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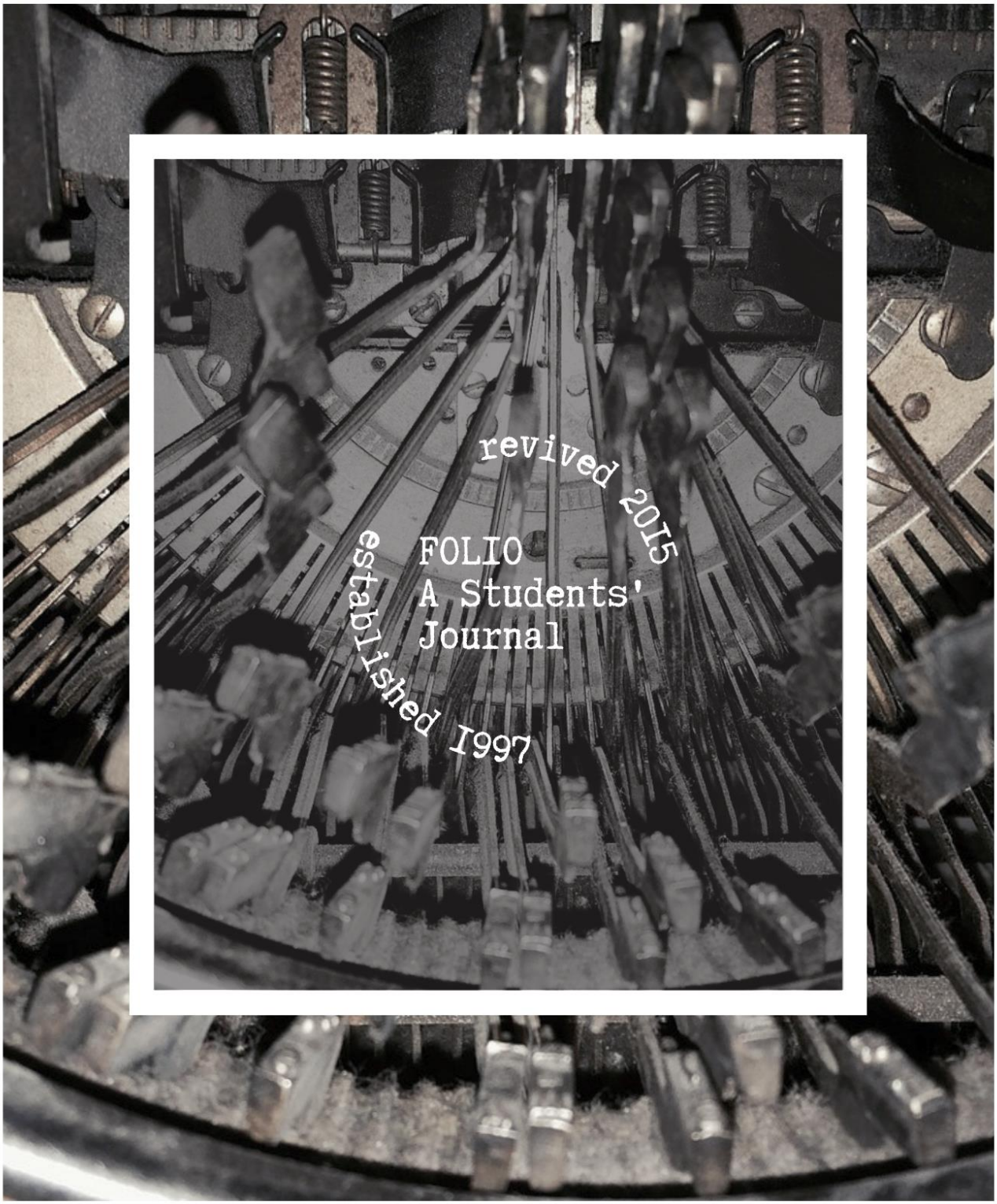

Dear Readers,

We are thrilled to present to you the 11th issue of *Folio. A Students' Journal* – a volume that marks a special milestone, as it arrives exactly ten years after the journal's reactivation in 2015. To celebrate, we invited three editors from that pivotal issue to offer a glimpse into the early days of rebuilding the journal.

Alongside their insights, in this year's collection of student essays, you will find a rich variety of topics across literature, culture, and translation. We investigate the evolution of literary and cultural traditions through the lens of Medea's symbolic transformations. Seeking answers to the environmental crisis leads us to investigative poetry by Natalie Diaz and dg nanouk okpik, whose narratives unveil the aftermath of colonialism. Next, we take a closer look at William Burroughs' "Wind Die. You Die. We Die" and the metafictional tools used by the author to obscure the distinction between fiction and reality.

As we move to culture, we invite you to engage with the essay exploring the unreliable narration in the movie *Shutter Island* and its effects on the audience's experience. Further on, we move to comedy and its social responsibility with a thorough and insightful investigation into the satire of racial issues, as well as an exploration of the concept of pretty privilege in stand-up based on the example of Matt Rife's career.

Turning to translation, we delve into Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, exploring the challenge of rendering dialect across languages and cultures, as well as a theatre-inspired interpretation of *Heart of Darkness* and its Polish translations. As always, we hope this issue will inspire you to read, reflect, and maybe even contribute your own work in the future. And if you are interested in shaping the journal behind the scenes, consider joining our editorial team, especially since next year marks another milestone for our journal – we will publish the 25th edition since its creation.

In the meantime, enjoy reading!

Weronika Korol
Marcel Sekuła
Natalia Wilk

"I, an Alien Here": Representations of Medea Across Time

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The character of Medea, first introduced in Greek mythology, has evolved significantly in her representation over time. Initially portrayed by Euripides as an emotionally complex and vengeful sorceress, Medea's character has been reinterpreted through various cultural lenses. From a symbol of female power and witchcraft, through an image of an anti-maternal figure, and eventually to a more humanised and sympathetic character, the varying portrayals express the complexity and complicatedness of her nature. They reflect shifts in social attitudes towards gender and power, highlighting the everlasting relevance of Medea's story. This essay will explore how Medea's representation has changed in European culture, analysing her portrayals in ancient texts, Renaissance literature through Shakespearean plays, and more modern interpretations, including Victorian and Pre-Raphaelite visual art, 19th-century literature, and Art Nouveau depiction. The aim of this study is to establish the character of Medea as not only an archetype of a witch, but also an inspiration for the literary trope of a dangerous woman, who goes beyond tradition and rules of society.

In Euripides' an ancient Greek tragedy *Medea*, the titular character – based on a mythological figure – is depicted as a powerful sorceress and a revengeful wife. She helps Jason, her husband, secure the Golden Fleece and moves with him to Greece, where they start a family together. When Jason abandons her to marry Glauce, the daughter of King Creon, Medea is consumed by desire for revenge. She plots and successfully kills them both, using a poisoned robe and crown. In the final act of vengeance, she murders her own children to, in a twisted way, bring her unfaithful husband to justice. After Jason curses her out, she escapes to Athens. The plot of Euripides' play does not differ much from the myth, however his version allows Medea to

have her own voice, resulting in a wider expression of her emotions; she is able to tell her own story, instead of having it passed from mouth to mouth in a form of a myth. She explains her reasoning behind the crimes she commits – she speaks highly of her children and declares her deep love for them, and yet voices the need to carry out the terrible act nevertheless. Her feelings are intense and oftentimes conflicted, which establishes her as a complex character, rather than a one-dimensional sorceress.

Seneca's portrayal of Medea, on the other hand, intensifies her role as a resentful witch; she is depicted as a relentless and vicious figure, fully embracing her dark powers and sorcery to exact revenge. She is more unambiguously evil compared to Euripides' portrayal. While shown as a professional witch who invokes the gods of the underworld and uses powerful incantations and potions, it is clear her intentions are anything but good – she is completely overtaken by her anger. Her determination and rage overshadow any signs of love or mercy, which makes it significantly harder for the reader to sympathise with her and understand her behaviour. Seneca's Medea is portrayed without the internal conflict and hesitation seen in Euripides' version; her actions are driven solely by a desire for revenge, making her a more one-dimensional character. In this text, "Medea is a professional witch, determined to harm the man whom she had loved but who had betrayed and abandoned her . . . The play has been compared to a contemporary horror movie, and it helps to establish the archetypical witch figure" (Levack 321). She shows no remorse or any inner struggle, emphasising her as a figure of pure vengeance. To make it clear for the reader, the author includes "a furious monologue by Medea in which she entreats the blessings of various deities upon her evil projects and exhorts herself to surpass all her former crimes" (Cleasby 45). Seneca establishes her, first and foremost, as a symbol of evil and witchcraft used for immoral purposes.

Ovid, who seems to stand between the two extremes presented by Euripides and Seneca, portrays Medea in two major works: *Metamorphoses* and *Heroides*. In the former, she is depicted as a powerful sorceress capable of dramatic transformations and performing magic. She is initially shown as a conflicted young woman, struggling with her love for Jason and her moral

compass after he abuses her trust. However, as the story progresses, she transforms into a malevolent witch, fully embracing her dark powers. In *Heroides*, the portrayal of Medea is more nuanced, revealing her emotional depth and complexity. She is shown as a passionate and desperate woman, deeply in love with Jason and anguished by his betrayal. This text revolves not around her magical abilities, but instead the human sensitivity and dealing with being mistreated; "Medea begins to know what Jason is . . . ; *he* is the one who will lead her to the cruel end of her story" (Hinds 24; emphasis in original). Ovid's portrayal does not stick to one vision of Medea, oscillating between depicting her as a supernatural, revenge-seeking being and a deeply hurt, deeply human woman. He establishes her as a symbol of both witchcraft and complicated human nature.

All three authors strongly base their Medeas on the same ideas, provided by the myth, yet give representations of her slightly different focuses. Euripides presents Medea as a complex figure with deep inner-conflicts. Her relationship with Jason is shown through intense love, which is turned to anger resulting from his betrayal. She is still shown as a powerful witch, however her story centres around her love for her family and inability to grant happiness for herself and her children. Euripides balances Medea's role as a sorceress with her human emotions (James 7), highlighting her internal struggle more than her vengeance. Ovid's version is much closer to those ideas than Seneca: he captures the duality of Medea's nature. In *Metamorphoses*, she transitions from an innocent, morally conflicted woman to a malicious witch. In *Heroides*, however, she is depicted primarily as a deeply emotional and passionate woman, who is strongly hurt by her lover and cannot quite fathom it. Ovid offers the reader a more ambiguous perspective on the character. Seneca seems to be the most rigid with his attitude towards the character: he focuses heavily on Medea's supernatural abilities and her role as an evil sorceress, minimising any aspects of motherhood or emotional conflict. She is depicted more as a fury than an emotional human being. While all these representations give different insights into the story, they all undoubtedly establish Medea as a woman going against what is socially expected of her: "[t]his Medea violates not only

by her rejection of maternity for power, stressed by Seneca, but also by her magic, stressed by Ovid" (Purkiss 260).

In Renaissance, references to Medea appeared in a variety of William Shakespeare's works – both directly and indirectly. While he has been known to use themes of magic and supernatural instances in general in a lot of his plays, it is possible that Medea's story inspired him in particular; "[w]e know that Seneca influenced the shaping of Shakespeare's late romances; his *Medea* may have been in Shakespeare's mind in a series of plays that deal with parents and children" (Purkiss 260). Her questionable morality, complex emotionality, and multi-dimensional character had been sure to catch the attention of this Elizabethan playwright, whose interest in exploring the depths of human psychology and internal conflicts have been recognised worldwide. Moreover, his numerous allusions to the story of Medea in various works of various topics, only add to her already wide array of representations.

Shakespeare's tragedy *Macbeth* is the most richly filled with references to Medea, though she is never mentioned by name in the play. First of all, it can be argued that The Weird Sisters in *Macbeth* evoke Medea's sorcery. Their supernatural powers and role in influencing Macbeth's fate reflect Medea's manipulation of magical forces. Additionally, the presence of Hecate and their conversations could also be a reference to Medea, as though "Medea was a goddess in her own right, the strongest images lead rather to a re-visioning of Medea as a manifestation of Hecate" (Tuana 256). Moreover, the image of the Three Witches speaking to Hecate recalls Ovidian invocation of Medea to the same addressee (Purkiss 260). Medea is often presented as a priestess of the goddess Hecate – the association is therefore more than expected. The second reference to the figure of Medea in *Macbeth* can be drawn through the titular character's wife – "Shakespeare's most obviously Medea-like woman" (Heavey 60) – Lady Macbeth. Not only is she often described as the embodiment of evil, thanks to her manipulations, striving for power, and doubtful morality, but also the "hints at her capacity for infanticide also ally her to Medea" (Heavy 109) – making her a more direct reference to the character herself, rather than simply her magical

powers. The representation in *Macbeth* therefore, yet again, underscores the duality of Medea's nature; she is both a witch and a human – though not a sensible, and instead a deeply flawed and power-fuelled one. Medea herself, however, seems to be much more powerful, though – she brings her words and threats to life by herself, instead of relying on anyone else, especially a man. This, in a way, pays homage to Medea; her "ability to transcend motherhood by literally exterminating the patriarchal line" (Purkiss 261) establishes her as even more agential than Lady Macbeth.

Another Shakespearean play, which is often said to be referencing Medea, is *The Tempest*. It is not unusual to make a connection between the characters of Prospero and Ovidian Medea from *Metamorphoses* during the invocation to Hecate: "[a]s has been frequently noted, Prospero's detailing of his power recalls Medea's boasts about her control over the natural world" (Heavey 138). Additionally, Prospero is one of Shakespeare's most famous parent-figure characters; *The Tempest*, apart from being the last play written by Shakespeare in its entirety, it is also often said to be a representation of his thoughts on fatherhood. In relation to Medea, especially the one presented by Euripides, Prospero is shown as a deeply loving father with a strong bond with his daughter, Miranda. However, he still controls every aspect of her life, seemingly for her protection – which is similar to the argument Medea makes when she fears her sons being mistreated by Jason's new bride, resulting in her – quite literally – taking their lives into her own hands. Lastly, Prospero's position by the end of the play is much more favourable to the one of Medea's: "Prospero is, at the play's climax, differentiating himself from the Colchian witch, who exults in the power that Prospero is choosing to reject: it is this differentiation, and the resultant quashing of Medea-like power, that is crucial to the happy resolution of the drama" (Heavy 139).

In Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, Medea is referred to both directly and subliminally. The former instance appears in Jessica mention of Medea's rejuvenation of Aeson, when exchanging love declarations with her newly minted husband, Lorenzo. The purpose of it is to highlight the witch's magical powers used for good; there is no mention of her actions outside of

this aspect of the myth. This allusion attempts to humanise Medea, focusing on her healing abilities rather than her more infamous activities; "Jessica is using Medea not as an example of a murderous revenger but as a lover who resisted paternal strictures (in Medea's case, those of her father Aeëtes) in order to pursue the object of her desire, and who aimed to keep him by rejuvenating his father" (Heavey 137). By omitting the darker aspects of Medea's story, Shakespeare softens her image, presenting her as a symbol of love and defiance against male authority. Apart from this instance, the story of Medea lies at the very heart of the play; this controversial work by Shakespeare speaks about alienation and social injustice above anything else. Just like Jewish people in Venice, especially Shylock, are mistreated and discriminated, Medea stands out among other citizens; she "is racially, geographically and religiously other than the Greeks" (Purkiss 259).

This "otherness" is the main theme of Amy Levy's 19th-century retelling of Medea's story. It focuses on her status as an outcast, emphasising her racial differences and alienation. Levy presents Medea as a figure driven to extreme actions by the discrimination and betrayal she faces. Not only is she left by her husband and her love, but it is clear other people of Corinth treat her as an outsider; she is constantly met with criticism and negative remarks about her physical appearance. It is clear after Jason and others around her call her ugly and compare to a monster, simply because she does not fit the beauty standards set by her society, she internalises this mentality and starts to hate herself. This portrayal seeks to justify Medea's actions by highlighting the injustice she experiences; it "demands empathy and understanding" (Olverson 69). An image this strong is not accidental – it is possible, as Levy attempted to tell her own story through Medea's experiences; her feminist ideas and Anglo-Jewish roots established her as an outcast in her own society (Olverson 69), much like the mythical sorceress. By focusing on Medea's suffering and marginalisation, Levy offers a more sympathetic and humanised version of the character, challenging traditional interpretations that depict Medea solely as a villain. The feminist beliefs of the author also add to the complexity of Medea's character.

The Victorian era was very much interested in revisiting ancient tropes and characters, both in written and visual art. The theme of dangerous women was one of the most especially popular topics – Medea being no exception. Pre-Raphaelite artists such as Frederick Sandys and John William Waterhouse depicted her bewitching figure in their paintings *Medea* (1868) and *Jason and Medea* (1907), respectively. Their paintings emphasise her exotic beauty and her connection to witchcraft, symbolising the Victorian fascination with the supernatural and the mysterious. Sandys' painting portrays her with dark allure, drawing the most attention to her attributes rather than the figure herself. She is as if caught in the middle of preparing a fiery potion; the table is cluttered with talismans, herbs, toads, and other elements strictly connected to magical practices. The animal skins in the background also refer to both the connection with nature and the traditional use of dead animals/bones in preparation of various potions and balms. The vessel is surrounded by a thread, which forms a circle on the table – most likely referring to the symbol often used along with incantations. Sandys' Medea is predominantly a skilled witch, who most likely dabbles in both natural and ceremonial magic. Waterhouse's representation is not much different – in *Jason and Medea*, the witch is not surrounded by as many magical ingredients and artifacts, yet she is also preparing a potion. Jason's presence suggests the mixture is the one used by Medea to help Jason complete tasks set out for him by Aeëtes in order to claim the Golden Fleece. While Jason seems to be concerned and arguably curious about his wife's activity, Medea's expression is undoubtedly very focused; she is determined to bring one of her schemes to life. These artworks underscore Medea's dual nature as both a powerful sorceress and a beautiful, loving wife, who is willing to go against her own father to help Jason – completely omitting the topic of her cruelty.

In contrast, Alphonse Mucha's poster for Sarah Bernhardt's production of *Medea* from the end of the 19th century is not afraid to show the most controversial element of her story. The piece exemplifies the Art Nouveau style, emphasising Medea's grace and intensity; the poster's style and aesthetics draw attention to Medea's exoticism, while capturing her

ambiguous morality. She is shown with a bloody knife in her hand and a dead body at her feet; her expression is aware, yet clearly scared. She does not seem to regret what she has done, she is not in a state of panic – at the same time, it appears she is already facing the consequences of her actions, at least in the emotional sense. Mucha's work aligns with Bernhardt's dramatic and expressive portrayal, highlighting Medea's beauty and sensitivity juxtaposed with a tragic story and merciless deeds. The poster captures the theatricality and intensity of Bernhardt's performance, presenting Medea as a powerful and commanding figure. This collaboration reflects the Art Nouveau interest in combining beauty and intensity, as well as the era's fascination with strong and complex female characters. It depicts Medea, above all else, as a murderess – a beautiful, sensible, powerful murderess.

Throughout the ages, the myth of Medea has been a canvas for cultural expression, reflecting changing attitudes towards power, and the women who challenge gender and societal norms. From ancient complex sorceress, through Shakespeare's parental-figure allusions to nuanced 19th-century reinterpretations, each portrayal of Medea expresses a unique response to the controversial story of a witch, a betrayed wife, and a murderess with homicidal tendencies. The varied depictions emphasise her magical power and vengeful nature, resonating with themes of betrayal and retribution, reference her dual nature as both a healer and a destroyer, suggesting a deeper exploration of her character's psychological dimensions. While earlier works tend to demonise the character, the later depictions further humanise Medea, showing her as a symbol of racial and social alienation; "[w]hether goddess, priestess, or witch . . ., she is always presented as a dangerous alien, seductive, powerful and unpredictable, untrustworthy and at the mercy of her passions" (Bruton 9). These portrayals collectively highlight a progress from viewing Medea as merely a mythical figure to recognising her as a complex symbol of the eternal struggle against patriarchal constraints; her evolution from a witch and a source of chaos to a misunderstood outcast and a figure of feminist resistance underscores her timeless relevance in literature and art. Medea remains a powerful archetype

of the dangerous woman, one who defies the conventional, blurring the boundaries of morality and societal expectations; as her story continues to resonate with modern audiences, her legacy as a powerful and multi-dimensional figure remains as compelling as ever.

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The Metafictional Narratives of William Burroughs' "Wind Die. You Die. We Die."

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Published in 1968 in *Esquire*, the short story "Wind Die. You Die. We Die." is prefaced with a sentence absent from its later appearances in short story collections, which reads: "Perhaps it's about you, sitting there, reading this magazine" (57). The story that follows challenges traditional storytelling conventions and, as promised by the quote, blurs the boundary between fiction and reality. This essay attempts to identify the metafictional devices used in the story and show how their use results in an intentionally incomplete narrative.

The complete text of "Wind Die. You Die. We Die." can be divided into four narratives. The first one begins with a man walking by the sea in Puerto de los Santos. He remembers that he "had made love to a girl some night before" and reveals that "[s]he could not have known that her romantic . . . lover was actually a stranded pederast who had experienced considerable strain in fulfilling his male role" (57). Even though this passage initially appears to be a negligible example of William Burroughs' signature self-deprecating inner monologue, it later becomes a missing link for tying the four narratives together. Before that, the reader's expectations are subverted, when the topic of the first story switches from love to an impending disaster. The man reveals that the people of Puerto de los Santos believe that what keeps their home alive is "the winds of God that blow away the mosquitoes and the miasmal mists and the swamp smells . . . the great hairy tarantulas and the poisonous snakes" (57), leading to the saying "Wind die. You die. We die." being coined. The man confirms it by citing his thesis on the exact topic and sharing his observations of the place: "There are few purchasers

and fingers that touch the merchandise are yellow and listless with fever" (57). He then foreshadows the same future for New York and the rest of the world, all disasters preceded by him writing theses about them and being ignored. After his last remarks, an unexpected "THE END" appears at the bottom, followed by a seemingly disconnected passage: "I turned the page to be faced by a lurid color picture of a creature with . . . claws, a scorpion's tail . . . and snapping teeth! They came in countless hordes and they attacked!" (57). What follows is a short story under the title "The Crawling Breasts" about a small town community rallying against a monster invasion. The content of the story appears to be an amalgamation of pulp science-fiction themes – it starts with the crude, yet somewhat intriguing title and also has the archetypal characters, such as the inexperienced and so largely ignored youth, the tame constable and the ex-military leader. Though in 1975 Gérard Cordesse wrote that "Burroughs pays homage to the classics of science-fiction" (Cordesse 33), referencing *Nova Express* and *The Ticket That Exploded*, he also noted that "he alternates science-fiction with other techniques of dramatizing, rather than reproducing, reality" (43). This alternation can be found here, as "The Crawling Breasts" should not be treated as a genuine standalone story. Not only does it lack the signature elements of William Burroughs' science fiction, such as the naming conventions, anti-establishment themes or inserting himself into the story. The omission of these elements appears to be deliberate in order to construct a text which reflects the pulp convention as authentically as possible. It also cuts abruptly at the climax, when, after a gap, another narrative is introduced.

The third story begins with Mr Anderson putting down a pulp magazine after his reading is interrupted by a receptionist. On his way to an unspecified room, Mr Anderson reflects on the stories: "Funny what you find in old pulp magazines. 'Wind die. We die. You die.' Quite haunting actually . . . good stories too . . . And I was reluctant to leave the intrepid colonel frozen forever rifle at his shoulder" (120). The quote serves at least two functions – it creates a clear separation between the narratives and gives the reader an opportunity to relate to the character, positively or negatively. Aside from opinions about the quality of the stories, neither Mr Anderson

nor we know how "The Crawling Beasts" would end, which creates an uncommon connection between fiction and reality.

The opening of the fourth story follows the same setup – this time, a Mr Bently is asked to follow a receptionist and, similarly to Mr Anderson one narrative before, he reflects on the contents of the magazine: "Story of someone reading a story of someone reading a story. I had the odd sensation that I myself would wind up in the story and that someone would read about me reading the story in a waiting room somewhere." (120). These remarks serve a similar function to the previous character's reflections. The first sentence helps the reader navigate the narratives – with the lack of titles and clear separations, this at least informs the reader that there must have been two separate observers before Mr Anderson. Thanks to this hint, it is possible to organize the four stories into three narratives, the first one containing both the original "Wind Die. You Die. We Die." story as well as the description of the page with the "lurid color picture of a creature " (57) and "The Crawling Breasts" story that followed. There also is a more distinct metafictional device present in Mr Bently's thought – the image of a string of fictional readers, one observing the other, results in metalepsis, defined as "the shift of a figure within a text (usually a character or a narrator) from one narrative level to another" ("Metalepsis"). It can be argued that the shift does not remain solely within the text, as it reaches out to the real reader, thus reflecting the quote that preceded the entire body of text in *Esquire*. It is at this point that it becomes clear that the collection of narratives is not so much about the individual characters, whose appearances do not last for more than a few paragraphs, as it is about the shifting point of view, where the string of observers only becomes longer.

Though the breaking of the fourth wall is striking, it should not overshadow what follows – a collection of seemingly disjointed phrases: "shifting inexorably to a spot over the sea . . . I turned the page to be faced by his leathery breasts . . . She could not know that her stranded pederast had experienced arrangements elsewhere" (120). The words are identified as what the current narrator had read, though now clearly freed from the organised boundaries of a written story. The passage is reminiscent of

William Burroughs' signature cut-up technique and, being largely composed from parts of a short story, evokes more familiar images than it would in a larger body of text, where certain phrases are more likely to be forgotten by the reader simply due to the volume of the text. The passage resembles a stream of consciousness with the previous stories at its source, thus exemplifying the metafictional device of self-reflexivity; it relies on the reader's memory of the preceding text while attempting to recreate the natural process of disorganised thoughts forming inside the reader's head.

These borrowings only become more important in the attempt to untangle the final narrative, whose beginning reflects the previous two – another character, this time a Mr Thompson, is asked to follow an assistant. The difference, however, is that there is no explicit reference to the other narratives – while the previous characters would remark on the amusing structure of what they had read, it is not known if Mr Thompson had actually been reading anything before his interaction with the assistant. Instead, they have a conversation about who they are going to meet: "It is said that she experienced a great disappointment in love many years ago but that was in another country" (120). As the characters travel through a strangely desolate landscape, Mr Thompson shares observations about his surroundings: "They waved us through with listless yellow fingers. . . . the surface occasionally releasing bubbles of stagnant swamp smell. . . . An officer with a rusty sporting rifle under his arm returned my salute" (122). Again, some of the phrases seem familiar – and there is a particularly high concentration of borrowings from the first narrative. The final clue to the question of what happened comes from the mouth of the assistant, who is also Mr Thompson's guide: "The odor of course is still here. You see there has been no wind since" (122). This information serves as an anchor for the spatial shift in the last narrative, creating a bridge between it and the first narrative. In "Metalepsis and Mise en Abyme", Dorrit Cohn provides a list of metafictional texts whose structures lead to, or at least suggest, an infinite loop of repeated events – one of the examples she uses is the French novel *The Counterfeiters*: "the novelist-protagonist Édouard is shown writing a novel that bears the same title – *The Counterfeiters* – as the novel that we are reading, a novel that

itself contains a protagonist who is a novelist" (Cohn 109). However, she also argues that "potentially infinite structure of this kind has nothing to do with a story that contains interior metalepsis. … Interior metalepsis … in no way gives us the impression that we, the readers, belong to an infinite series of fictional beings" (110). In the case of "Wind Die. You Die. We Die." as a whole text, its finale results in a paradox when the storyline of one of its characters is brought to an end. At last, Mr Thompson and his guide arrive at their destination to meet the woman, who is introduced as "the most astounding living monstrosity of all time. She was once a beautiful woman". The description of the sight that follows is a nod to the science-fiction convention: "In the center of the dusty room was a wire mesh cubicle where something stirred sluggishly. I felt an overwhelming nightmare vertigo" (122), but it is what the woman says that concludes Mr Thompson's storyline.

The words "*You! You! You!*" (122; emphasis in original) might sound inscrutable, yet their true weight is crushing after untangling the narrative – assuming the first and the last narrative share the same place, it is plausible that the original narrator was in fact a younger Mr Thompson, and his seemingly insignificant mistress was the woman he encountered at the end. If so, though the ending is open, the two narratives form an (admittedly chronologically disjointed) unity. In accordance with Dorrit Cohn's arguments, there is no hint of the story repeating itself. However, what remains is the middle – the fate of the mutual observers from the middle of the text is unknown. Though them sharing some of the same knowledge the real reader did blurred the line between fiction and reality, it cannot be said whether or not either of them would read the final story. And due to them being outside, and not inside that story, the expected frame is not complete since it is what they are reading that is embedded. Thus, their narrative remains indeterminate – and with it, the entire text.

By employing fragmented narratives and metalepsis, William Burroughs invites the reader to consider not only his or her own role in the story but also the broader implications of bridging the gap between literary fiction and reality. The frequent changes of storytellers, each being observed by the next, with the final observer being the real reader, subverts

expectations – and so does the way the narratives escape the traditional structure of framed story. Through the use of the discussed metafictional devices, what William Burroughs achieved is a story whose content and structure encourage the reader not only to consider the events within the text but reconsider the act of reading as a whole.

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A Contaminated Pastoral: Investigative Poetry in the 21st Century

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Pastoralism is one of the themes of the 19th century poetry tradition. It explores the topos of "Nature" in which a pastoral landscape is a place where one can seek contemplative solitude, search for inspiration, or simply take a break from the increasingly expanding and polluted urban areas. Yet, two hundred years later the world is completely changed, and a relatively new notion of the Anthropocene enters the humanities. The poetry of our times becomes "contaminated" with new ideas as it consciously reflects the surroundings which it stems from. In the year 2000, chemist Paul Crutzen and biologist Eugene Stoermer coined the term *Anthropocene* to reflect the humans' severe transformation of the Earth, that is, the exploitation of the planet with such an unprecedented speed that a new geological era has to be recognised and thus named after Homo sapiens. However, the term has not been accepted by the science of geology as an official name for the epoch. In her 2018 book, *Recomposing Ecopoetics: North American Poetry of the Self-Conscious Anthropocene*, Lyn Keller proposes to speak of "self-conscious Anthropocene" (11), referring to the intellectual atmosphere of the 21st century. She asserts that her intention was to coin a term that is "distinct from the label for the geological era that may have begun centuries ago, that foregrounds this very recent awareness" (Keller 11). As the issue at hand is poetry in the times of the self-conscious Anthropocene, Keller's main interest is in ecopoetics and poetry which she defines as the one that "responds to contemporary environmental changes and challenges" (12).

The epitome of pastoralism can be seen in a fragment of Whitman's poem, "Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun" where he writes, "Give me to warble spontaneous songs, reliev'd, recluse / by myself, for my own ears only; / Give me solitude—give me Nature—give me again, / O Nature, your primal sanities!" (177). What can be instantly noticed is the word "nature" written with the capital n. Nature for Whitman becomes a self which is to be addressed with a kind of poetic reverence. It is a passionate exclamation of what pastoralism has to offer. What constitutes the poetic inspiration is mentioned in this short fragment, that is, spontaneous singing for oneself, solitude, and a touch of primordial tranquility. Yet, what starts appearing in the poetry of the 21st century is no more a lyric written for the sake of praising "Nature," as the surrounding defined in such way ceases to exist in the "self-conscious Anthropocene." To understand what kind of situation is taking place, one needs to come back to the era of rapid industrialisation, where "Nature" as a concept became a product of the industrial develop-ment. Once "Nature" became distinct from the polluted city, it gave a rise to a possibility of its contemplation outside the civilisation which became a Romantic topos, possible to trace in Whitman's works. Therefore, the way in which this term functions in modernity is a product of industrialisation. Nowadays the division becomes even more artificial as there is no place on Earth left which would be undisturbed by human altering of the planet.

Even though the term Anthropocene entered the humanities for good, and some variations such as "self-conscious Anthropocene" are introduced, the term's exclusion and selectivity do not go unnoticed. The sources of what we call the Anthropocene now, can be traced to the beginnings of the European colonial expansion, that it is a process which started centuries ago, and that the notorious climate crisis which is most often associated with the term is just a small fraction of what the European colonialism and the politics of extraction have contributed and still are contributing to. Lyn Keller herself says that "its placement of humans within geological time is humbling: we have been on the planet for such a tiny fraction of the Earth's existence and we are only one species" (17). Also it does not escape her that "human societies vary greatly in how and how much they contribute to

anthropogenic environmental change, as well as in the nature and degree of environmental degradation they immediately face" (Keller 17). Keller recognises the importance of paying attention to how people vary in their contribution to the destruction of the planet. The consequence of which leads to taking into account Indigenous communities for whom the crisis started with the European colonial expansion some five hundred years ago, and not just recently as the date of the coining of the term may suggest. Keller is not the only person who notices a potential problematic nature of what the term refers to. For Anna Tsing "[t]his 'anthropo-' blocks attention to patchy landscapes, multiple temporalities, and shifting assemblages of humans and nonhumans: the very stuff of collaborative survival. In order to "make mushroom picking a worthwhile tale" (which is the topic of her book), she asserts that "then, I must first chart the work of this 'anthropo-' and explore the terrain it refuses to acknowledge" (34).

Similarly, for Joanna Ziarkowska "what remains problematic are the ways in which the very definition and understanding of the term is implicated in the Western capitalist-oriented and imperialist narratives of progress" (81). That is, the term Anthropocene addresses an abstract notion, is too general and inherently produces a universal view of humanity. Such mainstream discussion suggests that the whole humanity destroys the planet somehow equally. Yet, from the perspective of Indigenous communities not everybody is proportionately and in the same way responsible for the destruction. Furthermore, this crisis is nothing new because this destruction has been going on for a long time. According to the Indigenous approach to the problem the climate change is just an aspect of a larger catastrophe that we, as humanity, decided to notice only now. The origins of the crisis are in fact in settler colonialism and the logic of extraction which spread all over the planet. What is needed is a change of optics and seeing climate change as a part of a yet greater problem. Thus, the question has to be addressed differently as it is not possible to speak about climate catastrophe without looking more broadly at the logic of Western domination.

What is observed is a rise of poetry which responds to the problem by its own means. Mary Oliver's work may be considered an instance of post-

Romantic, contemplative modern poetry characterised by aesthetisation. Yet, Lyn Keller is sceptical of "nature poetry alone, especially work like Oliver's that presents nature's 'true gift' as lying in its unchanging patterns" as she believes that it "is an insufficient poetic response to the radical instabilities of the environmental mess in which we find ourselves" (Keller 31). What she finds a necessary poetic reaction of our time is experimental poetry which responds to the challenges that we are facing.

An Indigenous poet of Inupiaq-Inuit descent, dg nanouk okpik, writes about the possibility of survival in the world facing multiple crises. Therefore, it is possible to discuss her poetry in the terms of Indigenous futurism. okpik rel(ies) on a more nuanced model which draws attention to the relational character of interactions with other species and beings (including those which biology would refer to as nonlife) and thus dethrones man in the Enlightenment narrative of progress (Ziarkowska 80-81). Therefore, similarly to Tsing, okpik's literary exercise is in paying attention to various entanglements between all material entities. The split subject in okpik's poetry refers to a fragmented identity which was torn into two versions of life by the colonial violence as "[u]ntil 1984 the law stipulated that every sixth and subsequent child in Inuit communities would be put up for adoption" (Ziarkowska 95). It is an example of an extremely brutal colonial practice of forcing the Indigenous children into acquiring western culture. It served the western ideal of making local people forget their Indigenous ways in the process of violent uprooting directly linked with the extermination of Indigenous cultures. okpik, being precisely the sixth and thus uprooted child (Ziarkowska 95) originating from Alaska, is deeply concerned with oil extraction in her Indigenous homeland, the issue of which overlaps with her split identity.

Her poetry cannot be read in a fluent way as there is something on the level of how it is composed which underscores the fragmentation of her world. It is no longer a harmonious correlation, which her writing, with long spaces between phrases, manages to reflect adequately. okpik's experience is expressed with a layout of juxtaposed images in her poem under the title "Oil is a People". In its fragment, "She/I watch/es a bulldozer drag / black

peat the surface land not broken, / only fragmented like green fused moss" (62), okpik refers to the land being still there, although altered, fragmented, precisely like her split identity. She and her homeland become an inseparable unity. "[A] People" (62) to which she compares oil means a nation and she most probably wants to communicate that oil belongs to this place in a same manner as she does, that their material reality does not matter, that they are equal in terms of their belonging to this nature. Oil, being a commodity easily translated into numbers, that is money, makes mentioning it inseparable from the fate of the Indigenous people affected by its extraction. It is not an abstract notion, but it refers precisely to the ways of life which are being exterminated. Oil comes from a place where people had to be moved so that extraction could go on, which again is coming back to the notion of uprooting and displacement. okpik is reorienting a certain question as she is thinking about oil as connected to a specific place and therefore connected to "a People," animals, plants, and other material forms. She refers to a nation that stops existing in this place and thus becomes fragmented, precisely as the poem and her identity are fragmented:

> Oil is a People will she/I jump the edge?
> She'll/I'll walk with wrists sliced by
> burdock Her/my eyes fixed and formed
> like ironwood. (okpik 62)

okpik, verging on her two identities may want to transgress them. Being on the edge can possibly mean both placing herself in this liminal position or a contemplation of suicide. "[W]rists sliced by burdock" are very telling in terms of the latter. She recognises a painful and risky quality of this edge, and she is contemplating what may happen to her. okpik ultimately mixes the images of intrusion, extracting the body of this land, now fragmented, with those harrowing images of wrists sliced which can be read as a metaphor for a broken nation, a displaced woman, and violated landscape as it is literally wounded. Therefore, the fragmented body of earth constitutes

a wounded body of a human being because they are continuous, they cannot split. If the subject is broken, then the land is broken as well and vice versa. Another Indigenous, in this case Mojave, poet who is interested in reestablishing the connections between herself and her homeland is Natalie Diaz. Her poetry is very place-based which inherently connects it with Indigenous wisdom and epistemologies. Its poetics is strictly tied to the uncovering of those correlations as they are not abstract, and they manifest themselves in particular locations which she refers to throughout her work. In "Postcolonial Love Poem", Diaz's attention is accustomed to noticing all the minute details of her surroundings. She exercises a kind of awareness that can detect the implications of all the entanglements present in the environment. "I've been taught bloodstones can cure a snakebite, / can stop the bleeding—most people forgot this / when the war ended" (1), says Diaz. The bloodstones are inherently a part of her homeland and play a significant role in the Indigenous knowledge which is being gradually forgotten due to the colonisation and the uprooting of Indigenous cultures. According to her traditions, a certain meaning is given to the minerals which makes the relationship of stones and the bodies of people integral and profound. Therefore, a continuity between organic and inorganic matter is inherent, to which colonialism never paid any attention.

The theme of her poem is a never-ending war and when one takes the title into consideration it seems to be Diaz's understanding of colonialism. With speaking about "ever-blooming wounds" (Diaz 1) and "touch[ing] our bodies like wounds" (Diaz 2), she evokes an imagery of pain and suffering. okpik has already shown us that uprooting communities from their own cultures becomes a wound which is beyond healing. To learn how to live with these wounds is a question of both okpik's and Diaz's poetry as their stance is clear. In the poem Diaz says, "my desert" but also, "my shoulders," "my back, thighs," and "my thirst" (1), making the desert a part of herself. It constitutes her identity equally as her body does. In her another poem, The First Water is the Body, Diaz says: "[t]he Colorado River is the most endangered river in the United States—also, it is a part of my body (49). She uses elements of landscape to refer to herself. The essence of her poetics is

that it is not a metaphorical expression, her stance is that she is literally both, this desert, and this river, and she cannot think of herself as a separate being. "We carry the river, its body of water, in our body," says Diaz and explains below, "I mean river as a verb. A happening. It is moving within me right now" (51) which seems to be a metaphor for people being like a flowing water, changing each moment, never really staying the same. In Mojave's language even the abbreviated versions of the words for the water and the body are precisely the same, reflecting this continuity and the mode of thinking in which the human body is inseparable from this sacred source of life. The conclusion of the poem is that America in its spiritual understanding of nature is behind, for example, India which grants its sacred rivers "the same legal status of a human being" (55), whereas what the U.S. does is a violent treatment of the Natives who want to protect their river (also meaning their bodies) which as Diaz proves are inseparable for her people.

As okpik is continuous with her wounded homeland of Alaska, similarly Diaz's identity is an inherent creation of her desert and her river. Anna Tsing subtitles her book *On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*, and Diaz' poetry is also a part of this kind of futurism. She is beyond any doubt that an optimistic vision of a complete recovery is possible. She can feel that the wounds will never heal, thus she wants to feel her pain as life and love are still possible in this reality. In "Postcolonial Love Poem", she says, "I wage love" (Diaz 1) by which she asserts the continuity of the registers of these two ideas. This postcolonial war is the only reality to be known, thus learning how to live in these ruins of dispersed realities and uprooted lives, with the wounds never to be healed, is a key to any kind of future on Earth.

What becomes visible is a radical shift in how poetry ceases to exist only for aesthetic purposes. It becomes investigative and is conscious of the ongoing issues which humanity is facing. This kind of poetry goes back to the sources of the current crises and asks questions about the possibilities of survival. Suffering is a frequent theme visible there, as poets such as dg nanouk okpik and Natalie Diaz refuse to hide their pain. They remember the suffering endured by their ancestors synchronous with European colonial practices, while also maintaining an acute awareness of their present

postcolonial realities. These kinds of narratives are not easy in reception as postcolonial reality of the communities affected is not easy to comprehend as well. Yet, being aware of the discourse also means paying attention to the wisdom present in verses of such kind and thus to the possibilities of survival in the postcolonial world which Indigenous perspective offers.

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"To Live as a Monster, or to Die as a Good Man": The Unreliable Narrator in *Shutter Island* (2010) and His Influence on the Viewers' Experience

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An unreliable narrator is a term that was first introduced by Wayne C. Booth in 1961 and describes a narrator whose credibility is compromised: "I have called a narrator reliable when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say, the implied author's norms) unreliable when he does not" (158–159). Narrators may be considered unreliable for various reasons that usually include deliberately lying or misleading, impairment induced by various personal problems, lack of maturity to understand the actual state of events, or psychological issues that heavily interfere with the character's mind and memory. In some cases, that unreliability is immediately evident, which equips the audience with awareness of possible misleading as well as the fact that not everything should be taken as ultimate truth, even if the narrator believes otherwise. However, sometimes, that revelation is delayed until the very end of the text, causing the audience to discover that in the narrative they have been following, the narrator concealed or completely misinterpreted vital pieces of information, greatly changing the interpretation and course of the whole story. This technique can be seen in the 2010 film *Shutter Island*, directed by Martin Scorsese, which is based on a book by Dennis Lehane and features Leonardo DiCaprio as the protagonist of the story. This paper will delve into the construction of narration in the film and the application of various stylistic elements, which depict the protagonist's psychological issues, showcasing his unreliability.

The main character of the film is a complicated and troubled individual who created a very complex fantasy in order to escape from overwhelming guilt and grief. His name is Andrew Laeddis, and he was incarcerated in the 1950s at Ashecliffe, a mental hospital for the criminally insane, after murdering Dolores – his wife, who had killed their children. Laeddis blamed himself for what happened to all of the members of his family and was not able to reconcile with his past, so in order to escape from it, he created an elaborate fantasy, which he regarded as reality. He believed that his name is Teddy Daniels and, as a US Marshal, he is investigating suspicious happenings at the hospital, while Andrew Laeddis, a completely different person, is responsible for the death of his wife. He was convinced that the doctors at the hospital were performing dangerous and illegal operations, so he intended to uncover that and stop it from happening. After seeing that no form of therapy worked on him, Doctor Cawley, who manages the institution, came to an understanding that playing into his fantasy may prove beneficial to Laeddis and help him acknowledge his deeds. The whole film is told from Teddy Daniels's point of view, putting the viewers in his subject position, and they, just like the character, are increasingly more suspicious and disoriented by his discoveries and the behaviour of other people in the hospital (Mulhall 245).

Fig. 1 Daniels interviews the patients

At first, the seemingly professional US Marshal seems confident and trustworthy, only gradually we lose that certainty, not knowing whether we are questioning what is going on in the mental institution or the narration of the character itself. In the scene where Daniels interrogates other patients, one woman asks for a glass of water, and when she raises her hand and "drinks" from it, we can see there is nothing in her hand, even though the glass was brought to her. In this sequence, Scorsese effectively warns us not to trust anything Laeddis perceives as reality (Mulhall 245). The focus on the woman's hand draws viewers' attention to the fact that it is empty. This detail, followed by close-ups of the characters' faces, further demonstrates Daniels's confusion and anxiety associated with the whole situation and lack of necessary information to fully understand it. This nuance also adds to the feeling of alienation and estrangement, showcasing that the Marshal is not infallible. A similar effect is achieved during the meeting between Daniels and Rachel Solando, who later turns out to be just a figment of his imagination. Their conversation follows a shot/reverse shot sequence as they sit across a fire. The flames, however, can be seen on the right half of the screen, both when Daniels is looking offscreen and when Rachel is looking back (Mulhall 245), which is a violation of the 180-degree rule. It is a guideline that maintains spatial continuity and ensures consistent screen direction by keeping the camera on one side of an imaginary line between subjects, however, sometimes, "[d]irectors may break the 180-degree rule and cross the line, either because they want to signify chaotic action or because conventional spatial continuity is not their primary aim" (Corrigan and White 632). Scorsese uses this violation as a further emphasis on Daniels's delusions and lack of connection with reality (Mulhall 245). In this case, the violation further underlines the estrangement felt by the audience, which corresponds to characters' struggles and the whole narrative structure of the film:

> This just means that his fellow-actors increasingly lose their place in his palimpsestic script, and as Teddy adds wholly hallucinated individuals to his cast, his world's wholehearted

> commitment to accommodating itself to his projection only reveals its increasingly threadbare fictionality, and eventually the real reasons for its creation. (Mulhall 245)

The whole purpose of Laeddis's fictional reality that he created in his mind was to protect him from the gruesome truth connected to his past. After he murdered Dolores, he was not able to carry the burden of that deed alongside the grief that he felt. The audience receives those seemingly crucial to the plot information sparingly through flashbacks, dreams, and visions, which are often influenced and altered by Laeddis's afflicted mind. They serve as an integral part of the narrative by adding context and explanation to the story and, at first, disclosing only limited information and confusing the viewer, which would not be possible if Laeddis's recollections were reliable: "If an author wants to earn the reader's confusion, then unreliable narration may help him" (Booth 378).

In the very beginning, the audience sees Daniels's memory of his wife giving him a tie she bought for him. In this flashback, she looks almost angel-like and feminine while they stand in front of a mirror and hug each other. If it were not for the nondiegetic, sinister-sounding music that is heard throughout the whole scene, it would look as if it belonged in a romantic comedy. It challenges the audience's expectations while presented with such a stereotypical image. At the same time, the music is a hint that not everything in Daniels's life, and even in the film itself, is the way it should be and that there is more going on than Daniels is willing to tell us or even acknowledge himself. A similar instance of convention-breaking can be seen in one of Daniels's dreams. We can see him and Dolores hug each other as ash is slowly falling down around them, looking very similar to small flower petals that are usually much more suitable for such a romantic scene. His dreams hold great significance as they provide him with information otherwise inaccessible. That is how Daniels comes to remember the name "Laeddis". In this scene, we can also see his wife reprimanding him for drinking too much, showing that their relationship was not, in fact, as idyllic as it might have looked at the beginning. Despite that, Daniels says, "I need

to hold on to you. Just a little bit longer" (00:29:49–00:29:54), which shows how dependent he is on the version of her that he created in his mind. It is also his vivid imagination and psychological issues that cause him to see visions of his children later in the film, making the audience more suspicious about the narration and the protagonist's sanity. While Daniels is trying to blow up a car, he is talking to a vision of Dolores, who he believes is standing on the other side of the vehicle. She is only visible in over-the-shoulder shots taken from behind Daniels's back, and she is not present in any reestablishing shots during the conversation, which are supposed to present the audience with the "seemingly objective view" (Corrigan and White 627). This shows that he is indeed alone, which clearly proves that she exists only in Daniels's imagination. The scene with Dolores, which involves the least number of cuts, appears at the end of the film, when the truth is revealed to the audience. This scene does not feel out of place or rushed, in contrast to her previous appearances. The atmosphere is paradoxically relatively calm, and if it were not for DiCaprio's amazing display of emotions, it would seem surprisingly casual, showcasing the truthfulness and reliability of events. Throughout the film, the audience received only as much information as Daniels himself was willing to acknowledge. Each flashback and dream revealed more and more information while at the same time diminishing the influence of Daniels's imaginary reality, which was slowly falling apart.

Fig. 2 Daniels hugs Dolores in his dream

The line between truth and lie in Scorsese's film is very thin and almost imperceptible during the first viewing. Both narrative and stylistic elements served very important functions in creating suspense, starting with pure delusion and deceit, then gradually uncovering the truth and finishing with a dramatic reveal of the whole story. The opening scene of the film takes place at sea, where Daniels is suffering from motion sickness. He then joins his partner, Chuck Alue, who later turns out to be just playing the role of a US Marshal and in reality was Laeddis's psychiatrist – Doctor Sheehan. Chuck then looks at him and asks, "You okay, boss?" (00:01:58–00:01:59). This line is paralleled in the last scene, which takes place on the grounds of the hospital, with him asking Laeddis "How we doing this morning?" (02:07:46–02:07:49).

Both scenes are very telling and their comparison reveals many details regarding the narrative structure of the film and mental state of the character. In the first scene, ominous, nondiegetic music can be heard during their meeting, successfully setting a tone for a thriller, while in the last one, the only thing that the audience can hear, apart from the conversation, are birds chirping in the background. This sound is pleasant and calming, and the fact that it comes from the diegesis itself is very telling regarding the theme of truthfulness: "The word diegesis comes from the Greek word meaning 'telling.' . . . Diegetic [representations] use particular devices to tell about or imply events and settings" (Corrigan and White 731). Sound in this scene is faithful to the presented reality, which corresponds to the viewers' experiences and showcases the level of realness, in contrast with the music in the opening scene. A similar thing can be said about the camera distance and colour palette, which "create atmosphere or emphasize certain motifs" and greatly influence our reading of the shot (Corrigan and White 510). While at sea, the characters are shown in medium shot and medium long shot, increasing the distance and drawing attention to their background, which is dominated by cold and dark tones. During the last scene, the director used medium shots and close-ups, focusing on emotions and authenticity, which are strengthened by warm, light colours. In the broader context of the whole film, the differences between scenes can be interpreted

as a triumph of reality over delusion and lies. Exploration of the importance of truth and accepting one's past serves as an incredibly important topic in the film, indirectly showing the audience the relief that comes along with it by means of narrative and stylistic elements.

Fig. 3 Daniels and Dr. Sheehan talk at the end of the film

Shutter Island is a film that allows the viewers to enter the mind of a mentally ill individual and structures the narrative in a way that they have no other choice than to believe him. Laeddis blames himself for the death of his family members, and the fantasy he created allows him to be, at least seemingly, relieved of that burden. His efforts to remain oblivious to the truth are challenged by the acquisition of more and more information, which in turn changes the way he behaves "as he narrates" (Booth 157). The paranoia he experienced concerning the malfunctions of medical practice stayed with him to a various degree throughout the whole film, however the choice of this subject was not random: "Scorsese carefully sketches in the social context of the events on Shutter Island in such a way as to project Laeddis's subjection to fantasy as a representation of the underlying truth of his times" (Mulhall 246). This allowed the audience to believe him, as it seemed realistic enough to be true at that point in history, and made the reveal of his past even more shocking. All of the stylistic elements in the film point to the fact that there is a lot hidden from the audience, who has to go with the protagonist through all of his struggles to finally understand the

whole story, as it is not possible to pay attention to all of the details and connect them during the first viewing. Nothing in *Shutter Island* is said plainly, making the audience question everything they see. That does not change till the very end of the film. The viewers come to an understanding that Laeddis returned to his fictional world, only to realise a moment later that he, most likely, abandoned his defence mechanisms and decided that he does not want to "live as a monster" (02:09:22–02:09:24), presenting yet another gripping plot twist.

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The Social Responsibility of Comedy: The Satire of Racial Issues from Mark Twain to Percival Everett, Key and Peele, and The Lonely Island

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> *Donald Trump said recently he has a great relationship with the Blacks, though unless the Blacks are a family of white people, I bet he's mistaken.*
>
> - Seth Meyers

The joke about Donald Trump's relationship with the Black community was told by Seth Meyers, who at the time was the head writer of *Saturday Night Live* and the host of Weekend Update. It happened at the 2011 White House Correspondents' Dinner, in the presence of the US president and most important members of his administration. Jokes about racial issues are an integral element of this prestigious event in Washington, D. C. The debates whether political comedy is preaching to the converted are nothing new – historically the same questions were raised by Aristophanes, who is said to have believed "that it was the business of comedy to give good political advice" (Gomme 97). This essay will consider comedy as an indispensable part of social change.

To begin, good neighbourliness is a foundational principle of international law. Some might say that international law is a joke; nevertheless, it could be useful to introduce some of its ideas to the sphere of academic analysis of comedy. Good neighbourliness is a general concept, generally establishing an order in which states should not infringe upon the rights, including sovereignty, of other states. This principle stems from customs and treaties – one worth mentioning would be Article 74 of the Uni-

ted Nations Charter. Although good neighbourliness pertains to legal matters, as one of the notions that attempt to hold the world together, it could be said that it is also a crucial aspect that allows different communities to live alongside each other in one area or within one state. Peaceful coexistence without conflicts is the idealistic vision that reality instantly shatters, and that is reflected by comedy. This essay will explore the works of Americans who lived in various ethnically diverse communities and felt prompted to comment on that through comedy – in other words, this will be an attempt at describing the landscape of racial satire of the USA.

The discussion of racial tensions in literature started with the slave narratives of the 18th century; however, for the purposes of this essay, the first publication of Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* will be treated as a starting point. The reasons for this choice are the general consensus on the importance of this novel, as well as the fact that slave narratives can hardly be considered fiction, and this analysis intends to focus on satirical fiction. Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* will be used as a breakthrough work of fiction that has allowed for a more diverse range of topics to enter the world of satire. The following essay will also focus on Percival Everett's short story "Appropriation of Cultures", the Key and Peele sketch "Das Negros", and The Lonely Island's SNL Digital Short "Here I Go" (featuring Charli xcx).

The topic of racial inequality entered mainstream culture with the publication of Mark Twain's 1884 novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. It was a groundbreaking satirical novel, and now Twain is considered one of the writers who popularised local colour stories (Britannica). If things can be defined through the idea of lacking something or from somewhere, then *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* should be considered through the prism of its history of being censored, excluded from curricula, or even banned. Mark Twain can be credited with creating the space for Black writers who came after him to use the vernacular English. As Shelley Fisher Fishkin wrote about Twain giving life to Black voices through his novels, "blacks had known it all along. True, they hadn't 'proved' it. But they had known it and said it. Only nobody out there listened. Well, almost nobody" (82). Echoes of

the same sentiment are loud in the work of The Lonely Island, though not about the use of Black voice, but being aware of issues which tend to evade the wider audience. Conversely, in Percival Everett's "Appropriation of Cultures" where the main theme is that of subverting expectations – the author decided to make the Black character an Ivy League graduate, who, as implied, speaks in what is most probably the General American English.

"Does it help to know that who I snitched on was white?"

On November 16th, 2024, in a new prerecorded sketch on national television, comedian Andy Samberg, styled as a middle-aged suburban man, calls the police on someone who threw out a paper cup in his trash can. The Saturday Night Live audience reacted apprehensively, the same as Samberg's on-screen neighbours. Taking into account the overall racial unrest and the general public's opinion on the police, which took a steep turn for the negative after the murder of George Floyd in 2020, this specific reaction should not baffle anyone. The problem of police brutality against minorities has already made it into the mainstream media. Yet, it was not a new phenomenon; rather, it was a marginalised issue. As it was pointed out by Samberg in an interview for Variety Awards Circuit:

> Our country is going through a hard time. It's *been* going through this. I've been hearing about this in rap music for 30 years. We've been told if we wanted to listen. It's been happening. What the show is going to do is further the conversation. (Davis)

As part of the interview, the future of the sitcom *Brooklyn 9–9*, in which Samberg stars as a New York Police Department detective, was discussed. The answer was prompted by the nationwide protests that erupted after Floyd's tragic death, an event that changed the course of mainstream media. Rap music and works of culture created by or addressed to minorities have been talking about police brutality and discrimination. Nonetheless, for the

longest time, their contribution to the debate has eluded the mainstream. As much as it would be extremely beneficial to turn to Black-authored satire, and some will be closely examined in this essay, it is just as important for the racial issue to be a regular part of the conversation in big-name productions as well. As Sophie Quirk has argued, comedy has the ability, and often potential influence, to spark change; it is especially true if it enjoys a large audience like that of SNL, i.e., the most popular sketch show in the US (259). Therefore, comedy taking on the topic of racial issues that is created by non-Black authors should not be dismissed and is worth considering as part of the overall discussion.

The song "Here I Go" was created by the comedy troupe The Lonely Island, composed of Andy Samberg, Akiva Schaffer, and Jorma Taccone (who did not participate in the production of this particular piece). It premiered on the 7th episode of season 50 of Saturday Night Live, in collaboration with the British pop star Charli xcx. At first, the audience reacted with an explosion of enthusiasm at Samberg's dance moves, and later some tense laughs. The sketch was only awarded with unrestricted laughter and cheers from the audience when the person arrested by the police officers, told on by Samberg's character, is revealed to be Colin Jost, SNL Weekend Update host and comedy's poster white boy, an image he often ironically mocks on the show. The song Samberg sings goes on: "And I know you're not supposed to do it anymore but does it help to know that who I snitched on was white (white, white, white, white, white)" (Samberg and Schaffer 00:00:51–00:01:00), in a self-aware manner acknowledging the potential tension the sketch created earlier. The effect of this joke is heightened by the fact that the police officers, who respond to the incident, are men of colour, the word "white" appears multiple times on the screen in a white, cloud-like font, and the "snitch" is played by a comedian famous for playing the role of a police officer. This role-switching is, therefore, in line with the incongruity theory of humour, which states that "Humour is produced by the experience of a felt incongruity between what we know or expect to be the case, and what actually takes place in the joke" (Critchley 3). Conscious of the societal context, Samberg continues singing, "and now that that's cleared up, we can

all relax and enjoy this incredible song about calling the pigs on this motherfucker on my lawn" (Samberg and Schaffer 00:01:00–00:01:08)[1]. Applying the incongruity theory of humour again, the joke plays on the contrast of the vulgar nicknames and language juxtaposed with the upbeat music and dancing, building on layers of the joke.

The premise of "Here I Go" is that its main character enjoys snitching ("I've been itchin' to do some snitchin', I'm in my kitchen listening to my conditionin'" (Samberg and Schaffer 00:00:41–00:00:47), yet even he seems to have no respect for the police. His attitude is visible through the use of synonyms such as "pigs" and "cops" instead of "policemen" or "police officers".

The phenomenon of denunciation is generally associated with authoritarian regimes, where it tends to be generally encouraged by the government in order to maintain strict control over society, with the Soviet Union as a notable example. However, in other circumstances, the societal approach to informing varies; as Waldorf and Weiss wrote, "The snitch is a despised character" (185) and "Though the snitch's motives for informing can be altruistic, he or she is mostly seen as betraying the group"(185). The stereotypical roles are reversed, and the people of colour are the law enforcement and the white person is the arrested one – this is the core of the joke in "Here I Go". The smartly executed play on people's expectations is worth considering as a mindful approach to creating comedy on The Lonely Island's part, who have a history of taking on the responsibility of having a large audience. Through the years, they have often pointed out the hypocrisy of the US society in its approach to same-sex relationships versus the heteronormative standard (both prior to the legalisation of same sex marriage, in 2013's "Spring Break Anthem", and after in 2016's "Equal Rights"). Throughout the whole sketch, The Lonely Island is punching up on

[1]As per NBC's censoring swear words, during live broadcast the word "motherfucker" was partially replaced with a sound in order to cover it up. The uncensored version is available on The Lonely Island's YouTube channel youtu.be/kHwpS0LakeU?feature= and is discussed in the The Lonely Island and Seth Meyers Podcast episode listed as Additional Sources.

the white suburban communities, who, in the racial divide, come out on top in more privileged positions.

The sketch utilises role-swapping and offers a commentary on the social reality of suburban communities. However, it does not rely on racial unrest as its only source of comedy. The audience gets to laugh at the dancing, the wordplay ("like I invented-ed it" (Samberg and Schaffer 00:01:39)), the arrests of a Girl Scout, a pug with a tiny pair of handcuffs, and the collaboration with Charli xcx. Although "Here I Go" does not attempt to reclaim words or symbols, and was not created by Black comedians, it makes a strong case for transferring the conversation to the mainstream media and undeniably provokes the biggest laugh at the expense of the earlier described Colin Jost's reveal.

"His was the land of cotton": reclaimed symbols

Scholars cannot seem to reach a consensus on how to define "cultural appropriation." It should be noted that cultural interaction, or exchange, is an integral part of life, while "appropriation" is usually associated with malignant intent, but is still an incredibly nuanced topic (Lenard and Balint 332). To envisage this problem, it could be said that Adolf Hitler adopting the swastika as a symbol of the Third Reich was an appropriation of a Buddhist religious symbolism. At the same time, Jewish people eating Chinese food on Christmas does not constitute the same phenomenon. Taking this all into account, the right of fair use of culture should be allowed in comedy, especially for purposes of a commentary on social injustice. Making fun of a process, or the system, is fundamentally different from punching down on a marginalised minority group simply to get an underserved laugh. Comedy that attempts to break away from stereotypes and point out certain problems should not be considered cultural appropriation.

One could say that Percival Everett in the short story "Appropriation of Cultures" utilises a similar theme of subverting expectations as The Lonely Island's "Here I Go". "Appropriation of Cultures" tells the story of a

university graduate with a trust fund, Daniel Barkley. At the behest of a mostly white audience, Barkley, with a jazz band, performs a Confederate anthem, "Dixie". In a climate where generally anything Confederate is associated with slavery, this certainly evokes bewilderment in the reader. Throughout the narrative, the twisting of symbols continues. The main character goes on to buy a second-hand truck with a Confederate flag sticker. Although not explicitly, but through the shock of the people who sell Barkley the truck, the reader learns that it is a story of a Black man. Barkley keeps twisting the narrative; he is not averse to symbols connected with the system that historically exploited and abused his ancestors. "Dixie", a song with a deeply complicated heritage, originally Southern, "was constantly crossing boundaries of nation, allegiance, politics, race, and class" (Hutchinson 604). As Hutchison further wrote, it "was given to various local appropriations and rewriting and engendered a series of hotly contested proprietary claims" (604). What Everett does through Barkley in "Appropriation of Cultures" is the reclaiming of symbols, at the same time falling into the tradition of "Dixie" and its multiple variations. Everett took this problematic song and made it into an anthem expressing pride in coming from the former Confederate states, a song of Black pride. When Daniel sings "Dixie" with his jazz band, he feels deeply nostalgic and content:

> He was busy trying to sort out his feelings about what he had just played. The irony of his playing the song straight and from the heart was made more ironic by the fact that as he played it, it came straight and from his heart, as he was claiming southern soil, or at least recognizing his blood in it. His was the land of cotton and hell no, it was not forgotten. (Everett 25)

Daniel was prompted to sing this particular song by a group of white bar patrons. It could be inferred that their song request was meant as a provocation. However, it achieves the exact opposite effect – the moment serves as a catalyst to what Everett describes as a total reclamation of "Dixie"

and the Confederate flag, which by the end of the short story is flown at every Black event. Some parallels between "Appropriation of Cultures" and The Lonely Island's "Here I Go" could be noted, for instance in the way they both rely on the incongruity of portrayed situations. However, it is worth noting that "Here I Go" does not attempt to reclaim the denunciation. There, the negative action is exaggerated in order to point out its futility and absurdity, and the negative impact it has. While Everett's "Appropriation of Cultures" focuses entirely on racial tensions and satirises interracial relations, The Lonely Island's sketch, on top of those, makes fun of the suburban community culture and intrusive neighbours.

Coming back to the principle of neighbourliness, which in a simplified way could be said to have been broken in the skit "Here I Go", a similar metaphor, sometimes on a larger scale, can be employed in other forms of comedy, such as non-musical sketches or literature. One such example could be the Key and Peele sketch "Das Negros" from 2012. The audience is transported into 1942 Germany, where an SS officer is going door to door looking for Black people ("negros", as he calls them) and Jews. The officer is portrayed by the actor Ty Burrell, who puts on a fake German accent. One would expect stereotypically German people to open the door for him; however, the audience is surprised by Key and Peele in whiteface. The SS-man then proceeds to inquire about the "negros" and asks to perform some supposedly scientific tests on them to check whether they are truly white. The tests turn out to be purely absurd – he checks their reaction to beetroots and presents them with a cat toy – "like we throw beans up against the homosexuals and see if the beans explode" (Key and Peele 00:01:58–00:02:03). Key and Peele defer and pretend that they share the German prejudices. It could be said that the comparison of the racial segregation and discrimination of Black people with the genocide perpetrated by Germany during the Second World War serves as a device highlighting the social problem, even though it is not "funny" in any imaginable aspect. By paralleling the tragedy of the Second World War with racial unrest in the US, the Key and Peele sketch "Das Negros" produces a rather strong statement. This historical setting is also reminiscent of the aforementioned current

issues with denunciation (colloquially called "snitching" in the SNL sketch). Authoritarian regimes rely on citizens turning on one another to enforce either close control over the society or to execute their extermination policies, as was the particular case of Nazi Germany. Although the exact action of "snitching" is not shown in the sketch as it is in "Here I Go", the hostile reality of telling on one's neighbours is an integral part of the chosen background of this piece.

"If you don't mind, I'd like to read all the jokes in black voice": performing race

Circling back to the idea of reclaiming certain symbols, the use of whiteface in the Key and Peele sketch "Das Negros" should not be excluded from this analysis. Neither The Encyclopaedia Britannica nor the Cambridge Dictionary define whiteface. Its tradition could be traced to the 19th-century theatre, where the masks and costumes were not only part of the character's expression but also a signifier for the audience what type of character, or stereotype, they were about to watch on stage (Byrne 134). If described as the opposite of blackface, which is a dark mask or makeup typically worn by a white person to portray a Black person, then whiteface would be a Black person dressed up to imitate a white person. Traditionally blackface and Black people were subject to punching down – "Slaves as comic figures were objects of derision – in most instances both the vehicle for and butt of the humour" (Watkins 63). This dynamic can be seen in the Eddie Murphy SNL sketch "White Like Me," that parodies the 1961 book and experiment *Black Like Me*. In this sketch Murphy, in full white stage makeup, is mocking both the experiment itself, and the often borderline Orientalist approach to Black culture and struggles. Some argue that whiteface is a part of cultural colonisation "in part because whiteness as power is unavailable to these characters" (Schueller 235).

The phenomenon of blackface, and the far less common whiteface, raises the question whether race is performative. The Key and Peele sketch "Das Negros" seems to racialise whiteness in order to draw focus to how

majority groups tend to weaponise the concept of race to achieve certain goals – no matter if by highlighting their identity, or through discrimination. Out of the three works discussed in this essay, only "Das Negros" mentions whiteface. As Morgan wrote: "Contemporary satirical texts and performances, while they inspire laughter, also compel the audience to reexamine themselves and their complicity within the establishments being satirized" (10) – the quote relates directly to the work of Percival Everett and the described correlation is clear in his short story "Appropriation of Cultures", but it also applies to "Das Negros", where the characters come in direct contact with a servant of the establishment. In Everett, through the particular use of language (the main character is Black but does not use AAVE vocabulary or pronunciation) and the reclamation of Confederate symbols, Everett questions the *status quo* of preconceived notions.

Moreover, the dynamic that Morgan described is what occurs in The Lonely Island's "Here I Go", while the racial aspect of the sketch is discussed in this essay, the work itself is focused on satirising the suburban neighbourhood communities, therefore, a part of the establishment. Although Morgan's statement relates to the question of racial performativity in comedy, echoes of this sentiment can be noticed in "Here I Go", which achieves a similar objective, but through subversion of the audience's expectations. "Das Negros" seems to be portraying a slightly different situation. Key and Peele have their faces smeared with white paint to not appear as the "negros" that the SS-man is looking for. Although whiteface, or sometimes white voice, can be employed in order to subvert racial expectations (Schueller 239), it does not seem to be the case in "Das Negros". Rather, here it is used as a device of contrast, creating a quite powerful comparison. Perhaps this particular use of whiteface could not be classified as a reclamation of symbol or action, however, it is worth noting that it is still making the characters take race as a concept, twist it, and use it to their advantage – something that historically has been rather done by white colonisers. In a way, the use of whiteface seems to be an attempt at taking away power from blackface.

On the other hand, the adaptation of blackface or black voice can also serve as a device to create an incongruous joke. African American Vernacular English in the realm of fiction, and therefore later on in comedy, has been in use only since Mark Twain's novels utilised it. An example of that can be found in the SNL Weekend Update segment "Christmas Joke Swap 2024", where the already mentioned model of comedic whiteness Colin Jost reads jokes in "black voice" so that he does not "get in trouble" (Che and Jost 00:00:48). Using grammar and vocabulary associated with AAVE, such as "y'all" (Che and Jost 00:01:19) and "mofos" (Che and Jost, 00:01:53), Jost read the script written by Michael Che, his Black co-anchor – telling jokes about slavery reparations and his wife's hypothetical adultery. The "Joke Swap" segment functions on the basis of the two hosts writing jokes for each other and then reading them for the first time live on air. The suspense and incongruity of a white man performing something inappropriate for his circumstances are crucial to the joke, and they result in bursts of laughter from the audience. This piece of comedy, however, does not serve in any form as a social commentary, but rather as a frame which allows a joke to be publicized that otherwise would have been considered as racist.

Conclusions

Satire is a crucial part of the political debate, often bringing in the balance of tone registers and comic relief. The varied landscape of American comedy about racial issues, which started with Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, was demonstrated in this essay. Percival Everett's "The Appropriation of Cultures", the Key and Peele sketch "Das Negros" and The Lonely Island SNL Digital Short "Here I Go" were analysed in the context of the nuance that they introduce to the public discussion of racial issues. The life of various diverse communities struggling to coexist in peace was compared to the principle of good neighbourliness governing international relations. Reclamation of symbols, here mostly of the Confederate flag and anthem, was studied. This essay has showcased the prevalence of subversion of expectations as a device to simultaneously comment on racial unrest and

make the audience laugh. Extrapolating Butler's theory of gender performativity to race in a post-race environment could be worth exploring further, in relation to the rare phenomenon of whiteface and the question of racial performativity that were touched upon in this essay.

It would be worthwhile to circle back to the opening joke of this essay, told in 2011 about Donald Trump's relations with the Black community, and take into account the 2025 reality of a second Trump administration. With its announced mass deportation policy, the US comedy scene in the coming years might be rather fruitful with satirical takes on the topic of racial issues and similar devices to the ones pointed out in this essay should be expected.

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A Beautiful Jock: Pretty Privilege in Matt Rife's Netflix Special *Natural Selection*

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Who is Matt Rife?

Matt Rife is an American standup comedian with a huge internet following and some questionable controversies to his name. He started his career as a 15-year-old, and for many years, he worked as a recurring guest on the improv sketch comedy show *Wild 'n Out* and performed at various comedy clubs. He has self-produced three comedy specials *Only Fans* (2021), *Matthew Steven Rife* (2023), and *Walking Red Flag* (2023); he also has a comedy special produced by Netflix titled *Natural Selection*, which was the second most watched program the week it debuted on Netflix (Seitz). After his first comedy special, Rife signed a two-special deal with Netflix; one of them, *Lucid - a Crowd Work Special*, premiered on 13 August of 2024, less than a year after his first controversial comedy special *Natural Selection*.

Rife became popular in the comedic scene after a viral TikTok video of him in Phoenix, Arizona in 2022 (Rife "Not all heroes are overachievers."). He was resistant to moving his career online – for the first decade of his professional activity, he did not use any social media to promote his comedy. The period after the first video turned out to be one of the most fruitful times in his life: in just a few months, he gained over 15,6 million followers (Kurutz). His material was mostly on the topic of sex and relationships; most of his viral videos were of his interactions with the audience. He became known for roast-flirting with his audience and making somewhat inappropriate but flattering jokes (e.g. Rife "GILF gang"; "All these colors"; "DA-DUN-DA-DUN").

Rife's comedy special *Natural Selection* premiered on Netflix on November 15, 2023, and caused quite a backlash. However, this has not slowed the performer's career. His contract with Netflix includes more comedy specials, and his *ProbleMATTic World Tour* has sold out in most American cities and the UK (Kurutz; Matt Rife Official).

Is Matt Rife funny?

Matt Rife is aware that his jokes are not suitable for everyone, hence the name of his new tour, *ProbleMATTic*. After his Netflix comedy special, *Natural Selection*, his comedy skills were again scrutinized. Many online critics, journalists, and social media users criticized Rife for joking about domestic violence, accused him of fat-shaming, and declared him "not funny" (e.g., Venuti, Romano, Shyminsky, Hall).

Since he became known for crowd work, i. e. improvising his jokes on stage based on interactions with the audience, it is hard to categorize his type of humor. It does not fall directly into just one of the established categories of superiority, relief, or incongruity (Critchley). Rife mixes all three techniques by making jokes about disabled people and being happy to be born white (superiority), about his troubling childhood and him being "canceled" (relief), as well as coming up with incongruous punchlines while talking with audience members (incongruity).

The joke that started the whole online discourse questioning the funniness of Rife's performance was, however, a pure example of the theory of superiority:

> [talking about Baltimore] I ate lunch there, and the hostess . . . had a black eye. . . . [Rife's friend says:] 'I feel like they should, you know, put her in the kitchen or something… where nobody has to see her face, you know.' And I was like, 'Yeah, but I feel like if she could cook, she wouldn't have that black eye. [audience laughing] Testing the water, seeing if y'all are gonna be fun or not. (*Natural Selection* 00:02:13*)*

The audience, and Matt Rife himself, find the joke funny only because they feel they are better than a victim of domestic violence.

The truth is that no one really knows why we laugh at certain things. Jennings tried to deconstruct the concept by saying that: "For the most part, things do not become funny because joke-tellers seize on them. Joke-tellers seize on things that are already funny" (32). To answer the question of "What is 'already funny'?" McGraw and Warren proposed the benign-violation hypothesis:

> The benign-violation hypothesis suggests that three conditions are jointly necessary and sufficient for eliciting humor: A situation must be appraised as a violation, a situation must be appraised as benign, and these two appraisals must occur simultaneously. (1142)

According to this hypothesis, the only people who have found the aforementioned joke funny are the ones who find domestic violence benign. Since most do not, it is no surprise that the joke did not resonate with the majority of the audience.

In his material, Rife often discusses situations that violate personal dignity, social norms, and moral norms (e.g., physical deformities, strange behaviors, violence, taboo subjects). These situations would need to be benign, i.e. distant enough to be funny, which is precisely the problem with Rife's joke.

The examples given by McGraw and Warren are absurd (snorting someone's ashes and having sexual intercourse with a dead chicken) and psychologically distant (the situations are hypothetical) and, therefore, can cause laughter even if they are severe violations of social norms (1142–1143). Rife's examples are much more realistic and much less hypothetical, as they are based on real situations and talk about real problems. Joking about domestic violence will not elicit many laughs; most often it will be

considered offensive instead, as it is neither psychologically distant nor described as hypothetical.

Since violation is at the base of comedy, the biggest problem of Rife's jokes is not the topic itself, but his use of established strategies to seize on the comedic potential of things around us. The two most relevant strategies are punching up and punching down:

> "Punching up" . . . refers to a practice or ethical standard stressing that comics should not build their content upon the backs of populations who have been historically marginalized. "Punching up" rather than "punching down" emphasizes that jokes be made only at the expense of those within positions of higher socio-political status. (Holmes 20)

In the Baltimore joke, Rife punches down instead of punching up. Utilizing the latter technique on a joke about domestic violence would make the situation more distant and benign as: "comedy is aimed at those who are more powerful, as it is assumed that comedy will do relatively little harm to those who have power" (Setyaningsih and Larassati 54). In the case of punching up, comedy becomes empowering and relatable; it releases the pent-up anger at the oppressor. Rife's joke punches down on the victims of domestic violence, being more akin to a tool of oppression.

In conclusion, it is possible to joke about heavy subjects if one has enough social awareness and comedy skills, rather than when one aims to be controversial simply for the sake of being controversial.

What is "pretty privilege"?

Although Mr. Rife has developed an easy stage manner, thanks to the countless hours he has spent at the mic, his popularity may have as much to do with his cheekbones as his comedic chops. Tall and strikingly handsome, with blue eyes, a chiseled jawline and full lips, Mr. Rife is something rare in the comedy world: a heartthrob (Kurutz).

In his 2021 comedy special, Rife complains about the fact that his looks have significantly changed after puberty, and now he is considered attractive for the first time in his life. "This is not good for comedy!" Rife comments, leaning into the stereotype that most comedians are people who had to become funny in order to "balance out" not being objectively attractive ("Matt Rife: Only Fans" 00:12:36). It is ironic since Rife takes on a persona that disregards his own looks, and yet he takes advantage of them.

Rife is aware of the fact that most of his audience is female and not interested solely in his comedic talents. He pointed out multiple times that his humor is aimed at male audiences and, therefore, might not be suitable for fans who have only come to his shows to look at him (e.g. *Natural Selection* 00:29:47). As mentioned before, Rife had been in the industry for quite some time before he became famous. What brought him the level of popularity he enjoyed in November of 2023 was precisely the fact that he became physically attractive. That constitutes a prime example of a not-so-new phenomenon called "Pretty privilege".

Pretty privilege is an extension of body privilege phenomena: researchers have found that people seem to be treating objectively attractive individuals as more deserving of society's favors (Kwan). This stems from the Physical Attractiveness Stereotype (Griffin and Langlois), which, in the simplest terms, is defined as "beautiful is good" (Dion et al.). Because of the assumption that good-looking people already have fulfilling lives and are successful, society tends to react differently to what they are saying or doing, even to the point of finding people less guilty of committing crimes because of their looks (Kramer et al.).

This is why Rife was generally considered a funny comedian before he started joking about victims of domestic violence. His jokes have always been situated right on the benign-violation line: he joked about school shootings, religion, and mental disorders. For a long time, his material was perceived through the lenses of pretty privilege: people didn't know whether they found him funny or just aesthetically pleasing. It is another widespread phenomenon that:

> Upon first hearing the material of a comedian, audiences make swift decisions about the likeability, stage presence, or physical attractiveness of the comedian rather than their morality or ethics. (Oppliger and Mears 155)

It took a serious violation and a terrible choice of strategy for people to start questioning his methods and trying to get him canceled.

Cancel culture is very prominent in the world of stand-up comedy, as it can take as little as one bad joke to change the trajectory of one's whole career. It is a form of advocating social justice that points out problematic or unacceptable behavior in the hopes of setting an example (Jaafar and Herna 383). Matt Rife, however, was not canceled, at least not really, as exemplified by his deal with Netflix and his unwavering social media following. The discussion that surrounded his comedy special has died down, and the fact that he was scrutinized did not have severe repercussions. People have been much more lenient with him than, for example, comedians of color who were accused of making inappropriate jokes (e.g. Hasan Minhaj losing his job at "The Daily Show", Dave Chapelle having to cancel his live shows). Rife's career did not suffer from it: his tour is still going, his videos still manage to raise the same amount of views, and his deal for future Comedy Specials with Netflix has not been cancelled.

Rife has also never apologized for any of his controversial jokes. As a response to the scrutiny he has received after *Natural Selection*, he posted a mock apology on his Instagram with a link to a webpage selling helmets for people with special needs. It was said to be a calculated strategy that was supposed to save him from losing his comedy credentials (Power). After a comedian loses most of his fans, he can only quit or entertain the people who stayed, and Rife chose not to amend his wrongdoings and proceed as before.

What will the world learn from this example?

Rife continues to thrive, with the only drawback being that the TikTok algorithms recommend him a bit less. He seems aware that his comedy skills are being questioned; he did call his new special *ProbleMATTic* after all. However, as long as he has an audience that wants to listen to him play the victim of cancel culture, he will keep on making money by violating social norms.

The fact is that, even though body privilege is a widespread and well-documented phenomenon, there is nothing we can do to address it. We can only control our reaction to seeing the privilege play out in real life. In this case, enacting social justice in the form of cancel culture could have made more of an impact than it did; nevertheless, it worked in terms of pointing out the problematic behavior.

Even though cancel culture is a separate entity that requires much more research to be proven either useful or harmful, there is space for it in the world of stand-up comedy. As a society, we need to keep each other accountable for violating the rules that care for everyone's comfort and well-being.

Moreover, there is an art to comedy: making the best out of a bad situation, connecting with others by laughing together, and changing one's point of view with an incongruous turn of phrase. As audiences, we shouldn't be satisfied with performances that lack forethought or that have been thought through and were purposefully made offensive.

To reach a more tangible conclusion about the impact of Rife's comedy, one would have to analyze the phenomenon of toxic masculinity, as well as bro culture and locker room humor, which is a genre that his comedy falls under (Power). The discussion about what constitutes that type of humor and why it is a bad thing on its own is, unfortunately, out of the scope of this work. It is an interesting subject, especially considering the example of a comedian whose fanbase consisted mostly of women and who suddenly started pandering to the male audience. Another subject for further analysis could be Rife's use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE)

and the fact that as a white male, he aims his material mostly (often specifically) at black men.

It has been suggested that Rife might be overcompensating because his audience has objectified him and projected the pretty privilege onto him (Shyminsky). As a result, he tried to make it very clear who his target audience was. The whole Rife situation was neatly summarized in a post by science communicator and social media personality Hank Green:

> A comedian ruining his relationship with a large portion of his fanbase because he wanted to be like all of the other boring-ass Netflix Special "You Can't Tell Jokes Anymore" crowd is actually just depressing. (@hankgreen)

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Shadow Play:
Heart of Darkness and Its Theatre Structure

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Probably the biggest advantage of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is its ability to inspire different interpretations and renditions. The goal of this paper is to present a new possible interpretation of the text as having theatre play structure and try to create a way of reading the novella that would be more acceptable for the modern audience. Additionally, it will attempt to determine if the theatre-related terms were preserved in two Polish translations.

This essay discusses the theatre structure of the book, followed by an analysis of fragments connected to this theme in the original and in two of its Polish versions, by Jacek Dukaj and Magda Heydel. The analysis aims to establish how well the Polish translations retain the theatre structure of the text. Dukaj's interpretation is discussed because it features numerous theatrical elements and it is paired against Heydel's translation as she was the last one to translate the novella before Dukaj's version.

In Conrad's novella taking place in Africa there is not much Africa. The reader's view of the continent is limited to the Congo River, the bank of the river and the edge of the forest – the wall of giant trees. The river is not really a land in itself. Additionally, the bank of the river is occupied by Europeans, it is changed by them and appropriated by them. The edge of the forest is a backdrop for the events of the novel. However, this backdrop is silent, dark and impenetrable. I would argue that Africa is that which is hidden behind this "curtain" of trees.

If the trees are the curtain, then the bank of the river is the stage. It will be visible in fragments presented in the following paragraphs that Conrad sees the buildings raised by Europeans on the bank as a pitiful scenography.

As for Europeans, he often compares them to puppets or dummies: "His appearance was certainly that of a hairdresser's dummy" (Conrad 26). He sees them as artificial, ridiculous things, or characters in a play. Marlow does not identify with them and does not like or believe them.

Now the question arises: who is Marlow in this scenario? Marlow's main habitat in this novel is the river. He rarely sets his foot on the land. The river could be seen as the audience, and Marlow as a viewer of the show taking place on the bank. In the moments when he leaves his steamboat, he acts like a reluctant audience member being dragged onstage by the actors. He deems himself separate from what is going on there; he is a representtative of "the real world" in this play of madness he was only supposed to watch from a distance.

As for the natives, Conrad often describes them as shadows: "They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now, – nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation" (24; punctuation in original). This is a dreadful way of describing anybody but it does entail one important thing – that what Marlow sees in those people is not the full picture, there is something causing his impression that is stopping him from seeing the real person instead of merely their shadow. Black people in this novel are as if behind the curtain, performing a shadow play for the Europeans. Almost like in Plato's cave, the colonizers take the shadow of a thing for the thing itself. Marlow is surely one of them, but he has moments of clarity, of peeking behind the curtain, usually when he looks into the eyes of one of the natives, or enters the forest with Kurtz. Those are the moments when he transcends this show he is watching and realises that reality is beyond the stage. He finally sees black people, the backstage workers, who are supposed to keep the show running without causing any interruption, for who they are.

Is Kurtz's role the same as Marlow's? Not exactly. I would conceptualise him as an actor who no longer wants to cooperate and play according to the script. A mad actor who changes his lines and must be dragged offstage.

Kurtz breaks the illusion of the performance that he was supposed to be a part of. Maybe this is the goal of the novella. To make the reader peek behind the curtain, to notice the poor disguises of the actors and acknowledge that what appears to be a shadow is an actual person. However, for some reason Marlow hesitates. As a viewer, he cannot resist the power of the performance. The thought of artificiality of the world he is a part of is too terrifying. He comes back to Europe and lives a lie, but the truth at the back of his mind drives him insane.

Moving on to the analysis, let us start with the jungle: "The edge of a colossal jungle, so dark-green as to be almost black, fringed with white surf" (Conrad 19). The interesting element here is the word "fringe". It suggests that the wall of the jungle is a kind of textile, that can be fringed, which evokes an idea of a curtain.

In *Jądro ciemności*, a translation by Heydel, this fragment reads as follows: "Krawędź kolosalnej dżungli, zieleń tak ciemna, że aż czarna, okolona białą pianą przyboju" (19). Although the word "okolona" is a correct translation of the word "fringed", the passage does not evoke the same connotations with a curtain that were visible in the original.

Jacek Dukaj's version, *Serce ciemności,* is more of an interpretation than a translation and this fragment is absent from it. Only a couple of sentences later the wall of trees is described again: "names that seemed to belong to some sordid farce acted in front of a sinister back-cloth" (Conrad 19). Not only is the idea of the jungle as a back-cloth repeated, but here enters the idea of the company stations seen as a farce, a foolish play.

Heydel translated it as follows: "jakby to były nazwy jakichś obskurnych teatrzyków rewiowych, gdzie tłem przedstawienia jest ponura, czarna szmata" (Heydel 19). In a general sense, this version is faithful to the original and retains the comparison to theatre but there are subtle differences. First of all, "teatr rewiowy" has different connotations than a farce. The first one is a comedic show mainly revolving around dancing women in feathery clothing. On the other hand, a farce is also a comedy but one that is absurd and built around the flaws of the characters. "Sinister back-cloth" also has quite different connotations than "ponura, czarna szmata". First of all, there

is no mention of the blackness in the original sentence, but Heydel probably transferred it from the previous sentence that was analysed here. However, the image that both of these expressions bring to mind is quite different. "Sinister back-cloth" entails the feeling of mystery and even danger, while "ponura, czarna szmata" invokes an image of something a bit crude, maybe also ugly and sad. It does not quite fit the way in which Conrad usually describes the jungle in this book.

Dukaj shortens this sentence to: "Nawet nazwy owych miejsc brzmiały niczym wyjęte z groszowego wodewilu" (27). "Wodewil" is something in between a revue and a farce. It is a bit more unserious than a farce and includes some dancing. It is possible that both Heydel and Dukaj went for performances which include dancing because later in this passage Marlow says: "We called at some more places with farcical names, where the merry dance of death and trade goes on" (Conrad 19).

There are many examples of Conrad calling Europeans puppets but only one was chosen for this analysis: "I let him run on, this papier-mâché Mephistopheles, and it seemed to me that if I tried I could poke my forefinger through him, and would find nothing inside but a little loose dirt, maybe" (Conrad 37). This fragment likens a company agent to a papier-mâché puppet.

In Heydel it reads as follows: "Dałem mu gadać, temu Mefistofelesowi z papier mache, ale miałem wrażenie, że gdybym szturchnął palcem, przebiłbym go na wylot, a ze środka wysypałaby się najwyżej garstka suchych trocin" (35). The only noticeable difference here is that Heydel translates "dirt" as "trociny", which is something a little bit different than dirt but matches the idea of a marionette even better than the original.

Dukaj takes the idea of artificiality of the agent even further but loses the association with theatre: "Mój orlonosy kusiciel złożył się i spłaszczył w papierową wycinankę profilu Mefista, i jego głos także szybko sklęsł się i zanikł w tle" (55). Here the character is not even three dimensional anymore, he is just a cutout of a person, which is especially interesting considering the theme of this paper, because shadow plays traditionally use cut-out paper figures which are held between a source of light and a screen.

Now let us look at a fragment concerning the natives: "We were within thirty yards from the nearest fire. A black figure stood up, strode on long black legs, waving long black arms, across the glow. It had horns-antelope horns, I think-on its head" (Conrad 94). It is worth noting that the interpretation presented in this essay is by no means supposed to explain the author's intentions or justify him. However, the image painted by this sentence is really interesting. The person that Marlow is looking at is standing between him and a fire. In a setting like this a silhouette of a person would always appear black, no matter the skin colour. Additionally, the repeated picture of the long limbs brings to mind the elongated shadow of a person that is standing against a low-hanging source of light, for example a setting sun, or, like in this instance, a bonfire.

Here is this fragment in Heydel's translation: "Od najbliższego ogniska dzieliło nas jakieś trzydzieści jardów. W plamie blasku czarna postać na długich nogach poruszała się, wymachując ramionami. Miała rogi, antylopie rogi, chyba na głowie" (86). This passage does not seem to evoke the same image as the original. When a black figure is "w plamie blasku" it no longer means that the person is seen against the light, it suggests that the light is shining on them making them visible. Additionally, the arms are not described as long. There is also the issue of ambiguity, as the last sentence in the original can mean both that the narrator is unsure if the horns were antelope horns or that they are unsure if they were on the head of a person. I prefer the first interpretation as it is much harder to distinguish a type of horn from a distance than their placement, but Heydel went with the second option.

Dukaj's version seems the closest to the interpretation presented in this paper: "Czarna postać wyrysowana na fresku płomieni najbliższego ogniska obraca ku nam głowę ukoronowaną antylopimi rogami, falują długie czarne kończyny, jeden jej krok jak skok cienia od tańczących ogni, trzydzieści metrów, bliżej, bliżej, jeszcze bliżej" (133). In his rendition, Dukaj actually likens the person to the shadows created by the fire. The additions he made to this fragment nicely incorporate the themes he included in the previously discussed passages. The first one is a two-dimensional

image, which was seen in the fragment about the cut-out. Here, the person is described as a part of a fresco made by fire. This brings to mind black-figure Greek pottery, which looks as if the depicted people are standing in front of a fire. Additionally, Dukaj mentions "dance", which appeared in the analysis of the word vaudeville.

In *Heart of Darkness,* there are many theatre-related passages. Many of them would support the idea that there is an audience-stage-curtain division in Conrad's novel as well as that black people are described as shadows because they are behind a curtain and white people are just puppets in a show. It seems that Heydel does not really take into consideration this aspect of the text although she translates theatre-related expressions rather faithfully. Faithfulness is clearly not a goal of Dukaj's version, but many of the themes he incorporates into his interpretation are overlapping with the approach presented in this paper.

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The Translation of Eye Dialect as a Social Activity: Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and Its Translation into Polish

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Defining translation in one simple sentence is, in my view, a nearly impossible task. Many scholars have worked on various definitions, each of which have put more emphasis on different aspects of this process. Although they are all correct in their own way, it is very challenging to describe every characteristic of translation in just one brief utterance. Those definitions often include transfer of meaning from one language into another, but as Peter Newmark pointed out, it often "involves some kind of loss of meaning due to a number of factors" (qtd. in Korzeniowska and Kuhiwczak 25). Moreover, one of the very first things that comes to mind when thinking about translation is, undoubtedly, language itself. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak mentions: "[i]n my view, language may be one of many elements that allow us to make sense of things, of ourselves" (369). This interpretation is especially apparent in texts in which language constitutes the main tool to express one's identity and sense of belonging to a social group, for instance through the use of a dialect. In such instances, translation has a truly significant role: it allows a message, the message that emphasizes the importance of a specific group within the society of a source culture, to spread. Readers of the translation, people coming from the target culture, have a chance to broaden their understanding and knowledge about different societies. This view corresponds to the idea expressed by Gideon Toury that translation plays a social role and activities regarded as translation should have a cultural significance (205).

The process of translation presents many challenges to translators who attempt it. It is especially difficult to reproduce the source text if it is written, even partially, in a form different from the standardized version of the source language. In literature, when authors intend to depict a non-standard variety, they very often do so through spelling. Such a method is known as "eye dialect" and Brett, while referring to opinions and statements from academia, offers such a definition of it: "any variation of spelling to indicate particular pronunciations or accents" (49). He moves on to another significant observation: it is crucial to remember that, as languages differ, it is extremely rare that two languages would share "such a tenuous relationship between sound and orthographic representation as there is in English" (Brett 50). That being the case, the translator simply cannot transfer eye dialect into the target language, as the reflection of the dialect would be incomparable. This point evokes yet another idea: the issue of untranslatability.

Susan Bassnett explores untranslatability broadly in her book entitled *Translation Studies* where she analyses various approaches. She mentions Ezra Pound who stated that a translator can never reproduce an original in a faithful manner (qtd. in Bassnett 151). Such a perspective appears to be reasonable in terms of translating dialects in literature. How can one convey the same meaning from the source text into the target text, when eye dialect is present in the original work, and when it entails multiple associations and connotations for source readers? The target culture would never resemble the source culture in a way that would allow the translator to transfer the exact meaning. This is especially the case in texts which are set in a very specific time, place, or in certain social, political, cultural contexts. From the perspective of the strategy named foreignisation, which preserves the source culture in translation and its purpose is to "register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad" (Venuti 20), this distinction, reflected in the spelling depicting a non-standard variety, should not be transferred to the target text by applying a dialect from the target language. Taking that into consideration, some translators decide to translate literary works or their excerpts containing dialectal spelling not into a dialect

of their target language, but through lowering the register within the language (Morini 10). However, it is crucial to keep in mind that dialects are not incorrect versions of a given language, but rather non-standard varieties of it, and translators should not imply this incorrectness in their work.

An example of translating a dialect can be found, among others, in the Polish translation of Alan Sillitoe's novel entitled *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, translated into Polish by Jadwiga Milnikiel and titled *Z soboty na niedzielę*. The novel focuses on the affairs of a young, working-class man living in Nottingham. Sillitoe himself was born in Nottingham to working-class parents and was considered as one of the "angry young men": a group of middle-class and working-class British authors in the 1950s. As a result, he employed some dialectal features into his own writing:

> Do you think if I won the football pools I'd gi' yo' a penny on it? Or gi' anybody else owt? . . . I've 'eard that blokes as win football pools get thousands o' beggin' letters, but yer know what I'd do if I got 'em? I'll tell yer what I'd do: I'd mek a bonfire of 'em. (Sillitoe 35)

This excerpt presents many challenges, characteristics distinctive of Northern dialects of English, some of them being: H-dropping (*'eard*) or words from the FACE lexical set (containing a diphthong [eɪ]) that are pronounced with a long monophthong [e:] (Wells 357), as well as different vocabulary: *yer* meaning *you*, *owt* meaning *anything*.

Without any doubt it is not possible to portray the features and connotations they carry into the source language very faithfully. Moreover, there is a culture-specific item in this passage: football pools, which is a sports lottery in the form of a betting game, very popular in the United Kingdom. Milnikiel opted for:

> Czy myślisz, że jakbym wygrał w totka, to dałbym ci z tego złamany grosz? Albo komu innemu? . . . Słyszałem, że ci faceci, którzy wygrali w totka, dostają tysiące żebraczych listów. Wiesz,

co ja bym zrobił na ich miejscu? Powiem ci: spaliłbym te listy. (40)

The translator chose to use rather colloquial language instead of any dialectal variety of Polish and not to transfer the whole scene into a different cultural and geographical setting. What is more, she translated "football pools" as "totek", a lottery game popular in Poland. Even though it is a different kind of game, it can be easily understood by the Polish reader. On the same page, where Sillitoe wrote: "anybody else could whistle for it" (Sillitoe 35) to denote "to tell someone that there is no chance of them getting what they have asked for" (definition given by the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*), Milnikiel opted for "Na resztę bym gwizdnął" (Milnikiel 40), which in Polish gives a similar impression to the one used in the original.

There is another very interesting excerpt, in which various features and dialectal vocabulary are present: "The poor bogger works too 'ard, if you ask me. He's a good lad, though. Allus 'as bin. Don't know what I'd do wi'out 'im" (Sillitoe 47). In the Polish translation we can find the following: "Mój syn za ciężko pracuje, a to dobry chłopak. Zawsze był taki. Sama nie wiem, co bym bez niego zrobiła" (Milnikiel 56). This fragment illustrates that very often translation lacks features that clearly represent variations present in the original text. This confirms the idea of untranslatability, especially when there is a dialect involved.

Whenever the original text includes any non-standard vocabulary, there is the possibility of a misunderstanding that results in mistakes in the translation. In *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* the following excerpt can be found: "You look as if you've got summat on yer mind" (Sillitoe 57). According to the *Cambridge Dictionary*, *summat* is a dialectal version of *something*, which corresponds to the intended meaning of its use in this sentence. However, it was translated into Polish as "Wyglądasz, jakbyś miał jakiegoś robaka" (Milnikiel 69). The translator decided to use a non-literal expression to denote *to have something on one's mind*, even though quite common phrases *mieć coś na myśli* or *coś chodzi po głowie* could be used. As a result, the translation does not seem very natural.

When translating culture-specific items or proper names, it is especially important to be consistent. Although names of political parties can cause some problems for translators, quite often they have their equivalents in different languages. This is precisely the case with the English Conservative Party, known as the Tories, and the Labour Party. Their names function in Polish as "Partia Konserwatywna" (and "torysi") and "Partia Pracy", respectively. In Milnikiel's translation we can read "torysi w parlamencie" (Milnikiel 40) for "Tory bastards in parliament" (Sillitoe 35), but in the same excerpt "Labour bleeders" (Sillitoe 36) was translated as "ssawki z Labour" (Milnikiel 40). This decision seems rather inconsistent, as the proper name of one of those political parties was translated into Polish, while the second one, even though there is an equivalent, was not. Moreover, the translator opted for omitting the pejorative noun "bastards", as Sillitoe described the politicians, and not translating this term at all. This decision can be linked to the political situation occurring in Poland at the time of the translation's publication.

Translating literature is demanding, and when there is a dialect involved, it becomes a task even more difficult for the translator. There are many theories as to how this issue should or could be approached, but the decision is ultimately in the translator's hands. The political and social atmosphere and situation during the given period of time, both of writing the original text, and the translation as well, is crucial. Many aspects need to be kept in mind during the translation process of such a text, but the overriding objective should be to make the translation comprehensible to the target readers, at the same times maintaining the original style and meaning of the source text.

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Folio 10-year Jubilee interviews

Weronika Korol, Marcel Sekuła, and Natalia Wilk
in conversation with the student editors of the very
first issue of *Folio* after its reactivation 10 years ago:
Alicja (Kosim) Kitlasz – Literature
Aleksandra Szugajew – Culture
Maja Gajek – Linguistics

You were part of the editorial team that helped bring *Folio* back to life in 2015. How do you recall your time with the journal? Could you share any anecdotes?

Alicja
Thank you for reaching out. Answering these questions gave me a chance to revisit some really meaningful memories from my time at *Folio*. It's nice to see the journal still going strong!

It was such an exciting opportunity. I remember Dr Lucyna Krawczyk-Żywko showing us old issues of *Folio* during a critical writing class in my second year of BA studies. I was impressed by the quality of the essays, and that moment stayed with me. A few years later, she brought the journal back to life and invited me to join the editorial team! Her guidance shaped both *Folio* and my own path. I still remember our editorial meetings in that little room on Hoża Street. They had this slightly chaotic but enthusiastic energy.

I was meant to oversee the Literature section, but in our first issue, all the other editors ended up submitting their own papers! After some discussion, I found myself editing them, across a range of topics. It was a bit surreal giving editorial feedback to fellow editors, but also incredibly easy. Everyone was so diligent that it ended up being the smoothest editing experience I've ever had.

Aleksandra
Can' believe it's been 10 years! I remember being in Dr Krawczyk-Żywko's class along with some of the other *Folio* team and how much we enjoyed it. So the prospect of doing something like reviving *Folio* with her seemed impossibly cool. We (if I may say so) were all so excited by our studies and eager to do more. *Folio* was a fantastic initiative that allowed students to both get involved and to explore writing in another setting than term papers. One memory from the time on *Folio*'s editorial team which stands out is when we were gathered together in, I believe, Dr Krawczyk-Żywko's office going over the submissions. We were just dividing the work between us, but I recall the thrill of the potential that in our hands we had the makings of another issue.

Maja
I had a great time working on *Folio*'s new editions! It was an interesting opportunity to do something for our student community and learn new skills! I knew very little of the journal itself, just that it existed sometime in the 90s – we found a box of old issues in the Student Council's room at Nowy Świat 4. I still remember feeling very honoured when Lucyna approached me and my friends asking if we'd be interested in resurrecting the journal. It was absolutely something to brag about! Our editorial meetings at Hoża were never just business, we had nice discussions about pop culture, and the articles that we were working on at that moment. Sometimes it felt like a book club. So many good memories!

Have you ever revisited any of the essays published during your time on the editorial team? How do you think they would hold up today?

Alicja
Yes, I've looked back at several pieces, and I think many of them still hold up really well. They're not only thoughtful and insightful, but they also reflect the interests and concerns of students at the time. Some of them even document key initiatives at the Institute, like the 2017 Student Essay Prize or the Warsaw Literary Meetings: Rising Stars in 2018. That second project is

still going strong, and papers from those workshops are still being published in *Folio*, which feels like a great legacy.

Aleksandra
I have tried to keep up with the issues but can't say I revisited any essay as critically as I have my own. I was pretty proud of the paper which I had written while studying abroad, but when I revisited my work I regretted not tinkering with it some more. It remains a reminder of what I was capable of at that time, though seeing it through the eyes of someone who's since published some other papers I knew I could have spent some more time editing it. I gained a new appreciation for the editorial process, which, granted, at times can be lengthy and arduous (and annoying when you're on version TEN of your manuscript) but it's what makes writing great, I think. Also, working together with an editor who is not just a pair of fresh eyes but can also have a different take on things, urge you to reconsider a paragraph or even the whole thesis - that's invaluable.

Maja
I don't really look at the issues I've worked on, but I do sneak a peek at the newer editions from time to time.

Have you ever published any of your own papers at *Folio*? If so, how do you look back on them?

Alicja
I have never actually published any of my own work in *Folio*, so I don't have much to reflect on in that sense. My role stayed strictly behind the scenes!

Aleksandra
May have accidentally answered this one earlier. I published one paper in the inaugural revived issue back in 2015 and there are many things I would change in it now. Nevertheless, it shows who I was as a writer then, which can be inspiring to push forward and work on the next one all the harder.

Maja
Yes, I have! Two, actually – in 2015 and 2016 editions. One was an end-of-year paper for a Tolkien course (taught by the wonderful Maria Błaszkiewicz of course) that I wrote during the last year of my BA. Looking at it now, it could absolutely use some work, but back then publishing a paper in a students' journal was something I did just for fun.

The second paper was definitely more important for my future, as at the time I was applying for the PhD programme, and having a published article was a big advantage. Back then I was not aware of any other student journals, so the opportunities were very limited. I wrote the paper with the help of my MA supervisor Anna Wojtyś. I put much more time and effort into it, and out of the two essays I am more satisfied with how the second one turned out.

Can you recall a time when you had to make a difficult editorial decision? What was it, and how did you handle it?

Alicja
Yes, when we decided to launch a new poetry section in 2018, we received quite a few submissions. I was one of the editors responsible for selecting the poems, and it turned out to be more challenging than I expected. Poetry can be so personal and vulnerable, and the idea of evaluating it wasn't easy. Thankfully, I wasn't alone – another editor worked on it with me, and we made our decisions together after a lot of discussion. It was a careful, thoughtful process, and I think that helped us feel more confident in our choices.

Aleksandra
To be honest no one decision comes to mind. The toughest point, however, was deciding how much a certain editorial suggestion would impact the work. Also, discussing your proposed edits with the authors could at times make for tricky waters to manoeuvre. But we were first time editors working with first time authors and that came with a learning curve for both parties.

Maja
I only remember one case when I needed help from all my colleagues. The submitted essay was… not good. We have sent the feedback, however, our emails were mostly ignored, and the author claimed that they would not change anything. Finally, we received the "improved" version almost 2 weeks after the deadline, but it was barely edited at all… We made a unanimous decision to pull it, due to the difficulties and lack of cooperation. I also had a minor problem with another article, but it was purely a technical matter – the essay was about poetry, and the quoted verses kept jumping up and down and spreading on different pages. I wanted to keep everything neat, and the text was just not working with me! Funnily enough, the author of this paper is one of my best friends, and I did not hesitate to tell them that their article almost drove me insane.

Did working on *Folio* help you develop any skills you still use today? Would you say it influenced your path after graduation?

Alicja
Absolutely. Working on *Folio* gave me a practical sense of what academic writing looks like beyond the classroom. It was my first experience with the inner workings of academic publishing, which ended up being incredibly useful when I started submitting my own work during my PhD. I already had a good sense of what editors expect, and I wasn't intimidated by submission guidelines or revision requests.

It also had a direct impact on my path: I listed *Folio* on my academic CV, and that helped me land a position on a state-funded research project and secure a spot in a PhD programme. It definitely opened doors for me.

Aleksandra
Working on *Folio* made me pay greater attention to "how" I've written something. It's not just about the topic of whatever you are writing – tone, style, form are all choices we don't always give enough credit, but they can impact what you are trying to say. Even with e-mails now, at work, I try to

think twice (if not more) as to how I want to come across. My participation in *Folio* (both as a writer and editor) was also what gave me an edge when applying for the PhD program, I think – I was able to present to the selection committee not just the subject I was planning on pursuing but also that I was already exploring the topic in published papers.

Maja

If someone told me in 2015 that I would be using my *Folio* notes and experience in the future, I would roll my eyes. I never planned to go into journalism after all. But surprise! Three short years later, and I was teaching writing classes to BA students and working on my PhD dissertation. Being a part of *Folio* and learning from Lucyna and my amazing colleagues helped me approach many things in a different way. Most importantly, I learned not to be afraid of receiving feedback. Just because a supervisor sends your text back and it is full of red marks and comments, it does not mean that it is bad! Additionally, peer review is extremely valuable. People who are interested in entirely different topics often help you realise when some things need to be rewritten, to help the readers understand better.

Anastazja Jagoda Busz
"I, an Alien Here":
Representations of Medea Across Time

Marcel Tomasz Sekuła
The Metafictional Narratives of
William Burroughs' "Wind Die.
You Die. We Die."

Julia Nikołajczuk
A Contaminated Pastoral:
Investigative Poetry in the 21st Century

Małgorzata Komor
"To Live as a Monster, or to Die as
a Good Man": The Unreliable Narrator
in *Shutter Island* (2010) and His Influence
on the Viewers' Experience

Antonina Mazurek
The Social Responsibility of Comedy:
The Satire of Racial Issues from
Mark Twain to Percival Everett,
Key and Peele, and The Lonely Island

Urszula Pawelec
A Beautiful Jock:
Pretty Privilege in Matt Rife's
Netflix Special *Natural Selection*

Aleksandra Jóźwiak
Shadow Play: *Heart of Darkness*
and Its Theatre Structure

Zuzanna Jarentowska
The Translation of Eye Dialect
as a Social Activity: Alan Sillitoe's
Saturday Night and Sunday Morning
and Its Translation into Polish

**A Cultural History of
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dr. hab. Paweł Rutkowski

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prof. ucz. dr hab. Marek Paryż

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dr Kamil Chrzczonowicz

**Heart of Darkness /
Jądro ciemności / Serce ciemności:
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dr Dominika Lewandowska-Rodak

**Contemporary Approaches to
Translation Studies II**
prof. ucz. dr hab. Aniela Korzeniowska

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