 145)<sup>12</sup>. La nuit aussi peut être claire et la lune brillante (*Chanson de Roland* 1990, 187)<sup>13</sup>. Si l'obscurité menace, c'est alors le moment d'un miracle : pour l'empereur Charlemagne, « Dieu fit un grand miracle,/ car le soleil s'est arrêté, immobile » (*Chanson de Roland* 1990, 185)<sup>14</sup>, afin que les chrétiens puissent continuer la poursuite de leurs ennemis. L'obscurcissement de la terre est également, dans la *Chanson de Roland*, un moyen de souligner la tragédie : le cosmos entier fait le deuil de Roland, car « dès midi, le jour s'obscurcit » (*Chanson de Roland* 1990, 121)<sup>15</sup>. Le contraste noir/blancheur sert également à désigner les camps du bien et du mal, bien que comme le remarque Jean Frappier « l'opposition des chrétiens et des païens, du Bien et du Mal [...] n'est pas ou n'est guère marquée par l'antithèse de la lumière et des ténèbres, du jour et de la nuit » (Frappier 1968, 109) : les Sarrasins ont beau avoir des armes qui luisent au soleil, leur navire illuminer la nuit et la mer par les lanternes et les escarboucles (*Chanson de Roland* 1990, 195), ils sont « plus noirs que l'encre », n'ayant de blanc que les dents (*Chanson de Roland* 1990, 153)<sup>16</sup>.

C'est dans un autre registre métaphorique de la lumière que nous verrons celle-ci s'affirmer comme un clair symbole du vrai et du bien.

## 4.2 La lumière comme symbole de victoire

Le poème de Ferdowsi est tissé de contrastes puissants : lumière et couleurs s'opposent à l'obscurité et à la décoloration.

Ces contrastes ont des correspondances morales : la lumière et les couleurs, ce sont la gloire des rois, l'âme heureuse, le cœur pur, le bien et la justice, le paradis ; les ténèbres et la décoloration, ce sont la perte de fortune et de gloire, l'âme triste, le cœur mauvais, le mal et l'injustice, l'enfer. (Ringgenberg 2009b, 27)

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**12** « Esclargiz est li vespres e li jurz ;/ Cuntre soleil reluisent cil adub,/ Osbercs e helmes i getent grant flambur,/ E cil escuz ki ben sunt peinz a flurs,/ E cil espiez, cil orét gunfanun. » [1807–1811] (*Chanson de Roland* 1990, 144).

**13** « Clere est la noit e la lune luisant » [2512] (*Chanson de Roland* 1990, 186).

**14** « Pur Karlemagne fist Deus vertuz mult granz,/ Car li soleilz est remés en estant. » [2458–2459] (*Chanson de Roland* 1990, 184).

**15** « Cuntre midi tenebres i ad granz » [1431] (*Chanson de Roland* 1990, 120).

**16** « Quant Rollant veit la contredite gent/ Ki plus sunt neirs que n'en est arrement,/ Ne n'unt de blanc ne mais que sul les denz » [1932–1934] (*Chanson de Roland* 1990, 152).

Cette dualité lumière-obscurité est zoroastrienne : dans le *Dênkart*, une encyclopédie mazdéenne rédigée en pehlevi au X<sup>e</sup> siècle, la lumière est associée à l'espoir, à la béatitude, à l'accroissement, à la santé, à la véracité, alors que les ténèbres correspondent à la peur, aux tourments, à l'impuissance, à la dégénérescence, au mensonge (*Troisième livre du Dênkart* 1972, 331).

De fait, dans le *Livre des rois*, la victoire héroïque se présente naturellement comme une victoire de la lumière sur les ténèbres, c'est-à-dire du bien sur le mal, du spirituel sur les maléfices, du droit sur l'injustice. Un épisode célèbre l'illustre bien. Avec une grande armée, le roi Key Khosrow assiège le château de Bahman, maléfique et imprenable, dépourvu de porte, sis dans une terre à la chaleur infernale (Ferdowsi II, 547). Le roi fait écrire une lettre, en laquelle il dit vouloir vaincre les sorciers au nom de sa splendeur royale (*farr*) et par la grâce de Dieu qu'il détient. Attachée à une lance, la lettre est apposée sur le mur de la citadelle, qui se fend alors par la grâce du pouvoir spirituel de la lettre, porteuse du *farr* du roi (Ferdowsi II, 551). Les guerriers iraniens tuent nombre de démons (*div*) par des flèches, puis

une grande lumière apparut, et les ténèbres se dissipèrent ;  
un vent bienfaisant se fit sentir, l'air et la face de la terre semblaient sourire ;  
le monde brillait comme la lune, et les Divs partirent sur l'ordre de Khosrow.  
La porte du château devint visible, et la poussière qui avait enveloppé l'armée tomba.  
Le roi des Iraniens franchit la porte des remparts avec Goudarz fils de Keshvâd,  
et trouva qu'ils renfermaient une grande ville remplie de jardin, de palais, de places  
publiques et de maisons.  
À l'endroit où la lumière brillante avait paru, on trouva le rempart escarpé détruit,  
et le roi ordonna d'y bâtir un temple surmonté d'une coupole dont la cime touchât au ciel ;  
[...].  
Key Khosrow l'acheva et y plaça le feu d'Azargoshâsp,  
assigna les chambres qui entouraient l'édifice à des Mobeds, à des astrologues et à des sages,  
et resta dans la ville jusqu'à ce qu'il eût revêtu le temple du feu de toute sa splendeur. (Ferdowsi II, 551-553)<sup>17</sup>

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17 از آن پس یکی روشنی بردمید / شد آن تیرگی سر بسر ناپدید  
بر آمد یکی باد با آفرین / هوا گشت خندان و روی زمین  
جهان شد بگردار تابنده ماه / برفتند دیوان بفرمان شاه  
در دژ پدید آمد آنجایگاه / فرود آمد آن گرد لشکر پناه  
بدر رفت آن شاه از ادگان / ابا پیر گودرز کشوادگان  
یکی شهر دید اندر آن دژ فراخ / پر از باغ و ایوان و میدان و کاخ  
بدانجاء که آن روشنی بردمید / سر باره تیز شد ناپدید  
...بفرمود خسرو بدان جایگاه / یکی گنبدی سر به ابر سیاه  
ز بیرون چو نیم از تگ تازی اسپ / بر آورد و بنهاد آنر گشسپ  
نشستند گرد اندرش موبدان / ستاره شناسان و هم بخردان  
در آن شارسان کرد چندان درنگ / که آتشگده گشت با بوی و رنگ (Ferdowsi II, 550-552).

Ce temple, que l'on peut identifier au site sassanide de Takht-e Suleymân dans l'Azerbaïdjan iranien (Melikian-Chirvani 1991), est un lieu particulièrement sacré dans l'épopée (Key Khosrow y prie et adore Dieu) et le récit de sa fondation constitue l'archétype de la conquête d'un lieu maléfique puis de sa transmutation en lieu spirituel.

Dans *La troisième continuation du Conte du Graal*, le récit de la Chapelle de la Main Noire présente une typologie analogue : un lieu maléfice est vaincu par la spiritualité, et le caractère infernal de l'endroit laisse la place à un lieu purifié et illuminé. La Main Noire de la Chapelle tuait chaque jour un chevalier, et personne n'avait pu vaincre cette Main. Perceval entra dans la Chapelle après sa deuxième visite au château du Graal. Il invoqua Dieu, se signa et « levant les yeux, aperçut un grand diable tout environné de flammes, / qui avait le bras plus sombre / et plus noir que charbon éteint. » (Manessier 2004, 341)<sup>18</sup>. Perceval essaie de prendre le voile que le Roi Pêcheur lui avait dit de prendre et de l'étendre sur l'autel, mais il en est empêché par le diable. Perceval se signe encore : le diable saute en arrière et la Chapelle prend feu. Perceval lutte avec son épée et se signe une troisième fois : le diable s'enfuit vaincu.

[...] mais celui qui avait confiance en Dieu  
fit sans tarder le signe de croix  
sur son visage avec son épée  
pour que le diable ne lui fasse plus de mal.  
Aussitôt la Main se retire  
et, en même temps, un éclair jaillit  
et le tonnerre tombe du ciel  
ainsi qu'une foudre terrible,  
si horrible et si extraordinaire  
que jamais on n'en vit de si violente. (Manessier 2004, 347)<sup>19</sup>

Dans ces épisodes du *Livre des rois* et de la *Troisième continuation du Conte du Graal*, la séquence des événements est analogue : un lieu maléfique, invincible par les armes, est vaincu par des moyens spirituels, qui purifient l'endroit, soudain transfiguré par la lumière. Les éléments métaphoriques utilisés sont également analogues, voire identiques : chaleur et feu infernaux pour l'évocation

**18** « Adonc Percevaux s'aperçut, / Qui contremont vet regardant, / Un grant deable tot ardent / De feu, et ot lou bras plus taint / Et plus noir que charbon estaint. » (Manessier 2004, 340).

**19** « Mais cil qui an Dieu ot fience / De l'espee sanz demorance / Fist de la croiz signe an sa face, / Que l'anemi mau ne li face, / Si tost com il ot la croiz faite, / S'est la main arieres retrete. / Et maintenant lieve un espart / Et dou ciel un tonoirre part, / Et une foudre perilleuse, / Si orrible et si merueilleuse, / C'onques si grant ne fu veüe. » (Manessier 204, 346).

des maléfices (diable, démon), gestuelle rituelle et prière pour vaincre, lumière et clarté scellant le triomphe sur un maléfice.

### 4.3 La lumière des héros

Dans le *Livre des rois*, c'est le roi qui concentre une symbolique de lumière, et pour lequel donc le poète a eu recours aux métaphores de clarté, de radiance, de charisme. Les descriptions du héros Rostam, le plus grand héros de la partie héroïque de l'épopée qui raconte les conflits entre Iraniens et Turcs, insiste sur la force du héros, l'étendue de son art de combattre, sa sagesse et sa capacité de ruses, son pouvoir magico-spirituel de lier et de délier, sa spiritualité même, mais non sur sa luminosité, qui appartient aux rois en raison du *farr*. Même si les héros – et en premier lieu Rostam – sauvent les rois, font briller leur trône et leur pouvoir, ce sont néanmoins les rois qui concentrent la gloire divine.

Dans les romans arthuriens, en revanche, les héros participent volontiers de métaphores de lumière, exaltant l'idéal chevaleresque (Walter 2004a ; 2004b ; 2013). Plus haut, on relevait la récurrence des métaphores de brillance par lesquels, souvent, les chevaliers se présentent et sont présentés. Dans le *Conte du Graal* de Chrétien, un épisode exemplaire est la première rencontre de Perceval, jeune garçon ignorant vivant hors du monde, avec des chevaliers. Dès qu'il les aperçoit en entier, sortant des bois, Perceval

vit les hauberts étincelants  
 et les heaumes clairs et luisants,  
 et les lances et les écus  
 qu'il n'avait encore jamais vus,  
 avec des couleurs vertes et vermeilles  
 brillant sous le soleil,  
 et l'or, l'azur et l'argent,  
 tout cela lui parut très beau et séduisant.  
 Il dit alors : « Ah ! Seigneur Dieu, pardon !  
 Ce sont des anges que j'aperçois ici. [...] » (Chrétien de Troyes 2009, 688)<sup>20</sup>

Dans son *Parzival*, Wolfram von Eschenbach décrit certains personnages en des termes identiques à ceux employés par Ferdowsi pour évoquer certains rois : celui

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<sup>20</sup> « Que del bois furent descovert,/ Et vit les hauberts fremianz/ Et les hiaumes clers et luisanz,/ Et les lances et les escuz/ Que onques mes n'avit veüz/ Et vit le vert et le vermoil/ Reluire contre le soloil,/ Et l'or et l'azur et l'argent,/ Se li fu mout et bel et gent./ Lors dist : "Ha ! sire Dex, merci !/ Ce sont ange que je voi ci./ [...]". » [128–138] (Chrétien de Troyes 2009, 688).

d'un rayonnement solaire, qui émane de leur personne avec une évidence éclatante, et qui signale leur qualité intérieure, royale ou héroïque. Ainsi, il écrit à propos de Parzival dans le château du Graal : « Il leur sembla à tous, jeunes et vieux, qu'il resplendissait comme le jour qui se lève. » (Wolfram von Eschenbach 2010, 321)<sup>21</sup>. Plus loin, toujours dans l'épisode où Parzival assiste au cortège du Graal, Wolfram décrit de manière semblable la reine : « Son visage rayonnait d'un tel éclat que tous crurent que le jour se levait. » (Wolfram von Eschenbach 2010, 326)<sup>22</sup>.

Les armes, armures et écus apparaissent ainsi comme les signes génériques, moins sans doute de tel ou tel chevalier (qui se différencient par leurs noms et couleurs héraldiques), que du chevalier comme idéal et comme voie. Les expressions de luminosité et de brillance, les métaux précieux, la flamboyance des couleurs, sont à la fois des éléments concrets et des métaphores par lesquels le poète magnifie les chevaliers, donne éclats à leurs actions et destinées, embellit les valeurs et qualités chevaleresques, mais également les expressions symboliques d'une fonction rayonnante et d'une vie d'aventures dont le cœur battant, dès le *Conte du Graal* de Chrétien de Troyes, est le Graal, source de lumière et de vision.

## 5 Lumière surnaturelle et spirituelle

Dans les religions, la lumière est à la fois la manifestation, la réalité visionnaire et le symbole privilégié du sacré, du numineux, de la Révélation. De fait, dans les récits épiques, certaines manifestations de lumière se rattachent directement à une symbolique transcendantale abondamment exprimée dans les textes et arts sacrés. On a vu que dans le *Livre des rois*, la notion mazdéenne de *farr* concentre une bonne part de la lumière surnaturelle et spirituelle, dans la mesure même où Ferdowsi s'est fait l'écho d'une notion cardinale de l'antique religion zoroastrienne, connectée à une métaphysique de la lumière qui inspira même plusieurs philosophes et mystiques musulmans, tel Shihâbôddîn Yahyâ Sohravardî (1155–1191), auteur d'une philosophie à connotation mystique et universaliste qui entendait unir l'islam, la philosophie grecque et le mazdéisme (Corbin 1971).

Certes, hormis le *farr*, plusieurs passages évoquent incidemment une lumière qui, on le comprend, ressort plus du monde spirituel que du monde physique. Le héros Tus rêve ainsi une nuit de Syâvush, prince martyr, qu'il voit assis sur

<sup>21</sup> « alt und junge wänden/ daz von im ander tag erschine. » [V, 228] (Wolfram von Eschenbach 1998, 232).

<sup>22</sup> « ir antlütze gap den schîn,/ si wänden alle ez wolde tagen. » [V, 235] (Wolfram von Eschenbach 1998, 239).

un trône d'ivoire au milieu de la lumière, au paradis (Ferdowsi III, 71). La ville de Syâvushgerd, fondée par Syâvush dans le Turân (Ferdowsi II, 351, 355), est décrite comme une cité de lumière, avec des jardins, des palais et de l'eau vive, et cette cité a, dans l'épopée, un caractère paradisiaque, constituant même peut-être l'expression terrestre d'une cité céleste (Bahâr 1978), en sorte que sa luminosité renvoie à une lumière surnaturelle. Toutefois, redisons-le, dans l'économie narrative et symbolique du *Livre des rois*, c'est le roi qui est porteur de lumière, dans la mesure où, réceptacle de la gloire divine, il manifeste la royauté, l'ordre et la norme divins dans ce monde. On ne saurait comparer les rois auréolés de *farr* de Ferdowsi au rayonnement du Graal des romans arthuriens ; néanmoins, ils présentent en commun le fait de polariser et de diffuser la lumière du Divin dans le monde épique et de constituer les pôles structurants et référentiels soit des royaumes et de leur protection (*Livre des rois*) soit de la quête des chevaliers (romans arthuriens).

Dans le *Conte du Graal*, dans lequel le Graal fait sa première apparition littéraire, Chrétien de Troyes le décrit déjà dans un contexte cérémoniel de procession avec chandelles, et au moyen de métaphores de lumière qui révèlent son mystère spirituel, radiant et immaculé.

Mais alors deux autres jeunes gens arrivèrent,  
tenant dans leurs mains des chandeliers  
en or fin décorés d'émaux.  
Ces jeunes gens étaient très beaux,  
avec les chandeliers dont ils étaient porteurs.  
Sur chaque chandelier brillaient  
au moins dix chandelles.  
Puis venait un graal tenu à deux mains  
par une demoiselle  
qui s'avavançait avec les jeunes gens,  
belle, élégante et parée avec goût.  
Quand elle fut entrée dans la salle  
en tenant le graal,  
une si grande clarté se répandit  
que les chandelles perdirent  
leur clarté comme font les étoiles  
quand le soleil se lève ou la lune. (Chrétien de Troyes 2009, 765)<sup>23</sup>

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23 « Et lors dui autre vaslet vindrent/ Qui chandeliers an lor mains tindrent/ De fin or, ovrez a neel/ Li vaslet estoient mout bel,/ Cil qui les chandeliers portoient./ An chascun chandelier ardoient/ Dis chandoiles a tot le mains/ Un graal entre ses deus mains/ Une dameisele tenoit/ Et avec les vaslez venoit,/ Bele et jointe et bien acesmee./ Quant ele fu leanz antree/ A tot le graal qu'ele tint,/ Une si granz clartez an vint/ Ausi perdirent les chandoiles/ Lor clarté come les estoiles/ Qant li solauz lieve, et la lune. » [3213–3229] (Chrétien de Troyes 2009, 765).

Ces manifestations de lumière autour du Graal sont récurrentes dans les textes ultérieurs. Dans le *Roman de l'histoire du Graal* de Robert de Boron (vers 1200), qui amorça une christianisation du Graal, celui-ci est le récipient utilisé par Jésus lors de la Cène, et dans lequel Joseph recueillit le sang du Sauveur crucifié. En prison, Joseph fut visité par Jésus-Christ qui lui apporta le récipient : le vase entoura Joseph « d'une vive clarté,/ à tel point qu'il illumina la prison. » (Lachet 2012, 77)<sup>24</sup>. Dans la *Deuxième continuation* de Manessier, une lumière intense surgit entre Perceval et Hector : « À cause de cette lumière ils ouvrirent les yeux/ et virent au milieu de cette lumière/ un ange royal, tout seul,/ qui tenait le Graal dans ses mains. » (Lachet 2012, 189)<sup>25</sup>. Dans le *Lancelot*, on lit qu'au « moment où le saint homme enleva le tissu recouvrant le saint Graal, il advint qu'une lumière si forte se répandit à l'intérieur de la pièce que Bohort eut l'impression qu'un rayon de soleil l'avait frappé en plein dans les yeux. » (Lachet 2012, 267)<sup>26</sup>. Ce motif de la clarté, qui précède ou accompagne l'apparition du Graal, se rencontre à plusieurs reprises dans *La Quête du Saint Graal*, où l'auteur recourt à la métaphore du soleil, qui rendit la salle où se réunit la cour d'Arthur « sept fois plus étincelante » (Lachet 2012, 279), et Lancelot voit le Graal dans une chambre dans laquelle une lumière si éclatante illumine la maison « comme si tous les cierges du monde y brûlaient. » (Lachet 2012, 287).

Il est aisé aux comparatistes de rattacher ces propriétés du Graal à des objets et réalités sacrales plus ou moins éloignés de la culture celtique ou médiévale occidentale. À propos de la lumière dans *Le conte du Graal*, Philippe Walter, qui s'est employé à retracer l'origine mythologique celtique des récits et personnages arthuriens, écrit :

Dans le récit de Chrétien, des éclats de lumière irisent les objets. Ce rôle tenu par la lumière n'est sans doute pas l'effet du hasard. Dans le royaume hyperboréen du Roi Pêcheur, cette lumière apparaît comme le noyau absolu de l'énergie cosmique. Elle est le principe originel de toute irradiation lumineuse. (Walter 2004,166)

À propos du Graal chez Wolfram von Eschenbach, que le poète allemand décrit comme une pierre – « *lapsit exillis* » – aux propriétés miraculeuses (Wolfram von Eschenbach 2010, 495), Hannah Closs écrit :

<sup>24</sup> « A lui dedenz la prison vint/ Et son veissel porta, qu'il tint,/ Qui grant clarté seur lui gita,/ Si que la chartre enlumina ; » [717–720] (Lachet 2012, 76).

<sup>25</sup> « Por la clarté les iauz ovrirent/ Et enmi cele clarté virent/ Trestot seul un ange roial/ Qui en ses mains tint le Graal. » [41535–41358] (Lachet 2012, 188).

<sup>26</sup> « Au point que li prodom osta le samit de sus le Saint Graal, avint que leanz s'espandi si grant clarté qu'il fu avis a Boorz que an mi les eux l'eust feru .I. raiz de souleil. » (Lachet 2012, 266).

Son Graal est une pierre précieuse, un joyau rayonnant. Mais le joyau n'est-il pas aussi un emblème solaire ? Nous le trouvons sur l'arbre de Vie, l'arbre Soleil illuminé. Nous le trouvons dans les trois joyaux du casque de Vishnou et surtout dans le « padma mani » bouddhique, le joyau dans le cœur du lotus qui est, lui aussi, d'origine solaire. (Closs 1951, 62)

En tant que manifestation d'une transcendance (sans que l'on précise l'intensité, le degré ou l'ampleur de celle-ci), on peut comparer aisément le *farr* qui auréole les rois iraniens et la lumière du Graal, car tous deux – au moins dans les interprétations chrétiennes du Graal – s'enracinent dans la lumière divine et détiennent des qualités appartenant à un domaine surnaturel. C'est pourquoi le *farr* et le Graal exigent la pureté de ceux qui le reçoivent (*farr*) ou le servent (Graal). Chez Ferdowsi, le *farr* ne rayonne que chez les êtres purs, et disparaît de ceux qui, comme le roi Djamshid succombant à l'orgueil de sa propre gloire et de son génie, tombent dans l'erreur (Ferdowsi I, 53–55). Dans les romans du Graal, le Graal doit être porté par un être purifié du péché. Wolfram von Eschenbach écrit ainsi à propos de la porteuse du Graal, Repanse de Schoye : « La nature du Graal était telle/ qu'il fallait que celle qui en prenait soin/ fût pure :/ elle devait se garder de toute fausseté<sup>27</sup>. » (Wolfram von Eschenbach 2010, 326–327).

## 6 Et les astres ?

Jusqu'à présent, nous avons évoqué des lumières à la fois concrètes et surnaturelles, mais peu les sources de lumière elles-mêmes. Si bougies et chandelles sont un élément frappant des apparitions du Graal, bien qu'on les trouve très peu chez Ferdowsi, on constate que les astres pourvoyeurs de lumière, le soleil et la lune, sont finalement assez peu présents et ont une place relativement conditionnée, tant dans la tradition arthurienne que dans le *Livre des rois*. Nous ne pouvons songer à développer ce thème dans toutes ses conséquences, et l'on se contentera des observations suivantes. Dans les œuvres romanesques ou épiques du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, note Régine Colliot, le soleil, la lune et les étoiles apparaissent rarement, mais leurs apparitions ont presque toujours une fonction « magique » ou « mystique » :

[ils] remplissent alors le rôle de signes ; ils annoncent des situations, des conjonctures romanesques parfois conventionnelles, parfois plus originales : ils s'intègrent alors dans l'action ; ou ils font partie d'un climat amoureux, ils sont les attributs de scènes courtoises ;

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27 « der grâl was von sölher art :/ wol muoser kiusche sîn bewart,/ die sîn ze rehte solde pflēgn :/ die muose valsches sich bewēgn. » [V, 235] (Wolfram von Eschenbach 1998, 239).



ou ils ouvrent un chemin mystique aux héros. Ils remplissent assez rarement un rôle utilitaire, plus rarement un rôle purement esthétique, suscitant la seule émotion artistique chez l'auditeur. (Colliot 1983, 41)

On trouvera un usage analogue des astres chez Ferdowsi, qui évoque d'abord la Lune et le Soleil dans leur contexte astrologique : ils font partie, avec Mercure, Vénus, Mars, Jupiter et Saturne, des sept planètes dont les rotations manifestent les destins (Ferdowsi I, 9). Hors de ce contexte, le soleil est volontiers employé dans des comparaisons soulignant la brillance d'une chose ou d'un être. Les métaphores, comparant un visage ou la beauté générale d'un homme ou d'une femme au soleil ou à la lune, sont fréquentes : elles associent ainsi la beauté, non seulement à la luminosité, mais aussi à une harmonie cosmique et céleste. Décrivant les épouses des trois fils de Feridun, Ferdowsi parle de leurs « joues de soleil » et les dit « semblables aux jardins du printemps, pleines de parfums, d'attraits et de beauté » (Ferdowsi I, 129). Ferdowsi utilise abondamment le soleil dans un registre métaphorique se rapportant aux qualités et au *farr* du roi. Dans la dernière des trois parties en lesquelles on divise généralement l'épopée (mythique, héroïque, historique), le poète dit du roi sassanide Khosrow Anushirvan (règne : 531–579) que son intelligence est pareille au soleil et luit sur tout (Ferdowsi VI, 207) : le roi lui-même « marchait comme le soleil au ciel » (Ferdowsi VI, 221) et son visage rayonnait de splendeur (Ferdowsi VI, 521).

Cette association du roi et du soleil est également présente dans l'Occident médiéval (Boudet 2004), et met en valeur le caractère cosmique de la royauté et le charisme radiant du roi. Comme dans les romans médiévaux, le soleil peut être, dans le *Livre des rois*, le signe indicateur d'un événement pivot. L'exemple sans doute le plus frappant est le récit relatif au roi légendaire Key Khosrow qui, après avoir vaincu le roi démoniaque du Turân, après avoir restauré ordre et lumière dans le royaume, décide de se retirer du monde et part dans les montagnes avec quelques compagnons, à qui il annonce la veille de sa mystérieuse disparition-assomption : « Quand le soleil aura levé son drapeau brillant et couvert d'or liquide la sombre surface de la terre, alors le moment où je dois vous quitter sera venu, et j'espère être en compagnie avec le Soroush [un ange]. » (Ferdowsi IV, 267)<sup>28</sup>.

Dans tous les cas, nous avons affaire à une utilisation essentiellement symbolique de la lumière et indicative des astres : on peut l'illustrer – au propre et figuré – à travers la peinture et les illustrations qui, en Iran comme dans l'Occident latin, ont enluminé les manuscrits du *Livre des rois* et des romans arthuriens.

28 چو خورشید تابان برآرد درفش / چو زد آب گردد زمین بنفش (Ferdowsi IV, 266).  
مرا روزگار جدایی بود / مگر با سروش آشنایی بود

## 7 Poésie et peinture

Une étude comparative, à la fois de poétique et d'iconographie, entre les peintures sur livre illustrant les récits épiques occidentaux et iraniens dépasse très largement le cadre de cette présentation, mais l'on voudrait signaler ici sa grande richesse. Le *Livre des rois*, à partir de la fin du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle mongol, ainsi que les œuvres médiévales (Walter 2009), ont fait l'objet de somptueux manuscrits illustrés, dont les peintures offrent entre elles de nombreux points communs stylistiques. On signalera des compositions volontiers héraldiques et schématisées, une stylisation générique des figures, une représentation de l'espace en aplat ou structurée par différentes perspectives non académiques et pré-renaissantes, et surtout un art de la couleur qui, contrairement aux clairs-obscurs de la peinture de la Renaissance, ignore les contrastes d'ombre et de luminosité. Dans la peinture persane, à la gouache et sur papier, les illustrations du *Livre des rois*, avec ses images de cours, de combats ou de chevaliers, peuvent, « par leur esthétique même – l'absence de clair-obscur et la clarté immanente des couleurs –, évoquer la gloire rayonnante du roi, dont la lumière illumine le royaume, éclaire les âmes, chasse les ténèbres et ordonne le monde comme un jardin printanier. » (Ringgenberg 2009a, 353). Plus largement, ces images instillent un climat de lumière, qui transfigure les scènes dans une clarté idéale, et qui magnifie chaque épisode dans une matrice de beauté-lumière (Canby 2014).

Or, les peintures illustrant les manuscrits médiévaux, et qui s'inscrivent comme la peinture sur livre persane dans un cadre de mécénat royal et princier, présentent une esthétique analogue de clarté, et qui peut s'interpréter dans un sens tout à fait analogue comme une expression de la lumière royale, d'un idéal exalté de la chevalerie, d'une normativité esthétique fondé par et sur la lumière. Cet usage pictural de la lumière tend également à éterniser les scènes : c'est le soleil qui mesure le temps, mais en son absence, ou en présence d'un soleil purement indicatif qui n'engendre ni ombres ni contrastes, l'image peinte transfigure les événements représentés en les suspendant dans une lumière immuable, « héraldique ». Associée à une stylisation des personnages, les rois et héros du *Livre des rois* sont ainsi élevés au rang de modèles intemporels, alors que dans les illustrations de la légende arthurienne cette esthétique de la clarté s'accorde avec l'éclat détemporalisé du monde chevaleresque et avec cette volonté – exprimée dans certains manuscrits (Mentré 1986, 240–242) – de réaliser une synthèse symbolique du temps et de l'éternité, de la succession et du présent.

Dans ces deux traditions picturales, le soleil ou la lune sont figurés comme des indices du caractère diurne ou nocturne de la scène, mais leur présence, au contraire de la peinture post-médiévale où la nature directionnelle de la lumière physique modèle la construction, la dramaturgie et le sens de l'image, n'a aucune

incidence sur la représentation, baignée d'une lumière uniforme, sans ombres. À l'image des récits arthuriens ou du *Livre des rois*, les astres sont surtout des signes, des marqueurs symboliques, des objets de métaphore : c'est la lumière, la clarté ou l'éclat en général qui sont essentiels.

On notera que, dans les œuvres tant médiévales qu'iraniennes, les auteurs font mention d'œuvres picturales à l'intérieur de certains récits. Les romans arthuriens « décrivent des peintures murales, qui nous renseignent toutefois davantage sur l'écriture de leur auteur que sur les pratiques picturales de son époque » (Aurell 2011, 124) : ces peintures évoquées littérairement sont pour les personnages romanesques des supports de réminiscence et un moyen de révélation. Dans le *Livre des rois*, Ferdowsi décrit le palais des femmes du roi Mihrab : « Le palais ressemblait à un jardin du printemps par ses couleurs, ses parfums et ses peintures de toute espèce. » (Ferdowsi I, 247)<sup>29</sup>. Rares sont cependant les notations esthétiques : elles sont, de surcroît, toujours de nature très générale et codifiée, mais elles valorisent volontiers les qualités de luminosité et de brillance. Dans le *Livre des rois*, au début de la partie historique mettant en scène Alexandre le Grand, il nous est raconté que le conquérant grec rencontre un homme velu aux grandes oreilles qui lui parle d'une ville située à l'est où, « dans les palais tu trouveras les combats d'Afrâsyâb peints plus brillants que le soleil » (Ferdowsi V, 245)<sup>30</sup>. On ne peut manquer de faire le rapprochement avec une esthétique de la clarté qui, du temps de Ferdowsi, s'incarnait essentiellement dans les objets en céramique émaillée et dans des peintures murales, le plus souvent disparues, des riches maisons, mais qui plus tard sera caractéristique des peintures sur livres, sans ombres ni clair-obscur, à la luminosité immanente. Dans *Le roman de Thèbes* (milieu du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle), adaptation en ancien français d'une épopée en latin (*La Thébaïde* de Stace, écrite au I<sup>er</sup> siècle), l'auteur y décrit une tente, dans laquelle des « peintures extraordinaires », représentant une mappemonde, sont parsemées de feuilles d'or : « Les émeraudes, les jaspes, les sardoines/ les bérils, les sardes et les calcédoines,/ les hyacinthes et les chrysolithes,/ les topazes et les améthystes/ sont si nombreux dans l'or qu'ils parsèment/ qu'ils resplendissent à la lumière du soleil. » (*Roman de Thèbes* 1995, 299)<sup>31</sup>. Là aussi, ces notations esthétiques, valorisant l'éclat de l'or et des gemmes, renvoient à une esthétique de clarté qu'illustrent bien les manuscrits *enluminés*, les vitraux (qui s'épanouiront

29 (Ferdowsi I, 246). بیاراسته همچو باغ بهار / سراپای، پر بوی و رنگ و نگار

30 (Ferdowsi V, 244). بر ایوانها جنگ افراسیاب / نگاریده روشنتر از آفتاب

31 « Esmeragdes, jaspes, sardoines,/ berils, sardes et calcidoines/ et jagoines et crisolites,/ et topaices et amatistes/ ot tant en l'or, qu'il l'avironent,/ contre soleil grante clarté donent. » (*Roman de Thèbes* 1995, 298).

pleinement dans les églises gothiques contemporaines des chefs-d'œuvre arthuriens) et les peintures aux couleurs en aplat, sans ombres ni clair-obscur, enrichies d'or en feuille ou peint.

## 8 Quelques conclusions

On a pu constater ici de nombreux points communs dans l'emploi thématique, narratif, métaphorique, symbolique de la lumière, nonobstant des différences d'accentuation, de contexte, de narrativité. Une conclusion générale est d'y voir à la fois des parentés explicables par le genre épique des récits, où l'optique royale et chevaleresque prime, ponctuée diversement par des éclairs et des présences de sacralité, et par l'origine indo-européenne de nombreux thèmes qui traversent ces récits d'Orient et d'Occident.

On aimerait conclure en replaçant ces épopées dans le contexte très physique de leur lieu de création – l'Ouest de l'Europe pour les romans arthuriens, l'Est de l'Iran pour le *Livre des rois* – car après tout, toute poésie s'enracine dans des images inspirées d'un lieu, d'un temps et d'une *lumière*. Du point de vue du paysage, de ses couleurs et de sa luminosité, et du point de vue de l'ensoleillement, l'Occident et l'Iran sont évidemment très différents. Le climat plus ensoleillé de l'Iran, ses déserts sans ombres, ses lumières saturées, l'immensité de ses horizons, contrastent fortement avec l'Occident, avec ses forêts abondantes, son climat pluvieux, ses brumes et ses nuages, ses horizons plats ou bouchés par des forêts, ses montagnes couvertes de verdure. L'essentiel du *Livre des rois* se déroule sur le Plateau iranien, montagneux et désertique, ponctué d'oasis, à mille lieux des forêts des romans arthuriens. Un seul paysage, dans l'épopée de Ferdowsi, correspond à un paysage européen : le Mâzandarân, c'est-à-dire le Nord de l'Iran, entre les monts Alborz et la mer Caspienne, où grâce à l'abondance des pluies tout au long de l'année, vallées et plaines sont toujours verdoyantes et l'agriculture prospère ; mais à cause de ses brumes, de ses forêts profondes et denses, le Mâzandarân est, dans le *Livre des rois*, le pays des démons (*div*) habiles dans la magie (Ferdowsi I, 497), et par là un territoire dangereux et inquiétant, où le roi Key Kâvus se fit prendre au piège avec son armée et où le héros Rostam, parti le délivrer, connut ses fameuses sept épreuves (Ferdowsi I, 511–543).

Au point de vue de l'éclairage artificiel, en revanche, ces deux civilisations – médiévale et iranienne – étaient quasiment identiques : les éclairages publics n'existaient pas encore, et seules quelques flammes perçaient la nuit. À propos du Moyen Âge occidental, Alain Labbé écrit que la sensibilité pour la lumière témoigne « d'un temps où la clarté était une valeur esthétique dominante, et aussi

d'un état de civilisation où, les moyens de se protéger contre les dangers et les peurs de l'obscurité étant rares et coûteux, la lumière était signe de richesse et de sécurité » (Labbé 1988, 176) : ces propos pourraient aisément s'appliquer à l'Iran de Ferdowsi.

Il y aurait une étude à faire sur l'influence que le climat et la géographie ont pu avoir, dans les textes épiques que nous venons d'évoquer, sur les métaphores relatives à la lumière, mais également, plus généralement, sur la tonalité épique, sur la mise en scène des paysages, des contrastes lumière/ténèbres, des mesures du temps et de l'espace : elle ferait sans doute mieux apparaître ce qui relève de l'archétype et ce qui relève de l'inscription dans une géographie et un climat météorologique donné. Elle pourrait peut-être aussi rendre compte, à certains points de vue, de l'acoustique culturelle dans laquelle ces textes étaient lus et entendus : car entendre raconter la longue guerre de Key Khosrow sous le ciel iranien, dans sa lumière et son horizon, est une expérience tout à fait différente de ce que l'on peut ressentir dans un paysage européen ; inversement, entendre la découverte du château du Graal par Perceval a des résonances autres dans les paysages verdoyants et denses de la France médiévale que dans ceux, parfois « lunaires », du Plateau iranien. Certes, les romans arthuriens et le *Livre des rois* rapportent des traits universels qui dépassent les frontières, les délimitations culturelles et les géographies humaines, mais si un seul soleil éclaire tout le monde, il existe néanmoins des paysages différents de la lumière, et des manières également diverses de le voir et de le vivre.

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Fabiana Corrêa Prando

# Temporality and Finitude: The Wolf in the Fiction of João Guimarães Rosa and of Marcus Aurelius Pimenta and José Roberto Torero

**Abstract:** The wolf, as a symbol, is a highly complex image because of its positive and negative polarities. Symbols are essentially multidimensional, and express relationships and not a conceptual logic. A symbol permits a relationship of complementarity, and it is susceptible to infinite dimensions. To the Western imagination, the wolf is the wildest animal of all. According to Durand, the Big Bad Wolf, in more advanced thought, is close to the gods of death and to the forces of the underworld. In the Egyptian pantheon, Anubis, the great *psicopomp* god, is the one that has the shape of a wild dog, and is worshipped as the god of hell. Dogs equally symbolize Hecate, the dark moon, and the waning moon – sometimes represented by Cerberus as a three-headed dog. Time disguised in a wolf's clothing, the terrible devourer that reveals anguish before the *becoming future*, is the main thread of this investigation about the relationship between the books *Fita verde no cabelo* [Green Ribbon in the Hair] by João Guimarães Rosa and *Chapeuzinho Preto* [Little Black Riding Hood] by José Roberto Torero and Marcus Aurelius Pimenta. We will observe how the anguished attitude of human beings facing death and time is revealed through their fiction. Fita Verde faces death while visiting her grandmother and becomes aware of the wolf that prowls around us all. Little Black Riding Hood sees in the mirror a woman instead of a girl. She realizes that time has passed and death will come some day. Awareness of our own finitude is the blessing of the encounter with the wolf. Ricoeur, Heidegger, and Durand offer the theoretical background for the research.

**Keywords:** Gilbert Durand, *Green Ribbon in the Hair* (João Guimarães Rosa), *Little Black Riding Hood* (Marcus Aurelius Pimenta and José Roberto Torero), Martin Heidegger, Paul Ricoeur, temporality and finitude, wolves

## 1 Red, black, and green

This study begins with *Le Petit Chaperon rouge* [Little Red Riding Hood] by Charles Perrault (1697), the matrix from which our authors build their narratives. The girl in Perrault's story is the most remote counterpart of those in *Fita verde* [Green



Ribbon] (1964) and *Chapeuzinho Preto* [Little Black Riding Hood] (2010). In our comparative approach, we will try to demonstrate how the Brazilian authors privileged the temporal perspective that lies in the wolf immortalized by Perrault.

Despite beginning from the same point, the paths undertaken by our authors are very distinct, which reiterates the infinite possibilities of the primordial narrative. Torero and Pimenta's and Rosa's fiction will confront us with a deepening of the painful flaw of human temporality, the stretching or distension that characterizes our temporary experience never complete in itself, dilacerated, bungled, in an incessant search, invention, construction, and destruction of the senses. This possibility is glimpsed in the simple structure of the seventeenth-century narrative.

It is important to point out that our readings will not follow the psychoanalytic line so well represented by authors such as Bruno Bettelheim, or the analytical perspective of Marie Louise Von Franz. We chose, instead, to take the risk of pursuing our investigation in the light of Paul Ricoeur's, Martin Heidegger's, and Gilbert Durand's ideas.

The red-capped girl, immortalized by Perrault's version, has her path announced by the colour of her clothes. Chevalier and Gheerbrant's dictionary (2008, 944–946) has a long entry about the colour red and its force and ambivalence, which are confirmed in the course of the narrative. Red is universally considered a symbol of the beginning of life, with its force, power, and shine. It is also the colour of fire and blood.

A lighter shade of red, linked to fire, is diurnal, masculine; it provokes action, and refers to sunlight. Dark red is nocturnal, feminine; it refers to blood, to the mystery of life. While the former is an image of warmth, health, beauty, youth, impulsive and generous forces, the latter is shady, initiating, funereal, related to death. In this girl's story, light and dark tones of red remain together, a life force which moves towards death.

When the mother suggests the girl take a little cake and butter to her grandmother, who is apparently sick, we notice what Heidegger (2010, 79) calls the main lines for the interpretation of Dasein: concern, or care, or caring, a term I consider more appropriate (see Giaccoia 2013, 79–80).

The encounter with the wolf puts an innocent girl before a voracious wild animal that is only kept from devouring her immediately by fear of the woodcutters of the forest. They talk, the girl shows him the way to her grandmother's house, and the wolf proposes a challenge: they will proceed taking different roads, and see who will arrive first at the house of the old lady. While the wolf runs at full speed along the shortest road, the girl wanders distractedly along the longest road, picking hazelnuts, pursuing butterflies, and making bouquets with wild flowers.

While the wolf is driven by the vital pulse of satiating his insatiable hunger, the curious girl entertains herself. According to Heidegger:

Curiosity is a letting-go that consists of alienating oneself in snooping around what interests everybody, of what it entertains when capturing everybody's attention. It is to be in search of *newness* – that which, by definition, means being condemned to infinite replacement, under penalty of not being what one really is. (Giaccoia 2013, 80; my translation, emphasis in original)

More than not being what she really is, the girl walks towards her end, towards the not-being, in the direction of the devouring wolf.

Chapeuzinho Preto (Little Black Riding Hood) – the creation of the authors Marcus Aurelius Pimenta and José Roberto Torero – has that name because she wears a black coat. There are many references to this colour in Chevalier and Gheerbrant's dictionary and, confirming common sense, the shadier aspects prevail.

The colour black is associated with primordial darkness, with the underworld, with absolute passivity, and with death. Black is the colour of mourning, of the *prima materia*, of the original chaos, of deep waters, and of death. As the image of death, earth, the grave, and journeys at night, black is also linked to the promise of a renewed life, as well as to the night that contains the promise of dawn, and the winter that holds the promise of spring.

The tone of this story is revealed by the colour of the protagonist's clothes: the girl has black eyes and hair, she lives close to a very dark forest, and she will take to her grandma a basket full of *jaboticabas* – a Brazilian round, black, and flavourful fruit. In her encounter with the wolf, our attention is drawn to the fact that the predator is not eager to eat in spite of his implacable appetite; at that time, the wolf thought: "My hunger is endless. One day, for sure, I will eat this little one" (Torero and Pimenta 2010, 50; my translation).

The grandmother's reaction when she meets the wolf shows us the inevitability of that encounter. She mentions that he took a long time to arrive. Who may this wolf be, who sooner or later will devour all of us?

When the black-hooded girl finally arrives at her grandmother's house, she finds a mirror and, contemplating her reflected image, she asks herself the traditional questions of the original story, which she answers, and concludes that time has passed and that the girl she once was is now a woman. This passage enters into a dialogue with Heidegger's thought; we see contemplated in this fiction a fundamental concept of the German thinker: the idea that every possible understanding of being, beginning with *Dasein*, is a temporary understanding.

The protagonist's encounter with the wolf confirms Heidegger's proposition that being is time. He says to the young girl that he is the wolf of all wolves –

time – and that one day he will swallow her, and until then they can enjoy the *jabuticabas*. Curiously, the anguish of the confrontation between wishing to live and having to die is nowhere to be found here. Little Black Riding Hood eats so many *jabuticabas* along with the wolf that she ends up falling asleep.

It is only in the hunter's appearance that the distressing condition of the awareness of finitude is revealed:

- Damned wolf! I can't beat you!
- That is impossible, dear hunter, but we can be friends.
- How so, if one day you will swallow me?
- Well, let us be friends while that day has not arrived. (Torero and Pimenta, 2010, 54–55; my translation)

Is it really even possible to welcome death and maintain happiness and enthusiasm for life while death stalks us? “But, even when it is accepted, death remains frightening, anguishing, precisely because of its radical heterogeneity in relation to our desire, and because of the cost that its reception represents” (Ricoeur 2009, 358). *Fita verde no cabelo* [Green Ribbon in the Hair] by João Guimarães Rosa is, as its subtitle *Nova velha história* indicates, an old new story. Thanks to the author's brilliant idea, we will witness the blossoming of a narrative and glimpse a new possibility hidden in an old story.

Located between blue and yellow, the colour green is the result of their chromatic interferences. But it enters into a symbolic switching game with the colour red. The rose blossoms among the green leaves. The colour green, as the go-between between heat and cold, is a tranquilizing, refreshing, human colour. Green brings back hope; it is the arrival of spring, the awakening of the primordial waters. Green is the colour of water as red is the colour of fire, two analogous and opposite colours. “Green contains a strange and complex character that comes from its double polarity: the green of the sprout and the green of mould, life and death. It is the image of the profundities and of destiny” (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 2008, 943; my translation).

The unchaining of life starts from red and it blossoms in green, and our reading follows the same road, from *Le Petit Chaperon rouge* by Perrault to *Fita verde* by Guimarães Rosa.

The story begins describing a village where everybody was immersed in their daily lives. One notices a proximity here with Heidegger's concept of decline:

Decline (*Verfallenheit*) should not be taken in a moralistic sense. Although it evokes religious and moral (as the original sin) representations, it designates the original condition of being thrown into the impersonal world of the public sphere. It is for that reason – and only because of it – that being-in-there can also open up to its more authentic possibility: return-to-itself, or being-itself.

Being-in-there, as always, is a project, to be able to be, a possibility of being. For that reason, there is also a possibility not to be. (Giaccoia 2013, 81; my translation)

The decline of Dasein does not represent a “fall” from an impious superior state to a lower and rotten one. It is, above all, an existential determination of Dasein to be dissolved in everyday life, a tranquilizing experience that drives away the anguish of the awareness of finitude. A type of rest, automatic repetition, relaxation. “There was a village somewhere, not larger, nor smaller, with old women and old men who were getting older, men and women who waited and boys and girls who were born and grew up” (Rosa 1988, n. pag.; my translation).

We begin the narrative with everybody in peace, except a little girl who leaves with an imaginary green ribbon in her hair. And the girl leaves to go to her grandmother’s village, ordered by her mother, taking fruit preserve and an empty basket for picking raspberries. She doesn’t find the wolf on the road, just woodcutters. The wolf had been exterminated by them. Who knew?

Then, she announces to herself the route that will take her to her grandmother’s house. And she decides to tread the longer road instead of the “*encurtoso*” [the shortest way], and she proceeds with her shadow pursuing her. The girl in motion is ahead, and she has the shadow of the past stalking her as she follows her course of being constant. We have here an important image of Heidegger’s philosophy, being-in-there in its incompleteness, in process, in temporality:

The together of the being that Dasein is “in running its course” until it has completed “its course” is not constituted by a “progressive” piecing-on of beings that, somehow and somewhere, are already at hand in their own right. That Dasein should be together only when its not-yet has been filled out is so far from being the case that precisely then it no longer is. Dasein always already exists in such a way that its not-yet belongs to it. (Heidegger 2010, 234)

Dasein is open to uncertain possibilities of being, as a project thrown into the world, and, it must be assumed, mostly in its more radical possibility, as being-to-death. It is what awaits us when Fita Verde (Green Ribbon) knocks at the door of her grandmother’s house.

The grandmother asks the girl to come closer while there is still time. Roger Mello’s exquisite illustration reveals the presence of the wolf in the old lady’s hands, a clear reference to chronological time, that devouring one that eats her children and takes multiple forms such as, for instance, that of the wolf. What stands out here is the girl’s size before finitude in this perspective – very tiny. “There is, therefore, a very clear convergence between the bite of the *canideos* and the fear of destructive time. Chronos appears here with the face of Anubis, the monster that devours human time or the one that attacks even the stars that measure time” (Durand 2002, 87; my translation)

The wolf finally appears. It had not been exterminated by the woodcutters as it seemed to have been at the beginning of the day. It is just that it was not within people's horizon, steeped as they were in their tranquilizing routine. "But with the escape declined before death, the everyday life of Dasein attests that we are also even more determined as a being-for-death even when we are not expressly 'thinking about death'" (Heidegger 2010, 235).

Green Ribbon is frightened and sad. She realizes that she has lost her ribbon and begins the dialogue with her grandmother in which the statement "never more" is repeated several times. Our protagonist comes upon the inexorability of time and death. And, afraid, she screams to her grandma that she is afraid of the wolf, but her grandmother is no longer there, "except the cold, sad, and sudden body" (Rosa 1988, n. pag.; my translation).

The girl in front of her grandmother's inert body faces the inevitable "because the flesh, that animal that lives inside us, always leads to meditation on time" (Durand 2002, 121; my translation). And, in this manner, the initiating journey of Green Ribbon is fulfilled, an opening to the understanding of Being, because every possible understanding of Being, beginning with Dasein, is a temporary understanding. And as being-in-there in the temporary and finite world, the being-in-there is, ontologically, being-for-death: an existential opening to the possibility of not being, a beingness that is understood as such. The being-for-death condition is the call of Dasein for its more radical authenticity: "the end that awaits Dasein, that keeps watch on it, precedes it, an end that is always and imminent" (Ricoeur 2009, 356).

The grandmother's death seems to have saved the young girl from death, as a strategy of avoiding the moment of truth through her own death. But the death of the other permits learning about loss and mourning. To lose the other is, in a certain measure, to lose oneself, which means a stage on the road of anticipation.

The final images of the book show the dimensions of the Heideggerian proposition that everything is decided in the nexus between the total possibility of being and the finitude of the mortal horizon. Rosa's text surpasses the psychological approach; his artistic vein propitiates the search for meaning, it invites the reader to broaden their glance of existence, it evokes metaphysical reflections, it recalls Heidegger. It is a beautiful encounter between literature and philosophy. "According to Rosa, 'what is to be are the words!' Language is what needs to be – it is there where literature and philosophy will always have their encounter" (Carvalho and Ferraz 2016, 142; my translation).

## 2 Wolf, time, and narratives

In the Western imagination, the wolf represents the most ferocious animal of all. We have observed in this study that the character of the Big Bad Wolf, so feared and loved by children, goes beyond the association with wild, aggressive, and voracious aspects as it also contains, in itself, a representation of time.

Observing the devouring figure of the wolf in mythology, we notice its assimilation into the gods of death and the forces of the underworld. In the Egyptian pantheon, Anubis, the great *psychopomp* god, is the one that has the form of a wild dog, and is worshipped as the god of hell.

The battle is against darkness, bestiality, and the Fall. In other words, against Chronos, mortal time. It is also evidently, considering our emphasis on the relationship with time, the effort to dominate and control the flow of time, an attempt at reaching eternity. The opposition between human time and divine eternity introduces into the human experience of time an essential qualitative differentiation. In the narrative, as well as in life, the embrace of time equalizes all creatures, we are all subjects to temporality.

We often wonder why we like wolf stories so much. Ricoeur made me think that, in the space of narrative, the wolf/time is tamed, organized: a divine experience of the organization of the universe, of the cosmos beating chaos. According to Ricoeur, narrative-making brings a new meaning to the world in its temporal dimension. Fiction would be, for him, the place of regulation of temporality.

Ricoeur's theory is that temporal experience, phenomenologically described, shows insurmountable logical difficulties (aporias) that are only solved poetically in the fictional realm, given the narrative character of that same experience, analogous to the structure of action and human existence. Fiction becomes, in this way, an exploratory thinking of time: literature illuminating philosophy.

Telling stories, men articulate their experience of time, they are guided by the chaos of the developmental modalities, demarcating with intrigues and outcomes the very complicated course of men's real actions. In this way, the human narrator makes intelligible for himself the inconstancy of human things. (Nunes 1988, 78; my translation)

### 3 “Oração ao Tempo” [A Prayer for Time]

Caetano Veloso (n.d.; my translation)

És um senhor tão bonito  
Quanto a cara do meu filho  
Tempo, tempo, tempo, tempo  
Vou te fazer um pedido  
Tempo, tempo, tempo, tempo

You are such a beautiful master  
Just like my son’s face  
Time, time, time, time  
I’m asking you just one thing  
Time, time, time, time

Compositor de destinos  
Tambor de todos os ritmos  
Tempo, tempo, tempo, tempo  
Entro num acordo contigo  
Tempo, tempo, tempo, tempo

Composer of destinations  
A drum for all the rhythms  
Time, time, time, time  
I make an agreement with you  
Time, time, time, time

Por seres tão inventivo  
E pareceres contínuo  
Tempo, tempo, tempo, tempo  
És um dos deuses mais lindos  
Tempo, tempo, tempo, tempo

For being so inventive  
And seeming so continuous  
Time, time, time, time  
You are one of the most beautiful gods  
Time, time, time, time

Que sejas ainda mais vivo  
No som do meu estribilho  
Tempo, tempo, tempo, tempo  
Ouve bem o que eu te digo  
Tempo, tempo, tempo, tempo

May you be even more alive  
At the sound of my chorus  
Time, time, time, time  
Listen well to what I tell you  
Time, time, time, time

Peço-te o prazer legítimo  
E o movimento preciso  
Tempo, tempo, tempo, tempo  
Quando o tempo for propício  
Tempo, tempo, tempo, tempo

I ask you for the legitimate pleasure  
And the precise movement  
Time, time, time, time  
When we feel the time is right  
Time, time, time, time

De modo que o meu espírito  
Ganhe um brilho definido  
Tempo, tempo, tempo, tempo  
E eu espalhe benefícios  
Tempo, tempo, tempo, tempo

So that my spirit  
Gets a defined shine  
Time, time, time, time  
And I scatter the benefits  
Time, time, time, time

O que usaremos pra isso  
 Fica guardado em sigilo  
 Tempo, tempo, tempo, tempo  
 Apenas contigo e comigo  
 Tempo, tempo, tempo, tempo

What we will use for that  
 Is kept locked in secrecy  
 Time, time, time, time  
 Just between you and me  
 Time, time, time, time

E quando eu tiver saído  
 Para fora do teu círculo  
 Tempo, tempo, tempo, tempo  
 Não serei nem terás sido  
 Tempo, tempo, tempo, tempo

And when I have left  
 For a place outside your circle  
 Time, time, time, time  
 I will not be nor will you have been  
 Time, time, time, time

Ainda assim acredito  
 Ser possível reunirmo-nos  
 Tempo, tempo, tempo, tempo  
 Num outro nível de vínculo  
 Tempo, tempo, tempo, tempo

Indeed I still believe  
 That our gathering is possible  
 Time, time, time, time  
 On another level of bond  
 Time, time, time, time

Portanto peço-te aquilo  
 E te ofereço elogios  
 Tempo, tempo, tempo, tempo  
 Nas rimas do meu estilo  
 Tempo, tempo, tempo, tempo

So I ask you for that  
 And I offer you my compliments  
 Time, time, time, time  
 In the rhymes of my style  
 Time, time, time, time

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# ***The Paulo Afonso Falls* by Castro Alves (1847–1871): Interweaving Poetry and Social Imaginaries**

**Abstract:** This article explores the aspect of visibility in the poetic work *A Cachoeira de Paulo Afonso* [The Paulo Afonso Falls] by Castro Alves (1876) from the perspective of its dialogue with the pictorial and political construct of the Paulo Afonso Falls in the Brazilian social imaginaries of the nineteenth century. Through the analysis of the photographic representation of *Cachoeira de Paulo Afonso* [Paulo Afonso Falls] by August Stahl (1860) and an excerpt from Alves's dramatic poem, I present a comparative reading centred on the mechanisms of visibility and persuasion employed in both media, taking into account their relationship to the social problem of slavery and the issue of the human right to freedom.

**Keywords:** Brazilian poetry, Castro Alves, *enargeia*, iconography, slavery, social imaginaries

One of Antonio de Castro Alves's least studied poetic works, *A Cachoeira de Paulo Afonso* [The Paulo Afonso Falls], written between 1868 and 1870, features the human tragedy of slavery throughout its thirty-three poems, displaying a variety of dramatic devices so as to persuade the reader/listener to support the abolitionist cause.<sup>1</sup> Until the beginning of the twenty-first century, *A Cachoeira de Paulo Afonso* had received relatively little attention in publications and academic papers, with Affonso Romano de Sant'Anna's brief analysis in *O canibalismo amoroso* (1984) being one of the few studies dedicated to the poem. Nonetheless, the several mentions of the poem in critiques of Castro Alves's *oeuvre* have highlighted the poem's imaginative quality – exceptionally plastic and musical – derived from a poetic sensibility affected by landscape.<sup>2</sup> The emphasis on the

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1 This article synthesizes the main argument of my master's thesis (Gobbi Alves Araújo 2015). An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 2016 ICLA conference in Vienna. I would like to thank the seminar's organizers and participants for their comments. Moreover, I am grateful to Prof. Thomas O. Beebe for his valuable suggestions. This study was financed in part by the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior – Brasil (CAPES) – Finance Code 001.  
2 Some authors who have highlighted the sensory aspect of Alves's poetry and its particular interest in the Brazilian landscape are Manuel Bandeira (1946), Eugênio Gomes (1953), Fausto Cunha (1971), and Jon M. Tolman (1975).

Brazilian landscape was then seen, by some scholars, as an attempt to value local character or as a patriotic gesture. However, the geographical features selected by the author, as I will argue, symbolically engage cultural and political issues of Alves's time by putting a spotlight on an icon of the legitimization of the monarchical regime. Hence, this article aims to examine the symbolic construction of the Second Empire in the social imaginaries of nineteenth-century Brazil, through travel reports and iconographic material about the Paulo Afonso Falls, and its later subversion in Romantic literature by the abolitionist poet Castro Alves.

## 1 The symbolic construct of the Paulo Afonso Falls

The landmark of the Paulo Afonso Falls, located on the border of the states of Bahia and Alagoas, was converted into a social construct and a visual paradigm in nineteenth-century Brazil due to specific historical and political conditions that underlay its symbolic configuration.

In the 1850s, imperial sovereignty was threatened by a decline in political support from north-eastern authorities and major landowners. Right after a period of political turmoil with the Praieira Revolt that shook the province of Pernambuco from 1848 to 1850, a rural oligarchy felt discontented as a result of the promulgation of the *Eusébio de Queirós* Act and the Land Law, which were passed in 1850. The first law abolished the transatlantic slave trade, and the second instituted immigrant land tenure as a way of making up for the gradual decrease in slave labour. These events ended up undermining monarchical rule and stirring political unrest among northern landowners who now demanded decentralized policies and financial support. In 1859, Emperor Pedro II spent four months on a journey to the northern provinces aimed at, among other things, meeting these demands by instituting compensatory measures, such as the creation of Institutes of Agriculture in every province he visited and the granting of nobility titles to the local rural elites, thus “giving back in political status what was withdrawn in material interest,” according to the historian José Murilo de Carvalho (2007, 258; my translation).

Moreover, the consequences of the Emperor's travels to the north were not only political; they were also of a symbolic nature. From the Emperor's travel memoirs, it is known that part of his duties during the journey included visiting hospitals, schools, and churches, donating to the poor, making speeches, and attending Masses and parades in his honour (Schwarcz 1998, 358) – symbolic acts that left an imprint on the Brazilian nineteenth-century social imagination, while strategically promoting a discourse of national unification in an attempt to consolidate the image of the Emperor and to ensure the maintenance of the

monarchical regime. Considering that the foundation of every political regime entails the production of representations of the social order, in other words, a social imaginary as conceived by the philosopher Bronisław Baczko (1985, 309), the symbolic projection of the Emperor into the inland areas of Brazil would purposely serve to reinforce imperial hegemony.

In addition to such endeavours, Pedro II commissioned a number of hydrographic mapping expeditions to the São Francisco river, on which the Paulo Afonso Falls are situated, between 1850 and 1860, in order to ascertain navigability and expand business transactions. Because they had been an object of interest and concern on the part of the imperial power, the Emperor visited the Paulo Afonso Falls on the occasion of his visit to the northern provinces in October 1859. After the encounter with this “majestic scene” (Pedro II 2003, 135; my translation), the monarch hired a photographer to document the waterfall the following year. It was the German-Italian photographer Auguste Stahl who created a panorama of the Falls in 1860 that is an unparalleled milestone in the history of Brazilian iconography.



**Fig. 1:** Auguste T. C. Stahl. Stahl & Cia., *Fotógrafos de S. M. o Imperador do Brasil. Cachoeira de Paulo Afonso*. c. 1860. D. Thereza Christina Maria Collection. Courtesy of Fundação Biblioteca Nacional.

The panorama called *Paulo Afonso Falls* depicts the point where the seven tributaries of the São Francisco river meet in an eighty-metre waterfall, displaying in the middle ground an Afro-Brazilian man against the turbulent torrent. One can clearly see the rock formations and the parched vegetation that make up a

dramatic composition. The evident contrast between an incommensurable force of nature and human vulnerability accounts for the spectator's feeling of wonder and terror proceeding from, according to Immanuel Kant's theory of the sublime (1995, 103–104), both the subjective conflict between imagination and reason (given the magnitude beyond comparison of the waterfalls) and the acknowledgement of a supersensible vocation. In the Brazilian context of slavery, the incorporation of the Afro-Brazilian person – possibly an enslaved individual – in Stahl's artistic composition directly evokes the moral degradation of the condition of slavery. Because the foundation of the sublime is found within men, the feeling that emerges from the contradiction between our human faculties and the power of nature is responsible for subduing, even if momentarily, our imprisonment in the sensible world, restoring to the spirit its moral dignity. Consequently, the aesthetic judgement of Stahl's diptych can prompt a debate about slavery in nineteenth-century Brazil if we take into account the interconnection between the feeling of the sublime and the condition for its occurrence, that is, the consciousness of human moral freedom. The effectiveness of the sublime justifies the great impact of Stahl's panorama and the later reproduction of this model in subsequent artworks. As a matter of fact, after Stahl's panorama, visual representations of the Falls would flourish in the second half of the nineteenth century, including paintings by Herman Wahnschaffe (c. 1861) and E. F. Schute (c. 1860), an engraving by P. Skelton and R. Knight (1869),<sup>3</sup> and photographs by Augusto Riedel (1869), Marc Ferrez (1875), and Ignácio Fernandes Mendo (1878).

If the iconographic representations of the Paulo Afonso Falls relied chiefly on the sublime style to convey the negative pleasure one feels when facing them, nineteenth-century travellers' written descriptions were no different. The Emperor's comment in one of his travel logs discloses the pathetic aspect of his encounter with the waterfalls: "Trying to describe the waterfall in a few pages, and fully, would be impossible, and I feel that time would only allow me to draw very imperfect sketches" (Pedro II 2003, 135–136; my translation). The rapture of the sublime experience justifies the impossibility of reporting such a "majestic scene." In a similar fashion, the French scientist Emmanuel Liais, a member of the Imperial Observatory of Rio de Janeiro, would remark on the fury of the flow ("les eaux furieuses"), which turned into a hurricane of water dust. In the "splendour of the spectacle" described by Liais (1866, 391; my translation) one can identify the hybrid feeling of dread and wonder that makes up the sublime experience. In 1867, when the English diplomat Richard Burton visited the Falls, he would

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<sup>3</sup> Published as the frontispiece of volume 2 of Richard Burton's *Explorations of the Highlands of the Brazil* (1869).

describe a feeling of enchantment and awe too intense to bear provoked by the impetuous movement of the “liquid vastness”: “And the marvellous disorder is a well-directed anarchy: the course and sway, the wrestling and writhing, all tend to set free the prisoner from the prison walls. *Ces eaux! mais ce sont des âmes*: it is the spectacle of a host rushing down in ‘liquid vastness’ to victory, the triumph of motion, of momentum over the immovable” (Burton 1869, 444–445).

Note that the expression “marvellous disorder” embodies much of the feeling of discrepancy caused by the experience of the sublime. Burton’s description of the torrent also conveys the notion of a battle between nature’s titans in an anthropomorphic metaphor of the waters. Finally, it is important to add that Burton’s superlative epithet to Paulo Afonso on the frontispiece, “King of rapids, the Niagara of Brazil,” goes as far as to claim a sovereign status for the Falls, hence alluding to the Brazilian imperial regime and its initiatives to map and assess all of the São Francisco river’s attributes.

In a broader sense, this brief selection of works may be evidence that the production of artistic and scientific records about the Paulo Afonso Falls in the mid-nineteenth century was not only affiliated with the monarchical state but also contributed to the renewal of the social imaginary related to the unity and legitimacy of the Empire – locally and abroad. Since “symbolic landmarks” turn into powerful ideas when they are used as support for the organization of the collective imagination, in accordance with Baczko (1985, 307), the monarchical state would gain similar status by attaching itself to the symbolic landmark of the Paulo Afonso Falls, allowing its presence to infiltrate the collective system of the social imagination.

In Benedict Anderson’s study on the nationalist experience of imagined communities, he asserts that “thanks to print-capitalism, a sort of pictorial census of the state’s patrimony becomes available, even if at a high cost to the state’s subjects” (2006, 182), and argues that the possibility of its reproducibility is meant to reveal the “real power of the state” in a process which takes place even in post-independence states – as is the case with Brazil – and which he defines as “political museumizing” (183). In fact, all of the commissioned artworks and travel reports previously mentioned were published by the imperial printing press in luxurious editions, some in more than one language, and sent to European countries.

On the basis of such theoretical studies of the symbolic networks that constitute collective identities, I argue here that the Paulo Afonso Falls can be understood as a visual framework for a national aesthetic whose historic invention generated an allegory of the Brazilian Empire. This is the narrative and pictorial tradition of representing national ideas with which Castro Alves establishes a dialogue when he chooses the Paulo Afonso Falls as the natural setting for the poetic representation of slavery eleven years after the Emperor’s visit to the location.

## 2 Alves's dramatic poem

Published five years after the poet's death, in 1876, Castro Alves's book is – not by coincidence – entitled *A Cachoeira de Paulo Afonso* (Alves 1997, 311–373), and tells the plight of an enslaved couple, Lucas and Maria, who try to keep their dignity while facing the atrocities of the slave system. Essentially, the narrative exposes a crime of rape committed by an enslaver's son against Maria, an enslaved Black woman. Violence changes everything within and around her. It taints the natural landscape, making the idyllic environment gradually exhibit signs of evil and brutality. Facing dishonour and the subsequent impossibility of love's fruition, Maria and her partner commit suicide on a canoe that launches them off the Falls. In the poem's final verses, the enslaved couple's suicide is represented by the metaphor of a transcendent union, in which natural elements celebrate, at once, their wedding, their funeral, and their final communion with the cosmos.

Throughout Alves's poem, the metaphorical configuration of the natural setting stages the tragic drama of slavery with graphic vividness and sublimity. Far from being a mere landscape ornament, the water element plays a prominent and active role in the symbolization of conflicting human forces.

Castro Alves's depiction of Paulo Afonso echoes both the travellers' descriptions and the artists' pictorial representation of the São Francisco waters, as it extensively employs visualizing techniques (*enargeia*) and descriptive procedures (*ekphrasis*) in the characterization of elements of nature in order to generate pathos in readers and listeners, contributing to the rhetorical functions of delighting, teaching, and moving in favour of the abolitionist cause.

As stated by the scholar Heinrich Plett, *enargeia* is the visual effect obtained from the use of rhetorical techniques through which the poet creates “imaginary scenes,” providing immediacy and concreteness to any narrated event. The effect is such as if the scene were happening before the eye of the recipient; yet the effect of presence takes place before the inner eye of the imagination (Plett 2012, 12). The effectiveness of *enargeia* depends on the concreteness of descriptive details (*circumstantiae*) to make a discourse more vivid, such as figures of speech, bright discourse, monologue, dialogue, and *ekphrasis*. Discussed by Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, and Longinus, among others, enargetic techniques were widely explained in manuals of rhetoric used in educational institutions throughout the 1800s, being the “foundation stone” of poetics in nineteenth-century Brazil, according to Fausto Cunha (1971, 65; my translation). As a means to attain an aesthetic sublime effect, the use of *enargeia* is crucial for enhancing the persuasiveness of a poetic text, and even more relevant when placing the theme of slavery before the inner eyes of the audience.

For the purposes of illustration, I will briefly discuss some of these strategies in the poem “A Cachoeira” [The Waterfall] (Alves 1997, 365–366), located in the final segment of *A Cachoeira de Paulo Afonso*. The poem is characterized by the overlapping of three symbolic layers. It begins with a metaphorical event in which a bull becomes prey to a snake and is unable to resist the attack. The reptile drags the calf into the waters after biting and crushing it to the last bone. The hunting scene resonates with the same irrepressible violence seen in the sexual attack on Maria, mirroring that brutal experience. Then, the lyric I transposes the assault metaphor to describe the waterfalls portrayed as a clash of natural forces: the waters – “infinite serpent” – against rock formations transmuted into a “black granite bull” (365; my translation) – somewhat comparable to the ekphrastic description by Richard Burton. In the confrontation between the two majestic opponents, the watercourse takes on attributes of a herd of horses: it gallops, rears, and rides, convulsively, from the top of the cliff. In this second stage, the zoomorphism of the waterfalls expands and magnifies distinctive traits of both rivals. The enargetic configuration attains vividness with the aid of metaphors of movement, accurate word choice, and alliterations that materialize the waterfall, replicating bursts of water through the verses. In a third and final step, the process of metaphorization of the waters enters a mythological stage, in which the opponents acquire anthropomorphous components as mythological creatures – centaur and giant – who sustain the stream that flows over their shoulders.

At the poem’s climax, the waters of the São Francisco River enact the battle of Laocoön and his sons against the serpents of Tenedos, materialized in a well-known statue dated to the first century BC, transposing the sexual assault on Maria into a metaphorical clash of natural forces. The physical suffering of the family members is depicted by the contraction of Laocoön’s fist, his suffocated expression, and the imprisonment of his children around the reptiles’ rings.

Ferocious Laocoön’s colossal group  
 Hail to Greece beyond and the unearthly battle! ...  
 Cleric’s fist and the violet front ...  
 And the serpents of Tenedos enraged! ...  
 For reptile – a river! For prophet – a hill!  
 For Minerva’s altar – a mountain!  
 Around the pedestal hunted, betrayed,  
 Like children – weeping – the rocks! ... (Alves 1997, 366; my translation)

Through highly visual terminology, the lyric I synthesizes earlier metaphorical progressions in applying rhetorical techniques related to the categories of clarity, sharpness, and brightness in the imaginative view of the Greek statue, reaching the pinnacle of the aesthetic sublime and the poem’s highest point. Within the



poem, the *ekphrasis* of Laocoön's statue embodies the wrestling of the natural forms; it provides an aesthetic treatment of the poem's tragic matter; and, philosophically, it refers to the eighteenth-century debates on human freedom set forth by Winckelmann, Lessing, and, later on, Schiller. According to Schiller, "one single sublime emotion often suffices to break all this tissue of imposture, at one blow to give freedom to the fettered elasticity of spiritual nature, to reveal its true destination, and to oblige it to conceive, for one instant at least, the feeling of its liberty" (1902, 131). The presence of Laocoön conjures up the affirmation of the human spirit's superiority in the face of any imposition from the sensible realm, since the aesthetic expression of the pain of Laocoön and his sons dignifies their struggle. If the enargetic discourse works so as to stimulate pathos, the ekphrastic visual description of Laocoön symbolizes the existing violence of the human sphere as a way of representing the moral corruption of the enslaved person and denouncing the horrors of the slaveholding system. Hence, the ekphrastic visual description of Laocoön not only evokes existing violence – which was the foundation of the Brazilian social sphere in the nineteenth century – but also stands in the poem as an allegory of human dignity. In this context, the visualizing effects of *enargeia* act to enhance the persuasiveness of the poetic text, illuminating the argument against slavery.

### 3 Intertextual and paratextual elements of *A Cachoeira de Paulo Afonso*

Faced with a context of social exclusion, Alves seems to mobilize persuasive devices related to poetic visuality so as to dignify the enslaved individual through aesthetic elevation.

This procedure is not an isolated event in Brazilian literature, for it echoes the mythical elevation of indigenous figures performed by Gonçalves de Magalhães and Gonçalves Dias – twenty years before Alves's time – during the Indianist movement, which shaped nationalism by forging noble ancestors to the Brazilian people. Both Magalhães's and Dias's poetic works exalt epic accomplishments of Native groups, painting vivid pictures of war-like conflicts in which natural elements enact heroic battles, often denouncing the Portuguese-Brazilian imperial policies of local oppression and indigenous extermination, as the critic David Treece (2000) points out in his study on the Brazilian Indianist movement.

In Alves's account of national history, violence against enslaved individuals serves to denounce the horrors of the slaveholding system once it exposes the bedrock of Brazil as a nation: the genocide and marginalization of its non-white

population (Treece 2000, 131). In a society where enslaved people were obliterated by social indifference, the attribution of heroic protagonism to Afro-Brazilians in a poem of an elevated tragic essence defies a certain tradition of literary models in which Black characters were either non-existent or the source of trouble for white heroes. Nevertheless, the effects of this protagonism are not only of a literary nature. Placing the human drama of slavery into a natural setting so closely linked to imperial power resulted in substantiating the complicity of the official political regime in the perpetuation of the institution of slavery.

In light of Gérard Genette's theoretical propositions in *Seuils* (1987), two paratexts related to the publication of *A Cachoeira de Paulo Afonso* support this argument. Firstly, the postface to the text in the poet's manuscript contains a piece of news on the Emperor's 1859 visit to the Falls. If read in conjunction with Alves's republican poems, this appendix to the work may reinforce the poet's political opposition to the monarchical acts supporting the maintenance of slavery throughout the 1850s and, therefore, corroborate the interpretation that the choice of the Paulo Afonso Falls as a setting for the poem may be related to the imperial invention of the location as an allegory of the Brazilian Empire, an empire founded on the misery of enslavement. Secondly, in an 1867 letter, Alves would disclose his plan to visit the Paulo Afonso Falls in order to complete the writing of his book and "be Chateaubriand in this other Niagara" (Alves 1997, 746; my translation). Taking into account the centrality of Chateaubriand's cultural authority in French romanticism and the key role of *René* and *Atala* in shaping the New World's national sensitivities, in accordance with Renata Wasserman's work (1989) on the discourse of the exotic in *Atala*, my reading argues that Alves's *A Cachoeira de Paulo Afonso* may have been devised as a national poem that challenges the official configuration of social imaginaries related to the Brazilian Empire and attempts to reframe national consciousness with respect to the abolition of slavery.

Alves's poetic drama takes advantage of the network of symbolic meanings evoked by the waterfall and constructed by the visual arts and travel literature, to thematize the brutal violence inflicted on the enslaved characters, modulating subsequent readings of cultural products related to the destructive power of the Falls. The critic Marcus Wood identifies a commonality of impression between Alves's poetic work and the iconographic pieces that preceded and succeeded it, which changed how the iconography related to the waterfall would be interpreted under the retroactive influence of his "explosive verses": "Because of the power and influence of Alves's masterpiece, the Falls were thenceforth saturated in an ecstatic yet tragic relation to slavery. The Falls became symbolically complicated, fraught, darker, more ambiguous, and finally more inspirational, because of the manner in which Alves had imaginatively commandeered the natural phenomenon" (Wood 2013, 255).

On that account, it is productive to read the recapturing of the image of the Paulo Afonso Falls by Castro Alves in light of a narrative and pictorial tradition of representing national ideas. Narrative, because it follows the development of travel narratives and landscape descriptions, heightened after the European artistic contributions of 1816 and 1817; pictorial, because it witnesses a shift in the representation of the Paulo Afonso Falls from the linguistic field to that of the visual arts as well as an iconographic profusion in the 1800s, largely derived from contact with technological innovations in photography. Therefore, as Castro Alves centres the tragic drama of enslaved characters by the Paulo Afonso Falls, it is critical to consider the eponymous poem in relation to the network of meanings articulated by the social imaginaries of its time, taking into account a broader social and political context.

In conclusion, in *A Cachoeira de Paulo Afonso*, Castro Alves seems to subvert the referent of a national aesthetic by choosing the Paulo Afonso Falls to stage the tragic drama of slavery. Inserted in a narrative and pictorial tradition of symbolic representation of national issues, Castro Alves's book presents the Falls as a metaphor for slave freedom and a national icon related to social liberation, thus challenging the order of visibilities in the final decades of the monarchical era.

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## Once Upon a Time and So Many Other Times: *Hansel and Gretel*

**Abstract:** Fairy tales constitute a huge imaginary heritage that preserves stories whose origins bring us to the time when time could not be counted. These anonymous narratives which circulated orally, from generation to generation, have changed over time in different cultures and societies. This process of what Zumthor has called *mouvance*, articulated in mnemonic networks, enables the creation of intervocalization and intertextual connections, an achievement that is rendered in different semiotic systems, in a circular movement that allows exchanges, transformations, and disruption. Reinvented in different codes and languages, and on different technological platforms, these texts create new elements. From the perspective of semiotic studies and literary comparativism, we will compare the Grimms' version of the *Hansel and Gretel* tale, collected from oral tradition, with the audio-visual version developed by the TV series *Once Upon a Time* (season 1, episode 9), observing codes and adaptations in order to reflect on the rereading in the contemporary era.

**Keywords:** fairy tales, Hansel and Gretel, imaginary, intertextuality, *Once Upon a Time* (TV series)

### 1 Introduction

The fascination which men have had for narratives since time immemorial is well known. Moved by the endeavour of deciphering, men create and recreate multiple forms of language that permanently proliferate and hybridize, allowing mankind to complete itself while coming up with stories. The configuration of the several communication eras (Santaella 2005) draws on a complex *mouvance*/shifting, a concept coined by Zumthor (1993) to describe the creation of mnemonic networks of intervocality and intertextuality in different semiotic systems, in whose momentum it is possible to notice exchanges, transformations, and disruption. Thus, narratives produced and perpetuated orally in transit to other languages and technological platforms plot a composite of stories in the human imagination.

We have learned from Walter Benjamin (1994, 197–221) that the narrator is no longer present among us; however, the art of narrating perpetuates the need

for exchanging experiences. The group of listeners became spectators as the craft-processes of communication, whose technology was the vocal apparatus and the body and vocal performance, became processes mediated by technological mechanisms for the diffusion of voice perpetuated in space and time, capable of reproducing verbal and written language through the development of optical techniques of image reproduction and hybrid processes of propagation of image and sound.

Recreated in different codes and languages, and for new technological platforms, the primordial narratives and their creative translations contain old and new elements – that, in the context of this article, deserve to be reviewed and analysed.

A well-known story, *Hansel and Gretel* is a narrative that we can hardly access in its craft production mode, that is, in performance. But the intervocality and the magic elements that move can be grasped. The children’s imaginary commonly accesses this tale through the written record – via the versions of the Grimm brothers (2002) or Perrault (1973, 30–33) – or through the digital animated films that reread them. One version for an adult audience, in the TV series *Once Upon a Time* (*OUAT*), which aired its first episode on 23 October 2011, makes an interesting intertextual dialogue, rescuing yarns from several fairy tales and wonderful tales, including *Hansel and Gretel*. In the series, the characters are taken to another context, where there will be no happy endings and only Snow White’s daughter, at the age of twenty-eight, will be able to reverse the situation by fighting the Evil Queen.

“Once upon a time there was an enchanted forest with all the classic characters we know, or we think we know” –the first episode in the series (“Pilot” 2011) begin with this sentence, in which several protagonists are presented to us in two worlds: one of magic and another of everyday life. This is because “one day they found themselves trapped in a place where all their happy endings have been stolen. Our world” (“Pilot” 2011). Thus, the series shows both sides of every story. Valenzuela (2016, 9) puts it thus: “The guiding idea of the *OUAT* screenwriters is to create a new world of classic tales, using public-domain characters from oral tradition and, later, fixed in writing by writers of fables, folk tales, and fairy tales, providing the audience with new elements that would have appeared in addition to the known facts.”<sup>1</sup>

In this article, it is our intention to carry out a comparative reading of *Hansel and Gretel* – in the Grimm brothers’ version and in the audio-visual version as figured in the plot of the *Once Upon a Time* episode. We are dealing with two

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1 Translations in this article are our own unless otherwise indicated.

different narrative fields: one of literary language and another of filmic language, fields that have interesting relations between each other. To access them from the perspective of comparative literature requires an understanding of the fact that comparing the architecture of expressive forms produces a set of historical, social, and cultural elements, besides technical and aesthetic ones. Although the rapprochement between these two narrative fields – literature and cinema – is historically recognized, it is worth noting that these semiotic systems will not be compared here in the traditional way of drawing them together (searching for sources and influences in order to evaluate the process of cinematographic adaptation so as to prove “fidelity” with respect to the primary work). Instead, we shall cover the inter-art dialogue from the perspective of creative *mouvance*/shifting operations, examining the way the intersemiotic translations promoted in this relationship are processed.

In this context, we propose to observe and understand the relationships between literature and cinema from a broad perspective, considering the producer of the filmic work as a reader with “affective and volitional reactions, expectations, ‘pre-judgements’ or ‘prejudice’ [...] and a historical and temporal contextuality” (Sousa 2001, 33).

In this sequence of ideas, the language operations that seek to translate narrative texts from one language to another, from one medium or technological platform to another, deserve attention. According to Plaza (2003, 98), “the language operation from one medium to another implies a translator’s awareness, one that is able to consult not only the intricacies of the nature of the new technological platform, its potential and limits, but to take, from there, the qualitative leap, i. e. to move from mere reproduction to production.”

There are writings that tell that the anonymous tale of *Hansel and Gretel* was narrated, for a long time, on winter evenings around the fire in the huts of peasants. It became known from the Charles Perrault version, which gives written treatment to orality, and it was later rewritten in a version inspired by literary romanticism by the Grimm brothers. Given that it is impossible to interact in performance as the traditional storytellers did, and the written versions are not able to translate the spontaneous and affective effects of orality as experienced by the illiterate storytellers, who had no sense of line, punctuation, or the other resources used on printed pages, we have chosen just to signal here the existence of this narrative, which has crossed generations in permanent *mouvance*/shifting.

In print culture, the practical dimension of experiencing narration vanishes. Narrator and listener transfer themselves to the book object in a simulacrum of performance – artefacts. As the artist cannot make the voice heard, he trusts “to the eye the task of suggesting to the ear the sound reality” (Zumthor 1993, 125); thus, the written text becomes a “vocal gesture opportunity” (55). The image



fixes itself. As Borges shows, the book becomes an extension of the memory of mankind, of the creative imagination and the life lived beyond appearances.

The unique work of art is now created to be reproduced within the capitalist system. Communication processes are mediated by technology. Mechanisms are developed for spreading and diffusing voice in space and time, capable of reproducing written verbal language, optical techniques of image formation, hybrid processes propagating sound and image.

Many researchers have tried to detect the sources of this literature of anonymous and collective production, but could not find the original, pure texts. These anonymous texts circulated through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance until 1634, when Giambattista Basile published, in Naples, *The Tale of Tales*, subtitled *Pentameron*, in which fairy tales are highlighted. The book contains several of the most recurrent leitmotifs that can be found in stories all over the world.

In the Renaissance (fifteenth and sixteenth centuries), the written word became a significant presence. This was a period in which Italy showed a strong interest in folklore, short stories and folk songs, since the dialects tried to impose themselves as official languages. Basile was a scholar and aristocrat who discovered among Neapolitan peasants the linguistic wonders of the regional dialect. He became famous for the discovery of the stories of enchantment that circulated among the Neapolitans. He sets Mediterranean versions of these narratives down in Neapolitan dialect in his famous *Tale of Tales* or *Pentameron*. Endowed with an excellent linguistic breadth, Basile's works were translated into nine languages.

The French concern to adapt popular stories to the taste of an eighteenth-century audience is notorious. The rediscovery of popular literature by Perrault was aimed at amusing and guiding the moral formation of children, always pointing out rules of behaviour based on bourgeois values of the time. Despite being a transmitter of the prevailing values, Perrault introduced into literature the humble people: chambermaids, butlers, cooks, and others.

Two centuries later, between 1812 and 1822, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm collected these ancient narratives from folk memory and also put them into writing with an artistic quality. Jacob and Wilhelm were German philologists and scholars who gathered stories from the peasants of their country in order to perpetuate the medieval poetic production recorded, until then, only in the memory of the people. The nineteenth century into which the stories are inserted is marked culturally by romanticism, which brought a humanitarian sensitivity, softening the violent images.

Although the old fairy tales of our childhood continue to pronounce their magic words, the way they are told tends to change, reflecting the cultural context in which they appear. Originally inscribed in the oral heart of a people and spread by word of mouth, the tales, in the long run, have been crystallized by means

of the written word, in works by figures such as Basile, Perrault, the Grimms, T. Braga, Câmara Cascudo, and others. Since the twentieth century, they have been transformed in the work of visual art studios and, in the twenty-first century, they are being related to new technologies and the scope of cyberculture.

## **2 *Hansel and Gretel: The plot of the *Once Upon a Time* episode***

The episode (“True North” 2012) begins in Storybrooke, with Henry reading *The Incredible Hulk* comic book, the story of Hulk fighting against Wolverine. Henry is in a supermarket and is heckled by Ava, one of his classmates. Then, Nicholas, Ava’s brother, introduces himself to Henry. Ava invites Henry to accompany them. The market owner asks Henry to open his backpack and finds some stolen candies. Disappointed, Henry understands that Ava spoke to him just to distract him and put things in his backpack.

The scene shifts to the diegesis of the Enchanted Forest, where a lumberjack fells a tree; he is the father of the children. To ensure their safety and make sure that the family can always stay together, the father gives Gretel his compass, hanging it around her neck. After collecting some twigs, Gretel tells Hansel that it is time to return. However, their father has disappeared in the forest. During the search, they become prisoners of the Evil Queen.

Back in Storybrooke, Regina is at the supermarket to solve Henry’s problem. She puts the blame on the two brothers and leaves. At the exit, she meets Emma, the town sheriff, who has been called by the shopkeeper. The phone number of the children’s parents was disabled due to lack of payment, then Emma took the kids back to the house where they said they lived. But, as soon as she left them, the children ran to the place where they actually lived: the basement of an abandoned house; they had no parents.

## **3 *On Once Upon a Time’s Hansel and Gretel episode***

The predominant theme in the traditional tale in the Grimm brothers’ version is privation in its several aspects: the children feel abandoned, without the presence of their parents, and they feel the hardships of poverty and, with it, hunger. The Grimm brothers’ version has as a source the folk tales of the Middle Ages and

the hardships then experienced and transformed into narratives. Thus, the “great famine” which took place in Western Europe between 1315 and 1322 generated the production of diverse traditional tales and chronicles, among them the story of parents who leave their children in the woods, to their own fate, due to lack of food. There are also reports of cannibalism in pursuit of survival, a fact also present in the *Hansel and Gretel* tale, where the witch wants to devour the children: “a callousness that could have predisposed observers to think the worst – murder, even cannibalism – among parents and children when a family member suddenly died or left home unobserved (disappeared) to go begging or find work. The world of famine was a world of ignorance and shadows” (Jordan 1996, 150).

In *Once Upon a Time*, the predominant theme in the *Hansel and Gretel* version is hope, reaffirming the premise of the series. However, according to Valenzuela (2015, 137), when analysing *OUAT*: “The audience that watches the episode and thinks it is a fairy tale transposed to a TV format, with the same features of a narrative intended for children, is mistaken.”

Intended for a young and adult audience, *OUAT* offers the opportunity to juxtapose the same characters and their narrative paths in different diegeses, one in the Enchanted Forest and another in Storybrooke, our world. Such a parallel construction allows the identification of problems which are reiterated throughout the story, leading the audience to a self-questioning attitude about their own everyday lives: facing the situation of abandonment, what attitude is to be taken? What are the institutions that deal with the vulnerable in situations of abandonment like?

In the diegesis of the Enchanted Forest, *OUAT* proposes a Romantic image of the family which recalls, with some modifications, the version that appears in the Grimms’ first edition: in the TV episode, the children’s mother has died, and it is a devoted and gentle father that takes care of the children and watches over the family’s love and togetherness. The father, a lumberjack, is shown working and asks Gretel to look for branches to keep the house warm. Hansel is distracted, inattentive, indecisive, and more childish than Gretel. Despite the physical differences, the episode asserts that they are twins. When the children return in search of the father, they realize he has disappeared and try to locate him. They rely on the father, knowing that he would never abandon them, so they understand that they need to find him.

Although poor, the family displays unity, especially when the twins refuse the Evil Queen’s proposal, offering them the benefits of her palace if they stay with her, leaving their father.

If we reflect on the characters present in the Grimms’ tale and in the diegesis of the Enchanted Forest, we can observe a parallel with the historical reports of the Renaissance that conceive early childhood as a period of learning:

Early childhood was a time for learning. The toddler explored its home, its village, and the surrounding countryside. [...] The experience of childhood and adolescence was supposed to strengthen the body, sharpen the senses, equip the child to deal with adversity, and above all prepare him or her in due course to become a parent. The influence of the community made every child a product of the group and equipped him or her to do what society expected. In such circumstances there was little intimacy, but a growing sense of belonging, for better or worse, to an extended family. (Gélis 2003, 312–313)

By bringing the narrative path of lonely children to Storybrooke, the topic is given a profile close to the reality shared by the audience of the series: childhood and abandonment, the institutions that care for children in a situation of abandonment, and policies that allow the separation of siblings in the case of adoption or shelter in institutions.

According to A. Farge, who portrays the situation of Paris in the eighteenth century, the reality of child abandonment was concentrated in the disadvantaged layers of society: “The number of abandoned children is impressive, and the foundling asylum is nothing more than a desolate refuge where diseases and mortalities organize a tenacious destruction” (1997, 581).

The paths of the episode’s narrative add to the Grimms’ traditional tale the questioning of the minor’s vulnerability in a situation of abandonment, a recurring problem throughout history. In *OUAT*, both the heroine Emma and her son Henry face the same situation and its consequences. “Vulnerability” is understood as a situation connected “to the idea of fragility and dependence, which connects to the situation of children and adolescents, especially those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. [...] In certain situations, the state of vulnerability may affect health, even in the absence of disease” (Fonseca et al. 2013).

In the Enchanted Forest, Hansel and Gretel decide to follow the orders of the Evil Queen to steal a magical element from the Blind Witch’s house, because they believe it would be the only way to see their father again. The Queen warns that one should not touch anything in the house, but Hansel ignores the warning and devours a piece of candy. Hansel succumbs easily to the candy’s temptation, which marks his naivety or the hunger he was feeling. The image of the Evil Queen, offering the children a wealthy life, associated with the Blind Witch, who exposes the food, refers to the Christian fight against the devil, in which Jesus is tempted by the devil to eat and break his fast (first temptation) and the devil shows Jesus all the kingdoms and the glory that will be given if he gives in to the third temptation.

In both *OUAT* narratives, the children steal and lie in order to be together with their father again, who represents a guarantee of balance within life in society. Without him, the children were afraid of being separated through internment in orphanages or foster homes. The “saviour” Emma understands the children’s sit-

uation and pities them; within the fantastic scope of Storybrooke, Emma proposes real solutions to deal with recurrent conflicts in the audience's real world.

The audience shares knowledge that is despised by Emma: the children cannot leave Storybrooke since they are under the Evil Queen's curse. This condition is part of the creation of this fantastic universe of Storybrooke:

The fantastic text must rely on the assumption of a "real" world, on what we understand as "reality", codified by our laws of reason and social conventions. Several literary devices are employed to convey this impression of veracity or authenticity, one of these being the use of spatial markers in descriptions and of real spatial referents. Because it is presented as an exception within the textual reality and thus disrupts the logic that rules that storyworld, the fantastic element or event always generates a conflict. This contrasts with other literary forms in which the supernatural is an accepted part of the codes ruling the storyworld. (García 2015, 16)

## 4 Final considerations

In our view, *OUAT* is based on the concept of hope. The *Hansel and Gretel* fairy tale, in the Grimm brothers' first version from 1812, reveals, at the same time, a mild reading of the harsh medieval reality of abandonment and child poverty, softened by a veil of wonder: the happy ending is perpetuated with the death of the child-devouring witch by fire. Evil is destroyed, expunged through purification by the element of fire. It remains, then, for the twins to survive, together and free of all evil:

The old woman in the hot oven began to cry and to wail, but Gretel ran away, and the old woman burned up miserably. Gretel ran to Hansel and unlocked his door. He jumped out, and they kissed each other and were overjoyed. The whole house was filled with precious stones and pearls. They filled their pockets, then ran away and found their way back home. The father rejoiced when he saw them once more, for he had not had a happy day since they had been gone, and now he was a rich man. However, the mother had died. (Grimm and Grimm 2002 [1812 version])

There is no punishment for the children who took for themselves the riches of the witch, and no punishment for the longing and regretful father, who receives them merrily; but the tale shows no mercy for the mother who chose to abandon her children to their own fate.

In the Enchanted Forest, there is no mother, just the zealous father who is captured and suffers from the forced absence of the children. The Evil Queen aims to steal the magic apple and uses the children as an instrument to fool the Blind Witch, who is physically punished for her wickedness, as is often the case with

popular characters, be they Romantic or from oral tradition: blindness is her negative, scary mark. The children resist committing illegal actions, but the Queen's blackmail forces the minors to steal and throw the Blind Witch into the oven. It should be noted that the fire that kills the Blind Witch is lit by the Evil Queen, and not by the children. This narrative option is in accordance with expectations about a series that is aired in the US on Sundays at 8 p.m., and thus as a family programme. It is therefore necessary to remove the children's responsibility for a death, even if it is connected to the universe of wonder.

On the other hand, there is no happy ending in the Enchanted Forest, as the Evil Queen imposes her curse and the family finds itself unable to get together again. This is the function of the heroine Emma in the diegesis of Storybrooke: in "our world," the solution backed by law is the one in which children go to an institution that deals with the vulnerable in a situation of abandonment. The mayor makes use of statutes and laws governing the situation, without thinking about the possibility of reuniting the family, trying to find out who the unknown father is. Emma takes this mission on herself, this time as a "saviour" of the family, since she herself stayed and accepted the challenge of remaining in the city in order to get closer to her son Henry, who was given up for adoption as soon as he was born and had been adopted by Regina, the Enchanted Forest's Evil Queen.

In the diegesis of Storybrooke, the audience identifies the constitution of the contemporary family according to Oliveira:

The composition [of the family] may vary between consensual unions of separated or divorced partners; same-sex unions; unions of people with children from other marriages; mothers alone with their children; grandparents with grandchildren; and a multitude of forms to be defined, putting us in front of a new family, distinct from the classic nuclear family template. (Oliveira 2009, 68)

The monoparental template of the man who discovers himself as the father of two children offers the possibility of a happy ending for the characters of the narrative core, punished by the solitude imposed by the Evil Queen's curse. After so many setbacks, the family's unification suggests a cathartic effect on the audience, and – why not – even on the Emma character who, while relating her own traumatic experience of giving the child up for adoption, undergoes a cathartic effect, a purification of emotions, from the point of view of Freudian psychology.

The interest that the *Once Upon a Time* series generates in the audience is precisely this possibility of catharsis as a purge, creating the double idea that we are stuck to a curse – everyday life – but that if we face that challenge based on hope, it is possible that each one of us can figure out what we are and what we could be.

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# Storytelling in Advertising: The Case of *Os Últimos Desejos da Kombi*

**Abstract:** The aim of this study is to analyse an advertising video produced in 2014 and entitled *Os Últimos Desejos da Kombi* [Kombi: Last Wishes], a creation of AlmapBBDO for Volkswagen do Brazil, which closed its vehicle assembly line in January 2014 (video available at <https://vimeo.com/90870501>). The film presents a contemporary trend in advertising creation: storytelling, which means narratives based on real experiences, allied to a communicative strategy and fiction-writing techniques, and results in stories that are both involving and memorable. This tendency seeks to create affective ties with consumers so that the stories are remembered and narrated positively several times, thus being propagated by the recipient that was impacted by them.

**Keywords:** advertising copywriting, advertising creation, *Os Últimos Desejos da Kombi*, storytelling, transmedia

## 1 Storytelling as an advertising tool

Storytelling is one of the fundamental components in the formation of a culture because it makes it possible to find plausible explanations for reality. The stories told in the media gain the dimension of unquestionable truths to be read, interpreted, assimilated, and incorporated into daily life and the imaginary. As a privileged tool, media communication adopts the oral narrative as a strategy for dialogue with the recipient/consumer, recovering the practice of that same oral tradition and coupling it with non-verbal representations of imagistic and sonorous components, resulting in pieces that aim to construct a differentiated, memorable, and exciting communication. In this dialogical relationship between the narrator and the recipient/consumer, advertising creation identifies, by means of the fictional report, an opportunity to create films capable of bringing the two instances of narrator and recipient closer by diving into the world of imagination, of dreams, of desires, establishing at any given moment the chance, even if temporary, to satisfy this imaginary powered by narrative where the receiver feels he is the protagonist of the story. In contemporary times, technological breakthroughs as well as access to new technology have given rise to differentiated consumers connected to social networks and all manner of sites that allow an incessant activity of exploring, finding, acquiring, and sharing experiences. The

consumer becomes the protagonist of many stories, publishing and commenting on his own narratives.

In order to draw attention, arouse interest, generate a wish, and lead to purchase, advertising appropriates the art of narrative to communicate with consumers in an exciting and, at the same time, informative way by means of its audio-visual productions. The adoption of the art of narrating to persuade, inform, or remind the consumer about a particular product or brand has become a common practice in advertising. Approaching consumers by inserting them into a narrative context is one of the gimmicks used by the creative teams in advertising agencies to create, maintain, and strengthen links with their audiences so that they identify and recognize themselves as part of a particular group for which a certain product or service – the one being advertised – is designed, be it in the traditional or segmented mass media.

The act of telling and listening to stories has been present since primitive societies, having the goal of understanding the real world based on a mythical perspective:

Moreover, in this infinite variety of forms, it is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; indeed narrative starts with the very history of mankind; there is not, there has never been anywhere, any people without narrative; all classes, all human groups, have their stories, and very often those stories are enjoyed by men of different and even opposite cultural backgrounds [...]. Like life itself, it is there, international, transhistorical, transcultural. (Barthes 1975, 237)

In the situation described here, by borrowing the art of storytelling, narrative production in advertising proposes audio-visuals that narrow the distance between narrator and consumer, allowing a dive into the world of imagination, of dreams, of desires, and of satisfaction. As an integral part of the narrative, the consumer identifies himself as viewer and actor, sometimes the main one, sometimes the supporting one.

The proliferation of brands, products, and services that impact consumers daily requires a communication to be remembered in a striking, positive, and informative way. It is in this context that storytelling techniques are adopted and reshaped to win consumers over.

“Storytelling,” in advertising practice, is a term that defines the act of telling a story, is a logic of structuring thinking and diffusing narrative based on life experiences of one’s own that creates impact on the target audience, which accepts the story as engaging and memorable. When the term “storytelling” is adopted and applied to organizational communication and advertising, it can be understood as the art of telling real or fictional stories, either of individuals or companies, with an emotional and engaging tone able to arouse the attention of the recip-

ient by means of mnemonic stimuli, synaesthesia, and imagination, providing experienced pleasures – or just desired ones. The appropriation of storytelling in advertising means making use of memory with the goal of creating affective ties with consumers so that the stories can be remembered and narrated several times in a positive way. In turn, storytelling is a resource that is applied by means of several media in a transmedia process, that is, media convergence as a cultural practice. According to Henry Jenkins (2011): “Transmedia storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story” (Jenkins 2011).

In advertising practice, storytelling is characterized by a confessional tone, first-person narrative, the use of archetypes as characters, colloquial expressions, and universal themes, whose emotional value maintains suspense and stimulates the audience’s curiosity and emotional stamina. All these aspects are present in the video *Os Últimos Desejos da Kombi*.

## 2 Analysis of the video *Os Últimos Desejos da Kombi*

The analysis of the audio-visual production *Os Últimos Desejos da Kombi* [Kombi: Last Wishes] from 2014 (four minutes and ten seconds), created by the AlmapBBDO advertising agency for Volkswagen Brazil, and produced by Spray Filmes, is an example of the use of transmedia storytelling in advertising, representing a diversity that includes, in addition to audio-visual material, printed pieces, relationships with consumers, actions in social networks, and marketing activities that encompass the whole world, among other things – all to bring the production of a product to an end. The audio-visual piece which is the subject of this article is a narrative that aims to move, sensitize, and make viewers travel through time, while however informing them of a product discontinuation.

Reusing the oral narrator, the piece points to a traditional narrator who tells its experiences and shares them with its recipients: “Experience which is passed on from mouth to mouth is the source from which all storytellers have drawn. And among those who have written down the tales, it is the great ones whose written version differs least from the speech of the many nameless storytellers” (Benjamin 2006, 83). Narrated in the first person, following the device of prosopopoeia, it is the vehicle that tells, in a testimonial format, its own story, as if it were an old lady (played by the actress Maria Alice Vergueiro) that evokes Jung’s “Wise

Old Man” archetype, entering into a dialogue with the receiver and constituting Benjamin’s “Merchant Sailor” metaphor, which is presented in his text “The Storyteller” (Benjamin 2006, 83–109): the person who, as a result of his work, travels through several places and meets narratives from distant localities. This omniscient narrative instance shows its worldview, its experiences, in a diegesis in multiple spatio-temporal situations.

At first, the narrative shows an image of a clear sky with bright clouds and the voice of the “old lady” Kombi saying that she is “surprisingly well.”<sup>1</sup> The image presents the idea of death from a religious perspective where the sky is a post-mortem peaceful space. Following that, the camera descends to earth, in a low-angle shot, in a fast-moving shot, showing the double line that separates the two lanes of a highway. It is the Kombi that “hits the road” and begins to tell its stories, all of them in a metaphor for the long road of life.

At 15 seconds, we have a general plan of the road to be covered by a Kombi as blue as the sky, with the license plate “VWB 2013” (Volkswagen Brazil). Its horn marks the appearance of the title: “Kombi: Last Wishes.”

Then, at 25 seconds, the image acquires aspects of an old documentary in black and white, in the 1940s style, set in Germany. The idea is to show the designer of the Kombi, the Dutchman Ben Pon, and his son, Ben Pon, Jr, a boy of about eight years old. The scene recalls images of *Citizen Kane* (1941) by Orson Wells, specifically the scene where the young Kane plays in the snow. These images depict the idea of reality and, at the same time, of a dramatic construction extracted from a classic film, bringing both the video and the Kombi closer to the concept of a work of art.

The narrative instance also introduces ironies: assuming the Kombi’s personality, the old lady comments on her own curves (“nice curves”) and talks to the recipient straightforwardly, in a speech both friendly and playful, saying that “if you are a human being and live on this planet, we have definitely met somewhere,” that is, that all recipients have already seen her. Then, in a hoarse voice, she adds a new irony: “I don’t care what they may say, I have been around.”

In these latter words, the narrator assumes a sarcastic and mocking tone, in an ambiguity that captures the idea that she has experienced a lot in life and been through many situations – many drivers – while the image shows three Kombis driving on an oval circuit. Such irony and sarcasm are a sign of the conflict: the narrative instance has aged and this will have consequences. The recipient expects to know how the Kombi character deals with this situation, what her life was like, and what the future will be without her.

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<sup>1</sup> All translations from *Os Últimos Desejos da Kombi* are our own. An English version of the production is available at <https://bit.ly/18fBDY1> (12 March 2019).

It is worth remembering that car adverts generally feature young people and not the elderly, since they depend on the notion of speed, dynamism, and innovation. The voice of an aging lady proposes the opposite of what is usually employed for this line of products.

In the video, the narrator comes across to the consumer as a friend, establishing a close relationship not only with the recipient who is listening at that particular moment, but also with all of those who profited from the benefits of the Kombi in some way all over the world.

At 58 seconds, the image goes back to Brazil, introducing the couple of Frank and Isis Kochig, who travelled around the world in a Kombi, passing through twenty-five countries. In the image, the scenes show a Kombi cruising through forests, deserts, streams, and isolated places, on an adventure in which the partnership between the couple and the Kombi is established as something that surpasses the mere use of a vehicle: it is a dynamic relationship which allows access to leisure, fun, and knowledge of new cultures. The Kombi represents here an intermediary, the object of desire that becomes a partner in adventure.

Soon after comes the story of Mr Nenê: as the narration asserts, “she” was taken by Mr Nenê to three World Cups. The personification of the Kombi is evident by the time the car is brought to the World Cup playing the role of the adventurer’s companion. Decorated with the Brazilian flag, the Kombi was transported by land, sea, and air to get to the World Cups in Mexico, the US, and Japan. As in the previous episode, the Kombi is responsible for providing opportunities to make dreams come true.

The following story told by the “old lady” is Miriam Maya’s, who was born inside a Kombi; for this reason, the Kombi-narrator feels responsible for the girl as if she were her daughter. According to Marcelo Nogueira, this was one of the most remarkable stories reported by Kombi consumers: “There’s a girl whose pregnant mother was about to have a baby and there was no time. She got in a neighbour’s Kombi that would take her to the hospital. She was born inside the Kombi. Because of that, she has a love relationship with the Kombi. She tattooed a Kombi onto her leg. She loves the Kombi even today. It’s a nice story” (Nogueira 2013; our translation).

In addition, the North American artist Bob Hieronimus decorated his Kombi and took it to the Woodstock Festival in 1969, making the car a symbol that marked the hippie generation.

Not just the couple but also Nenê, Miriam, and Bob are shown by the camera as an intruder that breaks into the intimacy of the characters, searching for objects and images that represent their bond with the Kombi. The recipient shares this intrusion of the lens, sees the Kombi tattooed on Miriam’s leg, finds pictures of Bob at Woodstock beside the Kombi, and meets Frank and Iris’s daughter, and

witnesses their reaction when they receive the Kombi's odometer as a gift at home.

To create suspense, the narration is interrupted and there is a brief silence; in the image, an ad on a magazine page claims, with a bang: "There goes the Kombi. Soon, in no dealership near you." This is what Marcelo Nogueira, editor of the text in the video, called "de-launching," as he explains:

We create a text that would be the launching of a car, but it is just the opposite. The end: "Here comes, or rather, there goes the Kombi. The world automotive industry least expected de-launching. And like all the Kombis, it will be released with no trip computer, no air bag, no ABS brakes, no touch screen panel, but with retro style and charm from the factory." (Nogueira 2013; our translation)

The audio-visual narrative rhythm is supported by contemporary and old images in quick succession; the variation of scenes (characters, locations, and times) is easily observed by the recipient. This feature catches attention and arouses interest, causing anticipation.

Subsequently, in a detailed plan, a magazine falls on the table and a bass sound is heard, alerting us to the thrill of an unexpected announcement. Soon, TV newsreel scenes from around the world pop up and announce the closing of the Kombi assembly line in Brazil. The images throng onto the screen, in multiple idioms, and the narrative instance shows surprise about the world reaction: "It was a commotion. Not even I knew that so many people cared about me." That text is spoken exactly in the middle of the video, at 2 minutes and 5 seconds. It generates credibility and, at the same time, surprises the recipient, who observes himself included in the group that feels touched by the discontinuation of the Kombi.

The "old lady" then presents to the recipient her will, posted in the form of an ad on a newspaper page. In a noble gesture, the Kombi proves to be generous. In the will, people are honoured by the vehicle due to the love they expressed for her. Nenê got the hub autographed by Pelé; Miriam got the first draft for the Kombi designed by Pon, which is presented at the beginning of the video; Frank and Iris got the odometer with the most mileage possible; Bob got an art kit in the shape of a Kombi; Rolando Bassini, who turned the Kombi into an Italian trattoria, was presented with ravioli moulds in the shape of a Kombi. The video depicts many admirers of the Kombi being presented with items, including the delivery of gifts to fans from other countries. Such a feature shows that the affection for the vehicle is universal, just like the experiences provided by it.

However, as the video deals with Kombi's last wishes, the last of them still remains: seeing again the Kombi designer's son in the Netherlands, who, according to the narrative instance, is technically Kombi's brother. In that image, present

and past are united, the child and the already ageing son of the designer, who smiles at the sight of the Kombi in front of his house.

The video is concluded with the Kombi's last words, in a confessional tone: "How do I feel? Surprisingly well." Those are the same words spoken at the beginning of the video, giving it a cyclical dimension, that is, a circular time, connoting the Kombi's perennial presence, its immortality. In the image, the Kombi follows the road, fading through the right-hand third of the image, where the sky occupies most of the screen, with the predominance of the sunset light metaphorizing farewell and death. Then comes the end of the background music track, and the image fades out to a black screen.

The "old lady" develops her speech as an omniscient narrator, able to comment on each experienced moment as if she were ubiquitous, for she talks as if she were in another dimension, beyond death.

The first-person narrative is interrupted in some moments of the video, as when it shows Bob talking about the art on his Kombi and when it displays parts of the news commenting on the end of an era: the Kombi era.



**Fig. 1:** Advertising for *Os Últimos Desejos da Kombi* (Matsubara 2013). Promotional image.

In a globalized world which is also saturated with products, information, and brands, it is a challenge to catch the recipient's/consumer's attention, to create messages that stand out for relevance, effectiveness, and utility and become memorable, establishing ties and generating bonds. Thus, by these means, storytelling tells a life story connected with ordinary people (after all, who has never seen a



Kombi?) – real people – by means of several methods. The video is complemented by several resources and actions in other media, according to the characteristics of each method.

The lacunar report structures the audio-visual composition, since all the stories narrated in fragments must be completed by the recipient's imagination in a process that includes memory, personal involvement, and emotion.

Through the lacunar report proposed in the video *Os Últimos Desejos da Kombi*, the campaign manages to align with the VW brand and its values. The Kombi in the video is blue as the clear sky, free of pollutants; that visual choice is aligned with the VW proposal entitled “Think Blue,”<sup>2</sup> whose target is sustainability and designs with a focus on education, social development, and ecological solutions.

### 3 Final considerations

The collection of stories from fans from all over the world was part of the Kombi “de-launching” proposal. In following that strategy, more than four hundred stories from all parts of the planet were received. This engages with and appeals to consumers' feelings; they see here a chance to talk about their lives, showing a story worth being shared and known by all.

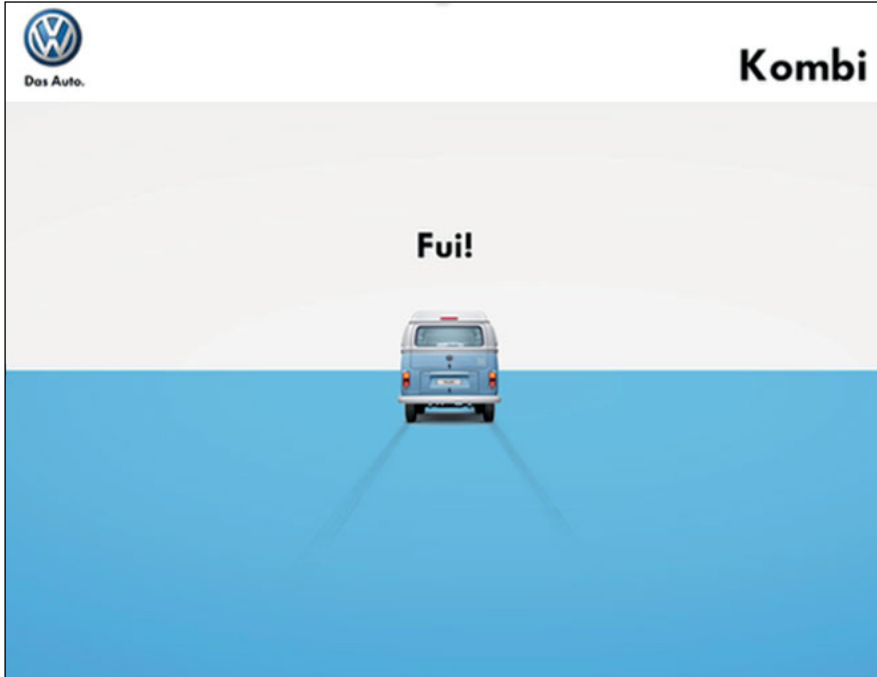
Therefore, it is emotion that, from the beginning, sets the tone of the video *Os Últimos Desejos da Kombi*, which imagines death, the end, the departure, the end of a motor vehicle's life personified by a voice. The images enable a journey through time across almost seventy years of the Kombi. The audio-visual narrative construction elevates the vehicle to a symbolic level, presenting it as an icon at several moments in history at times when paradigms were breaking: the Cold War years, or in Woodstock with the hippie movement, or even when it carries people from all over the world, from the most diverse cultures, societies, and religions.

Its multifunctionality allowed this vehicle model to win fans and followers, since its facilities and capacity to adapt allowed it to meet numerous requirements for different audiences in many situations: work, transportation, tourism, recreation, and even homes.

The attempt to identify with the public and thematic universality are recurring elements, and the farewell was the way found by the creative advertising team to communicate with emotion to consumers the end of the manufacture

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<sup>2</sup> Available <https://www.brandchannel.com/2011/05/23/vw-brings-eco-forward-think-blue-campaign-to-the-us/> (9 December 2015).



**Fig. 2:** “Kombi. Gone!” From Volkswagen’s official Kombi website (<http://kombi.vw.com.br/pt/> [9 December 2015]). Promotional Image.

of a product that had existed for more than seventy years – one that had had only two models since its creation, and only a few versions of them, but that had always been highly sought-after by consumers as a versatile utility vehicle with an attractive price.

The game of suspense presented in the script, added to curiosity and emotional stamina, constitutes this lacunar narrative, which makes possible the exploration of other stories inserted in several media in a transmedia intertextuality. Beginning at the end, the narrative demystifies and, at the same time, humanizes the vehicle-people relationship, rendering a tribute to the Kombi “de-launching” as perceived by the creators of the campaign.

*Os Últimos Desejos da Kombi* gained due recognition among consumers, who acquired, in one week, all 1,200 units produced in the Kombi Last Edition numbered series, and also acknowledgement as an advertising campaign. It won seven awards at the 2014 Cannes Film Festival, including two Golden Lions in the Branded Content & Entertainment category (focused on the creation and integration of original content and a brand) and Five Bronze Lions in the Direct (com-

munication designed to generate specific answers or actions), Public Relations, Film, and Cyber categories. It is worth considering that all this was achieved not to launch a product or service, but to “de-launch” it, making the public aware of the end of the production of a product that spanned generations: the Kombi, due to its design and structure, could not accommodate new technologies and safety requirements, such as mandatory ABS brakes and airbags in all cars, which distanced it from contemporary expectations for vans and utility vehicles.

Today, when accessing Volkswagen’s official website on the Kombi, we find the following image, which ends the campaign:

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## **4 The State of Adaptation Studies Today**



Brigitte Le Juez

# Modern Film Adaptations of Fairy Tales: An Examination of Four 2012 Versions of *Snow White*

**Abstract:** In order to broaden the understanding of adaptation, one must examine the ways that texts are read, rewritten, and retold. The fluidity of the term allows us to discuss adaptations of fairy tales that transform the source text into something new that functions independently, even when, as is the case here, several adaptations of the same source text appear within a very short space of time. Modern retellings of fairy tales are related to specific contexts which are closely linked to the choice of a particular story (or a particular version of it), the necessity of retelling it at a given time, and the appeal of retelling the story in the way(s) it is retold (including mixing versions of the same tale or of similar tales). *Snow White* lends itself to an analysis of this phenomenon, as four adaptations appeared, all in 2012 and all as feature-length films: Tarsem Singh's *Mirror Mirror*, Rupert Sanders's *Snow White and the Huntsman*, Pablo Berger's *Blancanieves*, and Siegrid Alnoy's *Miroir mon amour*. Each of these films brings its own experimental quality to the remodelling of the tale. This article analyses the various creative techniques used by each of the directors, reflecting their cultural contexts as well as modern, global values and the evolving nature of adaptation.

**Keywords:** fairy tales, film adaptations, Grimms, Snow White

The deliberate rendition of a specific text, which adaptation represents, is particularly complex when adapting fairy tales for the screen. Whereas many films are adaptations of texts with which most viewers are unfamiliar, fairy tales, in one form or another, are generally well known to wide audiences. This means that the transformation of the perceived source text or hypotext<sup>1</sup> into something novel involves overcoming specific challenges in order to give the audience the pleasure of recognition and at the same time allow the film to function independently.

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<sup>1</sup> Gérard Genette (1997, 5) wrote: "Hypertextuality refers to any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the hypertext) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the hypotext), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary." Genette (1997, 304) also describes "proximation" as a movement through which the hypertext transposes the diegesis of its hypotext to bring it up to date and closer to its own audience (in temporal, geographic, or social terms).



*Snow White* lends itself to an analysis of this process because it is one of the most adapted of fairy tales, an analysis rendered more challenging here by the fact that four feature-film adaptations came out in 2012 from four different countries (thus bringing more cultural references into play): in order of release, they are *Mirror Mirror* by the Indian director Tarsem Singh,<sup>2</sup> *Snow White and the Huntsman* by the English director Rupert Sanders,<sup>3</sup> *Blancanieves* [Snow White] by the Spanish director Pablo Berger,<sup>4</sup> and *Miroir mon amour* [Mirror My Love] by the French director Siegrid Alnoy.<sup>5</sup>

Each of these films brings with it its own experimental quality, whether it be – to name just a few examples – in subverting the central theme of the rivalry between (step)mother and daughter (not only in relation to the masculine figures, but also in relation to the ethical struggle between inner and outer beauty); or in using special effects and animatronics to explore and enhance the visual possibilities of the marvellous and the fantastic in fairy tales; or in developing a modern, sometimes sociological or feminist perspective on the heroine's plight and on the story's resolution. This article aims to investigate the various creative techniques used by the different directors to retell the tale, and their innovative visual approaches to reflecting the constant and universal evolution of ethical values.

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**2** Released in March 2012. Screenplay: Marc Klein and Jason Keller from a story by Melisa Wallack, based on *Snow White* by the Brothers Grimm. US, Czech, and Canadian production. Producers: Ryan Kavanaugh, Bernie Goldmann, Brett Ratner, and Kevin Misher. Starring Lily Collins, Julia Roberts, Armie Hammer, Nathan Lane, Michael Lerner, Sean Bean, and others. Cinematography: Brendan Galvin. Running time: 106 minutes.

**3** Released in June 2012. Screenplay by Hossein Amini, Evan Daugherty, and John Lee Hancock, from a story by Evan Daugherty based on *Snow White* by the Brothers Grimm. Starring Kristen Stewart, Charlize Theron, Chris Hemsworth, Sam Claflin, Sam Spruell, Ian McShane, Bob Hoskins, and others. Cinematography: Greig Fraser. Running time: 127 minutes.

**4** Released in September 2012. Screenplay by Pablo Berger. Music by Alfonso de Vilallonga. Starring Macarena García, Maribel Verdú, Daniel Giménez Cacho, Ángela Molina, Pere Ponce, and others. Cinematography: Kiko de la Rica. Running time: 105 minutes. *Blancanieves* was the Spanish representative at the Academy Awards in 2013 in the category of Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. It won ten Goya Awards, including Best Picture and Best Original Screenplay.

**5** Released in October 2012. Screenplay by Siegrid Alnoy and Lise Macheboeuf. Starring Judith Chemla, Fanny Ardant, Carlo Brandt, Laurent Stocker, Aurore Clément, and Jean-Pierre Kalfon in the main roles. Cinematography: Sabine Lancelin. Running time: 90 minutes.

Among the many adaptations of the tale by the Brothers Grimm (Grimm and Grimm 2005) which have been surveyed by Jack Zipes in *The Enchanted Screen: The Unknown History of Fairy-Tale Films* (2011), it is impossible not to highlight Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), which has over time become an unavoidable point of reference,<sup>6</sup> a sort of "shadow hypotext" – so much so that some of its variations on the Grimms' tale are now standard motifs in the plots of new adaptations. To take one example (assuming readers are familiar with the storyline): in the original, when the Evil Queen realizes Snow White was not killed by the Hunter as ordered, she decides to kill her herself. She makes three attempts: she tries first to choke Snow White with a silk lace, and then to poison her with a comb she places in her hair (in both cases, the dwarfs arrive in time to rescue Snow White), and finally she offers her a poisoned apple which apparently kills her. In this case, Snow White is saved by the fact that she did not swallow the piece of apple; it is only stuck in her throat, and a sudden stumble by the Prince's servants carrying her glass coffin causes her to spit it out.<sup>7</sup> In Disney, only the deadly apple device remains, and it produces a kind of sleeping-death enchantment which only a kiss of true love can, and generally does, reverse. These two combined changes tend to be systematically repeated in subsequent adaptations of the tale.<sup>8</sup>

The directors under analysis here have found ways to pay tribute to and subvert both the Grimms' original tale and the seminal Disney adaptation. They do not conform to established modifications: Alnoy revisits the Queen's three attempts at killing Snow White and turns them into gestures of motherly love; in Tarsem's film, the Princess kisses the Prince and before she bites into the apple offers it back to the Queen whose disguise has not fooled her, and toys with her, saying: "Age before beauty"; Berger's *Blancanieves* receives the true-love kiss from one of the dwarfs; and Sander's *Snow White* remains asleep when kissed by the Prince but does wake up when kissed by the Hunter.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> According to Eric Smoodin (2012, 7), it has stood out among Hollywood's animation films. However, for Maria Tatar (1999, 74), it "has so eclipsed other versions of the story that it is easy to forget that hundreds of variants have been collected over the past century in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas."

<sup>7</sup> In the original, the apple is also of a dual nature; the Queen/Witch offers half of it to Snow White and eats the other, creating a situation of trust, so Snow White is deceived in the first version, rather than naive, as in Disney's version.

<sup>8</sup> There are other similarly fundamental deviations, such as the Queen's punishment and death.

<sup>9</sup> As in the Grimms' version, in the versions of Tarsem, Berger, and Sanders, the apple is offered during celebrations in public – revealing the Queen for what she is (which also gets her killed in public in Berger's version).

The directors, each in their own way, also reintroduce the sexual elements which were present in the story in its earliest known oral form as it was originally recorded by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm in 1810 but which the brothers removed in order to make it suitable for children. As Ruth Bottigheimer (2009) has shown, the authorship and audience of fairy tales used to be adult. Violence was indeed not censured, as a 1815 review of the *Kinder- und Haus-Märchen* (the Grimms' *Children's and Household Fairy Tales*) confirms by saying "This [is] not a book to put into the hands of children,"<sup>10</sup> and our four film makers purposely bring the tale back to its first intended audience with more or less explicit scenes of sexual intimacy – with the exception of Tarsem who claims, in an interview, that his is a "family film" (quoted in Radish 2012b).

The reason why 2012 was such a prolific year for adaptations of *Snow White* is related to the two-hundredth anniversary of the first volume of the Grimms' collection to which *Snow White* belongs,<sup>11</sup> and also to the seventy-fifth anniversary of Disney's own *Snow White*.<sup>12</sup> Both were celebrated with different cultural and academic events as well as publications. Alnoy's film, for example, was commissioned by the Franco-German TV channel, Arte.

Besides taking part in the tributes, the directors seem to have taken a personal interest in the ventures. Interestingly, as mentioned before, all four films claim to be based on the Grimms' tale, which means they claim to return to a specific hypotext, although it is more likely that they and/or the screenwriters either used translations or worked from memory, which in both cases would mean there was at least one earlier level of adaptation and interpretation. Alnoy and Berger wrote their respective scripts themselves. Tarsem and Sanders were given screenplays. However, Tarsem insists he added his own tone (Bibbiani 2011; Nemiroff 2012) and stresses that he had not seen Disney's *Snow White* until he made his film (Radish 2012b). Sanders claims he had his own views on the tale as he had read the Grimms' version and seen the Disney adaptation (Radish 2012a). All the direc-

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**10** Quoted in Maria Tatar (2003, 15). For more on this question, see Michelle Ann Abate (2012, 181–183).

**11** The celebrations lasted two years, as the second volume was published in 1814. Among many celebratory events, several literary adaptations appeared in Germany to mark the occasion (see Zipes 2015); a dedicated conference was organized in Kassel (near the brothers' birthplace); and, in the US, Norton published a bicentennial edition. *The Guardian* published an article entitled "Grimm's Fairy Tales: 200th Anniversary Triggers a Year of Celebration" by Kate Connolly on 20 December 2012 (Connolly 2012). It is also worth noting that *Snow White* is a tale that is quite specifically attached to the Grimms, as opposed to other traditional tales, like *Red Riding Hood* or *Cinderella*, which are also attached to Charles Perrault.

**12** See Mindy Aloff (2013) and Eric Smoodin (2012).

tors therefore indicate that they left their personal mark on the final product, which is the essential point of any retelling, even if some of the choices in the US adaptations are evidently commercially motivated.

There are some similarities in their choices too, starting with the character of Snow White: the title of the original tale is *Sneewittchen*, which means “Little Snow White” – little, because the protagonist is a seven-year old girl. The adaptations being discussed, however, remove that element as their protagonist is between sixteen and eighteen (as in the versions by Disney and others). To show some fidelity to the Grimms’ urtext, the films take into account the protagonist’s development from childhood. *Mirror Mirror* offers a short animated prelude explaining Snow White’s early years. Berger dedicates the first third of his film to his child heroine, called Carmen, who only becomes Blacanieves after she runs away during adolescence and loses her memory after a traumatic experience (a near-rape by the Queen’s lover sent to kill her). *Miroir mon amour* parallels past and present with intimate, alternating scenes of mother and daughter at different ages. The films, therefore, all portray nubile young women, at first barely able to think and fight for themselves, but who in a state of total dispossession and despair finally rebel against a particular order.<sup>13</sup>

While retaining a stable core through motifs that demonstrate symbolic continuities,<sup>14</sup> such as the physical details of the heroine or the mirror on the wall, these adaptations add many narratively and visually idiosyncratic elements to the tale – yet without resorting to indigenization. Indeed, all four versions retain the distantiation<sup>15</sup> created by the original “Once upon a time” through various devices: a story world that is white, snow-covered, cold, and realistic in *Miroir mon amour*, heavily digitalized in *Mirror Mirror*, and provided with further computer-generated imagery (CGI) in *Snow White and the Huntsman*; and, at the other extreme, a black-and-white, silent film in *Blacanieves*, which is, like *Miroir mon amour*, seemingly situated in the 1920s (although only *Blacanieves* makes use of the period cinematically, using intertitles, for example – an aspect which, moreover, restores the written text inside the narrative).

These changes are essential. While fairy tales tend to project profoundly unconventional aspirations for individual and social change, they can also

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<sup>13</sup> In the case of *Miroir mon amour*, however, the order is a natural one, as a daughter must be allowed to take her mother’s place as Queen.

<sup>14</sup> Steven Swann Jones (1990, 32), identifies nine allomotifs (which may correspond to episodes): origin (birth of the heroine), jealousy, expulsion, adoption, renewed jealousy, death, exhibition, resuscitation, and resolution.

<sup>15</sup> The effect of distancing or estranging a spectator through the form or content of a text challenges basic codes and conventions, and therefore mainstream ideological expectations.

contain, as Jack Zipes (2002, 154) maintains, a “conservative feudal ideology” that can be reactionary, especially where women and minority groups are concerned – we might think here of the traditional stereotypes surrounding Snow White, the Evil Queen, and the Prince, as well as the dwarfs. These stereotypes are challenged in our four films.

One convention has been to present Snow White as docile. However, in *Snow White and the Huntsman*, she tames wild creatures including a ferocious monster. Later, dressed like Joan of Arc, she leads an army against the Evil Queen. In *Blancanieves*, she becomes a successful bullfighter.<sup>16</sup> The films are thus faithful to the spirit of the fairy tale, which, as Andrew Teverson (2013, 132) reminds us, is to resist “easy generalisation when it comes to the attribution of cultural and political function.” Fairy tales and their adaptations, as fruits of the imagination, retain their dissident spirit, and, even if “fairy-tale fantasy has been used increasingly by the culture industry to compensate for, but not to offer remedies from, social injustices and lack of individual autonomy,” as Teverson argues (2013, 133), their narratives continue to express desires for self-transformation and hopes of a fairer world. Our four adaptations, however, are not utopian, and their liberating power does not offer clear-cut, idealized conclusions.<sup>17</sup> Unlike their shared hypotext(s), these retellings opt for either a final farcical twist or situations in which doubt persists: Tarsem’s film announces what happens to the dwarfs individually after Snow White marries the Prince, making them part of the happily-ever-after; Sanders’s Snow White does not marry the Prince, and her eyes search for the Huntsman’s in the crowd celebrating her crowning; Alnoy allows them to marry but uses old newsreels of real and pompous royal weddings that do not offer anything that might bode well; and Berger’s *Blancanieves*, although still in her coma, sheds a sad tear.

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If these narratives differ in many ways from the source text, there is however one motif that remains: the rivalry between Snow White and the Evil Queen, who are traditionally presented as polar opposites.<sup>18</sup> In the original tale, as in most

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**16** The dwarfs make their living using their perceived deformity to amuse the public, in a kind of travelling freak show. One of them is a transvestite, another a prima donna, and one is in love with *Blancanieves* and might give her the reviving kiss (as there is no Prince in this take).

**17** Typically, punishment of the Evil Queen never corresponds to the original ending, which has her dancing to her death in red-hot shoes.

**18** See the list of cases in Jack Zipes (2015).

adaptations, the relationship between them is based on an uneven opposition.<sup>19</sup> Whether or not she is portrayed as a witch, the stepmother has access to some form of black magic, an unavoidable and destructive power, while Snow White can only depend on herself and the friends she makes on the way to thwart and survive all the Queen's schemes.

Critics, among them famously Bruno Bettelheim, have identified in the fairy-tale mother a double figure as perceived by children: the good mother who loves and grants their wishes, and the bad mother who resists and can even punish. As a result, the fairy-tale mother is often turned into a stepmother, a ploy meant to save the mother from too harsh a judgement (Bettelheim 1977, 211–213). As is well known, the Grimms changed their 1810 draft version of the tale, in which the mother does not die at the beginning of the tale but turns into her own daughter's jealous rival. It was their 1812 version that first introduced the well-known tropes of the Queen's death in childbirth and the King's subsequent remarriage.

This is indeed how things are presented in *Mirror Mirror*, *Snow White and the Huntsman*, and *Blancanieves*. In each case, the first Queen, Snow White's good mother, dies immediately or soon after the birth of her daughter, and the father remarries a woman who is indifferent at best to Snow White until she proves to be a hindrance to the Queen's total control. By then, the stepmother has become the "Wicked Queen." Here, however, Alnoy stands out in her decision to make Blanche Neige ("Snow White" in French) the capricious adolescent at war with her real mother who, from being the good mother of childhood, has become the bad mother of adolescence, just as jealous of her daughter as her stepmother counterpart, or so it would seem.

The story in *Miroir mon amour* starts where the original tale ends:<sup>20</sup> Blanche Neige wakes up as a young woman living in the Prince's castle. She is haunted by the image of a beautiful and cruel mother, which makes her dissatisfied and restless. During a trip back to her parents' castle, initiated by the Prince to ask for her hand, she is brought back in contact with her mother, and there, things are not how she thought she remembered them.

Through the repeated yet multifarious use of mirrors and other types of reflection, in which she appears alone or with her mother, the viewer is given to understand Blanche Neige's insecurity about her beauty and sex appeal. The

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<sup>19</sup> Some critics thus see the roots of the tale as those of Apuleius' *Cupid and Psyche*. See Pascale Auraix-Jonchière (2014).

<sup>20</sup> The title reminds us of Alain Resnais's film *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959, script by the French novelist Marguerite Duras), in which a doomed first love is relived and recovered from through an affair in later life.

daughter's perception at first forms the reflection of the Queen as the fairest of them all.<sup>21</sup> It is only when the daughter discovers pleasure with her Prince that the roles are reversed, and the mother cries looking at the mirror reflecting her aging face. This adaptation counters the stereotype of Snow White as traditionally "too pathetically good, too much the domestic," as Zipes writes, the opposite of the Queen, more "complex as a woman, more erotic, and driven to desperate acts by her magic mirror" (2011, 115). Alnoy's film breaks the tradition identified by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1984, 36) of the "equivocal relationship between the angel-woman and the monster-woman of western patriarchy," and brings the Queen and Blanche Neige together on a par, a relationship that simply has to do with a natural, if painful, order.<sup>22</sup>

The other films, as mentioned earlier, conform to the stereotype: unlike Snow White, whose name derives from her physical traits and indicate purity,<sup>23</sup> the Queen is neither described nor named in the original tale, which means she can take on various guises and names in the adaptations. She is the cruel but funny Clementianna in *Mirror Mirror*, the heartless and greedy Encarta in *Blancanieves*, and the vengeful psychopath Ravenna in *Snow White and the Huntsman*. In *Miroir mon amour*, however, she is either just "Maman" [Mum] to her daughter, or "Ma Reine" [My Queen] to everybody else.

*Blancanieves* further differs from the US narratives as the abuse suffered by the young heroine is mostly caused by neglect and exploitation in society. Berger shows that this is a perpetual problem by bringing different eras together through intertextual allusions to other tales, like *Cinderella*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, or *Tom Thumb*, and to other films – for example, the theme, soundtrack, and black-

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**21** In scenes where Blanche Neige recalls her childhood, the perfect mother is reflected in the mirror, but her image soon merges with that of the ferocious mother (sometimes associated with forest beasts, as in other adaptations) when the present resurfaces. The daughter's misunderstanding of her mother unfolds slowly when the viewer understands that the blood the daughter thought her mother had asked the Hunter to spill, was not her daughter's but her own; this becomes clear in a sadomasochistic scene between the mother and the Hunter, her lover. There is a third female figure here, the Prince's mother, who seems to represent Snow White's benevolent mother in the Grimms' tale.

**22** *Miroir mon amour* is a mostly female production (director, screenwriter, and photographer are all women). This is an important aspect as various feminist critics have demonstrated that the voice of patriarchy controls the tale and the main theme of beauty. Interestingly, there was in fact a fifth adaptation of *Snow White* in 2012, of which I became aware only after having done my research, simply because it had gone straight to DVD: it is called *Grimms' Snow White*, and was also directed by a woman, Rachel Lee Goldenberg, supported by a female scriptwriter, Naomi L. Selfman.

**23** "as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as ebony" (Brothers Grimm 1999, 83).

and-white photography of *Blancanieves* are a clear tribute to Marcel Lherbier's *El Dorado* (1921), which uses flamenco dance and music to express the despair of a single mother who eventually commits suicide.<sup>24</sup> As in Lherbier's film, no charming prince or hunter comes to the rescue in the end.

Allusions to the very process and history of film making are also found in *Mirror Mirror*, in which Tarsem offers a reflection on both the fairy tale and his own medium.<sup>25</sup> The film starts with "Once upon a time," but the story is ironically told here by the Queen herself using an animation device: a kind of praxinoscope, which produces a modern, digital animation short relating Snow White's childhood story. However, this device is meant to fool the audience, as the Queen uses the images to pretend that the King has disappeared, whereas she has transformed him into a monster against which Snow White will have to fight at some point.<sup>26</sup> The film within the film therefore comments on the power of images, and is directly related to the mirror which, although it is supposed to tell only the truth, is actually instrumental in the enfolding of events and ultimately in the Queen's demise.

This Evil Queen addresses the viewers and clearly states it will be *her* story, but the doubling of the word "mirror" in the title is not only a reference to the famous phrase "Mirror mirror on the wall"; it is also the reflection in the mirror, not of a male figure or a male oracle-like voice as in most adaptations, but of the Queen's double, a surreal being, some sort of sorceress,<sup>27</sup> also a wiser self who, at the end, will declare: "it was Snow White's story after all." Snow White then, in a Bollywood-style song and dance, closes the film, appearing very much in control. Tarsem's message is clearly stated: as he says in an interview, the film allows comment on a major change in Western culture today: "girl empowerment is such an issue [...]. I believe in it, and I come from a culture where they really don't hold women very high [...]. I think the pendulum was so swung against women for eons, and now it's probably like taking a big lash to the other side and I happen

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<sup>24</sup> *Blancanieves* is supposed to take place in the 1920s too. Some critics claim that the director also takes his inspiration from Hitchcock, Buñuel, and Almodóvar. See Peter Bradshaw (2013).

<sup>25</sup> It is also worth noting that the film projected by the praxinoscope (invented by the Frenchman Charles-Émile Reynaud in 1877) is a beautifully poetic animation of its own.

<sup>26</sup> Her narrative is related through mirrors reflecting images in rapid succession, thus producing the illusion of motion, of life. By using this device, Tarsem Singh alludes to early cinema (just as Martin Scorsese had recently done with *Hugo* and its reference to the work of Georges Méliès), which emerged from pioneers experimenting in pre-cinematic optical entertainments. See Duncan Petrie (1993, 3).

<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, she is played by the same actress (Julia Roberts) in white, both hair and dress, holding magic power and the Queen's ultimate demise in her hands.



to be in the middle of that swing” (quoted in Gilchrist 2012). In his film, it is the Princess who gives the Prince the true love kiss, removing the spell under which the Queen had placed him, and then sets out to fight the Queen on her own. She is constantly spurred on by either a female servant who tells her to reclaim her throne or the Prince, and the dwarfs (the men who care for her), who convince her she can be a leader.

At the other end of the spectrum, Sanders deliberately kept the darkness of the original, and made the Queen a kind of vampire (Radish 2012a). The innovation that *Snow White and the Huntsman* brings to this dark retelling of the tale is that its Evil Queen has a past and a purpose.<sup>28</sup> On her wedding night, she murders the King while whispering a monologue about the ways men use women, and how a king ruined her in the past. There are threads of vengeance and victim entitlement bound together here. Her ruthlessness is such that it does not allow the viewers to ever sympathize with her, and there is in this feature alone a risk that the story might return to the old patriarchal message. However, masculine figures suffer too, and the saving kiss in Sanders’s version is that of the Hunter, after that of the Prince proves ineffectual.<sup>29</sup> There are no male heroes here, but a few good men. This is something all four films have in common: the fathers are dead, under a spell, or absent; the princes (and in some cases the hunters) are in awe of Snow White and in a secondary role, as are the dwarfs.

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According to Linda Hutcheon, adaptation represents the pleasure of “repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise” (2013, 4). This is very much illustrated by our four films. Each of the adaptations examined here freely uses the source text not only as a new perspective on the same story, but also as raw material from which to create its own original story world, allowing the new version to be an autonomous work in its own right.<sup>30</sup>

The producers of fairy-tale adaptations are also receivers of other stories from their own sociocultural backgrounds, and thus the stories vary amongst themselves and belong to one and different lineages at the same time. After a screening

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<sup>28</sup> In *Snow White and the Huntsman*, the heroine finds refuge, as in Disney’s version, in an idyllic home, not in the forest this time but in an all-female lakeside community. Again the refuge proves precarious despite the goodness of its inhabitants (not dwarfs here, but self-defaced women and girls – freaks of a different kind).

<sup>29</sup> The Prince is in fact a childhood friend of Snow White here.

<sup>30</sup> Since the story world is in each case an imaginary one, one cannot talk of “indigenization.” However, the references and the language spoken are culturally loaded.

of his film, Berger explained: “I’m not a film director. I’m a storyteller. I tell stories. I tell fairy tales” (quoted in Susina 2015, 167). Indeed, like a true storyteller he can transplant tales, as he does here from the dark forests of Germany to the bullrings of Spain, retaining the spirit of the original yet extending it in provocative ways. All four film makers have become part of the Snow White storytelling chain, an increasingly visual lineage, which makes use of whatever technology is at its disposal at a given time.

Together, these four films illustrate the definitions that Hutcheon offers of adaptation: an acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work, a creative and interpretive act of appropriation, and an extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work that involves telling, showing, and interacting. This differentiation brings her to conclude: “Therefore, an adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative – a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing” (Hutcheon 2013, 8–9).

Through the four films briefly discussed here, we can see that the afterlife of *Snow White*, through transnational diffusion and intermedial recycling, is a successfully productive one (and the famous actors in the films prove its appeal). We might even conclude that the Grimms’ tale was both greatly honoured and made somewhat redundant in 2012. Indeed, *Snow White* clearly does not belong to them, for it is the sum of its variants, and as such can never be fixed, in the true spirit of the genre.

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Adile Aslan Almond

## Adapting *Hamlet* to the Turkish Screen

**Abstract:** This article examines the only Turkish cinematic adaptation of *Hamlet* to date, entitled *Kadın Hamlet: İntikam Meleği* [Lady Hamlet: The Angel of Vengeance] (1976), which replaces the role of Hamlet with a strong and determined female character. It is set against the background of a modernizing Turkish state, but still within a culture that showed some resistance to such modernity. This study examines how the director employs certain motifs, devices, and strategies (such as the use of classical music or westernized styles of dressing) to forward a modernizing agenda for the film. In particular, the idea of longing for an absent father (Atatürk and Hamlet's father) and contempt for the various puppets which have replaced him in politics (represented by Claudius and Polonius) is a key aspect of this adaptation. The 1976 film is analysed here in a wider historical context of Turkish Hamlets that have been adapted, staged, and produced in different genres and media with the modernizing aims of the Kemalist state in mind.

**Keywords:** adaptation, father complex, Hamlet, intercultural exchange, *Kadın Hamlet: İntikam Meleği* [Lady Hamlet: The Angel of Vengeance], Middle Eastern cinema, Turkish modernity, Turkish modernization, modern Turkish cinema, Shakespeare, translation

For Linda Hutcheon, adaptation is a “repetition without replication” and “an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works” (2013, 7). She defines the process of adaptation as “(re)interpretation,” “(re-)creation,” and “intertextual,” and believes that “an adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative – a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing” (8–9). Fassbinder's approach to adaptation emphasizes reader-response methodology: “any given reader reads any book with his own sense of reality, and therefore any book evokes as many different fantasies and images as it has readers” (1992, 168). For him, the only possible option to “turn literature into film” is “through an unequivocal and single-minded questioning of the piece of literature and its language,” “by scrutinizing the substance and the posture of the author's work,” “by developing an imagination instantly recognizable as unique,” and “by abandoning any futile attempt at ‘consummating’ the work of literature” (168–169). Similarly, Thomas Leitch problematizes the idea of fidelity in adaptation criticism. Underlining the unwitting privileging of source texts in these debates, Leitch, in his *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents*, maintains that “no matter how clever or audacious an adaptation is, the book will always be

better than any adaptation because it is always better at being itself” (2007, 16). He even goes on later to propose that adaptation can be seen as a genre in its own right (Leitch 2008, 106). This article focuses on the only cinematic adaptation of *Hamlet* in Turkey, *Kadın Hamlet: İntikam Meleği* [Lady Hamlet: The Angel of Vengeance] (1976),<sup>1</sup> and shows that it is a politically informed commentary – and a very secular one at that – on modern Turkey, despite its eccentric content. Previous works on the film, especially Tony Howard’s *Women as Hamlet* (2007), are referred to throughout, as the article aims to update criticism on the film and its director in light of recent scholarship by drawing attention to the way modernization is implemented as both a theme and a device in itself.

## 1 Female Hamlets

A brief glance at the history of *Hamlet* on the theatre stage or on the silver screen shows a long list of female actresses who have played the eponymous character, dating back to the eighteenth century. While Charlotte Charke (1713–1760) recounted her experiences of playing Hamlet on the stage, Fanny Furnival, who played Hamlet in Dublin in 1741, is the first female Hamlet recorded in historical sources from the period. Furnival was closely followed by Sarah Siddons in 1775, Elizabeth Inchbald in 1780, and Jane Powell in 1796 (Howard 2007, 38–39). Sarah Bernhardt, in Paris, was the first woman to be filmed while playing Hamlet (Guntner 1998, 92). Eve Donne was the first female Hamlet broadcast on radio in 1923 (Howard 2007, 1). Whereas all of these actresses played Hamlet as a man, Anne Nielsen, a Danish actress who worked in German cinema, played Hamlet as a woman, the princess of Denmark in disguise as the Danish prince, in 1921, based on an argument proposed by Edward P. Vining in his *The Mystery of Hamlet: An Attempt to Solve an Old Problem* (1881; see Brode 2001, 118).

Turkish theatre and cinema have witnessed more than one female Hamlet to date. The first one was Ayla Algan, who played the role of Hamlet dressed in a man’s clothes (as well as that of Ophelia) for the Municipal Theatre from 1962 to 1965. The second Turkish female Hamlet, in *Kadın Hamlet*, is more radical than her predecessors in that she is a woman playing a female Hamlet. More recently, the play *Hamlet* (1994), directed by Müge Gürman, was staged with two actors playing Hamlet in order to represent the character’s split personality: one of the actors was dressed in the manner of Charlie Chaplin, whilst the other wore more

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter referred to as *Kadın Hamlet*.

feminine costumes (Arslan 2008, 177). Sarah Frankcom's 2014 production for Royal Exchange Theatre of Manchester was a gender and race-crossing *Hamlet* in which Maxine Peake embodied an androgynous Hamlet, albeit without any of the political content of the original play. *Kadın Hamlet*, on the other hand, is a gender-subversive adaptation embedded in a local political context.<sup>2</sup> As we shall see, it is a unique adaptation with some unprecedented innovations. When it first appeared in 1976, the film received mixed reviews. Yet the hidden symbolism in its texture demands a careful reading and recognition as a politically informed, avant-garde adaptation.

## 2 Metin Erksan and adaptation

Metin Erksan was already an established figure on the Turkish cinematic scene when he shot the film. Interestingly, his debut film was a biography about the Bard of Turkish folk literature, Aşık Veysel (1894–1973). He adapted many famous works of Turkish literature as films, one of which, *Susuz Yaz* [Dry Summer] (1963), earned Turkish cinema's first international recognition with its Berlin Golden Bear prize. Other adaptations include Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* as *Ölmeyen Aşk* [Undying Love] (1966) and William Friedkin's *Exorcist* as *Şeytan* [The Devil] (1974), dubbed "the Turkish Exorcist." He also adapted five contemporary Turkish short stories by well-known Turkish writers into short-length films for the national TV channel in the 1970s. Erksan's *oeuvre* shows an imaginative combination of careful attention to central issues in Turkey (such as poverty, patriarchy, class issues, and rural problems) and more artistic tendencies (related to contemporary Turkish arts, literary adaptations, Western literary tradition, and Western cinema). He is associated with the Turkish National Cinema of the 1960s and 1970s, which advocated domestication in form and content, accompanied by the active sense of a socio-political task for film (Sayın 2011, 25–26). *Kadın Hamlet* was Erksan's penultimate film before 1977, when, dissatisfied with the film industry in Turkey and feeling that it underestimated his talent, he retired at the age of forty-eight.

Erksan originally named the film *Kadın Hamlet*. The subtitle *İntikam Meleği* [The Angel of Vengeance] was added later as a marketing tool to appeal to the cinema-goers of the time, who mostly consumed melodramatic films, come-

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<sup>2</sup> Howard claims that Frances de la Tour's *Hamlet*, directed by Robert Walker, was an attempt to embody the mood of the defeated Left in the UK after the election of Thatcher in 1979 (2005, 265–270).



dies, thrillers, or softcore sex films. Gülşen Sayın shows how the main themes of *Hamlet* – familial strife, vengeance, love conflict, and power – can be adapted to the Turkish context through the melodrama genre (2011, 27). Tony Howard suggests that, as a result of the significance of the family in Turkish society, “the Elizabethan revenge ethic” can be rendered more precisely into Turkish rather than British modern society (Howard 2005, 211; similarly Sayın 2011, 27). Howard describes the film as “a bewildering cross of Shakespeare, the avant-garde,” and “the least inhibited of all transgender *Hamlets*” (2005, 210–211).

*Kadın Hamlet* is the story of a woman whose father has been killed in the woods by her uncle. Returning from the United States, where she has studied drama, Hamlet attends the funeral of her father and, within a short time, witnesses, to her great dismay, the marriage of her mother and her uncle. When the ghost of her father appears and tells her who his murderer is, Hamlet’s suspicions are confirmed, and she swears to take revenge. She fakes madness in order to prove her uncle’s guilt and scorns her lover, Orhan, who later drowns himself. Hamlet employs *tuluat* (traditional Turkish theatre based on improvisation) actors to simulate the murder of her father on stage and drive Kasım to confess. However, Kasım decides to send her back to the United States to be killed by his underground friends in New York. Hamlet outdoes his plans and returns to the family mansion (a luxury mansion in an unnamed, indeterminate rural part of Turkey) to kill her uncle, who fatally shoots Hamlet’s mother, mistaking her for Hamlet, in the woods. As it is a modern-day Hamlet set in 1970s Turkey, swords turn into rifles, ships translate into luxurious white cars, seaports into airports, and letters become phone calls. Geoffrey Wagner (cited in Cartmell and Whelehan 2010, 5) identifies three types of adaptation: transposition (absolute fidelity), commentary (intentional or unintentional alterations as a result of the interpretation of the director), and analogy (a new work of art with significant divergence from the source text). Erksan’s film fits into the second category as he intentionally alters the source text in order to flesh out his perspective.

The film begins by depicting the murder of Hamlet’s father in the woods and his sombre funeral, immediately followed by the carefree wedding of Kasım and Gönül, thereby solidifying the immoral motives of the uncle as early as the third scene in the film. The character of Gönül, on the other hand, is presented as gullible or passive, if not completely innocent, rather than evil, as she appears to be uncritically obeying Kasım’s words throughout the scene. Hamlet keeps her distance from the newly-weds, looking disdainfully at the wedding spectacle, smoking a cigar with one hand while the other is in her pocket (an obvious gesture of disrespect), and standing on the verge of the wood, which becomes the symbol of her dead father. She is in a white suit with a striped shirt, a huge red tie, and an equally big red handkerchief hanging from her pocket. This bizarre suit can be

considered a statement of Hamlet's views of the marriage of her mother and uncle so soon after her father's death. The cigar and suit might also be regarded as the director's attempt at conveying the famously complex character of Shakespeare's Hamlet. Erksan tries to show that Hamlet bears feminine and masculine traits simultaneously, and that she transcends the male/female dichotomy. On another level, Erksan might be endeavouring to inscribe the Turkish woman into modern Turkish history by reversing gender expectations. Indeed, Hamlet is by far the strongest character in the film.

One interesting detail about the wedding scene is the fact that flags are used as decorations and hung between trees. While these flags do not correspond to the national colours and forms of any known country, Erksan might have used them to insert the international quality of *Hamlet's* themes, or the transnational quality of Shakespeare's plays, into the film. A similar gesture in the film is the family's surname, which the audience sees on the grave of Hamlet's father. *Evrén* means "universe" in Turkish. In this way, Erksan seems to be saying that he is trying to reach the universal by working through national material, as the only way to attain the universal is to first arrive at the national/local.<sup>3</sup> The dialectic of the universal and national/local through Shakespeare recalls Laura Bohannan's "Shakespeare in the Bush" (1966) and how local productions of meaning are the first step toward reaching the universal level. The specific dates of the father's birth and death carry significant symbolic relevance for modern Turkish history, as will be explained later.

In a switch similar to that between Kasım's murder of his brother and the funeral, the wedding scene is followed by a break-up scene. Hamlet and Orhan are at the two opposite ends of an abandoned, broken quayside, enclosed by unfriendly nature in the form of vast water, unfertile soil, and distant hills. Everything the frame includes denotes a sense of doom and ruin. The barren surroundings as well as the distance between Hamlet and Orhan symbolize the desolate and sterile future of the lovers. The pebbles and water, and Orhan's delicate, insecure posture in the face of Hamlet's destructive determination and bewildering frustration, foreshadow Orhan's death as a result of their ill-fated love. The ghost of the dead father has not been mentioned yet. Hamlet distances herself from Orhan, even before she knows anything about the ghost of her father. In Erksan's interpretation, then, the ghost's effect on the relationship between Hamlet and Orhan is a secondary factor. This might also suggest that the ghost

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<sup>3</sup> Erksan was by no means the first director to discover this strategy of approaching universality through local content. A well-known example is the work of Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, who have been working on their local material in order to reach universality since the early 1970s.

is a by-product of Hamlet's train of thought. In fact, it is a curious fact that while Erksan changes all the other names, he keeps that of Hamlet intact, and in Turkish the word for "ghost" (*hayalet*) closely resembles "Hamlet."

The fifth scene of the film is the opening of the original play, namely the scene where the night guards see the ghost of the dead father and decide to inform Hamlet of it. Erksan, who is known to be a realist artist, here resorts to fantastic, surrealistic tools in order to translate the ghost scene into a visual text. The ghost is clad in a red-lined black cloak with a big black hat on his head and walks through heavy smoke, casting enigmatic glances in the direction of the guards. Sayın claims that Erksan "abstract[s] the setting from the real world, implying that the ghost might be Hamlet's own imagination" (2011, 32). It is true that Erksan uses unexpected elements in the composition of the ghost scene. Sayın, however, seems to miss the political allusions beneath the supernatural appearance. First of all, Erksan elucidates his position regarding the century-long divide between secularism and Islamism in Turkey: his Hamlet, as a Western-educated, cigar-smoking, bikini-wearing woman of action and determination, is a clear affirmation of the secular protagonist. Therefore, it is not surprising that Hamlet and her dead father are stripped of any religious symbolism throughout the film, including the Islamic white garments of the dead. One of the important cuts Erkan makes from the original play is that there is no praying scene after the mini-play "The Mouse-trap" is staged (in Shakespeare's original, a scene of prayer takes place after the court play is performed). Erksan seems to have deliberately removed all the religious elements in order to make his secular attitude clear in the context of the long secularism-vs-Islamism debate in Turkey. Second, Erksan seems to take the film's relation to the Turkish milieu very seriously, despite the disorienting melodramatic elements on the surface. Thus, comic elements are not appropriate for the gravity of the subject matter. Black seems to denote the significance of the father (who, in a modern Turkish context, is always associated with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk), as opposed to the usual comedic elements of ghosts clad in white. Any comedic conventions would have undermined his political stance. Indeed, Polonius is the only comic figure, and the most despicable character in the film.

Only in the ninth scene of the film does Hamlet finally meet the ghost of her father, who appears in a westernized suit, in contrast with the usual Turkish cinematic conventions. This points to the possibility that the dead father represents the "eternal father" of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Indeed, one of Atatürk's many modernizing measures in the 1920s and 1930s was the implementation of the laws of modern garments, where men were expected to wear a hat, suit, and tie. The film includes other characteristics of westernization as well. The female Hamlet is obviously a liberated woman. She has a degree in drama from the United States. She wears bikinis or see-through blouses. In fact,

she wears suits with jackets and trousers for most of the film. She smokes and is entitled to her own opinion. Classical music represents Western arts in the film, which also include cinema and theatre. In many ways, this 1970s Turkish film deliberately portrays a Turkish woman who would be atypical for the Muslim, Anatolian, conservative audiences who came to watch it – the secular valency of the adaptation here is a clear counterfoil to the conservative nature of the society into which it was introduced.

### 3 Erksan's contributions to the character of Hamlet: Madness scenes

Most scholars agree that Erksan's Hamlet does not have any interiority. Unlike the brooding intellectual of Shakespeare's play who struggles with deeply philosophical questions regarding the existential conditions of the human race and is torn with self-doubt, Erksan's Hamlet is free from any kind of scepticism or metaphysical probing. She is confident, defiant, and self-composed from the first scene: there is no sense of unease or hesitation about her, and events unfold only to confirm her self-assurance. One of the tools Erksan uses in order to establish Hamlet's self-assurance is to change the character's roles and traits to the extent that Hamlet holds the reins of events in the plot. Erksan's *Hamlet* is important in furnishing a lead actress with such distinguished female agency and power at a time when feminism was still in its early stages in the West. Besides, Erksan makes some distinctive contributions to the character by highlighting Hamlet's madness and portraying it in unprecedented ways. Let us briefly examine the distinct qualities of some of these "madness" scenes.

After meeting Horatio and Bernardo (both are servants of Hamlet in the film) in the graveyard and asking them to keep the ghost story and her madness plan a secret, Hamlet appears in a red uniform (with possible connotations of both the Beatles' *Sergeant Pepper* and, closer to home, the state orchestras of the Turkish Republic), masquerading as a royal trumpeter among the trees and interrupting (and unsettling) Orhan, who is working on a realistic painting of the woods, to lecture him on the arts and the relationship between life and the arts. Upon ending her monologue/lecture on the arts and philosophy, she comes closer to Orhan and, in an unexpected manner, spills a box of red paint all over the canvas. Orhan is stunned and confounded: he cannot believe what he sees. Hamlet takes up her trumpet up and begins to play the same tune as that with which she interrupted him, and walks away. The importance of this scene lies in the fact that Erksan displaces or rearranges elements from the original play in an unexpected

way. For example, in Shakespeare's play the trumpet is a prop that belongs to the Danish court. Here, it appears as a symbol of Hamlet's madness. Erksan bridges the courtly setting of the play and Hamlet's madness in an innovative way. Erksan also uses this scene to comment on the relationship between art and life. We can take the views expressed in this scene as Erksan's own, as a metacommentary on art. The parallels between the concepts in Hamlet's lecture and the themes in the original play, such as the discrepancy between the visible and reality, are noteworthy. The exaggerated acting of the Turkish actress who plays Hamlet draws attention to the theatricality of the whole scene and reminds the audience of the stage origins of the characters.

Erksan employs a similar strategy of bridging Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and his film by using the original elements in novel ways in the second madness scene, which immediately follows the first one. Hamlet is now dressed in medieval armour with helmet, breastplate, and sword, and walks toward the hammocks where her mother and uncle are sleeping under the trees. She wakes them up with a long shriek, swinging her sword in the air. The dichotomy between the real and the visible is again the subject matter here. Hamlet moves between Gönül and Kasım, holding a mirror against them in turn and asking questions about the discrepancies between the interior and exterior, investigating whether they feel guilty or afraid, for they know that the interior – what she calls the core – hides murder, brutality, and barbarism. She breaks the mirror, bows in a knightly manner and walks away. As in the previous scene, the performance and theatricality of the scene are underlined by the acting, reminding the reader of the origin of the script. The costume of a medieval knight might even suggest the medieval origins of the play. In a way, then, Erksan brings about dynamic “cross-fertilisations” between two arts, instead of producing an example of culturally inferior, “impure” cinema (Cartmell and Whelehan 2010, 8).

In another scene, the audience is introduced to Hamlet's surreal outdoor bedroom. Hamlet sprawls on her bed, smoking and reading (the Shakespearean intellectual Hamlet at long last?). She looks seductive in translucent black tights and a red dress. Hamlet's seductive appearance reminds the audience of her mother's usual sensuality and sexually appealing glamour. This parallel between the mother and the daughter is underlined by the blue bed-cover, since the colour blue represents Gönül, as opposed to the red of Kasım's illegitimacy. A horn gramophone painted in rainbow colours plays “Makber” [Grave], a famous old Turkish song which “praise[s] the dignity and beauty of death, drawing a picture of death as a fantastic dreamland” (Sayın 2011, 33). When the Turkish Polonius arrives, Hamlet reprimands him for not knocking on the door before entering, and requests him to be as moral as a fishmonger (directly taken from the original text), and Polonius applauds. The mad princess makes sure to mention Orhan

to Polonius, remarking that Orhan is a beautiful boy. In the next scene, Gönül and Kasım read a letter written by Hamlet, which Polonius has found in Orhan's pocket, telling him how much she loves him. Erksan mixes the scenes of the original play in order to create a powerful and conniving Hamlet who is in full control of events. When Gönül and Kasım announce their approval of the relationship, Orhan is sent to meet Hamlet in her wilderness.

When Orhan, pushed by Hamlet's parents and his own father, comes to talk to Hamlet, she is in an open field, lost in conducting Shostakovich's score from Kozintsev's *Hamlet*. She is wearing a classic tailcoat with trousers and bow tie. There are no orchestra members. The instruments are tied to sticks. Next, a tape recorder in motion appears on the screen. We then realize that the classical music Hamlet is conducting comes from a tape. Even the applause at the end of the concert to which Hamlet bows is from the tape. It is at this point that the female Turkish Hamlet "performs" the famous soliloquy of Shakespeare's Hamlet, "to be or not to be," which is worded closely to the original. While speaking her lines, she simulates stabbing herself. When finished, she rebukes Orhan for his naivety and tells him to forget about her.

The director's translation of the travelling troupe in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* into a traditional Turkish drama based on improvisation (*tuluat*) is another imaginative instance of adaptation to a local context. The resulting play-within-the-film is a highly creative interpretation of Shakespeare's "Mouse-trap." The play-within-the-play scene starts with Hamlet on the stage as the chorus leader. She wears a black robe covered with big white skulls. The stage is set up as a medieval castle, Erksan's subtle way of telling the audience about the medieval origins of the play. Hamlet starts the show with a discussion of the task of theatre: it is a mirror held up to the world to show the good and the bad, and only the ignorant are served by undermining the truth. Hamlet announces that the performance is made up of two parts: a song accompanied by dancing and acting, and a play. The musical show is performed by Hamlet, Rezzan, and Gül. Hamlet wears a black bowler hat, a white shirt, braces, and blue jeans. The song is a playback, but Hamlet does not try to lip-synch and only mimes the content of the lyrics with her gestures and body language, while dancing to and fro on the stage. Rezzan and Gül, wrapped all over in colourful striped unitards, rhythmically swing at the back. The song is a critique of corruption in a humorous fashion: the established system is a riddle no one can solve.

The song – sung by an openly leftist, famous Turkish pianist, Timur Selçuk – is based on a poem by a well-known Turkish socialist-realist poet, Orhan Veli, who believed in poetry for the masses and was (through plain language) one of the modernizing figures of Turkish poetry in the twentieth century. In this way, Erksan inserts the socio-political climate of modern-day Turkey into his film version of

Shakespeare's famous play and politically localizes its content. The ending is close to the original, except that rifles are used instead of swords. Hamlet and Osman shoot one another, and the latter confesses the fatal plan of Kasım, who shoots Gönül when he mistakes her for Hamlet in the woods. Finally, Hamlet shoots Kasım. The entire final act is accompanied by Shostakovich's score for Kozinstev's *Hamlet*.

## 4 Conclusion

Erksan's *Kadın Hamlet* removes Fortinbras and Denmark's war with Norway, and instead inserts the political climate of Turkey through deeply embedded symbols, and thereby localizes and vernacularizes the original. It is an avant-garde interpretation of *Hamlet* marked by melodrama, yet highly charged with some central socio-political issues of modern Turkey. Since its first complete translation (from French) into Turkish in 1908 (the year of the Young Turk Revolution) by Dr Abdullah Cevdet, a staunch secularist, *Hamlet* has been a symbol of modernization and westernization processes in Turkey. From the early twentieth century to the present, Hamlet has been (re)translated, adapted, staged, and interpreted in various media many times by different artists in Turkey. As Saliha Paker notes, "translations and productions of [Hamlet into Turkish] are very closely related not only to some of the major events in the Turkish theatre but also to important changes or developments in Turkish political and cultural history in the twentieth century" (1986, 89). Similarly, Savaş Arslan claims that the century-long divide between secularism and Islamism in modern Turkish politics can be closely traced in the history of Turkish *Hamlets*. He argues that

in Turkey, Shakespeare's works, and *Hamlet* in particular, have long been participants in a republican discourse, which invariably sides with secularism and modernization against religious and conservative movements. [...] translations and adaptations of Shakespeare's best-known play align themselves along ideological lines, marking out *Hamlet* as a quintessential modern political allegory. Informed by the legacy of Kemalism – the modernizing, secular tradition enshrined in the achievements and memory of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of the Turkish Republic – on the one hand, and complex issues of religion, geopolitical "orientation", and identity on the other, twentieth-century Turkish Hamlets are deeply inscribed by the country's turbulent political history. (Arslan 2008, 171)

Interestingly, while their observations are definitely apt for many Turkish instances of *Hamlet*, both Arslan and Paker overlook Erksan's *Kadın Hamlet*. Indeed, at first glance, Erksan's film does not seem to offer anything more than a populist, melodramatic adaptation of Shakespeare's play. However, as Howard suggests, the

1970s were difficult years in Turkey. Due to strict censorship, the by-products of the 1971 military coup, and the ensuing political chaos, it was not easy to make a film with an overtly political message. Erksan's reaction to 1970s Turkey was to disguise his political message in a melodramatic *Hamlet*. In his version, then, there is a longing for the long-gone idealized father, if we take Hamlet's father as representing Atatürk, and the politicians in his place are either illegitimate usurpers or clowns seeking power and material gain (Claudius and Polonius). The female Hamlet, a well-educated, liberated woman, is the embodiment of Atatürk's revolutions regarding the modernization of Turkish society. It comes as no surprise that Hamlet longs for her heroic father and derides those who have taken his place. Erksan manages to reflect this parallel between the admiring daughter and the idealized absent father by representing the two figures with strikingly analogous imagery. Perhaps what *Kadin Hamlet* most effectively communicates are the intricacies involved in political appropriation when it takes place in so-called "developing" societies – particularly when the objective is a secular liberal one, but located in a conservative Muslim culture. The director does not have to address any degree of familiarity with the original in his target audience, yet names such as "Shakespeare" have such a potent westernizing connotation in Turkey, that the "modernizing" of a Shakespeare play by a Turkish film director would simply be another step in an ideological direction already associated with the playwright.

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## Three Adaptations of *Dracula*: Friedrich Murnau, Tod Browning, Francis Ford Coppola, and the Liminal Vampire

**Abstract:** Of the numerous cinematographic adaptations of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), three main cinematographic works – Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), Browning's *Dracula* (1931) and Coppola's *Dracula* (1992) – remind us of the true meaning of Bram Stoker's novel and of its decadent origin. Stoker's literary project was to embody artistic representation through the figure of Dracula. The three filmic adaptations make him a liminal figure: they express his position between life and death, between referentiality and representation, through the liminal spaces that the character crosses. Murnau and Coppola, however, stand at opposite ends of the spectrum: one tries to give his work complete autonomy in relation to the original work, while the other purports to go back to the novel and to link it to its historical source. Browning is in an intermediary position as he refers to the theatre adaptation of *Dracula* as well. Its innumerable retellings transform the story of Dracula into a myth. Adaptation thus becomes both an interpretation of the source and a synthesis of previous transpositions. The three examples examined here have renewed the myth of Dracula, turning the character into an archetype of the crossing of forbidden borders. They illustrate the function of adaptation as an aesthetic and symbolic dislocation from the original and, at the same time, as a return to its original meaning.

**Keywords:** Bram Stoker, *Dracula* myth, film adaptation, Francis Ford Coppola, Friedrich Murnau, Tod Browning, vampires

The long tradition of cinematographic adaptations of *Dracula* may lead us to forget its author's original purpose. In 1897, Bram Stoker, as is well known, wanted to write another *Picture of Dorian Gray*, and Oscar Wilde declared that this new interpretation of the Gothic imagination, a few years after his own work, was the most beautiful novel of the century (Sadoul 1993, 565). Stoker's literary project was to use the Gothic revival to illustrate the aesthetic ideas of the Decadent movement: Dracula, who does not grow old and never dies, embodies the work of art, and he is always, in the novel, the object of a representation built by all the other characters through the many voices mixed together in the narrative. He remains in a position between action and representation, between life and death.

Among the many adaptations of *Dracula*, three are particularly intent on using the visual possibilities that film offers to create a figure of liminality. First, Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), whose expressionist aesthetics shaped the subjectivity of the cinematographic image. Second, Browning's *Dracula* (1931), the first film adaptation of Stoker's novel to be authorized, which even more clearly than Murnau's film represents Dracula's in-between status using spaces of liminality such as doorways and balconies. Third, following several decades of vampire horror movies, Coppola's *Dracula* (1992) returns to the literary source, as the subtitle *After Bram Stoker* suggests. Its plot recalls the historical origin of the character, and this splitting of the film between past and present emphasizes the dual and symbolic aspect that is part of the liminality of the Dracula myth, which Stoker linked to a reflection on aesthetic representation.

Stoker's *Dracula* has to be understood in light of the crisis of representation. The end of the novel can be compared to the end of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. In Wilde's novel, Dorian Gray's face at the moment of his death reveals the passage of time since he made his unholy pact and thus remained young. Now he looks so decrepit that he can only be recognized by his rings. Along with the painting, the ring is here an expression of art as opposed to human life. At the end of Bram Stoker's novel, nothing remains of Dracula but dust, which seems to be what should remain of his corpse after the four centuries of his life. But in actual fact, there remains no trace of Dracula's existence, and the entire novel can be read as if the character was only a figment of other characters' imagination – exactly like Dorian Gray, who was more a work of art than a human being. This might be an explanation for the strange form of the story, in which there is not a constant narrator: the narrative is sustained instead by various documents that reflect different voices, whether characters' diaries or letters, or journal articles, bringing different perspectives and subjectivities into the text.

Dracula is the object of a representation. He is the only one whose point of view never enters the story-telling process; he has no direct presence in the text, but instead is seen through the other characters' perceptions. For example, during the sea crossing on his journey to London, the ship's entire crew gradually disappears, and when the captain's log is found, it leads to the supposition that the crew was murdered. All descriptions of Dracula are provided by characters and are only impressions. The portrait of Mina when she becomes a vampire at the end of the novel is similar:

The beautiful colour became livid, the eyes seemed to throw out sparks of hell-fire, the brows were wrinkled as though the folds of the flesh were the coils of Medusa's snakes, and the lovely, blood-stained mouth grew to an open square, as in the passion masks of the Greeks and Japanese. (Stoker 1997, 284–285)

This impressionistic portrait erases Mina's presence and illustrates the decadent interpretation of Schopenhauer's *World as Will and Representation* (2014): the world is my representation, and no representation fits the truth of the world. Dracula does not exist in himself, but only as the representation of a subjectivity. This is why he is called "undead": neither dead, nor alive. He does not really belong to the world but is rather a representation of collective fears.

The first film to capture this aspect was Murnau's *Nosferatu*, which is not actually the first cinematographic adaptation of *Dracula*: a year earlier, in 1921, Károly Lajthay had already made his own silent film entitled *Drakula's Halála* [*Dracula's Death*], of which no copy remains. The story of Murnau's film is well known: Bram Stoker's widow, Florence, did not accept the adaptation, and despite Murnau's changing the settings (the plot takes place in Bremen and not in London) and the names of characters (the vampire is called Count Orlok, for instance), the destruction of the film was ordered in 1925. Fortunately, a few copies survived.<sup>1</sup>

The reason for this opposition was that Florence Stoker had sold the rights of the novel to Hamilton Deane, an actor who transposed the novel for the stage in 1924, himself playing Van Helsing, with Edmund Blake as Dracula. His success in Dublin encouraged him to perform the play in London, and then, in 1927, in New York, with Bela Lugosi in the role of Dracula. Lugosi was also the main actor of Tod Browning's talkie of 1931.

The three films set out to transpose Stoker's reflections about subjectivity to the screen. Dracula is not a monster in the simple meaning of a frightening creature: he is the embodiment of the uncertain border between imagination and reality, and he is a monster in the sense that he belongs to both these worlds. For example in Browning's film, Lucy feels she is about to change (00:40:00). At that moment, she is becoming a vampire, but at the same time, she is about to marry, so her feeling can have both meanings. A little earlier, when Van Helsing asks her about what could have caused the two marks on her throat, the waitress says "Dracula," but she is in fact introducing the latter, and not answering Van Helsing, which confirms Dracula's dual position.

This play on ambiguities points to Dracula's metaphysical position. In Coppola's film, Dracula answers Mina's question about his nature by saying that he is nothing (1:37:32). One interpretation of art that enlightens Stoker's, Murnau's, Browning's, and Coppola's aesthetic purpose is the notion of a being "between two deaths" which was developed by Jacques Lacan in his *Ethics of Psychoanalysis*. Lacan (1997, 315–333) proposes an analysis of Antigone, whose artistic beauty,

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1 Subsequent rereleases of the film undid some of the changes, for example Werner Herzog's 1979 remake.

according to him, is situated between two deaths, giving her character its sparkle. Like Antigone, Mina in Browning's film is presented as glamorous when she is between two deaths, about to become a vampire (1:01:00).

This position between two deaths is explained in several passages of Stoker's novel by Van Helsing: as mentioned earlier, Dracula is "undead," meaning that he is neither dead nor alive, and that he belongs to both worlds at the same time. In the films, this position takes the visual form of tension between materiality and immateriality. In Browning's film, the immateriality of the vampire is shown when Harker meets him: at first, Harker does not see him, but then he follows him and remarks that he crosses spiders webs without tearing them (0:11:00). In this scene, the crossing of thresholds is linked to the immateriality of the vampire. A most famous example of this incorporeal presence is Murnau's calèche scene, which translates Stoker's own insistence on the alteration of all perceptions:

The time seemed interminable as we swept on our way, now in almost complete darkness, for the rolling clouds obscured the moon. We kept on ascending, with occasional periods of quick descent, but in the main always ascending. (Stoker 1997, 20)

Murnau undertakes to give a visual form to this hypnotic impression: he uses a disjointed movement with curves, and the music adds to the hypnotic impression. Coppola aims to produce the same impression, albeit differently: he returns to Stoker's text, which focuses on the two black horses leading the carriage, and makes their arrival seem to take place in a kind of levitation.

However, the scene in Coppola's film which probably shows best the immateriality of the vampire is the one with Jonathan and the three female vampires. The scene may be an allusion to Goethe's ballad "Die Braut von Korinth" ["The Bride of Corinth"] (1797), the very first literary text on vampires, in which a female vampire figure enters a young man's room. But, in Coppola's film, it is mainly the representation of a pure fantasy; the woman emerges from nowhere between the legs of the man lying on the floor. At the beginning of the scene, the arrival of the vampire is shown by traces of her presence, but there is no discernible body. And then, when the female vampire (played by Monica Bellucci) does appear, her very sensuality strengthens the contrast between the corporality and immateriality of the vampire.

In these examples, the three movies seek to interpret the meaning of the vampire in Stoker's novel. Linda Hutcheon, in her *Theory of Adaptation*, explains that adaptation is not a simple copy: "The adapted text, therefore, is not something to be reproduced, but rather something to be interpreted and recreated, often in a new medium" (2006, 84). From these two functions, interpretation and recreation, two aspects of adaptation emerge: adaptation transposes into another

medium and gives explanations. For example, nobody understands where the madman Renfield comes from in Stoker's novel, how he became mad, and why he is connected with Dracula. In Murnau's film, Renfield becomes the one who sends Jonathan Harker to Dracula's castle. In Browning's film, Renfield (and not Harker) goes to Dracula's castle and becomes mad, and the two Harkers stay in London, since there is no Carpathian pursuit in this film.

Coppola takes up Murnau's idea, but he remains close to Stoker's novel. For example, Dracula tells Harker that he is the last one of his kind. The sentence in question is taken from Stoker's novel, where it refers to a decadent character who, like des Esseintes in Huysmans's *A rebours*, is the last in his line: he is a character who does or creates nothing, being art himself. In the same way, Dracula does nothing but what he is told to do in Stoker's novel. The *Demeter* episode, which Stoker invented on the basis of the real wreck of the *Dimitry of Narva* in Whitby harbour in 1885, is ambiguous: the murders of the crew are the object of no narration, so the episode can be read as if the whole crew had died from disease. When Van Helsing recounts Dracula's medieval past, taking the position of the writer, he places Dracula in the context of pure fiction. The same ambiguity applies to Jonathan's letters, where Dracula is the object of his imagination. In each case, Dracula appears as the embodiment of fiction.

Coppola is also the only one of the three directors to use the episode of the baby who is killed by the three female vampires. This brutal episode was taken from one of the two books written against the historical character of Dracula in the fifteenth century, the *Story of Prince Dracula*, probably by Ulrich Han and published in Vienna in 1463. This book relates all the cruelties of the Prince, and is probably a propaganda book commissioned by the King of Hungary in order to weaken prince Dracula. In Coppola's film, he is called Vlad after his historical name, Vlad the Impaler, famous for impaling his enemies on forests of stakes; and indeed, the very beginning of the film refers to the 1463 battle against the Turks and shows the impaling in a symbolic scene in black and red, thus upholding the link between the historical and the fictional Draculas.

Indeed, if Coppola adapts Stoker, he also brings the story back to its historical sources, and he also adapts the adaptors – Murnau and Browning. As in Browning's film, Coppola's Dracula drinks no wine but speaks of the soft music of the wolves, which he calls the "children of the night." When Dracula enters Lucy's room, he appears as a shadow destroying the flowers, which is a double allusion to Murnau and Browning (0:58:30). Adaptation also takes the form of synthesis, and Coppola enlightens his adaptation by using other sources: he claims to have been inspired by Cocteau's *La Belle et la Bête* [*Beauty and the Beast*] (1946), for example in the scene where Jonathan sees Dracula crawling on the walls of his castle. This movement is also present in Stoker's novel, but the style of crawling,

with sliding lateral movements, is indeed taken from Cocteau. The scene of Lucy's rape, when Dracula has taken the form of a beast and does not want to be seen by Mina, is also inspired by *Beauty and the Beast*.<sup>2</sup>

Coppola's borrowings from Browning and Murnau are numerous. The play on colours also refers to Browning's movie. Mina explains to Dr Seward that Dracula appeared to her with two red eyes and a white face. This opposition between red and white is used in another way by Coppola, who creates an opposition between Lucy, in red, and Mina, in white. Through the allusion to Browning, Coppola gives Dracula, who is both red and white, an intermediate position between Lucy, who is dead, and Mina, who is alive. In Browning's movie, when Mina joins Dracula, she is in a white dress and he is in black (0:46:00). He is beyond the doorway and makes her cross it. The opposition of colours here enlightens the opposition of characters and spaces: the door represents a limit between two worlds, between life and death.

In the three films, Dracula is shown as the one who crosses limits; he is the character of thresholds, always shown crossing doorways or windows, because he belongs to two worlds and constantly goes from one to the other. In Browning's film, after having crossed a barrier of spiders' webs without tearing them (0:11:00), Dracula is in the doorway to save Jonathan from being killed by the three female vampires (0:17:30); this image is built on the opposition between inside, where the three women stand, dressed in white, in front of Jonathan, who is lying on the floor, and outside, where Dracula appears in black. Here, the liminal space is represented by a contrast between the two sides of the border, which is strengthened by the opposition of colours, underlining the symbolic meaning. The doorway symbolizes here the limit between life and death, embodied both by Dracula and Jonathan lying on the floor. In Murnau's film, the closed door cannot protect Harker (0:23:00). Dracula not only crosses the physical barrier of the door, but also the spiritual limit between souls, as he affects Mina through Jonathan (0:23:00).

More generally, telepathy in the three films contributes to this liminal function. In Browning's film, telepathy is linked to passing through a window (0:37:00): first Dracula is in telepathic contact with Renfield, then he enters Mina's room. He is therefore a character who crosses both physical and immaterial limits and also crosses the borders between materiality and immateriality. One possible interpretation of this structure is that the function of this character is to question both the nature of the world (Dracula would be a monstrous embodiment of the theory of

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<sup>2</sup> Dracula's figure at this moment looks like the Beast. More precisely, the scene of Lucy's rape seems to be a counterpart of the scene in *Beauty and the Beast* where the Beast is next to Belle's bed. It also reminds us of the scene where Belle falls asleep in the Beast's arms in the forest.

Baudelaire's correspondences) and of human beings: Dracula's telepathic position is that of the alter ego, and telepathy works as a mirror of the spirit, a message addressed by the spirit to itself.

In the three films, as in the novel, the mirror is a space of transition. One of the literary topoi attached to monsters is the lack of reflection in a mirror. For example, the eponymous character in Maupassant's *Horla* (1886) faces an empty mirror. After Stoker's novel, Walter de la Mare used the topos again in 1899 in *The Return*, as did Edouard Schuré in *Le Double* in 1910. Donald Winnicott offers his interpretation of this motif when he describes a mother's eyes as the mirror of a newborn child: "What does the baby see when he or she looks at the mother's face? I am suggesting that, ordinarily, what the baby sees is himself or herself" (2005, 151). Dracula represents the eyes of the mother and he offers the characters around him a reflection. This is why he has no reflection of his own. In Browning's film, this function of the mirror is obvious: the characters are referred to themselves; seen in a mirror, they seem to speak alone (0:42:00).

Coppola's film transforms Stoker's view: Dracula is not only the object of representation, but is the gaze itself, and as such he refers to an in-between space. When Harker is about to go to the Carpathians and leave Mina behind, the plants around them are like eyes that observe them. This gaze facilitates the passage from one reality to another, as the image of the plant transforms itself into that of a tunnel (0:08:00). The Carpathian space then turns nature into another image of this gaze (0:08:55): through the letter which translates Dracula's voice in this extract, mysterious eyes looking at Harker are signs of a presence at the crossing point of two worlds.

All of Dracula's story is about the opposition between two worlds. Stoker's novel has often been interpreted as showing the opposition between the past, represented by the Carpathian world, and the present, represented by Victorian London. Monstrosity, which is literally the combination of two heterogeneous beings, is here to be found in the manifestation of the past in the present; it is the crossing of forbidden borders, such as the border between life and death. In the three films, transitional images underline the chasm between two worlds. Such liminal spaces take different forms, such as, for example, a street in Murnau's film (0:54:00) where, after Dracula has introduced the plague, corpses build a line separating the dark and the sunny sides of the street – and the window, from which the street is seen, is another separation between interior and exterior spaces. In the same way, the very beginning of Browning's film shows two mountains separated by a path through which the calèche, carrying Renfield, passes on its way to Dracula's castle.

This structure in two symmetrical parts illustrates the very nature of the vampire, who can be a reflection, a double, or a shadow. Coppola uses it too, but



with a slight difference. Mina, talking with Dracula, evokes the Carpathian environment which she has seen in her previous life (1:06:00). The scene's background is shared between two spaces: on the left-hand side, the castle, and on the right-hand side, the restaurant in London where they find themselves, representing respectively the past and the present. When she evokes the princess of Dracula's story, the two parts become three (1:06:00). Dracula's in-between space is therefore not only situated between two realities, but occasionally between three. When Harker goes to the Carpathians and looks at a map, he notices that this space is between Transylvania, Moldova, and Bucovina; so that the organization of the fiction into a double space, London and the Carpathians, turns into a triple one.

In Browning's film, Dracula takes with him to London three boxes of his country's soil; this number has a strong symbolic meaning, for the two sides (life and death) of Dracula's hybrid nature turn here into a triple nature, evoking another trinity. The same thing occurs in another image relating Dracula to Mina. After Lucy's death, Mina and Jonathan marry, which creates a symmetry (1:06:42). This symmetry is represented by the two staircases of the church, one going down in white, the other going up in red. There are three windows in each staircase. This complex play on the symbolic value of numbers is a way to slide from one meaning of the vampire to another. The number two refers to Dracula's nature, situated between life and death: Dracula is the one who, coming back from death, reproduces Christ's experience in a blasphemous way. The number three refers to the triple nature of God. Dracula, representing a trinity of a different kind, thus challenges God, so that the vampire can be interpreted as a modern Promethean or Faustian myth.

Coppola strengthens both the outline of the story and its symmetries. For example, two babies are given to female vampires in the course of the film: Dracula gives a baby to three vampires at the beginning, and, after her death, Lucy brings a little girl back to her tomb. In this way, the motif of the baby eaten by vampires is used as one of the plot's frames. The whole structure of the film is also framed by a double and symmetrical vertical movement: Elisabeta dies at the beginning, and there is an ascension towards God at Dracula's death (2:01:00) at the end. The vertical movement, which gives its meaning to the whole story, linking it to a relationship between the vampire and God, builds another frame within the fiction. After having liberated her lover from vampire life, Mina looks at the portrait of the two lovers painted on the ceiling. The whole film is structured by two kinds of movement: horizontal movements with the various trips between London and the Carpathians, which seem to represent the quest; and vertical ones, with Elisabeta's fall at the beginning, which is repeated by Jonathan's fall from Dracula's castle, and the final ascension. These vertical movements seem to suggest the achievement of the quest.

Such symmetries and, more generally, the structure of the double foreground the act of artistic representation. In Browning's film, a policeman goes to the cemetery, where he finds a lady dressed in white, Lucy. The image of him in front of the gate of the cemetery and about to enter it (0:49:00) is a clear allusion to Caspar David Friedrich's painting of 1825, *Entry into the Cemetery*. Browning's entire film also alludes to the music of the second act of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*, which creates a counterpart to the plot, and Dracula's first appearance takes place during an opera. In Coppola's film, the representation is linked to cinema. The scene where Dracula seduces Mina takes place at a film exhibition (0:52:14). The structure is symmetrical and, once again, this symmetry presents three images: one showing Dracula and Mina; an image on the screen with a naked woman, which can be understood as a figuration of Mina's desire; and the wolf, who seems to represent Dracula. Thus, the references to cinema and painting, doubling the plots with symbolic images, turn whole scenes into dramatizations of artistic representations, and the films themselves become reflections on that process.

The idea of representation itself is expressed through references to multiple arts: in Murnau through architecture (the shape of the castle is an allusion to the Gothic novel), in Browning through music and painting, and in Coppola through cinema. But the films also refer to literature, and not only to Stoker. Murnau's plot is grounded in the *Book of Vampires*,<sup>3</sup> Browning's is focused on the *Arabian Nights* in Burton's translation (1885),<sup>4</sup> and Coppola retains a quotation in Stoker from Bürger's "Lenore": "Denn die Todten reiten schnell" ["For the dead travel fast"] (Stoker 1997, 13; my translation).<sup>5</sup> In the ballad in question, the young lady watches the empty horse of her lover coming back from the Battle of Prague and does not want to accept his death. When she follows the horse, she discovers a living dead man. In the three films, the Gothic reference is made clear by play on the form of the castle. However, Coppola gives the castle an almost human appearance, which suggests an identification with Dracula (0:11:45, 0:56:55). Could the identification of Dracula with his castle be understood as an allusion to Poe's "Fall of the House

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3 Dudley Wright's *Book of Vampires* was first published in 1914. A second revised edition appeared in 1924, two years after *Nosferatu*. Wright's *Vampires and Vampirism: Collected Stories from around the World* was also published in 1914.

4 Bram Stoker met Burton in the Company of the Beefstacks dining club. Burton had gathered Indian tales in a work entitled *Vikram and the Vampire, or Tales of Hindu Devilry* (Burton 1893), first published in 1870.

5 This is an approximate quotation from Gottfried August Bürger's ballad "Lenore" (1773), in which a woman waits for the return of her fiancé Wilhelm after the Seven Years War. She accompanies on horseback the mysterious young man who had knocked at her door at midnight, and, when she asks why he rides so quickly, the stranger answers: "die Todten reiten schnell" (Bürger n.d.).

of Usher” (1839), in which Usher is identified with his house? An adaptation is a work made from another or by alluding to another, and these relationships in the three adaptations take the form of a correspondence between the arts. This relationship attaches more firmly the myth of Dracula to its decadent origin. The idea of the correspondence appears in the subtitle of Murnau’s film: *Eine Symphonie des Grauens* [*A Symphony of Horror*]. The vertical correspondence, in the Baudelairean sense, is used by Coppola when Dracula describes his lover, Elisabeta: the princess’s face is a river, she is a flower, a river of tears, sadness, and despair. Both the concrete and abstract meanings of the word “river” are combined here, creating a link between the physical and moral worlds. Besides, the princess and the river that killed her are connected, so that Elisabeta appears as a new Ophelia, drowned in a river in her love. Ophelia’s figure is attached to *Hamlet*, but has become a literary myth at least since Rimbaud’s poem (1870) and creates a link not only between literary genres (tragedy and lyrical poetry), but also between the arts: the topos has an important place in particular in the works of Delacroix, Millais, or Waterhouse, and now finds an illustration in cinema through Coppola’s work. Thus, the analogy between Elisabeta and Ophelia not only denotes the relationship between cinema and literature, but also the unity between all the arts, while introducing a mythification of the story.

The mythical reference constitutes the final structural network of allusions that the three adaptations have in common. In Murnau’s version, Jonathan’s decision to go to the Carpathians looks like a pact with the devil when Jonathan and Renfield shake hands at the beginning (0:05:00). In Browning’s film, the meeting of all the doctors talking about Dracula reminds us of the central place of knowledge according to Faust (0:31:52): in this image, the light over the table and the books on the shelves represent rational and scientific knowledge, but the masks and the outside space of the mountain seem to be linked to the magic and forbidden knowledge that Faust wanted to gain.

Claude Lévi-Strauss (1958, 242) states that all the versions of a myth belong to the myth and are part of its history and its meaning. Through the allusions to the myths of Faust and Ophelia, and by applying the notion of correspondences between the arts, Murnau, Browning, and Coppola together propose a particular approach to adaptation. For them, adaptation produces a new work, a new creation which is at the same time an interpretation of the source and a synthesis of previous interpretations. And this idea of a synthesis which is also a transformation, leads to the project of creating a new Dracula myth: our three films interpret Dracula as a myth of liminality, where the challenge to God takes the form of the crossing of the metaphysical borders between life and death, and the crossing of the aesthetical borders between referentiality and representation.

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Jia Guo

# Adaptation as Creation: From Yu Hua's to Zhang Yimou's *To Live*

I once heard an American folk song entitled “Old Black Joe.” The song was about an elderly black slave who experienced a life’s worth of hardships, including the passing of his entire family – yet he still looked upon the world with eyes of kindness, offering not the slightest complaint. After being so deeply moved by this song I decided to write my next novel – that novel was *To Live*.  
(Yu 2003, 249)

**Abstract:** There is one point on which viewers and critics usually agree: that film adaptations of works of literature cannot reflect the full connotations of the original written work. *To Live*, written by Yu Hua, one of the most important contemporary Chinese writers, was first published in the Chinese literary magazine *Shouhuo* in 1992 with a length of 7,000 Chinese characters, and then was extended to 12,000 Chinese characters for cinematographic adaptation. Zhang Yimou, one of the leading Chinese directors of his time, adapted the novel as a film in 1994. Zhang is fully aware of the significance of the practice of film adaptations of literary works. Of his eighteen films, thirteen are adaptations of literary works, which has earned him the title of “the director inseparable from literature.” Both the novel and the film versions of *To Live* have gained great renown. By analysing the variations and distinctions between novel and film, this article will offer some interpretations of Zhang Yimou’s creative process in adapting literature.

**Keywords:** adaptation, film, literature, *To Live*, Yu Hua, Zhang Yimou

*To Live*, both novel and film, can be considered a dual success.<sup>1</sup> The novel was named one of the ten most influential books of the 1990s in mainland China and awarded the 1998 Grinzane Cavour literary prize as the best foreign fiction in Italy, receiving good reviews worldwide. Zhang Yimou’s film adaptation was well received, winning the Grand Jury Prize at the Cannes Festival in 1994, and was nominated as best foreign-language film in 1995 at both the British Academy Film Awards and the Golden Globe Awards. In an interview, the filmmaker revealed

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that he made the decision to adapt the novel *To Live* immediately after reading a draft of the novel, before *To Live* had even been published (Niogret 2001, 57). The novel has been reprinted since it was first published, whereas the film has never been publicly screened in mainland China, which adds an element of mystery to the relationship between novel and film, and makes it attractive for researchers to compare them. While literary critics consistently state that *To Live* is one of Yu Hua's best works, the critical reactions to Zhang Yimou's film adaptation of the novel fall into two opposing camps. According to one critic, the film represents the summit of Zhang Yimou's film career (Z. Zhang 2014, 2). Other people, who do not share this view, complain that Zhang Yimou's adaptation departs too radically from the novel, saying for example that the film "misunderstood the main point of Yu Hua conveyed in the novel, and some modifications the director conducted have politicized it" (Huang 2008, 47; my translation). Rather than taking issue with these early reviews, this article will offer a comparative analysis of the two versions of *To Live*, an analysis that, in the context of adaptation theory, explores more generally the concern animating those reviews: the creative side of adaptation.

## 1 *To Live*: The context

Since the first Chinese adapted film, *Ten Sisters*, based on a French detective story (B. Zhang 2007, 17) was made in 1921, there have been two main highpoints in Chinese film adaptation history: the 1920s to the 1930s,<sup>2</sup> and, after a period of stagnation during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), the 1980s to 1990s, when Zhang Yimou's *To Live* was produced. As Zhang Yimou, one of the most famous Chinese directors of the Fifth Generation, states: "By speaking of the materials and trend of Fifth Generation film, I insist that it is literary works that make our careers. [...] We must start with studying contemporary Chinese literature to study contemporary Chinese film" (quoted in Li 1998, 10; my translation).<sup>3</sup> From 1987 to 1994, five of the six films directed by Zhang Yimou were adapted from contemporary Chinese literature.

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<sup>2</sup> From 1921 to 1931, there were 650 films made by all Chinese film companies, and writers from the Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies School (a modern Chinese literary school originated in Shanghai in 1920s) took part in the production of most of these films. They are based on some of these works of this literature.

<sup>3</sup> The cinema of mainland China has gone through seven generations of filmmakers so far. The rise of the Fifth Generation began in the mid-1980s. Most of the film-makers graduated from the Beijing Film Academy in 1982; they include Zhang Junzhao, Chen Kaige, Tian Zhuangzhuang, Zhang Yimou, and others.

From 1984 to 1987, a group of Chinese writers, including Mo Yan, Su Tong, Yu Hua, Ge Fei, and Bei Cun, began attracting attention by developing unique writing techniques and language; they were labelled as “avant-garde writers.” Among them, Yu Hua has distinguished himself in various literary genres: he is the author of novels like *To Live*, *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* and *Brothers*, the short-story collection *Boy in the Twilight: Stories of the Hidden China*, and the collection of essays *China in Ten Words*. *To Live*’s positive reception both in print and in film has accelerated the dissemination of Yu Hua’s works in foreign countries, and several of Yu Hua’s books have been translated into a total of more than twenty foreign languages.

Inspired by an American folk song, “Old Black Joe,” Yu Hua made an autofiction out of an ordinary person’s life. The protagonist of the story, Xu Fugui, is born into a rich landlord’s family. After squandering the family’s fortune in gambling dens and brothels, he has to start living a peasant’s life. Subsequently, his family is hit by wave after wave of political turmoil, including China’s Civil War, the Great Leap Forward, and the Cultural Revolution. Xu Fugui is conscripted into the army during the Civil War, and his family loses all their wealth and land during the Great Leap Forward. Fengxia, Fugui’s daughter, becomes deaf and mute from a childhood illness, and then marries a man called Erxi. Youqing, another child of Fugui, dies while donating blood. Later on, Fengxia dies due to haemorrhaging during childbirth. Fugui also loses his wife to disease. Erxi is killed in a fatal construction accident. Kugen, Fengxia and Erxi’s son, dies by choking on beans. With every member of his family having passed away, Fugui is left with just an ox as his companion. Not involving any bloody violence, this tragic story is told by a neutral bystander. By revealing to us the life of a common peasant, the novel shows us how ordinary Chinese people survived during these decades. Chinese traditional values are well conveyed in the book. In the preface to the Chinese version, Yu Hua makes the point that the whole story is about the endurance of suffering and optimism towards the world, and he believes that people live for life’s sake, not for anything beyond life itself.

## 2 From page to screen

A close relationship has existed between literature and film since film was invented. In 1895, the Lumière brothers tried to show people’s daily life on film. A few years later, the French film director Georges Méliès made the film *A Trip to the Moon* in 1902, based on Jules Verne’s *From the Earth to the Moon* and H. G. Wells’s *The First Men in the Moon*. Méliès filmed stage plays with a motionless camera, as



film at that time was still the repetition of stage plays. Film did not find its own narrative techniques until montage was born.

In his book *Novels into Film*, George Bluestone points out the close relationship between narrative fiction and cinema: “the reciprocity is clear from almost any point of view: the number of films based on novels; the search for filmic equivalents of literature; the effect of adaptations on reading; box-office receipts for filmed novels; merit awards by and for the Hollywood community” (1968, 2). In the same book, Bluestone emphasizes differences between literature and film on the grounds that they are different media, maintaining that novels and their film versions are both organic, and that they consequently have different formal and thematic conventions, differences inseparable from differences in their respective media. Bluestone characterizes the “fitful relationship” between the two genres as “overtly compatible, secretly hostile” (1968, 2). By “secretly hostile,” Bluestone means in an extreme sense that novels and films are comprehensible to different publics: the small middle-class reading public and the mass public, which make the two forms of art turn in opposite directions. The differences that separate the two media are undeniable.

Despite this close relationship, the word “adaptation” itself can always remind us of a relationship of dependence, of a hierarchical relationship between literature and film. Fidelity is usually considered as the core criterion for maintaining this relationship, with people tending to measure the success of an adapted film by its closeness to the original text. Robert Stam, however, argues that fidelity/infidelity is, in fact, a pseudo-problem:

It is questionable whether strict fidelity is even possible. An adaptation is automatically different and original due to the change of medium. The shift from a single-track verbal medium such as the novel to a multitrack medium like film, which can play not only with words (written and spoken) but also with music, sound effects, and moving photographic images, explains the unlikelihood, and I would suggest even the undesirability, of literal fidelity. (Stam 2005, 4)

This leads to the question of how to define adaptation. Building on Bakhtin’s “dialogism” and Kristeva’s “intertextuality,” Stam considers adaptation as “intertextual dialogism,” because for him, adaptation is “less an attempted resuscitation of an ordinary word than a turn in an ongoing dialogical process” (Stam 2000, 64).

In her book *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon defines adaptation as a product, a process of creation and of reception (2006, 16). The three definitions given by Hutcheon are: “First, as a formal entity or product, an adaptation is an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works”; “second, as a process of creation, the act of adaptation always involves both (re-)interpretation and then (re-)creation”; and “third, seen from the perspective of its process

of reception, adaptation is a form of intertextuality” (7–9). Based on the theory of intertextuality, Hutcheon emphasizes the creativity in adaptation activity. Hence another question: what is a good adaptation? Hutcheon comments: “Whatever the motive, from the adapter’s perspective, adaptation is an act of appropriating or salvaging, and this is always a double process of interpreting and creating something new” (20). Hutcheon’s statement basically dispels the absolute importance of the original text, and attaches more importance to the interpretation of the audience.

In *Novels into Films*, Bluestone notes that “the novel began a still unbroken tradition of appearing conspicuously on story conference tables [...]. Filmed novels, for example, have made consistently strong bids for Academy Awards.” (1968, 2–3) These two facts reflect the fact that the novel exerts an enormous influence on what films directors make. The examples Bluestone provides, such as D. W. Griffith’s silent film *Birth of a Nation*, and Victor Fleming’s sound film *Gone with the Wind*, are commercially and artistically successful results of novel–film transfer. This pattern calls to mind a successful series of filmed novels taken from contemporary Chinese literature, including Yu Hua’s *To Live*, Mo Yan’s *Red Sorghum*, and Su Tong’s *Wives and Concubines*.

### 3 Yu Hua’s and Zhang Yimou’s *To Live*

The factors supporting the dissemination of contemporary Chinese literary works are numerous, but film adaptation has been identified as an important one (Liu 2012, 117). Mo Yan, Yu Hua, and Su Tong are among the most popular contemporary Chinese writers. They have one thing in common: each of them has a novel that was adapted into a film by Zhang Yimou that has won important foreign film awards. In an interview with Michael Berry, Zhang Yimou admits that *To Live* is the film with which he feels the strongest personal connection. He says: “*To Live* is important to me because of its historical background of the Cultural Revolution. Actually, the most attractive subject matter for me to make films about is the Cultural Revolution. There are countless stories from that era waiting to be told – not political stories, but stories about life and human nature” (quoted in Berry 2005, 127). Thus, it is not hard to understand that Zhang Yimou decided to adapt *To Live* at first sight. By comparing the novel *To Live* and its filmic counterpart, we will now evaluate the creative element of the film adaptation.

### 3.1 Narrative perspective

Etienne Fuzellier underlines three problems that film directors face in adapting novels: the length of the work, the use of paragraphs in novels devoted to psychological analysis of characters, and the change from a confidential tone to a public tone (Fuzellier 1964, 108–110). *To Live* was first published in the Chinese literary magazine *Shouhuo* in 1992 with a length of 7,000 Chinese characters, and was extended to 12,000 Chinese characters for its cinematographic adaptation, nearly doubling its length.

*To Live* is an unusual first-person narrative in that it has two narrators. The novel begins with the narrative of a young popular folk-song collector who encounters Fugui, an old man who then relates his own life story. Discussing the narrative, Yu Hua revealed in an interview that at the outset, he found himself stuck while writing *To Live*, and that the situation did not improve until he began to employ first-person narrative. According to him, writers are always led by narrative; narrative can control writers, and they are willing to be controlled by it: “Fugui’s value is the fact that he’s alone; that’s why he has a better reason to provide the voice for *To Live*, and it’s more powerful than any others’. A man surrounded by his relatives has a weaker voice about life” (quoted in Ye 2002, 36; my translation). Fuzellier mentions that

the novels sometimes called “first-person novels” – those which present themselves as a sort of autobiography – must undergo a profound transformation. The reader sees and imagines through the eyes of the character, identifies with him directly; the director has to present the same character visibly to the audience on screen; the narrative comes out of the character, takes place outside him, and thus adopts other perspectives, another dimension. (Fuzellier 1964, 109; my translation).

In the film, Yu Hua’s first-person narrative is eliminated. Our understanding of what happens in the novel relies on Fugui’s memory and narration, but in the film Fugui becomes just one of the characters. From the perspective of the audience, Fugui’s voice is no longer central, and the focus shifts from one event-related character to another, and the interactions between them. This shift may be due to technical reasons, but it makes the adaptation depart from Yu Hua’s nostalgic implications. As the only survivor in his story, Fugui, who has experienced all the events he relates, leads the readers of the novel to his memories of the past. In Zhang’s narrative, the story happening on the screen offers the audience the feeling of being present, which removes the distance between the protagonist’s account and his addressees.

According to the terms of Gérard Genette’s theory in the *Nouveau discours du récit* (1983), this novel has two narrators. One is a heterodiegetic narrator, the

young man who makes a living from collecting popular folk songs; the other, Fugui, is a homodiegetic narrator, someone who has experienced the story. There are two levels of narratives, two narrators, two voices merged in harmony between sympathy and reflection. This is how Yu expressed his philosophy of life in the preface to the Korean version:

As a term, *To Live* is full of strength in the Chinese language; its strength does not come from shouting, nor from attack, but from endurance. We need to endure the responsibility that life gives us, to endure the happiness, suffering, boredom, and mediocrity that reality gives us. *To Live* is a story about the friendship between a man and his fate; this is the most touching friendship in the world: they appreciate each other, they hate each other, they cannot abandon each other, nor complain about each other. (Yu 2012, 5; my translation)

This philosophy of life is conveyed by the retrospective narration of Yu's novel, through old Fugui's words and sometimes his psychological description. In the film, which lacks psychological description, this philosophy is portrayed by giving some added lines to Fugui. For instance, near the beginning of the film, Fugui, who has lost at gambling again, says while signing an IOU: "I've run up a pile of debts lately. But my calligraphy's improving." Why was this added to Fugui's lines? Probably because it allows Fugui's self-mockery to show that, after the many tragedies that had hit his family, especially several deaths, he could survive this setback.

### 3.2 The adaptation of the plot

Despite its name, the novel *To Live* has only one character, Fugui, who survives to the end of the story; as mentioned earlier, all of his relatives as well as a number of other characters die. At the end of the novel, Fugui remains alone with his only companion, an old ox; but in the film, Fugui survives with the other three family members, which seems less tragic and less pessimistic than the novel's ending. The details can be found in the table below ("x" means the character dies, while "√" means the character lives).

Characters	Fugui (F)	F's father	F's mother	Jiazhen	Longer	You- qing	Chun- sheng	Feng- xia	Lao- quan	Erxi	Kugen/ Mantou
Novel	√	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Film	√	x	x	√	x	x	x	x	x	√	√

We can now compare the two endings. The description of the last presence of Fugui in the novel is:

The old man and his ox gradually got farther away, but from far off I could still hear the echo of the old man's hoarse and moving voice. It floated through the open night like the wind. The old man sang:  
 In my younger days I wandered amuck,  
 At middle age I wanted to stash everything in a trunk,  
 And now that I'm old I've become a monk. (Yu 2003, 234)

This ending has a strong visual effect and interprets well the “endurance” and “strength” mentioned in Yu Hua’s preface to the Korean version. Through these sentences, we learn what it can mean “to live” for Fugui in different life stages. As an ending, it does not seem tragic, because the character Yu wanted to create is the one who “still looked upon the world with eyes of kindness, offering not the slightest complaint” (Yu 2003, 249) after suffering a series of hardships.

At the end of the film, Fugui’s companions are his wife, son-in-law, and grandson. The final conversation between Fugui, Jiazhen, and Mantou (Kugen in the novel) lightens the story and gives readers hope. Looking at a whole box of live chicks, Mantou asks his grandfather Fugui:

“Grandpa, when will these chicks be grown up?”  
 “They will be grown up very soon” said Fugui.  
 “What will happen when they are grown up?” asked again Mantou.  
 “They will turn into geese.”  
 “The goose will become a sheep.”  
 “The sheep will become an ox.”  
 “After the ox?”  
 “After the ox, you will be grown up” said Jiazhen.  
 “I want to ride on the back of the ox.”  
 “When you are grown up, you will take trains, take flights, and life will be better and better.”  
 (my translation)

However, we cannot help but ask the question: why did Zhang Yimou change the ending of the novel? In the interview with Michael Berry, the director explained his decision from both professional and personal perspectives:

We changed the ending simply to get it past the censors. After all, we wanted to get the film approved, and that wasn't going to happen if we killed off all the characters! In Yu Hua's original novel basically everyone died, but we couldn't let that happen in the film. We really wanted this film to be approved and hoped that audiences in China would be able to see it. On another, more personal level, I also felt that killing everyone would be a bit too much. After all, although my family went through hell during the Cultural Revolution, none of us died. It seemed to me more representative that most families survived that era, even if they

did experience terrible hardships. Later I heard that Yu Hua was not happy with this and felt I was getting too far away from his original novel. But writers have more freedom than we do. They don't understand that filmmakers face a lot more difficulties than novelists. We don't have the freedom to adapt stories exactly as we might like to. It never would have worked if we'd let the whole family die. (quoted in Berry 2005, 128–129)

The researcher Huang comments that, in the film, the family consisting of Fugui, Jiazhen, Erxi and Mantou (Youqing) represents a fairly happy ending, which stays superficial (Huang 2008, 47). I will argue that the depth of the work does not depend on how sad the ending is, but rather on how the hardships that the family of Fugui experienced are shown. Whether it is to satisfy censors or due to the filmmaker's personal feelings, the film's ending is less heavy and dramatic than the novel's, but the spirit of "endurance" is kept.

Another significant change in the film is the death of Youqing (Fugui and Jiazhen's son). In the novel, he dies donating blood to the wife of a county magistrate called Chunsheng, an old military buddy of Fugui's. Thus, Chunsheng is indirectly responsible for Youqing's death. The description in the novel is:

Youqing had already given more than his body could take, but out came another doctor saying there still wasn't enough blood. The fucking asshole doing the blood work extracted almost every drop of blood from my son's body. Youqing's lips turned blue, but the guy still didn't stop. Only after Youqing's head slumped and fell to one side did he finally begin to panic. He called a doctor over, who squatted down and listened with a stethoscope. "I can't get a heartbeat," muttered the doctor. The doctor didn't seem to think it was a big deal. He just scolded the blood technician. "You're really an idiot." (Yu 2003, 150)

In the transition from novel to film, Youqing's death becomes accidental. In the film, Youqing dies in a car accident. Because of the fatigue of steel-making encouraged by the government, Youqing is taking a nap against the wall at school, and is accidentally killed by the District Mayor who is reversing his car. Yu Hua places a greater emphasis on the dark side of human nature. The film, on the other hand, associates Youqing's death with wrong-headed state policies, which strengthens the criticism of political life.

### 3.3 Uniquely filmic elements

Fengxia and Erxi's wedding provides a way to interpret the role that the Cultural Revolution plays in these two works. The depiction of Fengxia and Erxi's wedding scene in the novel emphasizes individual happiness; but in the film, more political elements are involved through sounds and images: people express their

gratitude to the State by singing songs whose lyrics promote the message that Chairman Mao Zedong has a bigger influence on the individual than one's own family does; the new couple are photographed with Fengxia's parents, and everybody holds the "Little Red Book" (*Quotations by Mao Zedong*); and the Mayor's words, "Today, comrades, Wan Erxi and Xu Fengxia begin their wedded life. In good times, we think of the Communist party and Chairman Mao. Let's sing a song together" (English subtitles to *To Live*, modified here) reveal their devotion to the Chairman. Compared to the film, the novel takes an indirect approach, as Mao is relatively absent. The fact that Yu Hua and Zhang Yimou were born, respectively, in the 1960s and 1950s, could be one of the reasons for the difference in their ways of dealing with the Cultural Revolution.

Zhang Yimou inserts shadow play into his film. This folk art's presence is both a cultural element and a visual symbol that is a hallmark of all of Zhang Yimou's films. Zhang Yimou provides the explanation in his interview with Michael Berry, "The addition of puppet theater (shadow play) was basically to emphasize the visual look of the film. Visuality is something I have always highlighted in my films, and that was a way to add another layer of color" (Berry 2005, 128). The director is originally from Shaanxi Province, located in the north of China where shadow play, one of four major types of puppetry in China, was created. It becomes a metaphor for Fugui's life time. When Fugui is the young master of a rich family, he likes watching shadow theatre as a pastime. After squandering the family's fortune in gambling dens and brothels, he begins to work in a shadow-play art group to support the family. During the Civil War, Fugui and his friend Chunsheng decide to establish their own troupe. Unfortunately, their plan is delayed by Guomindang (Nationalist) conscription. After they are captured by Liberation soldiers, Fugui and Chunsheng finally start performing. In the context of the Cultural Revolution, however, shadow play is soon rejected as one of the old (and therefore banned) cultural activities. At the end of the film, Fugui removes his trunk of shadow-play puppets from under a bed, symbolizing a fresh start. Shadow play acts as a witness of Fugui's life through its ups and downs. As objects without souls, puppets cannot control their fate, like those people who cannot escape the influence of political events. Yet, as symbols of the cultural tradition, the shadow-play puppets here survive one disaster after another. Even after they are destroyed, the trunk which previously held them survives and awaits a new life.

The way Zhang Yimou deals with food is also quite different from Yu Hua's. In the novel, food serves to mobilize the narrative action or to intensify the conflict. Zhang Yimou's *To Live*, by contrast, uses food to portray personal feelings. As the filmmaker is from the north of China, where people mainly eat *jiaozi* (dumplings), *mantou* (steamed wheat buns), and noodles, he uses them as cultural symbols.

For example, Youqing is asked to go to school to learn about steel-making, and his mother Jiazhen prepares for him a lunchbox of *jiaozi* brought from the town as a reward for his hard work. As mentioned above, the tired Youqing falls asleep against a wall and is killed by a vehicle accidentally crashing into the other side of the wall. He never has a chance to open that lunchbox. *Jiaozi*, left cold and uneaten, are put at Youqing's graveside, which represents a way of showing people's respect for the dead.

## 4 Conclusion

I have discussed the adaptation of *To Live* in two ways throughout this article: in terms of what is transformed, and in terms of what is added. Exploring the intersection and differences between the novel and the film provides a way to examine the process of creation in adaptation. This is a far more complex process than simply transforming a text into a different medium. Everyone who finishes reading *To Live* can have his or her own interpretation of what it means “to live.” Compared to the novel's less cheerful ending, Zhang Yimou's interpretation brings it to a rather optimistic conclusion. Considering what Hutcheon (2006, 20) suggests as characterizing a good adaptation – that is, the creation of something new – I think that the film *To Live* qualifies as a success. The shadow play inserted into the film is more than a visual cultural symbol because it carries the meaning of the film, like the red lanterns in the director's 1991 *Raise the Red Lantern*. If this is part of the pattern used by Zhang Yimou to build a bridge between text and image, surely that is already an act of creation.

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Margarida Esteves Pereira

# Transnational Adaptations: The Nineteenth-Century Novel Revisited through a Transcultural Lens

**Abstract:** This article aims to address issues of adaptation from the point of view of transcultural and transhistorical film adaptations of classic nineteenth-century realist novels. I propose to discuss a number of these adaptations, taking into account production aspects as well as stylistic elements that enhance the transnational/global angle of the films. There are many examples of these, including the popular *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), an adaptation of Jane Austen's novel by director Gurinder Chadha, or the film *Trishna*, directed by Michael Winterbottom (2012), which is based on Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. We can call them transcultural and transhistorical adaptations, since they relocate the narratives that inspired them to different geographical and historical settings. We will frame our discussion of these adaptations using theories of adaptation, namely those of Linda Hutcheon and Robert Stam, as well as within a discussion of transnational film studies.

**Keywords:** classic adaptations, film adaptation, transcultural adaptation, transnational adaptation

## 1 On adaptation and the nineteenth-century realist novel: A brief overview

An age pervaded by the “global screen,” to use Lipovetsky and Serroy's phrase (2010), an age where reality is constantly mediated by some screen, can make the written page of the literary text as presented in the old medium of the book, or even in its updated version of the e-book, look almost obsolete. In this context, we can also see film and literature courses, which have in recent years become widespread in academic curricula in the humanities, as a sign of the difficult negotiation literature experts have to perform in order to meet the cultural expectations of generations of young (and not so young) adults whose cultural references are audio-visual as well as/rather than literary, and often popular rather than erudite.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> According to Marjorie Garber, literature and literary criticism, which were once a serious part of people's education, have been “replaced by expertise in science and in information technology,

The bulky nineteenth-century novel, in particular, may well present its own difficulties to contemporary undergraduate students who have to read, among others, novels by Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, William Makepeace Thackeray, Thomas Hardy, or the Brontë sisters. In these circumstances, but not only in them, we might say that the screen adaptations of such novels might even help students read them.

Indeed, a good number of the many forms taken by the relation between film and literature is addressed by studies of film adaptation and comparative analyses of screen adaptations of literary works. This has led to the emergence of the scholarly trend of Adaptation Studies, which is now widespread and which, in turn, has rekindled theoretical discussions about processes of adaptation.

It is now commonly assumed, in these debates, that the least productive view to take when making a comparative analysis of a film and its source text is that of so-called fidelity analysis, that is, an analysis that seeks to “read” the film in terms of its closeness to the novel it is based on. The rejection of the fidelity assumption dates back to George Bluestone’s pioneering book, *Novels into Film* (first published in 1957), in which even the idea of a comparative approach is fundamentally rejected on the basis of the specificity thesis. For Bluestone, that is to say, films and novels are such radically different media that the idea of trying to evaluate one in relation to the other is absurd. Thus, he states: “It is as fruitless to say that film A is better or worse than novel B as it is to pronounce Wright’s Johnson’s Wax Building better or worse than Tchaikovsky’s *Swan Lake*. In the last analysis, each is autonomous, and each is characterized by unique and specific properties” (2003, 5–6).

The specificity thesis was more recently revived by Robert Stam (2005, 16–18), who, in his theorization of adaptation, starts from the idea of the “automatic difference” between the media, both on the grounds of the production processes involved and the very languages used (that is, aesthetic specificity). However, as Brian McFarlane states in an article entitled “It Wasn’t Like That in the Book ...,” for many people (especially in the field of literary studies), there still persists an idea that “the film is only valuable as it approximates the precursor text” (2007, 4). McFarlane contests this assumption by saying that, in most cases, such criticism views the film as a derivative copy of an original. He argues instead that “the film has the right to be judged as a film; then, one of the many things it also is [*sic*] an adaptation (it is also the product of a particular industrial system, a genre film, part of a tradition of national filmmaking, etc.)” (McFarlane 2007, 9).

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on the one hand, and by visual literacy on the other”; “by visual,” she further argues, “what is now meant is moving images (films, videos, television, MTV, advertising) as well as paintings and photographs” (2012, 13).

Recent theories of adaptation, namely by Linda Hutcheon and the already-quoted Robert Stam, have preferred to emphasize the intertextual approach by focusing on, as Hutcheon argues, “adaptations as adaptations” (2006, 4). This means that, from the perspective of reception, “adaptation is a form of intertextuality: we experience adaptations (as adaptations) as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation” (8) or, as Hutcheon states at another point, “repetition without replication” (7). The intertextual approach, described by both Hutcheon and Stam, redirects our interest in adaptations from the “fidelity” type of comparative analysis towards a framework where an adaptation, as a cultural product, is seen as a text in its own right. In the process, as is posited by Stam through his use of Gérard Genette’s theorization of hyper- and hypo-textualities, this approach makes “manifest what is true of all works of art – that they are all in some level ‘derivative’” (Stam 2005, 45). Hutcheon draws on the Darwinian theory of evolution to suggest a parallel with what happens when stories get adapted to different media and different contexts. Thus, she states:

Stories also evolve by adaptation and are not immutable over time. Sometimes, like biological adaptation, cultural adaptation involves migration to favourable conditions: stories travel to different cultures and different media. In short, stories adapt just as they are adapted. (Hutcheon 2006, 31)

## 2 Transcultural and transhistorical adaptations

This idea may be applied to our consideration of any particular film adaptation, but it is patently obvious in those cases where the adaptation openly asserts its transcultural and transhistorical process. Although, as Linda Hutcheon states, there is nothing new in “adapting from one culture to another,” “what had been called ‘cultural globalization’ [...] has increased the attention paid to such transfers in recent years” (Hutcheon 2006, 145). This is the case with adaptations that appropriate more or less extensively a particular narrative, transposing it to a completely different historical and/or cultural context in a movement of re-location or “proximization” (Sanders 2010, 20).<sup>2</sup> In these cases, as is explained by

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<sup>2</sup> In *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (1997), Gérard Genette talks about a “movement of proximization,” which he explains in the following terms: “As has just been indicated with reference to nationality, the habitual movement of diegetic transposition is a movement of proximization: the hypertext transposes the diegesis of its hypotext to bring it up to date and closer

Julie Sanders, the adaptation contains “further layers of transposition, relocating [...] source texts not just generically, but in cultural, geographical and temporal terms” (2010, 20). Thus, in this case, the issue of fidelity to the original source is made even more irrelevant, because of the obvious differences between the two texts (novel and film) at all levels, from the narratological to the historical and the sociological. In other words, when stories are retold in completely different contexts, they allow for a process of transformation that emphasizes difference instead of similarity, and, as stated by Hutcheon, “local particularities become transplanted to new ground, and something new and hybrid results” (2006, 150).

This type of adaptation has been gaining currency lately, and we will find several examples of films that focus on a classic nineteenth-century realist novel and relocate it to a totally different time and geographical setting. Among the examples that readily come to mind is *Bride and Prejudice* (dir. Gurinder Chadha, 2004), which adapts Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), transposing it to contemporary India (but also to Los Angeles and London) in the context of globalization. As will be apparent further on in this article, *Bride and Prejudice* is a particularly transnational film, aimed specifically at promoting ideas of multiculturalism and global diversity that are made visible in, among other things, the production (this is a UK/US/Indian co-production), the blending of different film languages (Bollywood, Hollywood, English costume film), and the transnational setting, with the American, Indian, and English characters (and cast) flying to and from Amritsar (Punjab, India), London, and Los Angeles, as well as Goa (India).

Of course, adaptations of Jane Austen occupy such a special place in adaptation studies that we are bound to find a few more transpositions of her novels to other historical and cultural contexts, as is the case with *Clueless* (dir. Amy Heckerling, 1995), an adaptation of *Emma* (1815), which takes place in the modern US. Another transposition of a realist novel to modern India is *Trishna* (dir. Michael Winterbottom, 2011), an adaptation of Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* (1892). Winterbottom had already directed *The Claim* (2000), a transcultural adaptation of another Thomas Hardy novel, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), to another geographical dimension without changing the time frame – he sets the story in the California gold rush at the end of the nineteenth century. Dickens is another of the great realist writers whose novels have been extensively adapted to the screen; in his case, there are plenty of examples of relocated novels. Let us

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to its audience (in temporal, geographic, or social terms).” He further argues that this movement “always consists in moving from the remote to the proximate” (Genette 1997, 304). Some commentators prefer Sanders’s term “proximation” – for example, *Understanding Film Theory* by Ruth Doughty and Christine Etherington-Wright (2018, 34–35).

take just two examples: the film *Great Expectations* (dir. Alfonso Cuarón, 1998), which transposes Dickens's novel (published in 1861) to present-day New York, and *Boy Called Twist* (dir. Tim Greene, 2004), a transposition of *Oliver Twist* (1838) to contemporary South Africa.

The aforementioned movement of "proximation," which is made by a re-contextualization of the source text to a contemporary time, performs an obvious updating of the text from the nineteenth century to the present, investing the film with an added interest, perhaps, for contemporary audiences. This is particularly important in commercial cinema, where productions have to be able to attract audiences in order to pay for the costs of production. Very often, the films take advantage of the melodramatic and/or sensationalist characteristics of the realist novels they adapt, highlighting certain timeless qualities found in these novels. This seems to be the case with a film like Winterbottom's *Trishna*, which appropriates the sensationalist themes of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, as far as the issues of sexual politics underlying the novel are concerned, and transposes them to present-day India in a movement that seems to be intended to focus on the situation of women in India today. As I have discussed elsewhere (Pereira 2016), Hardy's novels have been concerned with matters both of gender and of the representation of sexual desire; thus, this adaptation seems to perpetuate intense responses on the part of the viewer by drawing attention to a sensationalist depiction of the female character. This is achieved by a very vivid depiction of Jay's continuous abuse of Trishna/Tess in scenes that make visible the sexual violence exerted on the character and reinforce the constraining and constricting situation of women in Indian society today (Pereira 2016).

However, these films raise other important questions, given that we are dealing here with adaptations that are simultaneously transhistorical (that is, they appropriate source texts from the nineteenth century by transposing them to the twenty-first) and transcultural (in that they transfer sources from European/English contexts to very different geographical and cultural contexts). The question that needs to be asked in relation to this kind of adaptation is: why keep using nineteenth-century novels to tell stories that are set in such different historical, geographical, and cultural contexts?

According to McFarlane and Hutcheon, some of the reasons for resorting to adapting literary classics have to do with recognizability and, consequently, the capacity to attract audiences; proven success; the prestige of borrowing from a well-established and respected art form, that is, exploring the "cultural capital" of a previous artwork (see McFarlane 2004, 6–7; Hutcheon 2006, 4–5, 85–92); but also, as Hutcheon (2006, 92–95) remarks, the desire to pay tribute to the adapted text by "copying" it, or the need to call the adapted text into question. This is the case, for example, when the film adaptation re-creates the hypotext by inter-

rogating its politics and frames of reference by introducing scenes that are not present in the original text. Thus, for instance, an adaptation can introduce a feminist or postcolonial interpretation into its treatment of an existing novel or story, undermining or reinforcing strands of meaning that might or might not be latent in the source text. This would be the case with *Bride and Prejudice*, Gurinder Chadha's adaptation of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, which, in spite of following the romance pattern of the novel and Elizabeth Bennet's strong, independent character, draws attention to questions of cultural stereotyping of India, which is seen by the prejudiced North American William Darcy as a lesser culture.

On the other hand, these transcultural adaptations are very often also transnational productions, funded by different companies based in different countries or continents. A case in point would be *Bride and Prejudice*, an English and US co-production based on an English novel, but set in different world locations – like Amritsar and Goa in India, Los Angeles, and London. The film displays an obvious global/transnational framework. Moreover, it is a blend of different national film traditions, a clear stylistic mix, fusing Bollywood musical with Hollywood romance and English heritage comedy, all three very popular and entertaining genres in their own contexts.

### 3 Transcultural adaptations as transnational cinema

As is mentioned by several authors who have dealt with questions of transnational cinema (Ezra and Rowden 2006b; Shohat and Stam 2003, 1–17; Desai 2004, 1–33; Higson 2006, 15–25), contemporary film production is a global business. In many senses, the idea of a global cinema can be applied to Hollywood cinema, taking into account its widespread global reach. This is not, however, the understanding of transnational cinema I propose here, since “transnational” may also refer to a counter-hegemonic film production, which is carried out, as Hamid Naficy points out, by exilic and diasporic “figures who work in the interstices of the social formations and cinematic practices” (2006, 111). As is stated by Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden:

The transnational comprises both globalization – in cinematic terms, Hollywood's domination of world film markets – and the counterhegemonic responses of filmmakers from former colonial and Third World countries. The concept of transnationalism enables us to better understand the changing ways in which the contemporary world is being imagined by an increasing number of filmmakers across genres as a global system rather than as a collection of more or less autonomous nations. (Ezra and Rowden 2006a, 1)

Writing more than ten years ago, Ezra and Rowden viewed this concept of transnational cinema as a consequence of a number of factors, which include “the increasing permeability of borders,” generated both by “the acceleration of global flows of capital and a shifting geopolitical climate,” including at that time “the end of the Cold War and the creation of the European Union,” and the accelerated circulation of films enabled by new technologies, notably the video, the DVD, and digital media (2006a, 1).

The rapid circulation of films and the impact this has on contemporary film practices has reached another dimension in the age of the Internet, which has heightened the transnational dimension of cultural practices by deterritorializing them. As is argued by Arjun Appadurai in his influential *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, “electronic media decisively change the wider field of mass media and other traditional media,” the other important mark of globalization being mass migration (1997, 3–4). According to Appadurai,

electronic mediation and mass migration mark the world of the present not as technically new forces but as ones that seem to impel (and sometimes compel) the work of the imagination. Together, they create specific irregularities because both viewers and images are in simultaneous circulation. (Appadurai 1997, 4)

Thus, in this sense, transnational cinema – or the cultural practice of a transnational cinema – transcends the idea of “national” cinemas and can be understood either as a set of production practices, or as a set of cultural practices of reading national cinemas in an era of globalized culture. As is argued by Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim in the inaugural issue of the journal *Transnational Cinemas*, we can see

this shift towards the transnational as encouraged by a wider dissatisfaction expressed by scholars working across the humanities (in particular sociology, postcolonial studies and cultural studies) with the paradigm of the national as a means of understanding production, consumption and representation of cultural identity (both individual and collective) in an increasingly interconnected, multicultural and polycentric world. (Higbee and Lim 2010, 8)

Films like the ones mentioned above are good examples of this transnational trend in current film production, not only because they are indeed, at least in most cases, transnational productions, but also because they can be read in a context that defies national traditions. Paradoxically, they do so, in the case of our transnational adaptations, by using realist novels that are part of the canon of the national literatures to which they belong.



## 4 Transcultural, transhistorical, transnational

What, then, is at stake when choosing to adapt a nineteenth-century realist novel to the contemporary, transcultural screen? How does the new context affect its original meaning? We can advance only a few tentative answers. In some of the cases, it seems that there is a clear emphasis on the question of cultural hybridity, which signals the intentional breaking of national boundaries in the films in question. Very often, their transnational outlook and their cultural hybridity are a reflection of the diasporic condition of economic globalization, with millions of immigrants living in transnational contexts. For example, when director Gurinder Chadha was asked in an interview whether her intention in directing *Bride and Prejudice* was to make an Austen adaptation or a Bollywood film, she enthusiastically stated that she wanted to do a Bollywood film, but added: “But I needed a good story that everyone was familiar with so they wouldn’t be freaked out by the Indian film language being foreign! So I went with the Jane Austen novel that we all did at school and that we all know and just started to Indianise it” (quoted in Russell 2004). She therefore clearly targeted a mixed audience that might be acquainted with Bollywood films, but most probably would not be. The recognition of the need to make the film more culturally hybrid was obviously part of the decision-making process in a film that was funded by UK and US production companies (including the UK Film Council) and catered for a global audience.

Michael Winterbottom, the director of two of the transcultural adaptations that were referred to above, *The Claim* and *Trishna*, is another interesting example of a particularly transnational director. This much is argued in an article by Andrew Dix, who argues that Winterbottom’s “is a cinema of persistent mobility and migration” (2009, 3). This is something that is clearly demonstrated in these two Hardy adaptations,<sup>3</sup> which are simultaneously transnational co-productions and focus on the transnational mobility of the contemporary characters they depict.

Winterbottom seems to be attracted to the way Hardy’s works denote a fissure between two worlds, the old rural world and the way it is caught in transition to a modern society. This may be the reason why he chooses to set Hardy’s stories outside England. In relation to this, he states that the reason why he chose to place the story of *Trishna/Tess of the D’Urbervilles* in India has to do with this sense of mobility in a changing world that is not found in Britain. As he states in an

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<sup>3</sup> Winterbottom seems to be particularly attracted to the work of Thomas Hardy, since he has made three Hardy adaptations, the first of which, *Jude* (1996), adapted from the novel *Jude the Obscure* (1895), follows the novel’s setting and time frame.

interview: “Hardy’s novels are often about modernity and speed and energy. But it’s hard to get that sense of a dynamically changing world if you set one in this country. Here the problems are more to do with a lack of mobility rather than an excess of it” (quoted in Sandhu 2012). On the other hand, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* had already been transposed to the screen several times before,<sup>4</sup> and this may well account for Winterbottom’s need to take a different approach to the narrative.

The same question of transience and mobility may be applied to his adaptation of *The Claim*, a film that brings to the fore a historical time that is contemporary to the historical time of Hardy’s novel, but changes its location, reterritorializing it from Hardy’s Wessex to the Sierra Nevada in California in 1867, just after the gold rush of the 1840s and the expansion of the American frontier. It tells the story of the pioneer men and women that first settled in this territory in the early days of the gold rush and the way the arrival of modernity, in the form of the railroad, will upset the balance of the town and the community that lived there, and ultimately destroy it, in order to create a new town and a new balance of power. The whole film draws attention to mobility and migration, since we are dealing with a mobile community that arrived here from different parts of the world. In the same way, in *Trishna* we are introduced to people that migrate and move from one place to another, be it from England to India (as in the case of Jay), or from a rural village in the north of India to the city of Jaipur and, from there, to Mumbai (in the case of Trishna). Both films display a sense of cultural hybridity linked to the places of mobility (social, migratory) where they are set that makes of them clear instances of transnationalism.

## 5 Conclusion

In all the cases that I have briefly discussed, we can see that the film in question was produced in order to cater for a transnational, mobile, and global audience. The fact that the source is a classic realist text – and a canonical one at that – only reinforces strands of meaning that make it more contemporary and alive for a contemporary audience. In many ways, this form of adaptation thus works to reinforce the canonicity of the novels that filmmakers adapt and rewrite; it does so by drawing the attention of ever-new audiences to these texts, but also by making

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<sup>4</sup> This began with two silent movies made in the US, in 1913 (dir. J. Searle Dawley) and 1924 (dir. Marshall Neilan); the most notable example is a Franco-British film called *Tess* by Roman Polanski in 1979.

use of a particularly well-known text which will probably make it easier to gather funding for the new film.

I would like to conclude with a note on questions of transnational filmmaking and transcultural adaptations of the nineteenth-century realist novel. The first is globalization, a recent trend in transnational film production. In a globalized world, films also feel the pressure of having to reach a fully globalized audience, one that is, to use Appadurai's term, ever more deterritorialized given the current processes of migration and global media. On the other hand, what these transcultural adaptations seem to bring to the fore is the contemporary significance of realist novels that are made to signify in different places, but with the, sometimes sadly, same themes. If this process draws attention to the global, somewhat timeless qualities and subjects of these novels, and thus to the universal qualities of human suffering, the films simultaneously use these universal themes to draw attention to localized problems and conditions. By doing so, they are, in a way, providing ever-renewed readings of old texts and in the process, making them more alive for contemporary audiences and readers alike.

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## **5 International Intermediality**



Carmen Concilio

# Marlene Creates: Land, Nature, and the Forest as Poetry/Museum

**Abstract:** In this article, I intend to scrutinize a Web project by the Canadian poet, land artist, and photographer Marlene Creates: *A Virtual Walk of The Boreal Poetry Garden* (2010). Her multimedia and multisensory artwork is here viewed as a contribution to the environmental humanities as well as to the eco-digital humanities. Creates's literary and photographic creations – that unravel through a patch of boreal forest in Newfoundland – are certainly among the most original and composite experiments in both digital art and *art-en-plain-air*, challenging the traditional museum and revealing nature within an ethical and aesthetic discourse of high literary value. The aim of this article is ultimately to assess the variety of media, forms, languages, and stances that The Boreal Poetry Garden project displays to its both real and virtual audiences, also taking into consideration the existing corpus of art and literary criticism on the artist's career (Susan Gibson Garvey and Andrea Kunard).

**Keywords:** Canadian literature, digital poetry, ecocriticism, ecopoetry, environmental humanities, humanities, land art, photography

Marlene Creates is a Canadian environmental artist, photographer, and poet. All these three artistic talents characterize the Web project discussed here. In 2010, she produced an original and multimodal artistic Web project entitled *A Virtual Walk of The Boreal Poetry Garden* (Creates 2017b).<sup>1</sup> The project is also to be enjoyed as an experience of eco-literary tourism, for it also involves a guided walking tours through a portion of the forest of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, in the vicinity of Creates's house. These various forms her poetry recitals; photography and film recordings; and interventions by natural scientists, acoustic musicians, and other multidisciplinary artists. In sum, it is a composite experiment in literary eco-art, digital humanities, and visual geography.<sup>2</sup> In order to better understand the intermedial nature of this total artwork, or *Gesamtkunstwerk*, I will start by singling out each term in the project's title. The title deserves to be unravelled

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<sup>1</sup> In the words of the British author Robert Macfarlane (2017, 106), Marlene Creates's work is "multi-perspectival."

<sup>2</sup> Schwartz (2017, 71).



first, so as to bring to the fore its own and the project's multifaceted implications and reverberations.

Then, I shall argue that it is important to define better the ethical and aesthetic imbrications in Marlene Creates's artistic and literary Web project – what Susan Gibson Garvey calls “Creates's aesthetic ‘ecology’” (2017, 16).<sup>3</sup> So far, Marlene Creates's work has been studied mainly by fellow artists, art critics, and art curators, as the numerous reviews of her exhibitions, interviews, and volumes published on her works and career demonstrate. Lately, a new publication has assessed Marlene Creates's poetics, her engagement, and her ethical stance: *Marlene Creates: Places, Paths, and Pauses: A Retrospective*, edited by Susan Gibson Garvey and Andrea Kunard (2017). Most, but not all, of the essays in it are by art experts, and they will inform the present analysis. However, this essay tries to shed light on the high literary quality of Creates's Web project, as well as to study the connections between environmental humanities and eco-digital humanities, and the way in which they combine with each other, creating what in my opinion results in a new conception of the museum.

## 1 “Virtual”

With the term “virtual” – one could also refer to the “digital” – environment, we are immediately immersed in the World Wide Web, for Creates's art project can be enjoyed, watched, listened to, and navigated with a computer and a Web connection. Her project consists of presenting a complex model/system that shows how the digital world promotes a new alphabet, made of various media that cooperate and intermingle so as to produce a completely new grammar. This section is meant to demonstrate how multimodality takes effect through the analysis of poems that guide the participant audience and the digital navigators through the landscape that the poems, in conjunction with the use of photos and films, are able to engender.

The virtuality of the project is evident from its prologue, so to speak, for it opens with an aerial view of Portugal Cove on Newfoundland's Conception Bay (47.5734° N, 52.8583° W). The photo is a typical reproduction of geo-localization images that are globally familiar, thanks to applications such as *Google Maps* and Google satellite views.<sup>4</sup> This opening image allows an immediate connection

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<sup>3</sup> Garvey (2017, 16).

<sup>4</sup> See the first full-screen image of Marlene Creates's Web project, <http://marlenecreates.ca/virtualwalk/> (5 January 2018). This aerial photograph was taken by the Department of Environ-

between a local project, based on specific sites in the coastal area of one of the Atlantic provinces, and the global spectator's cognitive and technical capacities to comprehend maps and their land(scapes).<sup>5</sup> It is thanks to the Web that the local becomes global and people from all over the world can easily access, know, and enjoy Marlene Creates's work/walk.

From that first image, the project becomes interactive and the digital spectator, who is connected through the Internet, a wanderer in a virtual space, is invited to click on the aerial photograph, on the computer screen, so as to begin the exploration of the territory and, along with it, of the particular digitalized and dematerialized hypertext that accompanies it. The cognitive skills of the viewer are triggered by the movement of the hands on the computer keyboard, mouse, or touchscreen, and the apprehension of information from the computer's screen and speakers by the eyes (the visual) and the ears (the auditory) respectively.

The next step/click brings the digital viewer to the "Introduction," which is a speech of one minute and thirty seconds that the artist delivers in front of a camera. Therein she offers the digital spectator instructions on how to proceed further and highlights some aspects of her poetics. First of all, she labels her own poems as "site-specific," that is, the poems she is going to read refer to a precise spot of land where they were first conceived. Second, she stresses how the poems bear traces of the local vernacular that, in the poet's words, "fulfils beautiful sonic relationships with this landscape." Third, the artist explains that she "tried to integrate her life and her art in these six acres of boreal forest," which resulted in "the slightness of her artistic gesture." Finally, she concludes that "often words are the only means to convey the fleeting phenomena that my camera cannot capture." What follows is an invitation to join the artist on a virtual walk through her natural sanctuary.

And from that moment, the artist will speak less to the camera – with close-ups of her face, while speaking – and more to address the real audience of noisy friends, visitors, and tourists who follow her through the forest, sometimes even at night with flashlights – while the camera is filming everything at a distance. Elsewhere, the digital spectator is completely immersed in the same event, bridging the temporal gap that separates the moment of its filming and his/her own experience of it. This is a very meaningful aspect of the project, as will become apparent.

According to the Italian psychoanalyst Vittorio Lingiardi, poetry, in particular, sparks a reverberation (*retentissement*) and activates our neurons in specific and

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ment & Conservation, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, prior to high res satellite views of Portugal Cove being available.

<sup>5</sup> "Part of my goal is to raise the appreciation of the boreal forest in Newfoundland. We're so focused on the sea and the coastline (naturally, I totally understand that) but it seems to me that the boreal forest we live in is also very special" (Crocker 2017).

complex ways (2017, 179) thanks to its brevity, rhythm, rhyme, distilled imagery, and intersubjective comprehension.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Lingiardi adds, a landscape, too, might reverberate in the same way. The effect is even more pronounced when encountering landscape poetry. All in all, then, experiencing Creates's photo-poems digitally does not necessarily involve a diminished experience of nature. Moreover, literature and the specific literary quality of the artist's experiment are worth analysing, for the literary and vocal poetic texts included in this art project are, in fact, dematerialized as part of the virtual ambience in which they are contextualized. This visual poetry constitutes an exemplary experiment in digital humanities, bringing poetry, an emblem of humanist literary tradition, right into the digital world, passing through the real, material world of nature.

To illustrate this point, two examples should suffice. Creates also situates some of her poems within the tradition of the haiku, which owes its popularity in Western modernist literature to Ezra Pound's translations (Pound 1993). Below are two of Creates's most effective image-poems:<sup>7</sup>

Will I  
trim off this branch  
jutting in the new path?  
The next pass a yellow leaf brushes  
my lips.

Pink wild  
rose petals poised  
downstream on the mossy  
edge for two days; then a record  
rainstorm.

These two brief poems, or haikus (Bradbury 2011), are very similar, not only on a surface level.<sup>8</sup> Their inner cohesive structure generates formal similarities. Lines seem to tumble down, as if from a staircase, or as if from a waterfall, through assonance (e. g. the prominence of the *i* sound in the first poem, or of the voiced *s* sound in the second one – “rose,” “petals,” “poised,” “mossy”, “days”), alliteration (e. g. “pink,” “petals,” “poised”), false rhymes (e. g. “branch,” “path”), and imperfect rhymes (e. g. “wild,” “poised”).

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<sup>6</sup> Lingiardi distinguishes between reverberation and resonance; resonance has to do with dispersal over a surface, whereas reverberation has to do with depth (2017, 177).

<sup>7</sup> All the poems cited and commented upon here are published in Concilio (2012, 65–82).

<sup>8</sup> “Many of the short poems are in the cinquain form (with the syllable count being 2, 4, 6, 8, 2), which is my favourite form” (Creates, private correspondence, quoted in Concilio [2012, 66]).

Both poems slip through a temporal shift, a fault line creating a “before/after” divide, a gap or ellipse. The first poem is composed of question and answer. In the first part, the question regards a branch that has grown too much and might need pruning. In the second part, the answer, only implicit, negates what was only a rhetorical question. The single yellow leaf, with its sudden turn of colour, is too beautiful to be trimmed off. The second poem similarly focuses on colour: first, the pink petals of a wild rose are scattered on the mossy edge of the river, then, suddenly, there comes a heavy rainstorm. It is left to our imagination to picture how the petals are most probably washed away to disappear in the end.

Both these poems pivot around the aesthetic beauty of a shot of colour in the wilderness, an almost miraculous event that occurs abruptly and does not last long at the latitude where the poem was conceived. The poems indeed “occur” as epiphanies do; they are thought of as instantaneous illuminations stemming from nature. Yet this analysis is also indebted to the filming techniques that accompany the artist’s oral performance of the poems: cropping and montage. The films manage to portray the passing of time, for their images, thanks to montage, frame first a green branch, then a branch with a yellow leaf; first two pink wild roses, then their scattered petals on the water. Finally, the poems not only perfectly represent the natural materiality they sing; they also fit in perfectly with the filming techniques they accompany. In this sense, the two media, words and images, are absolutely complementary, as Creates stated at the very beginning of her presentation. They follow the same timing, cropping time, in fact, and juxtaposing straight away what happened “before” and what happened “after.” The trimming of the branch and the rainstorm, however, are only evoked in words, as threats that might erase the beauty of nature, which is captured in words/images.

What we digital spectators see is a very specific, local, natural event, typical of the boreal latitude, of that region, that season, respectively early autumn or summer. However, our knowledge and experience of the cyclical patterns of nature makes this word-image familiar. Our mirror neurons are responsible for our capacity as viewers to feel empathy towards what we are watching, be we close to or far away from the geography in question.

Nature is alive in word-image form, also because of the sounds it produces, and which audio-visual filming is able to capture: leaves rustling in the wind, water gurgling in the stream. These video-poems, or photo-poems, really involve all our senses, and it is not difficult to imagine the chill of that water and the pungent air of the forest. We, digital viewers, cannot but plunge into that multi-sensory experience, even if only through a screen, no matter where we are located.

One more of these poems is among the most effective haikus included in the art project, and it is worth analysing: “One apple.”

The storm  
 began with one  
 apple remaining on the tree;  
 a chickadee gripped a twig in  
 the gusts.

In this case, still images alternate with film sequences portraying a single red apple on the white frozen branches of a tree, all covered in snow. The bird mentioned in the last two lines is not visible, but its melodious and shrill call is audible thanks to the superimposition of an audio soundtrack. The effects of the storm that are visibly conveyed through the white rimy trees and branches are rendered in words, too: “the storm” and “the gusts” that, circularly and symmetrically, open and close the poem mimetically mirror the kind of enveloping or sealing created by ice.

In this extremely cold weather, one apple and one bird are singled out as tokens left behind by a precocious autumn storm, almost miraculously surviving in such conditions. The still image of the red apple on the white frosty branches could, perhaps, be compared to a still-life painting. Yet here, nature is alive, even when it is dead or dying, namely, photographically and photogenically frozen, for its cycles are exactly what characterizes its life, its *bios*. And all this increases our sense of how nature is an open-air museum, by which I mean the way in which it deserves periodic tours and visits in order to appreciate its never-ending exhibits. These photo-poems, or video-poems – depending on whether they are moving images or still shots – only grasp the momentary, rather than the eternal. Their *poiesis* is a miraculous, albeit precarious act of creation.

The poems also have a pedagogic function. They teach and educate both the local visitors and the remote viewer to look carefully, to stop and enjoy details, to appreciate colours as sudden revelations, to train their eyes to see the microscopic level rather than the macroscopic one, and to attune their ears to the sounds, noises, and music of nature. In short, the brief poems, in particular, are characterized by multimodality as follows:

Technology:	photo-poems (still/frozen images) video-poems (film, moving images) Web-poems (audio-visual)
Haiku technique:	image-poems/ambience-poems eco-poems
Poetic agency:	map-poems (walking) site-specific poems (landmarks) performance poems (oral recitation)

This is the new grammar of the digital hypertext that this Web project activates, made up of a digital environment overlapping with a natural environment, hosting poetry recitals and photography and films; in sum, it is an exemplary model of eco-digital humanities (on which see Cohen and Le Menager 2016).

## 2 “Walk”

The second element of the project’s title refers to walking. On her official website, Creates links to two more websites that contain archives of artistic projects which include poetry performances and walking in nature. One example is the symposium and creative gathering “Language, Landscape & the Sublime” (29 December 2017),<sup>9</sup> a symposium organized by art.earth at Dartington Hall (UK) in 2016 that also included a screening of Marlene Creates’s documentary video-poem; “From the Ground Tier to a Sparrow Batch: A Newfoundland Treasury of Terms for Ice and Snow, Blast Hole Pond River, Winter 2012–2013”; a second example is “Walking Women,”<sup>10</sup> a series of events organized by the Live Art Development Agency held in London (UK) in 2016 that saw women artists as protagonists of walking experiences and a variety of artistic practices. Thus, Creates’s artistic goals become clearer. On the one hand, her art deals with gender issues, or, better, the role of women artists, herself included, in our contemporary society. On the other hand, it deals with environmental issues; that is, her walk occurs in nature, in the land to produce eco-art.<sup>11</sup> For Creates, the latter becomes a way to articulate aesthetic creativity and ethical engagement with her beloved Newfoundland.

In Marlene Creates’s own Web project, the landscape becomes a walkscape. It becomes a landscape that takes shape while walking, while being crossed and poeticized, through performance poetry, and thanks to one’s moving body.<sup>12</sup> This is a walked cartography where the landscape has been shaped and humanized by hands and feet. “Walking the landscape is the performative aspect of nomadic thinking that allows us to enjoy [aesthetically and philosophically] the paths of action-words” (Careri 2006, 2; my translation; see also Linguardi 2017, 48).

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<sup>9</sup> <http://languagelandscape.info/marlene-creates/> (11 March 2019).

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/whats-on/walking-women/> (5 January 2018).

<sup>11</sup> “Underlying all my work has been an interest in place – not as a geographical location but as a process that involves memory, multiple narratives, ecology, language, and both scientific and vernacular knowledge” (Creates 2017a, 13).

<sup>12</sup> “Her intimate landworks, such as *Sleeping Places, Newfoundland 1982*, have more in common with aspects of feminist earth/body practices” (Garvey 2017, 16).

Walking has undergone a revival as both a philosophical and a life practice, but also as an artistic practice, perhaps thanks to new environmental awareness.<sup>13</sup> Walking in the countryside and in nature (as a legacy of Romantic wandering) as well as urban walking (as a legacy of both *flânerie* and situational *derive*, or psychogeography) is a renewed critical and theoretical ground for literary and cultural, ethical, and aesthetic practices: according to Rebecca Solnit, these practices can be called “ecological.” She writes: “one new realm of walking opened up in the 1960s, walking as art” (Solnit 2014, 267).

The Walking Institute, as one more instance, based in Huntley, a small town in the north-east of Scotland, promotes socially engaged artistic projects that connect walking artists, communities, and places. The activities in which the artists of this community are involved include walking and reciting poetry while immersing oneself in nature, as, for instance, in the poet Petra Vergunst’s promenade performance of her poem “Embrace” in the Cruickshank Botanical Gardens,<sup>14</sup> or, as another example, walking in groups, listening and recording in the woodland together with environmental artists Reiko Goto and Tim Collins as guides.<sup>15</sup> These art projects are very similar to Creates’s own artistic experiments in Canada. Other works still, such as those by Hamish Fulton, could also be mentioned. He is a British walking artist who produces combinations of texts and photographs or illustrations, or vinyl wall texts, to be exhibited in galleries. His ethical principles include leaving no traces behind and leaving the landscape untouched. He also organizes group walks and social walks. For Fulton, walks need to be done very slowly and in silence to gain a meditative quality of concentration, in spite of the awareness of being among others, in order to purify oneself from the congestion of megadata bombarding one’s life through the Internet on a daily basis.<sup>16</sup>

In the contexts mentioned so far, walking means to pace and measure the land with a specific rhythm, it means allowing oneself to slow down, eventually to stop; to breathe air and its smells, eventually to touch the natural elements of one’s surroundings; it involves looking ahead and around, admiring and absorbing the landscape as a whole or in its smallest details by activating all sensory capacities. It is a physical activity, a cognitive and synaesthetic activity, as well as a philosoph-

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**13** In Italy, *Origami*, the weekly magazine of *La Stampa*, dedicated issue 71 to walking: *A ciascuno il suo cammino* (23–29 March 2017). See also *Walkopedia* (<https://www.walkopedia.net/>).

**14** Vergunst (2017).

**15** “Join environmental artists Reiko Goto and Tim Collins to explore issues of empathy, memory and imagination through walking, listening and recording in the woodlands north of Peterculter” (Vergunst 2016).

**16** Hamish Fulton’s official website is <http://www.hamish-fulton.com>. (28 January 2018).

ical activity. Within the boundaries of the artistic projects here discussed, walking is for the participants also an ethical activity and an aesthetic praxis.

For Creates, in the specific Web project examined here, walking as art has become walking and then stopping to recite poetry in/about precise spots in the forest and specific, recognizable sites. This is also a way of singing the land, and it reminds us of the Australian Aborigines' singing of places and routes, by means of chanting the names of milestones, landmarks, water wells, distances, and directions. Not dissimilarly, the Apache use language "not only to navigate but also to charm the land – to sing it back into being, and to sing one's being back into it" (Macfarlane 2017, 105). Marlene Creates, while walking, chants specific features of her forest, for instance the landmark "rockface" that digital spectators can look at on the computer screen. This short poem dedicated to the "rockface" is worth analysing, for it shows walking as art and poetry as action-word, that is, a literary discourse that has a performative quality to the point of conjuring up before our eyes shapes that we can perfectly visualize:

Coming upon the rockface  
for the first time – it is  
something unto itself,  
eerie, numinous.

In this case, nature is anthropomorphized, yet it remains itself. The rockface is a landmark, both recognizable and revisitable after that first epiphanic moment when the poet spotted it. Poetry allows the spectacle of nature to emerge as that which is ultimately worth seeing and experiencing as given unto itself. In this way, when we follow the poet who walks, tells, maps the boreal forest, that forest also becomes a community space for us all, both real and digital walkers, a shared place, not the privileged Romantic site for the poet alone to contemplate or whose emotion can be felt at a later time, as it was in Wordsworth's case when he wrote of "emotion recollected in tranquillity" (1973, 608). The forest is easily transformed into our own mindscape as well:

The events in The Boreal Poetry Garden have evolved into multi-sensorial crossings, between the arts and sciences. They have included collaborations with nature poets, boreal ecologists, geologists, wildlife and bird biologists, acoustic musicians, and contemporary dancers – all helping to connect people to the boreal forest ecosystem. And there are ripple effects from the participants encountering each other. (Creates 2017a, 160)

As Web-viewer spectators, we do not know where exactly the real audience is going and in what direction; however, the surprise effect creates curiosity and expectations to the point that visualizing the landmark of the rockface becomes



almost an act of re-cognition – for us, too, as we watch it through the screen. Rocks have “animacy”; “a rock is within its properly geologic duration a wayfarer, a holder of stories of mountains that undulate and continents that journey to the sea” (Cohen 2014, ix). The rockface is just such a living element; its story is here translated into/by the poem according to the terms of material ecocriticism: “all matter is a ‘storied matter’” (Iovino and Oppermann 2014, 1). Moreover, “minerals offer poetry and art that humans only sometimes grasp,” and “stone becomes an ecological agent with an inscribed and inhuman story” (Cohen 2016, 341). Moreover, the poet/artist shows how natural elements are not singled out hierarchically, for the vegetal and the mineral, biology and geology, are all worth poeticizing and photographing.

Another example of the high and varied quality of the literary achievements of the poet/artist is an extremely suggestive and moving example of a stand-alone documentary video-poem: “River of Rain.” Part of *A Virtual Walk of The Boreal Poetry Garden*, it consists of a seven-minute film in which the soundtrack is produced by the juxtaposition of the noisy stream of water, flowing and rattling, with the poet’s murmuring voice, singing the river lyrically.

If Creates’s work disproves Michael Ondaatje’s assumption about the relation between Canada and the haiku when he claims: “Canada supposedly sparked the idea for Imagism but it is really not the country for the haiku,” it proves him right when he assesses that “long poems crawl out of cupboards, archives, gardens, long bus journeys, out of every segment of Canadian writing” (1979, 11). Creates’s more narrative poem, almost a long poem that follows in the footsteps of the “typical” North American and Canadian tradition,<sup>17</sup> mimics the irregular course of the river from its source to the ocean. It narrates the river’s geological history, the water’s cycle, from liquid to vapour and rain, the relationship of the river to the ocean, the morphology of the terrain that causes the river to widen into a bog, and the specificity of that ecosystem, including the local fauna (trout) and the varied flora. As the poem is being recited, our gaze may wander downstream and caress those turbulent waters, those rocks, those weeds exactly as the camera does. Sometimes, the poet’s voice stops, as if she needed to take a deep breath or ponder, and subtitles appear in parentheses – these are her mute thoughts and memories:

(Again, I am drawn  
to this waterfall.)

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<sup>17</sup> “The long poem has been read as a lyric, as an epic, as a discursive narrative, as a postmodern text. [...] it engages itself with disparate elements only to subvert their functions and ideologies” (Kamboureli 1991, xiii–xiv).

Her thoughts and memories take the digital visitors to the same locations – in this case, the same waterfall, mesmerized as we are by the sound of tumbling water like a refreshing breeze. Then, the poem moves uphill from where water reels down upon rocks that were once lava, that welled up under an ocean “hundreds of millions of years ago.”

(Not under the Atlantic,  
not even the  
previous Iapetus  
but,  
a geologist told me,  
an earlier  
pan-African ocean.)

The poet’s mute thinking thus introduces the astonishing geological history of Newfoundland. Most of eastern Canada, around the Hudson Bay (Kangiqsualuk ilua), is characterized by the so-called Canadian Shield, or Laurentian Plateau, a formation of Precambrian igneous and very hard metamorphic rocks deriving from the ancient magmatic activity in the area. At present, this land is covered only by a very thin layer of soil that makes the terrain very hard to cultivate. Labrador occupies the eastern tip of the Shield. However, the the Avalon Peninsula in the south-east of the island of Newfoundland, where the capital city, St. John’s is, there used to be a microcontinent (Avalonia), in the Palaeozoic era, where some of the oldest rocks and fossils in the world are still to be found. These come straight from the northern volcanic arc of Gondwana. On the west coast of Newfoundland, furthermore, the Tablelands in Gros Morne National Park show the effects of plate tectonics, for rocks from the deep ocean crust and the Earth’s mantle lie exposed instead of being buried at great depths, as is usually the case.

The poem, therefore, explores the geology of the place, but in a lyric, suggestive, and moving way, like an ongoing caress. From those rocks the river reels down, from “droplets melding into runnels,” and its waters swell into the Blast Hole Pond, locally known by some as Blassy Pond, a sanctuary for trout.

(Some called it Blassy Pond.  
“We went in trouting  
and we said we went  
in Blassy Pond.  
You know what blasty boughs are?  
We said blassy.”)

Here, the poem harks back to the Newfoundland vernacular, for “blasty” is said “of the branch(es) of a spruce or fir, dead and dry but with the needles, now red

or brown, still adhering,” and the combination “blasty bough” or “blassy bough” means “such a branch which, used as kindling, burns with a quick, fierce, crackling flame.”<sup>18</sup>

The poem entwines a particular ecosystem with its language so much that, should that environment be irremediably damaged, the language that describes it, maps it, names it, makes it visible to the human eye and perceptible to the human senses would disappear as well. Blassy Pond is therefore cherished as a dear old friend, no differently from the rockface.

This long documentary poem – which would deserve to be quoted at length, for its strength is precisely in its length – moves on, naming flora specimens one by one, matching knowledge of scientific notions and local lore. Before the river ends up in the ocean, the poem dissolves, too, into drops of words scattered randomly. These are keywords sounded to evoke the whole river course, tumbling one over the other, murmured, with the rattling waters as sonic background, till a final “Adieu” concludes this journey downriver as a delicate, lyrical homage to water and the creatures it begets.

Rocks, water, stars, sky and earth, humans, fish and trees, grass, lichen, and flowers – all are lined up like a ribbon along the river. They resonate like drops of dripping rain in our ears; in front of our eyes they materialize, thanks to the camera that moves under the rhythm of words lyrically disposed to create the neuroaesthetic effect of which Lingiardi speaks: “artistic production and fruition, due to the anatomy and physiology of visual mechanisms, particularly before a landscape” (Lingiardi 2017, 75; my translation).

Finally, this digital project is didactic too: it merges scientific information and poetry, what we believe and what we imagine, into a clear, lucid, and evocative ecological discourse-and-display. We end up believing not only what we see but also what we do not see, the museum-like experience of nature. This is a moment within Creates’s Web project where environmental humanities explicitly encounter the eco-digital humanities. Eco-digital humanities include art projects with a visually rich grammar; the use of the new media, like the Internet; the conjunction of art and science (Cohen 2016, 341).

Marlene Creates’s “work is preoccupied with nature-culture relations, but the form of these relations is characterized by messy entanglement rather than simple connection,” writes Macfarlane (2017, 101). Here, I would add, we are offered a spectacle of *natura naturans*, nature that flourishes, that is alive and produces its

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<sup>18</sup> Entry for “blasty” (<https://www.heritage.nf.ca/dictionary/index.php#381>) in the online *Dictionary of Newfoundland English* (8 January 2018).

own show; and of *cultura naturans*,<sup>19</sup> an artistic project, made of photos, videos, oral poetry performance, written text, short- and long-measure poems, that is born out of ecological cultural perspectives, and that produces a natural spectacle as well.

### 3 “Boreal”

We now come to the third term in the title of Creates’s project to be considered in this article. This section of the article will develop as a constant dialogue between Marlene Creates’s concern for the boreal forest and Robert Pogue Harrison’s theorization of the forest.

Following scientific data in her description of the boreal forest, Creates assesses it as the largest intact ecosystem left on Earth: one third of the world’s vegetation – science tells us – is boreal. It forms a swathe around the crown of the planet, covering 12 million square kilometres – about 3 million acres – across Canada, Alaska, Scandinavia, Russia, northern China, and Japan (Concilio 2012, 79–80). The boreal forest is mainly coniferous trees, particularly larch, spruce, and fir, as well as deciduous shrubs and trees like alders, willows, poplars, and birches; and there is a multitude of mosses, lichens, and wildflowers. Creates claims: “I have found over forty different kinds of wildflowers just in the little patch of boreal forest where I live” (quoted in Concilio 2012, 79; private correspondence). Water in many forms is also a major feature of the boreal forest: there are rivers, ponds, lakes, brooks, and bogs. Canada’s boreal forest stretches right across the country from the Yukon to Newfoundland and Labrador. It measures about 5 million square kilometres – about 1.4 billion acres. Thus, Canada has almost half the world’s boreal forest. It is home to hundreds of First Nations communities, as well as a habitat for wildlife, including the black bear, lynx, moose, wolf, caribou, and snowshoe hare, and over three hundred bird species.

Forests matter now. They are under scrutiny thanks to an increase in environmental awareness and due to the drastic effects of climate change. In his study *Forests* (1992), Robert Pogue Harrison writes:

The global problem of deforestation provokes unlikely reactions of concern these days among city dwellers, not only because of the enormity of the scale [...]. We call it the loss of nature, or the loss of wildlife habitat, or the loss of biodiversity, but underlying the ecolog-

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<sup>19</sup> In “a classic Creates essay, ‘Nature is a verb to me,’ she outlines the challenges to an ecologically sensitive art practice” (Garvey 2017, 15).

ical concern is perhaps a much deeper apprehension about the disappearance of boundaries, without which the human abode loses its grounding. Somewhere, we still sense that we make ourselves at home only in our estrangement, or in the *logos* of the finite. In the cultural memory of the West forests “correspond” to the exteriority of the *logos*. The outlaws, the heroes, the wanderers, the lovers, the saints, the persecuted, the outcasts, the bewildered, the ecstatic – these are among those who have sought out the forest’s asylum in the history we have followed throughout this book. Without such outside domains, there is no inside in which to dwell. (Harrison 1992, 247)

Among the outsiders who dwell in the forest we could count Marlene Creates, the poet, land artist, and photographer. It is thanks to her art that we, as digital travellers, experience the exterior world, as if through the window of our computer screen.

Even more dramatically, Harrison claims that “we do not merely ‘speak meaning’ to the world but ‘speak our death’ to the world. [...] Nature knows how to die, but human beings know mostly how to kill as a way of failing to become their ecology. [...] when we do not speak our death to the world we speak death to the world. And when we speak death to the world, the forest’s legend falls silent” (1992, 249). Harrison provides an apocalyptic vision of humans’ inability to produce an ecological discourse and praxis, and foresees the silencing of the forest. Marlene Creates, too, sees the forest as a fragile ecosystem. But she gives voice to it.

The voice of the boreal forest in Portugal Cove is what we learn to recognize in Creates’s art project. By showing the way both to the digital observer and to the real audience, the artist points to spots where she has witnessed something numinous that she has captured with her camera and with her poems, through a combination of words, images, and the recording of natural sounds.

As noted above, Harrison writes that forests have suddenly become a major focus of ecological activism around the world. Creates’s interest in the boreal forest involves exactly the kind of ecological activism that aims to learn a great deal about the ecology of forests: “attentive environmental and cultural consciousness” are attributes her critics recognize in Marlene Creates.<sup>20</sup> She wants to know, and she wants us all to come to know, the bit of forest around her house.<sup>21</sup>

Harrison, more precisely, writes: “We now know that forests are prodigious ecosystems: environments where various species establish their ‘niche’ and exist in complex, integrated relationships to one another, each contributing its share

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<sup>20</sup> Graff and Dykhuis (2017, 9).

<sup>21</sup> “There have been two major turns in both my work and my life in response to moves: from Ottawa to St. John’s in 1985, and to Blast Hole Pond Road in Portugal Cove in 2002. Since then, my principal artistic venture has been to pay close attention to one particular place – the six acres of boreal forest where I live” (Creates 2017a, 13).

to the network and each, in turn, depending on the delicate coherence of the network as a whole” (1992, 199). Creates is conscious of the anthropic impact on any environment, yet she indistinctly chants rocks, leaves, waters, trees, grass, moss, flowers, fruits, animals, clouds, anthropic presences – animate and inanimate natural elements that share the same bio-logic, avoiding hierarchies.

Harrison claims that it is “the empirical science of ecology” that “examines the mosaic of such systems and elaborates the biological conditions that sustain life within them” (1992, 199). Yet, in this specific project, Creates combines photographs and poems as complementary arts and media to carry out this same task.

Forests, Harrison maintains, “provide a paradigm for the notion of the earth as a single, complex, integrated ecosystem.” Moreover, they are also “metonymies for the earth as a whole” (Harrison 1992, 199). So, once again, here, the boreal forest, local as it is, becomes a metonym for a global concern. But for Creates, representing *her* forest in words and images also means rediscovering the local vernacular of Newfoundland. Salvaging a language together with the territory where it belongs, in spite of promoting a very local objective, becomes a more complex ecological effort and also proof of personal and artistic commitment.

If, in conclusion, Harrison is right in saying that “by emphasizing the degree to which we belong to the earth’s cosmic forest, ecologists tend to redefine humanity’s place of dwelling in global terms” (1992, 199), Creates shows us that dwelling by allowing us to take a virtual walk in her linguistic and forestal realm of art.<sup>22</sup> Not unlike Harrison, and as remarked by Macfarlane (2017, 101), Creates’s poems associate the concept of dwelling with our original closeness to forests. This concept is underlined by Harrison and symbolized, in his opinion, by Frank Lloyd Wright’s architectural masterpiece *Fallingwater*, where the house built on flat horizontal concrete slabs, mimicking the rocks of the waterfall it incorporates, as well as the horizon, which means freedom to the artist, is one thing with the forest that surrounds it (Harrison 1992, 233).

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22 This form of dwelling seems to diverge from the Heideggerian notion of dwelling: “What, then, does *Bauen*, building, mean? The Old English and High German word for building, *buan*, means to dwell. This signifies: to remain, to stay in a place. The real meaning of the verb *bauen*, namely, to dwell, has been lost to us. But a covert trace of it has been preserved in the German word *Nachbar*, neighbor. [...] Where the word *bauen* still speaks in its original sense it also says *how far* the nature of dwelling reaches. That is, *bauen*, *baun*, *bhu*, *beo* are our word *bin* in the versions: *ich bin*, I am, *du bist*, you are, the imperative form *bis*, be. What then does *ich bin* mean? The old word *bauen*, to which the *bin* belongs, answers: *ich bin*, *du bist* mean: I dwell, you dwell. The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans *are* on the earth, is *Buan*, dwelling. To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell!” (Heidegger 1971, xiii; emphasis in the original).

From a different perspective, Robert Finley, however, goes further and asks more pointed questions about the turning of the forest into a poetry garden (*locus/logos*), addressing the links between ecology and language – precisely those that, as I have argued, distinguish Creates’s project from others more emphatically focused on explicit ecological issues. He asks:

Could we say that what gets “turned over” in *The Boreal Poetry Garden* is story, that what gets planted are poems, that the gardening done there gets done with words? That the ritual readings of the poems in situ and the remembered events which they subscribe make the wood a locus of social meaning (the Garden’s “harvest”), and both neighbours us to it and fixes it in memory as a discrete place? – We are gardenized, too. (Finley 2015, 170)

## 4 Conclusion

As a conclusion, I would like to add one more meaning to Creates’s work. Most importantly, what is at stake in her project, and what more than anything deserves to be stressed, is that *The Boreal Poetry Garden* also turns into a museum. This project completely subverts our idea of a traditional museum as a building, an enclosed place in the heart of urban environments, towards which artefacts and *oeuvres* of various origins, places, and times converge and in which they are exhibited. In the past, Marlene Creates has written that she is well aware of not being able to bring the whole of Newfoundland into a museum’s exhibition rooms. She is also aware that re-moving natural matter from its original place is an act of exploitation. This art project is not an example of traditional land art, where artefacts are added to the landscape and are visible as intrusive elements.

Thus, in her *Boreal Poetry Garden*, Creates demonstrates that nature is the museum, nature is the spectacle: it is an outdoor museum, and it is possible to walk around and admire, or to browse, if watched on a screen, the *objets d’art*/natural objects exactly as we do in traditional museums, as a similarly complete synaesthetic experience. In a traditional museum, however, be it a natural history museum or an art gallery, natural objects become inert, caged, and staged artificially for specific purposes that need captions and labels and archival indexing. In nature, the art objects, so to speak, are live and protean, metamorphic and ever-changing, even if it is only because of the wind blowing. The poems that Marlene Creates has authored for them have been printed and “planted” on the spots where they were originally conceived, as fragile, impermanent, and precarious captions and labels.

Creates’s artistic statement is more radical than she might have planned, for it puts nature on show and transforms it into a live, interactive digital/natural

museum. Thus, we are drawn to a faraway place to admire its aesthetic, ongoing, never-ending, and undisturbed spectacle. We become spectators of a virtual-natural museum. A museum where land *is* art, nature *is* art, forest *is* art: a sort of embodied poetry. The Web project becomes a portal with which “to share”<sup>23</sup> this experiment in eco-digital humanities.

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Eleonora Marzi

# Le texte liquide entre linéarité et causalité : les caractéristiques de l'hypertexte dans la littérature numérique

**Résumé :** L'article vise à identifier certains traits typiques de la littérature numérique en partant de l'idée que la forme du dispositif d'écriture/lecture influence le contenu : la singularité de l'hypertexte, composé de liens hypertextuels et de nœuds, comporte une structuration narrative qui diffère de celle du format papier.

La littérature numérique est une littérature de fragments mais, dans leur logique de combinaison, les concepts de linéarité, de séquentialité et de causalité y jouent un rôle fondamental. Pour soutenir les idées présentées, une analyse est proposée à partir de deux des premiers hypertextes de la littérature numérique : *Afternoon, a Story*, de Michael Joyce, et *Victory Garden*, de Stuart Moulthrop. Toutefois, considérer que des hypertextes aurait pu rendre ce travail incomplet, car certains phénomènes présents dans la littérature numérique naissent de la littérature imprimée. Afin d'illustrer comment ces caractéristiques se modifient au cours du passage de la littérature imprimée à la littérature numérique, nous avons inclus dans notre analyse deux textes de « tradition hypertextuelle » : *La Vie mode d'emploi* de Georges Perec et *Rayuela* de Julio Cortázar.

**Mots clés :** hypertexte, humanités numériques, sémiotique numérique, principe de causalité, texte liquide.

## 1 Autour de la littérature numérique

La naissance de la littérature numérique coïncide avec l'introduction de l'usage de l'ordinateur dans la vie quotidienne, au début des années 1990. Sa diffusion à l'échelle mondiale est très hétérogène : elle naît aux États-Unis où elle connaît, dès le début, un grand succès, et elle arrive avec un peu de retard en Europe où l'Angleterre, la France et l'Espagne l'accueillent avec une certaine curiosité. En Allemagne, elle tarde à s'affirmer, tout comme en Italie.

La littérature numérique se fonde sur l'hypertexte : elle est la synthèse d'une structure conceptuelle rhizomique appliquée à un produit issu d'un dispositif et sa matérialité est constitué par ce que nous appelons le « texte liquide ». Si la structure rhizomique est ancienne, la nouveauté est apportée par le dispositif, terme par lequel nous désignons un écran et une interface graphique orientée vers l'utilisa-

teur, connectés à un ordinateur. Le dispositif, souvent appelé « écran » par métonymie, est la condition *sine qua non* de l'existence de la littérature numérique : il ne s'agit pas d'une simple transposition d'un texte du format papier au format numérique, au contraire, il est « conçu » directement à travers un langage de programmation. L'écran est fondamental car il permet de définir la littérature numérique à partir de la dimension matérielle de l'objet littéraire. Bien qu'une définition univoque de la littérature numérique soit impossible aujourd'hui en raison de la variété des positions critiques et d'une répartition géographique inégale, on peut affirmer que la littérature numérique est une fiction en texte liquide, c'est-à-dire un ensemble inextricable d'une interface interactive et d'un contenu sémantiquement rhizomique. L'Electronic Literature Organization<sup>1</sup> définit la littérature numérique comme l'ensemble des pratiques littéraires qui « utilisent les capacités de la technologie pour réaliser des choses que ne permet pas l'imprimé » (Pano 2006, XI–XIII). Cette définition construite par soustraction est reprise par Philippe Bootz, qui parle de littérature de l'écran comme de toute forme narrative ou poétique utilisant le dispositif informatique comme intermédiaire et mettant en œuvre une ou plusieurs propriétés spécifiques à cet intermédiaire (Bootz 2006). Jean Clément se situe dans la même perspective lorsqu'il parle de la nécessité de distinguer la littérature numérique – conçue au sein d'un système sémiotique qui relève du numérique –, de la littérature numérisée – transposée aux médias électroniques :

Il convient de distinguer entre la littérature numérisée et la littérature numérique. On appellera donc littérature numérisée celle qui, bien qu'étant inscrite sur un support numérique, a d'abord connu une existence papier ou qui a vocation à être publiée sur ce support. On réservera l'appellation de littérature numérique à celle qui ne peut pas être imprimée sur papier sous peine de perdre les caractéristiques qui constituent sa raison d'être. (Clément 2007, 12)

La littérature numérique diffère profondément de la littérature numérisée en raison du support qui l'oblige à des processus de représentation sémantico-narrative non réalisables dans les textes imprimés. L'idée selon laquelle la forme détermine le contenu est le fondement de notre réflexion, et constitue la base de l'analyse des caractéristiques de la littérature numérique. L'introduction d'un nouveau média implique des conséquences dans la structuration du contenu, qui

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<sup>1</sup> Il s'agit d'une organisation qui naît à Chicago en 1999, et qui est désormais présente en Amérique du Nord et en Amérique du Sud, en Europe, en Asie, en Australie et en Afrique. L'organisation s'occupe de la diffusion et de la promotion de la littérature numérique dans le domaine artistique et littéraire à travers diverses activités telles que l'organisation de cycles de conférences et la publication d'une anthologie de la littérature numérique rassemblant des œuvres du monde entier. Pour plus d'informations, voir <https://eliterature.org/> (consulté le 18 novembre 2018).

ne se limitent pas à un changement apparent et superficiel dû à l'utilisation de nouveaux outils, mais qui impliquent un phénomène culturel au sein duquel il est nécessaire de remettre en question le nouveau statut de la littérature (Vitali-Rosati, 2007). L'importance du dispositif définit la littérature numérique, ainsi que la typologie de son texte, qui devient *dynamique*.

Le concept de texte dynamique s'inspire des réflexions de Serge Bouchardon, l'un des principaux experts en littérature numérique, qui distingue trois niveaux attribuables au concept de dynamisme du texte : le premier niveau fait référence à sa dimension matérielle, fruit d'un calcul par l'appareil et d'une reproduction instantanée en temps réel. Le deuxième niveau doit son dynamisme au temps fini de sa visualisation et à l'espace dans lequel il se matérialise, c'est-à-dire l'écran. Au troisième niveau, le texte est dynamique dans la mesure où il suit le lecteur, entrant dans une perspective relationnelle : le texte attend une réaction du lecteur laissant libre cours au concept d'interactivité (Bouchardon 2007). Le texte est dynamique parce qu'il est à *l'intérieur* de l'écran, *sur* l'écran, et *entre* l'écran et le lecteur : le support lui donne donc des caractéristiques constitutives fondamentales et non remplaçables. Il est important de souligner que l'idée d'interactivité destinée à la communication auteur-texte-lecteur n'est pas une prérogative de la culture numérique. Il suffit de songer, parmi bien d'autres œuvres, à *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*, de Jorge Luis Borges (1941), ou au *Conte à votre façon*, de Raymond Queneau (1967), ou encore aux nombreuses expériences de l'OULIPO qui convergent en un sous-genre aux limites floues englobant aussi bien la littérature-jeu que la littérature combinatoire. Nous pouvons affirmer qu'il s'agit d'histoires aux conclusions multiples dans lesquelles le choix du lecteur détermine le développement de l'histoire elle-même, et qu'Italo Calvino, brillant précurseur, a baptisé, à l'aide d'un néologisme, « hyper-roman » (Calvino 1988).

Cependant, l'idée d'interactivité prend de nouvelles significations au sein du discours numérique, grâce à une possibilité d'interaction concrète, dynamique et immédiate : l'hyperlien.

C'est grâce au lien hypertexte que le texte devient « parcourable », utilisable au sens « dynamique » du terme. Le lien lui-même n'est pas visible pour le lecteur, il s'agit en fait d'une chaîne exprimée dans le langage de programmation qui constitue un pont entre deux pages également appelées « nœuds ». La partie visible du lien hypertexte est appelée « ancre » (ou *anchor* en anglais) et se concrétise pour le lecteur dans un symbole sémiotique, à savoir le mot cliquable (Bootz 2006). Parmi les différents attributs du lien, il y a ceux qui sont appelés « directionnels » : il est en effet possible d'avancer et parfois aussi de revenir « en arrière ». En outre, la relation liant l'ancre et le texte peut, si l'on généralise, être définie comme relevant de la synecdoque – la partie pour le tout. La logique qui soude l'ancre au texte et qui coïncide avec le processus par lequel l'utilisateur exécute l'action de lecture,

tient à des opérations cognitives, logiques ou déductives, par exemple lorsque le lecteur veut approfondir un certain concept, et qu'il décide de cliquer sur un lien en relation sémantique avec ce même concept. Inversement, le processus peut être inconscient et/ou associatif, le lecteur procédant alors librement à des associations d'idées guidées par une connexion absolument inconsciente. De plus, l'auteur peut jouer avec le lecteur en donnant un indice trompeur sur le lien : le lecteur choisit de fait le mot cliquable sans avoir la certitude sémantique de ce qu'il pourra trouver. Toutefois, la question sur laquelle nous devons nous arrêter nous est suggérée par l'étymologie du mot « lien », explicitée ainsi : quels sont les objets mis en relation par les liens ?

Les liens hypertextuels présents dans un texte sont des ponts virtuels reliant des nœuds, ou des pages. En transposant le mécanisme dans le discours narratif, nous pouvons comparer les pages HTML à des fragments. La littérature numérique est donc une littérature de fragments, indépendants et autonomes, mais en même temps corrélés par une structure rhizomique.

De même que le concept d'interactivité, la littérature de fragments, qu'elle soit en prose ou en poésie, qu'elle soit conçue volontairement ou produite par l'usage sur support papier, existe depuis des temps immémoriaux mais, comme nous le verrons au cours de notre analyse, dans le discours numérique le fragment prend une nouvelle signification.

Notre attention se portera particulièrement sur la logique qui régule l'ordre entre les fragments, et sur celle qui régule la relation entre un fragment et le tout. Dans ce passage résident les clés de notre analyse, qui permettront de délimiter les caractéristiques et les limites existantes entre la littérature numérique et la littérature imprimée.

Le premier approfondissement nécessaire est une définition des concepts de séquentialité et de linéarité. Grâce à l'apport de la pensée critique de Gérard Genette, nous pouvons distinguer d'un côté le temps de l'histoire, l'*erzählte Zeit*, linéaire, car il suit la chronologie du vécu et du réel, et, de l'autre, l'*Erzählzeit*, le récit pouvant avancer librement en reformulant l'ordre chronologique de certains segments de l'histoire, générant ainsi des prolepses et des analepses (Genette 1972). La linéarité de l'histoire n'a jamais été une préoccupation pour les grands conteurs, comme le montre le célèbre exemple d'Homère et de son *Odyssée*. Cependant, si nous quittons la dimension narratologique au profit du domaine des phénomènes, nous pouvons tenir compte d'une autre typologie de récit linéaire, cette fois en référence au support de lecture, c'est-à-dire le livre. À partir du moment où le *codex* a remplacé le *volumen*, la pratique de la lecture a été influencée par la forme de l'objet : un élément fini en trois dimensions, pourvu d'un début et d'une fin (la couverture), qu'il est possible de parcourir de manière

séquentielle, page après page, en faisant défiler les lignes suivant une direction qui dépend de la culture de provenance du texte. Le roman moderne a tenté de démonter cet ordre à l'aide d'une série d'expériences différentes, comme ce fut le cas dans *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* de Laurence Sterne (1760–1767), première tentative de bouleverser les conventions typographiques du roman de son époque en orientant ainsi la lecture.

En effet, la matérialité du livre établit les règles sémantiques de compréhension et d'intériorisation de la matière narrative. Depuis l'introduction de la presse typographique, un certain nombre de conventions ont été acceptées, telles que la ponctuation, la division en paragraphes et chapitres, la table des matières, devenant des éléments nécessaires pour rythmer le texte.

Le chapitre peut commencer au milieu d'une page blanche parce que les techniques typographiques le permettent, mais ce vide, cette coupure, vont avoir des effets sémantiques sur la perception de l'histoire. La linéarité est alors un attribut essentiellement pragmatique et tangible, comme le souligne Clément (1994, 28) :

Il ne s'agit pas ici de la distinction classique et bien établie entre l'histoire qui est toujours linéaire, et sa narration qui peut et doit briser la chronologie des faits, mais de la linéarité matérielle imposée à la lecture par la succession immuable des pages du livre tel que son assemblage y oblige.

Nous pouvons distinguer une linéarité du contenu (qui a toujours été remanié et bouleversé) et une linéarité du dispositif, sachant que le dispositif influence le contenu. L'idée de linéarité à laquelle nous entendons recourir se positionne à mi-chemin entre la forme et le contenu, et elle peut être définie comme *séquentialité*. L'ordre n'est pas linéaire (un élément après l'autre), mais séquentiel, c'est-à-dire une concaténation significative, générée par une association libre et raisonnée.

Espen J. Aarseth (2003) propose une définition de la *topologie textuelle* en se référant à l'étude des différentes façons dont les différentes parties d'un texte sont reliées, indépendamment des propriétés du support des textes.

Les fragments qui composent un texte ont certainement un ordre, mais il n'est pas forcément linéaire. Dans la littérature traditionnelle, ce phénomène n'est pas très visible, car même si les fragments suivent non pas l'ordre linéaire et chronologique de l'histoire, mais celui du récit, l'existence des pages oblige à une lecture directionnelle. Dans la littérature des fragments, cette linéarité vacille, sans pour autant s'écrouler. Le lecteur peut toujours décider de parcourir les pages les unes après les autres, ou de choisir au hasard dans le livre. Dans l'hypertexte, cette liberté est neutralisée, le dispositif de lecture ne permettant pas au lecteur d'avoir le texte immédiatement disponible.

Nous pouvons donc parler de séquentialité se référant à un ordre qui, bien que construit à travers un dessein de compréhension non immédiate, se charge de sens.

Mais quel est l'ordre qui permet l'attribution de sens ?

Nous devons introduire à ce point l'idée de causalité contribuant à l'esprit téléologique qui anime à son tour tous les récits. En effet, pour arriver à une vision cohérente de la matière narrative, le lecteur utilise le principe de causalité, qui soutient une histoire, comme le dit Sartre (1947, 147). « Le récit explique et coordonne en même temps qu'il retrace, il substitue l'ordre causal à l'enchaînement chronologique ».

Des œuvres comme *Spoon River Anthology* d'Edgar Lee Master ou *Le città invisibili* d'Italo Calvino, deux exemples parmi bien d'autres, peuvent être lues de manière libre et non linéaire, sans annuler la possibilité pour le lecteur de parvenir à terminer le livre, à acquérir la totalité de l'histoire, notamment à connaître les vies des habitants du cimetière de Spoon River ou les lieux du voyage entrepris par Marco Polo dans l'immensité de la Chine.

Parmi les fragments, il existe donc un ordre caché qui tend à donner une cohérence à l'ensemble, et dans lequel le lecteur utilise deux types d'intelligence cognitive, l'une d'origine diachronique et paradigmatique, l'autre synchronique et inconsciente (Bochicchio 2011–2012).

Toutes deux contribuent à une vision organique et générale de l'histoire : il s'agit de l'esprit téléologique qui anime les récits.

La tendance à parvenir – par l'assemblage de chaque fragment – à un ensemble qui soit cohérent est l'activité accomplie par le lecteur, rendue possible parce que l'écriture de l'auteur est animée par le même esprit, l'esprit téléologique. Voilà donc comment dans la pensée narrative pré-numérique, animée par une volonté téléologique, le principe de causalité sauve la logique de la narration. Le lecteur peut compenser le manque de linéarité en agissant logiquement et en imaginant la raison pour laquelle tel personnage se retrouve dans telle situation, même si ce passage n'a pas été montré. La narration en tant que telle est inspirée par un esprit téléologique garanti par le principe de causalité narrative. Si l'ordre des fragments est donc inspiré par une séquentialité animée par le mécanisme de cause à effet, il semble fondamental de traiter la seconde relation des fragments, celle avec le tout. Aspen (2003, 763) définit ainsi un texte non linéaire :

an object of verbal communication that is not simply one fixed sequence of letters, words, and sentences but one in which the words or sequence of words may differ from reading to reading because of the shape, conventions or mechanisms of the text. Nonlinear texts can be very different from each other, at least as different as they are from the linear texts.

Le fragment compose ainsi le tout en infusant simultanément une caractéristique explosive qui dépasse ses limites : raison pour laquelle il serait incorrect d'affirmer que la somme des fragments donne le tout. Nous avons ainsi abordé les outils conceptuels que nous utiliserons pour effectuer une analyse comparative du corpus composé des deux hypertextes *Afternoon, a Story*, de Michael Joyce, et *Victory Garden*, de Stuart Moulthrop, ainsi que de deux romans papier, mais de tradition hypertextuelle, *La Vie mode d'emploi* de Georges Perec et *Rayuela* de Julio Cortázar.

## 2 Les hypertextes : *Afternoon, a Story* et *Victory Garden*

Les hypertextes examinés font partie des tout premiers publiés et c'est pour cette raison qu'ils sont significatifs : *Afternoon, a Story*, écrit par Michael Joyce entre 1987 et 1992 et composé de 539 nœuds ou pages et 950 liens hypertextes ; *Victory Garden*, écrit par Stuart Moulthrop en 1992, avec 993 nœuds ou pages et 2804 liens.

L'interface graphique des deux hypertextes (qui est également un standard des premiers hypertextes) permet de tracer une construction narrative commune.

Les pages ou nœuds qui composent les hypertextes sont des fragments graphiquement autonomes (ce sont des onglets), de longueur variable, et pourvus d'un titre. Les pages sont reliées par des liens (que le lecteur ne voit pas) au moyen d'ancres, grâce auxquels le lecteur navigue le long d'une organisation rhizomique. Il est important de noter l'existence, dans le mécanisme des liens, de filtres de code définis par l'auteur, qui redirigent la lecture de manière redondante. Si, au cours de la navigation, le lecteur retourne à une page qu'il a déjà visitée, il constatera que certaines ancres ont changé et que les options pouvant être exécutées depuis le même nœud sont différentes de celles de l'étape précédente.

La production de sens se construit en même temps que l'acte de lecture : non seulement l'histoire change, mais les mêmes plans et les mêmes situations offrent des possibilités différentes selon le chemin tracé, créant un vertige chez le lecteur et le conduisant à remettre en question la certitude de posséder l'histoire, à douter d'arriver à une satisfaction cognitive sur l'histoire.

Si nous procédons à une comparaison avec la lecture sur support papier, nous pouvons observer comment l'axe de contrôle de l'histoire se déplace : ce n'est plus le lecteur qui décide, guidé par la logique, l'inspiration ou le hasard, mais c'est l'écrivain/programmeur qui tient les ficelles et établit les conséquences d'un certain choix.



Nous analyserons plus tard en détail l'aspect du changement de la relation auteur/lecteur, lorsque nous aurons recueilli d'autres éléments critiques à l'égard de la littérature numérique, pouvant enrichir nos considérations.

Le texte est parcourable, au-delà d'une lecture intratextuelle, grâce à une série de commandes qui prennent sur l'écran la forme graphique de boutons, et qui représentent les ancres : « yes » et « no » permettent au lecteur de répondre aux quelques questions que l'histoire peut poser, le bouton « link » affiche une liste de tous les liens hypertextuels disponibles à partir de la page visitée ; la touche « history » permet au lecteur de reconstituer l'historique de ses choix, et enfin la touche « enter » lui permet une progression séquentielle de la lecture. Comme le suggère Vandendorpe « l'auteur de l'hypertexte peut permettre l'accès par sélection, association, continuité ou stratification. Ces différentes voies peuvent exister isolément ou sous des combinaisons différentes » (Vandendorpe 1999, 115–116) par rapport aux différents processus cognitifs qui sont activés.

Bien que les caractéristiques de l'interface graphique se réfèrent à une expérience similaire du texte, conçue donc avec une structure narrative similaire, il est important de noter quelques particularités des deux œuvres prises en considération.

Dans cet hypertexte, le lecteur a la possibilité de suivre un ordre *séquentiel* à l'aide de la touche « enter ». Cependant, s'il prend une telle décision, il n'aura à sa disposition que 35 pages (nœuds) sur un total de 539. Nous observons déjà ici une première indication à l'égard de la relation entre le *tout* et le *fragment* qui caractérise l'hypertexte : l'auteur permet au lecteur de suivre les modalités de lecture qu'il préfère, mais si celui-ci n'accepte pas les « conditions » de l'hypertexte, c'est-à-dire le rhizome, il se trouve face à une œuvre mutilée, prise dans un aspect partiel.

L'hyper-roman, dans sa lecture séquentielle, raconte l'histoire de Peter qui, en allant au travail, est témoin d'un accident de voiture qui le perturbe. Il passera l'après-midi à essayer de savoir si les victimes impliquées dans l'accident sont son fils Andy et son ex-femme Lisa.

Si, au contraire, le lecteur décide de se laisser emporter par la lecture rhizomique, de naviguer au gré des ancres et de se laisser inspirer par les questions du texte, l'histoire se démultiplie en une infinité de cheminements creusés autour des personnages, à travers des focus psychologiques ou des digressions chronologiques, en utilisant des fragments qui changent leur signification selon le moment où ils apparaissent. L'histoire change au cours de son développement et repose sur l'alternance de fragments. Le lecteur ne peut pas utiliser la pensée téléologique ici. L'œuvre dans sa totalité n'est pas accessible et une vision unitaire et organique n'est pas permise. *Afternoon, a Story* n'est pas un roman complet, fini, et c'est l'auteur même qui nous informe de cette condition :

Closure is, as in any fiction, a suspect quality, although here it is made manifest. When the story no longer progresses, or when it cycles, or when you tire of the paths, the experience of reading it ends. Even so, there are likely to be more opportunities than you think there are at first. A word which doesn't yield the first time you read a section may take you elsewhere if you choose it when you encounter the section again; and sometimes what seems a loop, like memory, heads off again in another direction.

La lecture est une expérience sans fin qui se renouvelle à chaque fois ; la fin de l'histoire réside dans le lecteur lui-même, dans son choix de quitter le monde narratif. Le lecteur semble être particulièrement stimulé, appelé à faire des choix décisifs. À cet égard, nous pouvons remarquer que dans *Afternoon, a Story*, les ancres, que l'auteur appelle dans la préface de l'œuvre « words that yield », ne sont pas immédiatement identifiables de manière visuelle, parce qu'elles ne sont pas typographiquement caractérisées. Le mot ne se définit comme une ancre qu'au moment où le lecteur parcourt le texte avec sa souris, lorsqu'il accomplit une exploration matérielle et numérique du texte. L'organisation de fragments est liée à la possibilité de percevoir l'hypertexte comme unitaire, possibilité qui semble ici être niée. À propos de *Afternoon, a Story*, Jean Clément parle d'une série de pièces d'un puzzle qui ne peut pas être reconstruit parce qu'il n'y a pas de configuration définie de l'ensemble, déclarant que « l'œuvre totale n'est que virtuelle » (Clément 2000, 2).

*Victory Garden* raconte l'histoire de la ville universitaire de Tara, à travers quelques-uns de ses habitants, pendant la guerre du Golfe. Emily Runbird et sa sœur Veronica sont deux étudiantes de la professeure de rhétorique Thea Agnew, qui est elle-même la mère de Leroy, une adolescente partie faire le tour du monde. Devant l'arrière-plan des événements de la vie des personnages, le thème de la réflexion politique est très clair, comme en témoigne le contraste entre le recrutement d'Emily (occupée à trier la correspondance du quartier général) et les positions politiques de sa sœur Veronica, qui refuse d'aller dans les zones de combat. Un autre personnage important est Boris Urquhart, étudiant et activiste politique amoureux d'Emily.

Nous pouvons trouver dans *Victory Garden* un homologue de la narration séquentielle mais censurée de *Afternoon, a Story*. Outre les fonctions de lecture énumérées ci-dessus, *Victory Garden* présente vingt parcours de lecture pré-arrangés, treize « path to explore » et 7 « path to deplore », qui s'organisent autour de certains personnages de l'hyper-roman.

Ces parcours, représentant une nouveauté par rapport à *Afternoon, a Story*, se concrétisent dans une illusion de complétude, comme un désir de l'auteur de donner l'apparence d'une œuvre achevée en indiquant au lecteur les possibilités d'une histoire finie. Il s'agit toutefois de parcours ouverts, que le lecteur peut

quitter à son aise grâce aux ancres, et qui en tout cas ne couvrent pas la totalité de la matière narrative.

Si la construction rhizomique de l'œuvre semble être la même que dans *Afternoon, a Story*, un détail de Victory Garden mérite d'être souligné : l'incohérence des fragments. Par exemple, l'un des « paths » montre le personnage d'Emily qui, entrée dans l'armée, se trouve avec son bataillon en Arabie Saoudite, alors qu'une bombe explose soudain non loin du groupe, et un écran complètement noir laisse imaginer qu'Emily et son équipe ont été victimes d'une attaque fatale.

Dans l'hypertexte, aucune autre séquence ne fait allusion à la disparition d'Emily : un tel mécanisme de symétrie entre la cause et l'effet dépasse le problème des terminaisons multiples générant un véritable roman caméléon, ou pour citer l'auteur même « *Victory Garden is a hypertext – a story, or a web of stories, whose shape and movements can change every time you read it.* » (Moulthrop 1994).

Un autre détail significatif de *Victory Garden* est la présence d'un plan de la ville, dans lequel il est possible de se positionner pour avancer dans la lecture, chaque endroit correspondant effectivement à un fragment ou à un nœud : l'organisation rhizomique trouve ainsi sa représentation graphique et la carte devient une métaphore de la spatialité de l'hypertexte. On remarque, comme dans les autres cas, comment la possession de l'œuvre est également illusoire, car une partie des pages seulement trouve sa représentation sur le papier. Le but téléologique n'est accessible ni graphiquement – dans la mesure où l'on suit une carte qui n'est pas complète –, ni en suivant les « paths » : le lecteur est trompé par un auteur qui lui fournit des outils permettant une orientation seulement partielle, conduisant à la seule solution de s'abandonner au vertige d'un non-savoir.

Après avoir analysé ces deux hypertextes, nous pouvons tirer quelques conclusions. Tout d'abord, les fragments prennent une valeur signifiante différente en fonction de leur position. Le labyrinthe hypertextuel est en perpétuelle métamorphose au gré d'un mouvement et d'une organisation rhizomique où chaque élément est à la fois indépendant et connecté, mais surtout mobile. Le fragment contribue à former le *tout*, mais il dépasse l'œuvre et la fait exploser de l'intérieur, emportant toutes les limites spatiales et temporelles. C'est le lecteur qui semble déplacer le fragment, c'est lui qui a l'illusion d'orienter la production du sens. Bootz (2006) observe à ce sujet :

La construction narrative que la navigation réalise en projetant la structure hypertextuelle sur un axe des temps, transforme profondément la lecture au regard de celle d'un livre. Un lecteur de livre découvre ou redécouvre une information achevée, déjà mise en forme. Il n'en va pas de même dans la navigation. En naviguant, le lecteur construit l'information. Il réalise une opération de montage [...] Cette opération de montage influence de manière cruciale la création du sens.

Bien que le lecteur semble disposer de la plus grande liberté, grâce à la multiplicité des options qui s'ouvrent à lui, il se rend vite compte qu'il vit une illusion d'optique. L'idée d'avoir « tout » lu échappe au lecteur qui, incapable de déterminer les limites de l'histoire, tombe dans un vertige cognitif. Ce n'est pas un hasard si les auteurs prennent soin d'insérer dans leur hypertexte une fonction permettant au lecteur non pas tant de revenir en arrière que de retracer le chemin qu'il a lui-même tracé, son propre récit au sein de l'histoire. Le lecteur se perd, doit s'abandonner au vertige et accepter la sensation d'avoir dans ses mains un texte fluide, une histoire qui prend le large et lui glisse entre les doigts.

Après ces analyses, nous pouvons tirer quelques conclusions sur les caractéristiques de l'hypertexte.

En premier lieu, les choix que fait le lecteur se révèlent illusoire car, en cliquant sur les ancrés, il peut être trompé par l'auteur, et ce à cause du support matériel qui active l'hyperlien, c'est-à-dire le « clic » de la souris ou du clavier, qui ajoute un passage supplémentaire au processus de lecture. Le lecteur peut agir en répondant à une curiosité métaphorique, à une association libre, d'approfondissement ou d'explication cognitive, mais il ne peut prédire si cette attente sera comblée. Deuxièmement, étant donné la nature du support, le lecteur n'est pas libre de passer d'un fragment à un autre comme il pourrait l'être avec les pages d'un livre imprimé, comme le montrent clairement les filtres de programmation. Dans le cas du livre imprimé, il y a évidemment un pacte que l'auteur conclut avec le lecteur, comme lorsqu'il conseille un ordre de lecture. Cependant, même lorsque le lecteur rompra le pacte, comme c'est le cas dans *Rayuela* de Julio Cortázar que nous allons analyser par la suite, il sera possible d'observer comment cette trahison du lecteur conduit à des résultats satisfaisants du point de vue cognitif. Inversement, dans l'hypertexte, la possession de l'histoire n'est pas accordée au lecteur, l'esprit téléologique est perdu, même si le principe de cause à effet ne peut pas disparaître.

Nous pouvons supposer que dans l'hypertexte, le principe de cause à effet est passé de la narration au support. Le fait que l'auteur de l'hypertexte ne construit pas un ouvrage qui peut se dire fini, terminé, et que le lecteur ne peut pas affirmer avoir tout lu, est un symptôme du non-respect de l'esprit téléologique. Si donc, à première vue, la condition nécessaire à l'existence de l'esprit téléologique semble disparaître, un approfondissement de la question peut suggérer l'hypothèse que la causalité ne disparaît pas, mais passe de la narration au support : c'est pourquoi la relation auteur-lecteur est renversée.

Dans l'hypertexte comme sur papier, la séquentialité ou la non-linéarité profite du principe de cause à effet pour créer du sens, mais l'ordre qui lie les fragments, entre eux et avec le tout, est régulé différemment par rapport au support papier.

En raison de l'introduction de l'écran et grâce à ses caractéristiques matérielles qui ont des effets sur le contenu, l'œuvre est conçue de manière différente par rapport au format papier : la hiérarchie entre l'auteur et le lecteur est inversée. Pour valider cette hypothèse, nous nous proposons de comparer les hypertextes de deux romans imprimés : *Rayuela*, de Julio Cortázar, et *La Vie mode d'emploi*, de Georges Perec.

### 3 Les (hyper-)romans imprimés : *La Vie mode d'emploi* et *Rayuela*

Le choix de ces œuvres résulte du désir d'avoir un terme comparatif aussi proche que possible de la structure des hypertextes.

Dans la préface de *Rayuela*, Cortázar suggère deux façons de lire son roman : la première, intitulée « Del lado de allá » [De ce côté ; c'est nous qui traduisons ici et par la suite], consiste à suivre linéairement les pages du chapitre 1 au chapitre 56, où l'histoire est interrompue, couvrant ainsi 320 pages sur 550. Dans la seconde proposition, qui comporte les chapitres intitulés « Del lado de acá » [De l'autre côté], le lecteur commence son expérience au chapitre 73 et la poursuit en suivant un chemin non séquentiel, avec des bonds en avant et en arrière, jusqu'à la lecture de la totalité du roman. En comparant ces deux possibilités, nous observons que la première option ne permet pas la lecture exhaustive de toute la matière écrite dans le livre, qui se produit plutôt dans la seconde combinaison.

Le roman se concentre sur le personnage d'Horacio Oliveira, qui vit *del lado de allá* à Paris et passe ses journées au Club du serpent où il interagit avec les autres personnages : le couple américain Ronald et Babs, le peintre Etienne, Wong Guy, l'Espagnol Perico Romero et Ossip Gregorovius, tous partagent une passion pour l'art, en particulier la littérature et le jazz, et pour la protestation politique. Parmi les clients du Club se distingue la Péruvienne Lucie, appelée « la Maga » [la Magicienne], avec qui Horacio tisse une relation sentimentale intense et tourmentée, mais qui va disparaître soudainement, à la suite de la mort accidentelle de son fils, le petit Rocamadour. « Del lado de acá » raconte le retour, de nombreuses années plus tard, d'Horacio à Buenos Aires. Là-bas, il mène une vie stable en compagnie de ses deux amis, Talita et Traveler. Cependant, le souvenir de « la Magicienne » hante les pensées d'Horacio, l'amenant à effectuer sur Talita, dans laquelle il croit reconnaître Lucia, une sorte de transfert qui finira par le mener à la folie.

Les deux versions relatent deux moments spatio-temporels circonscrits dans la vie du protagoniste, l'un pendant son séjour à Paris, l'autre après son retour à Buenos Aires.

Comme dans *Afternoon, a Story*, le lecteur de *Rayuela* n'épuise pas la totalité de la matière narrative avec la première option ; au contraire, avec la seconde possibilité, il peut aspirer à une connaissance globale du travail. Certes, ce fait est également dû aux caractéristiques matérielles du livre, qui se matérialise dans les mains du lecteur avec un début et une fin précis (la couverture). Toutefois, il serait superficiel de limiter la différence à ce seul aspect. Le dispositif de lecture conduit l'auteur à concevoir l'œuvre de telle sorte qu'elle soit un tout, même fragmentée. Dans un entretien avec Omar Prego, interrogé sur la procédure selon laquelle il a écrit son livre, Cortázar déclare avoir écrit chaque chapitre sans savoir ce qu'il serait (Prego et Cortázar 1985, 539). Il le compare à un « fragment », à une cuillère de miel sur laquelle se poseront des mouches et des abeilles.

L'image du miel et des abeilles, métaphore d'une chose irrésistible, renvoie au mouvement des fragments. Ceux-ci, animés par leur propre vie, trouvent leur ordre en suivant un mouvement inévitable, mais un ordre qui peut être fixé, comme cela arrive aux abeilles et aux mouches posées sur du miel. Dans la même interview, l'écrivain évoque à propos de sa manière de travailler un procès de cristallisation et de précipité.

Les termes « précipité » et « cristallisé » sont particulièrement révélateurs des forces auxquelles les fragments sont soumis. Issus du champ sémantique de la chimie, ils se réfèrent à un processus de changement de statut inévitable et non volontaire, dont le but ultime est la fixité non pas statique (la lecture peut toujours changer d'avis ou de parcours), mais sémantique. Quelle que soit l'option choisie par le lecteur – de ce côté, de l'autre côté –, il peut toujours parvenir à la possession de l'œuvre entière. Dans son interview, Cortázar parle enfin des lettres de ses admirateurs qui déclarent avoir trouvé un « autre » ordre, différent de ceux que l'auteur a indiqués.

Soulignons que le choix d'un autre ordre totalement aléatoire conduit à la satisfaction du lecteur et à l'idée que la possession de la matière narrative est réalisable. Nous pouvons supposer que cela se produit parce que le lecteur suit une logique identique à celle utilisée pour écrire le livre, Cortázar parlant de cristaux et de précipité alors qu'au contraire, Joyce ou Moulthrop parlent de livre ouvert et sans fin. L'étude de la relation entre le fragment et le tout nous guide dans l'analyse du second texte de notre corpus imprimé, *La Vie mode d'emploi* de Georges Perec.

C'est en 1978 que Georges Perec écrit *La Vie mode d'emploi*, un roman consacré aux histoires des habitants de l'immeuble du n° 11 de la rue Simon Crubellier, à Paris, dans le XVII<sup>e</sup> arrondissement, durant une période allant de 1875 à 1975. L'immeuble héberge divers personnages (10 pièces par étage sur 5 étages) appartenant aux classes sociales les plus diverses, mais le point central de l'histoire

est représenté par un trio assez curieux : le milliardaire Bartlebooth, le peintre Valène et le fabricant de puzzles Winckler. Comme le titre l'indique, le bâtiment parisien est en fait une métaphore des conditions de vie et des péripéties de ses « locataires » que l'écrivain cherche à représenter.

Conformément à cette volonté, l'auteur n'est pas autorisé à proposer une narration linéaire, ce qui explique pourquoi l'histoire est matériellement accessible à partir de plusieurs points. Le roman présente un certain nombre de paratextes qui permettent une lecture transversale : index des noms des personnages, index des noms des principales histoires racontées, plan des étages indiquant les anciens et nouveaux locataires. La logique narrative suit ce graphisme : peu importe le moment où le lecteur commence la lecture et peu importe l'ordre qu'il suit, il parviendra à connaître l'histoire qui lie tous les personnages qui sont passés dans le bâtiment.

De plus, à l'aide de ses nombreux parcours, Perec entrelace les fragments sans toutefois aboutir à un chevauchement inconsistant. Les fragments peuvent se croiser, laissant peut-être des « ombres » dans la compréhension narrative, que le lecteur remplit d'éléments d'imagination jusqu'au moment où il reçoit la réponse du texte, mais contrairement à *Victory Garden*, on ne trouve jamais de fragments qui se contredisent. L'accès à l'œuvre est similaire, la lecture peut être non linéaire, mais dans les fragments d'hypertexte, on ne peut pas former le tout, simplement parce que ce dernier n'existe pas ; en revanche dans l'(hyper-)roman, les fragments sont régulés par l'ensemble.

## 4 Conclusions

Dans l'hypertexte, la spécificité du support, c'est-à-dire les liens et l'interactivité, crée un texte dynamique, un labyrinthe rhizomique aux possibilités indéterminées : le sens de l'histoire se crée au fur et à mesure que le lecteur avance. C'est parce qu'il n'y a pas d'ordre défini de fragments. Le sentiment d'avoir « tout lu » échappe au lecteur, qui se retrouve dans un état que Bouchardon n'hésite pas à qualifier « d'opacité » (Bouchardon 2007, 178). Comme nous l'avons déjà remarqué, ce n'est pas une coïncidence si les auteurs se soucient d'insérer une clé, la fonction « history », qui permet au lecteur de retrouver le chemin qu'il a tracé. Comme dans une forêt, le lecteur est perdu et il n'a pas d'autre choix que de s'abandonner au sentiment d'étourdissement dû à l'impossibilité de sortir d'un espace qui change sans cesse, perdant ainsi la possession du texte. De même, dans la littérature des fragments sur support papier, la séquentialité narrative disparaît : les lectures se multiplient et le lecteur est appelé à faire des choix.

Cependant, l'idée d'un travail unitaire, même si chaque lecteur va dessiner une expérience différente, ne semble pas être remise en question et la logique de l'histoire est préservée grâce au principe de causalité narrative. Ceci garantit l'esprit téléologique qui anime la pensée narrative. En effet, au sein de celle-ci peuvent coexister deux modèles cognitif-interprétatif : l'un, diachronique et paradigmatique, le seconde synchronique et inconsciente. Comme l'indique Bochicchio (2011–2012, 29 ; c'est nous qui traduisons) : « Il est certainement nécessaire que dans une histoire il y ait une certaine corrélation logique de cause à effet, car sinon l'intrigue manquerait d'intelligibilité, mais cette "diachronicité narrative" n'est pas l'expression d'une rigide causalité linéaire ».

La désorientation du lecteur est la contre-preuve que l'hypertexte ne semble pas aspirer à une pensée téléologique, il n'y a pas de fin ultime à l'œuvre. Cela tient uniquement à l'introduction d'un type d'interactivité qui semble donner toute son importance au lecteur, alors que c'est plutôt l'auteur/programmeur qui tire les ficelles.

En effet, l'auteur de l'hypertexte fait passer le principe de cause à effet du récit au support, en trompant le lecteur pour pouvoir contrôler l'histoire. Il suffit de se rappeler que l'auteur, qui est aussi un programmeur, peut décider à l'aide des algorithmes des possibilités qui s'ouvrent au lecteur, de même que dans les filtres narratifs.

Ce n'est plus l'époque du « *wreader* », terme inventé par Landow pour indiquer l'union entre l'écrivain et le lecteur, au contraire, nous sommes confrontés à une division encore plus nette des deux rôles. L'auteur acquiert de nouvelles compétences qui lui donnent des pouvoirs illimités ; le lecteur, en ce qui le concerne, est invité à faire de plus grands efforts d'interprétation qui s'accompagnent d'un état de résignation dû à l'impossibilité de posséder l'œuvre.

Nous concluons sur une image esquissée par Perec dans la préface de *La Vie mode d'emploi*, où il raisonne sur la relation entre un fabriquant de puzzles et un joueur. Cette relation se traduit également par une métaphore entre la multiplicité et l'ordre des composantes d'un ensemble, éléments présents dans la littérature numérique :

On déduira quelque chose qui est sans doute l'ultime vérité du puzzle : en dépit des apparences, ce n'est pas un jeu solitaire : chaque geste que fait le poseur de puzzle, le faiseur l'avait fait avant lui ; chaque pièce qu'il prend et reprend, qu'il examine, qu'il caresse, chaque combinaison qu'il essaye et essaye encore, chaque tâtonnement, chaque intuition, chaque espoir, chaque découragement, ont été décidés, calculés, étudiés, par l'autre. (Perec 1978, 19)



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# Polyphonie

## Mehrsprachigkeit\_Kreativität\_Schreiben

Projekt, Portal, Community – Wie viel Web 2.0 braucht ein wissenschaftliches Webportal?

**Abstract:** Im Beitrag werden die Möglichkeiten (und die Grenzen) eines wissenschaftlichen Webportals in Hinblick auf die Rolle des sogenannten „Web 2.0“ untersucht sowie die Merkmale einer Kommunikationskultur, die von Folksonomien gekennzeichnet ist. Ferner wird das Webportal „Polyphonie. Mehrsprachigkeit\_Kreativität\_Schreiben“ unter anderem durch Screenshots vorgestellt, wobei insbesondere auf seine Dreiteilung, auf seine Rolle als Publikationsplattform und auf das Potenzial seiner Interview-Datenbank eingegangen wird.

**Keywords:** Mehrsprachigkeit; Webportal; Sprachbewusstsein; Web 2.0; Kreativität; Publikationsplattform; Kollektive Intelligenz

Das Webportal *Polyphonie. Mehrsprachigkeit\_Kreativität\_Schreiben* ist 2012 aus dem gleichnamigen Forschungsprojekt entstanden, das 2009 von einer Gruppe von Forscherinnen und Forschern aus Italien und Österreich ins Leben gerufen wurde. Das Projekt untersucht die vielfältigen Zusammenhänge zwischen Mehrsprachigkeit und Kreativität im Schreiben systematisch und aus interdisziplinärer Perspektive. Es setzt sich zum Ziel, den mehr oder weniger stringenten Zusammenhang von individueller oder gesellschaftlicher Mehrsprachigkeit und Kreativität im Allgemeinen bzw. literarischer Kreativität im Besonderen zu erforschen. Erste Ergebnisse des Forschungsprojekts finden sich im Band *Polyphonie. Mehrsprachigkeit und literarische Kreativität*, herausgegeben von Michaela Bürger-Koftis, Hannes Schweiger und Sandra Vlasta (vgl. Bürger-Koftis et al. 2010). Die ebendort präsentierten Beiträge bildeten den Ausgangspunkt für ein größer konzipiertes wissenschaftliches Projekt: ein Webportal, in dem aus der Sicht der bereits in *Polyphonie* vertretenen Disziplinen, erweitert durch Fremdsprachendidaktik, Translationswissenschaften sowie Medien- und Kommunikationswissenschaften, der von den Initiatorinnen und Initiatoren des Projekts angenommene und durch die Beiträge des *Polyphonie*-Bandes in unterschiedlicher Weise durchaus bestätigte Zusammenhang von Mehrsprachigkeit und literarischer Kreativität fortlaufend untersucht werden kann.

Unsere These, die sich auf die Beobachtung stützt, dass sich in Zeiten erhöhter innergesellschaftlicher Mehrsprachigkeit eine besonders vielfältige literarische Produktion feststellen lässt,<sup>1</sup> basiert auf der Annahme, dass Mehrsprachigkeit und Mehrkulturalität den kreativen Drang zum Schreiben ebenso wecken wie den Drang zum kreativen Schreiben. Nähme man, wie das viele im *Polyphonie*-Band behandelte Schriftstellerinnen und Schriftsteller auch auf Grund ihrer besonderen *language awareness* gerne tun, den Ausdruck ‚kreatives Schreiben‘<sup>2</sup> wörtlich, so fiel sofort der ihm innewohnende Pleonasmus auf. Es ist natürlich „in der Tat“ (wiederum wörtlich) jede sprachliche Äußerung, ob Sprechen oder Schreiben, kreativ, weil schöpferisch, schaffend. Da kreatives Schreiben zwar die Grundlage für jede Form der literarischen Textproduktion ist (eine Ausnahme bilden hier lediglich Texte, die einer oral weitergegebenen Erzähltradition entspringen), aber kreatives Schreiben nicht nur Literatur hervorbringt, sondern sich in vielen verschiedenen Textsorten zeigt, fragen wir uns, ob und, wenn ja, inwieweit Mehrsprachigkeit Kreativität beim Schreiben an sich fördert. Daraus ergibt sich der Titel *Polyphonie. Mehrsprachigkeit\_Kreativität\_Schreiben*.

Schon die Tatsache, dass wir von einem Webportal und nicht von einer Website oder Webseite<sup>3</sup> sprechen, weist darauf hin, dass wir bei diesem Projekt ein Format im Sinn haben, das kommunikativer und interaktiver konzipiert ist, als das eine Website wäre, das also mehr als nur eine Publikationsmöglichkeit für wissenschaftliche Aufsätze oder eine Online-Zeitschrift sein sollte.

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**1** Ein solcher Zeitraum war die Zeit um den Zusammenbruch der Habsburger Monarchie, in der Migrationsbewegungen von mehrsprachigen und mehrkulturellen Menschen von der Peripherie zum Zentrum ausgelöst wurden, ebenso wie die globalisierungsbedingten Nomadismen des ausgehenden 20. Jahrhunderts und die im gleichen Zeitraum durch den Zerfall des Kommunismus hervorgerufenen Wanderungsbewegungen von Menschen, die die Sprache des Ziellandes zu meist nicht in einer regionalen Varietät der Peripherie beherrschten, wie das hingegen am Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts für die Migranten aus den Kronländern Habsburgs der Fall war.

**2** Mit kreativem Schreiben ist hier keinesfalls das gemeint, was unter dieser Bezeichnung als therapeutisches Instrument von der Psychotherapie bis hin zur Esoterik Anwendung fand (vgl. Glück 2000, 386–387).

**3** Die weithin gebräuchliche Bezeichnung ‚Webseite‘ geht auf eine Volksetymologie jüngsten Datums zurück: Für das englische *website* wird im Deutschen eine Entsprechung gefunden, die den ersten Teil fremdsprachlich übernimmt und den zweiten, undurchsichtigeren Lexembestandteil umdeutet von engl. *site* (der Platz, der Ort) zu dt. Seite, wobei bei dieser Wortbildung wohl auch das engl. *homepage* Pate gestanden haben mag. Auch hier zeigt sich, dass die volksetymologische Umdeutung keineswegs das Verständnis erleichtert, denn eigentlich wäre die Seite eben nur ein Teil eines Ortes im Netz. Die gleichzeitige Verwendung von Webseite und Website mit jeweils weiblichem Genus, die Artikelbildung im Deutschen also des engl. *the website*, die eigentlich der direkten Übersetzung nach mit „der“ erfolgen sollte (der Platz, der Ort), ist darüber hinaus so etwas wie eine grammatische Volksetymologie.

Die Entwicklungen rund um Web 2.0 waren und blieben trotz der Weiterentwicklung bis heute in Web 3.0 und Web 4.0 in dieser Hinsicht für den Aufbau unseres wissenschaftlichen Projekts mitentscheidend.<sup>4</sup>

## 1 Web 2.0 – Entstehung und Entwicklung

Die Entwicklung, die das Internet und seine Anwendungen in den letzten fünfzehn Jahren gemacht hat, kann getrost als phänomenal bezeichnet werden: Nach dem „Zerplatzen der Dot-Com-Blase im Herbst 2001“ (O’Reilly) kam es, wie in solchen Fällen üblich, zu einem „Shakeout“ [Marktberreinigung] (O’Reilly), die ihrerseits in der Regel ein Anzeichen dafür ist, dass eine aufstrebende Technologie bereit ist, diesen Platz einzunehmen (vgl. O’Reilly). Diese neue Technologie wurde wenig später unter der Bezeichnung „Web 2.0“ bekannt und ist mittlerweile als Begriff weltweit akzeptiert, mit knapp 2,2 Milliarden Treffern im World Wide Web, die Google dazu findet.<sup>5</sup>

Natürlich war auch das Web 2.0 den üblichen Zyklen der Akzeptanz unterworfen, die von der US-Unternehmensberatung Gartner seit mittlerweile fünfzehn Jahren aufgezeichnet und in Kurven auf einer x- und einer y-Achse dargestellt werden. Diese sogenannten *hype cycles* (Hype-Zyklen) geben den Grad der Aufmerksamkeit, der einer Technologie zu Teil wird, wieder (vgl. Fenn und Raskino 2008). In der folgenden Abbildung ist der prinzipielle Verlauf eines solchen Zyklus zu sehen:

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<sup>4</sup> Das Web 1.0 beinhaltet statische HTML-Seiten als Informationsangebot ohne Interaktionen, d. h. sie können von Nutzern nicht verändert werden. Der Übergang vom Web 1.0 zum Web 2.0 ist als wahre Revolution zu verstehen: Inhalte werden nicht nur präsentiert, sondern dynamisch ausgetauscht, Netzwerke werden zu Plattformen, außerdem entsteht ein Netz, bei dem jeder selbst zum Anbieter werden kann, was Interaktionen, Zusammenarbeit und Kommunikationen ermöglicht. Das Web 3.0 ist eine Weiterentwicklung des 2.0 Webs: Die Verarbeitung erfolgt durch Menschen und beinhaltet zusammengetragene Informationen, welche Bedeutungen erhalten, die von den Computern interpretiert werden, sodass eine automatische Weiterverarbeitung folgen kann. Im Web 4.0 liegt der Schwerpunkt auf der Verschmelzung zwischen dem Internet und der Realität bzw. auf der Vermischung zwischen der virtuellen und der realen Welt. (Vgl. blogfarm) Während die hauptsächlichsten Veränderungen im Übergang von Web 1.0 zu Web 2.0 festzustellen sind, stellen Web 3.0 und Web 4.0 die jüngsten Entwicklungen des 2.0 Webs dar, das wegen seiner stets aktuellen Merkmale keinesfalls als obsolet gelten kann.

<sup>5</sup> Diese Zahl wurde 2020 erhoben, zum Zeitpunkt der letzten Überarbeitung dieses Artikels, der in einer Urform auch auf [www.polyphonie.at](http://www.polyphonie.at) zu finden ist.

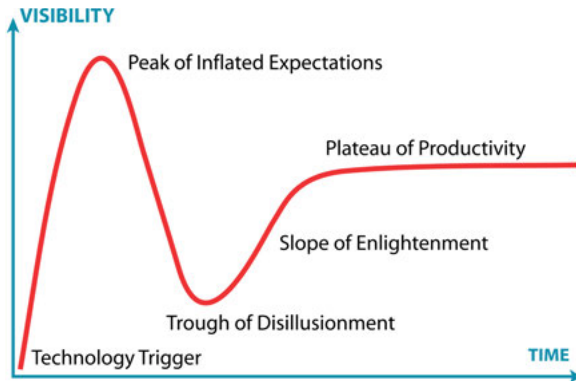


Abb. 1: Gartner Hype Cycle<sup>6</sup>

Jeder Hype-Zyklus durchlebt im Laufe des Lebenszyklus einer Technologie fünf Schlüsselphasen: Die erste ist der „Technology Trigger“ (technologischer Auslöser), der den Durchbruch einer Technologie und die starke Aufmerksamkeit rund um ihren Markteintritt bezeichnet, wobei die Produkte selbst, zur sogenannten ersten Generation gehörend, oft noch ungenügend ausgereift sind und ihre kommerzielle Verwertbarkeit noch keineswegs bewiesen ist (vgl. Honsel 2016).<sup>7</sup> Bleibt ein Produkt nicht in dieser Phase stecken, wie die als „Zombies“ bezeichneten Produkte, die bestimmte Phasen wieder und wieder durchlaufen (vgl. Honsel 2016), sondern steigt die Kurve an, tritt das Produkt also wirklich in den Mechanismus des Hype ein, so erreicht es die „Peak of Inflated Expectations“ [Gipfel der überzogenen Erwartungen] (Honsel 2016). Danach erfolgt der Abstieg durch das „Trough of Disillusionment“ [Tal der Enttäuschungen], in dem das öffentliche Interesse stark nachlässt und gleichzeitig der Ruf nach (technischen) Verbesserungen, also einer zweiten Generation, laut wird (vgl. Honsel 2016). Nach dem Durchtauchen des absoluten Tiefpunkts tritt die Technologie in die vierte, als „Slope of Enlightenment“ [Pfad/Hügel der Erleuchtung] bezeichnete Phase ein (vgl. Honsel 2016), in der die Implementierung der Verbesserungen zu greifen beginnt und das Produkt als Ganzes besser verstanden und angenommen wird. Die letzte Phase ist das „Plateau of Productivity“ [Plateau der Produktivität] (Honsel 2016), in der das Produkt von der breiten Masse angenommen wird. Den

<sup>6</sup> (c) CC BY-SA 3.0 Jeremy Kemp, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hype\\_cycle#/media/File:Gartner\\_Hype\\_Cycle.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hype_cycle#/media/File:Gartner_Hype_Cycle.svg).

<sup>7</sup> Die deutsche Übersetzung der Zyklusphasen wurde übernommen aus „Hype Cycle. Die Fieberkurve der Aufmerksamkeit“. *Technology Review* 10 (2006), 80–83 (vgl. Honsel 2016).

Übergang zum Pfad der Erleuchtung und damit letztendlich auch zum Plateau der Produktivität definiert die Erfinderin des *Hype Cycle*, Jackie Fenn, so, „dass ein ganzes Ökosystem mit Standards, Dienstleistern und kompletten Lösungen entsteht“ (Honsel 2016).

Eine Gegenüberstellung der Hype-Zyklen der letzten Jahre zeigt die Entwicklung, die Web 2.0 genommen hat:



Abb. 2: Hype Kurve 2006<sup>8</sup>

Diese Abbildung zeigt deutlich, dass sich Web 2.0 im Jahr 2006 auf dem Höhepunkt der überzogenen Erwartungen befand. Zwei Jahre später, 2008, also kurz bevor das *Polyphonie*-Forschungsprojekt entwickelt wurde, hatte Web 2.0 das Tal der Enttäuschung fast durchschritten, befand sich ungefähr dort, wo sich 2006 Wikis befanden, wobei sich der Abstand zwischen den beiden zugunsten von Web 2.0 verkürzt hatte:

<sup>8</sup> (c) CC BY-SA 3.0 Jeremy Kemp, adaptiert von den Autorinnen mit Daten aus Honsel 2016.



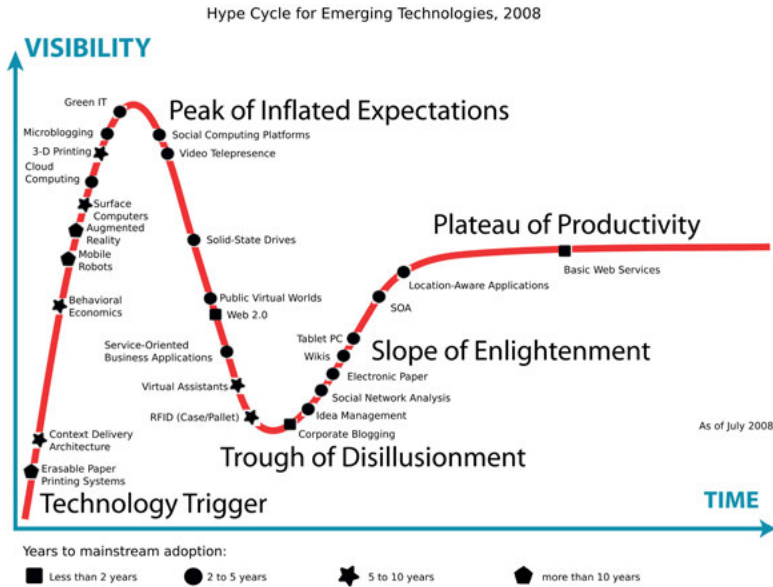


Abb. 3: Hype Cycle for Emerging Technologies, 2008<sup>9</sup>

Der Abstieg von Web 2.0 erfolgte also über einen Zeitraum von mehr als zwei Jahren, im Jahr 2009 befand sich die Technologie bereits auf dem ersten Drittel des „Slope of Enlightenment“ und konnte seinen Abstand zu Wikis wiederum erheblich verkürzen, was zweierlei Schlüsse zulässt: dass entweder Web 2.0 eine schnellere Aufholgeschwindigkeit hatte oder dass, je länger der Aufstieg andauerte, je weiter die Technologie also nach oben kam, die Beschleunigung langsamer wurde.

<sup>9</sup> (c) CC BY-SA 3.0 Jeremy Kemp, adaptiert von den Autorinnen mit Daten aus <http://proactivereport.com/gartner-hype-cycle-for-emerging-technologies/>.

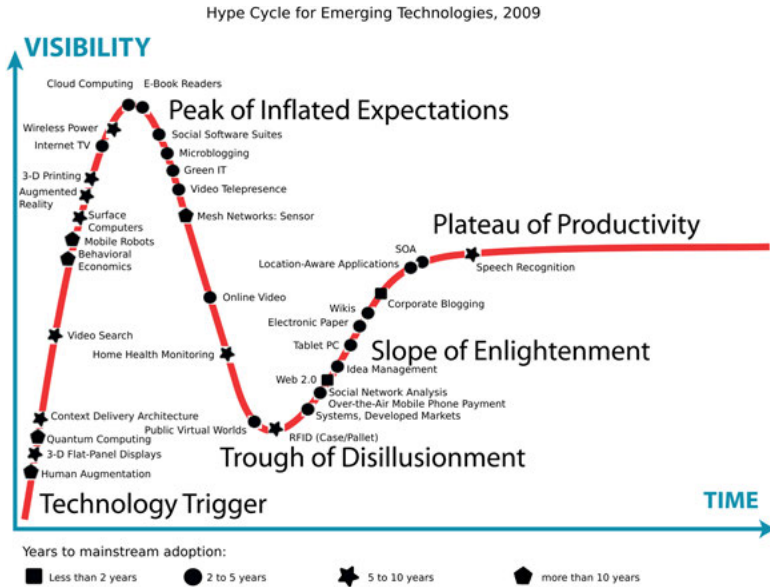


Abb. 4: Hype Cycle for Emerging Technologies, 2009<sup>10</sup>

Die Entwicklungen der letzten Jahre beweisen eindeutig, dass Web 2.0 mit seiner Konsolidierungsphase erfolgreich vorangekommen ist. Für unsere Zwecke ist aber lediglich von Belang, dass Web 2.0 keineswegs ein „Zombie“ war, also nicht obsolet geworden ist, bevor es das Plateau der Produktivität erreicht hat, und dass das Jahr 2010 möglicherweise der richtige Zeitpunkt war, sich mit dieser Technologie und ihrer Anwendbarkeit in der Wissenschaft und in der Wissenschaftsorganisation auseinanderzusetzen, was wir in den vergangenen Jahren mit der Entwicklung von *Polyphonie. Mehrsprachigkeit\_Kreativität\_Schreiben* denn auch taten.

10 (c) CC BY-SA 3.0 Jeremy Kemp, adaptiert von den Autorinnen mit Daten aus <https://www.nevillehobson.com/2009/08/02/gartner-restricts-usage-of-hype-cyclegraphics/>.

## 2 Web 2.0 – eine Phänomenologie

Das Web 2.0 kann man in der Tat, wie Tim O'Reilly, „als eine Ansammlung von Prinzipien und Praktiken visualisieren, die ein regelrechtes Sonnensystem von Seiten zusammenhalten, [und dabei] einige oder alle dieser Prinzipien in unterschiedlicher Entfernung vom Zentrum demonstrieren“.<sup>11</sup> Hier die prinzipielle, auf wenige wesentliche Merkmale beschränkte Gegenüberstellung von Web 1.0 und Web 2.0, so wie sie O'Reilly in der ersten „Web 2.0 Konferenz“ 2004 formulierte:

<b>Web 1.0</b>		<b>Web 2.0</b>
DoubleClick	→	Google AdSense
Ofoto	→	Flickr
Akamai	→	BitTorrent
mp3.com	→	Napster
Britannica Online	→	Wikipedia
Persönliche Webseiten	→	Blogs
Spekulation mit Domain	→	Suchmaschinen-Optimierung
<b>Namen</b>		
Seitenaufrufe	→	„cost per click“
Extraktion mittels Screen Scraping	→	Web Services
Veröffentlichung	→	Beteiligung
Content Management	→	Wikis
<b>Systeme</b>		
Taxonomie (Verzeichnisse)	→	„Folksonomy“ (Tagging)
Feststehend („stickiness“)	→	Zusammenwachsen („syndication“) <sup>12</sup>

**Abb. 5:** Merkmale Web 1.0 und 2.0

Für unsere Fragestellung „Wie viel Web 2.0 braucht ein wissenschaftliches Webportal?“ interessieren bei dieser Gegenüberstellung beispielsweise der Übergang von *Britannica Online* zu *Wikipedia* (Zeile 5) bzw. deren Koexistenz oder auch die Verdrängung der Ersteren durch das Letztere, was angesichts des unterschiedlichen *PageRank* der beiden wohl eher zutreffend erscheint, und damit parallel laufend der Trend von der Veröffentlichung zur Beteiligung (Zeile 10). Wie wir

<sup>11</sup> „You can visualize Web 2.0 as a set of principles and practices that tie together a veritable solar system of sites that demonstrate some or all of those principles, at a varying distance from that core“. (oreilly)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.oreilly.com/pub/a/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html>? [7 Juni 2018]

weiter unten bei der Beschreibung des Webportals sehen werden, ist keineswegs das Eine durch das Andere auszuschließen, Beteiligung und Veröffentlichung können durchaus kombiniert werden. Es handelt sich dabei also nicht um ein Entweder-oder, sondern um ein Sowohl-als-auch. Diese Dualität spiegelt sich auch in der bereits gebräuchlichen Bezeichnung des Nutzers des Web 2.0 und seiner „Folksonomien“ als „Prosumer“ (Peters und Stock), also als eine Person, die Produzent und Konsument in einem ist, wider. Das Produzieren und Beteiligen führt geradewegs dazu, was im Zusammenhang mit der „2.0-heit“ des World Wide Web neben der dynamischen Weiterentwicklung der persönlichen Webseiten zu Blogs und der Schaffung einer „Blogosphäre“ im *Social Networking* wohl am bekanntesten ist: zu den Wikis, also Webseiten, die von allen Nutzern erweitert oder geändert werden können (vgl. Böhringer et al. 2008, 151). *Wikipedia*, dessen Ruf in akademischen Kreisen schlechter ist, als es verdient,<sup>13</sup> ist das derzeit größte und bekannteste Wiki. Es ist ebenso ein Produkt „kollektiver Intelligenz“ wie seine kommerziellen Pendanten *eBay* oder *Amazon* (vgl. Peters und Stock). Zu einer weiteren Nutzung der kollektiven Intelligenz kommt es bei Webservices, die sich der Ordnung von *Bookmarks* (Lesezeichen) zu Websites (z. B. *Del.icio.us*), Bildern (z. B. *Flickr*) oder Videos (z. B. *YouTube*) widmen. Besonders das Setzen von Lesezeichen und deren freie Beschlagwortung (*tagging*) haben einen neuen Trend hervorgerufen, der unter dem Begriff „Folksonomy“, die Kategorisierung der Webseiten durch die Nutzer, die Leute (*folk* + *taxonomy*)<sup>14</sup>, bekannt wurde. Peters und Stock geben in ihrem Artikel aber zu bedenken, dass im Zusammenhang mit dem *Tagging* eben gerade nicht von Klassifizierung und daher auch nicht von Taxonomie gesprochen werden kann, da bei der Verschlagwortung weder mit Notationen noch mit Relationen gearbeitet wird.

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13 Dass *Wikipedia* eine weltweit anerkannte Wissenszyklopädie ist, ist mittlerweile unbestritten, gleichzeitig gilt aber das Zitieren aus ihr immer noch als akademischer Fauxpas. Da aber auch in der wissenschaftlichen Welt *Wikipedia* immer mehr zur Quelle der (wenn auch in der Folge noch zu überprüfenden) Erstinformation wird, ist nicht einsichtig, weswegen aus ordentlich recherchierten und mit einer Bibliographie versehenen *Wikipedia*-Einträgen nicht zitiert werden soll. Immerhin ist jedes Zitieren ein reflektierender Vorgang, der ohnehin nie unkritisch, sondern in der Regel auch gegengeprüft erfolgt.

14 Diese Wortschöpfung geht auf Thomas Vander Wal (2004) zurück (vgl. Peters und Stock).

### 3 Das Webportal Polyphonie. Mehrsprachigkeit\_Kreativität\_Schreiben

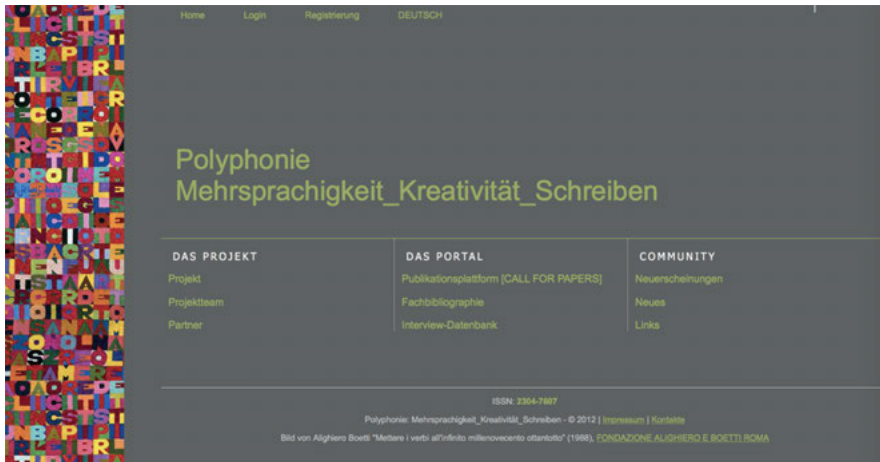


Abb. 6: Screenshot Webportal Startseite

Der Screenshot der Startseite des Webportals zeigt, dass wir bei der optischen Gestaltung des Webportals zu den Charakteristika einer frühen Version des Buchcovers (für Web-Archäologen vielleicht noch irgendwo in den Untiefen des World Wide Web auffindbar) zurückgekehrt sind. Die vielfarbige Seitenleiste, die mit der großzügigen Genehmigung der „Fondazione Alighiero e Boetti“ dem Gemälde Boettis *Mettere i verbi all'infinito millenovecento ottantotto* (1988) entnommen werden durfte, zeigt in seiner Buntheit und Wortbezogenheit, dass Mehrsprachigkeit und kulturelle Vielfalt zu einer kreativen Textur werden. Ebenso wie die Polychromie der Seitenleiste hebt sich auch der Hoffnung, Toleranz und Erneuerung symbolisierende limettengrüne Kopf und die gleichfarbig gestalteten Rubriken der Navigationsleiste harmonisch vom asphaltgrauen Hintergrund ab. Das ist durchaus als Postulat zu verstehen, die Polyphonie der Mehrsprachigkeit und kulturellen Vielfalt unserer Gesellschaften auf ebenso erfrischende Weise zu beleben wie die polychrome Seitenleiste des Webportals dessen graue Grundierung belebt.

Der Dreiteilung der Navigationsleiste des Webportals in „Das Projekt“, „Das Portal“ und „Die Community“ folgt auch der von links nach rechts, also von „Projekt“ bis „Community“, zunehmende Anteil von Anwendungsbereichen aus dem Web 2.0.

Während „Das Projekt“ mit der Projektbeschreibung und näheren Hinweisen zu den Teilnehmerinnen und Teilnehmern am Forschungsprojekt sowie den

Projektpartnern wie Universitäten, Institutionen, Sponsoren und dem wissenschaftlichen Beirat eine reine Informationsaufgabe erfüllt (Web 1.0), eröffnet „Das Portal“ den Nutzern auch den Eintritt, angefangen bei der Publikationsplattform.

Die *Publikationsplattform* des Webportals wird von Beate Baumann (Universität Catania), Michaela Bürger-Koftis (Universität Genua) und Sandra Vlasta (Universität Mainz) herausgegeben und bietet die Möglichkeit, Beiträge zum Thema Mehrsprachigkeit, Kreativität und Schreiben aus unterschiedlichen Forschungsperspektiven zu veröffentlichen und somit der internationalen Wissenschaftsgemeinschaft zur Diskussion zur Verfügung zu stellen. Klickt man auf „Publikationsplattform“, so erscheint folgende Maske:



Abb. 7: Screenshot Publikationsplattform

Die Forschungsbereiche bestehen aus neun Fachgebieten:

- Biographieforschung
- Mehrsprachigkeitsforschung
- Neurolinguistik
- Angewandte Linguistik
- Translationswissenschaften
- Literaturwissenschaft
- Komparatistische Forschung
- Medien- und Kommunikationswissenschaften
- Fremdsprachendidaktik

Beim Anklicken der einzelnen Fachbereiche erscheint eine Verzweigung, von der aus man Zugriff hat auf die Abstracts der Beiträge, jeweils auf Deutsch, Englisch, Italienisch, Slowakisch und seit 2019 auch auf Französisch, die dann eingesehen und heruntergeladen werden können. Die Beiträge selbst können nach Anmeldung bei dem Webportal heruntergeladen werden. Es handelt sich bei dieser Publikationsplattform aber um keinen Wiki, in den jeder Nutzer einfach einen Beitrag stellen bzw. in dem bereits existierende Beiträge einfach verändert oder ergänzt werden können. Da sich unser Projekt vornimmt, zitierbare Online-Publikationen zu produzieren, ist an dieser Stelle ein unlimitierter und unkontrollierter *Feed* (Einspeisung, Zufuhr) nicht möglich. Vorschläge für Beiträge können jederzeit in Form eines Abstracts (500 Wörter) zusammen mit einer Kontaktinformation und einer akademischen Kurzbiografie an die Herausgeberinnen über die Mailadresse [webportalpolyphonie@gmail.com](mailto:webportalpolyphonie@gmail.com) zur Beurteilung eingereicht werden, neue Beiträge erscheinen zweimal jährlich und sind sowohl auf Deutsch, Englisch und Italienisch willkommen.

Das Web 2.0 endet somit auf unserer, in dieser Hinsicht „konservativen“ Publikationsplattform, im Vorzimmer derselben. Danach werden die Beiträge, wie bei wissenschaftlichen Publikationsorganen üblich, durch die Herausgeberinnen und einen wissenschaftlichen Beirat peer-reviewed und günstigenfalls zur endgültigen Publikation empfohlen.

Ein anderer Teil der Ergebnisse der Buchpublikation wurde schon zur Gänze für das Webportal verwendet, und zwar wurden unter „Fachbibliographie“ die Bibliographien der einzelnen Beiträgerinnen und Beiträger von den Herausgeberinnen in inhaltliche Untergruppen zusammengefasst, online gestellt und seither auch mit Hilfe der Community ständig erweitert, womit wiederum Web 2.0 zur Anwendung kommt.

Das Herzstück des Webportals ist die „Interview-Datenbank“, auf der sprachbiographische Interviews mit Schriftstellerinnen und Schriftstellern mit plurilingualem Hintergrund in Audio- bzw. Videodateien abrufbar sind.

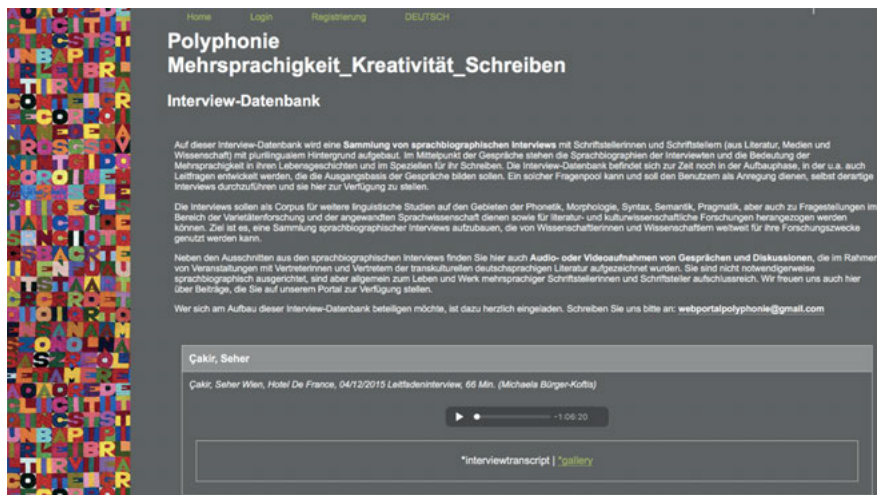


Abb. 8: Screenshot Interview-Datenbank

Im Mittelpunkt der Gespräche stehen die Sprachbiographien der Interviewten und die Bedeutung der Mehrsprachigkeit in ihren Lebensgeschichten und im Speziellen für ihr Schreiben. Dieses Vorhaben erfordert eine spezielle Biographiearbeit, deren Anforderungen vorab minutiös festgelegt werden. Vom „motherese“ [Mutterisch] (Westerkamp 2007, 66), dem Erstspracherwerb durch Bezugspersonen, im Vergleich zum Spracherwerb einer oder weiterer Erstsprachen durch soziale Kontakte oder den Bildungsweg, über den in der Folge sekundären Spracherwerb von Zweit- bzw. Tertiärsprachen bis hin zu anhaltenden Lernprozessen in der Schreib(fremd)sprache entsteht ein Gesamtbild der Sprachsozialisierung der Schreibenden. Neben den sprachbiographischen Interviews finden sich in der Datenbank auch Aufnahmen von Gesprächen und Diskussionen mit Vertreterinnen und Vertretern der transkulturellen deutschsprachigen Literatur, die nicht notwendigerweise sprachbiographisch ausgerichtet, aber allgemein zum Leben und Werk mehrsprachiger Schriftstellerinnen und Schriftsteller aufschlussreich sind.

Um eine sinnvolle Sprachbiographiearbeit zu ermöglichen, müssen die Interviews auch transkribiert werden – und auch das geschieht mit Hilfe der Community. Interviews können frei heruntergeladen werden, das Transkript kann dann der Datenbank zur Verfügung gestellt – und somit auch als Forschungsbeitrag publiziert – werden. Natürlich können die Interviews darüber hinaus als Corpus für weitere linguistische Studien auf den Gebieten der Phonetik, Morphologie, Syntax, Semantik, Pragmatik, aber auch zu Fragestellungen auf dem Gebiet der Varietätenforschung und der angewandten Sprachwissenschaft dienen, sowie



für literatur- und kulturwissenschaftliche Forschungen herangezogen werden. Ziel ist es, eine Sammlung sprachbiographischer Interviews aufzubauen, die von Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftlern weltweit für ihre Forschungszwecke genutzt werden kann.

Der dritte Teil der Navigationsleiste ist der „Community“ gewidmet, ihre Teile können ganz im Sinne des *Prosumer*-Prinzips auch durch die Nutzer selbst erweitert werden. In „Neuerscheinungen“ wird auf die Publikationen hingewiesen, die sich mit Mehrsprachigkeit bzw. Kreativität auseinandersetzen, während „Neues“ auf jene literarischen und kulturellen Veranstaltungen (Tagungen, Symposien, Literaturfestivals usw.) aufmerksam macht, die europaweit stattfinden und in deren Fokus das Leben oder Schreiben in einem mehrsprachigen Umfeld steht. Schließlich werden in der Sektion „Links“ die Hyperlinks zu weiteren Institutionen, Partnern und Forschungsprojekten aufgelistet, mit denen unser Portal in fortdauernder Verbindung steht.

Zuletzt wäre noch das Thema der inhärenten Mehrsprachigkeit eines Webportals, das sich mit Mehrsprachigkeit beschäftigt, anzusprechen: Wir wollten die von unserem internationalen Forschungsprojekt als so bedeutend beschriebene Mehrsprachigkeit auch innerhalb des Projekts umsetzen und haben daher alle Funktionsbegriffe, Portal-Texte und Abstracts nicht nur auf Deutsch (die Sprache, in der die meisten Texte verfasst werden) und Englisch (die heutzutage am häufigsten verwendete *Lingua franca* weltweit), sondern auch auf Italienisch (stellvertretend für die romanischen Sprachen sowie aufgrund ihrer Nähe zur Wissenschaftssprache Latein und der phonetischen Geradlinigkeit) und Slowakisch (stellvertretend für die slawischen Sprachen, das zudem nicht in kyrillischer Schrift geschrieben und von den meisten, slawische Sprachen sprechenden Menschen gut verstanden wird) übersetzt. Seit 2019 ist Französisch dazugekommen, ein Zeichen, dass die Wachstumsgrenzen dieses Webportals schier unbegrenzt sind. So kann diesem mehrsprachigen Webportal allenfalls nur noch der Vorwurf der Eurosprachen-Zentriertheit gemacht werden, da die Abstracts, die Beiträge und das Portal ausschließlich in europäischen Sprachen erscheinen. Aber auch das punktuelle Übersetzen von Beiträgen aus dem Bereich der Komparatistik beispielsweise in ganz andere Sprachen, wenn es sich um die Erstsprache des bzw. der mittlerweile auf Deutsch schreibenden Autors/Autorin handelt, wäre wünschenswert, dort, wo es zum besseren Verständnis des womöglich in zwei Sprachen publizierenden Autors in seiner Erstsprache führen kann. Zahlreiche Schriftstellerinnen und Schriftsteller schreiben nämlich nicht nur auf Deutsch, sondern auch in ihrer Erstsprache, daher könnten die auf [www.polyphonie.at](http://www.polyphonie.at) veröffentlichten Aufsätze in die Erstsprache der/des jeweiligen Autorin/Autors übersetzt werden, wenn diese(r) auch in der Erstsprache publiziert. Zum Beispiel schreibt Seher Çakir sowohl auf Deutsch als auch auf Türkisch, darum wäre eine

Übersetzung der zu dieser Autorin erschienenen Beiträge ins Türkische durchaus willkommen.

## 4 Conclusio: Wie viel Web 2.0 hat das Webportal [www.polyphonie.at](http://www.polyphonie.at)?

Als Voraussetzung für die Diskussion der eigentlichen Fragestellung konnte gezeigt werden, dass das Web 2.0 die logische Weiterentwicklung des Web 1.0 ist, vieles von Web 1.0 noch in Web 2.0 vorhanden ist und dass Web 2.0 mit seinen Anwendungen im World Wide Web das verwirklicht, wofür das Internet von Anfang an gestanden hat: Wissenstransfer und Wissensproduktion in und mit einem Massenkommunikationsmittel. Bei der Konzeption des hier präsentierten Webportals war die Bezeichnung *Webportal*, die die weniger „2.0-ige“ *Website* ablöste, noch das, was am ehesten an die Prinzipien des Web 2.0 denken ließ. Von Beginn an waren die Bedenken groß, dass wissenschaftliches Arbeiten und die Liberalität und Offenheit des Web 2.0 womöglich nicht miteinander vereinbar sein könnten. Undenkbar schien anfänglich, auch nur Teile des Webportals den Nutzern uneingeschränkt zugänglich zu machen. Auf der Publikationsplattform blieb es auch bei den oben beschriebenen Einschränkungen, um das akademische *Peer Reviewing* zu gewährleisten. In allen anderen Bereichen kam es aber, wie so oft bei einem *Work in progress*, zu neuen Einsichten, die die Vorgangsweise, ja das Ziel selbst neu definierten. Als Schlüsselerkenntnis darf hier wohl die neu entstandene Figur des *Prosumers* gelten, der gleichzeitig Konsument und Produzent ist, der, wie man meinen möchte, der Inbegriff dessen ist, was den Besucher einer wissenschaftlichen Website ausmacht.

Mit zunehmender Auseinandersetzung mit den Phänomenen von Web 2.0 wuchs die Erkenntnis, dass man sich auch bei diesem Forschungsprojekt das Kreativ- und Produktivpotenzial der Community zu Nutze machen kann. Wir empfinden es beispielsweise nicht mehr als visionär, daran zu glauben, dass unsere Interview-Datenbank mit Datenmaterial gefüttert werden kann, da bereits andere Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftler Interviews produziert und uns zur Verfügung gestellt haben, oder dass die online verfügbaren Interviews im Rahmen von universitären Abschlussarbeiten oder Studien transkribiert und wiederum auf unserem Webportal publiziert werden können. Die letzten Jahre haben uns bewiesen, wie viel Realität in unserer ursprünglichen Vision steckte.

Fest steht jedenfalls, dass in Zeiten, wo Forschungsetats empfindlich gekürzt werden, der Zugriff auf die Arbeitsressourcen, die das Medium des World Wide Web auf dem Feld des wissenschaftlichen (Zusammen-)Arbeitens ermöglicht,

eigentlich unumgänglich ist, denn durch den gemeinschaftlichen Einsatz kann ein Projekt wie das unsere trotz geringer finanzieller Mittel dennoch wachsen und gedeihen.

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Beatrice Nickel

# Intertextualität als Intermedialität: Zum Mond fliegen mit Jules Verne, Georges Méliès, Brian Selznick und Martin Scorsese

**Abstract:** The following paper aims at presenting intermediality as a form of intertextuality by applying Julia Kristeva's extended concept of textuality. Therefore, the literary tradition of the motif of the moon is – to some extent – retraced within the framework of a comparative case study: by analyzing the influence of Jules Verne's moon-fiction *Autour de la lune* (1869) on Georges Méliès's silent film *Le Voyage dans la Lune* (1902), which has in turn affected Brian Selznick's best-selling novel *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (2007), which has been picturized by Martin Scorsese in his 3D-movie *Hugo* (2011).

**Keywords:** *intermediality; intertextuality; moon fiction; Jules Verne; Georges Méliès; Brian Selznick; Martin Scorsese*

## 1 Vorbemerkung

Üblicherweise werden Begriffe wie Zitat, Paraphrase, Intertextualität etc. ausschließlich auf mit sprachlichen Zeichen gefertigte Artefakte angewendet. Erweitert man jedoch den Textbegriff in einem semiotischen Verständnis dahingehend, dass jedes Artefakt aus Zeichen in gewissem Sinne lesbar ist und daher auch Textqualitäten aufweist, so bietet sich die Möglichkeit, das gesamte Spektrum von Intertextualität auch als Semiose aufzufassen, die gattungsübergreifend ist und als Osmose von Texten, Themen und Motiven zwischen den verschiedenen Kunstgattungen beschrieben werden kann. Im Falle des hier vorzustellenden Gegenstandes handelt es sich darum, dass der uralte Menschheitstraum von der Reise zum Mond in Jules Vernes Roman *Autour de la Lune* (1869) in der sprachlichen Fassung unter den Bedingungen der industriellen Moderne konkretisiert wurde und zugleich – mit entsprechenden Illustrationen von Émile Bayard und Alphonse de Neuville – auch als visueller Text produziert wurde.<sup>1</sup> Diese Vorgabe nutzte der Filmemacher Georges Méliès, als er zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts

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<sup>1</sup> Zu den zahlreichen literarischen Imaginationen des Fluges zum Mond vgl. Montgomery 1999 und Nicolson 1960.

einen Kurzfilm zu diesem Thema drehte, der sich explizit auf Jules Vernes Roman bezog (*Le Voyage dans la Lune*, 1902). Er hatte damit einen Text zweiten Grades erzeugt, in diesem Fall einen kinematographischen Text. Dieser Vorgang wurde rund 100 Jahre später von Brian Selznick zum Prätext seines Romans *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (2007). Hier wird das Werk von Georges Méliès in einem ganz umfassenden Sinne durch einen romanesken Metatext vorgeführt, in dessen Zentrum ein anthropomorpher Automat steht, der die zentrale Szene aus Georges Méliès' Film zeichnen kann. In Selznicks Roman wird durch den Zeichenautomaten das Motiv des Mondfluges als Graphik und als Metatext dritten Grades präsentiert. Wenige Jahre darauf verfilmt Martin Scorsese diesen Roman und schafft damit einen kinematographischen Metatext vierten Grades über Georges Méliès' Bearbeitung von Jules Vernes Roman *Autour de la Lune* (Hugo, 2011).

## 2 Georges Méliès' *Le Voyage dans la Lune* (UA 1. September 1902)

Georges Méliès' 14-minütiger Stummfilm basiert maßgeblich auf Jules Vernes Romanen *De la Terre à la Lune* (1865) und *Autour de la Lune* (1869) sowie auf H. G. Wells' Roman *The First Men in the Moon* (1901). Die nachfolgenden Ausführungen sind auf den Einfluss von Vernes zweitem Mondroman<sup>2</sup> auf Méliès' Film konzentriert.

Die Handlung des Stummfilms ist schnell zusammengefasst: Auf dem Kongress der Astronomischen Gesellschaft erläutert einer der Wissenschaftler, Professor Barbenfouillis, der von Méliès gespielt wurde und der über die Alliteration mit Barbicane aus Vernes Mondromanen verbunden ist, seinen Plan, mittels einer Kapsel, die aus einer großen Kanone abgeschossen werden soll, zum Mond zu fliegen. Der Zuschauer wird nun zunächst Zeuge der Vorbereitungen, bis der Professor und fünf weitere Astronauten die Kapsel feierlich besteigen und diese danach in den Weltraum abgeschossen wird. Ab diesem Moment bewegt sie sich immer näher auf den Mond zu, und schließlich erscheint auf dem Bildschirm das folgende Szenario: Die Kapsel kollidiert mit dem Mond, und zwar trifft sie in

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<sup>2</sup> *Autour de la lune* ist vom 4. November bis zum 8. Dezember 1869 als Fortsetzungsroman im *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires* erschienen, und im Jahre 1870 wurde er vom berühmten Verleger Pierre-Jules Hetzel in Buchform publiziert. Ich habe diesen und nicht seinen Vorgängerroman mit dem Titel *De la terre à la lune* (1865) gewählt, weil das thematische Hauptgewicht dort auf den Vorbereitungen des Mondfluges liegt, es mir ja aber gerade um den Mondflug geht.

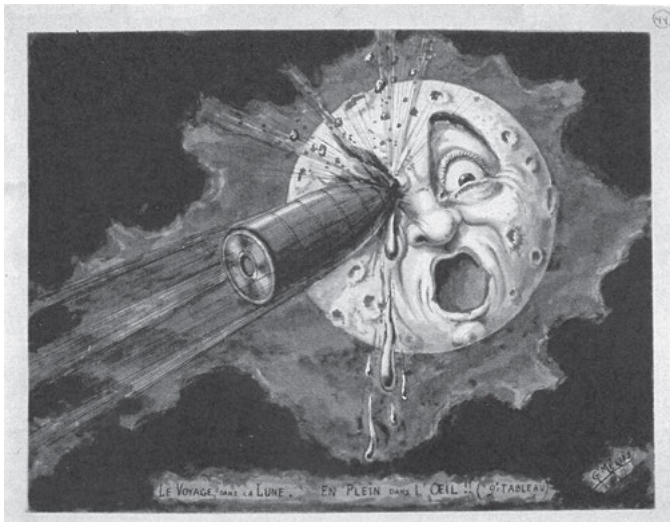
das rechte Auge des spätestens seit Plutarchs *De facie in orbe lunae* bekannten Gesichtes des Mondes bzw. des ‚Mannes im Mond‘ oder noch genauer der ‚Frau im Mond‘; denn es handelt sich um das Gesicht der Stummfilmschauspielerin Bleuette Bernon, die in mehreren von Méliès’ Filmen mitgewirkt hat. Auch in Vernes *Autour de la Lune* erscheint der Mond als eine Frau, und zwar sowohl verbal, nämlich in Michel Ardans Vorstellung („la charmante Astarté, la reine des nuits, la fille de Latone et de Jupiter, la jeune du radieux Apollon!“ (Verne 1977 [1872], 100), als auch visuell. Die folgende in Vernes Roman eingefügte Illustration zeigt die weibliche Gestalt des Mondes, und zwar ohne Gesicht:



**Abb. 1:** Illustration zur weiblichen Gestalt des Mondes (Verne 1977 [1872], 101).



Der Mond erscheint hier konkret in Gestalt der Göttin Selene/Luna, wenn auch unter Aussparung des Gesichtes, das – wie in Méliès' Stummfilm – auch in den nachfolgend untersuchten medialen Transpositionen von großer Bedeutung ist und mit dessen Hilfe jeweils nonverbale Kommunikation betrieben wird. In Méliès' Film wirkt das weibliche Mondgesicht im Moment des Zusammenstoßes sehr traurig, es vergießt sogar eine Träne. Noch besser zu erkennen als im Film ist dies in der entsprechenden, von Méliès gestalteten Vorlage, die bezeichnenderweise den Titel *En plein dans l'œil* (9<sup>e</sup> tableau) trägt.<sup>3</sup>



**Abb. 2:** Georges Méliès, *Le Voyage dans la Lune*, Screenshot (6m15s)

Méliès führt hier vor, was passiert, wenn die moderne Wissenschaft auf die Natur trifft, die allerdings stark anthropomorphisiert erscheint (vgl. Dagrada 2014, 245–262): „On peut y lire l'avancée du progrès scientifique de l'époque, un contact brutal entre la science et l'état de la nature.“ (Bromberg 2011) Dem Zuschauer wird an dieser Stelle im Film (6m15s) ein *close-up* des Mondgesichtes präsentiert. Auf dieses *close-up* des traurigen Mondgesichtes folgt völlig unvermittelt der Blick auf die Mondoberfläche, auf der die Reisenden gelandet sind. (Vgl. Frazer 1979, 96) Wir haben es hier mit der Technik der „vue à transformations“ (Méliès 2008 [1907], 198) zu tun, die Méliès oft eingesetzt hat. Die Landung

<sup>3</sup> Abgedruckt in Malthête/Mannoni 2008, 129.

auf dem Mond ermöglicht es den Wissenschaftlern, die Kapsel zu verlassen und die ihnen unbekanntes Landschaft zu erkunden. Sie treffen hier sowohl auf überdimensional große Pilze als auch auf die Mondbewohner, die Seleniten, die in der Lage sind, plötzlich zu explodieren und unsichtbar zu werden, sobald sie mit einem Regenschirm berührt werden. Die ganze Szenerie auf dem Mond zeichnet sich durch einen explizit anti-illusionistischen, bizarren, märchenhaften Charakter aus. Es handelt sich hierbei um eine Ästhetik, die dadaistische und surrealistische Kompositionen und Bildwelten vorausahnen lässt. Schließlich müssen die Astronauten fliehen, was ihnen auch gelingt, und die Kapsel stürzt – allerdings mit einem Seleniten an Bord – vom Mond in Richtung der Erde ab. Dort landet sie nach ihrem Flug im Meer. Wie in Vernes Roman werden die Astronauten nach ihrer Rückkehr wie Helden gefeiert.

Den Mondreisenden in Méliès' Film wird ein Orden verliehen, und Professor Barbenfouillis, der den entscheidenden Impuls zum Mondflug gegeben hat, wird schließlich eine Statue errichtet, und zwar in einer Pose, die deutlich macht, dass der Wissenschaftler den Mond besiegt hat und ihn mit dem Fuß auf den Erdboden drückt. Diese Szene bildet das Schlussbild, und ihre Inschrift ist für den Zuschauer lesbar: „Labor Omnia Vincit“. Dieses Motto ist dabei Vergils berühmtem Spruch „Omnia vincit Amor“<sup>4</sup> nachempfunden. Betrifft dieser ausschließlich den zwischenmenschlichen Bereich, so macht die von Méliès vorgeführte Inschrift deutlich, dass der Mensch durch seine Arbeit und mühevollen Anstrengungen alles – in diesem Fall den Mond als Sinnbild der Natur – besiegen kann, was eher als ironischer Kommentar denn als ernste Aussage aufzufassen ist. (Vgl. Frazer 1979, 98) Eine thematische Nähe zu späteren futuristischen Technikphantasien ist jedoch nicht zu leugnen.<sup>5</sup>

Auch wenn Jules Vernes zwei Mondfiktionen die maßgeblichen Quellen für Méliès' Verfilmung gewesen sind, so besteht ein wesentlicher Unterschied zur Vorlage vor allem darin, dass es den Protagonisten in Vernes Romanen nicht gelingt, auf dem Mond zu landen, und der Autor aus diesem Grund keine (spekulativen) Angaben über das Leben auf dem Mond zu machen braucht.<sup>6</sup> Im Gegensatz hierzu handelt der Hauptteil von Méliès' Film von den Lebensformen auf dem Mond (Seleniten, übergroße Pilze etc.). Auch die Intention ist jeweils eine andere. Ging es dem französischen Autor des 19. Jahrhunderts – neben der Unterhaltung seiner Leser – vor allem auch um eine Vulgarisierung naturwissenschaftlicher

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4 Der Spruch geht zurück auf ein Zitat aus Vergils 10. Ekloge (10, 69).

5 Vgl. hierzu vor allem Marinettis Manifest *Tuons le clair de lune!* (1909).

6 Die Frage, ob der Mond bewohnt sei oder nicht, ist zur Zeit Jules Vernes noch völlig offen. Vgl. hierzu Cotardièrre 2004, 146 und Nickel 2013, 119.

Erkenntnisse über den Mond, so dient das Mondthema dem Filmemacher vornehmlich dazu, seine Kunst in Szene zu setzen und dem Zuschauer eine imaginäre Traumwelt zu präsentieren. Im Gegensatz zu Vernes Roman erhebt *Le Voyage dans la Lune* nicht nur „keinerlei Anspruch auf Plausibilität oder Realismus“ (Spiegel 2007, 94), sondern betont gerade seine Fiktionalität. Damit wird „die Tricktechnik Selbstzweck und eigentliches Zentrum des Interesses“ (Spiegel 2007, 94).

Mag auch die Vulgarisierung zeitgenössischer naturwissenschaftlicher Erkenntnisse eines der primären Ziele Vernes gewesen sein,<sup>7</sup> so darf dies nicht den Blick darauf verstellen, dass schon in Vernes Roman weitere Dimensionen hinzukommen, die Méliès' Umgang mit dem Mondthema vorbereitet haben: Erstens lässt Verne auf dem sehr begrenzten Raum seines imaginierten Projektils zwei Weltanschauungen aufeinandertreffen: Die beiden Mondreisenden Impey Barbicane und der Kapitän Nicholl stehen für die moderne Wissenschaft (Mathematik und Astronomie) und Michel Ardan für die Kunst und die Abenteuerlust.<sup>8</sup> Diese beiden Blickwinkel unterscheiden sich stark voneinander, zum Beispiel wenn die Romanfiguren die Mondoberfläche betrachten:

Mais tandis que son imagination [scil. l'imagination de Michel Ardan; B.N.] courait ainsi ‚les mers‘, ses graves compagnons considéraient plus géographiquement les choses. Ils apprenaient par cœur ce monde nouveau. Ils en mesuraient les angles et les diamètres. [...] Ce qui, d'ailleurs, était parfaitement indifférent au digne Michel. (Verne 1977 [1872], 110)

Der Autor nutzt die Dualität der möglichen Betrachtungsweisen (wissenschaftlich-objektiv und künstlerisch-subjektiv) dabei vor allem dazu, um „die Partialperspektiven der Romanfiguren ebenso wie die im Roman repräsentierten Wissensformen in ein dialogisches und bisweilen kritisches Verhältnis zueinander“ (Schneider 2010, 100) zu setzen. Insofern Vernes Roman nicht nur wissenschaftliche Fakten ‚erzählt‘, sondern auch poetischen Imaginationen und intuitiven Assoziationen einen breiten Raum bietet, präsentiert er dem Leser einen umfassenden Blick auf den Mond.

Zweitens trägt Verne in seinem Roman auch dem Aspekt Rechnung, dass der Mond – vor allem durch seine relative Nähe zur Erde – seit jeher für den Menschen

<sup>7</sup> Wie fundiert die von Jules Verne in seinem Roman vermittelten naturwissenschaftlichen Erkenntnisse sind, geht nicht zuletzt auch daraus hervor, dass die Raumfahrtmission Apollo 11 der NASA tatsächlich vieles von dem eingelöst hat, was Jules Verne schon 100 Jahre früher beschrieben hatte. Vgl. hierzu Unwin 2000, 48, Nickel 2013, 120–121 und <http://lexikon.astronomie.info/satelliten/julesverne/index.html>. Zu den realen Raumfahrtmissionen vgl. Geiss 2009 und Roussel 2008, 141–143.

<sup>8</sup> Repräsentativ sei hier auf das elfte Kapitel in *Autour de la Lune* hingewiesen: *Fantaisie et réalisme*. Vgl. hierzu Unwin 2000, 49–50 und Capitanio 2000, 62–64.

ein Faszinosum darstellt. Zwar dient das Thema des Mondes im Roman zunächst der Vorführung eines wissenschaftlichen Forschungsprojekts, aber dennoch wird der Mond auch als ein Objekt der menschlichen Faszination dargestellt. Dies gilt dabei ausdrücklich nicht nur für den Künstler Michel Ardan, sondern auch für die beiden Forscher an Bord des Projektils, die vom Mond wie verzaubert sind.<sup>9</sup> Damit verbindet Verne im Mondthema Naturwissenschaft und Irrationales miteinander: „Diese Faszination steht der prinzipiellen Tendenz zur ‚Entzauberung‘ des Mondes, wie sie die Geschichte poetisch fikionalisierter Mondflüge aufweist, entgegen.“ (Nickel 2013, 120) Deutlich stärker als Vernes Roman hat Méliès' Stummfilm dieser ‚Entzauberung‘ entgegengewirkt.

Das Thema des Mondes gibt Méliès zunächst und vor allem die Möglichkeit, seinem Anliegen nach einer explizit nicht-mimetischen Filmkunst Ausdruck zu verleihen. Denn – ganz anders als zu derselben Zeit die Brüder Lumière<sup>10</sup> – wollte Méliès gerade nicht mittels Realitätseffekten die Illusion von Authentizität und Wirklichkeitsnähe erzeugen, sondern vielmehr filmische Traumwelten durch „Wunderbarkeitseffekte“ (Spiegel 2007, 92) schaffen:<sup>11</sup> „Mit der zunehmenden Inszenierung eigener Erzählwelten öffnet er das Medium Film für die Darstellung wunderbarer Welten.“ (Hartmann 2015; vgl. hierzu auch Spiegel 2007, 29–41) Den Stummfilm als einen der ersten Repräsentanten der filmischen Science-Fiction zu bezeichnen, muss aufgrund seines explizit anti-illusionistischen Charakters als unzutreffend entlarvt werden. (Vgl. Spiegel 2007, 94–95)

*Le Voyage dans la Lune* lässt sich mit Fug und Recht als filmisches Manifest bzw. filmisch realisierte Programmatik emblematischer Bedeutung für Méliès' Werk auffassen. Gerade die Sequenz, in der die Kapsel mitsamt den sechs Astronauten im rechten Auge des Mondes landet, gibt einen exemplarischen Einblick in Méliès' technische Fähigkeiten. Insofern ist es wenig verwunderlich, dass eben diese Szene eine bedeutende Rolle in Selznicks Roman spielen wird.

<sup>9</sup> Vgl. hierzu beispielsweise das folgende Zitat aus *Autour de la lune*: „Quel ravissement de jeter un regard sur ce monde que l'œil humain n'a jamais entrevu !“ (Verne 1977 [1872], 140)

<sup>10</sup> Zu den Filmen der Brüder Lumière vgl. beispielsweise Sadoul 1949, 18–26.

<sup>11</sup> Dies gilt nicht für Méliès' erste Filme, die noch stark an den Werken der Brüder Lumière orientiert sind: „Les premiers films de Méliès n'ont aucune originalité. [...] L'originalité de Méliès se révèle quand il aborde le truquage et consacre quatre-vingt mille francs-or à construire, en 1897, un studio dans sa belle propriété de Montreuil, aux portes de Paris.“ (Sadoul 1949, 27)

### 3 Brian Selznick, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (2007)

Mit dem Erfolg von Apollo 11 ist die Utopie von der Mondreise eingelöst, und es beginnt die Phase einer metafiktionalen Reflexion über die mediale Verarbeitung der Utopie von der Mondreise. Bemerkenswert ist hier der verbal-visuelle Roman<sup>12</sup> *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (2007) von Brian Selznick. Hier geht es um die Rekonstruktion eines Zeichenautomaten, der die Filmszenarien von Georges Méliès zeichnen kann – darunter auch die Bilder aus Méliès' Stummfilm *Le Voyage dans la Lune* (1902). Zu denken ist hier an einen Automaten wie denjenigen, den der Schweizer Henri Maillardet bereits zu Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts konstruiert hatte und der vier Bilder zeichnen und drei Gedichte aufschreiben konnte.

Nachdem der Automat repariert ist, ist er imstande, jenes Bild aus Méliès' Film *Le Voyage dans la Lune* zu zeichnen, das zeigt, wie die Raumkapsel mit dem rechten Auge des Mondes zusammenstößt. (Vgl. Selznick 2007, 252–253) Es handelt sich dabei um das zentrale Bild aus Méliès' Stummfilm. Als zentral ist dieses Bild vor allem deshalb zu bezeichnen, weil das weinende Mondgesicht auf paradigmatische Weise Méliès' anti-illusionistische Filmkonzeption repräsentiert. (Vgl. Spiegel 2007, 94)<sup>13</sup> Bei *Le voyage dans la Lune* soll es sich übrigens um den Lieblingsfilm von Hugos verstorbenem Vater handeln (vgl. Selznick 2007, 354). Diese intermediale Referenz auf den französischen Filmemacher wird in Selznicks Roman insofern offengelegt, als der Automat seine Arbeit nicht beendet, nachdem er dieses Bild gezeichnet hat, sondern folgendermaßen fortfährt:

That's when the children [scil. Hugo and Isabelle; B.N.] realized that the mechanical man wasn't finished. It seemed to have stopped mid-line, as if it was pausing. Hugo watched as one more time the mechanical man dipped its pen into the ink. Then it moved its hand into position and... signed a name. (Selznick 2007, 259)

Durch die Aposiopese verlängert Selznick gekonnt den Spannungsbogen und steigert dadurch die Aufmerksamkeit des Lesers. Zugleich hebt er die wichtige

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**12** Der Autor selbst hat als Untertitel folgende Gattungsbezeichnung gewählt, um die prinzipielle Gleichwertigkeit der schriftlichen und der bildlichen Anteile deutlich zu machen: „A Novel in Words and Pictures“. Auch John Schwartz hat in seiner Rezension darauf hingewiesen, dass Selznicks Roman nicht als *Graphic Novel* zu klassifizieren sei: „This is much more than a graphic novel: it is more like a silent film on paper“. (Schwarz 2007)

**13** Es ist daher wenig verwunderlich, dass mehrere Monographien zu Méliès und seinen Filmen gerade dieses Bild als Cover verwenden. Vgl. hierzu beispielsweise Gaudreault 2008 und Ezra 2000.

Bedeutung der Person, deren Name nachfolgend als Unterschrift erscheint, hervor: Georges Méliès. Mit dieser Unterschrift beginnt der zweite Teil des Romans: Standen im ersten Teil die Versuche Hugos, den Zeichenautomaten, den sein toter Vater einst erfunden hat, zu rekonstruieren, um eine vermeintliche Botschaft von diesem zu empfangen, im Fokus, so liegt das Hauptaugenmerk von diesem Moment an auf Méliès, der den Zeichenautomaten gebaut haben soll. Der Automat fungiert daher als Bindeglied zwischen den beiden Teilen des Romans:

These two stories intersect most powerfully at the figure of the automaton, which appears at first like the attraction it was built to be. Yet over the course of the movie, the automaton functions as a narrative device that propels the plot and that unites the film's dual interests of the written word and the moving image into a single focal point that closely resembles early cinema itself, with its own reliance on writing to supplement and complement its images. (Clement und Long 2012)

Was als tragische Geschichte um die unsichere Zukunft eines Waisenkindes begonnen hat, wird im zweiten Teil primär zu einer Hommage an das frühe Kino und an Méliès. In diesem zweiten Teil begibt Hugo sich auf die Spuren des weltbekannten französischen Filmemachers. In einem fiktiven Buch, das den Titel *The Invention of Dreams: The Story of the First Movies Ever Made* (1930) trägt,<sup>14</sup> findet Hugo folgenden Eintrag über Méliès:

The filmmaker Georges Méliès began his career as a magician and he owned a theatre of magic in Paris. This connection with magic helped him immediately understand what the new medium of film was capable of. He was among the first to demonstrate that film didn't have to reflect real life. He quickly realized that film had the power to capture dreams. Méliès is widely credited with perfecting the substitution trick, which made it possible for things to appear and disappear on screen, as if by magic. This changed the face of movies forever. (Selznick 2007, 354)

Auf diesen Eintrag folgen zwei Originalfotos von Méliès (vgl. Selznick 2007, 356–359), mittels derer auf den Beginn seiner Karriere als Zauberer verwiesen wird. Im Fokus des Romans steht jedoch seine Tätigkeit als Filmemacher. Denn nachdem Hugo und seine Freundin Isabelle Originalzeichnungen aus Méliès' Filmen versteckt in einem Geheimfach in einem Kleiderschrank gefunden und den Film-pionier mit ihnen konfrontiert haben, wird ihnen klar, dass Méliès mit seiner Vergangenheit abgeschlossen und sich damit abgefunden hat, in Vergessenheit geraten zu sein. Daraufhin sorgen die beiden Kinder dafür, dass Méliès Film *Le*

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<sup>14</sup> Handelt es sich auch um einen rein fiktiven Titel eines ebenso fiktiven Buches, so ist die Parallele zum Titel von Selznicks Roman offensichtlich und sehr aussagekräftig.

*voyage dans la lune* öffentlich gezeigt und dem Filmemacher schließlich zu der ihm gebührenden Anerkennung verholfen wird.

Der Schluss des Romans ist als uneingeschränktes Happy Ending gestaltet, und zwar sowohl für Hugo als auch für Méliès. Denn der Filmpionier erfährt eine Ehrung von der französischen Filmakademie, und Méliès nimmt die Vollwaise Hugo bei sich auf.

Im Fall von Selznicks Roman haben wir es mit Blick auf Méliès' Stummfilm erneut mit einem Medienwechsel zu tun, und zwar mit einem solchen, der auf Vernes Mondfiktion verweist, die ja ebenfalls die Medien Schrift und Bild nutzt, auch wenn hier – anders als in Selznicks Roman – noch nicht von der prinzipiellen Gleichwertigkeit beider Zeichensysteme gesprochen werden kann, zumal die Abbildungen in Vernes Romanen ausschließlich illustrierenden Charakters sind und damit den Text des Romans lediglich in ein anderes Medium transponieren, statt die Handlung voranzutreiben, wie dies in Selznicks Roman der Fall ist. Nichtsdestoweniger präsentiert Selznick das Motiv des Mondfluges mit Blick auf Vernes Vorlage als Metatext dritten Grades.

## 4 Ausblick: Martin Scorsese, *Hugo* (2011)

Martin Scorseses erster 3D-Film, der für elf Oscars nominiert und mit fünf Oscars ausgezeichnet wurde, basiert maßgeblich auf Brian Selznicks Roman *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, dem – vor allem durch die zahlreichen Bilder – selbst immer wieder kinematographische Qualitäten zugeschrieben wurden.<sup>15</sup> Auch Scorseses Werk feiert den Filmpionier Méliès (gespielt von Ben Kingsley), und zwar in Méliès' ureigenem Medium, dem Film. Auch bei Scorsese schreibt der Zeichenautomat den Namen des berühmten französischen Filmemachers unter das Bild des weinenden Mondgesichtes.

Wie Selznicks Roman stellt auch Scorseses Film eine Hommage an das frühe Kino dar: In einer Rezension auf *Spiegel Online* wurde *Hugo* als „traumhafte Liebeserklärung an die Magie des Kinos“ (Borcholte 2012) bezeichnet. Hat Méliès dem Zuschauer in seinen Filmen Traumwelten vor Augen geführt, so gilt dies uneingeschränkt auch für Scorsese und *Hugo*:

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<sup>15</sup> Vgl. hierzu beispielsweise Clement und Long 2012: „The novel seems almost cinematic, an impression reinforced by the number of stills used in the book to help bring the reader into the characters' experiences of movie watching. Transferring such a novel to screen seems an obvious move, the fulfillment perhaps of the novel's own desire to transcend its medium, and a kind of acknowledgement of the novel's integration of film into the novel's own form and story.“

Dass Scorsese seine Verbeugung vor dem Erfindungsreichtum der Kinoväter ausgerechnet in 3D drehte, sollte nur auf den ersten Blick irritieren: Wie könnte man sich treffender vor der Phantasie eines Georges Méliès verneigen als mit Hilfe der modernsten Illusionstechnik, die Hollywood zu bieten hat? *Hugo Cabret* ist ein Wunderwerk, das alle Register der Maschinerie zieht, die Kino zu einem der staunenswertesten Kulturmedien gemacht haben: Kaum etwas an diesem 170 Millionen teuren Film ist echt, die meisten Kulissen sind digital oder wurden liebevoll gezeichnet. (Borcholte 2012)

## 5 Schlussbetrachtung

Mit Blick auf Jules Vernes Roman *Autour de la Lune* wurden Georges Méliès' Stummfilm *Le voyage dans la Lune*, Brian Selznicks verbal-visueller Roman *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* und schließlich Martin Scorseses 3D-Film *Hugo* als Fälle verschiedener Grade von Intertextualität im weiteren Sinne und Intermedialität vorgestellt. Die einzelnen Grade der Intertextualität weisen dabei unterschiedlich gestaltete Verhältnisse zum Ausgangstext auf. Im Falle von Méliès' Film ist Intertextualität untrennbar mit einem Medienwechsel vom Buch zum Film verbunden. Selznicks *novel in words and pictures* kehrt zwar zum Ausgangsmedium, dem Buch, zurück, ist aber stärker auf Méliès' Bearbeitung von Vernes Roman bezogen als auf diesen Roman selbst. Insofern hier explizit auf das Medium Film im Allgemeinen<sup>16</sup> und Méliès' Stummfilme im Besonderen – und vor allem auf *Le voyage dans la Lune* – verwiesen wird, haben wir es mit einer *remediation* zu tun.<sup>17</sup> Scorseses Film stellt mit Blick auf Selznicks Roman einen Medienwechsel, mit Blick auf Méliès' Bearbeitung von Vernes Roman jedoch eine Rückkehr zum Medium der Vorlage dar. Es handelt sich hierbei um einen kinematographischen Metatext vierten Grades über Vernes Roman, auch wenn diese Vorlage nur indirekt, in Form der Bearbeitung von Méliès und seiner Vermittlung, greifbar wird.

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**16** Beispielsweise enthält der Roman mehrere Originalzeichnungen von Méliès für Filmszenen (vgl. Selznick 2007, 284–297) und das Standbild des in einen Bahnhof einfahrenden Zuges aus dem Film *L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* (1895) der Brüder Lumière (Selznick 2007, 348–349).

**17** Zum Konzept der *remediation* vgl. Bolter und Grusin 2000.



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Irina Rosenau

# Das Selbst zwischen Bild und Sprache: Marc Chagalls Autobiographie *Mein Leben*

**Abstract:** Der Beitrag untersucht das besondere Verhältnis zwischen Text und Bild im autobiographischen Text des Malers Marc Chagall *Mein Leben* (*Ma vie*, 1921–1931). Während Chagalls Bilder autobiographische Elemente enthalten, lehnt sich der Maler sprachlich in seiner literarischen Autobiographie an das Bildliche. Der Schreibprozess veranlasst den Künstler dazu, die Beziehung zwischen dem gewohnten Medium der Malerei und der Versprachlichung der Erinnerung zu reflektieren. Unter der Berücksichtigung der Poetik des Künstlers, dessen Leben vom Sprach- und Kulturwechsel geprägt ist, wird sein Sprachverständnis untersucht. Dabei wird aufgezeigt, dass Bilder bei Chagall als Speicher des Erlebten und die Bildsprache als eine universelle Sprache verstanden werden. An den Besonderheiten des Inhalts und der Form zeigt der Beitrag, dass *Mein Leben* ein autofiktionaler Text ist, in dem die Auflösung der Grenzen zwischen Realität und Fiktion, Text und Bild konstitutiv ist.

**Keywords:** intermediale Autobiographie; Autofiktion; Bildsprache; Bild und Text; universelle Sprache; Marc Chagall

Bild und Sprache stehen in der autobiographischen Selbstdarstellung in einer produktiven, wechselseitigen Beziehung. Bilder und Photographien werden in den autobiographischen Texten verwendet, während die autobiographische Malerei narrative bzw. textuelle Elemente enthalten kann. Die Autobiographie wird als eine verwandte Form des Sehens und als „das Auge des Ich“ bezeichnet. (Blazejewski 2002, 87–88) Die Geschichte des Selbstporträts zeigt einzelne und serielle Selbstdarstellungen, die als Formen der Selbstbeobachtung, des Tagebuchs bei Dürer, Rembrandt, Vincent van Gogh, Egon Schiele und anderen auftreten und die sich bis in die Gegenwart des photographischen Selbstporträts und der multi- und intermedialen Selbstdarstellung verfolgen lassen.

Der Vergleich mit dem Selbstporträt ist in der Theorie und Praxis literarischer Selbstdarstellung geläufig. Die Autobiographie wird mit dem künstlerischen Selbstporträt verglichen, und trotz der Diskussion um die Möglichkeiten der Analogie und der Komplikationen des Vergleichs der verschiedenen Zeichensysteme (Schmitz-Emans 1999a, 2–16; 1999b, 17–34) werden beide Medien der Selbstdarstellung aufeinander bezogen. Interessant ist in dieser Hinsicht Michel Beaujours Essay *Miroirs d'encre* (vgl. Beaujour 1980), in dem das literarische Selbstporträt,

ausgehend von Lessings Medienästhetik in *Laokoon*, als ein Darstellungsmodus verstanden wird, in dem Inhalte nebeneinander angeordnet sind und der demnach keine retrospektive Erzählung, sondern einen bildähnlichen Versuch darstellt, Momente der Selbstbetrachtung zu erfassen. An Texten wie Michel Montaignes *Essais* (1572–1592), Rousseaus *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (1776–1778), Nietzsches *Ecce Homo* (1888–1889), Michel Leiris' *L'âge d'homme* (1939) und *Règle du jeu* (1948–1976) postuliert Beaujour das literarische Selbstporträt als eine von der Autobiographie abweichende Gattung. In den 1920ern und 1930ern fangen Autobiographien von Schriftstellern und Künstlern an, mit „Selbstporträt“ überschrieben zu werden. (Hall 2016, 232)

Für Marc Chagalls Gesamtwerk ist das Zusammenspiel der beiden Medien charakteristisch. Er integrierte Sprach- und Schriftelemente in seine Kunst, malte für das Theater und schuf Illustrationen zu literarischen Texten. Neben den zahlreichen Selbstporträts, die seine Biographie, den Schaffensprozess, das Selbst des Künstlers reflektieren, hatte er 1922–1923 seine Autobiographie *Mein Leben* (1923) entworfen, zunächst in jiddischer Sprache und in einer Version auf Russisch, die die Frau des Künstlers Bella Rosenfeld ins Französische übersetzte.<sup>1</sup> Der Text umfasst Chagalls Geburt und Kindheit im jüdischen Stadtteil von Witebsk in Weißrussland, sein Studium in St. Petersburg und Paris, die Reise in die Heimat und die Jahre in der Sowjetunion bis zu seiner Rückkehr nach Europa, und greift thematisch Rituale, alltägliche Situationen und Ereignisse auf, die auch in einer Reihe von Chagalls Bildern Ausdruck finden.<sup>2</sup>

Ausgehend von den vorhandenen Untersuchungen zum intermedialen und fiktionalen Charakter der Autobiographie Marc Chagalls werde ich deren intermediale Makro- und Mikrostruktur und Ikonographie aufgreifen, um 1) die Beziehung zwischen Bild und Sprache in *Mein Leben* zu präzisieren, 2) die Rolle der Sprachlosigkeit und der Sprache zu bestimmen und 3) den Text als ein autofiktionales literarisches Selbstporträt zu deuten.

Der Literaturwissenschaftler Benjamin Harshav hat als einer der Ersten die intermediale Wechselbeziehung zwischen Chagalls bildnerischem und literari-

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**1** Die russische Version ist verschollen und die französische Version, obwohl von Chagall beaufichtigt und autorisiert, hält Harshav – genauso wie alle weiteren Übersetzungen – für weniger authentisch als die jiddische Version der Autobiographie, an der Chagall auch nach dem Erscheinen von *Mein Leben* weiter arbeitete. (Vgl. Harshav 2004, 81) Ich zitiere im Folgenden die deutschsprachige Version (vgl. Chagall 1959), nach einem Abgleich mit der englischsprachigen Übersetzung Harshavs, *My Own World* (vgl. Harshav 2004, 85–166), und der französischen Übersetzung Bella Chagalls, *Ma vie* (vgl. Chagall 1957).

**2** Näheres zu den Bezügen zwischen Chagalls Leben und dem bildnerischen Werk, zum intertextuellen und kulturellen Hintergrund seiner Autobiographie vgl. Harshav 2004; Schulze 2005; Koller 2012.

schem Werk wissenschaftlich beschrieben. Er bezieht die ursprünglich poetologische Kategorie des Fiktionalen auf Chagalls Mal- und Erzählweise. In seiner bedeutenden Monographie zu Chagall (2004) betont er neben der erzählenden Malweise gleichzeitig die malerische Erzähltechnik in *Mein Leben*. Er stellt fest, dass Chagall beim Schreiben dem Diktat seines besonderen malerischen Sehens folgt und den größten Teil des Textes in *painterly vignettes*, in malerischen Miniaturbildern, präsentiert. Die autobiographischen Fragmente werden von Chagall nicht bloß erzählt, sondern vielmehr visualisiert. (Vgl. Harshav 2004, 70–85)

Der Text von Chagalls Autobiographie ist vielschichtig, was die Bildlichkeit betrifft. Sabine Koller stellt in ihrer Arbeit *Marc Chagall. Grenzgänge zwischen Literatur und Malerei* (2012) drei Ausdrucksformen der Intermedialität fest: 1) Radierungen als Illustrationen zu konkreten Textstellen, 2) die Inhaltsebene mit der Bezugnahme auf diverse Kunstrichtungen, -werke, -techniken, -epochen der Malerei und der autoreferenziellen Bezugnahme auf eigene Bilder; und 3) die intermediale Stilistik auf der sprachlichen Ebene, das sogenannte pikurale Schreiben. (Vgl. Koller 2012, 49–50) Aspekte des pikuralen Schreibens und die Stellung, die die Sprache in *Mein Leben* in ihrer visualisierenden und fiktionalisierenden Funktion einnimmt, hängen mit der Spezifik von Chagalls Malerei eng zusammen.

Als Künstler fühlte sich Chagall keiner künstlerischen Richtung zugehörig, obwohl er Züge vieler Bewegungen der europäischen Avantgarde annahm und neu zusammensetzte. Dieser „postmoderne Stil in der Moderne“ wird als *demonstrative eclecticism* bezeichnet (Harshav 1992), da er sich durch ein Nebeneinander verschiedener Richtungen auszeichnet und trotzdem dank seiner eigenen Bildsprache homogen wirkt. Im Unterschied zum Surrealismus soll diese Bildsprache nicht aus dem Traum bzw. Unterbewusstsein entstanden sein, sondern aus dem tatsächlich Erlebten, während sie durch ihre Opposition zur Mimesis, durch gelöste Realitätszusammenhänge, traumhafte Kompositionen, Autonomie der Formen und Farben keine kunstsprachlichen Neuerungen, sondern eine innovative Fiktion in der Kunst vorstellen. Harshav deutet Chagalls Bilder thematisch und kompositionell als introspektive Darstellungen der sozialen und persönlichen, biographischen Traumwelt. Er positioniert den Künstler Chagall irgendwo zwischen dem Maler des chaotischen Unbewussten und dem naiven Erzähler einer seltsamen Biographie. (Vgl. Harshav 1992; 2010, 70)

Chagalls künstlerische Identität wurde von seinem interkulturellen Lebenslauf geprägt, besonders durch ostjüdische, russische und europäische Einflüsse. Der Maler unterhielt enge Beziehungen zur jiddischen Kultur, und so trägt die Semantik der jiddischen Sprache in zahlreichen Bildern des Künstlers zu deren Lesbarkeit bei. Koller untersucht ausführlich Chagalls Werk, darunter auch seine Selbstporträts, und zeigt, dass der Künstler Sprachbilder in „sprechende Bilder“

verwandelt und dass es sich in den meisten Fällen um Implikationen handelt, die man nur mit der Kenntnis der jiddischen Kultur und Sprache entschlüsseln kann. (Koller 2012, 64–104) In seiner Illustration *Selbstporträt mit dem Haus* (1922) stellt Chagall beispielsweise sich selbst mit dem Haus auf dem Kopf dar, das als Symbol für Heimat steht und die jiddische Redewendung „etwas im Kopf haben“ buchstäblich verbildlicht und gleichzeitig fiktionalisiert, da die Darstellung als absurd oder phantastisch wahrgenommen wird. (Koller 2012, 101) Das Erzählende im Bild Chagalls unterscheidet Koller in Narration (vertreten durch Bildsujet, Bildorganisation und -komposition, die räumliche Gestaltung) und Deskription (in Form von Metapher). (Vgl. Koller 2012, 11)

An der Ikonographie des autobiographischen Gemäldes *Ich und das Dorf* (1911) lassen sich narrative und fiktionale Züge der künstlerischen Sprache Chagalls verdeutlichen. Die Struktur des Bildes stellt eine Art Kaleidoskop, ein System von verschiedenen geometrischen Formen dar, ein simultanes Nebeneinander von räumlich auseinanderliegenden Dingen und Figuren. Das Gemälde präsentiert verschiedene farbliche Zuordnungen und Narreme<sup>3</sup>: 1) Ein grünes männliches Profil erstreckt sich über den gesamten rechten Bildrand als Selbstdarstellung des Künstlers, und am linken Rand schaut ein Tierprofil ihm in die Augen. Die Hand des Mannes, die von unten ins Bild kommt, hält eine Phantasiepflanze dem Tier entgegen, auf einem Finger trägt der Mann einen Ring. Die Augen des Tieres und des Mannes sind durch eine feine Linie verbunden. Das kleinere rundliche Licht in den Augen des Tieres scheint dabei ein größeres Leuchten in den Pupillen des Mannes auszulösen, oder möglicherweise spiegelt es sich vergrößert als ein leuchtender Himmelskörper in den Augen des Mannes wieder. 2) Im Profil des Tieres wird eine Melkszene präsentiert, als ein Bild im Bild, *mise en abyme*, welches das Tiermotiv wiederholt. 3) Im Hintergrund sehen wir eine Häuserreihe und eine dörfliche Szene: ein sich bewegendes Paar, wobei die Figur der Frau und die Häuser, an denen sie vorbeiläuft, kopfüber stehen, eventuell als die Entsprechung des Idioms „auf dem Kopf stehen“. Ein Pope schaut aus der Kirche dem Paar zu.

Die Zusammenhänge des Bildes sind angedeutet und gleichzeitig aufgelöst; die Farben sind nicht realistisch, sie definieren einzelne Bereiche. Die dargebotenen Motive rufen diverse Assoziationen hervor und regen dazu an, ihre Relation und Bedeutung zu deuten. Das Bild ist ein Erinnerungsmosaik, ein Tribut des Künstlers an seine Heimat, wie fast sein gesamtes Werk, es trägt selbstreflexive

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<sup>3</sup> Ich beziehe mich hier auf Werner Wolf, der den transmedialen Begriff ‚Narrem‘ für Erzähleinheiten wie inhaltliche Formen (Zeit, Ort, Figuren, Geschehen, Kausalität) oder Syntaxregeln des Narrativen vorgeschlagen hat. (Vgl. Wolf 2002, 23–103)

Züge. Das Tier repräsentiert das Dorf und ist die Braut, der Künstler trägt einen Verlobungsring, so dass es sich um eine Vermählungsszene handelt. Die Phantasiepflanze kann als ein Lebensbaum, der Kreis im Zentrum des Gemäldes, der die Mundpartien des Mensch-Tier-Paares verbindet, als der Kreis des Lebens, der Kommunikation, der Kunst verstanden werden. Die Augen des Tieres könnten die Quelle der künstlerischen Inspiration bedeuten, der Künstler reflektiert und vergrößert deren Licht. Die Sprache konstituiert das Bild durch die Metaphorik mit, die Kommunikation zwischen den zentralen Figuren geschieht im Visuellen: durch die Augen, den Blick.

Die narrativen Einheiten, die sich in Chagalls Bildern feststellen lassen, sind mit der Erzählweise seiner Autobiographie verwandt. Ähnlich wie im oben beschriebenen Bild wird der Text nicht entlang der Ereignisse ausgerichtet, sondern stellt eine Anordnung von Stimmungen und Porträts mit einer starken Ausrichtung auf Gefühl, Inspiration und Selbststilisierung als Künstler dar. Die Intermedialität des Textes ist unter anderem transformativ, die Sprache des Künstlers schöpft Farben und Techniken der Darstellung aus seiner Kunst. Chagall schreibt in der Sprache seiner Bilder.<sup>4</sup> Chagall verwendet das Vokabular eines Malers: Er schreibt nicht nur, sondern er ‚skizziert‘, ‚vollendet eine Silhouette‘, ‚porträtiert‘. (Chagall 1959, 8) Doch so gewohnt wie das Malen gestaltet sich der Schreibprozess nicht. Die Sprache des Künstlers scheint sich den Weg durch das visuelle Denken erkämpfen zu müssen:

Es wäre reizvoller, meine Schwestern und meinen Bruder zu malen.

Wie gern würde ich mich verführen lassen von der Harmonie ihres Haars, ihrer Haut, wie eilig wollte ich in sie hineinspringen, Leinwände und euch selbst berauschen mit der Ausdünstung meiner tausendjährigen Farben!

Doch sie beschreiben? Ich will auch nicht mehr als zwei Worte über meine Tanten sagen.  
(Chagall 1959, 18)

Es ist alles, was Chagall an dieser Stelle über seine Geschwister sagen kann, er vermag es nicht, sie mit Worten zu beschreiben. Im Prozess der Erinnerung wird Chagall mit imaginären Bildern konfrontiert, und er versucht, sie in Worten festzuhalten. Dazu greift er auf Bildevokation, Ekphrasis, Werke anderer Maler und autoreferentielle Verweise auf eigene Bilder zurück, wie beispielsweise in der Beschreibung seines Vaters:

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<sup>4</sup> Zur Diskussion über die „Sprache“ der Bilder vgl. Schmitz-Emans 1999a, 6–13; und Koller 2012, 59.



Habt ihr manchmal auf Florentiner Bildern einen von diesen Leuten gesehen, mit nie geschorenem Bart, mit Augen, braun und zugleich wie Asche, mit einem Gesicht von gebranntem Ocker, mit Runzeln und Falten bedeckt?

Das ist mein Vater. (Chagall 1959, 7)

In der Autobiographie folgt Chagall einem besonderen Kompositionsschema. Während im letzten Drittel der Autobiographie das simultane, bildhafte Erzählen nachlässt und das Narrative mit dem Bericht über die politische Situation in Russland immer gewichtiger wird, fügt sich die Sprache bis dahin dem Bildlichen. Unter den evozierten Bildern überwiegen dabei Porträts, alltägliche Rituale und Szenen. Die begleitenden Radierungen betonen die führende Position des Bildlichen im Text. Im ersten Drittel des Textes scheinen die Gestalten der Vergangenheit den Erzähler wie Geister zu bedrängen. Oft bricht er das literarische Porträtieren ab, denn der Nächste wartet darauf, dass sein Porträt versprachlicht wird. Das vertraute Medium der Malerei bietet Chagall die gewohnte Art und Weise, Inhalte einzufangen. Immer wieder betont er den Vorteil des Visuellen vor dem Sprachlichen. Zur Figur des Vaters schreibt er weiter:

Du weißt noch, ich habe von dir eine Studie gemacht. [...]

Darf ich von meinem Vater sprechen?

Was gilt ein Mann, wenn er nichts gilt? Wenn er unschätzbar ist? Und daher fällt es mir schwer, die richtigen Worte für ihn zu finden. [...]

Alles schien mir Rätsel und Traurigkeit an meinem Vater. Unzugängliches Bild. Er war müde, sorgenvoll, nur seine Augen hatten einen milden Glanz von grauem Blau.

(Chagall 1959, 7–8)

Nicht erst die sprachliche Realisierung des Porträts scheitert daran, das innere, durch die Wahrnehmung erzeugte und durch die Erinnerung modifizierte Bild zu realisieren, sondern auch die Kunst, die auch nur eine Annäherung an ein „unzugängliches Bild“ sein kann. Doch während eine Studie zum Porträt des Vaters als eine selbstverständliche Art der künstlerischen Produktion erscheint, wirft seine Transformation ins Sprachliche die Frage nach Möglichkeit und Legitimation so einer Beschreibung auf. Das gewohnte Übertragen des Denkens in Bilder beeinflusst hier die Sprache, erzwingt das pikurale Schreiben. Der Erzähler tastet sich in seiner Erzählabsicht an den Bildern entlang. Seine Darstellungen von Ereignissen und Personen gehen darauf zurück, so dass die Sprache sich dem Diktat des Visuellen fügt. Der Abschnitt, in dem die Erzählerstimme sich im Dialog an die auftauchenden Geister wendet, wird wie folgt abgeschlossen:

Eure Steine. Eure Gräber, Hecken, trüber Fluß, sanfte Gebete, das alles ist mir vor Augen.

Worte gar nicht. Das alles steckt in mir, verborgen, wirbelt und schwebt als Erinnerung. [...]

Doch genug! Auf Wiedersehen! (Chagall 1959, 22)

An dieser Stelle bekennt sich der schreibende Maler wieder dazu, dass er seine Vergangenheit in Bildern und nicht sprachlich abrufen kann.

Auch im weiteren Text, der eine zentrale Position, die Mitte der Autobiographie einnimmt und Chagalls Weg zum Künstler enthält, werden Erinnerungsbilder heraufbeschworen und versprachlicht. Chagall führt sie ein, skizziert sie in Form und Farbe, um sie anschließend um die Emotion, die sie begleitet und kommentiert, zu ergänzen. Das imaginäre Bild ist die Initiation, selbst wenn es zum großen Teil in der Imagination des Erzählers und für den Rezipienten unsichtbar bleibt. So wird die Szene der Geburt des Bruders dargestellt, der Erzähler ist ein ‚stillschweigender‘ Beobachter dabei:

Mama, halbnackt, liegt im Bett, blaß, zartrosa. Mein jüngster Bruder kam zur Welt.  
Die Tische weiß gedeckt.  
Rauschen von heiligen Gewändern. [...]  
Ich bin traurig. Stillschweigend sitze ich neben den anderen, kaue den Kuchen, die Heringe und das Würzbrot. (Chagall 1959, 45–46)

Die Knappheit der Beschreibungen entspricht dem Rhythmus der sich abwechselnden Erinnerungsbilder. Ein anderes Beispiel ist das Fragment, in dem der Tod der Schwester beschrieben wird:

Ihre Augen füllten sich mit himmlischem Blau, mit dunklem Silber. Ihre Pupillen erstarrten. Fliegen setzten sich auf ihre Nase. Niemand jagte sie fort. [...]  
Das Gefühl: in einigen Stunden wird dieser kleine Körper in der Erde liegen, und die Menschen werden mit ihren Füßen darüber hinstampfen! (Chagall 1959, 60–61)

Im Verlauf der ganzen Autobiographie wird die Vergegenwärtigung des Bildes oft durch den spontanen Wechsel ins Präsens realisiert:

Ohne ihre Haltung zu verändern, mit geschlossenem Mund und kaum bewegten Lippen, die spitze Frisur genau an ihrem Platz, stellte sie ihre Fragen, schwieg oder sprach sie wie eine Königin. Aber niemand ist da. Nur ich hörte ihr zu, von weitem.  
Sie bat mich:  
„Mein Sohn, sprich mit mir.“  
Ich bin ein Kind und Mama eine Königin. Wovon denn sprechen? (Chagall 1959, 12)

In allen oben zitierten Auszügen fällt die Thematisierung des Unsagbaren und der Stummheit auf. Diese nachdrückliche Betonung der Sprachlosigkeit bei einem Künstler, dessen Leben von drei Sprachen (Jiddisch, Russisch und Französisch) geprägt war, zieht sich durch den ganzen Text und hat eine gewichtige Bedeutung für Chagalls Sprachverständnis. Obwohl jede Sprache samt ihrem kulturellen Kontext für ihn zu einer Heimat, zum Teil seiner Biographie und seiner Identität

geworden ist,<sup>5</sup> wird die Sprache der Kunst, die für Chagall die Essenz seines Lebens und seines Selbst spiegelt und eine universelle Sprache bedeutet, zur eigentlichen Heimat des Künstlers. Chagall, der im Laufe seines Lebens mehrmals die weißrussische Heimat verlassen und 1941 auch aus seiner neuen Heimatstadt Paris in die USA ausreisen musste, verwurzelt seine Identität in der Kunst. Der Sprach- und Kulturwechsel ist wichtig für Chagalls künstlerisches Selbstverständnis, er bestimmt seine Suche nach einer konstanten Sprache, die über diesen Wechsel hinaus funktioniert. Die Quelle seiner Poetik der universellen Sprache bleibt im Lebensabschnitt verankert, in dem er seine Selbst-Werdung als Künstler erlebt. Daher wird dieser Lebensphase die Position des ‚goldenen Schnitts‘ im gesamten Text der Autobiographie zugewiesen. Sie erstreckt sich ungefähr vom Ausruf eines Kameraden („Hör mal, du bist ja ein richtiger Künstler!“ [Chagall 1959, 52]), bis zur Teilnahme Chagalls an der Ausstellung in Paris und bis zum Gespräch mit Apollinaire, in dem Chagall seine Position zur Kunst bezieht und so das Selbstbewusstsein als Künstler beweist. (Vgl. Chagall 1959, 108–113)

Chagall distanziert sich in Paris von den modernen Kunstrichtungen und deren Regeln, die ihn „traurig und verkrampft“ machen (Chagall 1959, 109). Er begreift die Kunst als einen Seelenzustand (vgl. Chagall 195, 113), als eine „blaue“, über seine Bilder, auf seine Leinwand fließende Seele (Chagall 1959, 108), und die „Seele eines jeden ist heilig, eines jeden Zweibeiners an jedem Punkt der Erde“ (Chagall 1959, 113).<sup>6</sup> Die ‚Sprache der Kunst‘ wird damit als ein universales Medium begriffen, und die Besonderheit der künstlerischen Sprache Chagalls ist der Versuch, die „eigene Logik“, die „eigene Vernunft“ und die Freiheit des Ausdrucks zu erreichen. (Chagall 1959, 113) Ich möchte Harshavs Begriff *demonstrative eclecticism* aufgreifen, den ich oben erwähnt habe. Entlehnungen aus verschiedenen Kunstrichtungen und die eigene Bildsprache, die auf Erinnerung und die drei kulturellen und sprachlichen Räume seiner Biographie zurückzuführen sind, gelten auch für die Sprache seiner Autobiographie.

Chagall verwischt im Text die Grenzen zwischen Medien und Stilrichtungen. Auch die Grenzen zwischen der Realität und der Traumwelt, wie bereits Harshav hervorhebt, werden bei Chagall aufgehoben. Von den ersten Sätzen der Autobiographie an bedingt die Anlehnung des sprachlichen Ausdrucks an das Bild die autofiktionale Form: „Was mir zuerst in die Augen sprang, war ein Trog. Einfach,

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5 Im autobiographischen Gemälde *Kubistische Landschaft* (1918), das Chagalls Weg durch sprachliche und kulturelle Stationen reflektiert, verwendet er als Textelement das sprachliche Spiel mit seinem Nachnamen, der im Russischen „schritt“ bzw. „ging“ bedeutet und den er nach der Zahl der Jahre wiederholt, die er in einer bestimmten Sprache verbracht hatte. (Vgl. Harshav 2004, 15)

6 „[U]ne âme bleue, jaillissant sur mes toiles“ (Chagall 1957, 155); „L'âme de tous est sainte, de tous les bipèdes sur tous les points de la terre“. (Chagall 1957, 160)

wuchtig, halb hohl, halb oval. Ein Trog vom Trödelmarkt. Einmal drin, fühlte ich ihn ganz aus.“ (Chagall 1959, 5)

Chagall kann sich natürlich nicht an den Trog erinnern, in den man ihn als beinahe totgeborenes Baby hineintaucht, um ihn zu beleben, doch vom ersten Satz an lädt er den Leser dazu ein, mit ihm ‚hinzusehen‘, und skizziert das Erscheinungsbild des Trogs. Der Schreibakt wird zum performativen Akt des Malens, die Lektüre zum Akt des performativen Sehens. Das dargebotene Bild hat keinen Anspruch auf die Faktualität, die Tatsachen im Text haben keinen dokumentarischen Charakter. Von Anfang an wird ein Bild geboten, das um das Erfundene bewusst erweitert ist. Das Sehen bezieht sich auf das innere, imaginäre Bild, das der Künstler sprachlich inszeniert, dadurch werden die Imagination und der Blick als ein performativer Akt in den Prozess der Lektüre miteinbezogen.

Die Frage danach, inwiefern die erfundene autobiographische Wirklichkeit den tatsächlichen Erfahrungen entspricht, und das konstitutive Moment der Autobiographie in ihrem Kunstcharakter sind für die Bestimmung des Textes als Autofiktion entscheidend. (Vgl. Wagner-Egelhaaf 2005, 41) Der Kunstcharakter der Gattung Autobiographie ist viel diskutiert worden. Roy Pascal steht am Anfang dieser Diskussion, die die Durchlässigkeit der Grenzen zwischen Literarizität und Fiktionalität der Autobiographie herausstellt. (Vgl. Pascal 1960) Autofiktionale Verfahren sind nicht nur für literarische Texte, sondern für alle Selbstdarstellungsformen relevant, auch für die Malerei und die Photographie. Laut der Unterscheidung der autofiktionalen Formen (Zipfel 2009, 284–314), handelt sich hier um eine Autobiographie, in der sich das Fiktionale durch den expliziten Konstruktionscharakter bemerkbar macht. Im Gegensatz zum chronologischen bzw. dialektischen Fortschreiten des narrativen Erzählens findet der Text in der Zeit des Schreibens statt: Das erinnernde Subjekt tritt aus der linearen Zeit heraus, die fragmentarische Erzählweise des Textes spiegelt die assoziativ rekonstruierte, auf Bildern aufgebaute Erinnerung. Makrostrukturell gesehen folgt der Text zwar der Chronologie des dargestellten Lebensabschnittes, in seiner Mikrostruktur löst er sich jedoch von den realistischen Zusammenhängen ab. Dabei werden die Grenzen zwischen dem Alltäglichen und der Imagination, zwischen Leben und Kunst aufgehoben:

Hinter dem Fenster – die Nacht.

Nur der Pope schläft und hinter ihm, hinter seinem Haus, die Leere, die Geister.

Aber mein Onkel spielt Geige. [...]

Nur mein Kopf schwebt leise durchs Zimmer.

Die Decke wird durchsichtig. Wolken und blaue Sterne dringen herein, zugleich mit dem Geruch von Äckern, Stall und Straßen.

Ich will schlafen. [...]

Ein See. Seine Töchter grasen wie rote Kühe. (Chagall 1959, 20–21)

In der Sprache verschwimmen hier Erinnerung, Traum und Imagination: Die Geister, der schwebende Kopf, die roten Kühe und die gelösten Zusammenhänge sind als Motive aus Chagalls Bildern erkennbar, und die komprimierte Ausdrucksweise lässt Leerstellen frei, die die Differenz zwischen dem Sichtbaren/Genannten und dem Unsichtbaren/Ungesagten bestimmen.

Die Poetik Chagalls bezieht die Idee des Lebens in der Kunst und des Künstlers als Kunstwerk und der vollkommenen Hingabe mit ein. In der imaginären Ansprache an seinen ersten Kunstlehrer kommt dieser Gedanke zum Ausdruck: „Ich brauche keinen Ruhm [...]; wie Ihre Bilder aufgehängt sind, will ich selbst hängen in Ihrer Straße, in Ihrer Nähe [...].“ (Chagall 1959, 59) *Mein Leben* enthält einige sprachlich entworfene Selbstporträts, unter anderem zwei photographische, die man nicht übersehen darf. Sie tragen zur Inszenierung des Selbst als Kunstwerk bei. Das erste Selbstporträt entsteht beim Besuch eines Photographen, bei dem die ganze Familie anwesend ist, und zeigt ein beinahe filmisches Standbild. Diese Strategie des Anhaltens des Erzählflusses, um ein Bild einzuführen, erinnert an ein Standbild und wird von Chagall viel verwendet: „Ich war ein Kind von fünf, sechs Jahren, bekleidet mit einem Kittel von rotem Samt mit goldenen Knöpfen, und hielt mich dicht an Mamas Rock. Genau wie meine Schwester, die auf der anderen Seite stand, hielt ich den Mund offen, um besser atmen zu können.“ (Chagall 1959, 64)

Das andere Selbstporträt wird zunächst als Narziss, als ein Jünglingsgesicht vor dem Spiegel stilisiert (vgl. Chagall 1959, 68). Danach geht Chagall von der Selbstbetrachtung zur Idee der Selbstdarstellung als ein gemaltes Porträt über. Schließlich überlagert er das Selbstporträt ironisch mit der Photographie, indem er auf die Technik des verschönernden Retuschierens anspielt, die er während seiner Lehre beim Photographen an den photographischen Porträts seiner Bekannten widerwillig ausführte (vgl. Chagall 1959, 63): „Ich gebe zu, ich zögerte nicht, mir etwas Schatten um die Augen zu legen, den Mund leicht zu röten, obwohl ich es gar nicht nötig hatte [...].“ (Chagall 1959, 69)

Das physische Erscheinungsbild verwandelt sich an dieser Stelle aus dem Objekt der Betrachtung in ein Kunstobjekt, gleichzeitig wird es zu einem sprachlichen Bild. Diese Überlagerung der Medien und die Überlagerung des Lebens mit der Kunst kommt im Abschlussabschnitt, in den letzten Sätzen der Autobiographie, programmatisch zur Sprache:

Diese Seiten haben dieselbe Bedeutung wie eine bemalte Leinwand.

Wenn es in meinen Bildern ein Versteck gäbe, könnte ich sie dort hineinschieben... Oder soll ich sie lieber irgendeiner Figur von mir auf den Rücken kleben oder gar dem ‚Musikanten‘ meiner Wandmalerei auf die Hosen?... (Chagall 1959, 173)

Das Wesen des Autobiographischen in *Mein Leben* ist demnach mehr als ein intermediales Werk, in dem graphische, mentale und verbale Bilder miteinander kombiniert werden. Das Sprachliche und das Bildliche gehen hier im produktiven Miteinander auf, denn die Sprache nährt sich von den Bildern, die den Anlass geben zu erzählen und sich als universelle Speicher des Erlebten, des autobiographischen Selbst erweisen. Die Sprache führt uns den Wechsel bzw. die Überlagerung der Medien vor. Obwohl die narrativen textuellen Formen in der Poetik Chagalls dem Visuellen gegenüber zweitrangig und betont unzulänglich sind, entwickelt der Künstler im Prozess der Versprachlichung des Bildes bzw. der Verbildlichung der Sprache ein literarisches Selbstporträt, eine Autofiktion, in der Text und Bild, Realität und Fiktion fließend ineinander übergehen.

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Christian van der Steeg

# Pallenberg alias Schwejk: Ikonografie der Satire, 1918–1933

**Abstract:** Dieser Beitrag analysiert ausgehend von einer Fotografie des österreichischen Bühnenstars Max Pallenberg die publizistische und literarische Rezeption der vom Piscator-Kollektiv 1928 uraufgeführten Bühnenadaption von Jaroslav Hašek's Romansatire *Die Abenteuer des braven Soldaten Schwejk* (dt. 1926). Der Beitrag beleuchtet sowohl ein Stück Weimarer Kulturgeschichte als auch die impulsgebende Funktion der Satire für die Formengenesse der literarischen Moderne im Zeitraum von 1918 bis 1933.

**Keywords:** Satire; literarische Moderne; Weimarer Republik; episches Theater; Piscator; *Die Abenteuer des braven Soldaten Schwejk*; Pallenberg

## Einleitung: Satire als Avantgarde

Keine Epoche der deutschsprachigen Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte war bisher, sieht man von der Aufklärung ab, von der Satire grundlegender geprägt als der Zeitraum zwischen dem Ersten Weltkrieg und der Machtübernahme der Nationalsozialisten (1918–1933). (Vgl. Brummack 2003, 611–613; Meyer-Sickendiek 2005; Hanuschek 2009) Dabei hatten satirische Formen in den 1920er und frühen 1930er Jahren nicht nur, wie bekannt ist, in den Genres der U-Kultur und der politischen Publizistik, also in Revue, Kabarett, Essay, Feuilleton oder Zeitgedicht, Hochkonjunktur (vgl. dazu Haarmann und Klein 1999), sondern sie strukturierten auch systematisch die für die Signatur der Epoche bedeutsamen künstlerischen Errungenschaften im progressiven E-Bereich: das epische Theater, den modernen Roman, die neusachliche Reportage, den neusachlichen Zeitroman, die Gebrauchslyrik sowie die materialistische Ästhetik. (Diesbezügliche Hinweise v. a. bei Arntzen 1964)

Wichtige Ursache für dieses starke Interesse an der Satire in verschiedenen Sektoren des literarischen Feldes der Weimarer Republik und zumal von den zentralen Akteurinnen und Akteuren der sogenannten „reflektierten literarischen Moderne“ (Kiesel 2004, 301 f.) war die im Ersten Weltkrieg akut gewordene Krise der bürgerlichen Kunst- und Weltanschauung. Die Satire profitierte auf der pragmatischen Ebene vom Funktionswandel des kontemplativen Dichters zum engagierten Schriftsteller, von der durch den Krieg geschärften Wahrnehmung politischer und faktischer Zusammenhänge sowie von der Flut politischer Text-



gattungen in der Nachkriegsphase (vgl. Kaes 1983, XIX; Weyergraf 1995, 10) – allesamt Voraussetzungen, die sowohl dem Autorenprofil des Satirikers bzw. der Satirikerin als auch der Satire als Gattung bzw. Schreibart zuarbeiteten. Fast mehr noch zog die Satire auf der Ebene der Episteme symbolischen Gewinn aus dem Ersten Weltkrieg, insofern die satirischen Formen aufgrund ihrer Inkompatibilität mit der bürgerlichen Kunstanschauung im 19. Jahrhundert – verstärkt nach 1848 – schlecht kultiviert und auf dem Tableau der Gattungen bzw. Schreibarten marginalisiert worden waren (vgl. Baum 1959; Brummack 2003, 611–613; Meyer-Sickendiek 2005, 396–402; Hanuschek 2009): Mit dem Kreditverlust der bürgerlichen Kunstnormen, der unter anderem aus der Propagandatätigkeit zahlreicher bürgerlicher Autoren resultierte, waren um 1918 mithin nicht nur die den satirischen Formen im literarischen Feld bis dato auferlegten sektoralen Restriktionen hinfällig geworden; vielmehr stand die Satire als valable Anwärtin für die Neuorganisation des Tableaus der literarischen Formen geradezu in den Startblöcken.

Dementsprechend entdeckten während des Ersten Weltkriegs und in der Nachkriegsphase auffällig viele Autoren die zeitgenössische Satire und die satirische Tradition als elaboriertes, verhältnismäßig unverbrauchtes künstlerisches Agitations- und/oder Ausdrucksmittel, das zudem, historisch bedingt, eine anti-bürgerliche Tendenz aufwies und dank der pazifistischen und sozialkritischen Interventionen – hauptsächlich von Karl Kraus' *Fackel*, Franz Pfemferts *Aktion* und Heinrich Manns *Der Untertan* (1919) – ideologisch und moralisch unbelastet war. Mit der verstärkten Bearbeitung satirischer Formen reagierten die innovativen Akteure und Akteurinnen des deutschsprachigen literarischen Feldes in den Jahren 1918–1933 also auf den „Raum der aus den früheren Kämpfen überkommenen Möglichkeiten“ (Bourdieu 1998, 65) und trieben homolog zu den Umwälzungen im politischen Feld um 1918 die „permanentel ] Revolution“ (Bourdieu 2001, 379) und mithin die Evolution des literarischen Feldes voran. Auf diese Weise fungierten die satirischen Formen als Avantgarde – ähnlich den sogenannten historischen Avantgarden Surrealismus, Futurismus und Dadaismus (vgl. Bürger 2017; Kiesel 2004, 233–297) oder der Karikatur in der modernen Malerei (Hofmann 2007, 81–89) – und schrieben sich infolgedessen matrixähnlich in die für die literarische Moderne von 1918–1933 repräsentativen Texte ein.

Diese für den vorliegenden Beitrag basale These der satirischen Impulsgeberfunktion und der daraus resultierenden satirischen Strukturierung der modernen Literatur im Zeitraum 1918–1933 soll im Folgenden anhand von Erwin Piscators Episierung des Theaters (1.) sowie der kontextbedingten semantischen Aufladung einer Reihe von hauptsächlich in den zeitgenössischen Printmedien zirkulierenden Fotografien und Karikaturen vorgestellt werden (2.). Die Abbildungen zeigen den österreichischen Bühnenstar Max Pallenberg in der Hauptrolle der von Pis-

cator, Bertolt Brecht, Felix Gasbarra, Leo Lania und George Grosz 1928 dramatisierten Romansatire *Die Abenteuer des braven Soldaten Schwejk* (dt. 1926) von Jaroslav Hašek. Mit der Ausleuchtung dieser Konstellation möchte der Beitrag erstens die *Schwejk*-Inszenierung des Piscator-Kollektivs, die als Meilenstein des epischen Theaters gilt (vgl. Piscator 1968a, 57; Willett 1982, 65–69; Bryant-Bertail 2000, 33–61), im Prozess der von der Satire beeinflussten Formengenesen der literarischen Moderne situieren. Zweitens möchte der Beitrag zeigen, wie sich die satirisch geprägte moderne Theaterästhetik im publizistischen Bereich in strategischen kunst- und weltanschaulichen Distinktionsmanövern widerspiegelt, mit denen sich die Akteure und Akteurinnen im literarischen Feld damals positionierten. Vor diesem Hintergrund erscheint die Bilderreihe von Pallenberg alias Schwejk als Ikonografie der systematischen satirischen Strukturierung der modernen literarischen Formen im Zeitraum 1918–1933.

## 1 Piscators episches Theater: Von der Kunst zur Politik zur Satire

Piscator, Sprössling einer hessischen Protestantenfamilie, gehört nicht zu jenen zahlreichen Künstlern und Intellektuellen, die mit Begeisterung in den Ersten Weltkrieg zogen. (Zur geistigen Mobilmachung vgl. Sauermann 2000; Mayer 2010; Anz und Vogl 2014; Honold 2015) Gleichwohl war der Erste Weltkrieg für den an der Westfront stationierten und in Kampfhandlungen involvierten Soldaten in künstlerischer Hinsicht ein Erweckungserlebnis. In seinem Buch *Das Politische Theater* (1929), das die Entwicklungsgeschichte seiner nach Kriegsende einsetzenden Regietätigkeit aufrollt, schildert Piscator anekdotisch, wie ihm, hilflos unter Granatenbeschuss liegend, plötzlich der weltfremde Luxus des von ihm ergriffenen Berufs des Schauspielers bewusst geworden war und er beschlossen hatte, in Zukunft dem Theater eine stärkere gesellschaftliche Relevanz zu verschaffen. (Vgl. Piscator 1968a, 14 f.)

In diesem Ursprungsmythos seiner Bühnenprojekte artikuliert sich die für die Literaturepoche 1918–1933 charakteristische Politisierung der Kunst, wobei deutlicher als anderswo die vom Bürgertum des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts kultivierte Autonomieästhetik als Reibungsfläche erkennbar ist. Betrachtete beispielsweise der letzte große bürgerliche Kunsttheoretiker, der von Walter Benjamin als „Papst der Ästhetik“ (Benjamin 1991, I/3, 880) angefeindete Johannes Volkelt, die „Entlastung“ von der Realität als die primäre soziale Funktion der Kunst (Volkelt 1927, 426), und bedeutete dementsprechend für ihn das Satirische als „Mischgebilde von Kunst und Lebensprosa“ ein „Herausfallen aus dem Rein-

Künstlerischen“ (Volkelt 1925, 476 f.), so bewogen Piscator stattdessen die auf dem Schlachtfeld gemachten Erfahrungen dazu, in öffentlichen Stellungnahmen und in seinen Regiearbeiten jeweils den Vorrang der Politik vor der Kunst zu betonen: „Während auf den meisten Theatern die Politik von der Peripherie her eindringt, ist bei uns die Politik das schöpferische Zentrum unserer Arbeit“. (Piscator 1968b, 28) Diese Sichtweise hatte weitreichende Konsequenzen für Piscators ästhetische Maximen:

Der Angriff gegen die bürgerliche Gesellschaft (die politische Aufgabe des Theaters) war zugleich ein Kampf gegen ihre Kunst, ein Kampf gegen Formen und Inhalte des stagnierenden bürgerlichen Theaters [...].

An Stelle des Privaten tritt das Allgemeine, an Stelle des Besonderen das Typische, an Stelle des Zufälligen das Kausale. Das Dekorative wird abgelöst vom Konstruktiven. Dem Emotionellen wird als gleichwertig das Rationelle beigeordnet und das Sensuelle wird durch das Pädagogische, das Phantastische durch die Wirklichkeit, das Dokument, abgelöst. (Piscator 1968b, 50)

Piscator, selber KPD-Mitglied, stellte damit, ähnlich wie dies bereits der satire-affine Kritiker des Bürgertums, Karl Marx (vgl. Neubert 1966, 22–33), in *Das Kapital* (1867) mit den idealistischen Epistemem getan hatte, die bürgerlichen Kunstnormen „vom Kopf auf die Füße“. (Marx 2001, 27)

Piscator formulierte hier die theoretischen Axiome einer modernen Theaterästhetik, wie er und Brecht sie, teilweise in Zusammenarbeit, in den 1920er und frühen 1930er Jahren entwickelten. Gemeinsames Feindbild war insbesondere die bürgerliche Dramatik, die sich um 1900 auf die hochartifizielle, in die Illusion der Guckkastenbühne gebannte Auslotungen der individuellen Psyche spezialisiert hatte. (Brecht 1988–2000, 21/270–275; dazu Szondi 1965; Mayer 1986) Positiv bezog man sich hinwiederum auf die zeitgenössische, von der bürgerlichen Kunstanschauung disqualifizierte satirische Dramatik, deren Stilistik Piscators Axiome keineswegs zufällig relativ präzise umschreiben. So bemühte sich der Regisseur in den 1920er Jahren nicht nur um die Aufführungsrechte von Kraus' Tragödie *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* (1922), sondern auf dem Wunschzettel Piscators standen ebenfalls Kurt Tucholskys Wendriner-Geschichten (vgl. Tucholsky 1996–2011, 21/293) oder Ödön von Horváths Volksstück *Die Bergbahn* (1927) (vgl. Horváth 2001, 1/289). Dass diese Projekte nicht zustande kamen, wobei Kraus mit der Begründung ablehnte, Piscators opulente Bühnentechnik verunstalte das dichterische Wort (vgl. Kraus 1927, 68 f.), spricht mitnichten gegen die Synergie von (zeitgenössischer) Satire und moderner Theaterästhetik. Das zeigt besonders die Kollaboration von Kraus und Brecht gegen Ende der 1920er Jahre (vgl. Krolp 1987, 252–303) sowie die vielfältige Beschäftigung Brechts mit der satirischen Tradition. (Vgl. bspw. Knopf 1983, 41–78)

Brechts und Piscators Interesse an den satirischen Formen, aber auch das allgemeine Interesse des Weimarer Theaterbetriebs daran (vgl. Schürer 1974) war in der Logik der Sache begründet. Um neben den bereits erwähnten Ursachen die wichtigsten Punkte zu nennen: 1. war der Einsatz satirischer Techniken als traditionell politisch-literarischer Stilmittel für ein gesellschaftskritisches Theater nichts anderes als zweckmäßig; 2. bedeutete die Forcierung einer marginalisierten Gattung bzw. Schreibweise des bürgerlichen Kunstformtableaus einen gezielten Affront gegen die bürgerliche Kunstanschauung; 3. waren die generischen Merkmale der Satire bzw. des Satirischen (Sozialtypik, Montage, Additionsprinzip, Rationalität, Didaktik, Faktennähe, Engagement) den oben zitierten Axiomen von Piscators antibürgerlicher Dramatik analog.

Dementsprechend lässt sich nicht nur in Brechts Œuvre, sondern auch im Fall von Piscators Theaterästhetik im Verlauf der 1920er und frühen 1930er Jahre eine sich konstant intensivierende Auseinandersetzung mit den satirischen Formen nachverfolgen. Davon zeugt nicht nur das bereits erwähnte Interesse an der zeitgenössischen satirischen Dramatik. So bewegte sich Piscator 1919 auch im Umfeld des Berliner Dadaismus, wo Grosz, John Heartfield, Wieland Herzfelde, Raoul Hausmann und Richard Huelsenbeck gezielt an satirische Illustrations-, Darstellungs- und Schreibtechniken sowie mit ihren Zeitschriftengründungen (*Der blutige Ernst*, *Die Pleite*, *Der Gegner*) an satirische Publikationsformate anknüpften. (Vgl. Willett 1982, 12f.; Riha 1992, 169–182; Korte 1996) Zudem war Piscator anfangs der 1920er Jahre mit dem von ihm und Hermann Schüller gegründeten Proletarischen Theater im satireaffinen kommunistischen Theatersektor unterwegs (vgl. Trommler 1974) und entwickelte hier zur Inszenierung von Lajos Bartas satirischem Einakter *Rußlands Tag* (1920) erste Ansätze des epischen Theaters. (Vgl. Piscator 1968a, 40; vgl. Barta 1988) Schließlich produzierte Piscator in der zweiten Epochenhälfte mehrere satirische Vorlagen wie die wahrscheinlich von den *Letzten Tagen der Menschheit* inspirierte Revue *Rasputin, die Romanows, der Krieg und das Volk, das gegen sie aufstand* (urauf. 1927), die Dramatisierung von Hašeks *Die Abenteuer des braven Soldaten Schwejk* (urauf. 1928) oder Walter Mehrings Komödie *Der Kaufmann von Berlin* (urauf. 1929). (Vgl. Willett 1982, 48–59)

Kulminationspunkt dieser Entwicklung von der Kunst zur Politik zur Satire war zweifelsohne die mit Brecht, Lania, Gasbarra und Grosz realisierte Inszenierung der *Abenteuer des braven Soldaten Schwejk*, die Piscator vom 23. Januar bis 12. April 1928 am Theater am Nollendorfpfplatz aufführte. Was das Piscator-Kollektiv an Hašeks Romansatire speziell interessierte, war neben ihrer stofflichen Aktualität – zeitgleich hatten Kriegsdramen und -romane Hochkonjunktur (vgl. Kiesel 2017, 770–807) – ihre dem epischen Theater verwandte Form. Die vom Kollektiv angestrebte, möglichst direkte Übertragung der Romansatire auf die Theaterbühne (vgl. Knust 1974, 9–122) unterlief nicht nur automatisch die

bürgerlichen Dramenkonventionen, sondern der Gattungs- und Medienwechsel provozierte zusätzlich die Suche nach neuartigen künstlerischen Lösungen und förderte dadurch die Entwicklung spezifischer epischer Theater Techniken: beispielsweise die von Laufbändern und Marionetten (vgl. Piscator 1968a, 193 f.), wie beides Brecht anschließend in den Inszenierungen von *Mann ist Mann* (1926/1931) oder *Mutter Courage* (1938/1939) einsetzte. Eine Dramatisierung der Romansatire, die sich an der dreiaktigen Gattungsvorlage der bürgerlichen Komödie à la Carl Sternheim, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Carl Rössler oder Roda Roda orientierte wie jene, die Max Brod und Hans Reimann Piscator angeboten hatten (vgl. Knust 1974, 21 f.), widersprach hingegen der künstlerisch-politischen Intention des Regisseurs sowie des konzeptuell stark involvierten Brecht, der später behauptete, er habe die „reine Montage aus dem Roman“ ganz alleine gemacht. (Brecht 1988–2000, 27/152; ders. 1967, 16/598) Brechts Vereinnahmung zeugt von der Bedeutung der *Schwejk*-Inszenierung für sein eigenes Œuvre (vgl. Knust 1974, 21 f.) und damit auch von der satirischen Prägung der modernen Theaterästhetik. Piscator sprach seinerseits im Kontext der Weimarer Republik von der Produktion der *Abenteurer des braven Soldaten Schwejk* als dem „erste[n] bewusst epische[n] Drama“. (Piscator 1968a, 57)

Mit Blick auf die satirische Formengese der literarischen Moderne ist dabei besonders hervorzuheben, dass das Piscator-Kollektiv nicht auf irgendeine Romangattung sondern mit den *Abenteuern des braven Soldaten Schwejk* nachgerade auf einen pikaresken Roman zurückgriff. (Vgl. Schamschula 1989, 291) Das Kollektiv bearbeitete mithin eine Gattung, die traditionell satirische Elemente aufweist und folglich im deutschen Sprachraum ein Jahrhundert lang ebenfalls keine künstlerische Relevanz besessen hatte. (Vgl. Jacobs 1983, 85) Die *Schwejk*-Inszenierung subvertierte demnach gleich auf verschiedenen Ebenen die bürgerliche Kunstanschauung: Erstens sprengte die Inszenierung die bürgerlichen Bühnenkonventionen, indem sie die aristotelische Einheit des Orts durch Schwejks berühmten, digressiven Fußmarsch nach Budweis aushebelte, statt der Schicksals- oder Heiratsmechanik die Episodenstruktur zum Prinzip machte, statt Individuen soziale Typen verwendete und statt auf Seelenschau auf Gesellschaftsanalyse setzte. (Vgl. Knust 1974, II.3) Zweitens rebellierte das Kollektiv mit der Dramatisierung eines pikaresken Romans gegen die bürgerliche Kunstanschauung ganz grundsätzlich durch die Verwendung einer von ihr marginalisierten satirischen Gattung. Zwischen den spezifischen Gattungsmerkmalen des pikaresken Romans (satirische Figurenperspektive, realistisch-reflexive Erzählhaltung, Vorrang des Materiellen, Schurkenpanorama, horizontale Bewegung des Helden durch den Raum, vertikale durch die Gesellschaftsschichten und diskontinuierliche Machart (vgl. Guillén 1969, 375–396)) und Piscators epischer Theaterästhetik bestand folgerichtig ebenfalls eine starke strukturelle Synergie.

Deren theatralische Umsetzung in der *Schwejk*-Inszenierung trug wesentlich dazu bei, die satirischen Formen matrixähnlich in die literarische Moderne der 1920er und 1930er Jahre einzuschreiben.

## 2 Die mediale Rezeption der *Schwejk*-Inszenierung: Unkunst, moderner Habitus, Klassenkampf, Kulturindustrie, Hitler

Die Inszenierung der *Abenteuer des braven Soldaten Schwejk* war der künstlerische, aber auch finanzielle Höhepunkt von Piscators theaterästhetischen Experimenten der 1920er Jahre. Die Produktion wurde in der Öffentlichkeit breit wahrgenommen. Ursachen für diese außergewöhnliche Resonanz waren Piscators Aufsehen erregende Bühneninstallation sowie das in der Weimarer Republik allgemein beobachtbare Interesse an satirischen Formen. Eine wichtige Ursache dürfte zudem der österreichische Hauptdarsteller Max Pallenberg gewesen sein, dem als Starkomödiant der Weimarer Kulturindustrie die mediale Aufmerksamkeit gewiss war. (Zu Pallenberg vgl. Ahrens 1972)

Pallenberg, 1877 in Wien geboren, war aber auch aus künstlerischer Perspektive die ideale Besetzung für die Rolle des braven Soldaten Schwejk, weil er die begrifflich kaum zu fassende, subversive Ironie des pikaresken und hanswurstähnlichen Protagonisten nicht nur kongenial verkörperte, sondern weil auch seine an der satirischen Tradition der Altwiener Komödie geschulte Stilistik, die sich durch Objekt- und Körperklamauk, Wortspielereien und digressive, kritisch-tageaktuelle Referenzen auszeichnete, die von Piscator und auch Brecht angestrebte gestische Spielweise antizipierte. (Vgl. Piscator 1968a, 82f., 152f.; 1968b, 158–166; vgl. Brecht 1988–2000, 21/388–396) Die Avantgardefunktion der satirischen Formen lässt sich also bis in den Bereich der Schauspieltechnik verfolgen.

Anlässlich der Premiere zirkulierten in den Printmedien eine Reihe von Abbildungen, die Pallenberg in der Rolle Schwejks zeigen. Die großflächige Distribution belegt zum einen das lebensweltliche Interesse der zeitgenössischen Öffentlichkeit an den satirischen Kunstformen; ihr Nachweis ist ein Stück Weimarer Kulturgeschichte.<sup>1</sup> Die unterschiedliche Kontextualisierung der Abbildungen

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<sup>1</sup> Abgesehen von den hier vorgestellten Abbildungen erschienen Fotografien von Pallenberg alias Schwejk außerdem in *Das illustrierte Blatt* (1928, Nr. 5, 128), der *Berliner Illustrierten Zeitung* (1928, Nr. 8, 284) sowie im *Querschnitt* (1928, Nr. 3, o. S.). (Vgl. Hammers 2014, 163f.)



**Abb. 1:** Pallenberg alias Schwejk in *Westermanns Monatsheften*

ist zugleich ein Indikator für die systematische Einschreibung der satirischen Formen in die literarische Moderne, insofern diese Abbildungen in den jeweiligen Kontexten die Artikulation der die literarische Epoche 1918–1933 kennzeichnenden kunst- und weltanschaulichen Differenzen provozierten.

a) *Westermanns Monatshefte* wurden 1859 gegründet und in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts mit dem Vorabdruck bedeutender Werke des poetischen Realismus bekannt. (Zu *Westermanns Monatsheften* vgl. Schmidt 1981, bes. 68–103) Gemäß ihrer bürgerlich-konservativen Ausrichtung zeigt die Zeitschrift in ihrer Rubrik ‚Dramatische Rundschau‘, die im März 1928 im Heft 859 erschien, wenig Verständnis für Piscators den Grundsätzen der bürgerlichen Dramatik zuwiderlaufende *Schwejk*-Inszenierung und ließ zudem deutliche Vorbehalte gegenüber der Karikierung des Militärs durchblicken. (Vgl. *Westermanns Monatshefte* 1928, 99–105) Dieselbe Kritik ging in derselben Ausgabe an die Adresse von Brechts

Lustspiel *Mann ist Mann*, das zeitgleich an der Berliner Volksbühne inszeniert worden war. Beide Theaterstücke stellen aus heutiger Sicht bedeutsame Ereignisse der literarischen Moderne von 1918–1933 dar, wurden jedoch vom Chefredaktor Friedrich Düsel persönlich als Zerfallserscheinungen des Berliner Theaterbetriebs betrachtet. Die Kombination von auf Kriegsverdrängung, Uniformfetischismus, Nationalismus und Großstadtfeindlichkeit basierender Ablehnung und konservativer Kunstvorstellung war typisch für die damals auch in den zeitgenössischen Literaturgeschichten vielfach anzutreffende, bis ins nationalsozialistische Lager reichende reaktionäre Diskursposition, die in den 1920er und frühen 1930er Jahren die Kunst von der Politik reinzuhalten versuchte und folglich die Satire allenfalls dann als Kunstform akzeptierte, wenn sie nicht konkrete, sondern bloß überzeitliche Missstände angriff. (Vgl. Merziger 2010, bes. 41–50) Verwandte Einwände wie gegenüber der *Schwejk*-Inszenierung wurden damals aufgrund seiner Sonderstellung im literarischen Feld insbesondere am Œuvre von Kraus austariert. (Vgl. Van der Steeg 2013/2014) In *Westermanns Monatsheften* wurden sie illustriert von der Fotografie von Pallenberg alias Schwejk geäußert. Die Abbildung stammt vom mit Piscator und Benjamin persönlich bekannten bzw. befreundeten Fotografen Sasha Stone (1895–1940) und zeigt Pallenberg alias Schwejk, wie er, gekleidet in ein einfaches Soldatengewand, mit einem zwischen Dummlichkeit und ironischer Subversion changierenden Gesichtsausdruck, die Hand an der Mütze, salutiert. (Zu Stone vgl. Hammers 2014, 159–182) Die Fotografie repräsentiert dabei für Düsel den einzigen Pluspunkt der *Schwejk*-Inszenierung, nämlich die schauspielerische Leistung des Starkomödianten, und zwar nachgerade deshalb, weil dessen volkstümliche Darstellungsart die von Piscator avisierte linkspolitische, satirische Theaterästhetik in einen allgemeinmenschlichen, also gesellschaftspolitisch unverbindlichen Humor abmilderte, wie er – auf Kosten der satirischen Formen – das Lachparadigma der bürgerlichen Kunstanschauung dargestellt hatte (vgl. Preisendanz 1985):

Auf der mit Rollbändern, Filmstreifen, beweglichen Pappfiguren und zeichnerischen Randglossen (von George Groß) mißhandelten Bühne ist davon [von der allgemein menschlichen Symbolkraft] nicht mehr geblieben, als was Max Pallenberg, der Darsteller des Schwejk, durch selbstherrlichen Witz und Humor in der *Familie Schimek* ungefähr auch zu retten weiß. (*Westermanns Monatshefte* 1928, 103)

b) Die *Zeitbilder*, die illustrierte Beilage der *Vossischen Zeitung*, die zum Ullstein-Verlag gehörte und eine der wichtigsten Zeitungen der Weimarer Republik war, brachten gemeinsam mit anderen Fotografien der *Schwejk*-Inszenierung auf dem Frontcover der Ausgabe vom 29. Januar 1928 eine körperumfassende Fotografie von Pallenberg alias Schwejk. Zusammen mit den anderen Fotografien wies sie



Nummer  
5  
29. Januar 1928

# Zeitbilder

Beilage zur  
Dossifischen  
Zeitung



Katon Edhofer als Ober-  
leutnant Kufsch.

Hugo Werner-Rabe als  
Freiwilber Kallala.

Mar Pallenberg als Schwejz.  
Aufnahmen: Sauer.

Egbert Caspell als Kneipwirt.

Rechts: Uta Holmboe als  
alte Frau.

## GESTALTEN im „BRAVEN SOLDATEN SCHWEJK“

Aufführung der Piscatorbühne, Berlin

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Abb. 2: Schwejk alias Pallenberg in *Zeitbilder*

auf die Premiere hin, die vor wenigen Tagen, am 23. Januar 1928, stattgefunden hatte. Sie zeigt den Schauspieler in dasselbe einfache Soldatengewand gekleidet; dieses Mal jedoch zusätzlich in einen Mantel gehüllt, stehend und mit Gemütsruhe Pfeife rauchend. (*Zeitbilder* 1928b, Front) Die Aufnahme, die wie auch die anderen Fotografien wiederum von Stone stammen, erschien im Zusammenhang von Abbildungen wie architektonischen Entwürfen für die Erweiterung des Reichtags, Fotografien der Pariser Autoren Jules Romains, André Gide und Henry Bernstein, die soeben Berlin besuchten, Standbildern afrikanischer Darsteller in einem Spielfilm sowie Fotografien deutscher Schwimmsportler sowie einer englischen Jagdgesellschaft. Wie dieser Kontext deutlich macht, war die Satire hier über die kunstinterne Angelegenheit hinaus ein Ereignis von allgemeiner gesellschaftlicher Relevanz, das in einer ‚Revue‘ der Zeit nicht fehlen durfte. Diese lebensweltliche Bedeutung der Satire in der Weimarer Republik beweisen auch die anfangs desselben Monats publizierten Fotografien von Satirikern (vgl. *Zeitbilder* 1928a, 2f.), die in Steckbriefen ihren Beruf beschreiben. Unter ihnen befinden sich in der Mehrheit Schriftsteller wie Reimann, Roda Roda oder Alfred Polgar, deren Satiren eher spielerischen Charakter aufweisen. Ebenso ist Tucholsky abgelichtet, der in der *Vossischen Zeitung* satirische Texte publizierte, die allerdings aufgrund der Direktive des Ullstein-Verlags im Vergleich mit seinen Texten in der *Weltbühne* oder in der *Arbeiter-Illustrierten Zeitung aller Länder* politisch eher handzahn waren. (Vgl. Hepp 2013, 115f.) Die Satire war also nur so lange ein Bestandteil der bürgerlich-liberalen Lebenswelt der Weimarer Republik, als ihr politisches Engagement dosiert wurde. Dann war satirische Gesellschaftskritik reizvoll wie die jüngste Kleidermode. Benjamin, Tucholsky, Robert Musil, Myona oder Kraus attackierten diese Haltung. (Vgl. bspw. Benjamin 1991, III, 279–283) Im Unterschied zu *Westermanns Monatsheften* war Piscators *Schwejk*-Inszenierung in den *Zeitbildern* mithin ein willkommenes Theaterereignis, insofern die Bühneneinrichtung spektakulär war, die Satire für angenehmen Nervenkitzel sorgte und der auf der Fotografie abgebildete Starschauspieler das Bedürfnis nach Klatsch und Tratsch ansprach. Die Kontextualisierung der Fotografien belegt derart zum einem die für die 1920er und frühen 1930er Jahre typische Kompatibilität der satirischen Formen mit einem modernen/neusachlichen Habitus und insofern ebenfalls ihre künstlerische Attraktivität für die Akteurinnen und Akteure der literarischen Moderne. Zum anderen lässt sich an der Präsentation in den *Zeitbildern* bereits die Tendenz zur Formalisierung und mithin sekundären Autonomisierung des satirischen Zugriffs ablesen, wie beides insbesondere auch anhand der Werkgenese von Musils *Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (1930/1932/1943) erkennbar ist. (Vgl. Arntzen 1960; Fanta 2000, Häusler 2015)



**Abb. 3:** Schwejk alias Pallenberg in *Die Arbeiter-Illustrierte Zeitung aller Länder*

c) *Die Arbeiter-Illustrierte Zeitung aller Länder* brachte dieselbe Fotografie von Pallenberg alias Schwejk wie *Westermanns Monatshefte* als Deckblatt der Ausgabe vom 24. Januar 1928. (Vgl. A-I-Z 1928a, Front) Da die Premiere am Vortag stattgefunden hatte, konnte diese Ausgabe inhaltlich nicht auf Piscators *Schwejk*-Inszenierung eingehen. Die Rezension wurde drei Ausgaben später nachgeholt. In dieser reproduzierte man wie in der *Vossischen Zeitung* Fotografien der Uraufführung sowie einen längeren Auszug aus dem Programmheft der Piscator-Bühne. (Vgl. A-I-Z 1928b, 13) Die prominente Präsentation der Fotografie von Pallenberg alias Schwejk auf dem Deckblatt der Ausgabe vom 24. Januar 1928 sagt viel über die Relevanz von Piscators Politischem Theater, aber auch über die der Figur des braven Soldaten Schwejk für die Arbeiterbewegung aus. Die Abbildung eröffnete ein Heft, das zunächst unter der Rubrik ‚Bilder der Woche‘ mittels Fotografien tagespolitische Ereignisse dokumentiert, danach, ausgehend von der Beschlagnahmung von Johannes R. Bechers Roman *Levisite* (1926), einen Beitrag über Zensurmaßnahmen enthält, gefolgt von Artikeln über die sozialen

Folgen des modernen Straßenbaus, über die feinen Unterschiede von Geschirr sowie über die Gesellschaftsstruktur in Island; unter der Rubrik ‚Satire‘ wurde zudem Brechts *Mann ist Mann* rezensiert. Ähnlich wie in den *Zeitbildern* war die Satire in der *Arbeiter-Illustrierten Zeitung aller Länder* demnach nicht nur eine kunstinterne Angelegenheit wie in *Westermanns Monatsheften*, sondern auch Teil der – proletarischen – Lebenswelt. Im Unterschied zu den *Zeitbildern* besaßen die Fotografien hier allerdings eine offenkundige politische Komponente. Zwischen Kultur, Kunst und Politik machte die Zeitschrift keinen Unterschied. Piscators und Brechts antibürgerliche Theaterästhetik wird folglich von der *Arbeiter-Illustrierten Zeitung aller Länder* begrüßt, und zwar nicht als Kunst- und Prominentenspektakel, also als primär kulturelles Ereignis, sondern aufgrund ihrer politischen Tendenz. Anders als die *Zeitbilder* verlangte *Die Arbeiter-Illustrierte Zeitung aller Länder* entsprechend keine Dämpfung des gesellschaftskritischen Moments der Satire. Vielmehr funktionalisierte sie dieses gerade als künstlerisches Instrument des Klassenkampfes. Der auf dem Deckblatt abgelichtete Pallenberg alias Schwejk war aus diesem Grund nicht Sinnbild des Humoristen oder des Starschauspielers. Stattdessen lag der Fokus auf einer literarischen Figur, die bereits bei Hašek und deutlicher bei Piscator Merkmale des marxistischen Revolutionärs aufwies (vgl. Hašek 2004, 5; Piscator 1968a, 187–203): Die Fotografie des vorschriftsmäßig grüßenden, in das schlichte Gewand des Offiziersdieners gekleideten Pallenberg alias Schwejk repräsentiert hier den klassenbewussten Proletarier, der mittels der List der Satire die Geschichte auf ihr materialistisches Telos hinsteuert. Die semantische Aufladung der Fotografien in der *Arbeiter-Illustrierten Zeitung aller Länder* entspricht damit einer materialistischen Kunstlogik, wie sie parallel zu Piscator und Brecht auch andere namhafte Repräsentanten der literarischen Moderne mit ihren Texten verfolgt haben. Zu nennen sind an erster Stelle Benjamins satirebasierte materialistische Ästhetik in *Karl Kraus* (1931) sowie Siegfried Kracauers satirisch-neusachliche Zeitromane *Ginster* (1928) und *Georg* (fertiggestellt 1934), deren Protagonisten an Hašeks Schwejk-Figur anknüpfen (vgl. Adorno 1997, 11/401; Kracauer 2004–2012, 7/603 f.), indem sie die satirisch-pikareske Perspektive des Proletariats aber auf die des Angestellten transponieren.

d) Pünktlich zur Premiere von Piscators *Schwejk*-Inszenierung war am 23. Januar 1928 in der altherwürdigen, mittlerweile sozialpolitisch eher lahmen, tendenziell verbürgerlichten Münchner Satirezeitschrift *Simplicissimus* (vgl. Schulz-Hofmann 1977/1978, 107) eine von Karl Arnold gezeichnete Karikatur erschienen. (Vgl. *Simplicissimus* 1928, 589) Sie zeigt ebenfalls Pallenberg alias Schwejk, und zwar wie er mit Tilla Durieux und Paul Wegener – beide Schauspieler in die Kostüme einer älteren Produktion Piscators gekleidet – mit erhobenen Händen vor einem mit zahlreichen Lichtern und einem Lautsprecher ausgerüsteten Thepiskarren ein-

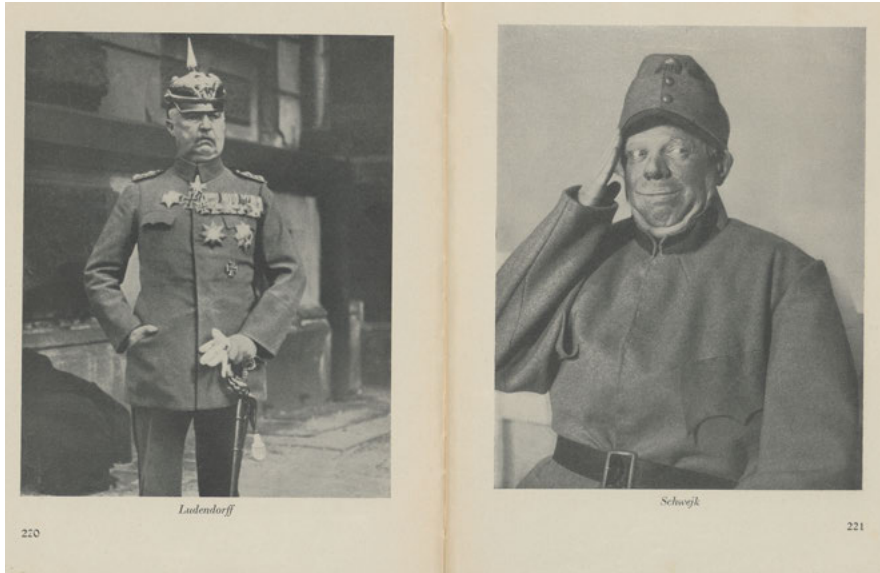


Abb. 4: Schwejk alias Pallenberg im *Simplicissimus*

hergeht. Auf dem Gefährt sitzt Piscator und bedroht die Schauspieler mit einer Pistole, seinen Oberarm umfasst eine Binde mit kommunistischen Emblemen, sein Gesicht ist eine Fotokamera. Die Karikatur verspottet entsprechend der eher von der literarischen Moderne um die Jahrhundertwende geprägten Kunstanschauung des *Simplicissimus* (vgl. Schulz-Hofmann 1977/1978, 121f.) die Theatermaschinerie, die Piscator ursprünglich aus pädagogischen und kunsttheoretischen Überlegungen entwickelt hatte, die unterdessen freilich, wie es den Anschein machte, nicht mehr in erster Linie zur Erziehung des Proletariats eingesetzt wurde, sondern künstlerischer Selbstzweck und vor allem ein Markenzeichen geworden war, in das Piscator kräftig investierte, um auf dem hart umkämpften Berliner Theatermarkt zu bestehen. (Vgl. Willett 1982, 33–45) Tatsächlich sah sich Piscator umso mehr zu einer opulenten Bühnentechnik gezwungen, weil das adressierte proletarische Publikum die Eintrittskarten zu ermäßigten Preisen bezog und Piscator auf das spektakelhungrige, zahlkräftige bürgerliche Publikum

angewiesen war, um seine in aufwändige Bühnenexperimente verpackte kommunistische Botschaft überhaupt an die proletarische Zielgruppe bringen zu können. Die Karikatur macht also auf den selbstverschuldeten Widerspruch eines Theaters aufmerksam, das scheinbar oberflächlich klassenkämpferische Ziele verfolgte, selbst aber, angeblich um einer künstlerisch-innovativen Ausstattung willen, nach kapitalistischen Grundsätzen funktionierte: „Der neue Geist aus der Maschine [...] peitscht mit dem Donnerwort ‚Verdiene!‘ den revolutionären Geist“, lautet daher der Anfang der Bildunterschrift. (*Simplicissimus* 1928, 589) Zur Befriedigung seiner künstlerischen Eitelkeit instrumentalisierte dem *Simplicissimus* zufolge der Regisseur mit seiner Pistole sogar die Starschauspieler. Allein in Tat und Wahrheit hielten gerade diese Piscator fest in der Hand: Um nämlich die hohen Kosten für Mieten, Steuern sowie Bühnentechnik mit Sicherheit wieder einzuspielen, waren so gut wie alle Berliner Theater gezwungen, auf die Zugkraft von Stars wie Pallenberg zu setzen. Deren horrenden Gagen trieben wiederum die Kosten in die Höhe. (Vgl. Piscator 1968b, 61–69) Unter diesen Bedingungen politische Satire zu machen, war beinahe ein Ding der Unmöglichkeit. Obzwar die *Schwejk*-Inszenierung finanziell äußerst erfolgreich war, ging Piscators Theaterunternehmen wenig später in Konkurs.

e) Tucholskys und Heartfields Text-Fotoband *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*, der 1929 im kommunistischen Neuen deutschen Verlag erschien, der wie *Die Arbeiter-Illustrierte Zeitung aller Länder* Willi Münzenberg gehörte, enthielt dieselbe Fotografie des salutierenden Pallenberg alias Schwejk, die im Jahr zuvor bereits in *Westermanns Monatsheften* sowie auf dem Deckblatt der *Arbeiter-Illustrierten Zeitung aller Länder* abgedruckt worden war. (Vgl. Tucholsky 1996–2011, 12/220 f.) Als Teil einer von Tucholsky und Heartfield komponierten Text-Bild-Montage, die mit ihrer Mixtur aus politischem Engagement, neusachlicher Montage und satirischer Stilistik ein wichtiges Zeugnis für die satirische Matrix der literarischen Moderne der Weimarer Republik darstellt, trat hier indes der dokumentarische hinter den politisch-künstlerischen Gehalt der Abbildung zurück. *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* verfolgte im Wesentlichen drei Themenstränge: die Kritik des reaktionären Bürgertums, das den Keimboden für die Nationalsozialisten abgab; die Objektivierung der menschenunwürdigen Lebensumstände der proletarischen Klasse; sowie die Darstellung der in der Weimarer Republik praktizierten Kunstformen – vom Heimatroman über die Revueproduktion bis zur Satire. Diese drei Themenstränge kulminierten gegen Ende des Buches auf einer Doppelseite, auf deren einem Blatt Pallenberg alias Schwejk abgedruckt ist und deren anderes Blatt den Weltkriegsgeneral Erich Ludendorff zeigt, wie er sich am Tag der Urteilsverkündung des Hitler-Putsches, am 1. Januar 1924, in Galauniform in München einem Fotografen präsentiert hatte. Die in der



**Abb. 5:** Schwejk alias Pallenberg in *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*

*Arbeiter-Illustrierten Zeitung aller Länder* lediglich angedeutete Klassendialektik wurde durch die Komposition explizit gemacht, wobei der Bildband gezielt Ludendorff mit dem Protagonisten aus Heinrich Manns Romansatire *Der Untertan* (1918) assoziierte. (Vgl. Tucholsky 1996–2011, 12/67–76) Zugleich identifizierte die Montage das listige Salutieren Schwejks mit der von Tucholsky und Heartfield in *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* selber verfolgten satirischen Strategie. (Vgl. Tucholsky 1996–2011, 12/99–107) Anders als in den *Zeitbildern* verlangte das Münzenberg-Konsortium keine Zählung der politischen Stoßkraft der Satire. Indem der Verlag allerdings das Buch mit Stones in *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* abgedruckter Fotografie von Pallenberg alias Schwejk bewarb, wobei man dem salutierenden Schauspieler den Textbildband unter den Arm montierte,<sup>2</sup> wurde gleichfalls mit dem vom Kapitalismus generierten Starkult paktiert. Die Satire lief dadurch Gefahr, ihre im Krieg bewiesene ethische Integrität zu verlieren. Ihre politische Intention verpuffte gegen Ende der Epoche nicht nur in der Form,

<sup>2</sup> Die Verlagsanzeige stammt nicht, wie Kaufmann/Schiller 1973, 712 angegeben, aus der *neuen Bücherschau*, Heft 9, 1929, sondern aus der *Arbeiter-Illustrierten Zeitung aller Länder* 1929, Nr. 44, 14. Für die Recherche und weiterführende Hinweise bedanke ich mich bei Dr. phil. Katja Leiskau von der Sächsischen Landesbibliothek, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek (SLUB). Zur Werbestrategie des Neuen deutschen Verlags für *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* vgl. Rössler 2012.

sondern auch im Marketing. Wie sich anhand der Werke von Kracauer und Musil zeigen lässt bildet dieser Vorgang dann wesentlich die Basis für die heute gängige Uminterpretation der satirischen in eine ironische Strukturierung der literarischen Moderne im Zeitraum von 1918 bis 1933. (Vgl. bspw. bei Honnef-Becker 1991, 140–173; Fanta 2000, 219 f., 374–378)

f) Diese Ökonomisierung und Autonomisierung des satirischen Impulses erscheint im Nachhinein als düsteres Vorzeichen der radikalen staatspolitischen und literatursysteminternen Veränderungen, die das Ende der Weimarer Republik – nicht ganz aber das ihrer satirischen Ikonografie – einläuteten. Die allermeisten Akteure der literarischen Moderne wurden von den Nationalsozialisten 1933 vertrieben und viele ihrer Texte auf die schwarzen Listen gesetzt; unter den verbrannten Büchern befanden sich auch *Die Abenteuer des braven Soldaten Schwejk*. (Vgl. Sauder 1983, 123) Das bisher für die moderne Literaturästhetik der 1920er und frühen 1930er Jahre maßgebliche Satireparadigma wurde relativ rasch wiederum durch die populäre Forderung nach einem sozialkritisch unverbindlicheren, mit der bürgerlichen Kunstanschauung kohärenten Humor verdrängt. (Vgl. Merziger 2010) Dem Interesse der exilierten Autoren an Hašeks Antihelden tat das freilich keinen Abbruch. Verschiedene Versuche wurden unternommen, um die künstlerische und politische Sprengkraft der Romanfigur zur satirischen Attacke auf das Hitlerregime zu nutzen. Piscator plante etwa die Verfilmung des Schwejk-Stoffs (vgl. Knust 1974, 125–146), Münzenberg beauftragte Arthur Koestler mit einer Fortsetzung von Hašeks Roman (vgl. Koestler 1970, 529; Koestler 1971, 11.f.) und Brecht schrieb in Kalifornien seinen *Schwejk im zweiten Weltkrieg* (1943). Einer der Vertriebenen, der ebenfalls mit Hitler-kritischer Intention auf Hašeks Antihelden zurückgriff, war Heinrich Mann. Mann hatte die künstlerischen Qualitäten Pallenbergs immer sehr geschätzt und sich den Schauspieler in der Vergangenheit verschiedentlich für die Inszenierung seiner Theaterstücke als Hauptdarsteller gewünscht. (Vgl. Mann 2005, 679; Mann 2001, 396–398) Als Pallenberg 1934 bei einem Flugzeugabsturz ums Leben kam, war Mann tief erschüttert. (Vgl. Mann und Mann 2005, 224) Sein Roman *Lidice* (1943) schrieb in der Folge ebenso am Intertext der *Abenteuer des braven Soldaten Schwejk* fort, wie darin Pallenberg implizit ein Denkmal gesetzt wurde. (Vgl. Mann 1984, 168–172) 1937 erschien in der Prager *Neuen Weltbühne* zudem ein Essay *Die Rede*, der gezielt auf die satirische Ikonografie der Weimarer Republik rekurriert und diese den veränderten historischen Bedingungen gemäß modifizierte. Der Text trug der neuen Konstellation Rechnung, indem er in den Schriftzeichen überblendet, was Heartfield und Tucholskys Bildmontage in *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* implizit in den medialen Raum gestellt hatte. Pallenberg alias Schwejk wird in Manns Essay nicht mehr via Ludendorff mit Hitler assoziiert, sondern die Abbil-



dungskorrelation dient unmittelbar als Karikatur des Führers. Ihn ließ Mann in *Die Rede* meditieren:

Ich mache einfach mein Führergesicht, es ist bössartig, hat aber auch wieder etwas Ulkiges, das entwaffnet. Ich mache ganz, ganz böse Augen, die unartigen Kinder sollen sich vor Schreck verunreinigen. Pallenberg konnte das. Ich klebe mir übrigens die aufgeworfene Nase großen Formates, wie er sie als braver Soldat Schwejk trug [...]. Drohende Züge, die gleichzeitig komisch sind, haben nun die sonderbare Wirkung, daß ich aussehe, als hätte ich vor mir selber Angst. So blicke ich als das gelungene Schreckgespenst meiner selbst in die Welt [...]. Außerdem verweilt sie bei dem künstlerischen Einschlag meines Wesens. Ich rühme mich einer Anordnung meiner Haare, wie nur verkrachte Malermeister sie fertigbringen [...]. Menschen der Macht, die nichts weiter sind, haben Kahlköpfe. Ich bin ein Genie. (Mann 1991, 123)

Die grotesken Züge dieser Passage sind bereits die Male der Krise der satirischen Produktionslogik. Nach 1933 hatte diese für die literarische Moderne nicht mehr dieselbe systematisch-schöpferische Kraft: Die kreativen Impulse, die von der Satire ausgingen, trugen nun primär durch das Misslingen der satirischen Formen zur künstlerischen Innovation bei. (Vgl. Braese 1996)

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Blaž Zabel

# Archaic Greek Poetry and Hip-Hop: A Comparison

**Abstract:** This article compares two different oral traditions, namely, archaic Greek poetry and hip-hop. It first defines what is meant by the oral character of both traditions and then considers how research in hip-hop scholarship could contribute to knowledge of archaic Greek poetry. Two specific topics that seem to be mutual to both artistic forms are addressed: rhythm, or flow, and intertextuality. It is argued that research on hip-hop can shed some light on the use of formulaic language in Homeric poetry. To this end, the article considers how artists in both traditions used accentuation and melody in performance. Furthermore, by comparing the use of intertextual referencing in both hip-hop and Homer, it is suggested that arguments about intertextuality in hip-hop support the views of those classical scholars who oppose the generally accepted notion that oral traditions cannot be intertextual.

**Keywords:** flow, hip-hop, Homeric music, intertextuality in hip-hop, intertextuality in Homer, oral tradition

## 1 Introduction

In this article, I discuss two different oral traditions, namely archaic Greek poetry and hip-hop. The main research question of this discussion is: what can be established about archaic Greek poetry when it is compared to hip-hop? In general terms, this is comparative research, meaning I compare two specific literatures in order to provide a new outlook on the discussed material (see e. g. Aldridge 1983). Nevertheless, this article is not a direct contribution to the very rich and fast-growing field of hip-hop studies, but rather uses the findings of hip-hop studies in order to identify some generally overlooked aspects of archaic Greek poetry. Although the article follows the line of research initiated by Milman Parry, who believed that further knowledge of Homeric poetry could be gained by comparing it to a still-living tradition of South Slavic *guslars* (Parry 1971), I carefully consider recent objections against such a methodology, which warn against unfounded transpositions of findings about one culture to another (e. g. Finnegan 1988; Foley 2005a, 2005b). Nevertheless, I promote a general argument that comparisons with hip-hop could be fruitful in highlighting those aspects of archaic Greek poetry that have been neglected in traditional scholarship.

In the discussion, I understand both archaic Greek poetry and hip-hop as manifestations of oral poetry. There are several reasons to suggest that both poetries can be described as oral: first, both poetic traditions were/are performed orally and do not rely on the written medium for their reception and distribution. Hip-hop is a performed musical genre, and archaic Greek poetry was recited or sung.<sup>1</sup> Second, improvisation is an important artistic element of both genres. In hip-hop, improvisation is the main characteristic of “free-style rap,” and in archaic Greece, it is believed, poems were invented at the moment of performance, at least to some degree. For Homeric poetry, this was famously proposed by Milman Parry in his discussions of oral-formulaic language, for he believed that Homeric bards learned how to perform poems by memorizing different formulaic expressions and then stitching them together in the moment of performance (Parry 1971). Similar oral-formulaic language has, although to a lesser degree, been observed in hip-hop as well (Pihel 1996). Another important element that is shared between both traditions is their agonal nature. The agonality of ancient Greek poetry and culture has been widely discussed (e.g. Vernant 1962; Colli 1975), as has the importance of braggadocio and competition in hip-hop (Bradley 2009, ch. 6).<sup>2</sup> Intertextuality, which will be further discussed later in the article, is another important aspect of both Homeric and hip-hop poetry. Lastly and most importantly, however, both traditions have a specifically oral nature. John Miles Foley describes manifestations of oral poetry as poetry in which:

structural elements are not simply compositionally useful, nor are they doomed to a “limited” area of designation; rather they command fields of reference much larger than the single line, passage, or even text in which they occur. Traditional elements reach out of the immediate instance in which they appear to the fecund totality of the entire tradition, defined synchronically and diachronically, and they bear meanings as wide and deep as the tradition they encode. (Foley 1991, 7)

A similar quality is ascribed to hip-hop by Russell Potter in his work *Spectacular Vernaculars*:<sup>3</sup>

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**1** It is not clear whether Greek poetry in the archaic period was sung (West 1992) or merely recited (González 2013). Nevertheless, the arguments presented in this article consider both options and are applicable either to the melody pitch or the voice intonation of a reciter.

**2** It is to some extent also possible to draw parallels between rhapsodic contests and rap battles (cf. Béthune 1999).

**3** Potter utilizes the concept of Signifyin(g) as put forward by Gates in his influential work *The Signifying Monkey* (1988).

Simply put, Signifyin(g) is repetition *with a difference*; the same and yet not the same. When, in a jazz riff, a horn player substitutes one arpeggio for a harmony note, or “cuts up” a well-known solo by altering its tempo, phrasing, or accents, s/he is Signifyin(g) on all previous versions. When a blues singer, like Blind Willie McTell, “borrows” a cut known as the “Wabash Rag” and re-cuts it as the “Georgia Rag,” he is Signifyin(g) on a rival’s recording. (Potter 1995, 27; emphasis in original)

After this citation, Potter applies the concept of Signifyin(g) to hip-hop as well. Both Foley and Potter thus describe the specific nature of oral poetry as “Signifyin(g)” or “reach[ing] out” of its immediate manifestation to its “entire tradition,” to “all previous versions.” Therefore, archaic Greek poetry and hip-hop express various features that are characteristic of (at least some forms of) oral poetry.

In this article, I consider how research in hip-hop scholarship could broaden knowledge of archaic Greek poetry and its performance, as well as productively inform classical studies. I demonstrate this by focusing on two topics that seem to be mutual to both hip-hop and archaic Greek poetry as manifestations of primarily oral poetry: their rhythm, or flow, and their intertextual nature. First, I discuss rhythm and flow, and argue that research on them in hip-hop can shed some light on how the formulaic language in Homeric poetry can be perceived in terms of its performative aspect. I then compare intertextuality in hip-hop and archaic Greek poetry, and argue that arguments about hip-hop as a deeply intertextual genre support the views of those classical scholars who oppose the generally accepted notion that oral traditions cannot be intertextual.

## 2 Rhythm and flow in hip-hop and Homeric poetry

In this part of the article, I analyse rhythm and the so-called flow of Homeric poetry and hip-hop. I argue that interesting and stimulating research on rhythm and flow in hip-hop (cf. Kautny 2015) can shed further light on how the performance of Homeric poetry can be envisaged. In order to understand flow, however, the development of hip-hop needs to be considered first (see Price-Styles 2015). Hip-hop started with the invention of musical sampling by DJ Kool Herc in the 1970s in the Bronx, New York. DJ Herc picked up different instrumental portions of songs with strong drum beats and combined them on the turntable machine. In this way, the rhythm-section part of hip-hop developed. Another important moment in the development of hip-hop was when MCs started talking and rapping over such musical backgrounds. This resulted in the possibility of two different



levels of rhythm, on the one hand the rhythm of music, and on the other the rhythm of vocal performance. Therefore, rappers were free to improvise with the rhythm of their own narrations because they had a solid and constant rhythmical base in the musical accompaniment (very much in the way a jazz musician can rhythmically improvise over the fixed beat performed by the rhythm section). The outcome of this performative setting is that rappers' voice often loses the natural rhythm or flow of everyday speech and rather acquires its own specific rhythmical form. One of the definitions of flow supports this understanding: as Oliver Kautny writes, flow is “the musical result of the airflow synchronized to a musical arrangement called beat,” the result of which is “the air flowing out of the lungs, formed into a flow of sound” (2015, 103). Since flow has its own rhythm but not a very prominent melody, we can thus understand it as something in between music and natural speech.

This conception is quite similar to how archaic Greek music was performed. Whether sung and accompanied by an instrument or only recited, Greek poetry was rhythmically highly defined. Epic poetry, for example, was performed in hexameters, but accentuation played its role too. Since the ancient Greek language had a tonic stress, parts of words were spoken in a higher pitch than others (Probert 2006, 47–48, 53–57). This was most probably reflected also in the melody of musical accompaniment. Based on the analysis of existing musical documents and other sources, scholars have proven that the melody of ancient Greek music generally reflected the pitch accent: the accented syllable (´) usually resulted in a higher pitch in the melody; if the circumflex (^) was divided by two notes, the second tone was lower than the previous one; and after the grave accent (`), the melody did not fall again until the next stress (Winnington-Ingram 1955; Anderson 1973; Landels 1999, 235; Cosgrove and Meyer 2006; West 1992, 199; Pöhlmann and West 2001, 11, 62–85).

This combination of rhythm and tonic stress is, in my opinion, a characteristic that is shared between archaic Greek poetry and hip-hop but is rarely considered in classical studies. I will demonstrate this with an example. In hip-hop, artists sometimes use flow in order to recreate direct speech. For example, in the song *Stan*, Eminem uses a different flow in order to present a different first-person narrator, a person called Stan, who writes Eminem three letters. In the last line, the rapper changes his flow in order to indicate that he himself is now writing a response. Another example would be Kendrick Lamar's song *Swimming Pool*, in which Lamar uses two different flows in order to create a dialogue between himself and his own conscience.

In Homeric and classical scholarship, however, this performative aspect has been almost completely ignored. One such example that I am going to discuss here is a formulaic line in *Od.* 16.48, which says: “ἐνθα καθέζετ' ἔπειτα Ὀδυσσεύς

φίλος υἱός” [the son of Odysseus sat there].<sup>4</sup> I have chosen this line mostly because it has already been discussed by two scholars, Milman Parry and Margalit Finkelberg: in this way, it is possible to clearly demonstrate the general academic disregard for melody and flow in Homeric performance. Parry uses this example to demonstrate how the bard stitched together two formulas, the formula “ἔνθα καθέζετ’ ἔπειτα” [sat there] and “Ὀδυσσεύης φίλος υἱός” [the son of Odysseus], thus creating a metrical irregularity (Parry 1971, 318–319). Finkelberg, on the other hand, argues that *Od.* 16.48 is a clear example of Homer’s aesthetic individuality, for he could have used the metrically correct formula “ἱερὴ ἴς Τηλεμάχιοι” [the sacred strength of Telemachus] and avoided the hiatus, but Homer has decided that naming Telemachus as Odysseus’ son is much more appropriate for the narratological context (Finkelberg 2012, 79–80). Both scholars thus insist heavily on metrical rules and the semantic meaning of this particular phrase, but leave aside its performative aspect. The hip-hop scholarship on flow, I believe, puts this whole discussion in a new light.

When all the occurrences of the formula “Ὀδυσσεύης φίλος υἱός” (i. e. *Od.* 2.2, 2.35, 3.64, 2.415, 3.352, 14.515, 15.59, 15.337, 16.48) are analysed, it becomes apparent that it is always used in longer narrations and never as an introduction to direct speech. On the other hand, the formula “ἱερὴ ἴς Τηλεμάχιοι” is (with one exception at *Od.* 16.476) always used as an introduction to direct speech (*Od.* 2.409, 18.60, 18.405, 21.101, 21.130, 22.354). This is, I believe, the result of how both formulas were spoken or sung during performance. The formula “ἱερὴ ἴς Τηλεμάχιοι” was, because of the specific pitch stresses, sung or narrated in a lower voice register. The formula “Ὀδυσσεύης φίλος υἱός” on the other hand, has a melodic rise at the end, and a partial drop on the “ἦ,” and was thus probably recited or sung in a higher register. It was precisely this melodic difference or difference in narrated pitch that determined the position of the two formulas in the context of the poem. The first one was therefore appropriate for naming Telemachus in the narrative parts (in a higher melodic register), while the second one was always used as an introduction to direct speech (in a lower melodic register).

As the analysis of flow has demonstrated, the formula “ἱερὴ ἴς Τηλεμάχιοι” was sung or recited in a lower register. It was thus used to create a difference in pitch between the introductory sentences to direct speech and direct speech itself – just like rappers use different flows in order to indicate the switch between narrators. The analysis of all direct speech after the formula “ἱερὴ ἴς Τηλεμάχιοι,” indeed, reflects this transition from lower to higher pitch. This can be seen most

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<sup>4</sup> All translations from the Greek in this article are my own. References to the *Odyssey* (henceforth *Od.*) are to Homer (2017).

clearly in *Od.* 21.101 and 21.130, where the direct speech begins with an exclamation, “ὦ πόποι,” which was most probably sung or recited at a higher pitch, but other examples reflect a higher register as well. That this is a standard practice in oral poetry can also be seen in performances by South Slavic guslars, as for example in *The Wedding of Mustajbey’s Son Bećirbey as Performed by Halil Bajgorić*:

vOnda reče beg Mustajbeg lički:  
 “vO gazijo, vo ti jabandžijo,  
 Na čardaku ji konaku mome  
 Sramota je ja ću teb’ upitat’,  
 Daj mi, kai ko si dji kako si.”  
 A šede mu momak govoriti:  
 “vOj Turčine, beže sa Grbave,  
 Ja sam otud sa Bosne ponosne --  
 vAj! U glavu Djerdelez Alija.  
 Dajidža mi gazi Hrustanbeže.”

[Then the bey Mustajbey of the Lika spoke:  
 “O hero, stranger among us,  
 Here on my enclosed porch and in my palace  
 It is shameful for me to ask you,  
 But grant me -- tell us your name and condition.”  
 And the young man began to speak to him:  
 “O Turk, bey of Grbava,  
 I am from over there, from proud Bosnia --  
 Aj! I am none other than Djerdelez Alija.  
 The hero Hrustanbey is my mother’s brother.”] (*Wedding of Mustajbey’s Son Bećirbey* 2004,  
 lines 217–234).

As in Homeric poetry, it can be observed that the guslar Halil Bajgorić introduces direct speech with a sentence that is sung in a lower register (“vOnda reče beg Mustajbeg lički”) and then uses different exclamations in a higher tonal register to indicate the nature of the direct speech (e. g. “vO,” “vOj Turčine,” “vAj!”). As a recording of this specific performance is available,<sup>5</sup> it is even possible to confirm this argument with a musical analysis.

Hence, with the discussion of flow and rhythm, I have demonstrated that hip-hop scholarship can productively influence classical and Homeric studies, helping them to consider questions related to Greek literature’s performative

<sup>5</sup> PN 6699. Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature, Harvard University. Also available at <http://www.oraltradition.org/static/zbm/zbm.mp3> (16 December 2018).

context. An understanding of flow and performance has, in the example considered, assisted in moving the discussion away from the purely textual understanding of Homeric poetry and shifting the focus to the performative aspect of poetry – something that, as I have shown, traditional classical scholars have not considered. I will now press forward and discuss how research on hip-hop can shed further light on another aspect of archaic Greek poetry that has recently been heavily debated – that is, the concept of intertextuality and its role in oral tradition.

### 3 Intertextuality in archaic Greek poetry and hip-hop

In this part of the article, I argue that research on intertextuality in hip-hop can be productive for understanding intertextuality in ancient Greek oral poetry. The research on intertextuality in hip-hop is vast and diverse, and researchers usually focus on two specific aspects of intertextuality (see Williams 2013, 2015). First, scholars of hip-hop often understand intertextuality as musical intertextuality (Williams 2014). Such musical referencing is most often the result of musical sampling, since record producers compose music and beats from different music samples taken from other artists. Because all of music of the archaic period is lost to us, however, it is extremely hard to discuss musical intertextuality in oral Greek literature. Nevertheless, one example might be reflective of it, the so-called song of the Sirens in the *Odyssey*. It has been often argued that the genre most appropriate for the Sirens would be lyric poetry (Pucci 1979; Segal 1994, 85–109; Scodel 1998, 188–189). This is reflected in the very peculiar use of their opening formula “δεῦρ’ ἄγ’ ἰών,” a formula hinting at an anapest-like rhythm, which was used in lyric poetry (Anderson 1994, 40). Furthermore, particular phrases in their song are reflective of, for example, Sappho’s poetry (Peponi 2012, 79). If the song of the Sirens thus indeed imitated the rhythm of lyric poetry as well as its formulaic language, it is possible that the accompanying melody was specific as well. Furthermore, if musical accompaniment and the flow of narration were indeed reminiscent of lyric poetry, the performance of the Sirens’ song would result in a kind of musical intertextuality.

The second aspect of intertextuality in hip-hop is the intertextuality of lyrics. Justin A. Williams, for example, lists the following intertextual techniques as the main characteristics of hip-hop composition, production, and performance: sampling, re-performing past music (by way of a DJ or live band), referencing other lyrics, matching the style of another rapper’s flow, and quoting sounds and dia-

logue in the music (2015, 208). As Williams concludes, hip-hop is a highly intertextual musical genre, one that uses this technique intentionally and consciously in order to celebrate its own past and tradition. The intertextuality of lyrics is an important characteristic of hip-hop tradition. It can be understood in many ways, including through the concept of Signifying(s) (discussed above), or even as a semantically productive dialogue as perceived by post-structuralist critics such as Kristeva, Barthes, Genette, and others (e. g. Diallo 2015).

Indeed, these findings are relevant, and can be paralleled to, present-day discussions about archaic Greek poetry. For the past two decades, the intertextuality of oral poetry has been hotly discussed in classical studies. Some, as for example Foley and Arft, argue that oral poetry cannot be intertextual:

In such oral-derived texts, interactions are much too complex, multidirectional, fluid, and dynamic for a purely intertextual model to fully explain. Further, traditional referentiality and an absence of textual fixity – typical features of oral and oral-derived narratives – undercut the notion that the elements and patterns that constitute a tradition can migrate from one poem to the other by a simple transference of units. (Foley and Arft 2015, 95)

Foley and Arft argue that intertextuality cannot apply to oral poetry since it is in its nature to be referential of its own tradition. On the other hand, however, the school of neoanalysis, a mix of analytical and oralist understandings of Homeric poetry, argues that archaic poetry can be intertextual precisely because of its specific oral character. Different performances and poems constantly reflect and communicate with each other, and their meanings derive precisely from this interaction (Tsagalis 2011; Burgess 2012). A relatively recent concept of interformularity proposed by Bakker (2013, 157–169) is an interesting attempt to capture this. Bakker sees formulaic Homeric language as very similar to natural language, which makes use of generic formulaic expressions as well as highly and intentionally intertextual references.

A comparison of research on archaic Greek poetry with hip-hop scholarship supports such a neoanalytical understanding of oral intertextuality and interformularity in ancient Greek poetry. Both hip-hop and archaic Greek poetry can thus be understood as using various intertextual techniques that range from purely formulaic to highly intertextual. I will illustrate this with some comparisons. The first example is an examination of the word “motherfucker,” in Greek “μητροκοίτης,” as used in hip-hop and archaic Greek poetry. In hip-hop, the expression is used often in a mostly formulaic manner, expressing simply the semantic meaning of “people” that can range from pejorative to approbatory to fairly neutral (as for example in Wu-Tang’s *Reunited*). In Greek literature, however, “μητροκοίτης” is a hapax legomenon, meaning it is recorded only once (Hipponax fragment 12, in West 1989), and is generally taken to be extremely pejorative, in line with the

genre of iambic poetry. If the word was used by others at the time, we could conclude that its use was intentionally intertextual or at least referencing a particular genre. The second example is the comparison of two expressions, “book of rhymes” and “ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα” [he/she spoke forth winged words]. “Book of rhymes” is a standard expression used in hip-hop to describe the book where rappers write their lyrics and ideas (Bradley 2009, xi). In this respect, its use is generally formulaic. However, after the extremely influential song *Book of Rhymes* by Nas, the use of the expression almost always brings at least partial recollection of that song. The same can be argued for the Homeric expression “ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα”: in Homeric poetry, it was indeed used as a formula meaning simply “he/she spoke,” but in later poetry or in other genres, as for example in lyric poetry, the audience must have recognized a Homeric or epic background to the expression. The third example is the comparison of highly intertextual referencing. In hip-hop, the lines “I carry the cross, if Virgin Mary had an abortion/ I’d still be carried in the chariot by stampeding horses” were first used by Nas in his song *The Cross* and later reused by Ab-soul in his song *Stigmata*. Ab-soul’s use of these particular lines is intentionally intertextual, and the semantic meaning of the lines is constructed in a dialogical relationship with Nas’s *The Cross*. A parallel can be drawn between this intertextual connection and a similar intertextual relationship between *Od.* 9.442 and 22.32. In both passages, the formula “τὸ δὲ νήπιοι οὐκ ἐνόησαν” [they, clueless, did not grasp] is utilized in a specifically intertextual manner, for it is used only at the moment when Odysseus and his companions escape the Cyclops’ cave and when the Suitors do not recognize Odysseus. As Bakker argues:

The Suitors are like the Cyclops in their total lack of understanding of their situation, but they are at the same time in the position in which Odysseus once was, trapped in the cave. But Odysseus was able to escape, whereas they are not. The similarity thus sets up Odysseus as a successful Cyclops and the Suitors as the equivalent of an unsuccessful Odysseus, the link between the cave and Odysseus’ *megaron* being established in the process. (Bakker 2013, 167)

What the comparison of scholarship’s take on intertextuality in hip-hop lyrics and in archaic Greek poetry has thus demonstrated is that both oral traditions express different levels of Signifying(s). As we have seen, scholarship in both fields has identified that references can range from purely formulaic to a highly dialogical intertextuality. Some expressions and lines are indeed formulaic (as much of the language itself is to a certain extent formulaic), but that does not mean that many other expressions, verses, motives, scenes, and themes cannot be intentionally intertextual. A review of hip-hop scholarship on intertextuality can thus productively inform the ongoing debates in classical studies about the role and nature of

intertextuality in oral poetry. In fact, as I have argued, it supports theories which argue for a more dynamic and flexible understanding of various formulaic and intertextual connections in ancient Greek poetry.

## 4 Conclusions

In this article, I have argued that hip-hop scholarship can productively inform research on archaic Greek oral poetry. On the one hand, research on hip-hop can highlight particular aspects of Homeric and archaic Greek poetry that have been generally disregarded in traditional classical scholarship. This I have demonstrated by discussing the importance of flow for understanding Homeric epics. On the other hand, I have demonstrated how hip-hop scholarship can inform some of the ongoing debates in classical studies. This I have done by comparing discussions about intertextuality in archaic Greek literature and hip-hop, essentially arguing that both oral poetries can be understood on a scale from purely formulaic expression to highly intertextual reference.

In more general terms, however, I hope my article also promotes the view that scholarship on one specific poetic tradition (in my case, classical studies) should not disregard other manifestations of literature and research on them. Such a broader outlook on literature can, as I have argued, be productive for scholarship and can even correct some erroneous convictions. Furthermore, it also promotes a more democratic and all-embracing outlook on literature itself, accepting that different cultures and traditions around the world have their specific forms of artistic expression. As David Damrosch (2009) has argued, one way to broaden the concept of world literature is to read widely across times and cultures; comparing ancient literature with hip-hop certainly falls under this category. Reading hip-hop alongside archaic Greek poetry thus promotes a view of literature that is to a certain degree more inclusive, as does the acknowledgement of findings of hip-hop research in classical studies.

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# Language and Intermedial Metamorphoses in Indian Literature and Arts

**Abstract:** The relations between literature and other arts are multifarious, and manifest themselves differently in each case, enabling the emergence of fresh artistic expressions. By looking at language in “intermedial metamorphosis,” I argue that, in multilingual cultures, simultaneously united and separated by several factors, the transactions between language, culture, and the arts require a constant multiperspectivism as well as new enquiries that need to constantly alter language itself and its processes of intermedial transference into new, evolving literary/artistic idioms. The intermedial exchange between different arts entails transformations not only on the linguistic level, but also in terms of image selection, presentation, and performance, where culture-specific elements reshape the source themes and narrative devices towards a new architectonics. Moreover, in Indian culture, intermediality belongs to the inherent structure of various art forms, and is, in fact, as I call it, an epigenetic intermediality; it is a process leading to the creation of art forms containing performative elements which develop under epigenetic factors into complex intermedial structures. The article draws on examples from various Indian arts, such as the traditional *patachitra* performance, and *Kathakali* and other styles of dance-drama.

**Keywords:** comparative literature, culture, Indian arts, intermediality, language, performance

## 1 Some theoretical perspectives and arguments

In order to develop, every subject of study requires its own “language” and discourses meant to create bridges with related or distant disciplines. Aristotle, Plato, and other philosophers in the course of history have reflected on the arts, on the relations between the arts, and their connection to the human self and lived reality. The notion of “intermediality” likewise calls for ruminations on the functionality of such a concept in contemporary times. The questions I would like to explore in this article include whether intermediality acts and functions within the same parameters in all cultures, and how the process of intermedial translation between arts and media changes in the case of multilingual and multicultural contexts like India.

By looking at language in intermedial metamorphosis, I argue that, in multilingual and multicultural contexts, where cultures are simultaneously united and

separated by several factors, the connections and transactions between language, art, and the myriad forms of the latter require multiperspectivism as well as new lines of enquiry; they have to constantly alter language itself and its processes of intermedial transference into new and evolving literary/artistic idioms. In such situations, the “universals” manifest themselves up to a certain point, beyond which the “particulars” come to the fore and need specific knowledge and comprehension. The “intermedial shift” between different arts entails metachronotopic transformations not only on the linguistic level, but also in terms of presentation, image selection, and performance, where local elements – for instance, cultural symbols, body language, names, allusions, intertextual references, styles of “acting” (both in drama and in sociocultural interaction), colour symbolism, personas – become dominant in reshaping the source theme and the narrative devices towards a new architectonics.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, the experiments with “intermedial metaphors,” like the experience of literature and the arts, differ from culture to culture and from one medium to another.

Adopting this perspective, my second argument is that, in cultures like India, intermediality belongs to the inherent structure of various art forms, being in fact, as I call it, an epigenetic intermediality, a process that precedes the actual theoretical concept and Western debates on intermediality; this process leads to art forms which contain performative and dynamic elements and evolve under epigenetic factors into complex intermedial structures with a particular aesthetics in each case. I employ the term “epigenetic” on the basis of these meanings: “1 a: produced by the chain of developmental processes in epigenesis [...]; b: relating to, being, or involving changes in gene function [...]; 2 of a *deposit or structure*: formed after the laying down of the enclosing rock” (“epigenetic” n.d.; emphasis in original). The present article reveals its supplementary significance in relation to intermediality. I also propose an approach to intermediality through perspectives and concepts such as epigenetic intermediality, performative intermediality, and intermedial architectonics, which are illustrated well in Asian cultures.

In India, various art traditions often bring together several artistic forms, like music, myths, folk narratives, dance, and/or painting – for instance, the case of the traditional presentation of *patachitra* stories, where the *patua* artisans exhibit painting scrolls while musically performing the stories;<sup>2</sup> other examples appear in dance-dramas, or in performances including films, video clips, and literary

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<sup>1</sup> The terms “architectonics” and “metachronotopy” are discussed elsewhere (see Ceciu 2013a). I employ them in this paper with similar meanings while adding new perspectives related to intermediality.

<sup>2</sup> Bengali *paṭa* “canvas, cloth, scene.” The alternative spelling of *patachitra* is *pattachitra*.

adaptations with dance and even theatre scenes, and so on. Indeed, the possibilities of comparatively studying language and its intermedial conversions in multicultural milieus are open-ended. However, in order to arrive at an illustrative exposition of specific arts and media from Indian culture, a survey of selected views on intermediality may be necessary.

Since the appearance of the term “intermediality” in 1983, introduced in *Intermedialität und Intertextualität* by Aage Ansgar Hansen-Löve, a German Slavist who employed it as an analogy to Kristeva’s intertextuality, theorists have expanded the concept into several areas; before the emergence of this term, the

Prague School scholars [...], most extensively Mukařovský, touch upon two seminal relationships between arts which are discussed in contemporary theories of intermediality: first, transmediality which refers to the *transfer* of motifs/story and formal elements from one medium (art) to another; second, multimediality or plurimediality which applies to the *combination* of various media within a work of art. (Šlaisová 2014, 42; emphasis in original)

Werner Wolf states that intermediality

applies to any transgression of boundaries between conventionally distinct media ... and thus comprises both “intra-” and “extra-compositional” relations between different media. “Relation” in this context denotes, from a mainly synchronic perspective and with reference to individual artefacts, gestation, similarity, combination, including imitation, but it may also designate, from a diachronic, media-historical perspective, what David Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin have termed “remediation.” (Wolf 2011, 2–3)

In a revised version of this article, Wolf speaks about an “intermedial turn” in the study of literature and narratology, and notes that “despite of the fact that literary studies ought not simply turn into media or cultural studies, mediality and intermediality have become relevant issues for both teaching and the study of literature especially in the fields of comparative literature and (comparative) cultural studies” (2013, 205). But beyond the literary realm, intermediality implies also interactions with other arts, histories, and cultures.

One must think of pragmatic approaches to extending not only literature but other arts too through intermedial exchange in order to make them relevant and necessary in scholarship, discursive acts, as well as the practical sphere of existence in today’s multicultural, multilingual, yet conflictual world. In this sense, S. Tötösy de Zepetnek and Louise O. Vasvári highlight that “socially constructed meaning or what we call and practice as ‘culture’ takes place through processes of the negotiation of stories, images, and meanings”; “individual and social identities are developed – at best – by and through dialogue”; thus, “new media [...] create new configurations of social, artistic, and economic systems of culture” (2013, 19). For them, intermediality is

a phenomenon for the creation of new forms of artistic and critical innovation, among others to find ways for their distribution [...], new scholarship about intermedial and interdisciplinary perspectives of old and new products of culture, the link(s) of cultural communities in cyberspace, and to be applied as a vehicle for innovative educational practices. Today, discursive practices including visualities form a complex intermedial network of signifying practices which construct realities rather than simple representations of them. (Tötösy de Zepetnek and Vasvári 2013, 18–19)

Elsewhere, Tötösy de Zepetnek has emphasized the role of “intermediality” and “transmediality” as different ways of doing scholarship and publishing in contemporary times (see Ceciu 2017).

The concept of intermediality (like that of interdisciplinarity) plays a vital role in the fields of digital humanities, comparative literature, cultural studies, and the humanities at large. As Mikko Lehtonen notes, “the past and present of contemporary culture and media are indeed part and parcel of multimodal and intermedial culture and media” (2001, 71). This observation has its validity, but it also prompts explorations regarding the relevance of multimodal and intermedial culture and media to the enhancement of comparative literature, the arts, and cultural studies in future. I would like to turn now to discussing some examples pertaining to Indian arts and culture.

## 2 “Intermedial metamorphoses” in Indian literature, arts and culture

Indian art has evolved since antiquity, from various works in stone, clay, metal, and terracotta from the Indus Valley Civilization and Harappa Culture; to representations of nature and human figures; to embodiments of the goddess and “mother” figure, and of gods and mythological characters in various forms, as art objects, sculptures, images, and relief depictions on temple walls and other architectural structures, as well as in dance/body postures; to later mixtures of art styles (e. g. Mughal art, Western and Asian influences).

In Indian thought, the concept of “art as yoga” (Skt *yog* “union, joining”) is significant as “a means of achieving harmony or unity of consciousness” (Coomaraswamy 2013, 20). Indian art theories are deep-seated in Indian aesthetics and philosophy, as well as in the social conditioning that imposes certain functionality on the artistic endeavour (for instance, artists carrying on the family caste/tradition, art as rooted in *dharma*, art as spiritual experience in temples or religious performances, and so on). At the same time, as Swati Bhattacharya remarks, “a good artist or ‘silpin’ [sic] is expected to have knowledge in literature,

science, astronomy, dance, music, etc. The dance and drama forms were considered to have intrinsic relation to visual art as is authenticated by the saying [...] *Nṛtyamnatakam dṛshyakavyam*” (2011, 102). Thus, the intermedial union that is mentioned in this Sanskrit saying and underlies the various art forms – dance, drama, visual art, and poetry/artistic creation – constitutes a basis for the appearance of several creative combinations of forms (*rupa*) and aesthetics visible in the evolution of Indian art through centuries of sociocultural transformation. A major idea in the aesthetic theory of Indian art, as suggested by Bharata Muni in *Natyashastra*, is that “the artistic creation works as a stimulus to the release of the self to an ecstatic freedom, an aesthetic experience fervent and overwhelming”; the flow of *rasa* unifies creator and viewer in a unique journey within the self and the world (Bhattacharya 2011, 104–105).<sup>3</sup> Many arts in India are a community affair, involving various issues related to identity and identification, to memories and realities experienced both individually and collectively.

Literature and the other arts have a constant dialogue that goes beyond the formal confines of art and becomes integrated into the actual “lived” life of the Indian people. The *Ramayana* (attributed to Valmiki), *Puranas*, and *Mahabharata* (attributed to Vyasa) are ancient texts rewritten in myriad forms and versions, within and outside India, in Thai, Burmese, Indonesian, Sri Lankan, and other cultures. The stories went through transmedial and intermedial alterations throughout cultural history, providing varied themes, models of lifestyle, concepts, and realities that have been transposed into different traditional and modern arts (e.g. handicrafts, painting, performing arts, installation artworks). Akin to modern Indian art, the folk arts too draw inspiration from the epics and often bring together several artistic forms: narratives, music, dance, painting, and others. A case in point is the traditional display of *patachitra* stories (narrative painted scrolls), where the *patuas* (Bengali *patua/pato* “painter”), like some itinerant minstrels, present the paintings on cloth or paper scrolls (*joranopatas*) – similar to some vertical comic or film strips, and at times painted on palm leaves (known as *tala patachitra* “drawings on palm leaf”) – while musically and/or gesturally performing the story shown in images; the songs are known as *pater gaan*.

This show is in itself both performative and an intermedial act. The *patuas*<sup>4</sup> or *chitrakars* (Skt “makers of pictures/paintings”), who belong to different ethnic

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3 The concept of *rasa* refers to aesthetic emotion, flavour, taste, and other ideas which would need more space for presentation than is available here.

4 The date of the appearance of this “profession” is unknown; it is estimated to have started around the tenth to eleventh century AD in Bengal, though the art precedes it; at present, *patachitra* is rendered in digital and other formats too, but a distinction needs to be made between representations/influences of *patachitra* and the actual art form (Maitra Bajpai 2015).

communities from West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar, and other areas, are artists who transcend the limitations of the arts, geography, and society to reach (nowadays) all “corners” of the world: they compose the songs, paint the scrolls with natural colours (traditionally made of leaves, flowers, clay), and perform the narratives depicted on the scrolls through song and body language; they use hand gestures to highlight some verses and key points in the accounts. Usually, the initial scenes introduce the characters of the story and the mythological or social setting, while the consecutive frames exhibit details about the characters’ relationships, their qualities, their deeds, and the events; in other words, the plot and the climax of each tale are fully developed in one long scroll which is unfolded step by step as the piece progresses. Among the common traditional themes of *patachitra* and other Indian arts, I would mention *Krishna Lila* (enactment of Jagannath as Lord Krishna in his exploits as a child), Radha–Krishna love, *Panchamukhi* (portrayal of Lord Ganesh as a five-headed deity), *Dasavatara Patti* (ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu), *Manasamangal* (poem to the snake Goddess Manasa, from the *man-galkavya* “poems of benediction” genre of Bengali medieval epics), and several others. The performances vary from place to place, from culture to culture, having both simple and more stylized versions in distinct contexts.

Interestingly, contemporary times and social issues have called for the reworking of the subjects that artisans employ in *patachitra*: they create verses and melodies along with new stories inspired by real-life situations as a way to express their views (otherwise often ignored) and to grapple with urgent social problems such as the cases of abuse against Indian women and communal violence in India, or environmental and educational topics like the protection of nature, trees, and plants; disease prevention; religious identity construction; and others. By such involvement in the contemporary cultural and political milieu, the *chitrakars* manage to create their own niche and challenge at the same time some remaining prejudices of the dominant communities regarding their marginal condition in society. In any case, the status and appreciation of such folk artisans and crafts in society have been evolving to some extent also due to foreign interest (e. g. through NGOs) in Indian art, which brings them increasing acclaim abroad in museums, private collections, and art festivals, and thus propels them further towards the “centre” of attention in their own culture (see other examples in Ponte [2015]; Maitra Bajpai [2015]; Palit and Datta [2016]). My own encounters with foreign artists who have come to India for creative exchange with local artists specializing in *patachitra*, as well as *Durga puja* idol-making and *pandal* (temporary bamboo-temple) design, stand as proof that Indian art has both influenced and benefited from dialogical relations with Western arts.

Regarding the notion of “art as universal code,” it may be highlighted that, in multilingual and multiethnic cultures like India, the “universals” manifest them-

selves only to a certain degree, beyond which the particular elements, the cultural and linguistic knowledge of the audience, need to supplement the meanings embedded within the artistic text if a deeper comprehension of the messages and concepts conveyed (as well as those implicit or unintended) is to be attained. To take an example, in the *patachitra* art (or in Indian dance-dramas and art forms like *Kathakali*, *Manipuri* and others), the visuals, the colours, the structures, some facial traits and emotions which the characters portray, the plasticity of lines and movements, the precise depiction of events – these might be universally understood up to a point on a denotative level. In a number of cases (especially for people who are not familiar with the languages and cultures which are the source of an artwork or performance, the source [con]text), however, the details, local figures, motifs, and a number of messages, as well as connotative meanings, implications, and intertextual references would remain encoded and thus unrevealed. In such situations, the signification perpetually lingers in a state of potential being, a fluid state of constantly becoming a complete meaning as far as that is possible (to touch upon Bakhtin's and Derrida's ideas on language and meaning). Music, more pertinently melody or the aural being of music, may be universal up to a particular point; yet even in this case there are subtleties, such as technical, aesthetic, historical, and sociocultural aspects, which not all audiences would grasp (due to lack of knowledge or of interest).

However, it must be noted that many Indian artists practicing intermedial arts draw together multiple senses and skills; they merge lyrical, narrative, visual, and theatre elements to create new art media through performative intermediality, which transcends the limits of one single art and exists as a metachronotopic process with continuous dynamics involving not only the arts, but also selves, individual and collective histories, lived and mythical realities. By doing this, these artists (un/intentionally) defy some rigid patterns of looking at and cognizing artworks as finite texts and their meanings.

One example of *patachitra* is the story of the Snake Goddess Manasa, which has several versions and iconic representations, and has been reworked in countless narratives, literary, artistic, and intermedial texts. In one version, Manasa Devi<sup>5</sup> has a grudge against Chand Sadagar, who refuses to worship the goddess because he is a great devotee of God Shiva and Durga Devi. To get her revenge, the Snake Goddess kills Chand's youngest son, Lakhindar, on his wedding night with Behula. The story continues with the penance Behula undergoes and her

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<sup>5</sup> Manasa Devi appears first in the *Atharvaveda* (4th Veda). The *Puranas* mention that Manasa was the daughter of sage Kashyapa, one of the *Saptarishis* "seven sages," and Kadru, mother of the Nagas. She is worshiped by the Shaivas. For further details, see Chakraborty Dasgupta (2009).



journey with her dead husband on a raft on the river towards heaven. Through her fearless attitude towards sacrifice, and after passing triumphantly through several dangers, Behula reaches the gods, whom she enchants with her dance and appeases into reviving her husband. Finally, Manasa Devi agrees to bring Lakhindar back to life, provided that Behula will convince her father-in-law to worship her. Reluctantly, Chand accepts the compromise; but he continues to offer Shiva the *anjali* “divine offering” with his right hand, while giving his offering to Manasa Devi with the left hand – although she has forgiven the offence due to her satisfaction at being worshiped by him.

At this point, I would like to draw attention to the “left-hand” offering.<sup>6</sup> By simply depicting the hand of a character presenting a gift, or enacting the gesture in performance, the artist transmits not only a (cultural) message – that in Indian culture it is commonly deemed to be an offence to give someone anything with the left hand, which is considered “impure” – but also an entire suite of possible meanings that such a gesture may set in motion. This detail, or other culture-specific elements, might not be understood by foreign viewers who are not acquainted with the source culture, and thus the audience may miss such key points and their implications.

As Chakraborty Dasgupta notes, the *Manasapala* “used to be sung in temples of Manasa and only later the *jatrapala* or the theatrical form of the *pala* [...] became popular” (2009, 20);<sup>7</sup> on the other hand, in such contexts “an understanding of the story would require an understanding of a different pluridimensional historiography, where myths, stories, legends exist in an authentic manner along with every other political economy based dimension of life” (7). I emphasize that precisely this pluridimensionality (with its manifold processes and mechanisms) is one of the main factors that give substance to the epigenetic influences and authenticity enriching intermedial art forms in India.

Other examples appear in arts like Indian theatre and dance-drama – for instance, the Bengali dance-dramas created by Rabindranath Tagore (*Rabindra Nritya Natya*, including elements from Manipuri dance and other arts), or *Kathakali* (originating in Kerala around the seventeenth century, based on stories from ancient texts such as the *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, or *Puranas*), and other

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<sup>6</sup> It seems that this appears in some popular accounts, while “a number of the older versions do not mention the left hand” (Chakraborty Dasgupta 2009, 17). In any case, my next remark regards the cultural specificity which may equally apply to other examples, not only to the left-hand gesture.

<sup>7</sup> Bengali *pala* “short stage-play, lyrical narrative”; here, it refers to the narrative songs performed in relation to Manasa Devi.

dance-dramas. In such art forms, we find the union of music and speech, dance, gestural art (*mudra*), corporeal language and expressions (*abhinaya*), or body painting; architectural and visual compositions displaying semiotic elements such as sacred and secular symbols, words, slogans, intertextual references, modes of address, and techniques; as well as images, colours, costumes, masks, or in some cases, puppetry, and technical devices (i. e. lights, sound, and so on) – all these create a specific intermedial architectonics while both complementing and advancing the process of “re-mediation” and artistic renovation. I use “renovation” to stress that, in such performances, each art transforms under epigenetic forces in order to accommodate the other arts and *itself* within a homogeneous artwork that is shown but is far from being a finite work with closed meaning (it is always “in the making”). The dialogical relations between such art forms, concepts, thematic structures, and sequences, the act of “performing,” and the intermedial translations imply effects of one art on another that lead to the remodeling of their features and components, opening the way for fresh expressions and discourses. They prompt a move beyond the formal and conceptual limitations of one art, from which blossoms a multilayered, multimodal, and complex artistic creation which engages audiences in an experience involving one’s self, inter-art cognizance, transactions with the “un/familiar,” and dynamic architectonics.

These are transformations that the languages, the “mediascapes,” the semiotic systems implicated in intermedial exchange (performative and epigenetic), as well as the arts, undergo in the dynamic process of metamorphosis. It is not simply a multimedial process, as Mukařovský had suggested; it is more than that because it involves changes in each art’s morphological structure. Conceptually and practically, this intermediality has existed since early times in Asian arts such as Indian arts, dance-dramas, *Kathakali*, folk arts, and even the Japanese kabuki theatre (with its stylized dance, music, dramatic utterances, decors, history, and so on), Chinese opera, and the Indonesian *Wayang wong* dance-drama and other arts, although the modern technical term and its theoretical development only appeared recently.

In conclusion, in certain traditions, intermediality pertains to the very nature of the artistic act. It is crucial to its very being and stands as part of the ontology of the artistic work; it is an epigenetic intermediality – and not a synthetic or syncretic intermediality. Under a synthetic intermediality are subsumed the types of intermediality that bring together multiple media and/or arts (without morphological change/integration, while maintaining a hierarchy between them) into one art-product (e. g. literary-musical-dance) which is perfectly capable of existing and transmitting messages to audiences without one or other media/arts included in its composition. As an example, an installation or a multimedia work can mix any arts, but if one artwork is excluded, the remaining media can still

*be* and make the art-product transmit its message, albeit in a slightly different form than initially intended by the artist (at times, a medium/art is included “for its own sake” without adding anything to the final/larger artwork). On the other hand, epigenetic-intermedial arts could not exist without other art forms which blend together – chanting, singing, narrative, body movements, visual and other arts: for example, the musical composition and singing, the show and the images depicted as *patachitra* performance, also the selves of the performers, are intrinsically connected. Similarly, in *Kathakali* the musical performance could not be without the body painting, the acting, well-structured dance and costumes, and so on. In these cases, if one takes away some art forms from the unified composition, a product still remains, but it is something else – neither *patachitra* performance (but only *paṭa* painting), nor *Kathakali*, and so on.

Within each Indian art form resides the dance of creation performed by Shiva (Nataraja), a great conception which is, in Coomaraswamy’s words, “a synthesis of science, religion and art” (2013, 61). It is equally a metaphoric dance of the inner intermedial processes at work in art. In other words, key are not the components (important as they are), but the dynamic process, the historical inputs, and the mechanisms that function jointly in harmony to make the intermedial creation possible. There are cases of epigenetic intermediality in the West too, but as a constitutive element, this intermediality involves, but also feeds on and plays with, constructing and deconstructing distinct meanings, values, mechanisms, and processes; it has specific sociocultural substance and currency in Indian and other Asian arts. It is also related to the signifying practices which create new realities, contexts of performance, and intensity in artistic conception, expression, and reception as an experience (including *rasa* aesthetics) with its specificity in each case of interaction between viewer and the art.

New media in the study of literature and other arts require new skills, the emergence of new perspectives that might have been unimaginable a few decades ago. It is by virtue of pushing the boundaries of disciplines, of venturing onto new paths of comparison, that the future of comparative literary and cultural studies will expand (see also Ceciu 2013b). The perspectives discussed here are preliminaries to further possible research into intermediality in India and other cultures. In fact, it is precisely in comparisons between texts and theories pertaining to distant cultures that we find a higher potential for bringing forth queries and findings that limiting ourselves to a single culture might not allow.

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Dora Nunes Gago

## Intertextual Encounters between Jorge de Sena and Manuel Bandeira

**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to analyse the echoes of the modernist Brazilian poet Manuel Bandeira in the poetry of the Portuguese writer Jorge de Sena. Following the theoretical approaches of Julia Kristeva, Harold Bloom, and Antoine Compagnon, we will analyse the mechanisms of intertextuality present in some of Sena's poems dedicated to Manuel Bandeira, such as "Poema desentranhado de um poema de Manuel Bandeira," "Nos Setenta anos do poeta Manuel Bandeira," and "Morte de Manuel Bandeira." We will discuss the concept of influence and the affinities between the two writers – who met in person and became friends – as manifested in references, quotations, and the use of similar subjects. Finally, we will try to see how the intertextual dialogue with Bandeira could be one way to define Sena's original poetry and how, by describing his "master," Manuel Bandeira, Sena is able to draw his own portrait as a poet.

**Keywords:** affinities, intertextuality, Jorge de Sena, Manuel Bandeira, modernism

When the Portuguese writer Jorge de Sena (1919–1978) decided to go into "self-exile" in Brazil in August 1959, he already occupied an important place on the cultural scene – he had published works and collaborated on the magazine *Presença* [Presence] and with the *Cadernos de Poesia* group. This decision to leave Portugal was motivated by his involvement in the failed attempt to bring down the dictatorial regime of Salazar known as the *Golpe da Sé*, or the Sé Coup, planned to take place on 11–12 March 1959 (Santos 2001, 67). He lived in Brazil for six years and taught at the universities of Assis and Araraquara until 1965, when he left and moved to the US. This experience of exile in Brazil, the native land of Manuel Bandeira (1886–1968), a poet whom Sena greatly admired and who is considered a model for his poetry, would intensify, as we shall see, the presence and memory of Bandeira in Sena's work; we are dealing here with the "memory of literature" that Tiphaine Samoyault refers to as intertextuality conceived in a unified form (2005, 6).

Jorge de Sena's interest in Brazilian literature and culture is widely documented in his *Estudos de Cultura e Literatura Brasileira* [Studies on Brazilian Culture and Literature], published posthumously by his wife, Mécia de Sena. This work includes forty-eight studies, reviews, chronicles, and conference papers by Sena about and relating to Brazil. In this study, we will focus on how Jorge de

Sena received and read one of the most important poets of Brazilian modernism: Manuel Bandeira.

Manuel Bandeira, considered one of the most prolific Brazilian poets of the twentieth century (Moraes 2017), was a multifaceted poet whose work is marked by a confluence of literary styles (from Parnassianism to modernism, passing through symbolism) that the author never fully assimilated, following instead his own distinctive literary path (Negreiros 2009, 30). Being one of the pre-eminent voices of modern Brazilian poetry, Bandeira brought informal language, everyday life, prosaic facts, and day-to-day experiences to poetry, experimenting with new rhythms and images, oscillating between genuine humour, criticism, and the metaphysical melancholy of universal lyricism. Without a doubt, the originality and authenticity of this Brazilian poet, allied to a revolutionary tendency typical of modernism, aroused the deep admiration of Jorge de Sena, which can be seen through intertextuality. Before beginning to analyse the poems and texts that testify to the dialogue between the two writers, it is therefore important for us to define in general terms the theoretical framework in which the study is rooted.

We should begin by mentioning that the concept of intertextuality as defined by Julia Kristeva in 1966 and inspired by the work of Bakhtin presents the text initially as a space where relational processes are the focus of analysis at the expense of static structures (Friedman 1991, 147). Consequently, the text emerges as the result of a dialogue between various works in an intersection between words and ideas. Thus, any text becomes an amalgamation of quotations; or rather, as Kristeva says, “any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double” (1980, 66). This line of thought is taken up by Laurent Jenny when he says that, “outside of intertextuality, the literary work would be quite simply imperceptible in the same way as an utterance in an as yet unknown language” (1979, 5).<sup>1</sup> In his turn, Graham Allen claims that “intertextuality, one of the central ideas in contemporary literary theory, is not a transparent term and so, despite its confident utilization by many theorists and critics, cannot be evoked in an uncomplicated manner” (2011, 2).

Taking as our starting point, therefore, a comprehensive notion of intertextuality and the theoretical foundations of Kristeva, Bakhtin, Genette, and others, we will analyse the intertextual dialogue between Jorge de Sena and the modernist Brazilian poet Manuel Bandeira. Along with the concept of intertextuality, we will also consider the concept of influence, following Harold Bloom’s thoughts, and the question of literary models, drawing on the theoretical presuppositions of Adrian

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<sup>1</sup> All translations in this article are my own unless otherwise indicated.

Marino (1998) and Álvaro Manuel Machado (1986, 15). According to Adrian Marino, models are analogical, isomorphic constructions that correspond to the theoretical and abstract description of a structure, and that make it possible to explain the function and organization that are constants of the system while always integrating a creative function (1998, 206). In his turn, Álvaro Manuel Machado raises the question of the status of the literary model, distinguishing productive models from reference models (1986, 17). A productive model is one that provokes and awakens “literary re-creation” on the level of both writing and the history of ideas; a reference model, situated on a plane further removed from admiration or affinity, is an element that is frequently mentioned, does not fall within the fundamental nature of the work, and is not structurally assimilated but becomes above all the recollection of a vague and fragmentary vision of a whole (Machado 1994, 285).

These are, in brief, the theoretical foundations that will guide our analysis of Jorge de Sena’s “encounter” with Manuel Bandeira as it is materialized through intertextuality.

## 1 Encounters with Manuel Bandeira’s poetry

In the above-mentioned work entitled *Estudos de Cultura e Literatura Brasileira*, Jorge de Sena dedicates over fifty pages to the Brazilian poet Manuel Bandeira. According to Frederick Williams (1983), who went through the writer’s library, Sena received ten books from Bandeira. The memorable first personal encounter between Jorge de Sena and Manuel Bandeira took place in London in 1957, two years before Sena went into exile. Sena recalls this meeting in a text entitled “Londres e Dois Grandes Poetas” [London and Two Great Poets], in which he reveals the emotion he felt on meeting personally such a respected poet and the fact that, on a personal level, Manuel Bandeira “the man” exerted the same charm on him as the poet did. He characterizes him as a “grand seigneur,” praising his natural dignity and humility, his human warmth, and his hypercivilized attitude (Sena 1988, 122). Indeed, Manuel Bandeira, a poet who was linked to the Brazilian first modernist group and whose objective was to completely revolutionize Brazilian literature, was considered by Jorge de Sena to be “a master.” In fact, in a lecture given on 25 April 1956, Sena said:

Manuel Bandeira é, para mim, como que um mestre: ou, mais do que isso, a sua poesia é como aquele banho lustral, tão raro, do qual, nas horas amargas da vida ou nos instantes mais vacilantes da poesia, saímos reanimados, reconstruídos, e no entanto, admiravelmente simplificados [...] É ele talvez o que oferece à poesia de língua portuguesa um mais puro exemplo de total libertação poética. (Sena 1988, 111)



[Manuel Bandeira is, for me, like a master; or, more than that, his poetry is like that extremely rare lustral basin from which, in life's bitter hours or in poetry's more vacillating moments, we emerge revived, rebuilt, and yet remarkably simplified. (...) It is perhaps he who offers Portuguese poetry a purer example of poetic liberation.]

Moreover, Sena recognizes that Manuel Bandeira is not merely his master but the master of his whole generation, since he taught them that “a poesia escrita em português podia ao mesmo tempo ser libérrima e disciplinada, intelectual e puramente sensível, e embebida de uma profunda humanidade sem limites no espaço e no tempo da vida” [poetry written in Portuguese could at one and the same time be very free yet disciplined, intellectual yet purely sensible, and imbued with a profound humanity that knows no limits in space and in the time of life] (Sena 1988, 126).

This admiration is emphasized throughout the texts he wrote about Manuel Bandeira, regardless of whether they have a critical or a memorial tone. Sena reveals a profound admiration for “a lição de humildade do poeta” [the poet's lesson in humility], greatly admiring his poetic freedom, spontaneity, and close attention to the apparently most insignificant aspects of life, and considers him to be the author of a “gloriosa obra” [glorious *oeuvre*], full of passion and wisdom (Sena 1988, 120). One of the affinities between Sena and Bandeira is, as Maria da Natividade Gonçalves (2012, 28–31) notes, their reference to the process of writing poetry as one in which the poem emerges as a thing of essence, something that imposes itself on the conscious mind like an urgent and cathartic need from which it is not possible to escape. Another element of poetic affinity between them is the importance of visual perception as a central element in their poetry, the pertinence of light as a founding element associated with a sudden and transcendent vision. In this context, as Luís Adriano Carlos remarks, “o clarão é a metáfora da aparição súbita da poesia” [the lightning-flash is the metaphor for the sudden appearance of poetry] (1999, 32). Thus, the birth of poetry is like a revelation, an epiphany, just as Manuel Bandeira wrote in *Itinerário de Pasárgada* [Itinerary of Pasárgada]: “os versos que eu fizera em menino por divertimento, principiaria então a fazê-los por necessidade, por fatalidade” [the lines I had written as a child for fun, I then began to write out of necessity, out of inevitability] (1984, 28). Both authors perpetuate the idea of the inspired poet that permeated romanticism. Therefore, as Luís Adriano Carlos says, “o pensamento poético aparece na infraestrutura da visão. E esta aparição é a revelação do discurso como estrutura que faz ver” [poetic thought appears within the infrastructure of vision. And this appearance is the revelation of the discourse as the structure that makes one see] (1999, 39).

In addition to this, the intertextual process through which Bandeira's poetry finds echoes in the verses of Sena is also marked by a work of assimilation and transformation, as takes place, albeit in a different manner, in Sena's “Poema

desentranhado de um poema de Manuel Bandeira” [Poem Extricated from a Poem by Manuel Bandeira], probably written on 18 January 1970. The intertext on which this poem by Sena is based is Manuel Bandeira’s poem entitled “Pensão familiar” [Two-Star Hotel] published in 1930 in the book *Libertinagem* [Libertinism] – a work clearly influenced by the modernist aesthetic in which a poetic transposition of external reality is effected by superimposing objectivity to the detriment of the subjectivity of the “I.” The central focus of this humorous and satirical poem is a kitten that “faz pipi” [takes a piss] and covers up the “mijadela” [puddle] (Bandeira 1993, 91; trans. Slater 1989, 73). What is noticeable is Bandeira’s use of a type of language that crosses the boundaries of colloquialism as it is almost coarse – in fact, the modernist’s concern with the use of freer language, drawn from everyday life, is clearly evident. After having been compared to a waiter, the kitten’s attitude is considered to be superior to that of humans as “sai vibrando com elegância a patinha direita:/ É a única criatura fina na pensãozinha burguesa” [he goes off, elegantly shaking his right paw/ – the only superior creature in the little two-star hotel] (Bandeira 1993, 91; trans. Slater 1989, 73). In this respect, we become aware of Bandeira’s criticism, impregnated with irony and humour, of the bourgeois society of the time. In the same way, a sarcastic tone also runs through the poem that Jorge de Sena “desentranha” [extricates] from Bandeira’s and which is summed up in two lines constructed around a chiasmus: “Um gatinho faz pipi/ Um pipi faz gatinho” [A kitten takes a pussy’s piss/ A pussy makes a kitten] (Sena 1980, 21). This suggests the erotic dimension of procreation, attributing to the text a different and original perspective and theme. As Ana Paula Mendes and Graça Cruz point out, we can find in this poetic experience with its concretist tone “a morphophonemic playfulness, developed through the homophonous power of language,” through the chiasmus just mentioned (1992, 316). In this case, the quotation is reintegrated and transformed in the text that receives it. This follows the line of thought of Antoine Compagnon, who develops the idea of quotation as a model of all literary writing since the work of writing is rooted in “rewriting” and endowed with the capacity to unite the dispersed elements in one coherent and continuous whole (1996, 39). According to Renate Lachmann,

in order to describe intertextual reference to elements of other texts, a metonymic type would have to be distinguished from a metaphorical one, with the help of rhetorical categories. The appropriation of texts occurs differently according to whether they are in a relation of contiguity or a relation of similarity. (Lachmann 2008, 305)

Here, then, in Jorge de Sena’s works, we can note a metonymic tendency in the use of quotations, hidden allusions, and so on.

As a result, the intertextual process by which Bandeira’s poetry has echoes in Sena’s is also manifested in dedications. According to Genette, they are part of the

paratext of a work and establish a private, intellectual relationship, real or symbolic, that serves the work as an element that enhances its value or as a topic of comment (1982, 138). In effect, Sena dedicated several poems to Manuel Bandeira that we will mention here: “Nos Setenta anos do poeta Manuel Bandeira” [On the Seventieth Birthday of the Poet Manuel Bandeira] (Sena 1988, 67), “Nos Setenta e cinco anos do poeta” [On the Seventy-Fifth Birthday of the Poet] (71), “Morte de Manuel Bandeira” [Death of Manuel Bandeira] (109), and “Meditação em King’s Road” [Meditation on King’s Road] (43). These dedications therefore mark important moments in Sena’s personal meetings with Manuel Bandeira (in the case of “Meditação”), or their poetic encounter (through the evocation of two important birthdays and Bandeira’s permanence and importance even after his death). Of the poems cited above, it is pertinent to look at the poem entitled “Nos Setenta anos do poeta Manuel Bandeira,” dated 19 April 1956, because of its theme. This poem focuses on the theme of growing old and death, and considers that the voice of the poet overcomes this circumstance of the human condition: “A tua voz, ó poeta, não pode envelhecer,/ se envelhecer é não sentir as graças da linguagem” [Your voice, poet, cannot grow old,/ if growing old means not to feel the graces of language] (Sena 1988, 151). Following this, the intertextuality that impregnates Bandeira’s poetry is evoked; in other words, and speaking generally, all the other poetry on which it is based is evoked, although names are not mentioned and mention is only made of “outros que viveram, que sofreram, que/ escreveram versos quais os teus resumem” [others that lived, that suffered, that/ wrote verses which yours summarize] (Sena 1988, 151). Importance is therefore given to the knowledge that has been acquired by reading throughout the history of literature. Shelley’s idea that “poets of all ages contributed to one Great Poem perpetually in progress” (Bloom 1997, 19) is brought to mind. Nevertheless, in addition to the recognition of a synthetic work of universal poetry in which the past enriches the present in a continuous historical flow, Bandeira is also recognized for his capacity for poetic innovation and transformation. Therefore, as Sena says, always addressing his interlocutor, the poet Manuel Bandeira, in a constant dialogue:

toda a poesia a ti concorre, toda,  
 e tu, singelo e humilde, sábio e juvenil,  
 a pegas delicado em teu fervor sem mácula,  
 e a ressuscitas nova, em português, eterna. (Sena 1988, 151)

[all poetry comes to you, all,  
 and you, simple and humble, wise and young,  
 take hold of it delicate in your unsullied fervour,  
 and resuscitate it anew, in Portuguese, eternal.]

Here we find a clear allusion to Manuel Bandeira's innovative power of synthesis and transformation. His work thus becomes new and universal, starting from the poetic tradition (“toda a poesia a ti concorre” [all poetry comes to you]). The word “ressuscitas” [resuscitate] alludes to the originality and poetic renewal brought about by the Brazilian poet and also emphasizes the eternal nature of Bandeira's poetry, which the lyrical subject addresses while also revealing the single and unique tenor of his own voice:

a minha voz sozinha te dirijo,  
para que a vejas, a recebas, nessa  
alegria de estar vivo e ouvir  
a música pensada, a música secreta.

[my lone voice I address to you,  
so that you might see it, receive it, in that  
joy to be alive and to hear  
the learnt music, the secret music.] (Sena 1988, 151)

As Francisco Cota Fagundes (2009, 80) points out, this poem goes beyond the mere aim of portraying the poet Manuel Bandeira. It is constructed in a fusion of the portrait of the master and the self-portrait of the lyrical subject in that the poem has themes running through it – the “joy to be alive,” music, solitude – that could be incorporated within Sena's cosmovision. The idea of a solitary “I” inhabited by the feeling of an ontological exile is emphasized. Finally, the poem ends with the vocative “Amigo e Mestre” [Friend and Master], both capitalized, expressing profound gratitude for the poet's legacy and commitment:

E deixa-me dizer-te, meu Amigo e Mestre,  
um obrigado simples, sem pensamento ou forma,  
um obrigado apenas, porque existes,  
e porque não foste embora p'ra Pasárgada,  
e a deste contigo francamente a todos nós.

[And let me say to you, my Friend and Master,  
a simple thank you, with no thought or form,  
a mere thank you, because you exist,  
and because you did not go away to Pasárgada,  
and granted it with you frankly to all of us.] (Sena 1988, 152)

In the excerpt quoted above, we should also underline Sena's acknowledged gratitude for the fact that Bandeira did not go to Pasárgada – a desire revealed in the poem “Vou-me embora para a Pasárgada” [I'm heading off to Pasárgada], which is also part of the work *Libertinagem*, in which the poetic subject reveals the ironic

elusiveness of a dream that is impossible to fulfil through escapism (a much-appreciated Romantic aesthetic) and the desire to take refuge in a perfect place, in a city where he can make use of the benefits of the technological evolution corresponding to modernist tastes: “Em Pasárgada tem tudo/ É outra civilização/ [...] / Tem telefone automático/ Tem alcalóide à vontade” [Pasárgada has all you could want/ (Another civilization [...]) / (...) / they’ve got dial telephones./ They are plenty of good-looking hookers/ just waiting for someone to hold] (Bandeira 2013, 90; trans. Slater 1989, 105). In effect, this poem, which has become one of Bandeira’s most famous works, clearly reveals his capacity for innovation, since this desired paradise has *sui generis* characteristics that distance it from the pleasant rural space idealized by the neo-classical poets, and so it becomes the space of Freedom.

Later, Sena wrote a poem dated 15 May 1961 called “Nos Setenta e cinco anos do poeta.” There is no reference in the title to Manuel Bandeira’s name, which thus serves to emphasize his importance in Sena’s universe and his status as a literary model – he is not a poet, but rather “the poet.” However, in the second stanza we come across an allusion to the “poet of Pasárgada.” This allusion to the imaginary city – although the name was originally that of a city founded by Cyrus, king of the Persians – converted by Bandeira into the space of Freedom clearly identifies to whom the poem is addressed.

In addition, the last two lines accentuate the lasting nature of Bandeira’s writing as well as the ontological act of writing, here permeated by the antithetical life–death combination: “Porque escrever é morte, mas o escrito,/ se o foi por ti, Manuel, não morre mais” [Because to write is death, but what is written,/ if it was by you, Manuel, dies no more] (Sena 1988, 152). Consequently, Bandeira’s writing is considered immortal, remaining as an echo of life after death.

## 2 Conclusion

Through the presence of Manuel Bandeira in Sena’s poetic work, we have looked at how literary memory can be traced through mechanisms of intertextuality, or, in other words, following Samoyault’s line of thought, how literature feeds on literature itself (2005, 15). Intertextual behaviour marked by profound admiration is clearly demonstrated, for example, in the dedications. Thus, Manuel Bandeira is inscribed in Sena’s work as a reference model (Machado 1986, 90). Despite the clear affinities, the reception of Bandeira’s work does not correspond to an authentic influence if we understand the latter as “assimilation inside the creative process itself and the profound transfiguration of the influencing elements”

(Machado 1986, 91). In this case, the existing “influence” can only be conceived, as Nietzsche or Emerson described it (see Bloom 1997, 20), as “vitalization,” and never as imitation or a shadow that darkens originality or poetic freedom.

On the other hand, the image constructed of the “master,” Manuel Bandeira, in the poems Sena dedicates to him, is woven by means of ideas, feelings, and themes (such as growing old and death) that are transposed from Sena’s poetry to Manuel Bandeira’s. Here, a metonymic process is followed in which, at times, Sena’s poetic “I” is projected into the poems dedicated to Bandeira. Thus his homage to the “master” coincides with a process of revelation and self-discovery on the part of the “disciple” faithful to the lessons of originality and freedom espoused by Bandeira. These are also evidenced by his social criticism and his interest in all that is human.

Thus, we can see that, through his unique sensibility and imagination, Sena, the multifaceted author of a vast bibliography of some eighty works, succeeds in integrating the poetic message of Manuel Bandeira, especially through the transposition of the external, of the everyday, to poetry, in a decisive dislocation of poetic attention. In fact, in his view, poetry expresses “a confrontation with life, in its circumstantiality” (Jackson 1981, 211), revealed through an interrogative discourse that blends interventionist content with confessional content and tradition with modernity – elements that also run through Bandeira’s poetry. Basically, both marked a new era and a new dimension for Portuguese-language poetry, guided by an ethical value and anchored in a dream of a kingdom of Freedom.

Let us end by saying that we could therefore apply to Bandeira and Sena the words of Wordsworth in his *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* (1802):

In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs; in spite of things silently destroyed; the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. (quoted in Sena 1988, 120)

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Alexander Vladimirovich Kalashnikov

# References to Music in the Translations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* into Russian

**Abstract:** The article studies the references to music in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and their renditions in its Russian translations. The material of the research consists of three translations containing thirteen cases of musical references. To assess the quality of the translations, an approach was developed on the basis of the criteria of musical genre, period of Russian translation/analogue, and vocabulary, syntax, and register. This method helped in selecting the translations which may be regarded as successful, even if they have employed a degree of poetic licence, in rendering the idea and pragmatics of the source text. Analogues based on Russian lyrics made the text domesticated, making the translations closer to the Russian analogues rather than Carroll's verses.

**Keywords:** *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, analogues, music, translation into Russian

## 1 Introduction

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (hereafter *AW*) by Lewis Carroll has been studied in various fields. Within the domain of language and intercultural communication, it presents a special example of persistent interest among translators attempting to render the nature of the book in a way that captures the various features of the text. An aspect underestimated in theory but important in practice is rendering the musical references using analogues represented by parodied song texts or lyrics based mostly on nineteenth-century music. This article will argue that analogues based on song texts of the target-language culture are an efficient approach to rendering the parody in Carroll's work if properly selected and modified. Hence, the present research presents a means of examining analogues based on song texts in translations, and may be used for studying and comparing multiple translations.

This article promotes the study of the transcultural and intertextual features in *AW* (Carroll 1978), in particular the musical aspect, and the search for new translation tools and their evaluation. The subject matter of the research is the references to music in the book and how they are rendered in its Russian transla-

tions. There are more than twenty translations of the book; the article will focus on the translations and adaptations by Solovyova (Carroll, trans. Solovyova 1909), Florya (Carroll, trans. Florya 2006) and Blekhman (Carroll, trans. Blekhman 2011). These translations were the most consistent in employing analogues based on music and lyrics of Russian origin. The novelty of the research lies in studying the musical component in literature in the context of translation. The article proposes a method of analysing and assessing analogues used in the translation of parodied poetic texts, including lyrics. The objectives planned for the research are (a) to show the relevance for translation of parody in Carroll's book, (b) to present the ways of rendering musical references through analogues in the Russian translations, and (c) to determine the degree of resemblance between source text and translation.

## 2 Material and methods

The article will consider translations into which the aspect of music is incorporated. The translations are those of Solovyova (1909), Florya (2006), and Blekhman (2011), from which four, five, and three analogues respectively for rendering musical references have been selected. The material of the research per se is made up of the verses from *AW* set to music (group 1), the tunes presumably sung by the characters (group 2), and the verses rendered into Russian with arbitrary song lyrics (group 3). Group 1 includes *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*, based on the poem by J. Taylor and set to the tune of a French folk song, and *Beautiful Soup*, based on the lyrics of *Star of the Evening* by J. M. Sayles. Group 2 includes the verses which are supposed to be songs in the book: the lullaby *Speak Roughly*, based on a poem by W. Bates, and *The Lobster-Quadrille*, based on verses by M. Howitt. Group 3 is represented by the translations of the poems *How Doth the Little Crocodile* and *The Letter in the Trial*.

The composers whose music was incorporated into the parodies are A. Alyabiev (*Vecherniy zvon* [Those Evening Bells], *Solovey* [Nightingale]), A. Rubinstein (*Ptichka bozhiya* [Divine Bird]), P. Bulakhov (*Gori, gori, moya zvezda* [Shine, Shine, My Star]), B. Flis (*Spi, moya radost', usni* [Sleep, My Joy, Sleep]), A. Verstovskiy (*Troika*), A. Spadavecchia (*Dobriy zhuk* [Kind Beetle]), and G. Gladkov (*Ah mozhet, ah mozhet ...* [May It Be, May It Be ...]); there are also the folk songs *Chizhik-pyzhik*, *Korobeiniki* [The Pedlars], and *Bayu, bayu-bayushki, bayu* [Lulla, Lulla, Lullaby]. The poets whose lyrics were used in the music were A. Pushkin, I. Kozlov, A. Delvig, V. Chuevskiy, F. Glinka, N. Nekrasov, F. Gotter, E. Schwartz, and E. Uspenskiy.

The method developed for the research is based on benchmarking that aims to assess the quality of translation, and on the existing practice of using data collected on the basis of a set of criteria. The criteria applied in this research are a combination of lexical, syntactic, and stylistic means and analogues of genres in the translations. An approach common in assessing achievement in general, and in particular assessment in education (*Common European Framework* 2001, 190), facilitated the transition from an impression to a considered judgement. This approach is especially relevant for assessing a vague area of poetic translation and the rendition of parodies, because a variety of criteria makes the assessment of translation fairer and more balanced.

To demonstrate the efficiency of analogues based on song lyrics and to hence prove the hypothesis, poems from three translations from different periods, which regularly apply analogues based on song lyrics, have been selected. Thirteen cases of translated poems were examined in terms of their consistency with the English text. It is proposed that the degree of resemblance between the English and Russian versions be measured on the basis of the rendition of Carroll's intention, as seen either in the burlesque or subversive nature of the poems; the choice of the musical genre and the year of the hypotext; and the application of linguistic parameters and the degree of their transformation (lexical, syntactic, and stylistic levels). The lexical level is assessed using the number of notional words which were changed or added in the Russian version compared to the English one for the purposes of parody. The syntactic level is assessed using the number of sentences and their types (neutral, interrogative, or exclamatory types of sentence). The stylistic level is assessed using the linguistic register of the words. A match in terms of these criteria between hypotexts and hypertexts in the source text and translation will mean an adequate correspondence between the source and target texts. The results of the analysis will be calculated and presented in a summarized manner. The approach will identify the translations with most parameters met, which will show the efficiency of analogues based on song lyrics, identifying the genres applied and tendencies in rendering either the burlesque or subversive nature of Carroll's poems.

### 3 The relevance of music in Carroll's work

Music was a significant part of Carroll's life that was projected onto his magnum opus. The writer was a connoisseur of opera and church music. In *AW*, conceived not only as a story but an operetta (Wakeling 2015, 189), a special feature is seen in parody. Interpretation of the parodies differs. Some scholars regard them as

primarily subversive (Updike 1965, 198) because they reject the morals of Victorian England. However, burlesque features of the poems were discussed by Gardner, a most authoritative and well-known commentator of the book (Gardner 2000, 356). This division in attitudes to the poems may also be traced in the translations, and the parameters (subversive or burlesque) that apply to the verses may be traced in them. A definition based on the analysis of earlier interpretations of the concept of parody is presented by N. Korkut. She writes: “parody is an intentional imitation – of a text, style, genre, or discourse – which includes an element of humour and which has an aim of interpreting its target in one way or another [...]. The last phrase of my definition – ‘an aim of interpreting its target in one way or another’ is related to the attitude exhibited by the work of parody towards its target” (2005, 21). This definition shows that a parodied text is based on intertextuality. We shall emphasize this when it comes to literary works. Intertextuality depends on the interaction between the parody text, which is a hypertext, and the text referred to in a parodied form, which is a hypotext. For instance, the lyrics of the lullaby *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* are a hypotext, and Carroll’s parody, *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Bat*, is a hypertext. Hereafter, the analysis will cover hypotexts and hypertexts in both the original text and its translations. The sources briefly outlined above concerned the poems without their musical features, but the current study will take references to music into consideration.

## 4 Analysis

As has been stated, parodies presuppose identifying and understanding the source text for the parody. The hypotexts of the poems created in the nineteenth century were well known to children in Victorian England (Hahn 2015, 19).

*Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Bat*, performed by the Hatter in chapter 7, is based on the lullaby *Star* with lyrics by J. Taylor. The music has been known since the eighteenth century as *Ah! Vous dirai-je, maman*. The song text is written in a neutral register. The lyrics represent a monologue addressed to a star accompanying a traveller. The star is compared to a diamond, while in the parody a bat is compared to a tea-tray. In Carroll’s parody, the star is replaced with a bat. The overall idea of the poem is burlesque. In three instances, the changes in the hypertext are located (“star” – “bat,” “so high” – “you fly,” “diamond” – “tea-tray”) at the end of a line. In the last line, “diamond” is substituted with “tea-tray.” Besides, Carroll repeats the words “Twinkle, twinkle” as a refrain after the stanza. The hypotext consists of two sentences: one narrative and one exclamatory. Carroll’s hypertext is made up of four sentences.

In chapter 10, the Gryphon and Mock Turtle sing *Beautiful Soup*, which parodies *Star of the Evening* by the American amateur poet and musician J. M. Sayles. The song, published in 1855, was devoted to a star – the evening star (a possible poetic reference to the planet Venus). The general idea of the parodied poem is burlesque. Changes in the hypertext in terms of vocabulary can be found on eight occasions: “star” was substituted with “soup” seven times, and “beautiful” was repeated. The lyrics consist of five neutral sentences with neutral lexis. Carroll’s parody, *Beautiful Soup*, consists of thirteen sentences, nine of which are exclamatory and four interrogative, with no neutral sentences. The register of the hypertext is lower compared to the hypotext; in particular, an intentional violation of register can be observed in an irregular division of the syllables in the gap in “pennyworth [*sic*].” The traces of the song and musicality of the poem can be seen in the hyphens used for drawing syllables: “Beau-tiful Soo-oop!”

Carroll also included the poems that are presumably sung in the book, in particular the lullaby *Speak Roughly*. The hypotext, *Speak Gently* by the American poet D. Bates, consists of two song stanzas and two choruses. The second stanza of the hypertext reflects the first one by rephrasing the first line of the poem, “Speak roughly to your little boy,” as “I speak severely to my boy.” The parodied part is the first line of the poem, “Speak gently to your little child,” which became “Speak roughly to your little boy,” with three words (two notional words) being changed: “gently” to “roughly,” and “child” to “boy.” The tone of the poem is neutral, even though it describes a negative idea: in the parody, tender love for a child is opposed by sneezing because of pepper. The hypertext by Carroll represents an idea inconsistent with the morals of Victorian England and hence is subversive.

*The Lobster-Quadrille* parodies the poem *The Spider and the Fly* by M. Howitt, published in 1829. The poem represents a piece of cautionary poetry for children. The idea of danger is traced in Carroll’s text as well, so the latter did not intend to subvert the idea but to render it in a burlesque manner. Carroll’s *Lobster-Quadrille* is made up of seventeen sentences, seven of which are interrogative and three exclamatory. The register of the lexis is neutral. The English hypotext and hypertext are of neutral register; both contain neutral sentences and questions, but Carroll added exclamations. Howitt’s text is made up of twenty-two sentences, and Carroll’s numbers eleven. The changes in the parodied fragment are represented by seven words (four notional words): “into my parlour” becomes “a little faster,” and “the spider to the fly” becomes “a whiting to a snail.” The characters are turned from the insects “spider” and “fly” into “whiting” and “snail.”

The features of the English hypo- and hypertexts were expected to correlate with the hypo- and hypertexts in the translations. To research the approaches to translation and measure their performance, the characteristics of the transla-

tions were compared. The Russian translations were assessed in terms of criteria related to type of parody, musical genre, year, lexis, syntax, and register.

The episode with *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* has frequently been rendered using analogues in the Russian translations. For analogues, the translators chose the anonymous song *Chizhik-pyzhik* (once) and the romantic song *Solovey* by Alyabiev (twice). The parody is burlesque. This approach is found in the translations and renderings by Solovyova, Florya, and Blekhman. The most popular hypotext was the well-known Russian romantic song *Solovey*. It was composed by Alyabiev for lyrics by Delvig in the late 1820s. This analogue does not correspond with the genre of the lullaby *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*. The best translation according to our criteria was done by Blekhman. The back-translation of his Russian analogue is “Ant, my ant, fidget ant! Whe-e-re are you hurrying? Wh-y are you sleeping so little?”<sup>1</sup> Blekhman’s translation met five of the six criteria. He used drawling to show that this is a tune, for example: “Mu-u-ravey moy, mu-u-ravey [...].” A bat was replaced by an ant as protagonist. The hypertext was made up of three sentences, two interrogative and one exclamatory. However, no comparisons between bat and tea-tray or the idea of sky and flying were presented. Parody was mostly evident in the initial line and did not spread throughout the poem as it did with Carroll. The neutral register of the vocabulary was kept.

The other poem relevant for translation as a song text was *Soup of the Evening*. The main object described is soup. Translations with a musical basis were used in all the translations examined here. The melodies referred to are the song *Vecherniy zvon* and the romantic song *Gori, gori, moya zvezda*. The tunes were created before Carroll’s book and thus can serve as analogues to some extent. The translators Solovyova and Blekhman used the well-known song *Vecherniy zvon*. The criteria of genre and type of parody were preserved. Most of the translations considered in this article followed the majority of our criteria. The criteria of lexis and syntax were met less successfully. The number of sentences was one of the most challenging parameters, for the translators used fewer sentences. A variant which met all the criteria was proposed by Blekhman. The back-translation of his version is: “The evening soup, soup, soup, the evening soup, soup, soup is lovely to be licked from fat lips, lips, lips. It is not made of chicken but a fatted billfish. I have loved it since my young years and I cannot bear other dishes. The evening soup soup, soup, the evening dream, dream, dream has been cooked for our common joy.”

The works of the composers mentioned earlier were used as Russian analogues. Alyabiev’s song *Vecherniy zvon* was based on translated verses of the poet Thomas Moore. The Russian translator Ivan Kozlov produced a fine translation

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<sup>1</sup> All translations from Russian in this article are my own.

of them. The tune and verses were used by the translator Solovyova in the early twentieth century and by Blekhman in the twenty-first century. The idea of soup is represented in all the analogues. In Solovyova's text, the verses represent recollections about childhood. The song is a relevant analogue as it is a well-known Russian song with a solemn melody. Another translation of the song was made by Florya to the tune of *Gori, gori, moya zvezda*. To show that these are lyrics, drawling syllables are graphically represented. In Florya's version, the Russian currency, the rouble, is mentioned instead of "pennyworth," which makes the text sound more Russian.

The second group of poems where rendition with musical references is necessary includes *Speak Roughly*. Considering its poetic nature, some translators turned to the genre of lullabies. The translations were done by using corrupted lyrics of the two most popular lullabies in Russia: the folk song *Bayu, bayushki, bayu* and *Spi, moya radost', usni* (by the German-speaking composer B. Flis and the poet F. Gotter), the latter albeit in a lower register ("Sleep my nasty, sleep"; back-translation of the first line of Florya's parody). Florya mentions a popular Russian literary character, Barmaley, as an element of domestication. The variant by Blekhman is closer to the Russian lullaby, but this translator did not mention pepper so the poem does not explain why the baby cries. Blekhman managed to meet six criteria in his analogue based on the Russian lullaby. His version, in back-translation, is: "Sleep, baby, on the edge, so that when Wolfie comes, he will bite your side. Uaa-Ua! Sleep, baby, go to sleep, do not whimper and sneeze. Mom will sing a song, box her mite's ears."

For *The Lobster-Quadrille*, the Russian translations twice used borrowed music: first, in the early twentieth century, in the translation of Solovyova, and later in the translation of Blekhman. Solovyova incorporated the first line of the lyrics by Glinka from the song *Troika* by the Russian composer Verstovskiy: "A swift fish is rushing." In the later case, Blekhman incorporated a piece of incidental music, *Dobriy zhuk*, from the Soviet film *Zolushka* (1947). The music was composed by Spadavecchia. This hypotext contains eight sentences (neutral, with exclamations). Analysis shows the irrelevance of the translation. The year of the analogue, 1947, adds to its irrelevant status. The tone of both analogues is neutral. In the earlier case, the sea theme is represented, while in the later one we can read a funny verse about the inhabitants of the sea without the idea of the cautionary tale – "will you walk into my parlour?" – when crayfish and goby fish are mentioned. The song symbolizes the idea of friendship and kindness. The translations were examined, and Solovyova's meets all the requirements. The criterion of register has become challenging, and the two translators did not cope with it. Though the hypotext in English is a work typical of cautionary tales, the Russian texts did not make any reference to a work in that style. Blekhman



used a film song. Besides the choice of a twentieth-century song, inconsistencies were found in syntax and register. Solovyova applied only the first lines from the Russian romantic song *Troika*. Solovyova's variant in back-translation is "A swift fish is rushing – a whiting – on stones to the wave, the snail is behind and carries a shell on its back."

Translation with lyrics was not considered obligatory in the third group of verses. However, lyrics were employed occasionally. To render Alice's verse *How Doth the Little Crocodile*, lyrics were used. Solovyova parodied a well-known romantic song by A. Rubinstein with the lyrics of *Ptichka bozhiya* from Pushkin's long poem *Gypsies*. As the use of lyrics is optional in this group, the analysis will omit some criteria. The parodies under examination in this group are *How Doth the Little Crocodile* as rendered by Solovyova; *'Tis the Voice of the Lobster*, Alice's third poem, rendered by Florya as a parody to the tune *Ah mozhet, ah mozhet ...* from the Russian animation *Plastilinovaya vorona* [Plasticine Crow] of the 1980s; and *The Letter in the Trial*, read by the White Rabbit, adapted with *Korobeiniki* in Florya's rendition. The latter two translations were based on less suitable hypotexts: the folk song did not match the poem read by Alice, and using the song from a Soviet animation was not a reasonable choice either as the period of the analogue should have some correlation with that of the original.

The poem rendered by Solovyova can be regarded as the translation closest to Carroll's text. The back-translation is: "Divine crocodile does not care either about work or labour. He does not rent apartments and hire servants. He sleeps at night in the ooze; when the red Sun rises, the crocodile, having warmed his back, clicks with his teeth and swims away." The issue with the other translations is the extent of parody, which is relevant given that Carroll parodied the first two stanzas of Watts's text rather accurately.

## 5 Results and discussion

To summarize the data obtained by means of benchmarking, some trends require mentioning. *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* was rendered three times. The lyrics parodied in the translations to fit the tune were borrowed from *Chizhik-pyzhik* and *Solovey*. *Beautiful Soup* was rendered with lyrics three times. The parodies were based on the lyrics of the song *Vecherniy zvon* (twice) and the romantic song *Gori, gori moya zvezda* (once). The largest number of analogues based on lyrics is presented in the translation by Florya, where there are five cases: *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star – Solovey*; *Beautiful Soup – Gori, gori, moya zvezda*; *My Star – Spi, moya radost', usni*; *'Tis the Voice of the Lobster – Ah mozhet, ah mozhet ...*; and *The Letter*

in the *Trial – Korobeiniki*. One of the analogues in Florya's translation relates to the animation *Plastilinovaya vorona*. The rest of the lyrics were drawn from the music of the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries. The translator additionally used a song text (*Korobeiniki*) for the letter read by the White Rabbit. Solovyova used lyrics in four cases: *Twinkle – Chizhik-pyzhik*; *Beautiful Soup – Vecherniy zvon*; *The Lobster-Quadrille – Troika*; and *How Doth the Little Crocodile – Ptichka bozhiya*. All the lyrics were based on nineteenth-century music. Hence, Solovyova's choices may be considered the most successful. Blekhman, who produced his translation in the early 2000s, coped with most poetic passages successfully, as shown by the following three instances: *The Lobster-Quadrille – Dobriy zhuk*; *Beautiful Soup – Vecherniy zvon*; and *Lullaby – Bayu, bayushki, bayu*.

As the translations varied in quantity and quality, one task of this article was to reveal the approaches applied to rendering parodies using analogues based on music. The analysis of the translations has helped to show tendencies in the translations and may assist in presenting guidelines for dealing with musical analogues. The least successful cases should be considered *The Lobster-Quadrille* substituted with the song *Dobriy zhuk* (Blekhman's translation) and *'Tis the Voice of the Lobster* substituted with the analogue of *Ah mozhet, ah mozhet ...* (Florya's translation). These translations fit three criteria. All the parameters were met in the translation of *Speak Roughly* by Florya. This translation may be considered the one that most resembles Carroll's text in terms of our six criteria. Three translations by Blekhman and two translations by Solovyova fit five criteria and thus show a high degree of resemblance to the source text.

This study may allow us to identify which criteria the translators considered relevant and which they saw as insignificant. The approach taken here shows that the majority of the translators prioritized the type of parody and register (twelve out of thirteen cases). Attitudes to date and genre contrasted with one another: the criterion of date was followed in twelve cases while genre was considered only in seven of thirteen cases, which shows that consistency between the hypo- and hypertexts was relevant to the translators. The criterion of lexis was more challenging – it was met in five out of thirteen cases. The syntactic pattern of parodies was rendered in slightly more cases – eight out of thirteen. The fidelity to the criterion of type of parody shows that, though the letter of the original was followed loosely, the spirit of the original text was preserved even with the incorporation of the musical references into the translations. As a recommendation for translators, it should be mentioned that, as far as translations incorporating analogues based on music are concerned, consistency in terms of genre and period may be appropriate. Parodied verses should avoid the realia of the target culture.

Applying musical analogues is ambivalent. It has the advantages represented by rendering the musical aspect of the original. In turn, it makes the text more

familiar and provides pragmatic adaptation. However, this deprives the translations covered in this article of proximity to foreign countries and cultures, which would be useful as an educational component, especially for children. The following negative features of the approach should be noted: using analogues does not let readers notice allusions, and it makes the text closer to the target text culture. In terms of the criteria proposed here, ignoring the genre and time of the analogue makes the text less relevant. In particular, the Hatter's song based on *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* should have been a lullaby, but the translators chose other genres, especially doggerels and romantic and other songs. The overuse of musical analogues may also be considered a disadvantage.

## 6 Conclusion

This article has shown that a number of Russian translations reflected the idea of the musical nature of *AW*, as is apparent in the thirteen examples from three translations considered here. The translations covered the period from the early twentieth century to the more recent past. Their approach to analogues based on music was relatively popular, and the translators used it in an appropriate manner. The research has suggested a criteria-based – and thus relatively clear and transparent – analysis of translations, which is not common in translation theory given the problem of assessing poetic translations or those incorporating poetic license. To assess the quality of translations, an approach was developed on the basis of the analogues with a focus on the major levels of language, especially vocabulary, syntax, and register. The method helped to select those translations which may be considered successful: even with a share of poetic license, they render the idea, tone, and pragmatics of the original. The lyrics from Russian melodies make the text domesticated, bring the translations closer to the Russian analogues rather than Carroll's verses. The analysis has shown that the use of analogues based on the lyrics from the culture of the target language is a feature of domestication. Although analogues may be a controversial tool, they are incorporated into the text of a foreign culture. Such analogues become an associated part of the original work, enabling the work to develop through new translations and acquire new meanings, hence making the original not something petrified but a work that develops in time and across cultures, and is thereby enriched.

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Giovanna Lucci

# Emma/Juremma: An Intersemiotic Translation of Jane Austen's *Emma* into Brazilian Culture

**Abstract:** The project described in this article focused on investigating and experimenting with the three main types of translation (interlingual, intralingual, and intersemiotic). Based on the concept of transcreation – here understood as a creative approach to translation – this research aimed to reimagine the novel *Emma*, written by Jane Austen in 1815. In attempting to bring two cultures and two very distinct time periods together, the research took as its primary motivation the study of the relationship between words and pictures. And, in addition to exploring how a text can be translated into another context, I studied the narrative flow of the story and the dynamics between its characters, performing several investigations into the variation of pace and rhythm, sound and image, and shapes and colours, as well as the translation of colour schemes and formal structures into visual elements. Throughout the whole process, aspects of Brazilian culture and imagery, as well as traits of the present era, were explored to ensure that the narrative would be able to reflect, at least in part, Brazilian culture, even though the final product is based on a piece of classic English literature.

**Keywords:** illustration, intersemiotic translation, reimagination, translation

## 1 Introduction

Throughout their lives, people develop their own ways of perceiving the world. These viewpoints vary, and can be as diverse as the array of people in the world, depending on backgrounds, cultures, and the ages in which people live. When Haroldo de Campos first introduced the concept of transcreation in his book *A arte no horizonte do provável* (first published in 1963), he used T. S. Eliot's comments on Gilbert Murray's translations of Euripides to justify the necessity of a creative approach to translation: "Necessitamos de um olho capaz de ver o passado em seu lugar com suas definidas diferenças em relação ao presente e, no entanto, tão cheio de vida que deverá parecer tão presente para nós como o próprio presente. Eis o olho criativo" [We need an eye which can see the past in its place with its definite differences from the present, and yet so lively that it shall be as present to us as the present. This is the creative eye] (Campos 2010, 110–111; my translation).

That idea, allied with Campos's concept of transcreation, was the starting point for this project. This research primarily aimed to bring two cultures, two ages, and two very different forms of narrative together in order to produce a reimagining of *Emma* (Austen 2008), written by Jane Austen in 1815, and involved broadening Campos's theories and applying them to narrative prose. By considering the characteristics of both Brazilian culture and the current era, the project was intended to create a reimagination that is capable of portraying another historical and spatial reality, while simultaneously preserving aspects of the original novel. The resultant new version of the book, which is more strongly integrated with the Brazilian context, is highly influenced by the country's popular culture and echoes the ways in which that culture is expressed. In addition to portraying Brazil's unique language and imagery, the project highlights the similarities between this reimagination and the original work by exploring the dialogue between the written word and images.

The research relates to questions of language, and its main focus was transporting a text into another context, producing an experimental project that involved the relationships between text and image, and exploring the three main types of translation (intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotic). The reimagination of the text in the Portuguese language, for example, took into account the sonority, customs, and particularities of Brazilian culture in order to characterize a different society in a different time, and thus generate possible plot changes. Although the translation processes were carried out mostly through comparison, free association, and the use of figurative language and metaphors, the methodology also included the translation of colour schemes, formal structures, pace and rhythm between sound and image, colours, and shapes.

## 2 Reimagining the novel

Overall, the research was divided into three main stages: the translation of the text from English into Portuguese (interlingual translation); the reimagination of the translated text, which aimed to incorporate elements of Brazilian culture into it (intralingual translation); and the visual translation of the reimagined text (intersemiotic translation). This division not only helped to organize the amount of work that had to be done and track my own progress; it was also a fundamental part of the project. As the introduction clearly states, this study was an interdisciplinary one and combined many disciplines and many interests, including those in the field of art and design.

As Carole Gray and Julian Malins state in their book entitled *Visualizing Research: A Guide to the Research Process in Art and Design* (2016), the key to getting effective results when conducting research like this is to establish appropriate research methodologies. Mapping the terrain and dividing the study into stages is part of this methodology, which also includes evaluating and analysing what was produced and documenting the creative process of translation. Therefore, dividing the research into parts and creating subdivisions for each stage helped to organize the workload and made analysis of the results more manageable.

Prior to beginning the translation and reimagination of the text, or even starting to elaborate on the images that would feature in the final product, the starting point of this research was an extensive investigation of the original work and its context. This examination favoured an in-depth understanding of not only the author's writing style and the linguistic resources that she employed, but also the story itself, and allowed each of the characters and their roles within the structure of the narrative to be outlined.

Placing *Emma* in its socio-historical context and then studying how it relates to its own time was an imperative precursor to starting the interlingual translation and creating a reimagination of it. However, and despite this, the bibliographical groundwork and the theoretical analysis are not described in this article, which concentrates solely on reporting how text and imagery were translated and reimagined to create an illustrated book.

After acquiring knowledge of the original text, the author, and the context in which the work was created, the first step was to translate the text from English into Portuguese as part of a process that is known as interlingual translation. Once translated, the material was ready to be subjected to a second translation process – intralingual translation – in which I started to create a reimagination of the entire text by taking into account the sonority, manners, and many particularities of Brazilian language and culture.

Prior to the process of transcreation, it became necessary to understand the story as a whole and, consequently, to create a timeline and organize the narrative by distributing its pivotal points in a way that made its several layers of meaning visible. Such an arrangement not only favoured the visualization of the narrative structure but made it easier to arrive at an understanding of how all of the significant units of the text are intertwined, and how they could be interpreted and transformed into images. Thus, part of this research included classifying and outlining the characters of the story and the settings where the events take place, in order to ensure that this reimagination of their names, occupations, personalities, and physical attributes would do justice to them and highlight their distinctive features.



When the narrative and all of its elements had been schematized, the full potential of the piece became clear. However, before starting the reimagination, I scrutinized the text itself – which had already been translated into Portuguese – and changed it somewhat: the narrative tone was modified to sound more contemporary, and the rhythm was accelerated to match what is observed and heard on a daily basis. To this end, with due respect to both the plot and the content of the original novel, typical Brazilian expressions were also inserted. This use of popular expressions gave the text a degree of informality and helped to establish a connection between it and Brazilian culture. However, despite these additions, there were also many aspects of the text that remained unaltered. An example of this is that, during this process, I decided to retain the third-person narrator and intensify the stream-of-consciousness passages of the original, which blur the line that divides the narrator and the thoughts and feelings of characters. By deciding to keep these characteristics, I intended to preserve *Emma*'s main feature: irony. In the original novel, Jane Austen used the third-person narrator to create layers of irony. Emma, the protagonist, is what many authors (Azerêdo 2003; McMaster 1996; Monaghan 1980; Page 2011; Tanner 1986; Watt 1963; Williams 1986) like to call an imaginist; this means that she enjoys creating her own version of reality and controlling other people's lives. Control, however, is a mere illusion, for she cannot even rule her own life. She cannot choose her own destiny, and her life is controlled by the author. Emma is a character in a novel, but she is not aware of it. This means that, throughout the novel, her plans do not always unfold the way she expected them to, and that is extremely ironic. Therefore, changing the narrator's perspective would give Emma too much power over her own decisions. Both the third-person narrator and the stream of consciousness were, that is to say, already an important part of the original, and I decided to keep them in this reimagination, for it would be hard to recreate the irony without them.

In terms of methodology, it is important to state that the reimagination was performed paragraph by paragraph: the original structure of the narrative was accurately followed, such that any reader would be able to place the original and reimagined versions side-by-side, compare their content, and refer to them. Yet, no matter how precise I intended this reimagination to be, the aim of the research was to portray the same story in a different society in another era, and so the plot inevitably underwent some changes.

### 3 Chromatic research

The work of a translator is the result of a series of choices. Even when translators try to remain impartial, they will inevitably have to make a few personal choices every now and then. There is no absolute truth when it comes to the translation of a text, and a creative project such as a reimagination would not be any different. Of the three different types of translation explored by this research, the third – intersemiotic translation – was always the main focus of the whole project. Thus, after completing the reimagination, I initiated the final and longest stage of the research. I started off by evaluating what had been achieved, revising the reimagined text, and reinterpreting its elements to create the images that would constitute the illustrated book.

The primary elements that would constitute the images – such as the use of colour and lines – were studied separately, and the knowledge obtained was used to conceive the illustrations. One example of this approach is the chromatic research that was carried out, for it provided a better understanding of the factors that can influence the perception of a particular colour scheme and thus were extremely important during the elaboration of the images. The chromatic investigation aimed to experiment with how colours behave when certain parameters and conditions are altered. Going beyond an explanation relating to optics, this research sought a method of incorporating colours into translation. The aesthetic principles that were formalized and prevalent during the early nineteenth century in England – a country that is characterized by its temperate climate – were entirely different from those that can be observed in a tropical country such as Brazil today. Geographical differences affect not only landscapes but also the way in which light is perceived and portrayed. This realization triggered another series of chromatic tests that were carried out in order to discover how colour works and define the parameters that I would have to alter to make a colour-palette translation possible.

The first illustrated edition of *Emma* featuring colour images was published in 1909 (Austen 1909). As this is the closest version there is to an illustrated edition of *Emma* contemporary with Austen, the watercolours in it, painted by C. E. Brock, were used in the tests described above. To this end, I created a digital file containing all twenty-four original images and used the *CameraRaw* plugin for *Adobe Photoshop* to systematically alter the following parameters: temperature, tint, exposure, recovery, fill light, black, brightness, contrast, clarity, vibrance, saturation, sharpening (amount, radius, detail, masking), noise reduction (luminance, luminance detail, luminance contrast, colour, colour detail), hue (reds, oranges, yellows, greens, aquas, blues, purples, magentas), saturation (reds, oranges, yellows, greens, aquas, blues, purples, magentas), luminance (reds,

oranges, yellows, greens, aquas, blues, purples, magentas), highlights (hue, saturation, balance), shadows (hue, saturation), and grain (amount, size, roughness).

To ensure that no possibility went untested, I decided to use combinatorial analysis theory to create a chart that would list all of the possibilities and help me keep track of the results. The alteration of the parameters listed above generated 19,895 variations of the original images. Many of these variations were noticeably different from the original digital file, while others remained unchanged. To verify this, I compared the colour table from the original file with the 19,895 colour tables generated by the variations. Those that did not show any difference were discarded and the remaining ones were selected for further analysis. This part of the study eventually yielded 198 colour tables that were completely different from the original file's colour table.

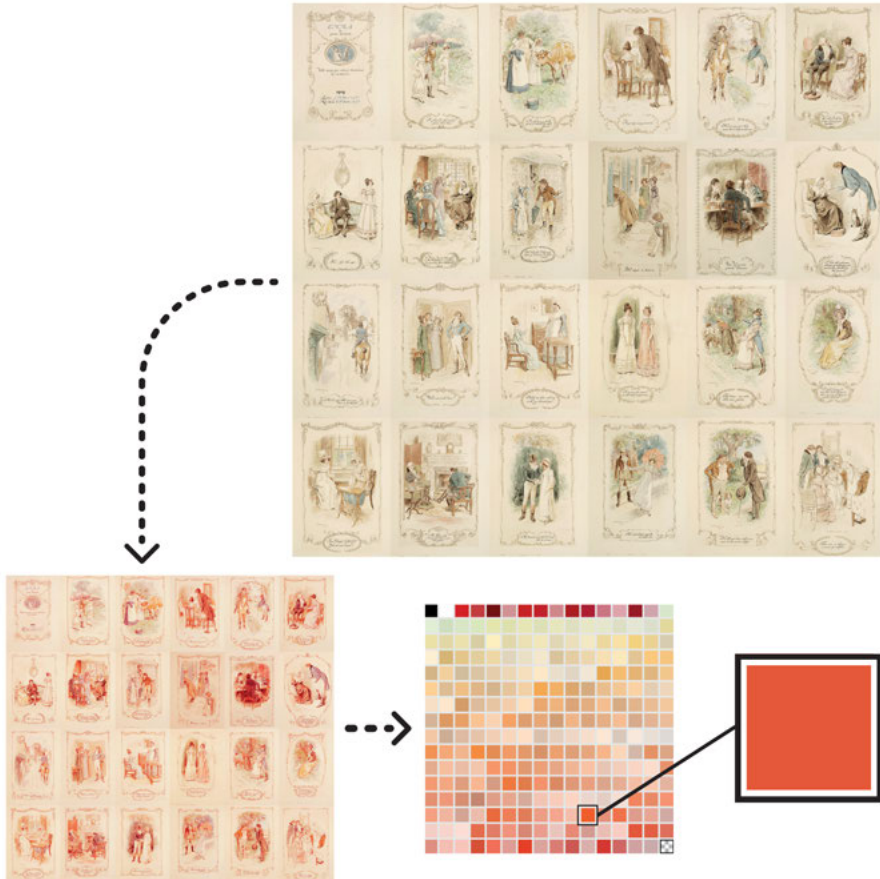
In the next stage of the chromatic research, these results were analysed. As the watercolour illustrations largely consisted of light tones analogous to one another, a change in the "shadows" parameter meant modifying their darker tones, generating a slight change in colouration and a drastic change in the image saturation, which reached its maximum value. As discussed above, this research also involved studying how light behaves and varies accordingly to geographical differences. As a result, based on the way that light presents itself and is perceived in Brazil, I picked a colour table that reflects the vibrant colours that characterize tropical countries. Of the 198 colour tables available, that is to say, the one that originally corresponded to variation 19,861 was chosen because it showcased noticeable alterations to the "shadows" parameter (hue = 30, saturation = 100).

All of the colour tables consisted largely of shades of orange, and table 19,861 is no exception. As the orange colour was predominant in this particular table, one of its orange tones was chosen to be the main colour of the final palette and was later used to determine the other colours that would be used in the illustrations. Figure 1 shows the vector version of this colour table and the selected orange shade.

## 4 Colour scheme

As discussed above, at the beginning of the reimagination process, I traced the characters' profiles, analysed their manners, and schematized their relationships with one another. Following the chromatic research, this information was used to determine the positions of these characters on the colour wheel.

The first colour added to the wheel was the shade of orange extracted from table 19,861. This shade of orange resulted from the chromatic tests described



**Fig. 1:** Colour table number 19,861 and the selected orange shade.

above and, consequently, it was chosen to represent the main character in the colour wheel and guided the choice of the remaining colours. At this stage, I assigned each shade of the wheel to one of the main characters, and the choice was based on their relationships with the protagonist, as well as among one another. The complete chromatic wheel is shown in figure 2.

After the translation and reimagining of the text, many aspects of it were transformed, including the names and surnames of the characters. As can be seen in figure 2, the main character, Emma, became Juremma, a name that originates in the language of the Tupi, an indigenous Brazilian tribe. Juremma, whose colour is the shade of orange discussed above, is located in the upper-right portion of the wheel. Taking into account the characters' relationships in order to fill in the



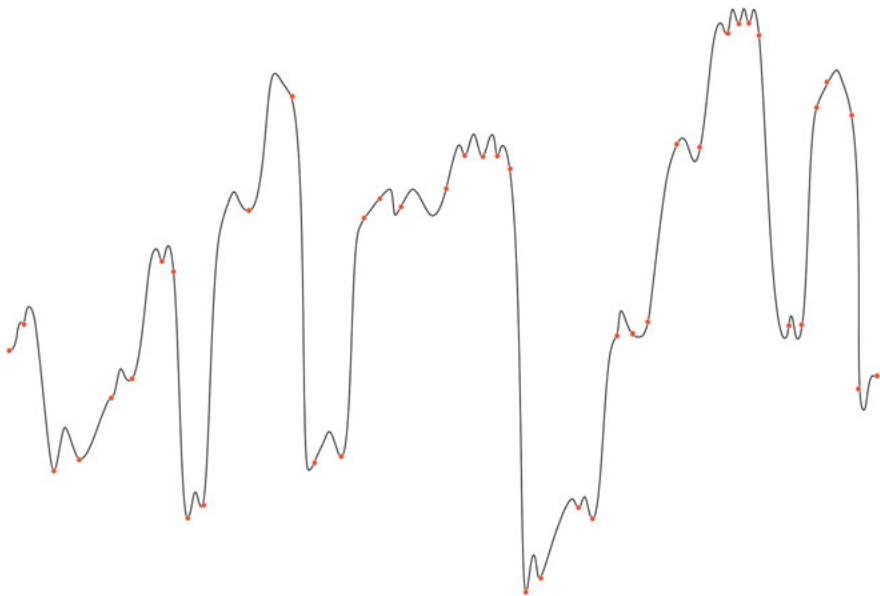
**Fig. 2:** Colour wheel; each colour corresponds to one of the main characters.

wheel, Juremma's complementary colour – her chromatic opposite – belongs to her love interest, Jorge (formerly known as George). Using the same logic, the segments on either side of Juremma belong to her antagonists: Joana (formerly Jane) and Augusta, whose name is unaltered. In sum, I filled all of the segments by considering the love interests and the rivals of each of the main characters.

Having established the colours, I defined the colour scheme itself, basing myself on the fact that the orange shade was used to identify the main character, and so its importance had to be made clear to the reader. Thus, I decided that the orange colour should be present in all of the chapters and at its maximum intensity, occupying a prominent position in the contours and the lines of the images, while the other colours would be used every now and then depending on the context. In the end, that is to say, the illustrations for each chapter gained a specific filling-colour that varied depending on who is the most relevant character in the chapter.

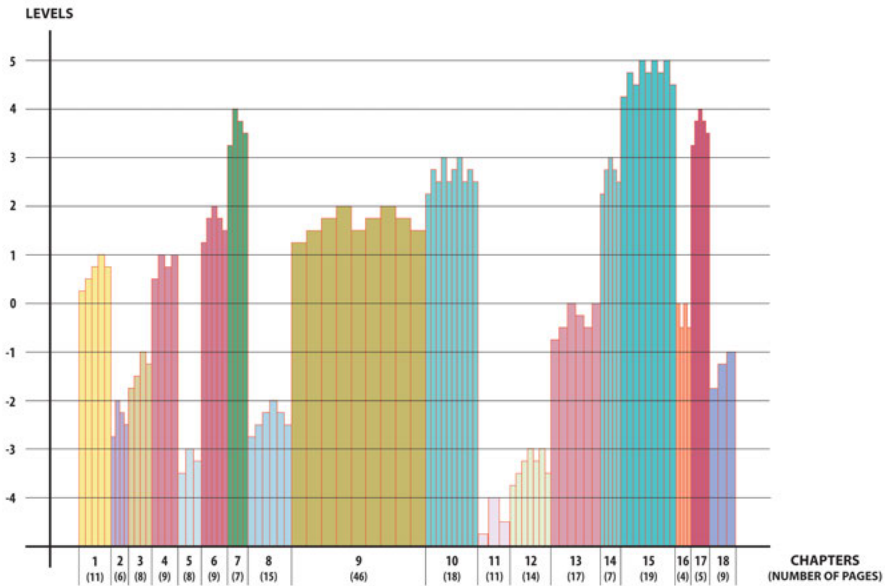
## 5 The structure of the narrative

After performing the translation and reimagination of text and defining the images' theme colours, I plotted the key points of the story in a graph (fig. 3) to graphically depict the inner workings of each chapter's plot and how they relate to one another:



**Fig. 3:** Graph showing the story's inner structure.

In addition to making the story's structure visible, this graph helped to assign degrees of importance to each action within a chapter, and to each chapter within the text. In this way, I divided the chapters into ten levels, ranging from  $-4$  to  $5$ , according to their relevance to the story. Likewise, I classified each major event of the story as belonging to one of four levels, ranging from  $1$  to  $4$ , based on its relevance to the plot of the chapter in which it occurs.



**Fig. 4:** Layered column chart demonstrating the connection between the story's inner structure and the intensity of the respective colours.

I then rearranged the contents of the graph and turned it into a bar chart (fig. 4) in order to better visualize the data. The width of each column is directly proportional to the number of pages in the chapter.

It is important to note that the two charts (fig. 3 and fig. 4) possess what Julio Plaza in *Tradução intersemiótica* (first published in 1987) defines as an understandable internal logic that facilitates interpretation, regardless of the reader's repertoire. This is to say, the importance of both charts relies on their efficiency in denoting the structural configuration of the text and translating the story's emotional tension, making it more evident (Plaza 2010, 104).

When the two charts were finished and both the events and the chapters of the novel had been divided into different levels of significance, the next step was to use this information to determine the colour scheme. I used the chapter levels, ranging from  $-4$  to  $5$ , to determine the intensity of the filling-colour for illustrations in each chapter. Ranging from 10% to 100%, each level corresponded to a 10% increase in saturation: thus, a level 4 chapter in which Augusta is the most relevant character, for example, would result in a red shade at 90% saturation. Similarly, the designated colour for a level  $-4$  chapter would have 10% saturation, while a level 5 chapter would have a saturation of 100%. These variations are depicted in figure 5.

-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	CHARACTERS
										JUREMMA (MISS EMMA WOODHOUSE)
										AUGUSTA (MRS ELTON)
										ADÉLIA (MISS HARRIET SMITH)
										ISABEL (MRS ISABELLA KNIGHTLEY)
										DONA DITA (MISS BATES)
										ZEFO (MR WESTON)
										FRANCO (MR FRANK CHURCHILL)
										JORGE (MR GEORGE KNIGHTLEY)
										FELIPE (MR ELTON)
										ROBERTO (MR ROBERT MARTIN)
										JOÃO (MR JOHN KNIGHTLEY)
										SEU CARVALHO (MR WOODHOUSE)
										TELMA (MISS TAYLOR/ MRS WESTON)
										JOANA (MISS JANE FAIRFAX)

**Fig. 5:** Table showing colour-scheme variation. The saturation of the shades ranges from 10 % to 100 %, and varies accordingly to the importance level of each chapter.

## 6 Creating the images

At the same time as I was conducting the chromatic investigation, I was also designing the images. It took me a long time to choose their style, and after some experimenting with a range of techniques and drawing styles, I decided to create them using *Adobe Illustrator CC*, meaning that the final illustrations were created digitally, by using vector graphics. As the format of the book was defined after the images had been finished, the flexibility of the vector graphics files in terms of their ability to be scaled up or down without losing any quality was an advantage.

Rather than portraying solely scenes or characters, the images represent the situations described in the text, showing objects that directly reference the metaphors and expressions used. Here, then, the images are closely connected to the content of the text; as the research aimed to create a proportional and intrinsic



sic relationship between the two, one is difficult to separate from the other. Ultimately, with text and images side-by-side, what once was an intention became a reality, and imagining the two elements separately became unimaginable.

Both the text and images were created using analogies. The production of the former had a direct relationship to the original work, and the parallels drawn between two different cultures allow the reader to perceive the connections, similarities, and differences between them. The images establish the same type of direct relation with the reimaged text. In addition to portraying figures that are described in the text, the illustrations also reflect its internal structure. One example of this is the line patterns which are used repeatedly in the images to create the illusion of textures, reliefs, and transparencies. They also, however, have a secondary function, as they add on layers of significance to the final product. The cross-hatching lines, for example, are indicative of the content of the text. In a chapter in which many events take place at the same time, the quantity of visual elements increases proportionally.

Another example is the layered bar chart: initially created to assist in determining at which points in the story the illustrations would be placed, I eventually decided to incorporate it into the final version of the illustrated book, knowing that its presence at the beginning of each chapter would help to signal the significance of that chapter within the story. A miniature version of the chart also appears on every page to indicate how the events described relate to the other events in other chapters. All of the images, without exception, were created based on the chart, and including it in the reimagination made the reader more aware of the story's structure. In other words, this was an attempt to make the research process more visible to a reader who only has access to the final product.

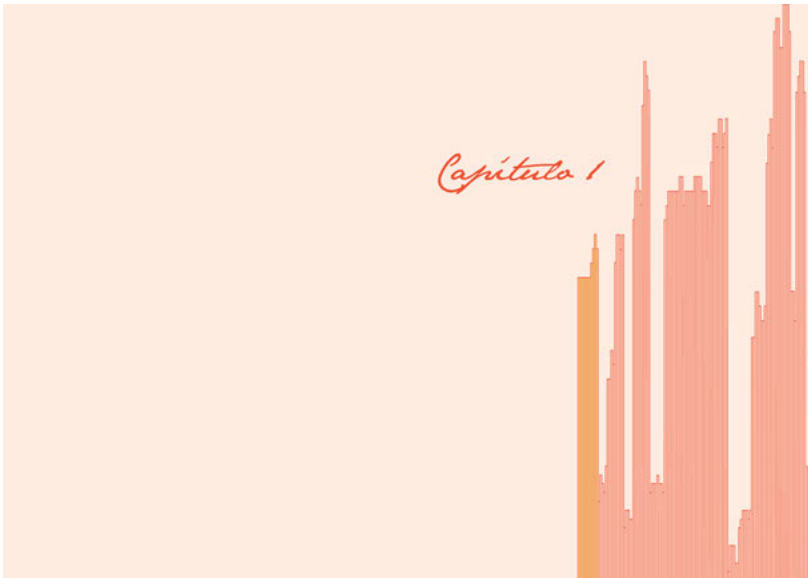
## 7 Designing the book

Once I had finished the images, the book began to take shape; the chapters were formatted and the images incorporated, with attention paid to achieving a balance between image and text. In order to achieve this, the larger images, which are spread over two pages, were alternated with the smaller ones and interspersed with text. On those pages containing both images and text, the latter is presented in a manner that differs from the norm; rather than being formatted in a straight line, as on the pages that do not contain images, the words form figures that relate to both the illustrations and the content of the text itself.

To achieve a balance, I used three types of font. The first, Garamond (size 12, regular, black), was widely used as it is a serified font that provides greater visual

comfort to the reader in the midst of so much visual information. The second was the same Garamond again, albeit in bold and in the shade of orange used to visually depict the main character. I used it to highlight the most important sentences of each paragraph and to smooth the transition between the pages containing both image and text and those consisting only of words. The third bears the name of the author of *Emma*: the font named Jane Austen was inspired by her handwriting and is presented in size 24, using the same shade of orange as before. Of the three, it is the least commonly used, appearing only at the beginning of each chapter and on the pages that contain images, where it indicates that something important is about to happen in the story.

Figures 6–9 are thumbnails of pages in the book from the first chapter:



**Fig. 6:** The opening pages of chapter 1, featuring the layered column chart.



**Fig. 7:** One of the first pages of chapter 1, as indicated by the chart on the right side of the page. It features both image and text, and the words are here presented using all three different types of font.



**Fig. 8:** As indicated by the chart, this page is in the middle of chapter 1. It is an example of a page that does not contain images and therefore is used as a transition between two large illustrations, aiming to offer visual relief to the reader.



Fig. 9: The penultimate page of chapter 1 introduces another kind of interaction between text and image. Here, all the elements from figures 7 and 8 are combined.

## 8 Conclusion

My research aimed to carry out a historico-cultural translation in order to study Jane Austen's work and the context in which it was produced, to examine and explore different kinds of translation, and to create a palpable product – an illustrated book – that brought together the knowledge obtained and contributed to Brazilian culture on some level.

To achieve this, the novel, which was originally published in the nineteenth century in England, was translated and reimagined to reflect contemporary Brazilian culture and the contemporary Brazilian imaginary. Reimaginings are becoming more and more popular by the day. Books are constantly being transformed into films and graphic novels, but most of these new versions do not see their adaptation as a translation process. The intention of this research, however, was not to tell a story using just words and illustrations, but to produce an interlinked mixture of text and images that, when placed together on the same page, provides the reader with a panoramic view of the work as a whole. The idea was to use paratextual elements that would truly contribute to the story, creating new interpretative possibilities. In fact, the idea behind referencing the translation

process and including the charts (fig. 4) in the final book was to encourage readers to engage with the story by allowing them to access a new layer of meaning. The visual and graphic elements are all there, but whether the readers will choose to use them in their interpretations is up to them.

This kind of creative exercise can be highly beneficial for translators, for it can help them fully understand the text they are working on. The reimagination process is a form of critical thinking and can help people expand their ideas about a book. By trying to recreate the work, the translator is able to analyse it from a new perspective, and that is why reimaginings and creative exercises should be incentivized. However, in projects such as this one, in order to achieve the desired goal, the researcher must not only have technical knowledge but must also deeply understand the inner workings of the two semiotic media in which he or she is working.

Taking into account the objectives of this research and what I produced in one year, it can be concluded that the work fulfilled its purpose and produced satisfactory results that exceeded initial expectations. I produced an illustrated book of eighteen chapters and fifty-two images, in which the images have a strong connection to one another, and both image and text represent Brazilian culture while still maintaining the same level of connection to the original story.

All in all, the innovative aspects of this research included: exploring intersemiotic translation in practice and reflecting on how visual elements can be used to contribute to the story being told. Reimagining a classic novel for a new culture is no easy task, and it meant trying to make its text more accessible to the people immersed in that culture. My intention was to make the characters and the way they speak to one another easier for other Brazilians to relate to. By changing the setting and the context in which the story is told, I aimed to open a door on literature and encourage people to see the original novel in a new light. Moreover, by changing the way the story is told, including illustrations full of significance and mimicking Brazilian imagery, I hoped not only to make the text friendlier to their eyes, but to make readers relate to the story as a whole. Ultimately, I worked to find common ground between early nineteenth-century England and today's Brazil, while also celebrating the differences that make both of these cultures unique.

*Emma* was the perfect novel with which to test these possibilities. The original book is full of metaphors, and one of its main themes is the construction of reality, so there was no better way of doing it justice than creating a new reality for it. As has already been stated, the work of a translator is full of personal choices, and the process described here could not be any different. Each step of this research represents a choice that led to the final product. Each element helped to create a work characterized by its unity, where text and image do not only interact but are

also integrated as one. In this illustrated book, the images have textual qualities and the text has a shape of its own, so that together they can intertwine to retell this story.

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Ana Maria Machado

# Literature and Cinema: The Military vs. the People in the Hetero-Visiotypes and Hetero-Imagotypes of the 1974 Portuguese Revolution

**Abstract:** Based on imagological theory and authors such as Leerssen and Beller, I will study images of the Portuguese 25 April Revolution in the nineties and at the beginning of the twenty-first century, namely in the Luso-French-Brazilian Sérgio Tréfaut's documentary *Outro país* (2000) and Lídia Jorge's recent novel *Os memoráveis* (2014), focusing on the implications of using different media and codes. Both documentary and novel have in common the same research method, in the sense that both look for temporally distant testimonies of the event. In a more fictional way, but under the same postmodern vision of History, Jorge, like Tréfaut, offers the reader fragments of an unfinished historical episode that we can only grasp through successive versions and perspectives. Since the novel opposes fiction to the presumed realism of the interviews and to a hybrid-genre film, the documentary, I will compare Jorge's literary verbal medium, codes, and structure with Tréfaut's languages, in order to identify the perspectives and strategies employed to realize the thesis of each work.

**Keywords:** 1974 Portuguese Revolution, hetero-imagotypes, hetero-visiotypes, imagology, Lídia Jorge, memory, *Os memoráveis*

In this article, I set out to analyse works – both documentary and literary – about memories, as we can see in their titles: *Outro país: Memórias, sonhos, ilusões ... Portugal 1974/1975* [Another Country: Memories, Dreams, Illusions ... Portugal 1974/1975] and *Os memoráveis* [The Memorable People]. In particular, I aim to establish a dialogue between the documentary and the novel, showing the different kinds of attention paid to the role of the working class and the role of the military as agents of the 25 April Revolution, and to their subsequent images. In both cases, I will try to determine in which way the different images are associated with the levels of the text, since, by coincidence, as we shall see, both the documentary and the novel are structured on three levels.

In fact, in *Outro país*, Sérgio Tréfaut selects photos and films from foreign photographers and filmmakers who came to Portugal to cover the Revolution for international media; the film director mixes those fragments with interviews with



authors and with working-class people that he intentionally shot twenty-five years later. As for Lídia Jorge, she opposes the three different parts of her novel in order to provide the reader with the backdrop to the first part's closed narrative and to question it, in the second part, using the interviews that Ana Maria Machado, the transfrontier protagonist, does with prominent April army captains. In the last part, she offers a third version of the event with the brief documentary "plot" that the journalist Ana Maria Machado must write. Here, one can observe the selection she really makes from the interviews and the interviews she explicitly chooses in order to preserve her intended lyrical tone.

## 1 Memories and images

In *Memory, History, Forgetting*, the philosopher Paul Ricoeur deeply analyses memory as a median level between time and narrative and its ties with History, and postulates the existence of three kinds of memory: collective memory, which "recalls common and public memories of the communities to which we belong"; individual memory, defined by the "living memory of individual persons"; and a distinct kind of memory, that of people's close relations, that is, the memories of the "people who count for us and for whom we count [that] are situated along a range of varying distances in the relation between self and others" (Ricoeur, 2004, 131).

As memory is linked to History and to collective memory, in order to study images of the April Revolution it is useful to resort to the typology presented by Ricoeur so as to put into context the different testimonies and analyse them according to imagology theory (Dyserinck 1996; Leerssen 2003; Beller and Leerssen 2007; Sánchez Romero 2005; Fischer 1987). Given the different nature of my corpus, I chose to merge different conceptions present in the inter- and transdisciplinary scope of imagology. Literary imagology is one of the most important perspectives of comparative literature. It focuses on the origin and function of the features of other countries and people as they are textually written and presented in literary works, essays, and so on. Considering its heuristic potential, and following Pageaux (1981), who defended a comprehensive concept, and searched for an understanding, of culture in general, I include in my study of foreigners' images of Portugal those that can be found in a "given text, in a literary work or even in a culture" (Machado and Pageaux 2001).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Translations of Portuguese excerpts in this article are my own.

So, by approaching the foreigner images that the documentary *Outro país* creates, I will talk about images as almost direct representations of reality, rather than literary images, which are “a set of ideas about foreigners included in a process of literarization and socialization” (Machado and Pageaux 2001, 50). Depending on who looks or is looked at, one could talk about auto- and hetero-image, as Hugo Dyserinck (1966) did within literary context. But, considering the visual nature of the documentary images, it would be better to resort to the less common, but perhaps more productive concept of the visiotype, which Pörksen (1997) defines as an optical representation of political events in print and television. Thus, although there is an epistemological difference between the documentary and these types of media (print and television), I suggest mixing Dyserinck’s terminology with Pörksen’s, thereby creating the terms “auto-visiotype” and “hetero-visiotype” for the study of foreigners’ images of Portuguese people in Sérgio Tréfaut’s documentary.

As for the literary corpus (*Os memoráveis*), the issue of terminology is simpler, not only because the study of the foreigner in Lídia Jorge’s novel is established by the imagology’s subject, but also because Manfred Fischer (1987) coined the concept of the imagotype as a specifically literary concept – an option endorsed by Sánchez Romero (2005) both because it was a linguistic creation and less misleading than an image. At the same time, this concept covers both groups of images that directly represent reality, the prejudice and the stereotype. By merging Fischer’s (1987) terminology with that of Dyserinck (1966), we could use the terms “auto-” and “hetero-imagotype” – notions already validated in some German literature (e. g. Siebenmann 2003).

## 2 Images of Portugal through different memories and genres

The foreigner’s view of Portugal – in particular of the Portuguese Revolution of 25 April 1974 and its unravelling through time – dominates the dialogue with the Other that these works both portray, although this is done more intensively in the documentary. Facing the same historical reality – the end of the Fascist regime and of the Colonial War, and the beginning of democracy – several hetero- and auto-images (*lato sensu*) of the episode and of its main agents were assembled and created. Firstly, in the nineties, the Luso-French-Brazilian Sérgio Tréfaut shot an impressive documentary that he named suggestively *Outro país: Memórias, sonhos, ilusões ... Portugal 1974/1975* (2000); secondly, Lídia Jorge, a Portuguese writer, published a historical novel entitled *Os memoráveis* (2014). Since this is

not a case of semiotic transposition – or, at least, one cannot prove from the novel that Lúcia Jorge knew her predecessor – it can be said that these two works are independent. Nevertheless, they have the same historical subject in common, since, quoting Claus Clüver’s essay “Inter textus/inter artes/inter media,” they both represent “aspects of reality captured by the senses” (2006, 14) and they are a consequence of different interpretative communities. It is exactly these different interpretative communities that are of interest for comparative literature, since in the documentary we deal with foreigners’ perspective on the Portuguese – filtered by a three-nationality director – and in the fictional book we deal with representations of the country – which bring together images made by an American character with images made by Portuguese agents of the Revolution. In my comparative analysis of both of these works, I will try to study the relationship between these two sources, of which the documentary is closer to reality and the novel conditioned by fiction.

There are two main aspects of these images (*lato sensu*), filtered by memory, that are worth highlighting. The first has to do with the fact that both the documentary and the historical novel take as their starting point historical happenings and one particular episode that affected Portuguese collective memory. The second has to do with the publication context of each of the works, since in both cases, the publication date is symptomatically connected to a cultural context of celebration: a quarter of a century and forty years after the Revolution, respectively. In *Outro país*, this need of remembering and of keeping the memory alive is an implicit one, while in *Os memoráveis* it emerges from the plot, which suggests the need of recalling the past precisely in order to avoid the excesses of forgetfulness (Ricoeur 2004).

Thus, with different reception contracts and with different media, both works are a product of memory *lato sensu*, also reinforcing collective memory. The works talk about the past in a fictional way or with a similar discourse to what, in his *Introduction to Documentary*, Bill Nichols (2010) called the discourses of sobriety. By doing so, these two works are the product of the selection and thoughtful combination of the events with each other, and thus necessarily biased, as Todorov (1995) suggests in his book about the abuses of memory. This combination and orientation is even more clear in the documentary because of the author’s “claims about his relationship with the historical world,” although he cannot “separate himself clearly from the narrative strategies or from the fascination of fiction” (Nichols 2000, 18).

Although in different ways, both the documentary and the novel appeal to individual and collective memories, with *Os memoráveis* still adding the memories of one’s close relations, mentioned at the beginning. And if it is well known that Ricoeur established the differences between these three kinds of memory

in the context of History and historiography, it is also certain that neither *Outro país* nor the novel have historiographical pretensions. Yet they are deeply and consciously related to History and to its links with memory. Under the same post-modern vision of History, and in spite of Lídia Jorge's fictional approach, she and Tréfaut offer the reader flashes of an unfinished historical episode that one can only grasp through successive versions, focuses, and perspectives. The different memories and the distinctive kinds of memories are the subjects of this plural perspective.

In Sérgio Tréfaut's documentary, the first hetero-visiotypes of Portuguese people we see are the product of research conducted in archives and studios from all over the world, and show reactions to their Revolution; the anonymous testimonies express their joy, excitement, and the will to be part of it. These recordings include individual memories as well, either from filmed or photographed people, who years later remember and assess the Revolution, or from film authors who share their interpretation of a moment in Portuguese history that truly fascinated them.

As for the dialogue between the three kinds of memories in Lídia Jorge's novel, the individual ones stand out. They express the personal memories of a US ambassador and of the seven agents of the Portuguese Revolution, and they are an important contribution for the final documentary that Ana Maria Machado, the reporter-protagonist, creates about 25 April 1974 and for the collective memory it cultivates. Finally, the novel explores a curious link between individual and close relations' memories, as the seven agents of the Revolution who are interviewed by the reporter were also her father's friends in the past, as can be seen in a photo he hid. Therefore, since the people in this picture were also her childhood points of reference, they still matter for her, and so do their memories (Ricoeur 2004. 131). In fact, this picture is the starting point for the documentary, as we will see later on.

Thus, by combining a plurality of memories, both authors construct several hetero-visiotypes and hetero-imagotypes of the Revolution and of the way it was welcomed in Portugal and abroad. Their respective semi-foreign (with a triple nationality) and native (through the main character that lived in the US for five years) perspectives are expressed through hetero-visiotypes and hetero-imagotypes representing two main groups: the people and the military.

It is worth clarifying, as we shall see later on, that in both works the concept of foreigner is not always absolutely clear, although there is a constant thin line between those who observe and those who are observed, producing an imagological look in the moment that the I looks at the Other and enrolls in a conversation with him and, eventually, with himself (Pageaux 2005).

### 3 The documentary

In *Outro país*, Sérgio Tréfaut presents a very coherent sequence of foreign photos and films shot during the 1974 Portuguese Revolution. Although it is a Luso-French-Brazilian who signs off the documentary, its photos, films, and reports were previously signed off by other foreign journalists, reporters, or filmmakers who presented their hetero-imagotypes of Portuguese people, at the time and later.

By taking advantage of the inherent audio-visual possibility that a documentary provides, the author's purpose is also to give an idea of the intensity of recording activity. Additionally, he wants to show how directors and photographers mediated the way the Portuguese sensed the Revolution, the assessment made by their foreign contemporaries, and how they themselves felt twenty-five years later about the changes in the country. This results in a very intercultural documentary, as we have the images of directors, journalists, and photographers from countries like Sweden, France, the US, and others. But one should not forget that, although the audience comes into direct contact with the images and discourses of those foreign authors, all the material that makes up the documentary is subjectively filtered by the camera of the Luso-French-Brazilian Sérgio Tréfaut. We could thus say that the documentary has a second-language degree, as the material used is not directly the Portuguese reality but rather a selection of it made using foreigners' work. In addition, we could argue that it is not Tréfaut who works on what Sella Bruzi (2000, 125) called the first-language degree, where one finds "the dialectical conjunction of a real space and the filmmakers that invade it." Rather, this definition of documentary fits perfectly the behaviour of the previous photographers and interviewers, as they are in fact the ones who dealt with reality and invaded it. It is also this two-degree framework that presents us with two levels of otherness. The first level is that of the foreign directors' images, of the evaluation they made, and of some of the testimonies they recorded in the past and revisited years later. The second level can be seen in Tréfaut's documentary and in the selection he makes from others' input. In reality, we only listen to the Luso-French-Brazilian director at the beginning of the film (since he chooses to hide himself when the selected images that his predecessors captured in the past are displayed) and at the end of the documentary, when he is interviewing the directors of the works he has fragmentarily displayed.

The mediation of those individual memories through a representation modality based on observation – which, as Bill Nichols (2010, 72–78) states, minimizes the director's presence – will not reduce his subjectivity or his partiality. Even so, the set of records we are shown, in a sort of redundant way, constructs a living memory for his contemporaries and their successors. Simultaneously, it globally

freezes a revolutionary version of this historical period and the political manipulations that Portugal was subjected to, from abroad.

All the excitement and trust in a new life for Portugal can be seen in the first emotions and testimonies that were recorded from immediately after the day of the Revolution until 1 May, Labour Day in Europe. Civilians and military talked loudly and freely as they had never done before, and with a new energy.

Throughout the film, the hetero-visiotypes of the Portuguese gradually abandon their focus on the military to concentrate on the working class and their statements. As for the soldiers, even though they are not quoted, their role is commented by foreign authors' reflexive memory, because, as privileged witnesses of History, not only did they know what they had recorded, but also what was going on behind the scenes. Thus, this is the only way we gain contact with the soldiers' actions and with the inner conflicts they were facing. We do not see or hear their testimonies. That part of History is told, not shown, by foreign directors, as if the working class, that we keep seeing, had not noticed what was happening. The people's hope was so great that they could only seize the good part of History.

Although this is the trend the images appear to follow, the reporters' individual memories present more critical and distant hetero-visiotypes when speaking in the present, about the way they felt during those days, and afterwards, when they reflect on the role of the Portuguese Revolution. Where the *people vs military* opposition is concerned, the reporters' discourses fill the void that images create, for in their interpretations they refer to the differences within the army and the destruction of its power. Yet, this does not diminish the power and the relevance that Sérgio Tréfaut attributes to the working class, as we can see in his selection of hetero-visiotypes: throughout the whole film, the working-class presence is constant. We see it and we hear it in a recursive way. People are always present and, in its simplicity, it is their way of feeling and sensing the historical movement that we are shown.

Very gradually, the documentary introduces a significant shift in the hetero-visiotypes that are shown: we begin to face an analytical review of the development of the Revolution. In fact, this second part focuses on a later period that moves away from the initial euphoria – where people declared enthusiastically they would do everything to support the Revolution, hand-in-hand with the army – and shows us that the collective images disappeared and that the soldiers are not present anymore, as if the past alliance had died. The only survivors were old people, lonely people, and disappointed people. In their individual memories, enthusiasm and hope belong to the past, at which they look with nostalgia. Looking at the camera, they state they can barely recall and identify the benefits of the Revolution.

As for the directors' individual memories about the enormous changes that occurred after 1975, they reflect the same fluctuation from joy to sadness, although we cannot ignore the fact that these views are strongly ideological. We could even say the directors are mainly leftists, as the foreign directors and photographers believed in a potential change based on the Revolution's ideology and the workers' power. In the director Robert Kramer's opinion, conservative Europe could not allow a revolutionary country in the continent's western corner. More universally, Portugal was allowed to live a utopia, but it could not last. In spite of its regretful feeling, Kramer's lucid synthesis is a kind of conclusion to the documentary.

From what we have seen in *Outro país*, the main focus of the camera is on the working class, its poorness, its hopes, and its deluded fight for a better world. The army became part of this mission, but then it disappeared from daily life and the working class was once again left on its own.

To sum up, there is some redundancy and homogeneous meaning in the way the hetero-visiotypes from different observers complement each other. But, at the same time, there is no doubt about the authors' will and capacity to influence the viewer, nor about Tréfaut's selection and the structured speech he composes and articulates through editing and montage (Gifreu 2011). The final product, apart from presenting the levels of the two narratives, also presents two antagonistic worlds. One is a simple and native world that acts and interprets, and is mainly composed by the people and shown through foreigners' eyes. The other is recorded by the documentary director and composed by foreign filmmakers and photographers who observe and analyse the historical reality and share their individual memories with him.

Moreover, taking into account Tréfaut's interviews, we could postulate a third level in the documentary: an independent level whose analytical style can be added to the historical narrative of the first documentary level. The disappointed visiotype the interviewers display is the intellectual counterpart of what the people's testimonies stated in the second part of the documentary, where we saw them reliving their individual memories.

Thus, when Sérgio Tréfaut builds his image of Portuguese people in the revolutionary period, combining selected testimonies from other films, reports, and photos, he builds a coherent hetero-visiotype of the country in revolutionary times. As it is always the case with images, this is a hetero-visiotype naturally biased and manipulated by the foreign authors and by Sérgio Tréfaut's personal observation and ideology (Ricoeur, 2004, 14). However, although part of the historical analysis matches the facts, or the official History, we cannot say it is a consensual image of Portugal. It is nonetheless an image of an important group from southern Portugal, defined by a leftist ideology. In fact, we only see one side

of History, as is implicit in the title *Outro país* [Another Country], which does not intend to make a generalization (e. g. “the country”). Nevertheless, it can still be said that these hetero-visual types are in line with the collective memory that the country preserves – although it cannot be claimed that they represent the whole country.

## 4 The novel

In Lídia Jorge’s novel, we face the same recursive and redundant way of creating hetero-visual types that we found in the hetero-visual types of the documentary, since we also have the same story told from multiple perspectives, by different characters, and, similarly, on three different narrative levels.

The interest of comparing the documentary and the novel has its grounds mainly in the way each author constructs their work and in the fact that *Os memórias* distances itself from a certain realism in *Outro país*. The inherent fictionality of the novel allows for a freer protocol, which the writer uses to create, in the second and third parts, a kind of *roman-à-clef*, giving nicknames to the historical characters that the protagonist interviews. In general, the author reconstructs historical agents, but these links to reality almost prevent the reader from credibly identifying the historical characters.

Forty years after the Revolution, in a kind of fight against oblivion, Lídia Jorge wants to remember a historical episode that is ignored by the younger generation born after the Revolution that brought freedom to the country. In a novel constructed in three parts, she presents three different visions of the revolutionary period. In the first one, “The Fable,” a US ambassador orders the protagonist, a CBS reporter, to film the first episode – about the Carnation Revolution – of the series *Awaking History*. In the hetero-visual type he creates, it is the tolerance he saw in the revolutionary period that is astonishing and, along with the carnations that flourished on military weapons, it is that surprising tolerance that makes those times luminous. Like the interpretations presented in Sérgio Tréfaut’s documentary, the US ambassador also mentions international politics and the impossibility of having a socialist government in Western Europe. But, quite differently from the directors’ interpretations, he, or Frank Carlucci – the person behind the fiction, who was the ambassador to Portugal from 1974 to 1977 – presents himself as part of that History, belonging to the sector that prevented a Communist regime.

Thus, in “The Fable” – a name that suggests an imaginative synthesis – we deal with a special memory that is individual and authorized because it is presented as based on a political experience in Portugal and in the international con-



flict the ambassador had to fight. So, what was told in *Outro país* is now revealed by a character that refers to a political actor. According to the ambassador's interpretation, the end of the revolutionary period was a matter of time and patience (Jorge 2014, 18) and "it would come, without sacrificing the Portuguese people and without turning them into guinea pigs of socialism in order to set an example of disgrace for the Europeans" (Jorge 2014, 30).

His individual memories recall the wonderful Portuguese people and their peacefulness as well as their poverty, further in line with the hetero-visual types of the Portuguese people that we saw in Sérgio Tréfaut's documentary. However, he arrives at a synthesis that exceeds what the documentary-maker said about the people, because now they are also violent.

Poor people without algebra, with no letters, with fifty years of dictatorship on their back, their feet tied to the ground, and suddenly a *coup d'état* happens, they all come onto the street screaming, each one with its own hallucinations, project, and interest, threatening each other, body to body, face to face, lots of them carrying weapons in their hands, and in the end they insult themselves, they beat themselves up, they arrest themselves, and they do not kill themselves. (Jorge 2014, 17)

Regarding the *people vs military* opposition, it may seem that, at the beginning of the novel, the military are not so relevant and that, in fact, all the ambassador's enthusiasm is channelled into the collective. However, at a certain point, he rethinks this and observes that these anonymous people have the imprint of one of the April army captains, whose civil name is Vasco Lourenço (Jorge 2014, 28). It is worth noting that, unlike the other two parts, in "The Fable" we are often given the real names of historical characters.

In a strikingly different way, the following two parts of the book focus mainly on the military movement, while the people's enthusiasm is only recalled by the military actors. And, if we think about Ricoeur's three attributions of memory, we realize that, in the framework chosen by the Portuguese reporter for her documentary, she introduces the memory of close relations – the third kind of memory, between individual memory and collective memory, which is the memory that belongs to our family and friends (Ricoeur 2004, 131, 163).

In fact, in the long second part, symptomatically named "Into the Fable's Heart," the reporter Ana Maria Machado uses a photo that was shot in August 1975 in a restaurant that close friends called "Memories." It is a picture of a dinner with her parents, seven soldiers previously opposed to the regime, and other persons. In different ways, these memorable characters were prominent figures of the April Revolution, or close to them, and they are part of Ana Maria Machado's youth memories because they were all her father's friends and often visited her house. Taking advantage of these memories of close relations and guided by that photo,

a relic from the past, the reporter intends to explore their memories to construct her narrative of those times.

In the interviews she and her team develop, she does not introduce herself as António Machado's daughter, and the interviewees do not recognize her because she was too young back then. At the same time, her individual memories of those times made her reject that past for family reasons. Thus, she works anonymously and, during the interviews, she does not want to restore the close relationship they had in the past, when they were part of her family group. That intimacy is part of her secret. Consequently, the interview testimonies – we could say the auto-imagotypes they present – appeal to their individual memories and they only become memories of close relations when the photo is shown and they remember their past intimacy.

Reading all the individual answers, we face mixed feelings towards individual memories and auto-imagotypes of Portugal, its past and present. On the one hand, we have the reporting of a glorious moment that everyone took part in, especially the military. On the other hand, there is a shared feeling of frustration due to lost hopes for the country's future, the lack of recognition, and the fact that, to a certain extent, the military were forgotten. It is all about memory and forgetting. And those images of Portugal, here described by the April protagonists, are not monolithic, but rather dual and, in that sense, coincide with the discourse of foreigners and the hetero-visitotypes they offered in Sérgio Tréfaut's documentary. Despite the difference in voice (foreigners and natives, respectively), they all sense the Revolution as one made out of joy, but also of disillusion.

In this respect, it is worth highlighting what there is in common between the content of those auto-imagotypes, seen here as an image that one has of the world as opposed to the auto-imagotype that derives from a hetero-imagotype. The interviews – the frame employed to construct Ana Maria Machado's documentary – act against oblivion and intend to “fulfil a plan of memory reconstruction” (Jorge 2014, 239). In order to achieve that – on the third level of the novel, that is in the documentary plot, which the reporter designs lyrically – all the historical apologies and lies we read in the interviews with the military are deleted so that a mythical image of the Revolution is created. This is the idealized solution the reporter chose in order to begin the documentary television series *Awaking History* – a title symptomatically linked with the idea of collective memory.

Thus, in her documentary, Ana Maria Machado and the camera operator idealistically focus on what needs to be registered in order to remember and to feed collective memory: the notion of a downtime, which only restarted at the beginning of the *coup d'état*, with the sound of footsteps from people rising up, the emergence of soldier figures, the fragments of testimony from the interviewed military recalling the Colonial War, the feeling of a miracle unfolding, and the

determination to do no harm. The sound is complemented with pictures from key moments of the military march, the distribution of flowers that took place, and the crowd that came together on the day of Revolution to support the soldiers. Finally, we see the image of the general who took over power and of the captain who laid down the Revolution strategy – neither of their names is mentioned. From this last image there is a transition to the photo of the memorable figures in the restaurant, and then to the images of their youth, full of joy, and then again to a recent picture of the same heroic captain, shot near the sea. And, because this man is a myth, he does not talk. At the end, there is a fragment of the US ambassador's speech in the Senate highlighting all that had happened in the previous two years without any bloodshed: "A unique case in the world's history" (Jorge 2014, 341). These hetero-imagotypes – as we call them, considering the distancing and estrangement of the CBS reporter – are a contribution to collective memory in the sense that they reinforce it. Somehow, it is the History of concrete winners that the documentary emphasizes, differing in this point from *Outro país*, where the all agents were anonymous and common people.

Contrary to traditional history, the heroes are nameless. Along with its post-modern conceptualization, Ana Maria Machado's documentary produces a kind of idealized and coherent synthesis of what the fragmented second part, "In the Heart of the Fable," had represented from multiple perspectives, for she is conscious of the impossibility of defining or stabilizing historical interpretations. In addition to the documentary coherence, there is another aspect one cannot miss: the sense of originality and brightness that spans the novel from the hetero-imagotype of Portugal, created by the US ambassador, to its adoption by the migrant reporter.

As a whole, despite the multiple photos it shows, the documentary emphasizes the military's action, not only because most of the interviewees are military, but also because the whole novel is a tribute to the five hundred members of the military that were involved and must be remembered.

As we can see, in the writing of the documentary, there is a large difference between the individual and close memories recorded and the final plot. In this mimetic representation of the reporter's work we also find two other traits of the documentary. First, there is the difference between what one records and what is delivered to the television channel. As Ana Maria Machado explains, this difference remains "the substance that we hold in our hands forever, to enlighten our lives" (Jorge, 2014, 301). In a sense, everything she learned from the interviews with her father's former friends made her understand better her father's frustrations and face her personal memories about her family and about the country from which she had fled five years before. Second, there is the delay in the story, which the reporter only writes six years after the interviews, thus reflecting the

time she needed to understand the country she had left. Her hybrid status as a Luso-American reporter favours her curiosity and also her knowledge of Portugal in its singularity. The documentary she lyrically designs is the answer to her father's accusation that she had invaded his friends' lives (Jorge 2014, 326). After being censored by her father, because of her supposedly unethical behaviour and her supposed modifications to what she hears with her biased standpoint, Ana Maria Machado at last seems to understand the reasons for that generational disenchantment and for the impossibility of finding a definitive historical interpretation. Symptomatically, she finishes her own testimony by acknowledging that the luminous entity had gone long ago, and that it would take "forty years, a hundred years, or the time that might be deemed necessary, in order to unravel what really had happened" (Jorge 2014, 342).

## 5 In conclusion

Through the reporter's final analysis, Lídia Jorge's historical novel joins Sérgio Tréfaut's documentary in the search for the memories of others: mainly foreigners, in *Outro país*, and mainly natives, in *Os memoráveis*. Both works started with the foreign perspective – a real one and a fictional one, respectively – and then they move, in a certain sense, to the Portuguese one, despite Sérgio Tréfaut's triple nationality and the fact that the novel's Portuguese protagonist has been abroad for quite some time. Imagologically, the status of the director and of the protagonist has ensured a degree of distancing and estrangement from the observed culture, moving away from what would be the native's perspective.

Altogether, these authors' representations of Portugal feed the collective memory of its recent History. Despite the delusion of the memories of close relations, Ana Maria Machado's final documentary script is a sort of anthem to the April military, now more personalized. The military acts as a strong imagotype, auto- and hetero-, depending on who looks at it, in the fight against oblivion. In *Outro país*, on the other hand, we see only an anonymous military and the way it guides the working class and helps them bring about the Revolution. As we have seen, the work focuses on the effect that the Revolution had on people and on the general feeling of disappointment that followed. Consequently, we could also say that, while *Os memoráveis* is an anthem to the April military, *Outro país* is an anthem to the people.

Despite the non-fictional cinematographic mode and the historical novel being different types of media, both genres recollect different memories from different people in order to approach Portuguese visio- and imagotypes, regard-

less of the contract each medium makes with its audience. The different forms of the *people vs military* opposition that these authors represent are, partially, a consequence of the perspective each one adopts: the *longue durée* in the novel and a closer look in the documentary. Nevertheless, regardless of the paths they follow, both messages are closely linked to reality and complement each other in the visio- and imagotypes of Portugal, (re)presenting the period and groups they choose to highlight: people in the documentary and the military in the novel. In spite of the melancholic feeling of the interviewees, we notice a common *philia* in the foreign culture of Portugal in the sense that Machado and Pageaux defined it – that is, as a positive perspective on a more or less foreign culture, within a culture that is itself considered positively (2001, 61–62).

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# Translational Functions of Book Illustrations, and What Dickens Has to Do with Them

**Abstract:** This article examines book illustration from the perspective of translation studies – as intersemiotic translation. It is suggested that while illustrations can operate in multiple ways – as clarification, adornment, addition, and so on – as translations they should be thought of in terms of two different types of function that they fulfil in the literary work. The main function of illustrations, their primary function, is to render the text from the verbal into the visual medium. Other secondary functions that the pictures may perform will then be dependent on how the primary function has been accomplished; that is, on whether the pictures translated the text in such a way as to clarify it, add to it, or even contradict or deviate from its purposes. The illustrations in three of Dickens’s novels will be used to exemplify these points.

**Keywords:** book illustration, Dickens’s novels, functions

## 1 Book illustration as intersemiotic translation and Charles Dickens

The idea of book illustration as intersemiotic translation is not a new one in literary or translation studies. Riitta Oittinen (2000, 106) points out that there are “many similarities between translation (into words) and illustration (translation into pictures) as forms of interpretation,” and, in her analysis of the illustrations in Dryden’s version of the *Aeneid*, Eleanor Winsor Leach (1982, 175) suggests that “the art of translation may approach that of illustration, both in its need to convey to the reader a coherent image couched within the understandable contemporary idiom and in its responsibility for preserving fidelity to the text.” Intersemiotic translation, or transmutation, was first described by Roman Jakobson (2000) as translation between two different systems of signs, for example, from the verbal into the musical, the photographic, or the pictorial medium – and thus also from a literary text into illustrations. Other theories can also help us understand the compatibility of the media involved. Haroldo de Campos’s (1970, 21–38) argument that literary translation is possible only by means of aesthetic



recreation,<sup>1</sup> for example, adds new support for consistency between the verbal and the visual media in translation, for it implies a reconstitution of the aesthetic information of the text in similar aesthetic form.

Such notions as these are underpinned by the fact that the activities of translation and illustration are carried out in very similar ways. With respect to the mechanics of book production, both translations and illustrations are produced to satisfy specific editorial demands, and both are strongly influenced by publishers. The publisher is not only responsible for commissioning the relevant professionals but also for deciding on general features of the publication (style, compositional elements, target audience, and so forth), so that, in both cases, he/she has a say in every aspect of the end product. These similarities can extend to the level of the creation of illustrations, for translators and illustrators make use of the same types of resources in the process of translating or illustrating. Translational procedures such as addition, omission, condensation, and suppression, amongst others (see Delisle et al. 1999), are commonly employed by translators and illustrators. And so are strategies such as foreignization and domestication (see Venuti 1995), to specify but one binary pair, for both translators and illustrators may (by means of cultural references, choice of words/visual elements, and so on) allude (and bring the reader closer) to either the source or target culture, depending on the way they approach the text being translated/illustrated.<sup>2</sup>

Both translation and illustration are metonymic arts. Maria Tymoczko (1999, 41–61) points out that metonymy is inherent to translation because, facing the impossibility of encompassing all textual, literary, and cultural features of a text, translators privilege some aspects to the detriment of others, always having to make choices:

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**1** Campos applies Max Bense's concepts of documentary information, semantic information, and aesthetic information to an exemplary sentence, "A aranha tece a teia" [The spider weaves the web], and to the first stanza of "Formas do Nu" [Forms of the Nude] by Brazilian poet João Cabral de Melo Neto. He proposes that, as a piece of documentary or semantic information, if the sentence were translated into another language, it could be reorganized in various ways: "The spider produces the web," "The web is made by the spider," "The web is a secretion of the spider," and so on. The opening of the poem (a piece of aesthetic information), however, "A aranha passa a vida/ tecendo cortinados/ com o fio que fia/ de seu cuspe privado" [The spider passes through life/ weaving curtains/ with the thread it threads/ from its private spit], could be translated in no other form but the one in which it was transmitted by the artist (Campos 1970 [1963], 22–23; my translations). He argues that any change in the original sequence of the poem would interfere with its "aesthetic realization," so that it is necessary that the poem be recreated in the other language in aesthetic form as well.

**2** In Pereira (2007), I discuss how translational procedures and strategies are used in the illustration of Brazilian translations and adaptations of *Alice in Wonderland*.

Translators must make choices, because no perfect homology is possible, not even in synonymy or intralingual paraphrase. Decisions are required in translation, because there is always loss and gain in moving between languages and between cultural discourses, because a translator cannot capture everything, because there are inconsistent demands on the translator, because there are limits on the practicable information load of the target text and so forth. Translators select some elements, some aspects, or some parts of the source text to highlight and preserve; translators prioritize and privilege some parameters and not others; and, thus, translators represent some aspects of the text partially or fully and others not at all in translation. (Tymoczko 1999, 55)

Tymoczko quotes Lawrence Venuti, for whom there is no complete or total translation, the translated text being “irredeemably partial in its interpretation” (quoted in Tymoczko 1999, 55), and she concludes that “by definition, therefore, translation [...] is a form of representation in which parts or aspects of the source text come to stand for the whole” (Tymoczko 1999, 55). When applied to illustration, the same principles prove to be true, as a literary text is illustrated never in its integrity, but in parts which are selected by the illustrator according to his/her criteria of what is appropriate or possible to illustrate, and which will represent the totality of the text. Thus, similarly to translators, illustrators, too, face constraints of various types (the publisher, the characteristics of the publication, the medium, and the text itself), and have to make choices.

Illustration can be particularly regarded as a form of translation, though, because, as such, it modifies the experience of reading. In an illustrated work of literature, the text is shown to the reader/viewer through the eyes of the illustrator, who, in turn, will always ground his/her views in a particular interpretation. Joseph Schwarcz points out that “[t]he illustrator, consciously or unconsciously, tastefully or crudely, *interprets*” (1982, 104; emphasis in original), and Stephen Behrendt (1997, 30) adds to this idea by remarking that “the illustrator generally shows us not how a scene or figure appears to its author but rather how it appears to the illustrator, and those two appearances can never be precisely identical.” Behrendt also suggests that, by interpreting the text, the illustrator plays an intrusive role in the work: the illustrator “*intrudes* his or her interpretation into an intellectual and aesthetic transaction that would otherwise involve only the literary author and the reader” (1997, 24; emphasis in original), and, in doing so – and because his/her views are never neutral or unbiased – just like the translator, the illustrator interferes in the reception of the text.

Such ideas will be used here to examine book illustrations from the perspective of translation studies – as intersemiotic translations. Charles Dickens is a significant author in this respect not only because illustrations abound in his works, but also because they were produced over a period of almost thirty years, by various artists, which allows different aspects of the illustration process to

be observed. Illustrations have always been a part of the universe of Dickens's books. With the exception of *Hard Times* (1854) and *Great Expectations* (1860), all his works were originally illustrated, an aspect which he took as seriously – sufficiently enough to be closely involved in it – as the production of the text itself: “he usually retained the illustrated format clearly convinced, despite the difficulties of coordinating text and pictures, of its advantages to himself, his publishers, his illustrators to a lesser extent, and, above all, to his readers” (Cohen 1980, 3). In fact, Dickens's career as a writer coincides with the heyday of illustration and the illustrated novel in England from 1836 to 1870 (Cohen 1980, 3–4). Thus, the study that follows is also broadly exemplary for, and more specifically illustrative of, the classic age of book illustration.

## 2 The translational functions of book illustration

The examination of illustrations as translations should be based on the assumption that, as much as the text, illustrations narrate. The narrative capability of images is obviously expressed by other means than those pertaining to verbal constructions. Being static, images can only simulate the development of action and the passing of time. But precepts such as size, shape, location, thickness of lines, colour, texture, level of saturation, and so on produce tension between the objects in a picture, causing them to be seen dynamically (see Nodelman 1988). These elements can also be organized in such a way that certain objects are given more importance than others (visual weight), or so as to direct the eyes of the reader/viewer to specific points (directed tension; see Nodelman [1988, 125–157]) – both of which are also ways to simulate action. Allied with typifications and distortions of movements and changes, gestures, symbols, and other conventions, pictures offer enough repetition to create a rhythm for the story and thus do imply events and their progression in time (see Nodelman 1988, 158–221).

I also suggest that the study of illustration as translation should be carried out on the same basis as the study of interlingual translation (translation proper; Jakobson [2000, 114]), both in terms of employing the same theoretical tools to analyse them, and in considering the verbal text as the source text (ST) and the illustrations as the target text (TT). This does not imply the primacy of the text over the illustrations, or any kind of hierarchical ranking of the verbal and visual languages. Rather, it can be legitimized by the coexistence of both media in the same space of the book. In contrast to literary images in a catalogue or hanging on the walls of an art gallery, the illustrations in a book cannot be dissociated from the text. Moreover, in an illustrated book, the pictures are meant to represent the

text – not the opposite – and the text is always the parameter in terms of which they should be examined: “Criticism of the illustration [...] must deal with images in relation to text; otherwise the critic has no logical grounds for evaluating the creative activity of illustrators” (Hodnett 1986, 1). The pictures exist because the text exists and has to be illustrated.

A distinction should also be made between the concept and the function(s) of illustration. Illustration has been defined in various ways, as illustrations have been seen to fulfil a number of functions in the illustrated book. For J. Hillis Miller (1992, 61), illustrating means “bringing to light”; for Bob Gill and John Lewis (1964, 7), it is “a visual answer to a specific problem”; and for Kurt Weitzmann (1959, 1), it is “clarification.” Where functions are concerned, Hodnett (1990, 1) argues that illustrations have three: “to decorate, to inform, and to interpret”; N. C. Wyeth (quoted in Gannon 1991, 93), proposes that they should add to the text; Behrendt (1997, 28) sees them in a more dynamic and open way, as in his opinion they can “alter, expand, contradict, or even ridicule or repudiate” the text; Schwarcz (1982, 14–18) lists congruency, elaboration, extension of the situation, and deviation as functions of illustrations; and Frank Weitenkamp (quoted in Harthan 1981, 8) suggests that illustration “must either elucidate the text or adorn it. It may do both: sometimes it does neither.”

At some point, the concept and the function of illustration seem to merge. Miller’s affirmation that to illustrate is to bring to light is close to the idea that the function of illustration is to elucidate or to clarify; and if Behrendt gives illustrations roles such as those of contradicting or refuting the text, this is consistent with the argument that they may deviate from what would be expected from them. These notions are certainly based on personal views and (especially in the case of those who are also artists) the way each theorist relates to art. To mention but one example, it is probable that illustrating has the sense of addition for Wyeth because of his idea of how to approach a literary text: “Why take a dramatic episode that is described in every detail and redo it? Instead I create something that will *add* to the story” (quoted in Gannon 1991, 93; Wyeth’s emphasis). In fact, there is nothing wrong with this or any of the other notions mentioned above, except that they may lead to the assumption that the concept and function of illustration will always coincide, that is, that illustrating is always clarifying or the function of illustrations is always to complement the text – the assumption that this study sets out to refute.

I also, finally, suggest that, as translation, illustrations should be thought of in terms of two different types of function that they perform in the illustrated book. The main function of illustrations, their primary function – which would describe the activity of illustrating per se – should be to render the text from the verbal into the visual medium. The specific way(s) in which illustrations operate

in relation to the text should be regarded as their secondary function(s). In other words: to illustrate is to translate the text from the verbal into the visual medium. Then, other (secondary) functions that the pictures may perform in the particular universe of the book will be variable, conditioned by the way(s) in which the primary function is carried out as a process of aesthetic recreation, which may result in images that relate to the text so as to clarify it, so as to add other pieces of information to it, so as to contradict it, and so forth. The pictures in Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (*Bentley's Miscellany*, 1837–1839), illustrated by George Cruikshank; *The Old Curiosity Shop* (*Master Humphrey's Clock*, 1840–1841), illustrated by George Cattermole and Hablot Knight Browne (Phiz), as well as by Daniel Maclise and Samuel Williams (one each); and *Bleak House* (Bradbury and Evans, 1852–1853), illustrated by Phiz, show these ideas in action.

### 3 The illustrations in *Oliver Twist*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and *Bleak House*

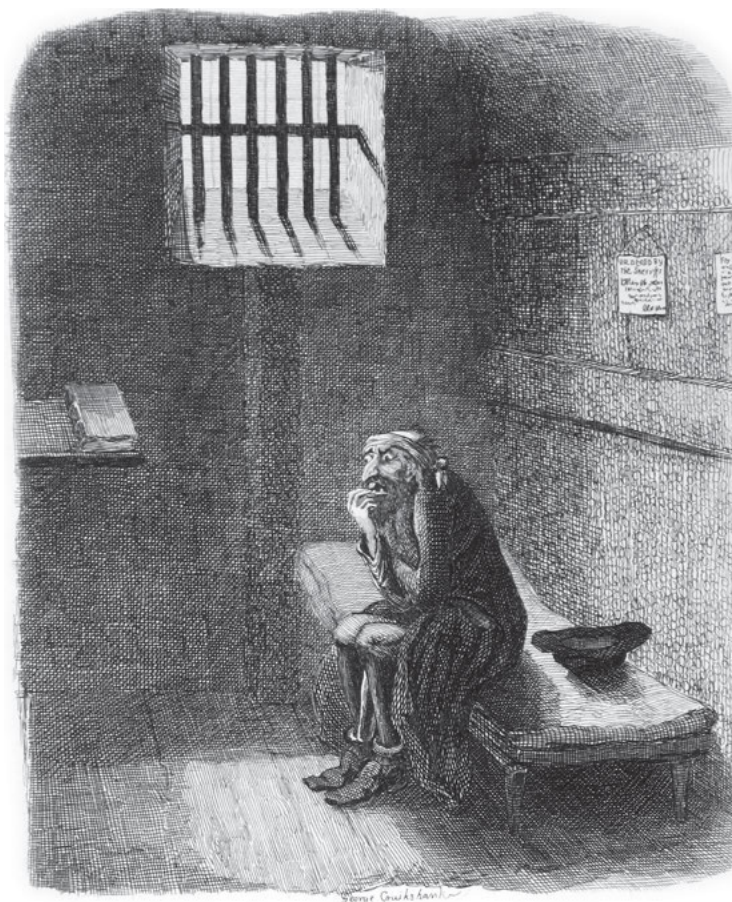
In *Oliver Twist*, George Cruikshank uses closed spaces to represent the main themes dealt with in the book (abuse at the hands of the system, the distance between those in authority and the poor, the philosophies of profit and individualism in Victorian society, and death, amongst others), as is expressed particularly in his portrayal of indoor scenes. An heir of Hogarth's conventions, Cruikshank makes use of emblems such as objects of art and pictures hanging on walls to denote these aspects, as well as other aspects of character and plot (see Cohen 1980, 23–24). But it is especially by means of small rooms, in whose environment the characters are all concentrated (even entrapped and asphyxiated, as Miller [1965, 36–52] would suggest about the text of *Oliver Twist*), that these motifs are reinforced. Notice, for example, that, except for the tiny lattice window through which Oliver is obliged to pass in the episode of the burglary at the Maylies' (Dickens 2002, 182), and the one through which Monks and Fagin watch Oliver in the little cottage room (282), nearly all of the rooms lack windows. The low ceiling in some illustrations (Fagin's den [65], the kitchen in Mr Sowerberry's house [49; see fig. 1], the place where Monks meets Mr and Mrs Bumble [315], and even Mr Brownlow's sitting room [91]), intensify the feelings of enclosure – a reflection of the suffocation caused by institutional structures and of the conditions in which the characters find themselves stuck, be it a life of crime, self-sacrificing devotion, or the quest for an identity.

These pictures have a dreadful quality, which is emphasized in scenes such as that of Oliver's return to Fagin's hands, when Sikes's shadow is projected onto



**Fig. 1:** George Cruikshank, “Oliver plucks up a spirit” (1837).

the wall and ceiling of the den (Dickens 2002, 126), and can also be seen in almost every illustration in the doomed effect created by the cross-hatching technique. Juliet John (2006, 134) suggests that Dickens “domesticates the Gothic, bringing it into surreal collision with domestic and realistic settings,” which is also evidenced in the pictures. In the plate of Fagin in the condemned cell (Dickens 2002, 444; see fig. 2), for instance, the character’s isolation, his gazing into space, and the expression of despair on his face all evoke the heightened emotions and the dramatic impact which characterize the Gothic. In fact, all the characters in *Oliver Twist* are portrayed in a theatrical way, in exaggerated gestures and unnatural poses – another resemblance to Hogarth in Cruikshank’s aesthetics. Notice Oliver kneeling down before the magistrates (Dickens 2002, 20) or the faces of the boys in



**Fig. 2:** George Cruikshank, “Fagin in the condemned cell” (1839).

the famous “Oliver asking for more” (16; see fig. 3). Moreover, they are regarded as ill-favoured in appearance. Cohen (1980, 24) classifies them as “malproportioned, if not downright unattractive.” She mentions Fagin’s and Oliver’s thinness, Bumble’s and Brownlow’s plumpness, and Nancy’s robustness, among other traits, as making the characters unappealing in general (Cohen 1980, 22). In any case, these elements reiterate the stylized effect of the plates and, combined, give them a grotesque dimension, which is another way to corroborate textual meaning.

In several instances, too, the pictures enter into an ironic relationship with the captions accompanying them. This is the case with the representation of Oliver’s recapture by Fagin’s gang. In it, the image shows Oliver being grabbed by the



**Fig. 3:** George Cruikshank, “Oliver asking for more” (1837).

collar by Sikes while the caption informs us: “Oliver claimed by his affectionate friends” (Dickens 2002, 121; see fig. 4). The passage when Oliver first meets Fagin is another example. While the plate portrays Fagin with a trident-like fork in his hand, the caption reads “Oliver introduced to the respectable Old Gentleman” (65). Another example is the drawing “Oliver amazed at the Dodger’s mode of ‘going to work,’” which shows the pickpocketing of Mr Brownlow’s handkerchief (75). Even the picture of the encounter of Mr Bumble and Mrs Corney, “Mr. Bumble and Mrs. Corney taking tea” (188), can be regarded as ironic, as Mr Bumble’s clear advances on Mrs Corney and their knowing smiles reveal their romantic interest in each other. In fact, the captions reproduce extracts from the text itself, which





**Fig. 4:** George Cruikshank, “Oliver claimed by his affectionate friends” (1837).

is ironic per se. By being separated from the text, the sentences lose connection with their textual context and create another context with the pictures against which they are placed. In the text, it is Dickens’s style which creates irony. In the visual representations, it is the illustrations: the captions are ironic because the images tell us so.

In *The Old Curiosity Shop*, however, the illustrators mostly highlight contrasts. Nell’s graceful figure and the grotesqueness of her surroundings are especially remarkable, but they can be extended, on the thematic level, to oppositions of good and evil, innocence and craftiness, and so forth. Samuel Williams’s plate of Nell asleep in the midst of all kinds of bibelots in the curiosity shop (Dickens

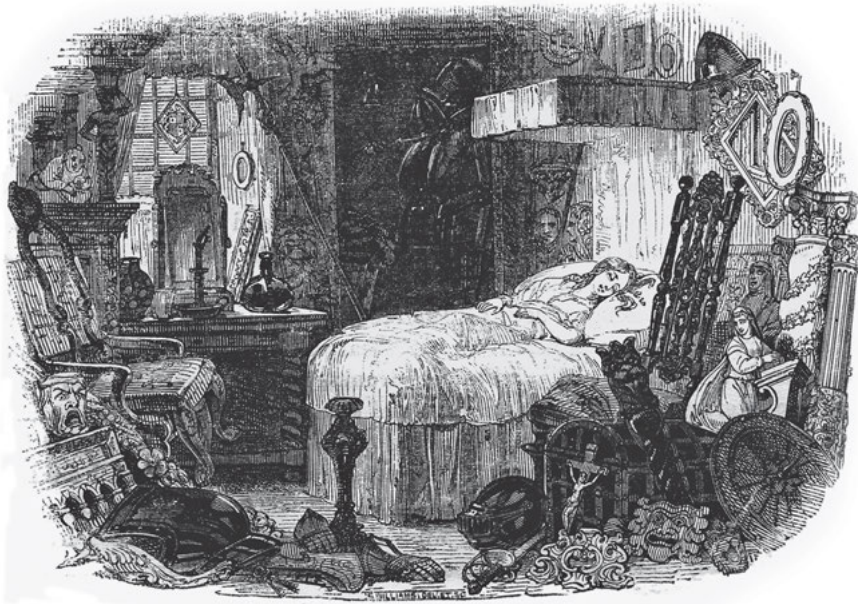


Fig. 5: Samuel Williams, “Nell in bed” (1840).

2008, 19; see fig. 5) is a classic example, but others can be observed throughout the book when she is depicted in sombre decayed settings, in the company of weird characters, or experiencing “the squalid horrors” (Dickens 2008, 352) she had been forced through. The presence of her grandfather, too, imposes a parallel between youth and old age, and there is also the alternation of the images of Nell and of Quilp and his associates. In some pictures, Quilp’s deformed figure and ugliness are representative of his evil personality, as exemplified by his devil-like face in Phiz’s plate depicting him defying a dog (170). In others, as when Nell hides from Quilp (211), these traits are reinforced by means of symbolic elements, such as the demonic statues on each side of the arch in the old gateway of the town.

Miller (1965, 94) suggests that the central axis in *The Old Curiosity Shop* is the opposition between “the city, the prison of the industrial and commercial inferno which is destroying Nell and her grandfather, and the free and pure country which is close to the divine;” an idea well expressed in George Cattermole’s illustration of Nell and her grandfather looking back at London from the outskirts of the city (Dickens 2008, 123; see fig. 6). Miller (1965, 95) also argues that the novel is a “pilgrimage toward the past,” a “past of barely remembered childhood, and, behind that, [...] the happy state of pre-existence before birth,” whose end



Fig. 6: George Cattermole, “Nell and the Old Man looking back at London” (1840).

is always death. In this sense, tombs (Dickens 2008, 400, 545), pits (415),<sup>3</sup> arid places (318, 326, 334, 351, 389, 410, 531), as well as the images of Quilp lying dead in a swamp (510) or of Nell on her deathbed (538), mark the recurrence of this idea in the visual domain. In fact, the images of Nell asleep (19) or in a faint (344) function as predictions of her death. Moreover, as mentioned by Elizabeth M. Brennan (2008, x), in the book, even people are displayed as human curiosities, which implies the loss of one’s identity. Thus, in this novel, the illustrations can be seen as depicting a declining trajectory of alienation, which eventually leads to death.

Finally, in *Bleak House*, the illustrations represent the dualities that permeate the novel. In contrast to what happens in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, these dualities are not expressed by oppositions between two conflicting ideas or elements, but by the two parts forming a whole or the two sides of one and the same thing. In *Bleak House*, narration is assigned to two narrators, an anonymous present-tense narrator and the protagonist, Esther Summerson. This is enough to indicate the

<sup>3</sup> “Nell and the Sexton,” by Daniel Maclise.

twofold aspect of the narrative, which combines the narrator's immediate account of the events and Esther's autobiographical retrospective; they connect present and past and display two correlated styles. Other binary associations can be traced in the novel by considering aspects of character and plot. Esther and Lady Dedlock, for example, although living in the same town, remain dead to each other in alienation from the truth about themselves – that Esther is in fact Lady Dedlock's illegitimate daughter. Esther and Lady Dedlock also, in a sense, seem to exchange roles: being a mother, Lady Dedlock fails to fulfil a maternal ideal; not being a mother, Esther has a motherly instinct which makes her take care of everyone around her and even be called by (suggestive) nicknames such as "Mother Hubbard" (Dickens 1977, 90). This gives them the dual quality of being both mothers and daughters at the same time.

These dualities are manifested visually by two distinct types of plate featured in the book, which also exemplify two styles created by Phiz: one in the "ordinary" caricatural mode, typical of the artist's works, and another, more realistic, found in the so-called dark plates, in which close lines added to the plate before the etching process is concluded (Cohen 1980, 109) give the printed drawing a darker tone. Including the frontispiece, there are ten dark plates in *Bleak House*, of which "Tom-all-Alone's" (Dickens 1977, 552; see fig. 7) is an example. In it, not only are the cruel realities of the London slums exposed; the cold atmosphere also reflects the solitude and mysteries surrounding the characters' lives. In fact, the dark plates act as emblems of the obscurity of the characters' past, a past about which they are seeking answers, but by which they are haunted at the same time. If, in the text, the fog epitomizes "spiritual blindness" (Miller 1965, 163), the dark plates act as its counterpart in the illustrations. Evidence of this can be found in their emphasis on the environment (landscapes, empty rooms, outdoor spaces), in which the human figure, when present, can barely be distinguished. Contrarily to the dark plates, the typical plates in *Bleak House* (whether stressing action to a greater or lesser degree) concentrate on the characters. However, both types of plate are complementary and interdependent, in that they can be seen to represent the instances of narration conducted by the anonymous narrator and by Esther. Most commonly featured in the chapters narrated by the former, the dark plates describe states, a set of ever-present conditions which seem to be frozen in time and which are presented from the neutral (even cold) point of view of the narrator. The plates illustrating Esther's narrative, on the other hand, portray more intimate scenes (Dickens 1977, 33; see fig. 8), as (albeit also distanced by memory) Esther sees herself interacting with the other characters in her account of her past.

It is clear that the illustrations discussed here represent the text differently in each novel not only because (obviously) the books are different, deal with dis-



**Fig. 7:** Hablot Knight Browne, "Tom-all-Along's" (1853).



**Fig. 8:** Hablot Knight Browne, “The little old Lady” (1852).

tinct subjects and themes, and were written in varied contexts, but also because, by approaching the texts differently (in terms of purpose, decisions on what to illustrate, and resources at their disposal), the artists developed different types of association between the text and the pictures in each book. While this is, again, quite obvious, it allows us to determine what functions the illustrations are ascribed in the illustrated work. The function(s) the illustrations perform in a book cannot be predicted or classified in advance. In the particular cases considered here – elaborating on the discussion of the concept of illustrating and the function(s) of illustrations in a work – the illustrations can be seen to represent

contrasting themes in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, the dualities of narration in *Bleak House*, and the ironic relationship between image and text in *Oliver Twist* only in the light of the circumstances under which they were produced. In every case, they can be said to evoke the text visually, for its verbal information is given form by means of lines and patterns of light and shadow – which legitimizes illustration as translation.

From the perspective of translation, illustration can be seen not as an isolated activity of crafting images for words – although pictures invariably do this – but as a process which shapes the way the literary work is received. This view also allows for the study of the various types of constraints influencing illustration and how the pictures reflect ideologies and the aesthetic attitudes and concerns of illustrators in different times. As translation, therefore, illustration establishes a parameter for how the verbal and visual narratives coexist in an illustrated book. The suggested primary function of illustration is a starting point for establishing the secondary function(s) that the illustrations may fulfil. From that point onwards, other relevant questions pertaining to translation can be applied to illustration (we can, for example, ask what counts as visual literalness or fidelity in visual representation), so that studies which examine illustrations in such a light are of paramount importance to both translation and visual studies. And there are more than enough illustrations in Dickens's works with which to do this.

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Márcia Arbex, Izabela Baptista do Lago

## Images littéraires de l'atelier de l'artiste

**Résumé :** L'objectif de cet article est de présenter les rapports entre la littérature et l'art à partir de l'examen de l'un de ses *topoi* les plus fréquents : l'atelier de l'artiste. Considéré comme « enveloppe du peintre », l'atelier fait l'objet de descriptions complexes dont l'importance pour le récit se révèle fondamentale. Une sélection de textes littéraires des XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles a permis d'établir une typologie de ce *topos*, qui sera illustrée par des extraits d'œuvres. Espace propice à la mise en scène de l'artiste au travail, l'atelier apparaît comme une métaphore de l'espace de création littéraire où la figure de l'écrivain se réfléchit dans celle du peintre.

**Mots clés :** Littérature française, roman d'artiste, *Künstlerroman*, peinture, atelier, art

L'atelier de l'artiste<sup>1</sup> est un espace de création constamment mentionné dans la littérature du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, ainsi que dans les récits contemporains qui renouvellent la tradition du « roman d'artiste » par la mise en scène de personnages peintres, sculpteurs ou photographes. Métaphore de l'espace de création littéraire, l'atelier évoqué dans la littérature est indissociable des courants artistiques qui traversent les siècles, et dialogue avec les représentations picturales de l'atelier du peintre, également très fréquentes dans l'histoire de l'art. À partir d'une sélection de textes littéraires appartenant à la tradition du « roman d'artiste » et comportant des descriptions d'ateliers de peintre, il a été possible d'établir une typologie de ce *topos* qui révèle que l'entrée du « monde de l'art dans la fiction » (Vouilloux 2011, 52) n'est pas restreinte au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, mais s'est poursuivie également au siècle dernier. Nous allons présenter au moins un exemple littéraire de chaque type d'atelier identifié, la mention des peintures mettant en scène ce même motif ayant une fonction purement illustrative<sup>2</sup>.

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2 La comparaison entre les descriptions littéraires et les peintures réelles mériterait un développement à part, qu'il n'est pas possible de réaliser dans le cadre de cet article. Nous pourrions, par exemple, et dans certains cas, évoquer l'hypothèse d'une transposition intersémiotique des tableaux vers le texte littéraire, l'image réelle étant génératrice de la description. Les tableaux cités dans cet article pourront être visualisés sur les sites indiqués en note après chaque référence.

# 1 L'atelier comme «enveloppe du peintre»

Ce n'est qu'au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, avec la création des Académies de peinture et de sculpture – et après une progressive valorisation de l'artiste par un processus de légitimation sociale et théorique de la peinture –, que s'affirment les différences entre le travail manuel et celui de la pensée. Le statut de l'artiste s'inscrit désormais dans le champ du travail intellectuel en raison de sa puissance de création, donnant postérieurement lieu au mythe de l'artiste comme personnage hors du commun, être supérieur, plus proche de la divinité que du commun des mortels (cf. Kris et Kurz 2010, 91). Le XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle voit surgir des relations horizontales entre le champ pictural et le littéraire, de nouvelles alliances naissent entre le peintre et l'écrivain. L'espace de création de l'artiste, son atelier, univers privé où l'art prend forme, a néanmoins gardé une correspondance avec le travail artisanal du menuisier, car le mot « atelier » dérive de l'ancien français *astelle*, qui signifie « éclat de bois<sup>3</sup> ».

Le statut de l'artiste influe naturellement sur ses conditions de travail : pour le jeune peintre, s'installer dans son propre atelier signifie atteindre le statut d'artiste professionnel, celui qui vit de l'art et pour l'art, après avoir quitté les ateliers-écoles. Selon Gausson (2006, 8), une fois installé, le peintre est fier de donner une représentation picturale de son atelier, que ce soit une chambre ou un salon, une mansarde ou un palais<sup>4</sup>. Représenter l'espace dans lequel il donne vie à son œuvre signifie alors s'affirmer comme un artiste indépendant en pleine ascension, montrer ses relations professionnelles et personnelles, tout autant que révéler ce qui le touche le plus profondément, ses dilemmes les plus intimes :

[...] [L]’atelier est comme l’enveloppe du peintre. Mais c’est aussi son monde intérieur. La chambre noire où l’œuvre, peu à peu, prend forme. C’est un laboratoire de rêves, peuplé des fantômes des tableaux passés et à venir. Lorsqu’il représente son atelier, le peintre nous montre ce qui se passe dans sa tête. (Gausson 2006, 106)

Ainsi le peintre est-il conscient du fait qu'en transportant sur la toile son propre atelier, il donne à voir son intimité et révèle au spectateur ses références personnelles, ses inspirations, ses désirs et rêveries. Et encore, parce qu'il s'agit d'un espace consacré à l'art, les tableaux et autres œuvres d'art exposés vont évoquer

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<sup>3</sup> « D'après l'orthographe ancienne, on reconnaît qu'atelier a même radical qu'attelle (*astelle*) : c'est le lieu où l'on prépare les attelles, qui sont de petites planches ; en un mot, c'est l'atelier d'un menuisier ; de là le sens a passé à toute espèce d'atelier (voy. ATTELLE) ». Dictionnaire Littré. <<http://www.littre.org>> (consulté le 25 juillet 2018).

<sup>4</sup> La peinture d'atelier était, d'ailleurs, devenue un genre dès le XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle et elle se démultiplia au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle (cf. Bared et Pernac 2013, 172).

les thèmes chers au peintre et la tradition dont il s'inspire, de même que les objets qui garnissent son atelier participeront de la composition de sa mythologie personnelle.

Les caractéristiques d'un atelier de peintre au XIX<sup>e</sup> peuvent varier, comme le souligne Laneyrie-Dagen (2012, 181) : les peintres mondains et ceux qui ont déjà acquis une certaine renommée ont besoin de plus d'espace, puisqu'ils reçoivent plus de visites et travaillent sur des tableaux de grandes dimensions, comme les prestigieuses peintures d'histoire ; les peintres de chevalet, inversement, se contentent d'une petite pièce dans leur appartement personnel. Dans cette pièce, ils peuvent s'isoler du monde, travailler loin des regards, s'appliquer aux toiles en cours et imaginer les œuvres futures. L'atelier devient un espace protégé, un sanctuaire ou un refuge.

Cet espace qui, en principe, privilégie la solitude et le recueillement nécessaires au travail de création est utilisé également comme lieu de socialisation et de négociation (Maurisson 2006, 207) : c'est là où le peintre exposera son œuvre aux marchands, recevra ses modèles et les clients potentiels. Toutefois, en raison de la pluralité des fonctions de l'atelier, il revient au peintre de garder un équilibre entre sa vie professionnelle et sa vie domestique, entre sa vie d'artiste et sa vie privée, ce qui ne va pas sans complications.

Dans ce sens, on observe que les ateliers littéraires que l'on retrouve dans de nombreux « romans d'artiste » présentent ces mêmes éléments, et les descriptions qui en sont données sont donc très proches d'une réalité historique. La description de l'atelier y est non seulement quasi obligatoire, mais s'inscrit aussi dans la trame du récit, voire participe du destin du personnage-peintre.

## 2 L'atelier du peintre dans le « roman d'artiste » : un exercice de description complexe

Le « roman d'artiste » est issu de la tradition allemande du *Künstlerroman*. Ce sous-genre du roman, dans lequel « [...] uma figura de artista ou uma obra de arte (real ou fictícia) desempenha função estruturadora essencial » [une figure d'artiste ou une œuvre d'art (réelle ou imaginaire) exerce une fonction structurelle essentielle] (Oliveira 1993, 5), s'est popularisé dans toute l'Europe, mais surtout en France. Comme un réflexe de l'enthousiasme pour les arts visuels, le roman d'artiste fait du peintre son artiste de prédilection, de sorte que la description de l'atelier, ainsi que l'*ekphrasis* et les références aux mythes de la création en sont devenus des *topoi*, comme le souligne Maurisson (2006, 207), une espèce de passage obligé de la construction de l'illusion réaliste.

Dans la description de l'univers privé du personnage-peintre, rien n'est arbitraire ou gratuit, explique Vouilloux (2004, 5)<sup>5</sup>, puisqu'elle tient compte des principaux éléments de la création artistique, des matériaux et des opérations techniques nécessaires au produit résultant de tous ce processus: l'œuvre d'art. Espace encombré, rempli par les ustensiles, où les esquisses et les toiles s'accumulent, où les critiques et les modèles se croisent, « [...] l'atelier fait l'objet de descriptions précises et est représenté par des mises en scène complexes où chaque objet a une fonction symbolique. » (Maurisson 2006, 208).

La description accorde une attention spéciale aux effets de lumière et aux accessoires qui composent le studio de ce personnage. La première exigence d'un peintre est en effet que la lumière puisse pénétrer à flot dans la pièce, une lumière naturelle de préférence, d'où sa prédilection pour les étages les plus hauts des édifices, avec leurs grandes fenêtres et baies vitrées. Les objets, accessoires ou instruments de travail décrits font partie du décor et sont aussi des indices des rapports du personnage-peintre avec le monde qui l'entoure (Vouilloux 2004, 5). Dans ce sens, les meubles et la nature des objets disposés dans l'atelier disent beaucoup de son caractère, de sa condition sociale, de son style, puisque la description de l'atelier est étroitement liée à son œuvre. L'atelier aux murs nus, où la poussière s'accumule, avec des meubles usés, dépareillés, réduits à l'essentiel, par exemple, accentuent le caractère excentrique du personnage lié au mythe de l'artiste, trop absorbé par ses pensées élevées pour s'inquiéter des choses éminemment triviales, comme la décoration ou la propreté de la pièce. Négligeant le confort du monde matériel que son dévouement à l'art ne lui permet pas d'apprécier, le peintre est capable de tromper la faim et le froid, simples drames humains, incomparables à l'importance de sa mission. L'encombrement et le désordre des objets disposés dans l'atelier sont les témoins de la révolution qui se trame dans la tête du peintre-prophète : révéler un nouvel ordre du monde, créer une autre réalité par le travail artistique.

L'efficacité de la description de l'atelier, enfin, s'appuie sur un effet de réel qui permet au lecteur de pénétrer dans les mystères de la création artistique. Compte tenu de la force symbolique<sup>6</sup> des objets qui composent la pièce, la description procède par énumération de chaque élément, comme les pièces d'un puzzle que le lecteur devra recomposer. Elle s'attachera tout aussi bien à l'ambiance du lieu,

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5 Cette affirmation de Bernard Vouilloux, bien que se référant à l'atelier de Porbus, dans *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu* de Balzac, peut être appliquée à toute description littéraire d'atelier, car, comme l'observe cet auteur, « le moment où l'atelier du peintre devient un lieu romanesque est un motif récurrent de la fiction d'art [...] » (Vouilloux 2004, 5).

6 En ce qui concerne la portée symbolique du tableau dans le récit, cf. Bertho 1990.

où chaque objet a une importance non négligeable, non seulement pour le personnage, mais aussi pour la compréhension du récit (Ledda 2006, 60).

### 3 De l'atelier-laboratoire à l'anti-atelier : essai de typologie

La description de l'atelier dans le roman d'artiste a donc une importance fondamentale pour l'ensemble du récit et tout élément qui s'y retrouve obéit à une intention déterminée. À partir d'une sélection d'œuvres littéraires des XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles, sept catégories ou types d'atelier littéraires ont été identifiés : l'atelier-laboratoire, l'atelier-vitrine, l'atelier-sanctuaire, l'atelier domestique, l'atelier-école, l'atelier itinérant et l'anti-atelier (Arbex et Lago, 2015, 12–15), chacun se distinguant par la mise en évidence soit des objets et du lieu, soit du travail artistique, du caractère ou de la condition sociale du personnage-peintre.

En raison de la complexité des ustensiles décrits et de la spécificité du travail technique qui s'y développe, l'*atelier-laboratoire* se rapproche du laboratoire d'un alchimiste. C'est le cas de l'atelier du peintre Orazio Gentileschi dans le roman historique d'Alexandra Lapierre *Artemisia. Un duel pour l'immortalité*, où ce rapprochement est explicitement fait dans le cadre d'une longue description :

Avec ses pots, ses poudres, ses chaudrons, ses bassines, ses creusets, ses alambics et ses cornues, l'endroit évoquait davantage le laboratoire de l'alchimiste que l'atelier du peintre. Même le tas d'étoffes, les traînées pourpres des velours, les drapés blancs des linges, tous les accessoires de l'artiste qui s'amoncelaient sur les tréteaux au fond de la salle, les robes de capucin, les grandes ailes d'ange, les roues des martyrs et les têtes de mort contribuaient au mystère de cet antre, à l'atmosphère irréelle et vaguement inquiétante. D'un brasero montait une fumée noire, épaisse, qui ne s'échappait par aucune cheminée. Un garçon de quinze ans, Francesco, l'aîné des fils, surveillait dans un pot de terre roux au fond plombé une huile, scintillant comme de l'or, qu'il touillait lentement avec une longue plume. (Lapierre 2012 [1998], 55–56)

Lieu consacré à l'exercice de la peinture tout autant qu'à la fabrication des pigments, cet atelier situé dans le contexte du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle traduit toute l'ambiance énigmatique propre aux opérations alchimiques. Le lecteur assiste aux mystères de la création artistique dès la fabrication de sa matière première, dans une approximation qui n'est pas sans rappeler les caractères mystique et magique attribués à l'alchimie et à ses adeptes : de même que l'alchimiste, le peintre est capable de parfaire la matière, de créer une autre réalité par le travail artistique. L'énumération des objets hétéroclites et encombrants, l'atmosphère trouble, le feu et la fumée, de même que le personnage du garçon nous renvoient au tableau

de Johannes Stradanus, *Le laboratoire de l'alchimiste* (1570), bien que celui-ci traite d'un autre sujet que la description donnée par Lapierre<sup>7</sup>.

L'alliance entre les fonctions sociale et commerciale du lieu de création se matérialise dans *l'atelier-vitrine*, où l'artiste va non seulement concevoir et réaliser ses œuvres, mais aussi recevoir ses amis, élèves, critiques, clients et marchands – toute une foule qui aura accès à l'univers privé du peintre. En ce sens, la nouvelle d'Albert Camus *Jonas ou l'artiste au travail* est exemplaire :

Ainsi coulait le temps de Jonas, qui peignait au milieu d'amis et d'élèves, installés sur des chaises maintenant disposées en rangs concentriques autour du chevalet. Souvent, aussi bien, des voisins apparaissaient aux fenêtres d'en face et s'ajoutaient à son public. Il discutait, échangeait des vues, examinait les toiles qui lui étaient soumises, souriait aux passages de Louise, consolait les enfants et répondait chaleureusement aux appels téléphoniques, sans jamais lâcher ses pinceaux avec lesquels, de temps en temps, il ajoutait une touche au tableau commencé. (Camus 2013 [1956], 33–34)

Le tableau *Un atelier aux Batignolles* (1870), de Henry Fantin-Latour<sup>8</sup>, illustrerait bien ce type d'atelier, s'agissant d'un portrait collectif qui montre au premier plan Manet à son chevalet, entouré de ses amis peintres et écrivains, tels que Renoir, Zola et Monet.

C'est également dans l'atelier-vitrine que le peintre exposera ses propres œuvres ainsi qu'un certain mode de vie luxueux en accord avec la renommée éventuellement acquise, comme c'est le cas de Hutting, dans *La vie mode d'emploi* de Georges Perec :

Hutting travaille, non dans son grand atelier, mais dans une petite pièce qu'il a aménagée dans la loggia à l'intention des longues séances de pose qu'il inflige à ses clients depuis qu'il est devenu portraitiste.

C'est une pièce claire et cossue, impeccablement rangée, n'offrant absolument pas le désordre habituel des ateliers de peintres ; pas de toiles retournées contre les murs, pas de châssis entassés en piles instables, pas de bouilloire bosselée sur des réchauds d'un autre âge, mais une porte capitonnée de cuir noir, de hautes plantes vertes débordant de grands trépieds de bronze et grimant à l'assaut de la verrière, et des murs laqués de blanc, nus, à l'exception d'un long panneau d'acier poli sur lequel trois affiches sont maintenues par des punaises aimantées affectant la forme de demi-billes [...]. (Perec 2012 [1978], 334–336)

La condition sociale du peintre Hutting est soulignée par l'énumération des objets qui ont l'air de faire partie d'un décor mis en place pour recevoir des visiteurs. La

<sup>7</sup> Stradanus, Johannes (Jan van der Straet). *Le laboratoire de l'alchimiste*. 1570. Huile sur ardoise, 24x18 cm. Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, Italie. <goo.gl/jBjpau> (consulté le 8 août 2018).

<sup>8</sup> Fantin-Latour, Henry. *Un atelier aux Batignolles*. 1870. Huile sur toile, 204x273 cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France. <goo.gl/xRC7nc> (8 août 2018).

vie désormais aisée du peintre est mise en évidence par la négation du désordre et de l'encombrement, de même que par l'évincement des objets qui traduisent la précarité de la condition de nombreux artistes.

En contrepartie, l'*atelier-sanctuaire* est présenté comme un refuge, un lieu vu comme sacré où le peintre peut s'isoler du monde pour concevoir ses prochaines œuvres : l'exercice de la création implique le recueillement et la méditation. Le caractère privé de ce lieu intime peut se manifester par l'exposition de ses instruments de travail – pinceaux, tubes de peinture, moules, palettes –, mais aussi par les objets qui composent son univers particulier et qui en disent beaucoup sur ses choix esthétiques. C'est le cas de l'atelier du personnage-peintre Léonard dans *L'Atelier d'un peintre*, de Marceline Desbordes-Valmore (1833, 20), dont le mur affiche le portrait de Raphaël comme référence esthétique.

Toutefois, l'aspect sacré de l'atelier se révèle davantage quand il est ressenti par un autre personnage que le peintre, comme de l'extérieur. C'est en effet avec une certaine révérence empreinte de fascination, et même avec une ferveur mystique, que l'on pénètre dans l'atelier-sanctuaire, expérience vécue par le narrateur d'*À la recherche du temps perdu* de Marcel Proust, dès qu'il entre dans l'atelier d'Elstir :

[...] je me sentis parfaitement heureux, car par toutes les études qui étaient autour de moi, je sentais la possibilité de m'élever à une connaissance poétique, féconde en joies, de maintes formes que je n'avais pas isolées jusque-là du spectacle total de la réalité. Et l'atelier d'Elstir m'apparut comme le laboratoire d'une sorte de nouvelle création du monde [...]. (Proust 1988 [1919], 190)

Une expérience similaire est vécue par le jeune Poussin, dans *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu* de Balzac (1831) :

Porbus s'inclina respectueusement, il laissa entrer le jeune homme en le croyant amené par le vieillard et s'inquiéta d'autant moins de lui que le néophyte demeura sous le charme que doivent éprouver les peintres-nés à l'aspect du premier atelier qu'ils voient et où se révèlent quelques-uns des procédés matériels de l'art. (Balzac 1994, 391–392)

Nombre d'extraits littéraires illustrent ce type d'émerveillement d'un personnage devant l'atelier-sanctuaire : c'est le cas de Griet dans *La Jeune fille à la perle*, de Tracy Chevalier (2000 [1999]), ou de Sainte Colombe et son disciple Marin Marais en entrant dans l'atelier de Lubin Baugin, dans *Tous les matins du monde*, de Pascal Quignard (2013 [1991]).

Comme à l'opposé de cette atmosphère de recueillement et d'intimité, l'*atelier domestique* se caractérise par la présence d'éléments prosaïques ; c'est celui dont l'espace est partagé avec la famille de l'artiste peintre et, par conséquent, soumis aux contingences du quotidien. Dans la littérature, la description de l'ate-



lier domestique est très fréquente puisque, dans la plupart des cas étudiés, le personnage de l'artiste est présenté comme quelqu'un qui ne dispose pas de ressources matérielles, il lui manque les moyens pour s'installer dans un second appartement. Le partage de l'espace est source de graves conflits, car le peintre devra savoir séparer sa vie privée de son métier, dilemme vécu par le peintre Claude Lantier dans *L'Œuvre* d'Émile Zola : « Cet atelier de la rue de Douai, petit et inconmode, était accompagné seulement d'une étroite chambre et d'une cuisine grande comme une armoire : il fallait manger dans l'atelier, le ménage y vivait, avec l'enfant toujours en travers des jambes. » (Zola, 1996 [1886], 299). Le personnage de Jonas, dans *Jonas ou l'artiste au travail*, se trouve dans une situation semblable :

Sur le conseil de Rateau, on avait décidé de placer la chambre conjugale dans l'une des petites pièces, l'autre devant abriter l'enfant qui s'annonçait déjà. La grande pièce servait d'atelier à Jonas pendant la journée, de pièce commune le soir et à l'heure des repas. On pouvait d'ailleurs, à la rigueur, manger dans la cuisine, pourvu que Jonas, ou Louise, voulût bien se tenir debout. (Camus 2013 [1956], 24–25)

Dans l'histoire de la peinture, il n'est pas rare que le peintre se représente lui-même aux côtés de sa femme et de leurs enfants, comme l'ont fait André Derain dans *Le peintre et sa famille* (1939), et Joaquín Sorolla dans *Ma famille* (1901)<sup>9</sup>.

La préparation de tout peintre se fait dans *l'atelier-école*, où les apprentis artistes, surveillés par un maître, s'entassaient autour d'un modèle pour pratiquer le dessin ou la peinture. Le tableau d'Auguste Massé, *L'atelier des élèves de Gros* (1830), illustre bien le prestige de ce peintre par le nombre de disciples présents à l'époque à son enseignement<sup>10</sup>. Dans la littérature, l'atelier-école est associé à la jeunesse bohémienne du peintre, à ses années de formation et d'apprentissage. *Trilby*, de Georges du Maurier, en fournit un bon exemple :

L'atelier – ou cours de peinture – de Carrel était situé rue Notre-Dame-des-Potirons-Saint-Michel, au fond d'une vaste cour ; de larges baies poussiéreuses laissaient pénétrer la lumière du ciel dans de vastes ateliers poussiéreux. Le plus vaste et le plus poussiéreux était celui de Carrel. Trente à quarante étudiants des beaux-arts y dessinaient et peignaient à partir de modèles nus, chaque jour sauf le dimanche, de huit heures à midi, et deux heures encore l'après-midi, sauf celui du samedi consacré aux balayages et nettoiyages, d'une rigoureuse nécessité dans ces écuries d'Augas. (Du Maurier 2005 [1894], 77–78)

<sup>9</sup> Derain, André. *Le peintre et sa famille*. 1939. Huile sur toile, 176,5x123,8 cm. Tate Gallery, Londres, Royaume-Uni. <goo.gl/fpBbjY>. Sorolla, Joaquín. *Ma famille*. 1901. Huile sur toile, 185x159 cm. Ayuntamiento de Valencia, Valence, Espagne. <goo.gl/aixBwi> (8 août 2018).

<sup>10</sup> Massé, Auguste. *L'atelier des élèves de Gros*. 1830. Huile sur toile, 80x100 cm. Musée Marmottan, Paris, France. <goo.gl/iYm8RM> (8 août 2018).

Un cas particulier d'atelier-école pour jeunes filles, d'où les séances de pose avec modèles et les figures nues sont bannies au nom de la décence, nous est fourni par la nouvelle de Balzac *Une Vendetta*. Le personnage de Servin, « l'un de nos artistes les plus distingués » (Balzac 2000 [1830], 25–27), a en effet conçu un espace dédié à la formation artistique des jeunes filles de bonne famille, espace dont la ressemblance avec le tableau d'Adrienne Grandpierre-Deverzy intitulé *Atelier de Pujol* (1822)<sup>11</sup> pourrait nous faire penser que Balzac l'a pris pour inspiration. La longue description de l'espace de cet atelier-école, planifié comme une « retraite, aussi sacrée qu'un harem » en accord avec les « mœurs pures » du maître (Balzac 2000 [1830], 25), se termine par ce que Vouilloux appellerait un « tableau d'auteur » (2004, 9) :

Une douzaine de chevalets élevaient leurs flèches aiguës, semblables à des mâts de vaisseau dans un port. Plusieurs jeunes filles animaient cette scène par la variété de leurs physiologies, de leurs attitudes, et par la différence de leurs toilettes. Les fortes ombres que jetaient les serges vertes, placées suivant les besoins de chaque chevalet, produisaient une multitude de contrastes, de piquants effets de clair-obscur. Ce groupe formait le plus beau de tous les tableaux de l'atelier. (Balzac 2000 [1830], 27)

*L'atelier itinérant* se caractérise par sa mobilité : le peintre se déplace alors à la recherche de la lumière naturelle avec tout son matériel pour peindre en plein air, pratique propre aux impressionnistes tel Claude Monet qui partait travailler sur l'eau<sup>12</sup>. C'est bien le rêve du peintre Claude Lantier, dans *L'Œuvre* : « Il se plaignait amèrement de n'être pas riche, car il rêvait d'avoir des ateliers mobiles, une voiture à Paris, un bateau sur la Seine, dans lesquels il aurait vécu comme un bohémien de l'art. » (Zola 1996 [1886], 305).

L'itinérance du personnage-peintre ne se caractérise pas uniquement par le déplacement vers l'extérieur. Dans l'atelier itinérant décrit par Camus dans *Jonas*, le peintre change constamment de place dans l'appartement familial, migrant du salon à la chambre conjugale, du couloir à la salle de bains, renforçant le caractère déplacé du personnage, qui va culminer avec sa stérilité créative :

Les jours qui suivirent, il tenta de travailler dans le couloir, le surlendemain dans la salle de douches, à l'électricité, le jour d'après dans la cuisine. Mais, pour la première fois, il était gêné par les gens qu'il rencontrait partout, ceux qu'il connaissait à peine et les siens,

<sup>11</sup> Grandpierre-Deverzy, Adrienne. *Atelier de Pujol*. 1822. Huile sur toile, 96x129 cm. Musée Marmottan, Paris, France. <goo.gl/Vtr8pS> (8 août 2018).

<sup>12</sup> C'est le thème de *Claude Monet peignant dans son atelier*, de Manet, cf. Manet, Édouard. *Die Barke [Claude Monet peignant dans son atelier]*. 1874. Huile sur toile, 82,7x105 cm. Neue Pinakothek, Munich, Allemagne. <goo.gl/UV6Qy> (8 août 2018).

qu'il aimait. Pendant quelque temps, il s'arrêta de travailler et réfléchit. Il aurait peint sur le motif si la saison s'y était prêtée. Malheureusement, on allait entrer dans l'hiver, il était difficile de faire du paysage avant le printemps. Il essaya cependant, et renonça : le froid pénétrait jusqu'à son cœur. Il vécut plusieurs jours avec ses toiles, assis près d'elles le plus souvent, ou bien planté devant la fenêtre ; il ne peignait plus. (Camus 2013 [1956], 50)

Enfin, la stérilité créative peut se manifester dans la figure d'un faussaire, un peintre qui ne produit que des pastiches ou copies d'œuvres connues; ainsi le personnage balzacien de Pierre Grassou, dans la nouvelle éponyme (1839) :

Au-dessus des trois ou quatre pièces de l'appartement occupé par Grassou de Fougères, s'étendait son atelier, qui regardait Montmartre. L'atelier peint en tons de briques, le carreau soigneusement mis en couleur brune et frotté, chaque chaise munie d'un petit tapis bordé, le canapé, simple d'ailleurs, mais propre comme celui de la chambre à coucher d'une épicière, là, tout dénotait la vie méticuleuse des petits esprits et le soin d'un homme pauvre. Il y avait une commode pour serrer les effets d'atelier, une table à déjeuner, un buffet, un secrétaire, enfin les ustensiles nécessaires aux peintres, tous rangés et propres. Le poète participait à ce système de soin hollandais, d'autant plus visible que la lumière pure et peu changeante du nord inondait de son jour net et froid cette immense pièce. Fougères, simple peintre de genre, n'a pas besoin de machines énormes qui ruinent les peintres d'Histoire, il ne s'est jamais reconnu de facultés assez complètes pour aborder la haute peinture, il s'en tenait encore au chevalet. (Balzac 1994, 273–274)

Grassou n'est pas un véritable artiste car il ne crée rien, et cette incapacité infléchit la description que l'auteur fait de son atelier, un *anti-atelier* qui va à l'encontre de tous les autres, où le désordre et l'encombrement étaient révélateurs du travail incessant qui s'opère dans la tête de l'artiste peintre : dans celui de Grassou, tout est systématiquement propre et bien rangé, les ustensiles du peintre sont soigneusement classés dans un tiroir, en somme, c'est une pièce qui ne présente aucune trace de travail. Nous sommes bien loin de l'atelier-laboratoire où un nouvel ordre du monde, une autre réalité est prête à surgir du travail artistique.

## 4 Conclusion

Soulignons pour terminer que les différents types d'atelier identifiés ne constituent pas des catégories closes, étant donné que certains aspects ou caractéristiques peuvent se retrouver dans une même description. Ce lieu d'exception est en effet montré du point de vue de divers personnages et à des moments différents du récit et, surtout, l'atelier est décrit comme un lieu dynamique pouvant se transformer selon l'état d'esprit ou la nécessité du personnage peintre : dans *Artemisia*, le peintre Orazio prépare et transforme son atelier pour recevoir son

mécène ; dans *Manette Salomon* (Goncourt 1996 [1867]), la situation financière de Coriolis est déterminante et l'atelier, qui regorgeait d'objets exubérants lors de sa période de prospérité, se retrouve, dans sa période de stérilité, dégarni et dépourvu de toute vie.

Quelques ateliers regorgent de vitalité, emplis d'objets somptueux, de curiosités, riches en détails, ils indiquent l'intense activité de l'artiste. D'autres révèlent soit l'harmonie, soit les conflits entre le domaine de l'art et celui de l'existence matérielle et affective, comme les échanges commerciaux qui permettent à l'artiste de survivre, ou l'entourage familial. C'est dans l'atelier que l'on peut voir l'artiste au travail, chaque geste étant un acte symbolique qui opère le passage de la réalité à l'invention : le lecteur assiste à la naissance de l'œuvre d'art, voire du chef-d'œuvre, ce qui ne s'accomplit pas dans le calme ni dans le silence, mais dans un combat journalier de l'artiste contre lui-même et sa toile.

L'atelier, en tant qu'espace de création propice à la mise en scène de l'artiste au travail, a enfin une importance essentielle dans le récit dans la mesure où, par la description qui en est donnée, l'art s'affirme comme le protagoniste de l'œuvre littéraire, et non comme un simple ornement du texte. Dans ce sens, le peintre doit être envisagé comme une métonymie de l'écrivain, car le métier d'artiste peintre s'exerce de façon similaire à celui de l'écrivain, dans une étroite parenté des voies de la création, voire dans des rapports d'amitié, de complicité et d'hommage dont le portrait d'Émile Zola par Manet<sup>13</sup> est l'un des exemples les plus éloquentes.

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Capucine Echiffre

# La conception française du lyrisme à l'épreuve du lied : l'exemple de Blaze de Bury

**Résumé:** Les années 1840 voient apparaître en France un nouveau genre poétique d'origine germanique, le lied, caractérisé selon les médiateurs français par son lyrisme inédit. Cette nouveauté coïncide en outre avec un infléchissement dans la littérature française. La grande période romantique, désormais révolue, laisse en effet le champ libre à une mise à distance réflexive et critique. Dans ce contexte, la poésie allemande est souvent érigée par les intercesseurs en modèle à suivre en vue d'une régénération de la production française. C'est ainsi qu'Henri Blaze de Bury publie à partir des années 1840 plusieurs articles de presse sur le lied et sur la littérature française dans la très influente *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Sous sa plume, le discours poétologique, et en particulier la catégorie du lyrisme, se voient investis de valeurs alors peu répandues en France. En somme, une triple confrontation se joue dans ses textes, opposant deux aires culturelles, deux écritures et deux époques poétiques. S'il faut certes attendre les années 1850 pour voir l'émergence de grands recueils poétiques modernes, on peut envisager les années qui précèdent comme une période de gestation, au cours de laquelle les médiateurs germanistes tels que Blaze de Bury jouent un rôle méconnu mais non négligeable.

**Mots clés :** Transfert culturel, discours poétologique, lied poétique, poésie française, lyrisme

Dans les années 1840, alors que la poésie allemande suscite depuis deux décennies un vif intérêt auprès du public français par l'intermédiaire des traductions, les intercesseurs germanistes commencent à rédiger des essais destinés à définir le genre étranger. Ce travail de présentation avait déjà été accompli par Mme de Staël dans *De l'Allemagne*, paru en 1813. Près de trente ans plus tard, cependant, la reprise de cette pratique semble s'imposer en raison du renouvellement du corpus importé d'outre-Rhin. L'engouement romantique pour les ballades fantastiques cède en effet le pas à l'attrait qu'offre une veine plus intimiste représentée à la fois dans les chansons populaires et chez des auteurs comme Goethe, Uhland ou



Müller dans une partie de leur production. En d'autres termes, à la ballade dramatique succède le lied lyrique<sup>1</sup>.

Cet infléchissement dans le transfert culturel coïncide en outre avec un infléchissement dans la littérature française. La grande période romantique, désormais révolue, laisse le champ libre à une mise à distance réflexive et critique. Dans ce contexte, la poésie allemande joue un rôle non négligeable, elle qui déjà autour de 1830 avait été reconnue par les écrivains comme une source d'inspiration majeure en particulier pour leurs poèmes. Une dizaine d'années plus tard, les essais des médiateurs germanistes sont ainsi très souvent l'occasion de comparaisons entre les œuvres allemandes et françaises, les secondes tendant à être évaluées à l'aune des premières, érigées en modèle. C'est le cas chez Henri Blaze de Bury<sup>2</sup>, qui publie à partir des années 1840 de nombreux articles sur le lied et sur la littérature française dans la très influente *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Dans le premier article sur le lied, intitulé « De la poésie lyrique en Allemagne » (1841a), il élargit sa présentation du genre d'outre-Rhin à des considérations sur la poésie lyrique. Ce mouvement généralisant est bien sûr loin d'être neutre, dans un tel cadre, le critique incitant à plusieurs reprises les poètes contemporains à tirer parti des ressources que leur offre le corpus germanique pour renouveler la poésie française. C'est que, à ses yeux comme à ceux de nombreux littérateurs, le romantisme n'a pas tenu toutes ses promesses, notamment en ce qui concerne la poésie lyrique. C'est le lied qui incarnerait véritablement cette dernière, tandis que les poètes français en auraient une conception obsolète, encore imprégnés qu'ils sont par le système littéraire classique. Sous la plume du jeune rédacteur, le discours poétologique se voit dès lors investi de valeurs peu répandues en France. Dans cet article de Blaze de Bury, le premier à donner une présentation aussi complète du lied et à connaître une certaine diffusion, se joue donc une triple confrontation entre deux aires culturelles, deux écritures et deux époques poétiques.

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1 Nous emploierons le mot *lied* pour désigner le genre poétique et non musical, l'usage au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle permettant de renvoyer à l'une ou l'autre de ces catégories.

2 Henri Blaze de Bury (1813–1888) n'est pas à proprement parler un « comparatiste », ni même du reste un universitaire. Les premières publications de ses articles sur le lied sont très antérieures à l'institutionnalisation de la discipline « Littérature comparée », et il est resté presque toute sa vie rédacteur dans l'organe généraliste qu'est la *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Néanmoins, ses travaux sur le lied présentent des problèmes poétologiques et terminologiques tout à fait transposables au champ de la recherche en littérature comparée.

# 1 Lyrisme germanique et lyrisme français : deux épistémès antagonistes

Dans les années 1840, à la suite notamment du *De l'Allemagne* de Mme de Staël, le lyrisme tend à être défini en France comme une posture existentielle et non plus selon des critères thématique-formels, ainsi que le voulait la tradition rhétorique<sup>3</sup>. Cette importance accordée au rapport qu'entretient le sujet lyrique avec le monde est très perceptible dans les articles de Blaze de Bury, qui revient constamment sur l'épistémè propre au lied. Le panthéisme du genre germanique conditionnerait un type de contenu qui s'oppose à celui du lyrisme français, enté quant à lui sur une pensée dualiste.

Le rédacteur définit le lied comme une « chanson » « pleine de je ne sais quel mysticisme où le dieu de Spinoza se révèle sans cesse, rapportant toute chose à l'idéal<sup>4</sup> ». Il est

l'expression d'un pays où les sources élémentaires de la poésie coulent encore, où l'homme vit en communion avec l'être universel, où les cascades qui bouillonnent, les acacias en fleur, le ciel étoilé, signifient encore quelque chose, où la porte donnant sur la nature n'a point été murée. (1841a, 823)

L'univers panthéiste représenté par le genre d'outre-Rhin assure donc une circulation entre « l'idéal » et « la nature », ces deux dimensions du monde étant considérées comme deux modes d'un même être universel dans la philosophie d'origine spinozienne. L'interaction entre ces deux composantes inséparables est très visible selon Blaze de Bury dans la tradition populaire, dont a hérité du reste le lied savant moderne<sup>5</sup> :

Nous avons voulu donner une idée du lied religieux en Allemagne, du lied mystique et divin ; essayons maintenant de caractériser en peu de mots un autre genre de cette poésie populaire, de mettre en évidence une facette nouvelle du diamant. Parlons du lied terrestre, du lied d'amour proprement dit. Ce n'est pas que nous devons nous attendre à perdre de vue tout à fait les sources religieuses [...]. Les rayons dorés de la légende nous frapperont encore

<sup>3</sup> Nous ne pouvons développer ce point dans le cadre du présent article. Nous renvoyons pour plus de détails à Jean-Michel Maulpoix (1987) et à Antonio Rodriguez (2003, chap. i). Précisons seulement que dans l'ouvrage de Mme de Staël puis chez ses successeurs, le lied est un genre emblématique de la poésie lyrique.

<sup>4</sup> On rappellera que dans la France du milieu du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, Spinoza est placé à l'origine des courants philosophiques panthéistes.

Dans tous les extraits cités, l'orthographe a été modernisée, y compris celle des noms propres.

<sup>5</sup> « Le lied vient du peuple », déclare Blaze de Bury (1841a, 829).

ça et là, mais moins vifs, car nous sommes sur la terre, moins saisissables, car ils auront à percer désormais à travers le nuage des passions et des calamités humaines. L'amour terrestre remontera plus d'une fois jusqu'aux sources de l'amour divin pour s'y vivifier ; comment ferait-il différemment ? La légende est aussi indispensable à son existence que la nature, autre élément dont nous le verrons disposer à son gré et qui lui servira à rendre sensibles les affections du cœur, comme l'autre, l'élément divin, à les épurer. (1841a, 841)

La poésie française séparerait au contraire la dimension empirique et le divin, conformément à l'épistémè dualiste traditionnelle de ce côté du Rhin. Cela donnerait lieu d'un côté à des descriptions de phénomènes superficielles, et de l'autre à des réflexions éthérées. Dans de nombreux textes, Blaze de Bury fustige ainsi le goût romantique pour la couleur locale et le trait pittoresque. Dans un article sur le poète allemand Rückert, il compare la poésie orientalisante en Allemagne et en France, en prenant pour exemples d'un côté le *Divan oriental-occidental* (*West-östlicher Divan*) de Goethe, les *Roses orientales* (*Östliche Rosen*) et les *Ghazals* (*Ghaselen*) de Rückert<sup>6</sup>, et de l'autre les *Orientales* de Hugo. Alors que les deux poètes allemands seraient parvenus dans leurs recueils à s'imprégner du « mysticisme » et du « panthéisme » persan, de son « être intime et latent », la « fantaisie » et le « dilettantisme » (1845, 714) des auteurs français les maintiendraient dans une appréhension purement extérieure des objets. C'est le reproche qu'adresse Blaze de Bury au romantisme de ses compatriotes, en s'incluant du reste dans ce mouvement : « Nous tous tant que nous sommes, la rage du pittoresque nous tue ; peu soucieux de creuser le fond des consciences, il nous suffit d'interroger l'habit, et ce qui nous charme davantage, c'est la couleur. J'ai nommé là le grand cheval de bataille du romantisme. » (1845, 716). Le rapide commentaire sur les *Orientales* mobilise un paradigme du lyrisme en antagonisme avec celui qui est associé au lied dans l'article de 1841. De fait, les « splendides qualités lyriques » (1845, 714) que présente le recueil de Hugo résideraient non pas dans une posture spirituelle panthéiste, mais au contraire dans une célébration uniquement sensuelle et exotique d'un ensemble d'objets associés à la culture orientale. Les « épanchements descriptifs du chantre de *Sarah la Baigneuse* et du *Feu du ciel* » se détaillent ainsi en « saphirs et diamants [...] ; roses de Chiraz, tissus de Cachemire [...]. Un collier qu'une indolente main de sultane égrène dans l'albâtre sonore et transparent ; un bouquet embaumé qu'on effeuille, des étoffes de soie et d'or qu'on déploie au soleil ». « [T]out cela certes vaut son prix » (1845, 714), reconnaît Blaze de Bury au terme de cette énumération. Les concessions qu'il accorde au lyrisme hugolien ou plus largement romantique sont cependant loin de suffire à en contrebalancer les

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<sup>6</sup> Le ghazal est à l'origine un poème d'amour persan.

manques, défauts dont la poésie allemande serait justement exempte. Le *Divan* de Goethe témoigne ainsi de « cette analyse subtile, de cette observation métaphysique qui creuse avant tout l'être moral, et loin de s'en tenir au phénomène extérieur, va chercher au fond des consciences le secret de la vie d'un peuple. » (1845, 715). La supériorité à cet égard de la poésie allemande sur la poésie française est formulée explicitement : « Comment nier [...] que le moindre ghazal de Goethe ou de Rückert vous en apprenne plus sur la physionomie originale et l'esprit de ce monde [...] ? » (1845, 714).

Même lorsqu'elle échappe à l'écueil du « pittoresque », la poésie française ne parvient pas à rendre sensible « l'âme humaine » dans ses manifestations empiriques, d'après Blaze de Bury. L'aspiration vers l'essence l'absorbe alors et donne lieu à des œuvres guettées par l'abstraction. Lamartine représenterait cette tendance : « Lamartine, toujours planant, de tout ce bric-à-brac ne connaît rien. Il s'en va, plongé dans la nue, chantant ses hymnes magnifiques, *cantica nova*<sup>7</sup>. » (1878, 53). Si aucun texte du rédacteur ne montre de réserves sérieuses vis-à-vis du chantre d'Elvire auquel il voue une grande admiration, celui-ci ne s'en éloigne pas moins du lyrisme germanique que le médiateur souhaiterait « acclimater » (1841a, 828) en France.

Cette hiérarchie établie sur le plan épistémique, qui se manifeste de manière privilégiée dans le contenu des œuvres poétiques, est bien sûr solidaire d'une hiérarchie sur le plan poétique et même plus profondément sémiotique.

## 2 Poétique et sémiotique des lyrismes germanique et français

La double polarité du panthéisme, qui postule l'identité ontologique du divin et de la nature empirique, engendre deux tendances poétiques. L'une se tourne davantage vers la nature et les sentiments humains, en fondant sur ces objets une théorie de l'expression, tandis que l'autre aspire à une plus grande spiritualité à la fois dans le domaine moral et dans celui de la représentation artistique<sup>8</sup>. La pro-

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<sup>7</sup> Ce texte est certes bien plus tardif que les articles rédigés pendant les années 1840. La comparaison entre les différents écrits de Blaze de Bury tout au long de sa vie montre que sa pensée a cependant peu évolué sur ces questions.

<sup>8</sup> Pour de plus amples développements sur ces deux tendances, on pourra se reporter à Verónica Estay Stange (2014, première partie, « Présences de la musique », 181–182).

duction française apparaît à nouveau dans tous ces cas comme un contre-modèle, à transformer en s'inspirant des réalisations germaniques.

## 2.1 La représentation des sentiments : expression spontanée ou artifice

La représentation des sentiments est déterminée en premier lieu par une posture énonciative, appuyée elle-même sur une certaine anthropologie. Le lied, caractérisé par sa « grâce naïve » et son « ingénuité » (1841a, 831), présuppose en effet la transparence du sujet à lui-même et sa sincérité, ainsi que, sur le plan sémiotique, l'adéquation du langage poétique à son objet<sup>9</sup>.

Le lied populaire témoignerait parfaitement de la transparence et de la sincérité du sujet lyrique, lui qui a pour fonction d'« exprim[er] », ou de « reflét[er] dans le cristal de son miroir » (1841a, 832) « [c]e que des milliers d'hommes ressent[ent] au fond du cœur » (1841a, 830). Une telle vision est certes commune aux théories romantiques allemandes et françaises sur le lyrisme. Pour Blaze de Bury, cependant, seuls les poètes allemands savent l'actualiser dans leurs œuvres. Les écrivains français en effet seraient encore trop tributaires du classicisme et de l'image artificielle qu'une rhétorique ostentatoire et emphatique ne peut manquer de donner du sujet poétique. Dans la pratique française de l'élégie, sous-genre de la poésie lyrique, les effets de mise en scène domineraient encore. On aurait affaire bien plus à un sujet en représentation, un sujet qui s'observe et se livre, qu'à un sujet qui exprime directement ses mouvements intérieurs. L'élégie française ne se serait pas entièrement affranchie du modèle de Boileau :

[...] l'élégie n'a rien de familier, rien d'*intime* ; elle compose ses airs et prend ses temps ; il lui faut son mausolée et ses cyprès. C'est toujours

La plaintive Élégie en longs habits de deuil,  
la sublime pleureuse qui lance des soupirs mesurés vers le ciel, arrondit les bras et combine avec art les sanglots de sa période. L'élégie a sa pompe, sa beauté plastique, son style nombreux, et, si on l'aime, son pathos [...]. (1841a, 825)

<sup>9</sup> On reconnaît là de fortes similitudes avec les théories rousseauistes de l'*Essai sur l'origine des langues*, en particulier (1995 [1781]). De fait, les écrits de Rousseau publiés jusqu'aux années 1770 étaient bien connus de Herder, et ce dernier a fait à bien des égards figure de maître à penser chez de nombreux auteurs de lied. Le médiateur français qu'est Blaze de Bury ne s'y est donc pas trompé en reprenant certains aspects de la pensée rousseauiste pour définir le genre du lied.

En dépit des avancées romantiques – qui en outre ont été suivies, au cours des années 1830, d'un mouvement de retour vers une poésie plus conformiste –, la persistance de la poétique classique entraverait en France une expression véritablement lyrique.

Comme le laisse entendre la fin du propos de Blaze de Bury sur l'élégie française, la posture énonciative se joue en grande partie dans le style du texte. Le style du lied se signifierait par son adéquation au contenu affectif qu'il met en œuvre. Le rédacteur évoque en effet en parlant cette fois du lied savant le « sentiment profond contenu dans la forme la plus artistement élaborée, la plus limpide et la plus transparente, comme une essence volatile dans le creux d'un petit diamant » (1841a, 828). Il loue également dans « La fille de l'hôtesse » de Uhland « [l]a simplicité de la forme, le ton naïf sous lequel les choses se présentent » (1841a, 827). La simplicité et la naïveté (c'est-à-dire au sens étymologique le caractère natif, naturel) sont bien entendu aussi sous la plume de Blaze de Bury des propriétés de la faculté du sentiment. Autrement dit, l'écriture du lied parviendrait à restituer le mouvement interne des émotions.

Davantage, au-delà de cette « forme » et de ce « ton », que l'on peut sans doute rattacher au lexique et à la syntaxe, l'adéquation entre le poème et son objet passerait par une remotivation de la matérialité du langage<sup>10</sup>. Le commentateur fait part en effet de son admiration devant le vers de Schiller dans *La Cloche*, « ce vers sonore, nerveux, malléable, puissant, qui se prête si bien aux effets d'imitation calculés avec tant d'art, ce vers à la fois impétueux, fluide, incandescent, métal qui bout, éclair qui luit, feu qui flamboie, poutre qui rompt et craque<sup>11</sup>. » (1841b, 554–555). De la même manière, dans un passage de l'article consacré au lied où le rédacteur élargit la perspective à la poésie lyrique en général, le « rythme » et la « mélodie » sont présentés comme une « partie intégrante de l'idée, du sentiment, qui ne saurait se faire jour sans les entraîner avec lui, attendu qu'il existe entre l'idée, la mélodie et le rythme, membres harmonieux de la trinité poétique, une

**10** Pour reprendre les catégories de Gérard Genette (1976), le lied combinerait donc un cratylysme syntaxique et un cratylysme phonique.

**11** Dans cette citation comme dans la suivante, on peut s'interroger sur le statut de la relation de motivation mise en évidence : Blaze de Bury adhère-t-il à la pensée cratylienne ordinaire (« primaire », dans la terminologie de Genette 1976), qui postule entre autres une motivation naturelle des sons de la langue, ou a-t-il déjà l'intuition de ce que Genette toujours appelle le cratylysme « secondaire », à savoir la création artistique d'un *effet* de motivation ? Il n'est pas possible de répondre à cette question dans le cadre de cet article. On peut rappeler cependant, comme le fait Genette (1976, 205–206), que bien avant les réflexions décisives de Mallarmé sur le « double état de la parole » (Mallarmé 2003 [1897], 250), Diderot notamment avait déjà formulé la possibilité d'un usage esthétique de la langue par la création d'un tel effet en poésie.

indivisible union, une simultanéité solidaire. » (1841a, 830). Un des traits définis du lyrisme résiderait donc dans la relation motivée entre la forme poétique et son contenu de sens, relation qui se trouve mise en œuvre dans le lied. On a là un exemple – parmi d’autres – des glissements qui s’opèrent dans le discours du critique entre une perspective circonscrite à la poésie allemande et un point de vue universalisant sur le lyrisme. Aux yeux de Blaze de Bury, et sans qu’il formule explicitement cette idée, le lied incarne la poésie lyrique<sup>12</sup>.

Or le goût des romantiques français pour la prouesse de versification ou pour la provocation métrique entraverait un fonctionnement sémiotique motivé, au profit d’une virtuosité gratuite ou polémique. Le rédacteur s’en prend à ce propos au culte de la rime riche parmi les romantiques français. Cette préoccupation prendrait le pas sur toute autre considération, y compris celle de la signification, ruinant par là tout l’intérêt que pourrait revêtir le soin apporté à l’écriture poétique :

Avec de pareilles fantaisies, on en vient à donner au mot le pas sur l’idée, à se payer de sons, de vains bruits, d’un cliquetis plus ou moins agréable à l’oreille. [...] Et la poésie dégénère, la poésie s’en va ; la Muse, de déesse austère qu’elle était, devient quelque folle de carnaval dansant la gigue et la sarabande, quelque charmante baladine secouant sous le lustre sa robe pailletée de clinquant et sa marotte à grelots. La rime est, à tout prendre, plus dangereuse qu’on ne pense, et, si vous ne lui tenez la main, elle risque de vous mener là où vous ne seriez jamais allé sans elle, et de vous faire dire mille sonnettes dont vous vous seriez bien gardé. (1841b, 557)

Dès lors, la poésie française resterait en-deçà du véritable lyrisme, et il faudrait en passer par les œuvres d’outre-Rhin pour parvenir à définir cette catégorie.

Ce qui expliquerait les différences entre les deux poésies serait en fait à chercher dans la liberté accordée aux écrivains allemands, d’un côté, et inversement de l’autre côté dans les contraintes qui continuent à peser en France, en dépit des conquêtes romantiques. C’est que les principes poétiques du lyrisme ne se situeraient pas dans la conformité à des règles extérieures, mais dans les dispositions propres de l’auteur : « la faculté lyrique est ce qu’il y a au monde de plus individuel, de plus *subjectif* » (1841a, 875). Le poète ne peut obéir qu’à des règles internes :

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<sup>12</sup> On trouve déjà cette oscillation et cette équivalence chez Mme de Staël, mais cette dernière du moins énonce une fois expressément le rapprochement qu’elle établit entre la poésie germanique et le lyrisme (1968 [1813], deuxième partie, chap. x).

[...] le lyrisme, poésie indépendante de sa nature, poésie de la douleur et de la joie, poésie du sentiment [...], se passe à merveille du monde extérieur, et trouve tous ses éléments dans la seule poitrine d'où il s'échappe [...]. Nulle poésie, plus que la poésie lyrique, ne répugne au despotisme de la forme, à ce moule arbitraire, ode ou sonnet, qu'un certain goût national lui impose sans trop savoir pourquoi. (1841a, 863–864)

Ce constat formulé sur un plan général trace bien sûr à nouveau une ligne de partage entre les pratiques allemande et française, même si les secondes ne sont pas mentionnées. La liberté de l'écriture serait un trait identitaire germanique : « en général, la poésie allemande revendique comme un privilège national la liberté de la forme dans l'acception la plus vaste du mot » (1841a, 863). L'exemple de Goethe confirmerait en outre cette conjonction entre liberté et lyrisme : « Étudiez [...] le lyrisme allemand chez un grand artiste, chez Goethe par exemple, et vous serez frappé de voir l'unité subjective toucher, dans sa libre explosion, à toutes les formes, à tous les modes, à tous les rythmes de la poésie. » (1841a, 864). C'est bien enfin cette liberté qui rendrait possible la sincérité de l'expression poétique, garante de la motivation du texte. Ce dernier se confondrait alors avec les sentiments dont il serait une extériorisation naturelle : « Quel poète n'a eu de ces inspirations où sa nature se révèle ? Il ne s'agit plus alors de théorie et de manière ; l'idée entraîne avec elle la forme, et l'épanouissement s'accomplit selon les lois les plus simples. » (1841a, 872).

## 2.2 Le statut de l'œuvre lyrique : suggestion symbolique ou univocité du sens

Le lyrisme cependant ne passe pas seulement par une imitation verbale du contenu de sens visé. On peut relever dans les articles de Blaze de Bury la mise en évidence d'un autre type de fonctionnement sémiotique, associé néanmoins lui aussi à la poésie lyrique d'outre-Rhin. En effet, au-delà de l'intérêt pour la dimension strictement empirique du monde – en l'occurrence, dans le lied, l'intérêt pour les émotions – le panthéisme invite à déceler la présence du divin dans les phénomènes et dans les êtres humains. Il s'agit de saisir l'interaction qui fait des corps autant d'incarnations de l'Être, et de l'Être le principe d'existence des corps. Cette articulation est transposée dans la poésie au moyen du symbole, par lequel une entité sensible (ou sa représentation verbale) renvoie à une autre entité abstraite. « On rencontre à chaque pas dans Goethe de ces petites pièces qui vous ouvrent tout un monde » (1841a, 826), affirme le critique. Davantage, de la même manière que le divin peut faire l'objet d'une intuition du sujet humain mais reste inaccessible à la connaissance, conservant ainsi son mystère, la poétique de la



suggestion permet de désigner au sein du texte, mais en creux, un au-delà du sens littéral<sup>13</sup>.

Dans « La fille de l'hôtesse », Uhland aurait recours à des procédés de non-dit qui investissent ce lied d'un niveau de sens second. Après avoir appris la mort de celle qu'il aimait, un jeune homme déclare brièvement son amour devant le cadavre de la jeune fille : « – Je t'ai toujours aimée, je t'aime encore, et je t'aimerai dans l'éternité. » (Blaze de Bury, 1841a, 827). La suggestion joue à plein dans ce court poème qui se clôt sobrement sur ces paroles du personnage, sans prolongements pathétiques de la voix narrative. Blaze de Bury s'émeut devant cette pièce qui « compren[d] en ses dimensions restreintes tout un passé d'amour, tout un avenir de désespoir, une somme infinie d'ardeur et d'afflictions [...]. [...] un seul moment est mis en jeu par le poète, moment éternel. » (1841a, 827). Il souligne à plusieurs reprises dans son article les procédés d'atténuation qui permettent de mettre en œuvre de telles suggestions. Davantage, il relève leur productivité émotionnelle auprès du lecteur : « [l]a réticence vous suffoque » (1841a, 827). Le spectacle de la mort et l'expérience du deuil, associés bien sûr à l'expérience du mystère du monde, ne pourraient en définitive être mieux représentés que dans un discours fondé lui aussi sur l'incomplétude, sur le non-dit qui préserve l'indicible. L'expérience de lecture rejoindrait alors, sur un plan sémiotique et fictif, l'expérience existentielle<sup>14</sup>.

Comme on peut s'y attendre d'après les attaques contre la prédilection des romantiques français pour la « couleur » et le pittoresque, le rédacteur s'en prend en revanche à tout un pan de la production française en raison de son écriture ostentatoire et creuse. La recherche de formulations explicites et sophistiquées rendrait impossible toute complexification du sens. Hugo fait les frais d'une partie de ces reproches. Il donnerait d'une part une représentation grossissante des éléments qu'il décrit : « Victor Hugo, taillé dans le granit pour l'hyperbole, n'a jamais connu le mot simple » (1888a, 161), et d'autre part, son vers ne laisserait aucune

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**13** Sur ce parallélisme entre les théories métaphysiques et la création artistique, on peut se reporter encore une fois à Verónica Estay Stange (2014, première partie, « Présences de la musique », 187–193).

**14** On voit que le fonctionnement sémiotique est ici tout autre que celui de l'imitation abordé plus haut. Genette parle à ce propos de « tournant du cratylisme », en le situant en Allemagne à la charnière des XVIII<sup>e</sup> et XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles (1976, 228). Il n'est plus question désormais d'imiter verbalement des éléments isolés (sentiments ou phénomènes), mais le fonctionnement même du monde (1976, 232). Genette précise également que ce tournant n'intervient en France que dans la seconde moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle (1976, 238 note). L'analyse du lied de Uhland par Blaze de Bury montrerait du moins que certains médiateurs ont eu un peu plus tôt l'intuition de ce changement de paradigme.

place à un investissement quelconque du lecteur. Le critique oppose à cet égard sa poétique à celle de Vigny :

Le vers d'Alfred de Vigny a de ces coups d'aile, mais seulement par intervalles ; d'habitude il est plus discret, plus voilé. Avec Hugo, tout de premier mouvement, tout en surface, on ne discute pas, on est enlevé. Chez Vigny, tout en profondeur, il y a de quoi rêver ; son vers a des dessous, des mystères qu'il faut pénétrer pour en bien jouir. (1878, 39)

Vigny serait proche en cela de la poétique du lied, qui « vous donn[e] le ton, puis laisse votre âme chanter quand elle a de la voix. Pour peu que la mélancolie des lieux et le penchant de votre humeur s'y prêtent, le lied va vous ouvrir une porte sur l'infini. Grâce à lui, vous rêverez sans fin » (1841a, 825). Comme Lamartine, cependant, Vigny est situé par Blaze de Bury en dehors des modes romantiques françaises sur bien des points. Dans ses « souvenirs », où il attire l'attention sur les différences personnelles et littéraires entre les auteurs romantiques, il présente Vigny comme un « dissiden[t] », un romantique « désabus[é] » (1888a, 324), et salue celui dont le salon « se distinguait par la tenue et la modération. » (1888a, 164). Aux yeux du rédacteur, seuls les auteurs à la marge du paysage littéraire français auraient atteint le véritable lyrisme, preuve supplémentaire de la supériorité allemande dans ce domaine.

C'est en somme l'éloignement de la poésie française par rapport à la nature, quel que soit le contenu précis attribué à ce mot, qui empêcherait un plein accomplissement lyrique. L'analyse par Blaze de Bury de la poétique et de la sémiotique du lied vise dans ce contexte à lever l'obstacle, que ce soit en appliquant à la poésie des conceptions issues de Rousseau, ou en adoptant des pratiques d'écriture plus complexes mises en œuvre outre Rhin.

### 3 Conclusion

Le lied apparaît en définitive comme un genre emblématique de la poésie lyrique, elle-même porteuse en ce milieu de XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle français d'enjeux littéraires majeurs. S'il faut attendre les années 1850 pour voir l'émergence de grands recueils modernes, on peut envisager les années qui précèdent comme une période de gestation, dans laquelle les médiateurs germanistes jouent un rôle méconnu mais non négligeable. Sans atteindre un statut théorique, les articles de Blaze de Bury n'en révèlent pas moins de nombreuses intuitions que l'on trouve approfondies et mises en pratique par les générations postérieures : il suffit de penser à la musicalité des recueils du jeune Verlaine ou bien sûr aux expérimentations formelles et sémiotiques des symbolistes. Le nom du critique apparaît certes peu dans les

paratextes des poètes. Néanmoins, compte tenu de ses fréquentations et de la diffusion que connaissait alors la *Revue des Deux Mondes*, appuyée en outre par la publication en volume de nombreux articles<sup>15</sup>, il n'est pas douteux que les textes dans lesquels il faisait l'éloge du modèle germanique n'aient eu un réel impact dans l'évolution du lyrisme français.

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<sup>15</sup> L'ensemble des articles de Blaze de Bury sur la littérature allemande a ainsi été rassemblé en 1846 et 1868.

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