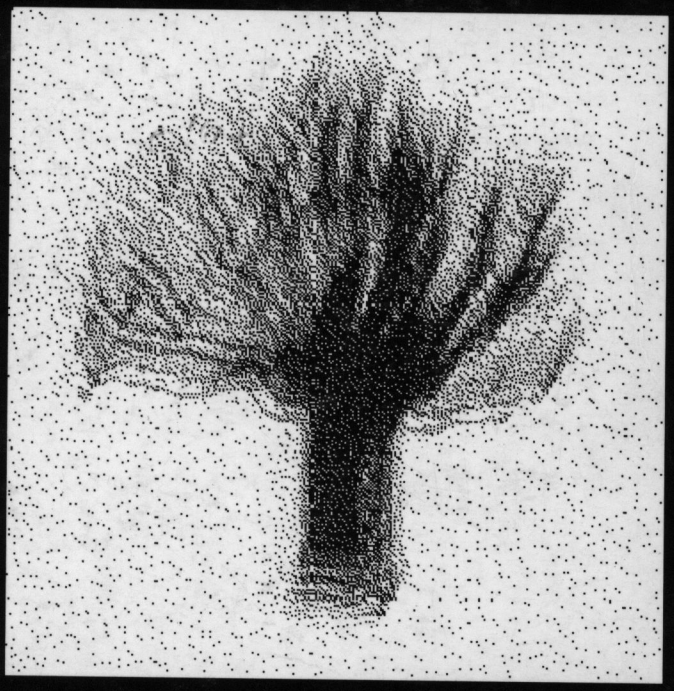
FOLIO

A STUDENTS' JOURNAL **No. 11**

2000/2001



INSTITUTE OF ENGLISH STUDIES

WARSAW UNIVERSITY

0107

FOLIO

A STUDENTS' JOURNAL

Adres redakcji

Redakcja FOLIO
Koło Naukowe Studentów IA UW
Instytut Anglistyki UW
ul. Nowy Świat 4
00-497 Warszawa

Adres wydawcy

Uniwersytet Warszawski
ul. Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28
00-927 Warszawa

This issue contains papers submitted during the academic years 2000/2001.
Ten numer zawiera prace napisane w latach akademickich 2000/2001.

ISSN 1506-1930

Druk i oprawa: Zakład Graficzny UW, zam. 244/2002

CONTENTS

literature

CULTURE

[lɪŋ'gwɪstɪks]

translation

*Redakcja dziękuje dr Anieli Korzeniowskiej za dostarczenie materiałów.

Dear Readers

the time has come to say good-bye to all of you. Your support and participation made this challenging and demanding journey a fantastic adventure. Therefore, we would like to thank everyone who made it possible for us to come so far. Namely, the Professors of our Institute, for their invaluable help and encouragement, the authors, without whom FOLIO would never have existed, the sponsors - our miracle-making benefactors, and last but not least, You - our Readers, our source of inspiration and enthusiasm. We hope you enjoyed our company as much as we have yours, in sharing the knowledge and ideas of the students of our Institute with those throughout Poland.

Thank you,

The Editors.

literatu
re...

Łukasz Kacperczyk

Paul Auster's *City of Glass* as an Anti-Detective Novel

> ... a true follower of detective fiction ... would be bitterly disappointed. Mystery novels always give answers: my work is about asking questions.[1]
>
> The question is the story itself, and whether or not it means something is not for the story to tell.[2]

Paul Auster's *City of Glass* (the first instalment in *The New York Trilogy*) has been called a 'metaphysical thriller', or a 'postmodern detective story'. The second label seems more adequate as far as the intentions of the author, as well as the final 'product' are concerned. The adjective 'postmodern' carries a feeling of something defying all expectations. It suggests an act of breaking down walls to "expose the plumbing."[3] Therefore a postmodern detective story should violate some of the rules governing the genre. This is exactly the case with *City of Glass*. Not only does Auster break the rules, he breaks the most important one – the principle of giving the reader the answers to the questions posed by the story. The real content of the novel is that of a literary journey into the extratextual world, and the failure to 'squeeze' the reality into the confinement of an orderly work of fiction.

The main protagonist of the novel – Daniel Quinn – has the same initials as the hero of the most important intertextual reference in *City of Glass* i.e. Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. Near the end of the story, Quinn wonders "why

instead of living out their adventures."[4] Quinn does the same – because all his knowledge about the subject of his own writing (detective fiction) comes from books, movies and other fictional works, having the opportunity (being mistaken for a private eye – Paul Auster) he jumps out of the literary tradition and straight into the real world and the real case (but not for a 'real' detective – as it turns out, Paul Auster – the detective, does not exist). Quinn fails in his attempts to get away from the 'text' and apply rules governing literary works (in this case – detective fiction) to the extratextual reality. When he follows Peter Stillman Sr., he gets bored. To kill the time, he buys a notebook – a red one (another sign of mixing reality with fiction – I have already cited Auster's book of essays entitled *The Red Notebook*). During long, monotonous hours of his investigation, Quinn writes down his observations. Reality, considered by him to be an alternative to the text, becomes the text itself – there is no escape from narration.[5] There is however one problem – the fictitious realm of writing does not offer any solutions explaining reality. The world is immune to the seemingly ingenious routines of deduction depending upon the number of details the detective notices. One of the basic assumptions of the detective fiction is proven to be wrong – the world is not a logical combination of apparently unconnected parts. Auster comments on the use of chance in his work, "... I consider myself a realist. Chance is a part of our reality: we are continually shaped by the forces of coincidence, the unexpected occurs with almost numbing regularity in all our lives."[6] He discredits other so-called 'realists' for following in the footsteps of Quinn, "Everything's been smoothed out in these ['realistic'] novels, robbed of its singularity, boxed into a predictable world of cause and effect. ... Truth is stranger than fiction."[7]

An obsessive urge to apply the patterns of meaning found in literature to reality leads to the destruction of the main protagonist. However, it is not an apocalyptic 'big bang', but rather a quiet, process of entropy. One of the conditions for entropy to occur is the appearance of a 'closed system' – there mustn't exist any kind of 'outside' energy supply that would balance the loss. Otherwise, the process would stop.[8] One cannot escape the thought that human beings are *not* closed systems – we eat, drink, breathe, and sleep. However, numerous contemporary American novels "concentrate on people who precisely *are* turning themselves into 'isolated systems' ... they take in a decreasing amount of information, sensory data, or even food."[9] Auster's hero reminds one in this respect of the unfortunate scrivener from Melville's story. Quinn, as well as Bartleby, loses contact with the world. When he starts to watch the Stillmans' house, and gradually reduces his food rations, as well as the amount of sleep, he unconsciously allows entropy to 'take over', and lead him to slow, yet unstoppable, decay. The uniformity of Quinn's daily routine is

him to slow, yet unstoppable, decay. The uniformity of Quinn's daily routine is yet another cause of entropy. The hero is deprived of almost any energy coming from an external source, and seems to have turned the point of no return. There is no going back. Although in the end (when he decides to stay in Stillmans' empty apartment) Quinn eats (food being provided by some mysterious force from the outside), and therefore violates the principle of a 'closed system', the process does not stop. The hero's decline towards nothingness continues. Again, a parallel with Melville's Bartleby comes to mind. Even though Melville's narrator goes as far as to change offices to escape from harmful influence of his employee, other scriveners start to use Barleby's sayings (being a sign of having been 'infected'). On the other hand, when Quinn goes back to his apartment (being a symbol of his 'old' life), it turns out not to be his any more. These are the signs of the irreversibility of entropy.

Norbert Wiener, in his work *The Human Use of Human Beings*, used the notion of entropy to develop the theory of information. Zbigniew Lewicki sums Wiener's views in the following statement: "the very matter of fiction, communication among people, was also influenced by entropy."[10] The less probable message counters entropy, yet that might lead to a dangerous result i.e. disorder which, according to Wiener, is, along with the uniformity, a source of entropy. To avoid it, the author must walk between the probable message transmitting little information, and chaotic, incomprehensive works that the reader would consider disorderly.[11] Auster shows the entropy that influences Quinn, but at the same time escapes it in the form of his novel – the framework of detective fiction is used to convey a message very different from what is usually found in the works of that genre. Auster skillfully balances between too obvious and too common (strategies and clichés of detective fiction), and too chaotic (very postmodern and overloaded with intertextuality content of the novel). Otherwise his message would be difficult to understand.

Another sign of postmodernism of *City of Glass* is the pervasive intertextuality of the novel. I have already mentioned *Don Quixote* when referring to the main protagonist and his insane pursuit of the logic in the "reality that has no coherent structure."[12] One of the references to Cervantes's novel focuses on the authorship of the book. Auster (the writer from the novel) theorizes that *Don Quixote* is narrated by Sancho, written down by the barber and the priest (Don Quixote's friends) translated into Arabic by Simon Carasco, a bachelor from Salamanca, and only then translated back into Spanish by Cervantes.[13] The case with Auster's (the real one) novel is very similar. The question of the authorship of *City of Glass* results in a complicated game of the "doubles" and mirror images. Quinn seems to be the reflection of the 'real' Auster, still, Paul Auster from the novel also bears some resemblance to the one from the extratextual world (name of his wife, son). The issue of identity is vital

for the author of *City of Glass*. The theme of the 'double' realized in traditional detective novels by the opposition between the detective and the criminal applies in Auster's book to almost all the characters. They not only double themselves (e.g. Peter Stillman vs. Peter Stillman Sr.) but also the extratextual person of the author (one cannot help considering Quinn the 'paper' Auster). Auster explains the source of that idea:

> ... it stemmed from a desire to implicate myself in the machinery of the book. I don't mean my autobiographical self. I mean my author self, that mysterious other who lives inside me and puts my name on the covers of books. What I was hoping to do, in effect, was to take my name off the cover and put it inside the story. ... Paul Auster appears as a character in *City of Glass*, but in the end the reader learns that he's not the author. It's someone else, an anonymous narrator who comes on the last page and walks off with Quinn's red notebook. So the Auster on the cover and the Auster in the story are not the same person. They're the same and yet not the same.[14]

The last sentence of the quotation is perhaps the best realization of the postmodern instability reflecting the state of the contemporary world. Quinn from *City of Glass* is the writer who never knows what will happen next until it happens, someone who cannot be sure of the final resolution until he invents it. But even then, the answers he finds/gives are often (always?) unsatisfactory...

Not only is *City of Glass* a brilliant piece of contemporary writing, it also may have a beneficial effect on one of the most stagnant literary genres. Auster 'saves' detective fiction from being repetitive by giving it an original purpose – he uses it as a framework of 'writing about writing'. The author does not allow the form to 'swallow' him, instead *he* uses up the potential of the detective story. The postmodern reinvention of this much exploited form certainly works well in his attempt to depict the fragmented world of the writer's mind. The intertextuality of *City of Glass* is another sign of Auster's conviction that one cannot cross the border between the textual and the extratextual and still use the set of principles of the former. It is only possible the other way round – by incorporating chaos and unpredictability of the real world into the realm of fiction. But then, the climax, so expected at the end of a detective story, would be non-existent. *City of Glass*' unsatisfactory ending results from that attitude. The novel reads like a 'grabber', but its content is that of "literary criticism |rather| than fictional depictions of crime and detection."[15] By leaving the reader with unanswered questions, Auster negates the very nature of detective fiction. Still, as he says, his job is "about asking questions"[16], not answering them. That is, of course, if we assume that they *can* be answered.

Notes

[1] Auster, 1995, p. 139.
[2] Auster, 1985, p. 3.
[3] Auster, 1995, p. 137.
[4] Auster, 1985, p. 129.
[5] Nealon, p. 121.
[6] Auster, 1995, p. 116.
[7] Auster, 1995, p. 117.
[8] Lewicki, p. 72.
[9] Tanner, p. 146.
[10] Lewicki, p. 74.
[11] Lewicki, p. 74.
[12] Bernstein, p. 137.
[13] Auster, 1985, pp. 98-99.
[14] Auster, 1995, p. 137.
[15] Bernstein, p. 135.
[16] Auster, 1995, p. 139.

Bibliography

Auster, P. *City of Glass*, [1985]. *New* 1–132.
Auster, P., *The New York Trilogy*, Faber and Faber, London and Boston 1988.
Auster, P., *The Red Notebook*, Faber and Faber, London and Boston 1995.
Bernstein, S. "'The question is the story itself' Postmodernism and Intertextuality in Auster's *New York Trilogy*" in Merivale P., and Sweeney S. E. (eds.), *Detecting Texts: The Metaphysical Detective Story from Poe to Postmodernism*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 1999.
Lewicki, Z. "From Rudolf Clausius to Herman Melville: Entropy as a Literary Concept" in *The Bang and the Whimper*, Greenwood Press, Westport 1984.
Melville, H. "Bartleby the Scrivener" in *Five Tales*, Dodd, Mead and Co., New York 1967.
Nealon, J. T. "Work of the Detective, Work of the Writer: Auster's *City of Glass*" in Merivale P., and Sweeney S. E. (eds.), *Detecting Texts: The Metaphysical Detective Story from Poe to Postmodernism*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 1999.
Tanner, T. "Everything Running Down" in *City of Words*, Harper and Row, New York 1971.

Piotr Maj

Deconstructing Detective Fiction: Postmodernist Features in Paul Auster's *City of Glass.*

The main feature of the postmodernist view of the contemporary world is that it allows for the unrestrained creativity of a diversity of meanings. In the field of the literary theory it propagates infinite freedom of compilation, as well as advocates a total subjectivity and plurality of interpretations. Detective fiction as a genre, on the other hand, in its basis offers an expectation that patterns do cohere behind the confusing surface of reality[1]. In this essay I want to analyze the way Paul Auster's *City of Glass* embodies a postmodernist deconstruction of the genre of detective fiction.

Paul Auster's *City of Glass* is a detective story whose protagonist, Daniel Quinn is a writer of detective stories, who himself becomes a detective. The author, in the example of the bond between Quinn and the protagonist of his stories - Max Work, ponders in his novel not about the classic issue of the identification of the reader with the detective, but looks into the relation between the writer of the detective stories and his protagonist. Quinn writes under the pen name of William Wilson, and it is his alias that constitutes a "bridge" between him and the hard-boiled detective; a situation where Wilson "served as a... ventriloquist, Quinn himself was the... dummy, and Work... the animated voice."[2] Quinn admires Work for the ability to restore order in the chaos of the diverse signs and clues that surrounds him, and finds it reassuring to pretend that he is the detective while writing the book. Also, in spite of the fact that he used to be a really promising and acclaimed writer, Daniel Quinn withdrew from the real life, substituting for himself his alias William Wilson. "He had, of course, long ago stopped thinking of himself as real. If he lived in

the world at all, it was only at one remove through the imaginary person of Max Work."[3] Later in the book, when continuously disturbed by telephone calls demanding for "Paul Auster" the detective, he decides to play along and puts on the persona of the non-existent sleuth. This interplay of the selves of the protagonist exemplifies the way Auster transforms the existing image of the main character of the detective novel by transposing his persona through a hall of mirrors to come up with his numerous alter egos, and totally disrupts the structure of the narrative, starting from its unifying and central point - the detective.

The postmodernist tendency to disrupt the traditional features of the detective novel is discernible in Paul Auster's book in numerous instances. Having accepted a case of protecting Peter Stillman Jr., Quinn embarks on the arduous task of following Stillman's mentally unstable father. But as soon as he starts his detective practice, we notice how tedious the activity of following an old man roaming around the city becomes to the inexperienced detective (an attitude very infrequently depicted in the genre.) "Little by little, Quinn begun to feel cut off from his original intentions, and he wondered now if he had not embarked on *a* meaningless project."[4] Quinn has become the detective eluded by the certainty and the effectiveness of Work's actions, wanted to put some concrete meaning behind his stories. However, due to the fruitlessness of the investigation he is again thrown back to the uncertain position of the writer as he starts occupying himself with writing down the seemingly pointless actions of Stillman in a red notebook. When Quinn eventually starts to have an idea of Stillman's actions, the latter abandons his project leaving the detective-to-be completely dumbfounded. The writer decides to install himself in an alleyway opposite Stillman Jr.'s apartment, observes the building, and spends there months completely motionless, leaving only in the very early hours of the morning to obtain food. The total inactiveness of observation, as well as the tediousness and the eventual futility of the investigation, all exemplify a postmodernist breach with the traditional view of the detective novel. Similarly, the lack of definite solutions in the novel is an illustration of the postmodernist attack on the Structuralist idea of the existence of one coherent meaning of the language, instead of which postmodernism proposes a plurality of possible meanings. The reverberations of the idea that the language cannot express adequately anymore everyday reality are discernible in the project Peter Stillman Sr. had embarked upon. It was in his endeavor to invent a new language that he decided to confine his son for nine years without any contact with the outside world, hoping that he would rediscover the inborn Edenic language that we have been made to forget having transgressed God's will.

After he is released from jail, he undertakes a new quest, he roams through the streets of New York collecting objects regarded as useless because they are no longer able to perform their original function, with a purpose of endowing them with new names, that would correspond to their present un-functionality.

The Postmodernist notion of the unfeasibility of a definite interpretation as hindered by the plurality of possible meanings is figured in Paul Auster's novel through numerous references to glass and mirrors. As New York, the city of glass, presents many reflections, the protagonists are never really sure whether the occurrences that surround them take place on this, or the other side of the looking glass. In its alternative view of detective fiction, the novel presents the detection itself as a look in the mirror, with every step forward bringing one closer to the starting point. Quinn, who at one point in the book sets out to watch the building where Peter Stillman Jr. lives, spends countless hours watching the glass door of the entrance. However, the mystery lurks uncomprehended within, to eventually pass under Quinn's nose.[5] After Stillman Sr.'s disappearance, Quinn suffers a breakdown, having lived in the streets for months, and when he sees his own reflection in a storefront: "He had no feeling about it at all, for the fact was, that he did not recognize the person he saw there as himself."[6] This is a major threat that Auster's novel conveys, that too long a consideration of pointless clues, too intense a search for an impossible coherence, eventually ends in destabilizing of the personality.

The concept of the end of literature, as developed by Postmodernism, originated from the contemporary inability to invent any new literary forms, and endowed the Postmodernist writers with the ability to freely play with and incorporate any of the existing literary works and conventions. Such intertextual borrowings can be found in Auster's novel in abundance. The protagonist's pen name, "William Wilson", under which he writes his detective novels is taken from the eponymous E. A. Poe's story. On closer examination of the text, we realize, that this choice was not in the least insignificant, the first lines of the story being: "Let me call myself, for the present, William Wilson. The fair page now lying before me need not be sullied with my real appellation."[7] - all this adding depth to the Quinn's interplay of selves. However, this is not a lone instance of the influences of the father of the mystery story, as we are reminded of *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* when Quinn tries to decipher the letters that Stillman's walks are outlining. Another outstanding nineteenth century writer Auster refers to is Henry David Thoreau, whose idea of a room serving as a model for the mind is not absent from the novel, and whose name is referred to when Quinn guesses the origin of the initials of Henry Dark. One of the characters of Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* Humpty Dumpty and

his linguistic ideas have been incorporated by Auster into Stillman's theories concerning the state of language. Another great author, whose ideas served as basis for Stillman's theory is John Milton and his *Paradise Lost*.

However, the most important intertextual reference that resurfaces through the whole text of the novel, is Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. At one point Quinn ponders "Why Don Quixote had not simply wanted to write the books like the ones he loved - instead of living out their adventures"[8] and why he had the same initials as Don Quixote. The most important of the Quixote references is Quinn's discussion with "Paul Auster" who theorizes that the Cervantes's novel is actually narrated by Sancho, put in a literary form by the barber and the priest, translated into Arabic by Samson Carrasco, and then translated back into Spanish by Quixote himself. This theory reiterates the motif of the multitude of Quinn's selves by presenting endless doubles and mirror images. In fact, "Auster's" theory suggests Quinn as Auster's double, as in his statement that: "In some sense Don Quixote was just a stand-in for Cervantes himself."[9] Quinn is the only witness to all of the novel's events written down in his red notebook, which is prepared for publication by the novel's narrator. The narrator at some point says: "Somehow I had an intuition... where Quinn had wound up."[10] to later admit, that "(Quinn) will be with me always."[11]

Another postmodernist feature of the "City of Glass" I would like to mention is incorporation into the fictional narrative of facts from real life. Paul Auster employed this technique by furnishing the story with some autobiographical information, once again highlighting the concept of the protagonist of the novel being the author's double. On one of his numerous walks through the city - the plan of which is in itself meticulously depicted, passes by 6 Varick Street "where he had once lived"[12], the address where Auster writes one of his memoirs in the *Invention of Solitude*. Also the anniversary of Quinn's parents (May 6.) coincides with the one given in his memoirs.

The examples given above depict just a few of the techniques Postmodernism employs in its play with the traditional genres, however I hope that the above exemplifications suffice to show that Paul Auster's *City of Glass* represents a postmodernist deconstruction of the detective fiction.

Notes

[1] Merivale and Sweeney, p.138
[2] Auster, *City of Glass*, p.6
[3] Ibid., p.6
[4] Ibid., p.60
[5] Merivale, p.136
[6] Auster, , *City of Glass*, p.119
[7] Mabbot, p.422
[8] Auster, , *City of Glass*, p.199
[9] Ibid., p.99
[10] Ibid., p.132
[12] Ibid., p.132
[12] Auster, *The Invention of Solitude*, p.107

Bibliography

Auster, Paul, *The New York Trilogy*, Faber and Faber:London.1987
Auster, Paul, *The Invention of Solitude*, Noir Sur Blanc, Warsaw, 1996
Mabbot, Thomas Olivier, ed., *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978
Merivale, Patricia and Susan E. Sweeney, ed., *Detecting Texts: the Metaphysical Detective Story from Poe to Postmodernism*,University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, PA., 1999

Anna Pochmara

The Game of Mirrors and the Impossible Quest. *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* by Vladimir Nabokov

The Real Life of Sebastian Knight is a novel that began the literary career of Nabokov as an English writer. The novel plays with the terms of biography and character identity in a way that questions the notion of realism which is alluded to in the title. The author, instead of realizing the promise of a true and honest biography, undermines the possibility of success in such a task. The story becomes a refined game of literary striptease which begins on the first page and continues up to the end of the novel. The narrator juggles with facts, dreams and intuitions, revealing and concealing the information interchangeably. The story can be read as a detective game as well as a philosophical quest, and the border between the two is never quite clear, as Dabney Stuart states in his critical work *Nabokov. The Dimensions of Parody*.[1] As the novel is a complicated composition of the interplay between various details, it requires much concentration and investigation on the part of the reader, but it turns out to be an extremely rewarding reading experience.

The narrator of the story attempts to write a biography of his brother, a modernist writer, Sebastian Knight. The reader may be touched by his frank enthusiasm and serious attitude towards the task. However, as the story progresses the text, instead of being just a biography of a dead writer, becomes in fact the record of the narrator's investigation and journey. Nabokov plays with the notion of a biography by introducing a complicated web of relations between many layers of the story as well as many external themes: he constructs striking and intricate parallels between the life of Knight, his books, the life of the narrator, books from the canon of literature that are mentioned in the story and, finally, the events taken from Nabokov's own life. Thus, he discusses the notions of a biography and autobiography, undermines their standard meanings and possibly introduces his own solution.

First of all, I will try to discuss the mentioned parallels between the author, narrator, the fictional writer and his books. The narrator of the novel is referred to as V., which is the initial of Nabokov's first name. They have a common mother country, Russia, which they both left in 1918 because of the revolution. However, this feature links Nabokov also to Knight himself. This is not the only parallel between the real and the fictitious writer. Many facts from their lives are strikingly similar, as is pointed out by Stuart.[2] They were born in the same year, at the turn of the century, in 1899. After leaving Russia Nabokov studied in Cambridge, just like Sebastian. Both are writers who perceive and present reality in their works in a similar manner. Finally, V. finds in Knight's flat pictures which were to be used by his brother in a fictitious biography. This is another link between the writers and simultaneously Nabokov's comment on his novel, as it is also a fictitious biography.

The story reveals also interesting parallels between the half brothers V. and Sebastian. They share common experiences of a childhood in St. Petersburg and emigration westwards in 1918. V. is inspired by Sebastian's life, shocked by his death, and, therefore, he becomes his brother's biographer. His new writing job connects him with Sebastian even more strongly. Their fraternal relationship is thoroughly discussed by V. in his book. He admits admiring Sebastian and wishes that their conversations had been richer and more frequent. In spite of the fact that they hardly share any conversations and their correspondence is rather formal and conventional, V. believes that they are, in fact, soul mates. He compares this relation to a game of tennis between two brothers. Although there are surface differences in their styles of playing, there are some deep similarities that bond them together and, thus, their game is harmonious. V. argues that his perception and his attitudes to the world is similar to his brother's. One of the examples he offers is their dubious attitude towards the idea of physical love. Both of them treat with suspicion the linguistic realization of this idea, "sex".[3] Moreover, the narrator claims that he is the only person who understands the complicated works of Sebastian in a way that his brother intended the readers to. He chastises the remarks and interpretations of other critics, especially concentrating on Sebastian's earlier biography written by Mr. Goodman. In his own work on Sebastian, V. devotes a considerable part of his book to a critical analysis of Knight's work. He summarizes nearly all his novels, quotes large fragments of the texts and tries to interpret them. As a result of this biographical strategy the reader becomes familiar with the literary output of Sebastian Knight.

Thus, we are able to investigate the autobiographical traits in Knight's novels. Some of them are pointed out by the narrator himself. He feels entitled to analyze his brother's work from an autobiographical perspective. However,

he does not acknowledge Mr. Goodman's rights and ability to perform such a task. V. mocks Goodman's attempts to trace experiences of Sebastian's life in his books and the stories he tells as jokes. From V.'s critique of Mr. Goodman's reasoning we may learn that Knight presents made-up stories and plots from books as facts from his life. This illustrates his indignation to speculate about his work and his biography. It is another example that may be added to the parallels between Knight's fiction and that of Nabokov.

V.'s biographical analysis of his brother's work may be illustrated by his attempt to grasp the atmosphere at the end of Knight's relationship with Clare Bishop in Sebastian's novel *Success*.[4] He justifies this hypothesis when commenting on an excerpt from another Knight's text, *Lost Property*. V. argues that:

He (Sebastian) had a queer habit of endowing even his most grotesque characters with this or that idea, or impression, or desire which he himself might have toyed with. His hero's letter may possibly have been a kind of code in which he expressed a few truths about his relations with Clare.[5]

A careful reader may analyze the fragment cited by V. even more thoroughly, and for example link the author's initial, the letter L, with the figure of a knight in chess whose moves resemble the shape of Ls. The chess figure conspicuously points to Sebastian Knight himself. Apart from explicit attempts of the biographers to expose connections between Sebastian's life and works, the readers may investigate them on their own. There is a pattern of details which create a web of parallels between Knight's experiences and the excerpts from his books. V. describes *The Doubtful Asphodel*, the last of Sebastian's novels, as a story about a dying man. When his end approaches, images from his personal experience appear in his mind. Some of them can be linked to the events from the last years of Sebastian's life.[6] There is a mention of a double suicide of a Swiss couple in a hotel room, which coincides with the information that we gain from the hotel owner in Blauberg about the death of two people from Switzerland that takes in another hotel while Sebastian is staying there. Among the images V. cites, there is also a primadonna in silver shoes, who may be identifiable as Clare Bishop. She wears silver shoes to one of the parties described in the novel. The autobiographical details and traits in Sebastian's novels create a complicated web which is simultaneously tangled with the experience of the narrator and the structure of his book. This point will be discussed in detail later in the essay.

Here, I attempt to relate the life of Sebastian to another literary discourse, this time not only to his books, but to other literary texts mentioned and alluded to in the novel. The first and most elaborate allusion to literary

discourse is made when V. visits Knight's flat. He concentrates on the "vague musical phrase, oddly familiar" created by the shelf of books he finds there.[7] The sequence starts with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, whose plot is used by Knight to play a trick on his secretary. He presents an up-dated version of the story as the plot of one of his own novels. Although this seems to be presented only as a joke, there are certain striking parallels between the lots of Hamlet and Sebastian. Both loose their fathers in tragic circumstances, and both deaths are connected with the person of the mother. Hamlet's mother marries the killer of her husband, while Knight's father dies in a duel defending the honor of his ex-wife. Moreover, Sebastian's relation to his mother, just like Hamlet's, bears the traits of an Oedipus complex. He uses her last name, keeps the violet sweets from his mother in his locked desk and identifies with her mother country, England, more than with Russia. This special relationship is further emphasized by the similarities between Virginia Knight and her son, such as their love of traveling. Finally, Sebastian's disastrous choice of his last mistress seems to be influenced by her strong resemblance to his mother.

Other books on the shelf also seem to be somehow connected to the life of their owner. The gloomy story of *Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* may be linked to the title of Sebastian's work "The Back of the Moon", which is connected to Sebastian's mysterious lady and their affair. Later in the novel she is compared to the other side of the moon by a man whom the narrator meets on the train.[7] Several of the books allude to Knight's name and its connection to chess. First of all, there is *Alice in Wonderland*, in which the chess figures become living, personified characters. Secondly, there are works which point to the death of a king: *La morte d'Arthur, Hamlet* and *King Lear*. As Alex de Jonge argues, this fact links them to chess, as the aim of the game is to kill the king.[9] Finally, as chess knight resembles a horse, it is related to another of Sebastian's books: *About Buying a Horse*.

Among the books on the shelf that caught V.'s attention are also two masterpieces of European modernist prose: *Le Temps Retrouve* and *Ulysses*. Both books deal with some kind of journey which takes place partly in the mind of the narrator. This fact would connect them more to the story of V. than to that of Knight, as V. describes his quest as a journey into the past.[10] The former title is later indirectly alluded to, as Knight's editor is called Swan, just like Proust's main character (there is just a slight difference in spelling). Swan edits Knight's novel *The Funny Mountain*, and this may introduce an allusion to Mann's *Der Zauberberg*, the title which complements the trio of modernist masterpieces. The plot of this novel exposes even more parallels to Knight's life. The main character, Hans Castorp stays in a mysterious sanatorium high in the Alps, in

Davos. This place corresponds directly to Blauberg where Sebastian is treated for heart disease. The morpheme *berg* (German for mountain) in the name of the town furthermore points to the title of Mann's novel. The parallel seems even more striking, when we add that in Davos Hans has an affair with a Russian girl, while Knight meets in Blauberg his Russian mistress. Thus, Nabokov constructs a pattern of intertextual allusions and parallels between the characters introduced in his book and the literary discourse. This contributes to a complexity of layers in the structure of Knight's character. He is a fictitious character, described by the narrator in a way that accentuates his authenticity. On the other hand, the author entangles his experiences with literary plots, which adds an additional dimension to this figure: fictitious and imaginary, already inside the reality of the novel.

Knight is not the only character whose life is connected to literary plots. The narrator, V. is inspired by Knight's books to such an extent that he seems to live them. The parallels between his investigation of his brother's life and Knight's books have been analyzed by many critics. Alexandrov claims that "V. is caught in a fatidic web and experiences situations and meets characters from Sebastian's fiction".[11] The most conspicuous example, analyzed by Stuart, Alexandrov and other critics is narrator's encounter with Herr Silbermann, who turns out to be an almost mirror reflection of Mr. Siller, "perhaps the most *alive* of Sebastian's creatures" according to V.. Apart from the obvious similarity in the last names of the characters, there is a striking resemblance in their appearance, which fact is indicated in Stuart's essay[12] and thoroughly analyzed by Alexandrov[13]. Herr Silbermann helps V. to acquire information about Sebastian's mistress. Nevertheless, he discourages him from his quest, calling the search impossible: "You can't see de odder side of de moon".[14]

Stuart argues that there are further instances of fictional characters enriching V.'s journey. Stuart quotes V.'s summary of *The Doubtful Asphodel* and argues that all of the characters mentioned appear in the narrator's quest. He meets uncle "Black" playing chess at Paul Rechnoy's; "Black" can correspond to "a gentle old chess player Schwarz, who sits down on a chair in a room in a house, to teach an orphan boy the moves of the Knight".[15] The parallel is strengthened by the presence of a boy at Rechnoy's and the fact that "Black" mends a chess knight. The fat Bohemian lady in Sebastian's book seems to be similar to Lydia Bohemski, one of the ladies visited by V. in search of Sebastian's mistress. Again, the similarity of last names is emphasized by the similarity in appearance. Stuart indicates that there is a connection between a primadonna that steps into a puddle and a woman that V. meets at the end of his journey, at Sebastian's mistresses' house. She also steps into a puddle. These

strange occurrences are a part of Nabokov's playing with the borders between text and life. The story is constructed in the sphere which may be labeled the "inter-zone"[16] of the two.

The fictitious characters from Sebastian fiction who become real are not the only parallel connecting V.'s story with Sebastian's works. Stuart claims that the structure of V.'s biography of Sebastian is a reflection of the first of Knight's novels, *The Prismatic Bezel*. It is a parody of a detective story, which as V. states is the spring-board for the author to leap to other, quite different concerns. Stuart argues that the same description also fits Nabokov's novel. It is also, in some dimension, a parody of detective fiction. V. is desperately seeking the identity of Sebastian's mistress. His fruitless attempts are supported by the help of Herr Silbermann, who manages to find the names of three women that stay at Blauberg where Sebastian supposedly meets his last love. V. uses canny tricks, taken from the novels of A.C. Doyle or A. Christie, in order to eliminate the wrong names and identify Sebastian's dark lady. He asks tricky and captious questions. When visiting Lydia Bohemski's flat, he asks if she is a brunette: the answer is positive, although he expects that she should be a blonde. Finally, he discovers the identity of Sebastian's lover by making a remark in Russian, which is unconsciously understood by Madame Leeerf. Thus, she becomes unmasked as a Russian lady. This is a parody of a typical detective story trick.

The Real Life of Sebastian Knight bears even stronger resemblance to *The Prismatic Bezel* than just its relation to detective fiction. In both novels the relations between the characters are coincidental and intricate. In Knight's story the seemingly strange tenants of a boarding house turn out to be strongly related: they are blood relatives, lovers and friends. A similar phenomenon occurs in V.'s story. The women found by Silbermann's as potential Sebastian's acquaintances, Nina Rechnoy and Helene von Graun, turn out to be strangely related to Sebastian's past and to each other. First of all, when he visits one of them he some meets people, who knew Sebastian's father and Sebastian's first love, Natasha Rosanov. Even a stranger coincidence appears between Nina Rechnoy, Helene von Graun and Madame Leeerf. V. visits Nina's ex-husband to discover later that his wife is Sebastian's mistress, a woman whom he later meets as Madame Leeerf. The mysterious link between them is Helene, who probably never appears in the story. We can deduce that she really is Madame Leeerf's friend, who is absent when V. visits her. Being friends, both of them could stay in Blauberg in 1929. Apart from the parallel in the complicated relations between the characters in both novels, there is another analogy pointed out by Stuart: the final resolution in *The Prismatic Bezel* as well as in

Nabokov's novel takes place in a country mansion. Finally, in *The Prismatic Bezel* a dead man, Mr. Abeson, turns out to be resurrected in the character of old Nosebag, who explains that "one dislikes being murdered".[17] We can seek parallels between this event and the fact that after Sebastian's death and writing his biography V. concludes: "I am Sebastian Knight".[18]

The Prismatic Bezel is not the only one of Sebastian's novels that bear resemblance to his biography. One may form analogies also with his second book, *Success*. The novel tells a story of the accidental meeting of a man and a woman, whose lots are compared to:

Two lines which have finally tapered to the starting point of meeting and which are not really the straight lines of a triangle which diverge steadily towards an unknown base, but wavy lines, now running wide apart, now almost touching.[19]

This comparison fits perfectly the story of V.'s search for the identity of Sebastian's last love. She may be identified in the beginning of the novel from her letters. V.'s own novel would benefit greatly from the information contained in these letters. Nevertheless, Nabokov teases the reader and burns the epistolary evidence with the help of V.'s hands. The next incident when V. almost discovers Sebastian's lover is when he visits Paul Rechnoy, her ex-husband. This strange wavy line of their lots finds its end when he accidentally meets her in Helene von Graun's house.

There is also an element from *The Doubtful Asphodel* which is mirrored in *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*. The narrator claims that Sebastian's novel brings the promise of revealing the answer to the absolute mystery of life and death. Nevertheless, he looks for it unsuccessfully. In V.'s book, Sebastian as a dying man is about to communicate him a similar knowledge. We wait for this moment like V. reading his brother's book, but all we get is breathing that turns out to be Sebastian's. However, this time the narrator seems to be satisfied with the answer found in the breathing sounds of a stranger.

The refined and devious ways in which Nabokov plays with the identity of his characters and the characters in his character's books create a fascinating game. His novel can be described (which is also a part of this complex game) with the remark made about Sebastian's fiction: "Knight seemed to be constantly playing some game of his own invention, without telling his partners the rules".[20] The atmosphere of a strategic game in *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* is further emphasized by a web of references to different games. We get hints that Sebastian was inclined to gamble. The narrator also investigates his attitude towards different games in the college. One of the questions he asks is "Was Sebastian good at games?".[21] The answer he gets is negative. Knight's attempts at sport are limited to a few unsuccessful games of tennis. This may

seem a disappointing remark, however, it refers us to V.'s comparison between the two brothers playing tennis, and his relationship with Sebastian.

The most powerful, ingenious and symbolic web of references constructed by Nabokov is connected with chess. First of all, it is indicated by Sebastian's last name. The reference is made rather explicitly as Knight's first poems are signed with a small ink picture of a chess knight. On a deeper level we might seek similarities between his name and his function in the novel. The identity of Knight seems to escape V.'s search in a series of L-shaped moves of a chess knight. The moves of the knight are quite unpredictable, he may move in different directions, on fields of different color, and he may jump over other chess figures.

Not only Sebastian's last name is related to chess. His girlfriend Clare's last name is Bishop, which refers us also to the chessboard. It is furthermore emphasized by the fact that she marries a man, whose last name is also Bishop. Foster develops the interpretation of chess motifs in the names of the characters by referring to the first family name of Nina – Toorovetz. In Russian it is related to a chess rook.[22] The figure of the knight stands on the chessboard symbolically between the rook and the bishop, but the rook is a more powerful and important figure, which is reflected by the significance of Nina in the story.

The story of the narrator is also marked with references to chess. When he visits Paul Rechnoy, the host is playing chess and throws a figure of the knight on the chessboard. The head of the knight is broken. Stuart interprets this incident metaphorically: Rechnoy's ex-wife is a woman over who Sebastian loses his head. Furthermore, Paul's opponent, uncle "Black" screws the knight's head on, which is parallel to the fact that he later becomes a key to the mystery. In the final scene Madame Leeerf admits knowing a man who can write his name upside down, which is a trick performed by uncle "Black". Thus, V. deduces that Madame Leeerf and Nina Rechnoy are one and the same person.[23]

Finally, chess is also a clue which leads V. to Sebastian's sanatorium. He desperately tries to gets there, having been informed of the poor condition of his brother, but he forgets the name of the place.[24] He recalls it looking at the chessboard drawn in a phone booth. Chessboard in French is spelled "damiere" and coincidentally the name of the place he seeks is St.Damiere. Thus, a chess motif in the story compliments the image of the strategic game of the narrator and is simultaneously a key to the resolution of the mystery.

Nabokov's complicated game with real and fictitious intertextual motifs, and his playing with the limits of life and text, give the readers the kind of joy he mentions when discussing the possibility of representing a true story of another man's life. He claims that it is not possible to present someone's

personal history without distorting it, but the joy derived from this task is stronger than the reproach.[25] The mere joy, however, is not the only value that *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* may offer. As I mentioned earlier, Stuart claims that, like in *The Prismatic Bezel*, parody and play in *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* serve as a surface layer. One can go beyond them and read the story as a symbolic quest for identity.

The surface plot of the story is based on the narrator's quest for the information about his brother, and later on, an even more desperate search for his last love. The atmosphere of a journey is present throughout the novel. Following the narrator's mind and body we travel from Russia to all parts of Europe. The international journey is reflected also in the multilingual language patterns. The narrator uses French, Russian and English. This is illustrated by his association between a drawn chessboard and its French name, which leads him to St.Damiere. Other inter-linguistic patterns can be traced in the names of the characters, which I have analyzed. Finally, the atmosphere of a symbolic journey is strengthened by the allusions to *Ulysses* and *Le Temps Retrouve*, which also present subjective and symbolic, almost mystic journeys.

The life of Sebastian is mirrored in the theme of journey in the novel's structure as he inherits the inclination to travel from his mother. The favorite vehicles of Sebastian, his mother and brother are trains. The narrator travels by railway all over Europe, even his final journey to St.Damiere, which starts in a taxi, finds its end on a train. Thus, one has to agree with Stuart that "railroad trains play an important part in the structure of Nabokov's novel".[26] Trains seem to be vehicles connecting the sphere of text and life. V. meets Herr Silbermann on a train, and presents himself as a traveler into the past. The instance of missing a train repeats several times. The first time we come across it is in the draft of Sebastian's story about Mr. Roger Rogerson, who is a heavy sleeper and is afraid of missing a tomorrow train (a train to tomorrow?). Besides, the narrator also almost misses a train several times. Finally, Madame Lecerf reminds her husband not to miss his train.

The narrator seems to travel through the web of railroads on his hazardous errand for identity. Some of his journeys take place on the border of reality and dream, like that to St.Damiere. V. and his brother seem to be like passing trains that cannot touch. Stuart claims that:

Whenever one encounters a train or a train ride in *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, he is, I think, encountering a focus of the theme of the quest for identity. The quest is Sebastian's and the narrator's. For both of them it leads to memory and to dreams, in both of which regions time and space, as the waking mind orders them, are banished, and more revealing arrangements of experience are possible.[27]

The quest becomes the identity itself, a lively, complicated, accidental and coincidental progress.

The fact that the narrator discovers Sebastian's identity in himself is emphasized by the reference that is made to *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.[28] Sebastian's identity living in V. is connected with the realm of mystery and night, life and death just as it is in the classic horror story. This analogy is strengthened in the title of Sebastian's work, *The Back of the Moon*, which can be treated metaphorically as looking for the dark side of one's soul.

The final resolution of the narrator's quest is his discovery that he is Sebastian Knight himself. This is not the only parallel between different identities in the story. Some of them, such as that between Nina Reehnoy and Madame Leeerf, have already been named. Stuart draws a line of similarity also between the other women in the novel. He identifies Nina Reehnoy with Natasha Rosanov and Virginia Knight. The former are two of Sebastian's lovers, who abandon him. They have the same initials, and the significance of initials is one of the important patterns in the novel. Moreover, both of them are Russian. Furthermore, their tragic influence on his life may be connected with the disastrous influence that Virginia Knight has on Sebastian's father and on other men. The photograph of Natasha is kept together with the violet candies that remind Sebastian of his mother. Violets appear also in the hotel "Les Violettes" where his mother dies. Strikingly, Madame Leeerf attracts V.'s attention with her violet eyelids. Thus, the three women may be interpreted as different sides of one identity. Stuart proves in his analysis that the women not only are only one on a deep level, but they may be also identified with Sebastian.[29] Thus, Sebastian loves not the two women but himself. Moreover, analogically, V. looking for Nina Reehnoy vel Madame Leeerf looks for Sebastian and simultaneously for himself.

Nabokov's novel becomes a dream in which all the characters are in fact one character, that of the dreamer. This interpretation may be justified also by the fact that, according to Sebastian, the only real number is one. The rest remains counting and repeating. A similar impression is presented in the symbolic dream that the narrator experiences, in which Sebastian takes off a glove and many small hands fall out of it. This event may be interpreted as an illustration of the reflections of Sebastian being present in so many characters in the novel. One identity is reflected in different persons. Thus, the narrator's search for Sebastian's identity resembles opening a Russian doll, which contains smaller and smaller dolls inside. The smallest, central doll usually does not open.

The structure of mirrored characters and many reflections of one identity bring us to the motif of the myth of Narcissus, which is central to the

novel.[30] It is alluded to in the title of Sebastian's novel, *The Doubtful Asphodel* , the asphodel being an equivalent of the English daffodil, related to the narcissus. The most obvious and elaborate reference to the myth is given in the portrait of Sebastian. This is a water reflection of his face when he looks at himself: "These eyes and face itself are painted in such a manner as to convey the impression that they are mirrored Narcissus-like in clear water (...)."[31]

Sebastian's figure can be interpreted as Narcissus-like on several levels. First of all, he and his mirror reflections - Nina, Natasha and Virginia - are the cause of love disappointments. Natasha abandons Sebastian. Nina rejects the love of Sebastian and Paul. Sebastian leaves Clare. Similarly Narcissus is an autoerotic figure, who brings suffering to people who fall in love with him. Secondly, the reflections of Sebastian in his works and in the other characters in the novel create the parallel between him and Narcissus. The theme of reflection is significant to the general structure, but it is also present in details. To illustrate this, I can describe the scene when narrator visits Sebastian's flat. He finds an empty talcum-powder tin decorated with violets. He is, however, able to see the violets, which are connected with Sebastian's identity in the novel's pattern, only in the reflection in the mirror.

Reflection becomes Narcissus's curse and blessing. He is finally able to experience love, but it may never be realized. The tragic fate of Narcissus is compared by Stuart to Sebastian's continuous self-awareness, described by Knight in *Lost Property*: "Most brains have their Sundays, mine was even refused a half-holiday".[32] It brings him fame as a writer and suffering in his personal life. He is destined to reject Clare and look for the reflection of his mother and himself in Nina Rechnoy.

Stuart interprets the myth of Narcissus in *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* as a metaphor of looking for "the reflection of death in the mirror of life". Death can be deciphered as "The Asphodel on the other side doubtful as ever".[33] This is a well argued thesis. Firstly, Narcissus' preoccupation with his reflection is deadly in result, leads him to suicide. The narrator's quest also seems to be strongly connected to the "absolute solution" of death and life.[34] V. hopes to find the answer to this problem first in Sebastian's book, and later in his words. When he fails to acquire it in these ways he suddenly finds the resolution and peace of mind. This happens when he discovers that Sebastian lives in himself. Thus, the solution exists also in himself. The author teases the reader with a promise but does not offer the explicit answer. However, analyzing the narrator's experience one can conclude that the answer exists in himself or herself.

The myth of Narcissus may be applied not only to the particular characters but to the whole structure of the novel. As I tried to prove in this

essay the pattern of the novel is based on the game of mirrors in which there are reflected biographies, characters and other texts. This is strongly connected with the postmodern thesis about the intertextuality of literature. Every text is just a simulacrum, a copy reflecting other copies. Thus, every word should be put in inverted commas. The lack of the original is emphasized by the fact that we cannot be sure if the identity reflected in the novel is that of V. or that of Sebastian, or neither of them. The narrator ends the novel: "I am Sebastian Knight, or Sebastian is I, or perhaps we are someone whom neither of us knows".[35] One may dare to suggest that the unknown person may even be Nabokov himself.

The experience of looking at the Narcissus-like reflections in a Nabokov novel holds a deeper dimension. Robert Graves describes Narcissus' fate as a mixture of pleasure and torment. He finds perfect, faithful love, but it remains unattainable. The narrator faces a similar problem. He desperately seeks Sebastian's identity. Nevertheless, his biography diverges from the promise contained in the title , as the reader gets the story of the narrator rather than that of Sebastian. It seems that the story is impossible to present. Sebastian escapes the narrator's quest, as in the scene from childhood:

I have a vivid recollection, too, of his riding a bicycle with very low handle-bars along a sun-dappled path in the park of our countryplace, spinning on slowly, the pedals motionless, and I trotting behind, trotting a little faster as his sandaled foot presses down the pedal; I am doing my best to keep pace with his tick-tick-sizzling back wheel, but he heeds me not and soon leaves me hopelessly behind, very out of my breath and still trotting.[36]

The reader may assume that this vivid image represents the whole novel, when, suddenly, we are told that V. is Sebastian and, thus, he may be actually found in the narrator's story.

The narrator leads us through the novel in search of an unattainable image of Sebastian, which seems to be lurking somewhere in between the lines. As the novel demonstrates, there exist ideas which remain unpresentable. It can be interpreted in terms of the postmodern sublime defined by Lyotard. The philosopher, referring to Kant, defines this sentiment as "a conflict between the faculties of a subject, the faculty to conceive of something and the faculty to 'present' something".[37] He claims that the emotions accompanying this experience are also similar to those of Narcissus, pleasure combined or even deriving from pain. This kind of pleasure may also become the experience of Nabokov's readers. Therefore one needs to be cautious on entering this world where fiction is confused with reality, nothing is an unquestionable fact, and the rules to this strange, enchanting game are not preordained. The game may turn out to be a labyrinth, impossible to leave without a piece of string fastened to the entrance door.

Notes

[1] Stuart, p.2
[2] Stuart, p.16
[3] Nabokov, p.103
[4] Nabokov, p.96
[5] Nabokov, p.110-111
[6] Nabokov, p.173
[7] Nabokov, p.39
[8] Nabokov, p.130
[9] de Jonge, p.63
[10] Nabokov, p.125
[11] Alexandrov, p.155
[12] Stuart, p.12
[13] Alexandrov, p.156
[14] Nabokov, p.130
[15] Nabokov, p.173
[16] a term borrowed from Borroughs' fiction
[17] Nabokov, p. 93
[18] Nabokov, p.203
[19] Nabokov, p.95
[20] Nabokov, p.179
[21] Nabokov, p.43
[22] Foster, p.164
[23] Stuart, p.14-15
[24] Nabokov's perverse game reveals the name of the place to the reader several pages earlier
[25] Alexandrov, p.137
[26] Stuart, p.19
[27] Stuart, p.22
[28] Nabokov, p.39
[29] Stuart, p.8
[30] *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* is not the only one of Nabokov's novels which can be interpreted with reference to Narcissus. Explicit allusions to this myth may be also found in *Pale Fire*, the novel, which, like *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, is narrated by a man who comments on the literary work of his friend.
[31] Nabokov, p.117
[32] Nabokov, p.65
[33] Stuart, p.26-27

[34] I have already pointed out to it in the reference to *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and "The Back of the Moon".
[35] Nabokov, p.203
[36] Nabokov, p.14-15
[37] Lyotard, p.56

Bibliography

Alexandrov, V. *Nabokov's Otherworld*. Princeton University Press, Princeton 1991
Graves, R. *Mity Greckie*. Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1992
Foster, J.B. Jr. *Nabokov's Art of Memory and European Modernism*. Princeton University Press, Princeton 1993
Jonge, Alex de. "Nabokov's Uses of Pattern". *Vladimir Nabokov: A Tribute*. Morrow and Company, Inc., New York 1980
Lyotard, J.F. "Odpowiedź na pytanie: co to jest postmodernizm?" *Postmodernizm*. Baran i Suszczyński, Kraków 1996
Nabokov, V. *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*. Vintage Books, New York 1992
Stuart, D. *Nabokov: The Dimensions of Parody*. Louisiana State University Press, Louisiana 1978

Joanna Sobierajska

Thus Vladimir Peers into a Pool at himself. Vladimir Nabokov as a Narcissistic Writer

> " It wasn't I who said that ... It was in the book." "What book?" "Well, this one. The one we're in now, which repeats all we say as we say it and which follows and tells about us, a genuine blotter which has been stuck on our lives".[1]
>
> "You know very well you're not real."(...)
> "If I wasn't real (...) I shouldn't be able to cry".
> "I hope you don't suppose those are real tears?"[2]

The beautiful youth who fell in love with his own reflection in the water gave rise not only to the name of a flower (*narcissus*), but also to a type of behaviour which we call narcissistic. Narcissism may be referred to, as in a dictionary entry, as 'morbid self-love or admiration'. Morbid indeed, and not only in the context of Narcissus' fate - drowning in the vain pursuit of his own reflection. In general our society tends to perceive one's preoccupation with oneself as a source of potential disruption and disquiet, a force decomposing the inner structure of society since its very welfare is based on contributions of its members: we are to serve the establishment, turn our eyes towards other people, collective purposes and achievements - the very things that are jeopardised by self-interest, self-love or any other predominance of the self.

It is curious to notice, however, that the writers whose gaze repeatedly turned on their own reflection, and would not be diverted from it, produced art which is interesting and original, although possibly of little communal interest. A writer often labelled 'narcissistic' is John Fowles; his counterpart from Latin America would be Julio Cortazár - and north of the equator to the latter, Vladimir Nabokov.

What does the term 'narcissism' imply? What does 'morbid self-admiration' mean in the context of a writer's work? Is this not just another example of pigeonholing? These are some of the questions which ought to be answered before undertaking a close analysis of a given work or theme.

Ann Jefferson recalls Gérard Genette while discussing the work of *nouveau romanciers* such as Barthes or Robbe-Grillet[3]. She not only uses the terminology made famous by Genette (hyper- and metatextuality), but also adds her own term – that of sister texts, sister texts being texts belonging to 'the corpus of a given author'[4]. In Nabokov's fiction this would be constituted by most of his 'American' novels. Hypertexts are re-writings of previous texts (hyponyms), with the famous example of Joyce's *Ulysses* being a re-working of *The Odyssey*. The text to be re-written may be one's own life – a point Jefferson tries to prove on the basis of overt autobiographies such as *Roland Barthes* par Roland Barthes. The Nabokov question seems not to be, however, one of overt, fictionalised autobiography, but rather that of obscure autobiographical fiction[5]. Is there really a difference? Where lies the border between fiction and fact – this is an especially valid notion in the prose of Vladimir Vladimirovich, who liked so much to peer into the pool of his fiction. This is a very special, and not so uncommon, kind of self-love.

I have mentioned writers with whom Vladimir Nabokov may be held in fellowship, i.e. Fowles and Cortazár. The reader of the former is haunted by a woman – carrier of knowledge, who lives by parables, whether her name be Sarah, Diana or Rebecca. In the works of the latter 'the same' lampshade on the floor beside the bed witnesses and casts violet light upon love-making. In the writing of VN we may enumerate several such 'links': butterflies, a professor of non-American literature in America, chessboards - all of which are significant also beyond themselves - till we arrive at the most important, and most filled with meaning – that of the double or the alter-ego.

The topic in itself is a subject matter for another essay, or even an MA dissertation. Humbert & Quilty, Pnin & Vladimir Vladimirovich (!), Sebastian & V. Alter-ego; the other I; the "not-not I"[6]; the reflection, distorted, discarded, faithful – but present, whether in the pool or in the mirror. The other serves as a means of defining ourselves; our traits of character, vices and flaws are more clearly visible in our double. We can define ourselves as not being the other; many writers employ the strategy of reduction, by the means of which a full character emerges, a result of merging the two. It is interesting to note what Jacques Lacan had to say on the subject (in relation to *Hamlet*):

> The playwright situates the basis of aggressivity in this paroxysm of absorption in the imaginary register, formally expressed as a mirror relationship, a mirrored reaction. The one you fight is the one you admire the most. The ego ideal is also, according to Hegel's formula which says that coexistence is impossible, the one you have to kill[7].

Hamlet killed Laertes; Onegin killed Lensky; thus Humbert kills (or should we say "kills"?) Quilty. V (merely?) relates the death of Sebastian whereas Vladimir Vladimirovich chases Pnin out of town (and out of his narration). Yet are the ones who are "killed" the "killers" 'ego ideals'? The absurd Russian professor Pnin is ridiculed by his double, the sophisticated writer Vladimir Vladimirovich; Humbert is also full of contempt for Quilty, though he recognises him as an equal (sic) partner. It is the latter, ultimately, who succeeds in 'stealing' Lolita.[8] When it comes to V and Sebastian, the situation is not so obvious, since V's feelings towards his brother are by no means clear. V admires Sebastian and resents him at the same time for his having ignored and inflicted a sense of intellectual superiority on his younger brother. V starts off on a humble mission: to 'try' to capture, 'save' the image of Sebastian Knight, his life and ideas. He does not claim to be a proficient writer; on the contrary, he repeatedly stresses his amateurism. The novel he writes is not "The real life of Sebastian Knight by his brother"; it is a novel of struggle in order to catch the butterfly of the Other, as represented by Sebastian. V finds it very disturbing that Goodman, his brother's publisher, did not mention his name in Knight's biography. To the reading public in the microcosm of *The real life of Sebastian Knight* V is unknown – he does not exist, as V. Nabokov did not exist for the pre-dominant number of readers in America before publishing the very work discussed. The novel V writes is a proof of his own existence, but also more – it is an exercise in writing ('how to write a novel'), in how to practice various genres and modes of writing; a workshop enabling V. Sebastian's brother kept in the closet, to become V the writer, who in the end confesses: "I have become Sebastian". Paradoxically, this is really a story about V; the more he vows not to speak of himself, of his own life, the more he does so – by speaking of Sebastian. "In defining Sebastian, he will define himself. In clarifying Sebastian's existence, he will clarify his own"[9]. By the end of the novel Sebastian grows weaker, his strength being now V's. In a sense the latter *has* indeed become Sebastian; he has absorbed the traits of his alter ego which he found useful and then discarded his character by letting him die in St. Daumier (French 'chessboard'), as a writer (or script writer, especially of soap operas) would do with a tedious character who has played his/her part and therefore is no longer needed. In this sense we should use quotation marks when speaking of Sebastian as V's brother, or indeed

'Sebastian' at all. Check, mate. The Knight is swept of the chessboard, as is the Bishop (Clare) before him; what is left is the great black-white space of (in)finite possibilities, and the One who has won over the Other. The echoing names: V. Vladimir Vladimirovich, Humbert Humbert...
... Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov.

For decades we have been wary of ascribing an artist's life into his art; yet in some cases certain facts and parallels are obvious. I have mentioned certain recurrent themes and motifs in Nabokov's prose, some of which reappear as elements of that abundant material provided for each writer – life – and therefore constitute a biography. Though looking towards a writer's biography for inspiration and easy answers has been regarded by some critics as unacceptable, it appears to be justified in the case of Nabokov. The Vladimir which emerges from almost every novel is never the straightforward portrait of the artist and cannot be identified with Nabokov (as in the title of Maurice Couturier's essay "I, X does not equal Nabokov"), these portraits are rather versions of mirror images, distorted, partial or blurred reflections, often bordering on parody – glimpses of what Vladimir saw in the pool and how he found it. In other words, autobiography serves as another element of the game of identification, as the chessboard of reduction. Nabokov's prose cannot really be treated *merely* as a re-writing of his life, a collection of unfulfilled options, parallel lives. It is rather a case of self-referential fiction bordering on/containing elements of obscured autobiography – elements which may become powerful tools, reflecting and thus allowing us to understand Nabokovian pairs, but also at the same time opening up other reflections, other dimensions.

In his "The Fledging Fictionalist" Michael H. Begnal claims that when it comes to *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*:

> Something more is going on here than the construction of an artistic chess problem. *Sebastian Knight* is Nabokov's acceptance of the loss of his Russian heritage, as well as his coming to grips with his own convoluted relationship with his brother Sergey[10].

Begnal supplies the reader with evidence for the above mentioned claim, mainly derived from Nabokov's *overt* memoir *Speak, Memory*... parts of which earlier appeared as short stories (!). Apart from a 'psychoanalytical' explanation of Vladimir's sense of having wronged his brother, Begnal traces bits and pieces of Nabokov's life which appear to emerge slightly twisted in *The Real Life of*... . These include, among others, a London address which Nabokov 'assigned' to Sebastian, a slightly distorted surname, a picture on the wall, as well as certain 'mental images', also that of the ever-present game of chess. He also traces the

figure of the brothers' nanny whom V. visits in Switzerland to that of Nabokov's own, and finds features of Sergey not only in Sebastian, but also in Silbermann, an ambiguous figure, which can be interpreted as mirroring either V or Sebastian, as well as being a projection of Sebastian's fiction on 'life', i.e. the story written by V... Begnal finally quotes Nabokov's confession in *Speak, Memory*:

> I have often noticed that after I had bestowed on my novels some treasured item of the past, it would pine away in the *artificial* world where I had so abruptly placed it... the portrait of my old French governess, whom I once lent to a boy in one of my books, is fading fast, now that it is engulfed in the description of a childhood *entirely unrelated* to my own[11].

This confession seemingly contains a disclaimer, by the means of which Nabokov aims to distinguish between the world of fiction and that of reality; yet still we may claim, as Begnal does, that *Sebastian Knight* is for its author a vehicle of "putting the past to rest in the only way he knows how – through the fabrication of a fiction"[12], thus making this 'unrelated past' another mirror to peer into. Yet this is also just a "confession", since the very fragment quoted appeared in the English version of a short story, *Mademoiselle O*, before it became part of *Conclusive Evidence* and finally *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited*...[13]

A short story becomes part of an autobiography? Perhaps I should quote Couturier:

> At the time he was writing *Conclusive Evidence*, Nabokov explained to one of his correspondents that the book he was working on belonged to a new genre:
>
> This will be a new kind of autobiography, or rather a new hybrid between that and a novel. To the latter it will be affiliated by having a definite plot. Various strata of personal past will form as it were the banks between which will flow a torrent of physical and mental adventure.[14]

This would seemingly provide us with a clue: so this evasive, infuriating writer-trickster does *not* distinguish at all between fact and fiction; he is unreliable as a source of knowledge, no genre is sacred, etc. Yet it is not so easy to dismiss Nabokov's traps without falling into them. The topic of autobiography is taken up by Brian Mc Hale who, when discussing *roman-à-clef* discusses several novels by Nabokov, among others *Lolita* and *Look at the Harlequins!*.

> Autobiography plays hide and seek with us even more elusively in Nabokov's writings. All of Nabokov's English-language novels are in some sense *romans-à-clef* – the question is, in what sense, exactly? [...] We seem to glimpse personal

> revelations, but about the author himself rather than about others; however, [...]this appearance of self-exposure is caught up in an ontological game, and we may well wonder whether what we may have glimpsed is the 'real' Nabokov or whether, as seems more likely, the 'real' Nabokov maintains a safe distance from his texts.[15]

Look at the Harlequins! is a slightly different case than the previously discussed novels, as it seems to draw more heavily than the others on such aspects of metafiction as fiction aware of its own status, self-begetting novels, etc., all of which form a special kind of self-reference fuelling narcissism . All of Nabokov's novels are heavily intertextual (hence some readers find them so demanding), but out of the corpus of his fiction *Harlequins* seem to be the one which most straightforwardly stresses the existence of its other 'sister texts', to recall Jefferson's term. If we were to return to John Fowles, we would encounter many examples of e.g. authorial comments reminding the reader that what he/she is reading is indeed *fiction*. In *The French Lieutenant's Woman* the 'Author' appears twice in his own creation: in the same train carriage as his main protagonist and in one of the final scenes of the book, as a critical observer standing before a building in Chelsea, London (a highly auto-ironic passage, destroying whatever Godlike pretences the Author appeared to have, by a phrase likening him to a 'successful impressario') The authorial voice is heard even more frequently, whether it be in a longish dissertation upon the nature of the novel and its characters, or merely a short remark to the reader which would remind him/her of the 'state of affairs'. Similarly, Cortazár also plays games with his readers, referring them to his other novels and relying heavily on the intertextuality of the 'inverted' *roman-à-clef* type: mentioning fictitious characters as if they were 'real' in the microcosm of the novel, whereas they are really only visitors from another microcosm. An example of such an action would be the 'appearance' of Temple Drake in Cortazár's early novel, *Los premios*. The name is uttered by a young girl, a virgin, whose thoughts circle around the 'thing like a cob of corn', and of the 'poor Temple Drake' about both of which her friend had told her. The reader who has not read Faulkner, notably *The Sanctuary*, will probably assume that Temple Drake is a victim of rape or similar atrocity, 'real' in the world of the novel or possibly alluding to a factual event at the time of the novel's writing. Temple Drake is a rape victim, but in Faulkner's literary world, the Yoknapatawpha of *The Sanctuary*, where she is assaulted with the aid of a ... cob of corn. The intertext works subtly – the cob serves merely as a simile, and the event is merely hinted at. It is similar in *The Sanctuary*, where the scene of rape is 'missing' from the text.

Nabokov's method in *Look at the Harlequins!* is not far removed from that of these other writers. The novel assumes the form of memoirs of a Russian novelist living abroad, i.e. Vadim Vadimovich, whose life not only resembles that of Nabokov – something we have got used to by now – but which also seems to be formed by elements of Nabokov's *fiction*. There appears, for example, a 'Lolita' motif (Vadim's relationship with his daughter). Quoting Mc Hale:

> The most teasing displacements occur in Vadim's bibliography. The novels listed as 'Other Books By the Narrator' obviously correspond to Nabokov's own, although the titles and dates have been slightly scrambled and, as we learn in the course of the text, their contents have been recombined. Thus, *See Under Real* (1939, or is it 1940?) corresponds to *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (1941), but incorporates certain materials from *Pale Fire*; *Dr Olga Repnin* is Pnin with the sex of the protagonist switched; *A Kingdom by the Sea* combines elements of *Ada* and *Lolita* [...][16].

This 'strange sense of déjà-vu' is shared not only by the reader. Vadim's great problem and sense of anxiety arises form the fact that he is constantly taken for Nabokov (sic!). He begins to question his own identity (he remembers his family name *was* similar to that of Nabokov, but what was it exactly?). Finally Vadim begins to suspect that he is merely a character in a novel; he is haunted by the feeling that his life is "the non-identical twin, a parody, an inferior variant of another man's life, somewhere on this or another earth.[17]" Towards this Vadim feels inferior: after all, the other is the original, while he is merely a 'copy'. He does not, however, kill his alter-ego, his better version, but withdraws from the scene himself. Neither in this most consciously fictional novel does Nabokov actually enter the scene; as Brian Mc Hale notes, "the ontological barrier between *roman-à-clef* and autobiography totters but does not finally fall[18]". Vladimir remains in this novel as elusive to the readers as to Vadim, his double, even if he opts for the hard-line version of the game. This was, after all, the last work of fiction Nabokov published before his death.

The question of writer identity and reliability seems to be an infinite one, since in the case of Vladimir Vladimirovich there seems to be no conclusive evidence whatsoever, while Nabokov's memory appears to speak in many voices... . Perhaps all we may do is gaze in wonder at one of the writer's reflections in a pool and hope that we will see ourselves appear next to him, though I dare say we may sooner fall victim to one of his games of deception, a game which leaves us gasping and cursing the man's ingenuity. This happened at least once while I was writing this essay; also when I used to while read Fowles and Cortazár. The conclusion: never trust a narcissistic writer, especially one whose work resembles a labyrinth...

One may comfort oneself by tasty bric-a-brac, such as this last treat: one of the titles considered by Nabokov for what later became *Conclusive Evidence*, aka *Speak, Memory* was *The Prismatic Edge*, a title which somehow strangely resembles Sebastian Knight's debut in the field of fiction writing...

Thus Vladimir peers into a pool upon himself. What can we do but gaze over his shoulder?

Notes

[1] Queneau, p. XXX

[2] Carroll, p. 71

[3] Jefferson, pp. 108-129

[4] *ibid.*, p. 110

[5] See Brian Mc Hale's definition of *roman-à-clef* as "a form of autobiographical fiction which preserves much of the ontological force *without* reproducing real-world proper names", p. 206

[6] Chambers, p.143

[7] Lacan, p. 225

[8] It seems we cannot discuss this novel without using quotation marks unless we insist on accepting the plot of the novel as reliable (that there 'really was' a Dolores Haze and not that Lolita is merely a device on Nabokov's chessboard, etc.), which does not appear to be a plausible assumption.

[9] Begnal, p.1

[10] *ibid.*, p.3

[11] *ibid.* Italics mine.

[12] *ibid.*

[13] Couturier, p.1

[14] *ibid.*, p.2

[15] Mc Hale, p. 207

[16] *ibid.*, p.208

[17] Nabokov, 1980, p.76

[18] Mc Hale, p.209

Bibliography

Appel, A. "Introduction" to Vladimir Nabokov's *The Annotated Lolita*. Vintage Books, New York 1990.

Begnal, M. "The Fledging Fictionalist".

Carroll L. *Through the Looking Glass*. Penguin Books, London 1994.

Cortazár, J. *Wielkie wygrane (Los premios)*. Muza S.A., Warszawa 1997.

Couturier, M. "I, X does not equal Nabokov". http://
Chambers, R. "Alter ego: intertextuality, irony and the politics of reading" [in:] Worton, M; Still, J (ed.), *Intertextuality: theories and practices*. Manchester University Press, Manchester 1990.
Faulkner, W. *The Sanctuary*. Penguin, Harmondsworth 1972
Fowles, J. *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Pan Books, London 1969.
Jefferson A. "Autobiography as intertext" [in:] Worton, M; Still, J (ed.), *Intertextuality: theories and practices*. Manchester University Press, Manchester 1990.
Lacan, J. "Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in *Hamlet*" [in:] Armstrong, P. "Watching *Hamlet* watching: Lacan, Shakespeare and the mirror/stage", [in:] Hawkes, T(ed.), *Alternative Shakespeare*, vol.2. Routledge, London 1996.
Mc Hale, B. *Postmodernist Fiction*. Routledge, London 1987.
Nabokov, V. *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*. Vintage Books, New York 1992.
Nabokov, V. *Lolita*. Penguin Books, London 1995.
Nabokov, V. *Pnin*. Penguin Books, London 1983.
Nabokov, V. *Look at the Harlequins!* Penguin Books, London 1980.
Queneau, R. *Le Chiendent* [in:] Appel, A. "Introduction" to Vladimir Nabokov's *The Annotated Lolita*. Vintage Books, New York 1990.

Anna Dworakowska

The World of Beckett's Drama - a Void Without Divine Anima

"There is only one good definition of God: the freedom that allows other freedoms to exist"[1]. Although it is hard to state with certainty if Samuel Beckett would accept such a definition as valid for the worldview that is presented in his dramas, it appears that the notion of freedom as such, constitutes the core of his philosophy. In his plays Becket attempts to depict the illusory nature of our mundane existence as well as the bonds and habits of self-deception that hinder us from gaining independence and freedom. In this world being a free individual is not a blessing as it involves the shattering of all the illusions that help to keep the absurdity, emptiness and meaninglessness of everyday life at a distance.

Faced with a chaotic world, Becket's characters strive to impose some artificial patterns on reality in order to make it meaningful and endurable. The most basic patterns that superficially order the reality and endow it with a kind of meaning are religion and a belief in a puppet-master-god who that is capable of controlling the world. This particular mode of self-deception is skillfully ridiculed in *Waiting for Godot*. Two vagabonds, Vladimir and Estragon, make their existence dependent on one activity i.e. waiting for god-like *God*ot, desperately clinging to the belief that the awaited will finally appear and considerably alter their lives. By this they shun their rights of being independent individuals but at the same time they endow their lives life with a superficial meaning that is derived from the pattern of waiting for a change that lies solely within the capacity of the omnipotent Godot.

This craving for a god-like figure is mirrored in the relationship between Pozzo and Lucky, the second pair of characters in the drama. Pozzo is the puppet-master, the symbol of power, whereas Lucky is his blindly obedient

servant-puppet, whose personality is reduced to performing certain functions. The two characters are interdependent and they may symbolize the kind of relationship that exists between traditional, all-powerful, 'white-beard' God and an individual that is crucified and entrapped by his faith. This confining quality of false beliefs is symbolized by the dance that is performed by Lucky, 'The Net'. The omnipotent figure of Pozzo i.e. the figure of a puppet-master-god is ridiculed, since during the course of the play he turns blind and loses all the attributes of power, such as his watch or vaporizer. Beckett also questions the validity of suffering that is embedded in traditional faith as the symbolic cross that is carried by Lucky i.e. his bag, turns out to be filled with sand. If Vladimir and Estragon seek in Godot what Lucky has already found in Pozzo, the emptiness and purposelessness of their hope is quite clearly visible. It seems that by the end of the play Vladimir comes to the realization of the falsehood of his belief, he seems to recognize that the image of god created by him is essentially that of a traditional, omnipotent, white-bearded figure, the image that does not correspond to the reality of the void. Nevertheless, Vladimir and Estragon, being unable to accept the meaninglessness of everyday reality, do not cease to wait and desperately cling to their false belief in "a personal God...with white beard...who loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown"[2], trying to find a satisfying and meaningful purpose for human suffering.

Striving to shun the realization that we are born into the void of a grave, that "the light gleams an instant, then it is night once more"[3], Vladimir and Estragon occupy themselves with meaningless activities, trying, as they say, to "find something...to give us the impression we exist"[4]. Engaging themselves in an absurd dialogue where communication seems to be nonexistent, they turn, as J.L. Styan points out, into a kind of speaking machines[5]. They are virtually unable to keep silent as this habitual blabbing allows them to reduce the feeling of anxiety that would be enhanced by the realization of the void. "Nothingness is what they are fighting against and why they talk"[6].

> *Estragon*: In the meantime let us try and converse calmly, since we are incapable of keeping silent.
> *Vladimir*: You're right, we are inexhaustible.
> *Estragon*: It's so we won't think.
> *Vladimir*: We have that excuse.
> *Estragon*: It's so we won't hear.
> *Vladimir*: We have our reasons.
> *Estragon*: All the dead voices.[7]

The "dead voices" mentioned by Estragon are all the ideas, philosophies and beliefs that have been discredited as invalid for the contemporary world. Trying to avoid hearing the dead voices they shun the realization that their waiting for Godot, the purpose and aim of their existence, is such a *dead voice* as well.

In *Waiting for Godot* the characters "go on, but in the old ruts, and only by retreating into patterns of thought that have already been thoroughly discredited". It appears that "in the universe of this play *on* leads nowhere"[8]. However, Becket seems to suggest that it is possible to dismantle the net, thus freeing oneself from entrapment. This can be achieved only by abandoning all the false patterns that blur the reality of meaningless, unredeemed suffering.

Although Vladimir and Estragon appear to be completely unable to accept the surrounding void, this cannot be stated about Clov, a character from Becket's *Endgame*. The relationship between Clov and his master Hamm may, as in the case of Pozzo and Lucky, symbolize the bond that exist between a puppet-master-god and a crucified individual. The action of the play takes place in dingy room that appears to be one of the last, if not the last, remnant of life, but of life that is dying and disintegrating. Once powerful, but now crippled Hamm, is obsessed with the idea to be always at the center of this little universe, the universe that is the only one available as, according to Hamm's words, "outside of here is death"[9]. Clov is entrapped in this barren universe where sun is zero, waves are lead, light is dying and seeds do not sprout: the universe of old patterns, old questions and old answers. However, it seems that Clov, though still unable to disobey Hamm, goes through a process of realization that he is tied to a "dead voice", a dead, invalid idea or belief.

Becket suggests that we are condemning ourselves to death by clinging to discredited, dead ideas. It seems that the net, the trap lies within our minds. This domineering subjectivity is symbolized by Hamm's tale of a madman who saw himself as the only human being who survived the end of the world and now starts to perceive the reality around him as completely barren and devoid of life. The scenery of the play also points to the mental trap we are subjected to as "the room may represent the inside of the skull of a man who has closed his eyes to the external world"[10].

"Something is taking its course"[11], the actual words repeated by Clov, seem to suggest a growing awareness that he has tied himself with a false, corpsed idea. He begins to see through the artificiality of the patterns that govern his existence. He finds the language i.e. the modes of thinking that he had learned from Hamm, as insufficient. He says: "I use words you taught me. If they don't mean anything any more, teach me others. Or let me be silent"[12]. He starts to wonder why he has never rebelled against Hamm. He finally

recognizes the cyclical nature of time, the recurrence of patterns, the perfect semblance of consecutive days. As all human experience is individual and subjective, Clov finally realizes that it is absurd to treat Hamm's world as objective reality. He is guided by the desire to know; it becomes insufficient to him only to say to himself that the earth is extinguished, he wants to see it lit, he wants to experience. The appearance of the little boy towards the end of the play seems to suggest that life might be resurrected if Clov dares to encounter bare reality stripped of distracting nonessentials..

It is hard to decide if Clov, having seen through the patterns, is able to shatter them and leave Hamm in order to begin his quest. Though we are incapable of deciding what he will find at the end of his journey, and though it may be the meaningless void, he may gain his freedom and dismantle the net of dead voices. Abandoning the corpsed idea of puppet-master-god seems to be beneficial, however, "it is not easy to be one's own man in a universe like this one, so completely devoid of the signposts that once made it seem familiar, even if they mislead"[13].

If God is, or used to be, regarded as The Creator, he is presented by Becket as an artless artificer. It seems that the only palpable change is disintegration and decay. Human beings, made in God's image, are portrayed as physically repulsive and mentally ridiculous. Vladimir has urination problems, Estragon's feet are covered with ulcers, they both stink, Hamm's face bleeds; whereas his parents are a pair of limbless aged people capable of swallowing solely macerated pap. The heroes of *Happy Days* seem to attain some animalistic features, as one of them appears to have a tail, while the other resembles a limbless worm. Indeed humanity seems to be at its last gasp. There is no place here for glory or dignity. The world seems to be a mistake, a low quality product. One of the characters in *Endgame* tells a joke suggesting that God was too hasty in creating the world and thus it is a complete disaster. Winnie, a heroine from *Happy Days* laughs on seeing an emmet carrying an egg. She says: "how can one better magnify the Almighty than by sniggering with him at his little jokes, particularly the poorer ones"[14]. It seems that if God created the world, he must have abandoned it on seeing what he had created.

A human individual is not only abandoned by God, at least God as understood in a traditional way of the Almighty, he is also utterly isolated from other human beings. Communication could prove a panacea for the void, but communication is nonexistent as each individual is a center of his own subjective universe. As Martin Esslin[15] claims, each individual has to create their own salvation, and this can be done only by means of freeing oneself from the deadening habit, seeing through the patterns governing our lives and facing the inevitable i.e. the void.

In his plays Samuel Beckett attempts to probe into the core of our existence by drawing a distinguishing line "between the merely accidental characteristics that make up an individual and the essence of his self".[15] If there is any divine anima present in Beckett's dramas it may surface solely as an unbound existential freedom. This freedom inevitably involves the shattering of all the artificial social, cultural or historical patterns that blindfold our perception and hinder us from attaining an insight into surrounding reality. However, acquiring this insight may involve the probable hazard of peering into the void, as this may prove to be the essence of the reality when all the nonessentials and artificialities are discredited and removed. To put it differently, freedom might turn out to be an unbearable burden that few may dare to cope with. However, it seems that Beckett is much more interested in shattering the illusion than in the final outcome of this process. His main preoccupation is "the search for man's own identity- not the *finding* of the true nature of the self"[16]. By equating divine anima with freedom, Beckett liberates an individual from the confinement of habit and illusion and invites us to play a game of chess with our existence though "death's final checkmate is inevitable"[17].

Notes

[1] Fowles, p.86
[2] Beckett, p.42
[3] Beckett, p.83
[4] Beckett, p.65
[5] Styan, p.250
[6] Alvarez, p.87
[7] Beckett, p.58
[8] Webb, p.41
[9] Beckett, p.96
[10] Webb, p.55
[11] Beckett, p.98
[12] Beckett, p.113
[13] Webb, p.64
[14] Beckett, p.150
[15] Esslin, p.64
[16] Esslin, p.65
[17] Alvarez, p.98

Bibliography

Alvarez, Al., *Beckett*, Fontana Press, London 1992
Beckett, S., *The Complete Dramatic Work*, Faber and Faber, London 1990
Esslin, M., "'Godot and His Children: The Theatre of Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter' *Experimental Drama*" G. Bell and Sons Ltd., W.A. Armstrong (ed.), 1963
Fowles, J., *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Triad Panther, London 1984
Styan, J. L., *Współczesny dramat w teorii i scenicznej praktyce*, Ossolineum, Wrocław 1995.
Webb, E., *The Plays of Samuel Beckett*, Peter Owen, London 1972.

Andrzej Gabiński

The Free Spirit and the Businessman. Male Archetypes in American Literature.

Literary theory attempts to examine texts from a number of perspectives; one such approach is psychoanalytic criticism whose grandfather was the renowned Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud. However, alongside his own views a rival theory appeared, advocated by his former disciple and colleague, Carl Gustav Jung. Jung developed his own method of psychoanalysis which was later expanded and applied to the theory of literature; it was based on the assumption that every person has an personal unconscious which stores all their experiences and sensations, and a collective unconscious which encompasses the experiences, feelings or beliefs shared by the whole humanity. Within that collective unconscious Jung has discovered archetypes, figures or patterns of behavior that are common for individuals who share their history, religion and, most notably, their mythology. It is the culture, argued Jung, that defines archetypes which may also be understood as recurring models of conduct that we assume and follow, often unconsciously.

Jung's critical approach focuses on "...a representation of the relationship between the personal and the collective unconscious... 'archetypes' of past cultures."[1]. Studying literary texts from such a point of view the critic must locate and identify the archetype that a particular character represents, and later demonstrate its relation with other characters which are often exemplifications of the Shadow, which is the embodiment of all the rejected, undesired characteristise and the exact opposite of the archetype a character represents, the animus, which is the male element in every female character, or the anima, which embodies all that is female within a male character. The Shadow, the animus or the anima often reveal themselves as projections; the

collective unconscious of a character makes them perceive the characteristics they either shun or desire in the conduct of others. Projections explain, therefore, the nature of interpersonal relations: one dislikes others, because they manifest all that one rejects in one's own behavior. By the same token, one may be strongly attached or attracted to others, because they exemplify all that one wishes to be.

Having adopted Jung's method I intend, firstly, to define the two major male archetypes present in American literature, namely the Free Spirit and the Businessman on the basis of a study of selected works and, secondly, proceed to a discussion of a contemporary text of culture, an American film *Fight Club*. The aim of the discussion is to establish either of the archetypes as the one exerting the greater influence upon the contemporary American society and culture.

The Free Spirit

The archetype of the Free Spirit is undoubtedly the earliest American archetype that has exerted strong influence upon writers, as well as upon the common people. One of the first widely recognizable writers of the New World, James Fenimore Cooper, was the author of numerous adventure books, most notably the "Leatherstocking Tales". Its protagonist, a frontiersman and hunter by the name of Natty Bumppo became the first American hero whose myth spread rapidly not only among the citizens of the young nation, but also in the intellectual circles of Europe, and became the first vivid embodiment of the American.

Natty represented an independent, strong, self-reliant character. He shunned civilization and its laws, preferring to live in the wilderness and preserve the harmony with nature. The Free Spirit was resourceful and skilled enough to solve all problems that he faced without help from others; he provided for himself relying on his instincts, physical strength and simple wisdom, rather than a decent education. One aspect that appeared exceptionally attractive about Natty was the fact that he was an outlaw figure -- he rarely respected the laws of his fellow men, choosing to follow his private beliefs which often brought him in collision with the law enforcement.

The Businessman

Over a hundred years later another renowned American writer, Sinclair Lewis, introduced into literature an archetype rival to that of the Free Spirit. In

his novel entitled *Babbitt*. Lewis portrayed a figure so totally different from Natty Bumppo that the only relation these two figures might stand is opposition.

The protagonist of Lewis' novel, George F. Babbitt, was a businessman employed in an advertising agency. His goals in life were financial stability, a high standard in life and a striving...to fit perfectly into the people around him. Babbitt was a conformist. His house, his car, even his clothes were generic – average, not characteristic of the owner, but rather of a certain class of people. Babbitt's tastes and opinions were based on general likes and dislikes of the middle class: his dreams were created (rather than dreamt) by advertisements he had seen or tales he had heard; they were never his own. Lewis' character was one of the many, a typical, law-abiding citizen who minds all the social customs, a mediocre product of the 1920's who considered the public opinion or persons fitting above him in the social order as judges far more reliant and proficient than himself.

The contention

The protagonist of the film *Fight Club* is a babbitt of the modern times. He works in a big corporation, leads a dull life and as he remarks: "...I had become a slave to the Ikean nesting instinct..."[2]. He is a mediocre person, one of the yuppies who follow the latest trends and choose their furniture or suits from catalogues issued by the well established, popular designers. The hero at one point realizes, however, that he is dissatisfied with his life and then he meets Tyler Durden, an eccentric anarchist who wears bright, avant-garde clothes, has a shocking hair-style and, generally, stands out in the crowd. Tyler is a critic of consumerism; he shuns stability, social status and material goods. "...the more things you own, the less free you are..."[3] he remarks. As the story develops the businessman, drawn towards the figure of Tyler, abandons his job and former life, choosing to follow the anarchist's philosophy. Soon, however, he realizes that Tyler is a master-mind of a terrorist organization which plans to overthrow the capitalist system and, instead, substitute it with a revival of the old, simple ways: hunting, growing crops, walking in the forest surrounded by wild animals...

By now it is clear that Tyler Durden is the businessman's Shadow, the contemporary incarnation of Natty Bumppo. The mediocre worker finds the anarchist attractive, but at the same time is repulsed by his violent, uncontrollable behavior. One of the leading themes of the film are physical confrontations which may be treated as the struggle of the businessman's ego in

the process of individuation, which, according to Jung, is a process of the integration of one's psyche into a single, in-dividual entity. Individuation involves the recognition of one's Shadow, together with all the vices it may embody, and then the incorporation of that rejected part into one's psyche. Towards the end of the film the businessman realizes that he is Tyler Durden and the figure of the anarchist was an illusion, a projection created by his unconscious to demonstrate and eventually integrate all that his ego had supressed. The businessman had been leading a double life, completely unaware of the truth that lay within his mind. In the closing scenes the two figures meet for the final confrontation to take place; the struggle on the both physical and psychological level represents the final stages of individuation. The ego must understand and accept all that is within its collective unconscious in order to achieve unity. Finally, the businessman stands over the body of the anarchist as victor.

If we treat the film as a manifest of the preferences of contemporary American society with regards to desired patterns of behavior it becomes obvious that Americans choose the businessman as their champion. His victory symbolizes the dominance of the mediocre worker over the Free Spirit. In today's society there is no place for a Natty Bumppo figure; an outlaw in the 18th century he remains an outcast till this very day. Conversely, the Babbitt, alongside all his faults, dullness and conformity, appears to be the more influential archetype, the model citizen of the 21st century and the figure who will guide the Americans towards material and personal success.

Notes

[1] Selden, Widdowson, p.137

[2] "Fight Club", dir. Fincher David, 1999, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation.

[3] Ibid.

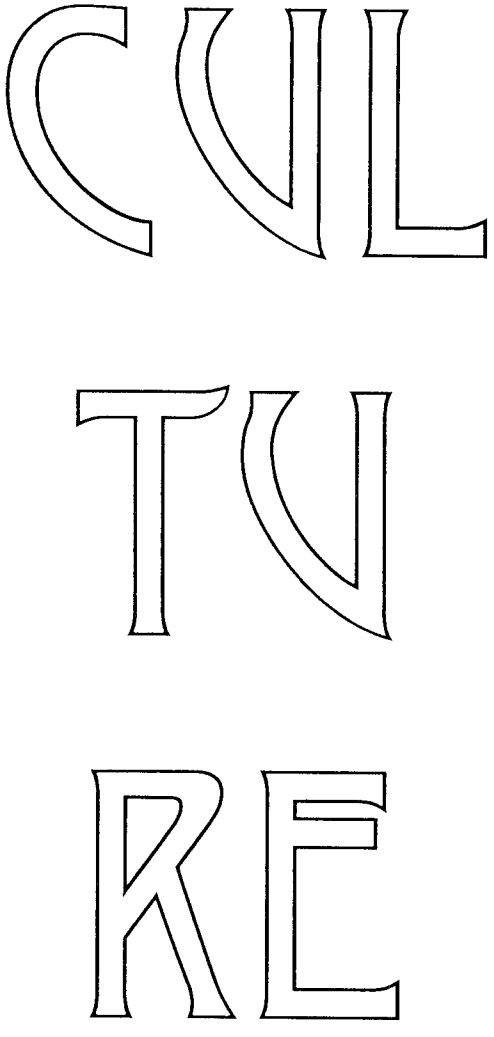
Bibliography

Cooper, J. F., *The Pioneers*, Washington Square Press, Inc., New York 1962

Lewis, S., *Babbitt*, Signet Classics, New York 1961

Samuels A., Shorter B., Plaut F., *Krytyczny Słownik Analizy Jungowskiej*, Oficyna Wydawnicza UNUS 1994

Selden R., Widdowson P., *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, Harvester Wheatshaf 1993


CUL
TU
RE

Zuzanna Ananiew

Would the Real Gertrude Please Stand: The Significance of the Role of Gertrude in Three Film Adaptations of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

William Shakespeare was one poet but Laurence Olivier, Franco Zeffirelli and Kenneth Branagh are three directors with three distinct concepts of the great playwright's play, *Hamlet*. The intended meaning depends, among other factors, on the presentation of the protagonists. Gertrude, Hamlet's mother, may or may not be crucial to the play. In the three film adaptations of *Hamlet* chosen for this study, the Gertrudes impersonated by Julie Christie, Glenn Close or Eileen Herlie are very different. By determining a number of factors constituting each Gertrude, it is possible to decide the significance of her person in each adaptation. These factors are: Gertrude's physical appearance, camera shots, her lines, her relation with Hamlet, and the actress's past roles.

The latest version of *Hamlet* was directed in 1996 by Kenneth Branagh, who cast himself for the lead part. His choice for Gertrude was Julie Christie, a handsome woman of noble facial features and a distinguished air. Her first appearance on the screen is grand. She is proudly walking alongside Claudius, her new husband. Head held high, she is radiant and dressed in the white of a new bride. This joy and white attire meant for a young girl suits the past-middle-aged Christie – the viewer is quickly aware of her class. She listens to the words of her husband Claudius but not with naive fondness and puppy-eyed admiration. She is a mature woman who has decided to marry again. This self-assured attitude holds for most of the film and is also visible in her relations with others.

Christie's dresses are closely fitted, showing off an attractive waistline, but smart and classy, never low-cut. She keeps to rich, dark colours like

burgundy, forest green or gold, symbolising royalty and possibly a certain strength of character. Except for the scene in which Polonius is slain and a flashback of her honeymoon night, her hair is always pinned up in stately twists and she is never seen with an excess of make-up, jewels or other accessories which might compromise her distinction.

The camera rarely leaves Christie's Gertrude in the background, often shooting close-ups, underlining her importance in family matters as the queen and the mother of Hamlet. She is frequently included in shots which do not concern her. Branagh wished to emphasise her choice of marrying and the duty she truly feels towards Claudius. They are often seen side by side, holding hands. Gertrude supports him, defends him, comes between him and his enemies as in Act IV, scene v[1] when Laertes thrusts his sword at Claudius in revenge of his dead father. The camera closes-in on Christie holding back Laertes' sword. She never once betrays suspicion of Claudius' crime or evil nature. Her dying words, "The drink, the drink, I am poison'd" (Act V, scene ii) are not an accusation directed at Claudius and the viewer is left with the impression that Gertrude died in ignorance of her husband's true nature. In The Mousetrap scene (Act III, scene ii), the camera lens is equally concentrated on Gertrude and Claudius. There are over ten close-up shots of Gertrude alone, registering her emotions: from happy, to uneasy, to being on the verge of tears, to composed again.

As to Christie's relation with Branagh's character, the viewer can have no doubts as to its nature. Gertrude is a loving, though not overly emotional mother. Her closeness to Hamlet goes no further than a pat on the back or a kiss on the cheek. There are no hints at Hamlet's suffering from the Oedipus complex; his hate for Claudius and desire of revenge does not stem from an incestuous obsession with his mother. Analogically, Gertrude is not torn between Claudius and her son on the same level. The scene in which Hamlet kills Polonius in Gertrude's bedroom brings out her slight sense of guilt or uncertainty, especially when Hamlet is comparing pictures of both brothers. However, this guilt does not involve her son. Gertrude's dilemma pertains to Claudius and her late husband.

Branagh's adaptation is unique for having almost entirely preserved the Folio edition of Shakespeare's text. Christie's lines also remain unchanged. This fact is not particularly significant to Gertrude's character.

Christie is important in Branagh's *Hamlet* when considering the film's cultural coding. The highlight of her career being the part of Lara in David Lean's (1965) *Dr. Zhivago*, she contributes to the 19th century Russian setting Branagh chose for his film. In fact, Christie acts as a systemic cultural subcode[2]

because the informed audience – as opposed to the naive audience – immediately associates her with Lean's film. Her past as an actress does not overcode her role as Gertrude as do Glenn Close's previous roles in Zeffirelli's 1990 rendition of *Hamlet*.

Zeffirelli saw Hamlet as a passionate and very active man – thus Mel Gibson as Prince of Denmark – who seems oblivious to the real motives of his actions. Is his mission against Claudius driven solely by the need to revenge his father? Is not Gertrude, the young and sexy Glenn Close, an object of his subconscious sexual desire? More importantly to this study, is not Gertrude torn between Claudius and her son rather than her dead husband?

Zeffirelli chose a setting which probably corresponds to Shakespeare's medieval Denmark. Gertrude is a Viking queen with thick, long blonde braids, blue eyes and a fair complexion. Her dresses are heavy; jewellery big and metallic. Together with Claudius they are the only characters to wear colourful clothing. Gertrude is seen in white in the film's second scene where the court gathers to hear Claudius announce his new bride. She sports a crimson dress at a merry feast, full of drink and laughter, and various shades of blue throughout the rest of the film. On the whole, the adaptation is seen through browns, greys and other rather drab colours, so Gertrude is singled out and made dynamic. Close is not beautiful and, in a sense, less attractive than Christie. However, her very high forehead, beady eyes and long, pointy, slightly crooked nose are almost vulgar. Close's Gertrude is so young she could not possibly be Hamlet's mother – at least this may be the viewer's impression. She could, however, be his lover.

The camera is fond of Close. One might argue this could not be considering her star status. However, it is not only Close who is in the limelight, it is Gertrude, who plays a much more critical role in the plot than in Branagh's version. It is interesting to note that, of the main characters, Gertrude is the first to appear on screen in a close-up while crying over the king's body. The camera shows her grief but it is not convincing. Following is a sequence of short close-up shots: she looks up from the coffin, then a shot of Hamlet, then of Claudius. A triangle between these three characters is formed from the very beginning. Close is often seen passionately kissing Claudius, which emphasises her sensuality, whereas Christie's relationship with Derek Jacobi's Claudius amounts to hand-holding. During the Mousetrap scene in Zeffirelli's *Hamlet*, Gertrude is filmed less than Claudius although the camera does catch her eyes growing wider with every second. It also captures what may be jealousy towards Ophelia. When Gertrude, all smiles, asks Hamlet to sit by her, he answers, "No, good mother, here's metal more attractive." (Act III, scene ii).

The camera then swings to Gertrude for a second-long reaction shot[3]– just enough time to show her smiles change to a jealous stare. In the bedroom scene during which Polonius is slain, the viewer is presented with a very jumpy view of Gertrude being attacked by her son. The camera zeros in on her bare shoulder, her relatively low-cut dress, her loose hair. It ends in a full shot of Gertrude sitting on the floor in front of her bed on a white shaggy rug, hair in shambles, looking as if she has just been violated. Her encounters with Hamlet are usually filmed up close, letting the viewer in on their forbidden intimacy. A meaningful take is recorded at Ophelia's funeral when Gertrude exchanges looks with Claudius after Hamlet leaves. Her face is guilty but defiant, whereas Claudius seems to be slowly realising the nature of the mother-son relationship. This as well as Close's jealousy of Ophelia are only and can only be expressed through camera work because Shakespeare did not actually include such sentiments in his play.

Unlike Branagh, Zeffirelli took Shakespeare's words into his own hands and constructed a very different script. There are entire scenes and characters cut out, the order of the lines, their speakers switched. Close's character is also subject to these modifications, however despite the cuts, "Zeffirelli enlarges the role of women" in his *Hamlet*, according to Deborah Cartmell[4].

What does however change one Gertrude from the next is each queen's relation with Hamlet. It has already been stated that Close and Gibson in their respective parts as Gertrude and Hamlet are involved in an intense Oedipal game. Their three passionate kisses – one in the first scene in which they are alone, one in her bedroom and the other when Hamlet is leaving for England – attest to the sexual desire between them. Zeffirelli does not go as far as writing in a love scene but "Hamlet makes no secret of his sexual jealousy of Claudius and in the closet scene all but rapes his mother, simulating sex with her on the bed," (op. cit.) Gertrude even dies with Hamlet on top of her (op. cit.). This interpretation changes the nature of Hamlet's revenge mission and therefore the whole moral or central idea of the tragedy. The Prince of Denmark is not the noble son of his slain father. He hates Claudius because he would rather be in his place.

Glenn Close's parts in Adrian Lyne's *Fatal Attraction* (1987) and Stephen *Frear's Dangerous Liaisons* (1988) (op. cit.), both in which she plays over-sexed women, doom her Gertrude to a similar reputation. For those who saw either one of her earlier films, it is impossible to erase the very vivid images of seduction and not transpose them onto Gertrude.

On the other hand, Olivier's choice of Eileen Herlie as Gertrude is one of a clean slate. Herlie's account of major film parts is empty when she takes on

Gertrude. Olivier's black and white *Hamlet* does not allow for the discussion of the colours of Gertrude's dresses. Fortunately, everything that can be said about her is contained in the necklines of her voluptuous gowns: they are low-cut, making her at once sexual and vulnerable. It is difficult to discern the details of her physical appearance because she is so often in the background, rarely closed in on. Not only that, this Gertrude is very often filmed from behind so that only the back of her head is visible. There are three significant close-ups of Herlie throughout the film: one in the bedroom scene when the camera focuses especially on her eyes, one when Claudius drops the pearl into the goblet at the fencing match – this close-up allows the viewer to see that she is not as naive as she has seemed so far, and the final close-up of Gertrude knowingly drinking the poisoned wine, displaying even a slight smile of relief. During the Mousetrap however, she is shown from afar, her reactions to the play are left almost unregistered. This filming strategy confirms Carol Chillington Rutter's[5] theory that "[Olivier...] locate[s] women in his directorial imagination as occupying the same space as medieval illuminations, decorative marginal glosses to the main matter".

Like Zeffirelli, Olivier modified Shakespeare's text substantially. Herlie has much less significant a role than Close. Her lines seem to be limited to only the most important longer speeches, but generally this weak and victimised version of Gertrude has little to say.

Olivier's *Hamlet* is Zeffirelli's predecessor as the Oedipal version of this play. Gertrude and Hamlet kiss on the lips. He throws her on her "immense, enigmatic and vaginally hooded bed,"[6]. Hamlet kisses her practically naked breasts. These details provide the viewer with the image of a jealous Hamlet, who, like in Zeffirelli's version, sees Claudius as a rival.

By 1948, Eileen Herlie had had some years experience on the stage and even played Gertrude alongside Richard Burton on Broadway. However, she was a relatively unknown face and therefore could remain as insignificant as her character did throughout the film.

Who was the Gertrude Shakespeare wanted to bring to life? Did she love her son more than a mother should? Did she know that her second husband was an evil, conniving man? Was the audience supposed to see her as "the central object of [Hamlet's] attention"[7] like Glenn Close, or as "but a handsome [or robust] side-show" (op. cit.) like Julie Christie and Eileen Herlie. As for Hamlet, was the death of Claudius meant in homage to his murdered father or was it rather an act of jealousy, driven by Oedipal desires? These three filmic interpretations of Gertrude's role show that her person is a deciding factor in the true motive behind Shakespeare's great revenge tragedy.

Notes

[1] Shakespeare. All subsequent quotations from and references to *Hamlet* are from this edition.
[2] Elam, pp. 55-57
[3] Weseliński, p. 29
[4] Cartmell, p. 215
[5] Chillington Rutter, pp. 243-244
[6] Davies, p. 171
[7] Crowl, p. 235

Bibliography

Cartmell, D., "Franco Zeffirelli and Shakespeare", in: Jackson, Russel (ed.), 212-22, 2000
Chillington Rutter, C., "Looking at Shakespeare's women on film", in: Jackson, Russel (ed.), 241-259, 2000
Crowl, S., "Flamboyant realist: Kenneth Branagh", in: Jackson, Russel (ed.), 222-238, 2000
Davies, A., "The Shakespeare films of Laurence Olivier", in: Jackson, Russel (ed.), 163-182, 2000
Elam, K., *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, Methner, London-New York 1980.
Jackson, Russel (ed.), The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000.
Shakespeare, W., "Hamlet", Penguin Group, London 1994
Weseliński, A., A Dictionary of Film and Television Terms, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warsaw 1994.

Films Discussed

Hamlet, directed by Laurence Olivier, United Kingdom, 1948
Hamlet, directed by Franco Zeffirelli, USA, 1990
Hamlet, directed by Kenneth Branagh, United Kingdom, 1996

[θɪəˈretɪkl
ənd
əˈplaɪd
lɪŋˈgwɪstɪks]

Tamara Brzostowska

'Twixt... Ear and Lip There's Many a Slip, or H. P. Grice's Theory of Conversation in Practice

The present paper has been devoted to the interpretation of a colloquial dialogue in the light of the Theory of Conversational Implicature as proposed by H. P. Grice in his "Logic and Conversation" (1975). The following interpretation by no means claims any rights to objectivity and exclusiveness, for the scale of divergences between interpretations of a single talk exchange might be obviously very substantial, though the methodological tool applied remains the same. This frequently results from the different repertoire of premises individual interpreters have at their disposal while analysing a dialogue: their knowledge of the context, participants and relationships between them as well as the degree of their personal involvement in the conversation itself. An attempt at providing evidence of how incredibly more gets communicated than is actually said becames the main objective of the article. For 'twixt ear and lip there is indeed many a slip.

The following conversation took place among the co-tenants (students living together in one flat), who in the late hours of the evening were preparing their meals in a narrow kitchen. They like each other very much and are continually faced with the problem that the fridge is too small to provide for needs of as many as six people. The "guerilla warfare" lasts. Both Maciek and his room-mate Marcin are enthusiasts of Polish cinematography - real cinema maniacs and are known for their anarchic and "mocking" approach to conversation.

Asia: *A czy zauważyłeś, że tylko my utrzymujemy twój toster w czystości?*
(pause)
Maciek: *Nie, no... Ja jestem tak wdzięczny!... Ja to kiedyś okażę!... I wasze*

szczęście, że zachowujecie! Ja bym wam dał! Nie, no... jestem niepoważny... Wszystko schowałem do lodówki, a piwo nie?
Asia: *Ale to było w przeciwieństwie do innych!*
Marcin: *W zamrażarce jest jeszcze z pewnością miejsce.* (laughter)
Maciek: *Trzy lata później... Wiesz kochanie, już wiem, czemu ta lodówka eksplodowała... Jak to?* (laughter)
Marcin: *O, o uwaga...*
Maciek: *Panuję nad sytuacją. W pełni. Absolutnie. Tylko bez paniki.* (laughter)
Monika: *Czyżby lekkie przeładowanie lodówki?*
Marcin: *Niedługo eksploduje. Wojna to wojna.*
Maciek: *Eeeeeee, tam.... Od razu eksploduje... Ty to jesteś ten... no ...*
Marcin: *Pesymista....*
Monika: *Pirotechnik!*
Maciek: *A co to jest pesymista?*
Marcin: *Takie małe zielone z uszami.*
Maciek: *O, to nawet pasuje!* (laughter) *Wiecie co?, ja się przeniosę tu, kiedy on jest tam i zrobimy kolację symultanicznie...*
Monika: *Gdzie jest Paweł?*
Asia: *Gdzieś w teatrze, słonko. Nie jestem pewna, czy na "Swidrygajłowie", czy na "Bilardzie Petersburskim". W każdym bądź razie, coś z Dostojewskim. Jak zwykle zresztą.*
Marcin: *O, ty już nie możesz pokroić tego pokrojonego sera....*
Maciek: *Co, ja nie pokroję? Ja nie pokroję? Dobra, to był cytat z klasyki. A opowiedzieć wam jak z ojcem...*
Asia: *I tak opowiesz...*
Maciek: *Nie, właśnie, że nie opowiem... A tu? Ty w ogóle wiesz, co to są proporcje? Owa niebiańska harmonia, którą już starożytni Achajowie... O ,o... Zaraz dostanę w ucho...* (laughter)
Marcin: *Ucho od śledzia, Kramer, ucho od śledzia...*
Maciek: *KWINTO!!!!!!! Piękny był "Vabank" Strasznie mi się podobał... Proszę, osiemdziesiąt dziewięć procent pokrycia!*
Marcin:*A tu? Wolny przebieg! O!*
Maciek: *Niniejszym, uprzejmie proszę o zabranie reszty plastków sera...* (pause) *No proszę. Nikt się nie poczuwa. Ile razy mam wam powtarzać, że jesteście kompletnie nieodpowiedzialni! To wprost karygodny brak odpowiedzialności...*
Marcin: *A jaka jest mianowicie twoja definicja karygodności?*
Asia: *A gdzie Tamara?*
Maciek: *A to się nagrywa? Jesteśmy w telewizji?*
Marcin: *La, la, la...*(laughter)
Maciek: *Kocham cię, mamo!* (laughter)
Marcin: *To śpiewałem ja, Jarząbek.* (laughter)

In order to "disentangle" the recorded string of conversation we have to, apart from providing its context, agree with regard to some preliminary assumptions, listed by H. P. Grice in "Logic and conversation". Namely, that talk exchanges do not normally consist of succession of disconnected remarks, but are characteristically cooperative efforts (assumption of continuation), in which each of the participants recognizes a common purpose, or at least a mutually accepted direction of the conversation (interdependence of exchange). The purpose or direction can be fixed from the very start or evolve during the exchange, definite or leaving a considerable latitude to the interlocutors. (The conversation in question here is an example of a casual talk exchange, developing in a fairly indefinite direction; although the general (surface) purpose of this chat can be defined as "giving charm to boring and usual action of preparing supper, amusing friends, striving for humorous effects, keeping friendly contact with the co-tenants in spite of the 'fridge problem' "). Furthermore, it has to be taken for granted that the participants at least observe the general Cooperative Principle while taking their subsequent conversational turns (they make their conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which they are engaged) and that they share some background knowledge so that the conversation does not take place in an "informative vacuum" i. e. they are able to work out implicatures on its basis.

Starting the conversation Asia's utterance: "*A czy zauważyłeś , że tylko my utrzymujemy twój toster w czystości?*" gives rise to the conventional implicature (hardly cancellable, non-calculable, non-truth-conditional) triggered by "*tylko*", a word indicating that someone is the one person that does something in contrast to all the other possible persons that do not perform a particular action; to emphasize the exclusiveness of something/someone. "We (meaning here me and Marcin) are better than other co-tenants at least with regard to keeping your toaster clean; we are good for your possession and demand praises" is implied in this particular context (particularized implicature). The emphasis put on said "my" as opposed to hypothetical, implied in the above utterance "oni" is apparent, strengthened and made explicit, in Asia's second utterance.

Maciek's answer: "*Nie, no... Ja jestem tak wdzięczny!... Ja to kiedyś okażę!...*", being an example of an ironic utterance, exemplifies flouting (exploiting) the maxim of Quality (Try to make your contribution one that is true; and particularly the second submaxim: Do not say what you believe to be false). It is perfectly obvious to Asia that what Maciek has just said is something he does not believe and at the same time Asia knows that Maciek knows that the

very fact is obvious to her. Unless Maciek's utterance is entirely pointless, he must be trying to get across some other proposition than the one he purports to be putting forward. This must be some obviously related proposition; the most obviously related proposition is the contradictory of the one he purports to be putting forward. Conversational particularized (assuming extra-linguistic context) implicature is generated: "It is obvious that you should keep my toaster clean. It is not a big deal that "you", as opposed to "they" do it. This is a duty, unwritten agreement of all people living in this flat", or "O.K., I am grateful but in comparison to other things it is nothing". The particularized implicature is cancellable, calculable from extra-linguistic context, non-truth-conditional. Undue prolixity, exaltation and rhetorical exaggeration, inappropriateness of affective style are here the indicators of flouting the aesthetic maxim and the maxim of Manner, since the utterance is far from being perspicuous, brief and simple. Stylized for threat and changing radically the tone of Maciek's answer utterance: "*I wasze szczęście, że zachowujecie! Ja bym wam dał!*" is a similar conversational experiment (again flouting the maxim of Quality and Manner) "pretending" to be a face-threatening act (flouting the maxim of Politeness). The conventional implicature that might have arisen from the very utterance, triggered by the sentence structures: "*wasze szczęście, że..*", and "*ja bym wam dał...*" can be formulated as: "If you didn't keep my toaster clean, I would certainly do something bad to you!" But it is obvious from the context (such an insignificant and trivial thing as keeping the toaster clean as a focus of discussion; the fact that they like each other, Maciek's facial and body expression, gestures) that nobody feels either offended or threatened. Therefore the particularized implicature that is generated is similar to Gogol's "Revisor" "There is no need for breaking chairs!" (It is not a big deal!). By saying: "*Nie, no... jestem niepoważny... Wszystko schowałem do lodówki, a piwo nie?*" Maciek interprets his previous action. "I put some of the goods into the fridge - in fact all except beer" exemplifies an entailment (non-cancellable, non-calculable, truth-conditional).

A simultaneous speech occurs and it becomes obvious from Asia's utterance that Maciek did not fulfill her previous conversational expectations. Therefore, she once again emphasizes the "merits" of herself and Marcin by saying: "*Ale to było w przeciwieństwie do innych!*" making explicit what was conventionally implied in her first utterance.

But her utterance is suspended, left unanswered, because Maciek opens the fridge and everybody sees his comically unhappy and disillusioned face since food wants to "erupt" from the fridge and there is absolutely no room for his four bottles of beer. Marcin's utterance: "*W zamrażarce jest jeszcze z pewnością miejsce*" is an instance of flouting the maxim of Quality (Do not

he!). Everybody knows that Marcin has just returned from *Geant* supermarket and put into the freezer his ice-creams, 2 kilos of beef, one chicken, a packet of frozen peas and another packet of brussels sprouts in the refrigerator. The irony, further emphasized by the expression "*z pewnością*" (conventional implicature arises from the use of "for sure" expression emphasizing that something is definitely true) is apparent for all the participants of the conversation and what can be implicated (particularized implicature) is: "Of course you would not be able to put your beer neither into the fridge, nor into the freezer, because they are packed").

Having understood the irony Maciek simulates a film dialog of an elderly, grumbling couple: "*Wiesz kochanie, już wiem, czemu ta lodówka eksplodowała... Jak to?*" He refers to the participants' background knowledge concerning the convention present in some movies, when the director skips a few years to bring the viewer to another times by placing an inscription at the bottom of the screen: "Three years later..."; and recalls a script of a usual conversation between elderly couples. He seems to flout at least two of the maxims: the maxim of Manner (an exaltation, highly sophisticated manner and lofty style characteristic of this utterance seem to flout the Aesthetic maxim), and Quality, since he ironically portrays an imagined, untrue "scene", which he lacks adequate evidence for, and even seems not to believe in a possibilitity of occuring of such a situation in the participants' future. The particularized implicature arises and it can be formulated as: "Beware of packing up our fridge, for your future might be as gloomy as the one recalled by me."

Nevertheless, Maciek decides to try to open the freezer... Examining carefully and with "terror" the whole situation Marcin warns Maciek: "*O, o uwaga...*". In saying so he perfectly observes all the maxims listed by Grice: Quantity (making the conversational contribution as informative as is required), Quality (saying the truth and having an adequate evidence for what is said), Manner (his utterance is brief and to the point) and Relation (being relevant). The conventional implicature is triggered by the exclamative "*O,o...*", immediately attracting the hearer's attention and "*uwaga*", indicating that there is some danger.

Finally, Maciek finds himself snowed under frozen products, which he strives to handle desperately and chaotically. This is the context for his next turn in the conversation: "*Panuję nad sytuacją. W pełni. Absolutnie. Tylko bez paniki*", which - being formulated in such an ironic way - flouts the maxim of Quality, since it is not true that he controls the entire situation. The conversational particularized implicature is obvious: "I am desperate! I cannot stop the rain of food!" At the same time he seems to flout the maxim of Relevance, since such an utterance would fit better a highly dangerous situation,

such as a fire in a public place, than just fights over a fridge usual in students' life! Synonyms "*w pełni*" and "*absolutnie*" strengthen and emphasize expressiveness of this utterance. The maxim of Manner seems also to be flouted since Maciek's utterance, being extremely (even deadly) serious and kept "in cold blood" certainly does not avoid obscurity and ambiguity of expression.

Monika enters the kitchen and at the same time involves herself in the conversation about the fridge: "*Czyżby lekkie przeładowanie lodówki?*". Monika's ironic utterance exemplifies litota (meiosis, understatement) in this context and therefore flouts the maxim of Quality, and especially its first submaxim. The particularized implicature is: "You are of course faced with the problem of the "overflowing" fridge again, aren't you?"

Marcin immediately informs her: "*Niedługo eksploduje*". This is again an instance of flouting the maxim of Quality, since Marcin does not believe that the fridge is about to explode, the particularized implicature arising from his utterance can be formulated as: "Nothing special happened. We just fight with the fridge, as always". This conversional implicature is fully "sustained" by his adding: "*Wojna to wojna*" - an utterance flouting the Quantity maxim. Being a tautology, it conveys a content that is informative-vacuous, but significant and meaningful in this particular context. Maciek tries to defend himself by saying: "*Eeeeeee, tam.... Od razu eksploduje... Ty to jesteś ten... no ...*- and the second part of his utterance is a classical example of "flouting" the phenomenon of tip-of-the-tongue-expression, since Maciek deliberately forgets the appropriate expression, which allows for at least two interpretations of the whole situation: "*Pesymista*" or: "*Pirotechnik*".

Maciek - pushing ahead with the humorous effect - asks Marcin: "A co to jest pesymista?" only to hear Marcin's answer: "*Takie małe zielone z uszami*", flouting the maxim of Quality and being a mocking definition of the person. The particularized implicature that arises can be formulated as: "What a stupid question to ask!" or "Nobody that resembles a small creature with funny ears" referring to participants' background knowledge concerning an absurd manner of describing creatures from the outer space. Subsequent: "*O, to nawet pasuje!*" also flouts the maxim of Quality, since Maciek does not believe, that Marcin indeed looks like a green UFO passenger with funny ears resembling antennas. This is an instance of irony and the particularized implicature is exactly opposite to what had been said: "You do not resemble extraterrestial form of life." Maciek's utterance flouts at the same time the maxim of Politeness, since it can be considered as a comic face-threatening act. "*Wiecie co?, ja się przeniosę tu, kiedy on jest tam i zrobimy kolację symultanicznie...*" is a purely informative utterance using deictic expressions (*ja, on, tu, tam;* in this particular context indicating subsequently: Maciek,

Marcin, the cupboard, the table)

Monika's question: *"Gdzie jest Paweł?"* finds the answer in Asia's: *"Gdzieś w teatrze, słonko. Nie jestem pewna, czy na "Swidrygajłowie", czy na "Bilardzie Petersburskim". W każdym bądź razie, coś z Dostojewskim. Jak zwykle zresztą."* This piece of talk exemplifies Maxim clash: the maxim of Quantity is violated, but its violation can be explained by the supposition of a clash with the maxim of Quality. There is no reason to suppose that Asia is opting out from the operation of both the maxim and of the Cooperative Principle. Asia's answer is less informative than Monika expects it to be and Asia is fully aware of this fact, but to be more informative would be to say something that infringed the maxim of Quality. Asia chooses to answer: *"Gdzieś w teatrze"*, which leaves room for many possibilities, implicating (particularized implicature), that she does not know exactly in which theatre Paweł is spending his evening. However, she tries to show her will to cooperate and as if to make up for this incomplete information by saying *"Nie jestem pewna, czy na "Swidrygajłowie", czy na "Bilardzie Petersburskim"*, at the same time making explicit and emphasising her uncertainty. The awareness of the importance of the Quality maxim seems to lie behind the expression *"Nie jestem pewna..."* (giving rise to conventional implicature - uncertainty). Having felt, that this answer may still not meet Monika's needs, she recalls from her memory two titles of the performances: *"Swidrygajłow"* and *"Bilard Petersburski"*. Not to misinform Monika she immediately withdraws herself from what she had said and formulates a general statement: *"W każdym bądź razie, coś z Dostojewskim"*. Furthermore, she adds: *"Jak zwykle zresztą"*. What is implied in this utterance (particularized implicature) is that Paweł is one of the lovers of Dostoevsky's novels who also watches all the plays based on the Russian writer's texts. Conventional implicatures are created by words *"w każdym bądź razie"* and *"zresztą"* indicating that the statement supports a previous point of discussion, making it more visible and obvious. Also the deminutive form of address *"słonko"* gives rise to conventional implicature - makes it apparent that the relationship between the two girls is friendly. Generalized implicature is derived by the quantity maxim. Generalized implicature triggered by *"czy... czy"* (cancellable, non-truth-conditional, calculable by the quantity maxim from scales of expressions - here: ⌈(p and q), (p or q)⌋)) arises: Paweł cannot watch *"Swidrygajłow"* and *"Bilard Petersburski"* at the same time. *"Zwykle"* triggers another generalized implicature, but this time calculable by the quantity maxim from the scale of expressions: ⌈(always, often, sometimes)⌋: Paweł does not always watch plays based on Dostoevsky's novels. He watches another plays as well.

Marcin's utterance: *"O, ty już nie możesz pokroić tego pokrojonego sera..."* conveys a superfluous, additional information to emphasize that the

cheese had been already cut up in the shop. Maciek's utterance: *"Co, ja nie pokroję? Ja nie pokroję?"* flouts the maxims of Politeness and Manner, since such an provocative, aggressive and exaggerated tone is not appropriate for reacting to such a simple thing. The impression is strengthened by a repetition and the presence of a word *"co"* expressing indignation (the feeling of shock or anger which you have when you think that other people have done sth unjust or unfair) - conventional implicature (hardly cancellable, non-calculable, non-truth-conditional). The irony, resulting from the flouting of Quality maxim, is also present in the utterance in question. Furthermore, he deliberately misinterprets *"nie możesz"* not as "it is physically impossible, since the cheese has been already cut", but as "you are inable to cut your cheese, since you have insufficient strength, skill...". The particularized implicature arises: "It is obvious that cheese that had been already cut needs not be cut. Therefore, your remark is pointless and does not make any sense". He reveals the source of his utterance as a classic film scene (*"Dobra, to był cytat z klasyki"*), at the same time playing with the participants' background knowledge concerning the usual reaction when somebody questions sb else's ability to do certain things as if stepping on sb else's ambition.

Conventional implicature is triggered by the word *"dobra"* indicating the change of subject in conversation and summing up what has been already said. *"A opowiedzieć wam jak z ojcem..."* starts a completely different subject of this talk exchange, but this utterance, though having the conventional structure of a question - has not been actually meant as a question. It can be treated as flouting the maxim of Manner. Maciek does not ask the participants of conversation whether they want to hear his story. Their permission is not necessary. The particularized implicature is: "I'll tell you about some event concerning me and my father anyway!". This intention hidden behind the form of a question is immediately noticed by Asia who says: *"I tak opowiesz..."*, as if making the above implicature explicit and adding the information that Maciek is a highly talkative person. *"Nie, właśnie, że nie opowiem..."* says Maciek pretending opting out from the operation both of the Cooperative Principle and maxims. He makes it visible that he is unwilling to cooperate in the way the maxim requires. At the same time he flouts the maxim of Quality, since either way he will tell the participants the story. The conversational particularized implicature is: "Of course I will tell you, since it is a memorable, great story...". And he certainly would have told them the story, if he had not noticed Asia putting cheese on her sandwiches...

He points to empty spaces on Asia's slices of bread: *"A tu? Ty w ogóle wiesz, co to są proporcje? Owa niebiańska harmonia, którą już starożytni Achajowie..."*. Maciek's utterance flouts the Aesthetic maxim and the maxim

of Manner. Instead of being simple, brief and clear, it is deliberately verbose, psdeudo-poetic, elevated, highly unnatural and full of superfluous affectation. Furthermore, Maciek does not really think that Asia does not know anything about harmony and proportions (hyperbole, irony - flouting the maxim of Quality, and especially the directive stating: Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence). Maciek's remark refers to the participants' background knowledge concerning the schema of writing "Matura essays", starting with: "The ancient Greeks have already known that..." and exaggerated, lofty style, clichid manner used frequently while talking about greatness of ancient Greece and perfectness of its cultural achievements. "*Achajowie*" refers directly to the name of Greeks used by Homer in his epics. The particularized implicature can be formulated as: "You put your cheese on sandwiches in a chaotic manner". "*O,o... Zaraz dostanę w ucho...*" is an immediate verbal reaction to Asia's facetious gesture. "O, o..." gives rise to conventional implicature as words attracting attention, expressing exclamations. Marcin's remark is triggered by the word "*ucho*", referring directly to the words used by one of the characters of "Vabank": "*Ucho od śledzia, Kramer, ucho od śledzia...*"

This utterance might have seemed completely irrelevant (violating the maxim of Relevance), but all the participants of a "kitchen chat" have watched the Polish film, understand and appreciate its humorous character and are able to recall the appropriate film scene, therefore it can be described as flouting the maxim of Relation. But, characteristically, the particularized implicature that arises does not refer directly to the appropriate film scene when these very words are used, but rather refers to the general comic character of the film and can be formulated simply as: "Funny thing". Maciek, as enthusiast of Polish cinematography immediately pickes up Marcin's words and probably finishes the film dialogue with appropriate facial and body expression: "*KWINTO!!!!!!*". Having added his comment concerning the humorous value of the film: "*Piękny był "Vabank". Strasznie mi się podobał...*" (entailment: Maciek had watched the film and knows it very well), Maciek again changes the subject of conversation pointing to his own way of putting cheese on sandwiches (as opposed to the one prefered by Asia) and referring to the friends' background knowledge concerning bank operations and currency markets: "*Proszę, osiemdziesiąt dziewięć procent pokrycia!*" He flouts the maxims of Relevance and Manner, since his utterance is obscure and ambiguous, giving rise to particularized implicature: "Look, I cover my sandwiches with cheese in a better, more organized way than Asia." Conventional implicature is at the same time triggered by "*Prosze*" attracting the hearer's attention, accompanying gestures of pointing out some action or entity. Marcin's remark pushes further the subject of criticism concerning

various, individual ways of putting cheese on slices of bread and pointing to the "hole" in Maciek's sandwich asks: *"A tu? Wolny przebieg! O!"*, thus referring to yet another field of the background knowledge: motorization. This flouts the maxim of Manner (as obscure, ambiguous expression) and Relevance again and gives rise to a particularized implicature: "No, you are not as perfect in putting cheese on your sandwiches as you think!" Exclamation: *"O!"*, as accompanying the action of pointing out the "holes" in sandwiches and catching Maciek's attention, conveys particularized implicature.

Maciek finishes making his sandwiches and says: *"Niniejszym, uprzejmie proszę o zabranie reszty platków sera."* The utterance employing the form of a performative and thus flouting the maxim of Relation (as being irrelevant and inappropriate in this situation) and the maxim of Manner is so unusual and unexpected that causes the overwhelming silence and consternation among the participants, who are, nevertheless, always ready to burst out with laughter. Maciek comically misinterprets the silence: *"No proszę. Nikt się nie poczuwa. Ile razy mam wam powtarzać, że jesteście kompletnie nieodpowiedzialni! To wprost karygodny brak odpowiedzialności..."* and the maxim of Manner is flouted again. At the same time Maciek flouts the maxim of Quality, since he does not believe that the conversation participants are completely irresponsible. And it is perfectly obvious to the audience as well. The particularized implicature is "You are responsible people." Hyperbole and irony are apparent. Maciek's utterance may be said to flout the maxim of Politeness (mocking face-threatening act) and the Social maxim as well - performatives are used in strictly defined social situations: at weddings in a church, at the lawyer's office while executing the dead's last will... Marcin, in turn tries to conform his utterance to the overall lofty tone of the discussion: *"A jaka jest mianowicie twoja definicja karygodności?"*. The conventional implicature is triggered by the word *"mianowicie"* demanding here an introduction of more detailed and specific information that would add to or explain what somebody has just said.

Finally the demistification of recording the conversation takes place. Asia's question: *"A gdzie Tamara?"* is simultaneous with her noticing the dictaphone. The other participants of the chat respond immediately to the new situation, making fun of it by referring to conventional and ridiculous ways of people's reacting in front of TV cameras (as in Maciek's exclamation: *"Kocham cię, mamo!"*) or mocking secret toadying by recalling an appropriate scene in the Polish film "Mi", when one of the employees praises his boss by recording his song: "Łubu dubu, łubu dubu, niech nam żyje nam prezes naszego klubu" and leaves the message for him: *"To śpiewałem ja, Jarząbek"*. Marcin replaces the actual words of this song with conventional: *"La, la, la..."*, assuming, that the participants of the chat are able to decode them properly in

the context. All the friends' utterances seem to flout the maxim of Manner as ambiguous and obscure and what is conversationally implied (particularized implicature) can be formulated as: "We have been tricked by Tamara but we can make fun of everything".

The humour of this conversation results from the continuous flouting of maxims, most of all the maxims of Manner and Quality (frequent instances of irony and hyperbole). Participating in a humorous, casual talk exchange, the friends do not bother much about strict observing of the maxim of Relation, which results in frequent shifts in the course of a conversation, rapid changes of subject of the chat, which are strictly connected with the context in which the conversation takes place. The links, associations between subsequent conversational moves usually do not surface, remaining hidden, tacit, covert, not explicit. But they are always understood, present on the level of "what is implied", and inspiring the further conversational turns of the interlocutors. All the participants eagerly observed the Cooperative Principle and were perfectly aware of the general purpose of conversation, which was supposed to be not a maximally effective exchange of information, but a humorous game. While observing the CP, all of them exploited the humour based on taking liberties with the maxims of Quality, Quantity, Manner and Relevance giving rise to conversational implicatures, which are always dependent on the context of the utterance and shared knowledge between the speaker and the hearer.

Bibliography

Grice, H.P. *Logic and Conversation* [in:] P. Cole and J. L. Morgan (eds.) *Syntax and Semantics: Speech Acts*. Academic Press, New York 1975, p. 41-58

I would like to thank Joanna, Monika, Maciek and Marcin who have agreed to a linguistic analysis of their conversation.

Michał B. Paradowski

Polish Learners' Mistakes in English Prepositional Constructions and Their Possible Causes: A Data-Based Approach

Prepositions belong to those areas of grammar which pose difficulty for the foreign language learner. This is due to the fact that there exists no one-to-one correspondence between the prepositions in different languages; suffice it to present the various uses of English *at* and Polish *na* (Fisiak *et al.* 1978:68):

En. *at* - *w* (*at school*)
- *na* (*at the university; be angry at sb; stare at sth*)
- *przy* (*stand at the wall*)
- *o* (*at five o'clock*)
- *do* (*smile at sb*)

Pl. *na* - *at* (*look at*)
- *on* (*sit on the chair*)
- *for* (*for sure; save it for tomorrow*)
- *onto* (*jump onto the table*)
- *to* (*change a name to Smith*)
- *of* (*die of pneumonia*)
- *by* (*by the ounce*)
- *in* (*in Lithuania*)

Such discrepancies point to the need for a deliberate teaching of prepositions to the learners, paying particular attention to the areas in which we predict the most room for potential error. Several textbooks have been published concerning only this area of grammar, basing on the assumption that 'every person who has been learning English for some time sooner or later encounters

difficulties with the correct usage of prepositions' (Kosonocka-Taber 1997:3). Below we present a number of authentic mistakes in prepositional constructions found in essays and spontaneous speech of already highly proficient, CAE-level third-grade students in one of Warsaw's well-known high schools. (We chose to disregard such special constructions as phrasal verbs as the particles they contain act as an inseparable part of the set expression and not as a preposition proper.) An attempt is made to arrive at the underlying causes of the errors made. We conclude by presenting a handful of guidelines which we believe will facilitate successful production of correct prepositional constructions by the students.

The most common source of learners' errors is probably interference from L1, also referred to in numerous sources as 'negative transfer'. In the case of prepositional constructions we can distinguish here three basic subgroups of the errors analysed.

First, let us examine the most obvious and noticeable instances of mistakes – the case when a preposition occurs in both languages, and the one that is used is the first English equivalent of the Polish preposition that comes to the student's mind. The most numerous group here concerns the use of prepositions denoting either spatial relations (also in metaphorical or abstract uses; division after Quirk *et al.* (1989:673-712)), such as:

- position: **on the university, *in TV, *on the whole world, *on this cursed world, *they meet on a stadium, *most values still stay on the first place, *in my way to school*
- destination: **a visit in ..., *I've never been in London, *... brought me back on earth, *I shouted to the phone*
- source: **I went out from the building*
- space: **from all around Europe*
- orientation: **I couldn't see anything in the distance of two metres, *everything in a reach of your hand, *just two streets further, *some floors lower*

or time:

- time position: **in the right moment, *in the same time, *in the wrong time, *a ray of sun in a cloudy day, *someone in your age, *in the age of 37, *It may involve people at any age*
- duration: **improvise on the lessons, *for the whole school-week I wait for Saturday, *how to survive up to the next month, *from ancient times.*

Ranges of meaning other than place and time included:

- the cause/purpose spectrum:
  - purpose, intended destination: **the teacher is supposed to be well-prepared to each lesson, *she isn't well-prepared to life;*
  - recipient, goal, target: **ads aimed to children, *an attack at .... *people who are lucky to have money only feel contempt to the poorest ones, *We are not able to speak with someone who is really lonely, *we are deaf to the suffering of others;*

- the means/agentive spectrum:
  - means and instrument: **by foot, *if he's not taken for the snout, he won't do anything, *something should be done with it, *making profits on the misery of others;*
  - instrument and agentive: **for money you can't buy true love or true friendship, *to decide what we can buy for it;*

- support: **to vote on a candidate.*

The data gathered also contains a few mistakes in prepositional phrases used chiefly in complementation of verbs, adjectives, and nouns: **to be angry on someone, *everything depends from you, *I've always dreamt about becoming famous, *with regard on .... *I'm not afraid about the future, *some decide for an exotic country, *forget what they wanted to spend it for, *discourage students to learn*, and a couple of fixed or metaphorical phrases, such as **in a result, *on the mere thought of, *From the other hand, ... *In the other hand, ... *In my point of view, *the building was in fire, *it won't finish on one battle.*

One glance at the foregoing data suffices to determine the source of the mistakes: a rough, direct translation of the Polish preposition into English. Disturbing is the fact that a vast majority (74 per cent) of the errors here concerns common, non-idiomatic uses of prepositions and not ones selected by some idiosyncratic properties of another part of speech. Mistakes in those more difficult to learn uses of prepositions are prevalent in the two more cases where inference from L1 takes place, *viz.* when a preposition in L1 corresponds to none in L2, and when a structure lacking a preposition in L1 has a corresponding equivalent in L2 that does contain a preposition.

In the former situation, 73 per cent of the mistakes concern prepositional complementation of verbs, whose idiosyncratic properties determine the choice of the preposition, *e.g.*: **I know a few teachers who fit to*

*this term, *somebody tried to contact with the police, *a sci-fi film turned to reality, *we could sometimes discuss some issue in groups, *the native speaker ought to encourage to free use of English by the students, *you have to deserve for it, *I don't have to mention about the house in Beverly Hills*; in the latter the ratio is 100 per cent, *e.g.*: **listen music, *a funny adventure happened me, *I'm very concerned with the things I read in Steve Elsworth's letter, *thanks that, ..., *we disapprove boorishness, *explain them what we treasure*. It thus seems evident here that learners fall back on their native tongue when their command of L2 is wanting: observe that the scarcity of mistakes concerning the use of prepositions denoting spatial relations and time in the last two subgroups of the inference errors discussed can be ascribed to the fact that temporal and spatial expressions in English which lack prepositions are actually very restricted and limited in number (our database contains only three mistakes in this area: **for all my life, *when I was at your age* and **in the shape of a ship*).

Occasionally students, aware of the fact that English, unlike Polish, is not an inflectional language, try establishing a preposition where they feel a need for one. This is especially the case with Polish Genitive, Dative and Instrumental, which are usually replaced with English *of, for, to*, or *with*:

- Pl. Gen.: **if there was a need of fighting, *the wind was howling around of me, *who was guilty for ..., *If the teacher is seeking for a job, *for some people money is the solution of their problems, *it will never be a substitute of a friend*;
- Pl. Dat.: **well-known for us, *give a start of WW III, *when we look closer to the problem, *thanks of it I can believe in the safety of my future*;
- Pl. Instr.: **It's good to realise that there exists a world outside of school, *besides of ..., *you can get bored of it, *I am delighted when I can share with my feelings, *the teacher has to share with all the knowledge he has acquired*.

Of course, in many cases this intuitive approach proves (not surprisingly, when one takes a closer look at the correspondence) quite successful, but here we naturally restrict the scope of our research to mistakes only.

Another major source of learners' mistakes in prepositional constructions is the influence of some other English structure, lexical item or context that they already know. Believing that the construction they are creating is parallel, or even identical, to another one they are familiar with, learners often fall into a trap. Below we present an inventory of errors that we believe were caused by interference, this time from L2 (the relevant correct constructions assumed to underlie the mistake are given in brackets):

**we listen to stories that she's telling us for the whole evening, *for all my life (for life), *if the teacher is seeking for a job (looking for a job), *after time (after some time), *in the end of my life (In the end, ...), *At the beginning, I'd like to say that ..., *I shouted to the phone (I shouted to her), *a sci-fi film turned to reality (I turned to him), *discourage students to learn (encourage), *the native speaker ought to encourage to free use of English by the students (encourage students to use English freely), *they don't pay much attention to if the teens take part in a mass or not, *we don't have enough time to our family and friends (to talk to them), *by my car (by car), *I went out from the building (I went away from the building), *give a start of WW III (the beginning of WW II), *only few of us are satisfied of their material status (glad of), *it is the reason of most of world's armed conflicts (cause of), *I'm very sorry with those people who lost their lives (I sympathise with ...), *I'm very concerned with the things I read in Steve Elsworth's letter, *the issue concerns with teaching methods* (passive), **this is independent on him (dependent on ...), *in my point of view (in my opinion), *a lot of people in all over the world are starving (in the world), * a good teacher should be able to discuss with students about different subjects and problems (discussion about ...), *we could sometimes discuss about some issue in groups, *knowledge of students of English as a matter fact depends on the teacher (I know about ...), *poor people can't afford proper education of their children, *it cannot be the most important thing of our life, *you're not doing anything in home (in the house).*

Obviously such mistakes need not have one strictly-defined, discrete cause only: the reasons may be manifold and overlapping, *e.g.* both the knowledge of another, similar structure in the target language *and* inference from the native tongue. It may also be quite the opposite: we occasionally witness mistakes that could have been avoided if the learner had only gone for a verbatim, word-for-word translation from Polish (*cf. *in my point of view, *after time*).

The last major reason for learners' choice of incorrect preposition that we believe is in play is the way the students perceive/imagine/think of the situation they are depicting. This would explain errors such as **the building was in fire* (engulfed by flames), **an apartment in an expensive district in London, *he saw the cosmos in a space-shuttle, *we will be living in an illusion of being happy, *I sat over my desk* (leaning over it), **people have been seeking answers*

for their questions, **this is a part from a song* (taken from a song) or **I was in a party* (in someone's apartment). Thus it seems that conceptualisation also plays a part when learners decide upon a particular structure whose correctness they are not certain of.

We thus distinguish four major (though, as illustrated above, not necessarily mutually exclusive) causes of Polish learners' mistakes in English prepositional constructions (as we have observed, the prepositional meaning seldom occurs with one particular underlying cause; the only safe generalisation is that complementation of verbs, adjectives and nouns is less intuitive and may therefore require more guidance): direct interference from L1, reliance on the Polish case system, dependence on the knowledge of similar constructions and lexical items in the target language, and students' individual ways of perceiving certain situations. Recognising these causes, we as teachers could try using them to our advantage: pointing to similarities existing between English and Polish (*e.g. do Londynu – to London*) and general patterns (*e.g.* Pl. Genitive with nouns denoting entities other than humans – En. periphrastic genitive), stressing similarities between English language items (*e.g. encourage to, persuade to* but *discourage from, dissuade from*) and helping learners see situations in a way that would enable them to remember the structure better (*e.g. on the bus plane* – on the deck of the bus/on board). While pointing to existing similarities, we should at the same time stress differences between L1 and L2. As a result, our recognition of the underlying sources of error should make our teaching of prepositional constructions a pedagogical success.

References

Benett, D.C. *Spatial and Temporal Uses of English Prepositions. An Essay in Stratificational Semantics*. Longman, London 1975

Fisiak, J., Lipińska-Grzegorek, M. and Zabrocki, T., *An Introductory English-Polish Contrastive Grammar*. PWN, Warszawa 1978

Konosocka-Taber, L., *W labiryncie angielskich przyimków*. Wiedza Powszechna, Warszawa 1997.

Quirk, R., Greenbaum S., Leech G. and Svartvik J. (eds.), *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. pp. 655-712. Longman, New York 1989

Michał B. Paradowski

Using Story-telling in Teaching English to Young Learners

Story-telling is one of the most primeval human activities, customary to all cultures and religions. People simply feel a deep need to tell and swap stories; we all need stories, that is why we watch films and series on television or go to the cinema and theatre, we read books, we (or at least some of us) gossip and exchange anecdotes with friends. Stories are particularly important in the lives of children as they help them to understand the world and to share it with others. Children have a natural, constant need for stories and will always be yearning to listen to a new narrative.

Stories can be found everywhere; in the language classroom we can make use of:

- traditional fairy-tales – these are appropriate for children and adults alike (though not so much for adolescents), as they are told in simple language, they are familiar in outline (though rarely in detail) in the learners' mother tongue, and they bring back recollections from childhood
- folk tales
- literary short stories – particularly for teenagers; detective stories are especially successful here
- abridged versions of well-known literature – they have master plots that arrest listeners' attention in a way that most other stories do not
- films and plays
- personal anecdotes about the teacher, his/her family or friends, rumours, stories from childhood – they can be very effective; students (especially adults) relish learning about the teacher through his/her stories
- news reports

and many others.

We can enumerate several advantages of telling stories:

• students naturally like to listen to stories, and the suspense and attention involved make them remember the plot and the language used long after the lesson is over (some students like to repeat the story to themselves a few times)

• stories are motivating, interesting and fun and help develop a positive, confident attitude towards the foreign language and language learning, they reduce the affective filter and create a desire to continue learning

• children will often accept and enjoy a story in the foreign language which they might consider infantile and dull in their mother tongue

• stories actively arrest and hold the students' attention in a way that no other technique can; children become personally involved in the story as they associate themselves with the characters and try to follow and interpret the narrative, each in his/her own individual way

• story-telling is a steady source of language experience for children, it helps them develop language awareness, get the 'feel' of the foreign language. Stories also acquaint children with language items and structures without their necessarily having to employ them productively. The children can construct a reservoir of language in this way

• stories are a handy and flexible technique for both eliciting and exemplifying various aspects of grammar (e.g. the Simple Past tense); they provide a realistic and understandable frame for presenting grammatical structures and can be employed as an almost subliminal, covert grammar input. Stories can be told and retold again and again, and thus the language point can be repeated. (It should be mentioned at this point that children learn grammar as lexical chunks.) It is also fairly easy to steer one's telling or follow-up exercises in such a way so as to elicit particular structures from the students

• stories allow the teacher to introduce new vocabulary items or revise ones recently introduced

• stories permit natural frequent repetitions of words and phrases

• stories improve children's memory and assist storage of vocabulary without tedious mechanical repetitions. Children's storage and recall are generally based on repetitions which enhance the short-term memory; stories, however, involve long-term memory, children remember words (which need not be simple!) because they are connected with the suspense generated by the story, associated with genuine emotions

• stories provide a link to cross-curricular studies; through stories and related activities children can develop their comprehension of the surrounding world in such areas as geography, history, sociology, science, or maths (e.g. time, numbers).

• children expect to discover meaning in stories, so they listen actively with a purpose: when they understand they feel rewarded and encouraged to increase their understanding more still
• stories grant constructive and creative comprehension – 'when children listen to a story, four types of mental processes are involved in terms of comprehension/response' (Vale 1996:83)
- picturing and imaging – children create a mental image of what they are listening to;
- predicting and recalling – children attempt to predict what will supervene, or relate what has occurred earlier to what is taking place;
- identification and personalising – children become personally involved in the story as they associate themselves with, or relate to, the characters and situations in the story according to their own personal experience;
- making value judgements – children apply their own values to those encountered in the narrative;
• listening to stories in class creates a sense of sharing and co-operation, it is a shared social experience that is not only enjoyable but also can help unfold the children's self-confidence and promote social and emotional development
• stories build up fluency, develop
- listening fluency, which is based on a positive attitude to not understanding everything, and on the skills of searching for meaning, predicting, and guessing;
- speaking and writing fluency, which is based on a positive attitude to 'having a go' with the language and not being afraid of making mistakes, and on the skill of constructing meaning with limited linguistic resources;
• exposure to stories facilitates future production: the more learners hear, the more they will be able to speak and write
• stories promote communication and expression in the classroom, encourage responses through speaking and writing, saying one's preferences, and swapping ideas and associations connected with the stories heard (or read)
• stories can be taught to absolute beginners if their mother tongue is close to the target language; unknown lexical items can be conveyed with mime and drawing; in this way children can be helped to understand fairly complicated constructions well beyond their own active command
• stories present numerous possibilities for follow-up activities
• nearly every teacher can tell stories (whereas not so many can read aloud satisfactorily)
• and last, but not least, stories are inexpensive.

Story-telling is considered as superior to listening to the story from tape. Being told a story by a live person involves one in 'I – you' listening, something

special, where the listener has the ability to influence the telling. Listening from tape, on the other hand, is invariably a third-person listening, an uncompelling 'eavesdropping'. Of course, for teachers who cannot boast a good pronunciation or a strong, powerful voice, the tape may be the best alternative.

Telling stories is also preferred to reading them aloud as:
• the children feel you are presenting them with something personal
• children these days often spend considerably more time in front of television sets or computer screens than with their parents or grandparents and thus are seldom used to the experience of hearing someone tell a story; hearing one in the classroom can have a powerful impact on them
• story-telling establishes and sustains a community of attention between the teller and the listeners, as it allows to address the audience directly, and enables direct eye contact
• it is often easier to understand a story being told than one that is read aloud:
- telling permits natural, non-artificial repetitions,
- you can observe the children and respond to their lack of comprehension and instant problems more easily,
- you can make use of gestures and facial expressions more effectively to intensify meaning,
- telling enables expanding and modifying the form, omitting, adding, or altering passages, moulding the story to our needs (e.g. to the language level of the listeners).

For selecting stories to tell, a few criteria can be recommended. Firstly, adopting the viewpoint of the prospective listeners, we must check whether the story we wish to use is one which:
- will whet the children's curiosity within the first opening lines and keep them engaged?
- is fit for the children?
- the children will understand sufficiently enough to enjoy?
- offers the children ample experience of language?
- does not contain lengthy descriptive passages (unless it is a story designed for advanced students)?
- is fit for the occasion and with regard to the other things you are currently teaching the children?
- is amusing and memorable?
Secondly, you must ask yourself whether it is a story you would enjoy telling, and whether you feel you would tell it well.

Before telling a story, you must make sure you remember it well. There are various techniques to achieve this:
• read/listen to the story for a few times and then try to retell it;
• write down the key points in diagram-form;
• make a story skeleton – a concise written frame of the story giving, in minimal form, all the essential components of the story: the plot outline, background information (where necessary; of course you can often choose to alter the background a little) and character detail. The skeleton is for preparation only and must not be used during the telling;
• see the story as a film in your imagination;
• try to remember the verbal rhythm of the story;
• remember the personalities of the characters and this will help remind you of the story.
There are accepted guidelines concerning the way you should tell stories. Key lexical items and phrases should be kept to a minimum and pre-taught a day or two before the story itself is told to allow the students ample time to internalise the items and give them the chance to concentrate on content rather than on vocabulary when the lesson is eventually presented (Celce-Murcia 1998:57). For beginners you may decide to simplify the language.
Just before you tell the story you must make sure the children are in the right mood for it:
- try to get the children much closer to you than usually – they must see you and recognize they are going to share something.
- arrange the seating in such a way so as to enable eye-contact with the listeners, preferably in a semi-circle.
- make the listeners comfortable and at rest.
- you may choose to switch some of the lights off.

How to begin:
- talk with the children about their experience of what you know will be the central topic of the story; or
- begin with an explicit introduction to the story; or
- simply begin without any preparation at all.

Do not begin until you have everyone's attention and complete hush.
Your manner and behaviour during the story are equally, if not more, vital:
- be natural.
- make use of the variety of human voice, pace, and tone (some teachers can feel more at ease using a cassette instead of telling the story themselves).

- halt at key moments – these will arrest the listeners' attention, who will have to be active in order to fill the pauses in,
- assume a different voice for the narrator and each of the characters,
- speak clearly,
- move like the characters,
- look at the children as you tell the story,
- tell the story with interest.

You should never:
- tell stories you dislike;
- rate the story above the listener (tell a story that is too difficult to understand or too infantile and dull); tell the story for the sake of the listener not of the story;
- become preoccupied with 'getting the language correct';
- tell from notes.

Finally, I should like to mention a couple of activities to accompany story-telling.
1. Before telling the story: helping children to understand the story, to concentrate on the plot and to start to predict what the story might be about:
• recycle the lexical material you have pre-taught,
• produce the front cover and ask the children to guess what the story might be about,
• set the scene by drawing upon the children's experience relevant to the story.
2. During the story:
• use pictures, objects, puppets, masks (can be made by the children),
• use mime and gestures – yourself or guide the children; numerous items of vocabulary (actions, feelings of emotion, adjectives, adverbs) can be conveyed by mime,
• use sound effects,
• halt and ask what the children think will supervene,
• drawing and colouring – the children draw and/or colour a person/animal/object/scene basing on what they hear in the story.
3. Follow-up activities; traditional, routine comprehension activities may ruin the effect of the story, so it is preferable to choose alternative, creative activities, such as:
• drawing the characters/places/events from the story,
• drawing a map of the story,
• designing a book cover,

• asking about the learners' individual representation of the characters or places, asking the children to describe the characters and setting in detail.
• exploring group's sentiment towards the characters in the story.
• evaluating the story – asking the children how they judge it.
• asking children to retell the story.
• asking them to produce a similar story or a modern version of the one told (the latter usually results in the children coming up with highly creative and enjoyable narratives).
• the children invent a continuation of the story.
• assign roles for children to perform, tell them to impersonate the characters.
• cut up a summary of the story – the children will be expected to arrange the sentences in the correct sequence.
• children write comprehension questions for their friends.
• rewrite the story with mistakes of content (never of grammar!) in it – the children will have to find and correct the mistakes.
• for focused practice of a particular grammatical structure – write up the story, leaving gaps for the students to fill in with the items expected.

Notes

Celce-Murcia, M. and Hilles S., *Techniques and Resources in Teaching Grammar.* OUP 1998
Ellis, G. and Brewster J., *The Storytelling Handbook for Primary Teachers.* Penguin 1991
Morgan, J. and Rinvolucri M., *Once Upon a Time. Using stories in the language classroom.* CUP 1992
Reilly, V., *Very Young Learners.* OUP 1992
Vale, D. and Feunteun A., *Teaching English. A training course for teachers of English to children.* CUP 1996
Wright, A., *Storytelling with Children.* OUP 1996

translation

Agnieszka Kasprzyk

Translating *The Hobbit*. A Case Study in Contrastive English-Polish Grammar

It was at this point that Bilbo stopped. Going on from there was the bravest thing he ever did. The tremendous things that happened afterwards were as nothing compared to it. He fought the real battle in the tunnel alone, before he ever saw the vast danger that lay in wait. At any rate after a short halt go on he did: and you can picture him coming to the end of the tunnel, an opening of much the same size and shape as the door above. Through it peeps the hobbit's little head. Before him lies the great bottom-most cellar or dungeon-hall of the ancient dwarves right at the Mountain's root. It is almost dark so that its vastness can only be dimly guessed, but rising from the near side of the rocky floor there is a great glow. The glow of Smaug!

There he lay, a vast red-golden dragon, fast asleep; a thrumming came from his jaws and nostrils, and wisps of smoke, but his fires were low in slumber.

(Tolkien, 1993: 205-206)

W tym momencie Bilbo stanął w miejscu. To, że po chwili znów ruszył naprzód, było największym dowodem męstwa, na jaki w życiu się zdobył. Wszystkie okropności, które zdarzyły się potem, były niczym w porównaniu z tą decyzją. Prawdziwą walkę stoczył samotnie w ciemnym tunelu, nim jeszcze zrozumiał ogrom czyhającego niebezpieczeństwa. W każdym jednak razie po krótkim przystanku poszedł dalej. Wyobraźcie go sobie zbliżającego się do końca tunelu, gdzie otwiera się wąski wylot, podobny z kształtu i wielkości do drzwi wejściowych. Mała główka hobbita wsuwa się ostrożnie w szparę. Bilbo ma przed oczyma wielką, najniższą pieczarę, może loch więzienny dawnej siedziby krasnoludów, wyżłobiony u samych korzeni Góry. Jest tak ciemno, że można tylko zgadywać rozmiary obszernej piwnicy, lecz w ciemnościach pod najbliższą ścianą od skalnej podłogi bije jasna łuna. To blask Smauga!

Oto leży tu olbrzymi, czerwonozłocisty smok, pogrążony w głębokim śnie; z paszczy i z nozdrzy dobywa się pomruk i kłęby dymu, lecz podczas snu potwora ogień ledwie się tli w jego wnętrznościach.

(Skibniewska, 1995: 166)

W tym momencie Bilbo zatrzymał się. Podjęcie dalszej wędrówki w dół korytarza stanowiło najodważniejszy czyn, jakiego kiedykolwiek dokonał. W porównaniu z tym wstrząsające zdarzenia, które miały miejsce później, były po prostu niczym. Prawdziwą bitwę stoczył samotnie, w tunelu, zanim jeszcze ujrzał grozę, oczekującą go u kresu drogi. Po krótkim postoju ruszył naprzód. Wyobraźcie sobie tę scenę: oto kończący tunel otwór tej samej wielkości i kształtu, jak drzwi w zboczu Góry. Mała główka hobbita wysuwa się z niego. Przed nim w dole rozciąga się ogromna sala, najniższy z pradawnych krasnoludzkich lochów, u samych korzeni Góry. W półmroku nie da się oszacować jej ogromnych rozmiarów, lecz niedaleko wejścia od kamiennej podłogi bije łuna. To świeci Smaug!

Leżał tam — olbrzymi, złocistoczerwony smok, pogrążony w głębokim śnie. Z jego paszczy dobywał się grzmiący pomruk, z nozdrzy uchodziły smużki dymu, lecz podczas snu ogień smoczy ledwo się tlił.

(Braiter, 1997: 149)

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the differences between two language systems: English and Polish on the basis of an analysis of an extract from the novel "The Hobbit" by John Reuel Reginald Tolkien (Tolkien, 1993) and its two Polish translations done by Maria Skibniewska (Tolkien, 1995) and Paulina Braiter (Tolkien, 1997)[1].

The linguistic differences emerging in the process of translation can be divided into three types: I) syntactical, II) morphological, III) lexical and phraseological. The syntactic differences can be further subdivided into: Ia) categorial, Ib) functional and Ic) differences between specific syntactic constructions.

I.

a) The English text under discussion and its translations, although quite short, contain almost all the word-classes, thus allowing for a full comparison of English categories and their Polish correlates. Among the outstanding differences one has to count:

Polish nouns having different endings for different cases (inflection)(in English only one case - genitive- is visibly marked on nouns and two cases - genitive and objective - are marked on pronouns):

e.g. *to the end*(objective, unmarked) *of the tunnel* (periphrastic genitive)
do końca(genitive) *tunelu*(genitive)

(Skibniewska)

...at the Mountain's(Saxon genitive) *root* (objective, unmarked)
...u samych korzeni(genitive) *Góry*(genitive)

(Skibniewska, Braiter)

all Polish nouns having one of three grammatical genders, impose this gender on the verb (in past and future simple tense — Subject-Verb Agreement), adjective and other modifier forms, while in English the logical (sex-based) gender of nouns is marked only on the singular subject pronouns:

e.g. *(He fought) the real battle...*
Prawdziwą bitwę (stoczył...) (Braiter)

Bilbo (he) stopped (...) he ever did
Bilbo(on) zatrzymał się (...) jakiego kiedykolwiek dokonał (Braiter)

English articles **the** and **a/an,** non-existent in Polish, where the definiteness of nouns is marked by the determiners or must be deduced from the context:

e.g. *a vast red-golden dragon*
(?) olbrzymi, czerwonozłocisty smok (Skibniewska)

lexical aspect (perfective vs. imperfective) in Polish (marked by lexical means of prefixation, suffixation and suppletion) vs. grammatical aspect (perfect vs. imperfect, progressive vs. non-progressive) in English (marked by grammatical means — the combination of auxiliary verbs "be" and "have" and the present and past participles of verbs, respectively). Differently than in English, each Polish verb is marked for aspect:

e.g. *He fought the real battle...* (no aspect marked)
Prawdziwą walkę stoczył... (Skibniewska)
(perfective as opposed to
non-perfective "toczył")

— opposition of the adjective in English to the adverb in Polish in the sentences beginning with expletive *it:*

e.g. *It is almost* ***dark****...*
Jest tak ***ciemno****...* (Skibniewska)

— English prepositional phrases translated into Polish as noun phrases (due to the different ways of signalling the meaning and the structural

relationships: inflectional in Polish, positional and dependent on the prepositions in English):

e.g. ... *were* ***as nothing***...
... *były* ***niczym***... (Skibniewska, Braiter)

b) In the group of functional contrasts, two examples can be distinguished. Firstly, as the subject cannot be dropped in English, even in the cases where the third person neuter pronoun *it* is used non-anaphorically, *it* cannot be omitted. The Polish counterpart of such sentence would be a subjectless sentence:

It is almost dark...
(?) Jest tak ciemno... (Skibniewska)

Braiter again prefers more free translation, replacing the sentence with expletive *it* with the prepositional phrase "w półmroku" (roughly: "in the semi-darkness").

Secondly, in her translation of the sentence:

Before him ***lies the great bottom-most cellar***
or dungeon-hall of the ancient dwarves...

Skibniewska changes the very long subject into a direct object, altering the structure of the whole sentence:

Bilbo ma przed oczyma ***wielką, najniższą***
pieczarę, może loch więzienny... (Skibniewska)

A similar situation occurs in the translation of the following fragment (the subject becomes the direct object); here the alteration follows the replacement of the English passive voice with its Polish counterparts:

e.g. ...***its vastness*** *can only be dimly guessed...*
... *można tylko zgadywać* ***rozmiary obszernej piwnicy...*** (Skibniewska)
... *nie da się oszacować* ***jej ogromnych rozmiarów...*** (Braiter)

c) In the extract under discussion there are many examples of differences between specific syntactic constructions of English and Polish. In the first sentence of the English text a clefting construction is used both to emphasise a piece of information and to keep Given-New word order:

e.g. ***It was*** *at this point* ***that*** *Bilbo stopped.*

There is no grammatical device of this kind in Polish because of its free word order. Thus the topic comment distribution can be retained by simply moving

the needed constituent to the beginning of the sentence:

W tym momencie Bilbo zatrzymał się. (Braiter)

However, the effect of emphasis is not as clearly visible as in the English construction and if we insist on enhancing it, some lexical means must be used, for instance the word "właśnie" (roughly: "just, at this very moment"):

*W tym **właśnie** momencie Bilbo zatrzymał się.*[A.K.]

Due to the existence of the full conjugational paradigm for most of the verbs in Polish, Subject-Verb Agreement is marked more visibly than in English in which only the third person singular of the Present Simple tense and the defective verbs "be" and "have") are marked. This allows for dropping the subject pronouns in Polish as the gender, person and number of the subject can be discovered from the form of the verb:

...you can picture him...
...(wy) ***wyobraźcie** go sobie...* (Skibniewska)

Subject-Verb inversion in English serves (among others) to impose the topic comment distribution over the stiff syntactical frame of the English sentence. Sometimes it is also used to avoid putting the long subject before the short Verb Phrase (the question of End Weight):

*Before him **lies the great bottom-most cellar***
***or dungeon-hall of the ancient dwarves**...*

Subject-Verb inversion is used in Polish, too:

*e.g. Przed nim w dole **rozciąga się ogromna sala,***
najniższy z pradawnych krasnoludzkich lochów...
(Braiter)

However, from the second Polish version of the same sentence we can see that the question of the topic comment distribution need not be solved in Polish by means of the SV inversion:

*Bilbo ma przed oczyma **wielką, najniższą***
pieczarę, może loch więzienny... (Skibniewska)

What was the subject (*New*) in the original text, was translated as the object (*New*) into Polish and the translator decided to introduce the already *Given* proper name of the hobbit as the subject. The first translation is, of course, structurally closer to the English original.

English has developed many other grammatical devices to deal with the problem of fixed word order, for instance existential sentences and the passive voice (the latter also used to avoid talking about the Agent). Existential constructions beginning with "there + be (the form of the verb in agreement with the introduced subject)" serve to introduce the *New* element as the subject of the sentence. They have no counterparts in Polish because Polish word order does not require the subject to go first in the sentence:

e.g. *...rising from the near side of the rocky floor*
there is *(v)* ***a great glow.***

Moreover, the verb "be" in an existential construction is often replaced in Polish by lexical verbs:

... w ciemnościach pod najbliższą ścianą od
skalnej podłogi ***bije*** *(v) jasna* ***łuna.*** (Skibniewska)

In this case, some of the meaning of the Polish "bije" (roughly: "shines", "rises"; used by both translators) was taken from the participial Subject Complement "rising from...". Both translators decided to omit the participle in order to avoid using another word of the similar meaning to the verb "bije". Thus, the lack of the Polish counterpart of the existential construction became the indirect reason for translating the participial Subject Complement as several adverbials of place.

The English passive voice allows for two different transformations of the sentence (in Polish only the Direct Object can become the Subject of the sentence) and for the passivization of the prepositional verbs. On the other hand, except for the relatively free word order, Polish developed the impersonal verb forms, third person neuter reflexive verb forms, and non-inflected verb forms, all of which serve as translational equivalents of the English passive voice. In the extract under discussion there is an example of the passive voice combined with a modal verb:

e.g. *... so that its vastness* ***can*** *only* ***be*** *dimly* ***guessed...***
...że ***można*** *tylko* ***zgadywać*** *rozmiary...* (Skibniewska)

This structure is rendered into Polish by Skibniewska as the non-inflected verb form "można" (treated as a modal) followed by the imperfective infinitive. Paulina Braiter chose a less literal translation with the infinitival "oszacować" (roughly: "to estimate") preceded by the negative third person neuter reflexive verb form "nie da się". This type of grammatical structure can also be helpful in the translation of the sentences beginning with the subject pronouns "they, you, one" (the identity of the Agent is unimportant).

II.

There are not many morphological contrasts exemplified in the given extract. Those of the greatest interest could be:

the complex noun "opening" rendered as the morphologically simple noun "otwór" and morphologically complex noun "wylot" in Braiter's and Skibniewska's translations, respectively.

- two compounds of the type Noun-Noun and Noun-Determiner. The first one, "dungeon-hall" translated by Skibniewska as the noun phrase "loch(n) więzienny(adj)" and disjoined by Braiter into two separate nouns "sala"(hall) and "lochów"(dungeons, genitive). The second one, "bottom-most" rendered by both translators as "najniższy" — the superlative form of the adjective "niski"(roughly: "low") — because "najniższy" can mean "the lowest" as well as "situated closest to the bottom".

- the very rich and productive system of diminutive formation in Polish as opposed to the rather poorly represented system of diminutives in English. In the original text the small size of the hobbit's head is implied by the adjective "little".

e.g. *the hobbit's little head*

Both translators render it double as "główka" in itself means "a little head" and they modify it with the adjective "mała" (little). Such overtranslation alters the meaning of the original, though not in a particularly harmful way.

III.

The discussion of the last two types of contrasts, that is those of lexicon and phraseology, is in fact mainly devoted to the question how we can render some English words and expressions literally. Many of them have fixed counterparts in Polish and other suggestions sound awkward:

e.g. ***wisps** of smoke*
***smużki** dymu* (Braiter)
***kłęby** (???) dymu* (Skibniewska)

*...the vast danger that **lay in wait**.*
*...ogrom **czyhającego** niebezpieczeństwa.* (Skibniewska)

*...grozę(???), **oczekującą go u kresu drogi** (???).* (Braiter)

*He fought the real **battle**...*
*Prawdziwą **walkę** stoczył...* (Skibniewska)
*Prawdziwą **bitwę**(???) stoczył...* (Braiter)

In the last example two fixed Polish expressions are confused a little, i.e. "walczyć z samym sobą" and "bić się z myślami". The meaning of the English sentence is that Bilbo fought against himself, trying at the same time to convince himself to go on and to go back. In Polish, the closest equivalents would be:

e.g. ***Stoczył** prawdziwą **walkę sam ze sobą**...*
*Długo **walczył ze sobą**...*
or
*Długo **bił się z myślami**...* [A.K.]

Two examples of a particularly striking phraseological contrast are:

e.g. 1) *fast asleep*

translated by both Skibniewska and Braiter as:

pogrążony w głębokim śnie

There is no simple adjectival phrase in Polish to render the meaning of "fast asleep". The adjectives "śpiący" and "uśpiony" evoke different chains of associations, the former also meaning "sleepy", and the latter "put to sleep by somebody". The Polish combination of the participle "pogrążony"(roughly: "immersed in") with the prepositional phrase "w głębokim śnie" (roughly: "in deep sleep") seems to be the closest in meaning but being twice as long as the English expression it certainly influences the style of the translated text.

2) Another example

*...**his fires were low** in slumber.*

is translated as:

*...podczas snu **ogień** smoczy **ledwo się tlił.*** (Braiter)
*...podczas snu potwora **ogień ledwie się tli** w jego wnętrznościach.*
(Skibniewska)

where the verb plus the subject complement are replaced by the lexicalised reflexive verb "tlić się" (roughly: "to smoulder").

Except for the contrasts discussed above, each text contains a certain amount of culture-specific words and ideas. In addition to that, it is strongly

marked by the author's style, erudition and imagination. Those factors are no less important in the translation process than the problems of a purely linguistic nature.

The extract chosen for analysis in this paper is far too short to allow any thorough discussion of Tolkien's style or erudition. Neither is it long enough to enclose any cultural particularities. However, the next few paragraphs in the text show Tolkien's skill in describing the creatures and items from his world. An impressively picturesque depiction of Smaug sleeping on his mound of wealth at the same time presents an idea that might be strange to the Polish reader: that of the dragon, the treasure-hoarderer (even if we are familiar with dragons, *vide* the legend about Smok Wawelski, dragons in Polish legends and fairy tales are not presented as treasure-hoarderers). Equally unknown are the dwarves, goblins and hobbits, the first two coming from the Scandinavian and Celtic mythologies, and the third being a personal invention of the writer (Maria Skibniewska coined the Polish name for the hobbit. Alluding to the hobbits being rather short persons, she named them "niziołki").

Tolkien's way of writing also requires a lot of work on the part of the translator: the novel is full of cunningly hidden prolepses and allusions to the forecoming events. Tolkien often addresses the reader directly and he changes from narrating in the Past Tense into the Present to make the narration more dramatic (this technique is used in the analysed extract). The parts written in prose are regularly separated with poems and songs, all of them rhythmic and rhymed. The style of the whole narrative oscillates between high and humorously colloquial.

A translation is in fact an artistic rewriting of the original text. Assuming a certain overall atmosphere, a certain style for the translation, naturally leads to situations in which the translator has to alter the original to a substantial extent in order to retain that style. Thus even the grammatical structures, despite having particular correlates already ascribed in the target language, often have to yield to the stylistic requirements of the translation process. It is important, however, to avoid inappropriate and wrong structures which instead of creating the desired effect may irrevocably spoil it. Grammar and style have to be analysed together if they are to be properly unified, creating a successful translation product.

Notes

[1] This essay is based on the analysis of the extracts from: "The Hobbit or There and back again" (English original) by John Ronald Reuel Tolkien published by HarperCollins Publishers in 1993 in London (pages 205-206), "Hobbit albo tam i z powrotem" by J.R.R. Tolkien translated by Maria Skibniewska published by Wydawnictwo "Iskry" in 1995 in Warszawa (page 166) and "Hobbit. Czyli tam i z powrotem" by J.R.R. Tolkien translated by Paulina Braiter published by Wydawnictwo "Atlantis-Rubicon" in 1997 in Warszawa (page 149). All quotations throughout the body of the paper come from these three extracts.

Bibliography

Fisiak Jacek, Maria Lipińska-Grzegorek & Tadeusz Zabrocki. *An introductory English-Polish contrastive grammar*. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe. Warszawa 1978

Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Hobbit or There and Back Again*. HarperCollins Publishers. London 1993

Tolkien, J.R.R. *Hobbit albo tam i z powrotem*. 1995. Wydawnictwo "Iskry". Warszawa 1995

Tolkien, J.R.R. *Hobbit, Czyli tam i z powrotem*. Wydawnictwo "Atlantis-Rubicon". Warszawa 1997

Anna Maczkowska

A Translation of the Fragment of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

Arundhati Roy: *The God of Small Things*, pages 51 – 58

When he died, Pappachi left trunks full of expensive suits and a chocolate tin full of cuff-links that Chacko distributed among the taxi drivers in Kottayam. They were separated and made into rings and pendants for unmarried daughters' dowries.

When the twins asked what cuff-links were for – 'To link cuffs together,' Ammu told them – they were thrilled by this morsel of logic in what had so far seemed an illogical language. *Cuff + link = Cuff-link.* This, to them, rivalled the precision and logic of mathematics. *Cuff-links* gave them an inordinate (if exaggerated) satisfaction, and a real affection for the English language.

Ammu said that Pappachi was an incurable British CCP, which was short for *chhi-chhi poach* and in Hindi meant shit-wiper. Chacko said that the correct word for people like Pappachi was *Anglophile*. He made Rahel and Estha look up *Anglophile* in the *Reader's Digest Great Encyclopaedic Dictionary*. It said *Person well disposed to the English*. Then Estha and Rahel had to look up *disposed*.

It said:

(1) Place suitably in particular order.
(2) Bring mind into certain state.
(3) Do what one will with, get off one's hands, stow away, demolish, finish, settle, consume (food), kill, sell.

Chacko said that in Pappachi's case it meant (2) *Bring mind into certain state*. Which, Chacko said, meant that Pappachi's mind had been *brought into a state* which made him like the English.

Chacko told the twins that though he hated to admit it, they were all Anglophiles. They were a *family* of Anglophiles. Pointed in the wrong direction, trapped outside their own history, and unable to retrace their steps because their footprints had been swept away. He explained to them that history was like an old house at night. With all the lamps lit. And ancestors whispering inside.

'To understand history,' Chacko said, 'we have to go inside and listen to what they're saying. And look at the books and the pictures on the wall. And smell the smells.'

Estha and Rahel had no doubt that the house Chacko meant was the house on the other side of the river, in the middle of the abandoned rubber estate where they had never been. Kari Saipu's house. The Black Sahib. The Englishman who had 'gone native'. Who spoke Malayalam and wore mundus. Ayemenem's own Kurtz. Ayemenem his private Heart of Darkness. He had shot himself through the head ten years ago when his young lover's parents had taken the boy away from him and sent him to school. After the suicide, the property had become the subject of extensive litigation between Kari Saipu's cook and his secretary. The house had lain empty for years. Very few people had seen it. But the twins could picture it.

The History House.

With cool stone floors and dim walls and billowing ship-shaped shadows. Plump, translucent lizards lived behind old pictures, and waxy, crumbling ancestors with tough toe-nails and breath that smelled of yellow maps gossiped in sibilant, papery whispers.

'But we can't go in,' Chacko explained, 'because we've been locked out. And when we look in through the windows, all we see are shadows. And when we try and listen, all we hear is a whispering. And we cannot understand the whispering, because our minds have been invaded by a war. A war that we have won and lost. The very worst sort of war. A war that captures dreams and re-dreams them. A war that has made us adore our conquerors and despise ourselves.'

'*Marry* our conquerors, is more like it,' Ammu said drily, referring to Margaret Kochamma. Chacko ignored her. He made the twins look up *Despise*. It said: *To look down upon; to view with contempt; to scorn or disdain.*

Chacko said that in the context of the war he was talking about – the War of Dreams – *Despise* meant all those things.

'We're Prisoners of War,' Chacko said. 'Our dreams have been doctored. We

belong nowhere. We sail unanchored on troubled seas. We may never be allowed ashore. Our sorrows will never be sad enough. Our joys never happy enough. Our dreams never big enough. Our lives never important enough. To matter.'

Then, to give Estha and Rahel a sense of historical perspective (though perspective was something which, in the weeks to follow, Chacko himself would sorely lack), he told them about the Earth Woman. He made them imagine that the earth – four thousand six hundred million years old – was a forty-six-year-old woman – as old, say, as Aleyamma Teacher, who gave them Malayalam lessons. It had taken the whole of the Earth Woman's life for the earth to become what it was. For the oceans to part. For the mountains to rise. The Earth woman was eleven years old, Chacko said, when the first single-celled organisms appeared. The first animals, creatures like worms and jellyfish, appeared only when she was forty. She was over forty-five – just eight months ago – when dinosaurs roamed the earth.

'The whole of human civilization as we know it,' Chacko told the twins, 'began only *two hours* ago in the Earth Woman's life. As long as it takes to drive from Ayemenem to Cochin.'

It was an awe-inspiring and humbling thought, Chacko said (*Humbling* was a nice word, Rahel thought. *Humbling along without a care in the world*), that the whole of contemporary history, the World Wars, the War of Dreams, the Man on the Moon, science, literature, philosophy, the pursuit of knowledge – was no more than a blink of the Earth Woman's eye.

'And we, my dears, everything we are and ever will be – are just a twinkle in her eye,' Chacko said grandly, lying on his bed, staring at the ceiling.

When he was in this sort of mood, Chacko used his Reading Aloud voice. His room had a church-feeling. He didn't care whether anyone was listening to him or not. And if they were, he didn't care whether or not they had understood what he was saying. Ammu called them his Oxford Moods.

Later, in the light of all that happened, *twinkle* seemed completely the wrong word to describe the expression in the Earth Woman's eye. Twinkle was a word with crinkled, happy edges.

Though the Earth Woman made a lasting impression on the twins, it was the History House – so much closer at hand – that really fascinated them. They thought about it often. The house on the other side of the river.

Looming in the Heart of Darkness.

A house they couldn't enter, full of whispers they couldn't understand.

They didn't know then, that s

river and be where they weren't supposed to be, with a man they weren't supposed to love. That they would watch with dinner-plate eyes as history revealed itself to them in the back verandah.

While other children of their age learned other things. Estha and Rahel learned how history negotiates its terms and collects its dues from those who break its laws. They heard its sickening thud. They smelled its smell and never forgot it.

History's smell.

Like old roses on a breeze.

It would lurk for ever in ordinary things. In coat-hangers. Tomatoes. In the tar on the roads. In certain colours. In the plates at a restaurant. In the absence of words. And the emptiness in eyes.

They would grow up grappling with ways of living with what happened. They would try to tell themselves that in terms of geological time it was an insignificant event. Just the blink of the Earth Woman's Eye. That Worse Things happened. That Worse Things kept happening. But they would find no comfort in the thought.

Chacko said that going to see *The Sound of Music* was an extended exercise in Anglophilia.

Ammu said, 'Oh come on, the whole world goes to see *The Sound of Music*. It's a World Hit.'

"Nevertheless, my dear,' Chacko said in his Reading Aloud voice. 'Never. The. Less.'

Mammachi often said that Chacko was easily one of the cleverest men in India. 'According to whom?' Ammu would say. 'On *what* basis?' Mammachi loved to tell the story (Chacko's story) of how one of the dons at Oxford had said that in his opinion Chacko was brilliant, and made of prime ministerial material.

To this, Ammu always said, 'Ha! Ha! Ha!' like people in the comics.

She said:

(a) Going to Oxford didn't necessarily make a person clever.

(b) Cleverness didn't necessarily make a good prime minister.

(c) If a person couldn't even run a pickle factory profitably, how was that person going to run a whole country?

And, most important of all:

(d) All Indian mothers are obsessed with their sons and are therefore poor judges of their abilities.

Chacko said:

(a) You don't *go* to Oxford. You *read* at Oxford.

And

(b) After *reading* at Oxford you *come down*.

"Down to earth, d'you mean?" Ammu would ask. "*That* you definitely do. Like your famous airplanes."

Ammu said that the sad but entirely predictable fate of Chacko's airplanes was an impartial measure of his abilities.

Once a month (except during the monsoons), a parcel would arrive for Chacko by VPP. It always contained a balsa aero-modelling kit. It usually took Chacko between eight and ten days to assemble the aircraft with its tiny fuel tank and motorized propellor. When it was ready, he would take Estha and Rahel to the rice fields in Nattakom to help him fly it. It never flew for more than a minute. Month after month, Chacko's carefully constructed planes crashed in the slushgreen paddy fields into which Estha and Rahel would spurt, like trained retrievers, to salvage the remains.

A tail, a tank, a wing.

A wounded machine.

Chacko's room was cluttered with broken wooden planes. And every month, another kit would arrive. Chacko never blamed the crashes on he kit.

It was only after Papppachi died that Chacko resigned his job as lecturer at the Madras Christian College, and came to Ayemenem with his Balliol Oar and his Pickle Baron dreams. He commuted his pension and provident fund to buy a Bharat bottle-sealing machine. His oar (with his team mates' names inscribed in gold) hung from iron hoops on the factory wall.

Up to the time Chacko arrived, the factory had been a small but profitable enterprise. Mammachi just ran it like a large kitchen. Chacko had it registered as a partnership and informed Mammachi that she was the sleeping partner. He invested in equipment (canning machines, cauldrons, cookers) and expanded the labour force. Almost immediately, the financial slide began, but was artificially buoyed by extravagant bank loans that Chacko raised by mortgaging the family's rice-fields around the Ayemenem House. Though Ammu did as much work in the factory as Chacko, whenever he was dealing with food inspectors or sanitary engineers, he always referred to it as *my* factory, *my* pineapples, *my* pickles. Legally, this was the case because Ammu, as a daughter, had no claim to the property.

Chacko told Rahel and Estha that Ammu had no Locusts Stand I.

"Thanks to our wonderful male chauvinist society," Ammu said.

Chacko said, 'What's yours is mine and what's mine is also mine.'

He had a surprisingly high laugh for a man of his size and fatness. And when he laughed, he shook all over without appearing to move.

Until Chacko arrived in Ayemenem, Mammachi's factory had no name. Everybody just referred to her pickles and jams as Sosha's Tender Mango or Sosha's Banana Jam. Sosha was Mammachi's first name. Soshamma.

It was Chacko who christened the factory Paradise Pickles & Preserves and had labels designed and printed at Comrade K. N. M. Pillai's press. At first he had wanted to call it Zeus Pickles & Preserves, but that idea was vetoed because everybody said that Zeus was too obscure and had no local relevance, whereas Paradise did.(Comrade Pillai's suggestion – Parashuram Pickles – was vetoed for the opposite reason: too *much* local relevance.)

It was Chacko's idea to have a billboard painted and installed on the Plymouth's roof rack.

Tłumaczenie

Kiedy Pappachi umarł, zostawił po sobie kufry pełne drogich garniturów i pudełko po czekoladkach ze spinkami do mankietów, które Chacko porozdawał taksówkarzom z Kottayam. Spinki zostały podzielone na części i przerobione na pierścionki i naszyjniki, które miały stanowić posag niezamężnych jeszcze córek.

Kiedy bliźnięta zapytały, do czego służą naszyjniki – do noszenia na szyi, powiedziała im Ammu - były pod wrażeniem tego przebłysku logiki w języku, który do tej pory wydawał się im całkowicie nielogiczny. "Na" + "szyja" = "naszyjnik". Było to dla nich porównywalne z precyzją i logiką matematyki. Słowo "naszyjnik" dało im niezwykłą (jakkolwiek przesadną) satysfakcję i spowodowało u nich napływ ciepłych uczuć do języka angielskiego.

Ammu powiedziała, że Pappachi był nieuleczalnym CCP Brytyjczyków, co było skrótem od *chhi-chhi poach* i w języku Hindi oznaczało zamiatacza gówien. Chacko stwierdził, że odpowiednim określeniem dla ludzi takich, jak Pappachi, jest "anglofil". Kazał Rahel i Esthcie sprawdzić znaczenie słowa "anglofil" w "Wielkim Słowniku Encyklopedycznym Reader's Digest". Definicja brzmiała "osoba dobrze usposobiona do Anglików". Estha i Rahel musieli sprawdzić, co znaczy słowo "usposobić".

Słownik mówił:

1) wprowadzać kogoś w określony nastrój
2) ustosunkowywać kogoś w jakiś sposób, nastawiać

Chacko powiedział, że w przypadku Pappachiego "usposobić" znaczyło "2) ustosunkowywać kogoś w jakiś sposób, nastawiać". Jak twierdził Chacko, znaczyło to, że Pappachi został nastawiony na lubienie Anglików.

Chacko wyznał bliźniakom, że chociaż nie znosił się do tego przyznawać, to oni wszyscy są anglofilami. Są rodziną anglofilów. Popchniętą w nieodpowiednim kierunku, uwięzioną poza swoją historią, niezdolną do wycofania się po śladach swoich kroków, ponieważ zostały one zatarte. Wyjaśnił im, że historia jest jak stary dom nocą. Dom, w którym palą się wszystkie światła. A w środku szepczą przodkowie.

Aby zrozumieć historię – powiedział Chacko – musimy wejść do środka i posłuchać tego, co mówią. I obejrzeć obrazy na ścianie, książki. I poczuć zapachy.

Estha i Rahel nie mieli wątpliwości, że domem, który Chacko miał na myśli, jest dom po drugiej stronie rzeki, pośrodku opuszczonej plantacji kauczuku, gdzie nigdy nie byli. Dom Kari Saipu – Czarnego Sahiba. Zhinduizowanego Anglika. Który mówił w małajalam i nosił mundur. Miejscowy Kurtz. Ayemenem – jego prywatne Jądro Ciemności. Strzelił sobie w głowę przed dziesięcioma laty kiedy rodzice jego młodego kochanka zabrali chłopca od niego i posłali do szkoły. Po samobójstwie posiadłość stała się przedmiotem długich sporów sądowych pomiędzy kucharzem a sekretarzem Kari Saipu. Dom stał pusty od lat. Bardzo niewielu ludzi go widziało. Ale bliźnięta umiały go sobie wyobrazić.

Dom Historii.

Z chłodnymi kamiennymi podłogami, wyblakłymi ścianami i falującymi cieniami w kształcie statków. Pulchne, półprzeźroczyste jaszczurki żyją za starymi obrazami, a woskowi, kruszący się przodkowie ze stwardniałymi paznokciami u nóg i oddechem, który czuć pożółkłymi mapami, plotkują świszczącym szeptem przypominającym szelest gazet.

Lecz nie możemy wejść do środka – wyjaśnił Chacko – bo zamknięto przed nami drzwi. A kiedy zaglądamy przez okna, widzimy tylko cienie. Kiedy próbujemy słuchać, słyszymy tylko szepty. I nie możemy zrozumieć tych szeptów, bo naszymi umysłami zawładnęła wojna. Wojna, którą zarazem przegrywamy i wygrywamy. Najgorszy rodzaj wojny. Wojna, która więzi nasze sny i każe je nam śnić na nowo. Wojna, która każe nam podziwiać naszych najeźdźców i pogardzać sobą.

"Raczej p o ś l u b i a ć naszych najeźdźców" – powiedziała sucho Ammu, mając na myśli Margaret Kochammę. Chacko nie zwrócił na nią uwagi. Kazał bliźniętom sprawdzić, co znaczy "pogardzać". Znaczyło: "patrzeć z góry na coś lub na kogoś; mieć w pogardzie; wykpiwać lub lekceważyć".

Chacko stwierdził, że w kontekście wojny, o której mówił – Wojny Snów – "pogardzać" obejmowało wszystkie te znaczenia.

Jesteśmy Jeńcami Wojennymi – powiedział Chacko – Nasze sny zostały zafałszowane. Nie mamy swojego miejsca. Żeglujemy bez kotwicy po niespokojnych morzach. Możliwe, że nigdy nie pozwoli się nam dobić do brzegu. Nasze zmartwienia nigdy nie będą wystarczająco smutne. Nasze radości wystarczająco wesołe. Nasze marzenia wystarczająco ambitne. Nasze życia wystarczająco ważne. Aby się liczyć.

Potem, aby dać Esthcie i Rahel poczucie perspektywy historycznej (choć to właśnie perspektywy miało samemu Chacko w następnych tygodniach dramatycznie zabraknąć) opowiedział im o Kobiecie Ziemi. Kazał im wyobrazić sobie ziemię – liczącą cztery tysiące sześćset milionów lat – jako czterdziestosześcioletnią kobietę, jak na przykład nauczycielka Aleyamma, która dawała im lekcje malajalam. Potrzeba było całego życia tej Kobiety, by Ziemia stała się tym, czym jest. By rozeszły się oceany. By powstały góry. Kobieta Ziemia miała jedenaście lat, powiedział Chacko, kiedy pojawiły się pierwsze jednokomórkowce. Pierwsze zwierzęta, takie jak robaki czy meduzy, pojawiły się dopiero, gdy miała czterdzieści lat. Miała przeszło czterdzieści pięć lat – zaledwie osiem miesięcy temu – gdy po ziemi wędrowały dinozaury.

W życiu Kobiety Ziemi cała ludzka cywilizacja, jaką znamy – powiedział Chacko bliźniętom – zaczęła się dopiero dwie godziny temu. To tyle, ile nam potrzeba by dojechać samochodem z Ayemenem do Koczinu.

Chacko stwierdził, że grozę i upokorzenie (upokorzenie to ładne słowo, pomyślała Rahel) budzi myśl, że cała historia nowożytna, wojny światowe, Wojna Marzeń, człowiek na księżycu, nauka, literatura, filozofia, pogoń za wiedzą – trwa nie dłużej, jak mrugnięcie oka Kobiety Ziemi.

A my, moi drodzy, wszystko czym jesteśmy i czym będziemy - jest tylko iskierką w jej oku – powiedział Chacko uroczyście, leżąc na łóżku i wpatrując się w sufit.

Kiedy był w takim nastroju, Chacko używał swojego Dostojnego głosu. W jego pokoju panowała kościelna atmosfera. Nie dbał o to, czy ktoś go słucha, czy nie. A nawet jeśli słuchali, nie przejmował się, czy rozumieją, co mówi. Ammu nazywała to jego Nastrojami Oksfordzkimi.

Później, w świetle wszystkiego, co się wydarzyło, "iskierka" wydawała się zupełnie nieodpowiednim słowem na opisanie wyrazu oczu Kobiety Ziemi. Iskierka była słowem z radośnie pofalowanymi brzegami.

Chociaż Matka Ziemia wywarła na bliźniętach trwałe wrażenie, to Dom Historii – o wiele im bliższy – naprawdę je fascynował. Myślały o nim często. O domu na drugim brzegu rzeki.

O domu na drugim brzegu rzeki.

Wynurzającym się z Jądra Ciemności.

O domu, do którego nie mogły wejść, pełnego szeptów, których nie mogły zrozumieć.

Nie wiedziały wtedy jeszcze, że wkrótce tam wejdą. Że przekroczą rzekę i będą tam, gdzie nie powinny być, z człowiekiem, którego nie powinny kochać. Że rozwartymi szeroko oczami będą patrzeć na historię, która objawi się przed nimi na tylnej werandzie.

Podczas gdy dzieci w ich wieku uczyły się innych rzeczy, Estha i Rahel nauczyli się jak historia stawia warunki i ściąga długi od tych, którzy łamią jej prawa. Usłyszeli jej głuchy, przyprawiający o mdłości odgłos. Poczuli jej zapach i nigdy go nie zapomnieli.

Zapach historii.

Jak zapach więdnących róż na wietrze.

Potem czaił się już zawsze w zwyczajnych rzeczach. W wieszakach do płaszczy. Pomidorach. W asfalcie na drogach. W niektórych kolorach. W talerzach w restauracji. W braku słów. I w pustce w oczach.

Dorastali borykając się wciąż z problemem jak żyć po tym, co się stało. Próbowali wmówić sobie, że w kategoriach czasu geologicznego było to nic nie znaczące zdarzenie. Tylko mrugnięcie okiem Kobiety Ziemi. Że przedtem działy się Gorsze Rzeczy. Że ciągle działy się Gorsze Rzeczy. Lecz nie znaleźli w tej myśli pocieszenia.

Chacko stwierdził, że oglądanie "Dźwięków Muzyki" było wręcz chorobliwym przejawem anglofilii.

Ammu powiedziała: Daj spokój, cały świat ogląda "Dźwięki Muzyki". To światowy przebój.

Niemniej jednak, moja droga, – powiedział Chacko swoim Dostojnym głosem. Nie. Mniej. Jednak.

Mammachi często mówiła, że wiadomo, że Chacko jest jednym z najmądrzejszych ludzi w Indiach. Kto tak uważa? – pytała zawsze Ammu. Na j a k i e j podstawie? Mammachi uwielbiała opowiadać historię (którą znała od Chacka) o tym, jak jeden z profesorów w Oksfordzie stwierdził, że jego zdaniem Chacko to człowiek genialny i materiał na premiera.

Na to Ammu zawsze mówiła: Ha, ha, ha!, jak bohaterowie komiksów.

Mówiła jeszcze:

a) jeśli ktoś pojechał do Oksfordu, nie znaczyło to jeszcze, że był mądry;

b) to, że ktoś był mądry, nie znaczyło koniecznie, że byłby dobrym premierem;

c) jeśli ktoś nie potrafił nawet zarządzać fabryką marynat tak, aby przynosiła

I, co najważniejsze:
d) wszystkie hinduskie matki mają obsesję na punkcie swoich synów i dlatego nie umieją obiektywnie ocenić ich zdolności.

Chacko mówił:
a) do Oksfordu się nie jeździ. W Oksfordzie się s t u d i u j e
I
b) po s t u d i a c h w Oksfordzie ląduje się wysoko.

Chcesz chyba powiedzieć, że ląduje się z hukiem na ziemi? – pytała Ammu. Co ty z pewnością robisz. Jak twoje słynne samoloty.

Ammu mówiła, że smutny, ale całkowicie przewidywalny los samolotów Chacka był obiektywną miarą jego możliwości.

Raz w miesiącu (z wyjątkiem pory monsunów) do Chacka przychodziła pocztą paczka. Zawsze zawierała drewniany model samolotu do składania z drzewa balsa. Zwykle Chacko potrzebował od ośmiu do dziesięciu dni, żeby złożyć samolot łącznie z jego miniaturowym zbiornikiem na paliwo i napędzanym silnikiem śmiglem. Kiedy samolot był gotowy, Chacko zabierał Estha i Rahel na pola ryżowe w Nattakom, aby pomogli mu go uruchomić. Samolot nigdy nie latał dłużej niż minutę. Miesiąc po miesiącu starannie złożone przez Chacka maszyny rozbijały się na mulistozielonych polach ryżu. Estha i Rahel zrywali się jak wytresowane do aportu psy, aby ocalić resztki wraka.

Ogon, zbiornik, skrzydło.

Zraniona maszyna.

Pokój Chacka był zaśmiecony połamanymi drewnianymi samolotami. Każdego miesiąca przychodził kolejny zestaw. Chacko nigdy nie twierdził, że samolot rozbił się z powodu wad fabrycznych.

Dopiero po śmierci Pappachiego Chacko zrezygnował z pracy wykładowcy w Christian College w Madrasie i wrócił do Ayemenem z Wiosłem z Oksfordu i marzeniami aby zostać Królem Marynat. Przeznaczył swoją rentę i pieniądze z książeczki oszczędnościowej na kupno maszyny do zamykania butelek z Bharat. Jego wiosło (ozdobione wykutymi w złocie nazwiskami innych członków jego drużyny) zawisło na żelaznych obręczach na ścianie fabryki.

Do czasu przybycia Chacka fabryka była niewielkim, lecz dochodowym przedsiębiorstwem. Mammachi prowadziła je po prostu jak dużą kuchnię. Chacko zarejestrował je jako spółkę i poinformował Mammachi, że jest w niej ona tylko figurantem. Zainwestował w wyposażenie (maszyny do puszkowania, kotły, kuchenki) i zwiększył zatrudnienie. Prawie natychmiast rozpoczął się finansowy upadek, który Chacko starał się sztucznie hamować za pomocą

finansowy upadek, który Chacko starał się sztucznie hamować za pomocą szaleńczo wysokich pożyczek bankowych, które uzyskiwał dzięki oddaniu w zastaw hipoteczny rodzinnych pól ryżowych naokoło Domu Ayemenem. Chociaż Ammu pracowała w fabryce równie dużo, co Chacko, to zawsze, kiedy miał on do czynienia z inspektorami żywnościowymi lub kontrolą sanitarną, mówił m o j a fabryka, m o j e ananasy, m o j e marynaty. Było to zgodne z prawem, bo Ammu, jako córka, nie miała praw majątkowych.

Chacko powiedział Rahel i Esthcie, że Ammu nie może sobie rościć.

Dzięki naszemu cudownemu, męskiemu, szowinistycznemu społeczeństwu - odparła Ammu.

Co jest twoje, jest moje, a co jest moje jest także moje – stwierdził Chacko.

Śmiał się głosem zadziwiająco wysokim jak na człowieka o takim wzroście i tuszy. A kiedy się śmiał, cały się trząsł, chociaż sprawiał wrażenie, że pozostaje w bezruchu.

Przed przybyciem Chacka do Ayemenem fabryka Mammachi nie miała nazwy. Wszyscy nazywali jej marynaty i dżemy po prostu Mango Soshy albo Bananowy Dżem Soshy. Sosha to było imię Mammachi, Soshamma.

To Chacko ochrzcił fabrykę nazwą "Marynaty i Przetwory Paradise" i zlecił Towarzyszowi K.N.M. Pillaiowi zaprojektowanie i wydrukowanie etykietek. Z początku chciał ją nazwać "Marynaty i Przetwory Zeus", ale wszyscy zaprotestowali przeciw pomysłowi, twierdząc, że nazwa "Zeus" jest niejasna i nie ma budzi skojarzeń z regionem, podczas gdy "Paradise" - owszem. (Propozycja towarzysza Pillaia – "Marynaty Parashuram" – została odrzucona z przeciwnego powodu: zbyt dużo skojarzeń z regionem).

To Chacko wpadł na pomysł, żeby namalować billboard i zainstalować go na rozsuwanym dachu Plymoutha.

On translation strategy

The God of Small Things is the first novel of the Indian writer, Arundhati Roy. The novel, which takes place in the state of Kerala in south India, recalls some dramatic events from the life of a local family. Those events, though they took place in the space of just a few weeks, changed the life of this family forever – especially the lives of the twin children Rahel and Estha, who are the main protagonists of the story. The subject matter of the novel (which is about the experiences of childhood, the disintegration of traditional family, a forbidden love) has drawn the attention of the readers. But the immense popularity of the book was due not only to its subject matter, but also to the exotic (for a Western

Roy describes the world in a very sensuous way, based not only on images, but also on the sounds, smells, and tastes. It is her characteristic style and the vocabulary she uses (frequent puns and neologisms), and the whole cultural context, that make *The God of Small Things* a real challenge for a translator.

The fragment of the novel which I translated exemplifies perfectly the problems that may appear during the translation of *The God of Small Things*. Such problems arise in three main spheres: in rendering the vocabulary, the style and narrative technique of the author, and the cultural context of the novel. The aim of my translation was the functional equivalence, i.e. rendering the original text so that for the Polish readers (the target audience) it had the same (or at least very similar) meaning as for the implied, source audience (and by source audience I mean both the Indian and the British readers – because the novel was published almost simultaneously in India and in Britain. Moreover, the upper classes of Indian society, which constitute the majority of the Indian readers of this book, are strongly anglicized).

The Vocabulary

An evidently problematic issue is how to translate, or rather how to create the Polish versions of the Hindi or Malayalam (local dialect) words and names. It would be possible to translate the words and to present the names in a Polish phonetic version. However, I decided not to change any words (such as 'mundu') and names ('Ayemenem', 'Pappachi', 'Soshamma'). In the original version of the novel the names and expressions in Hindi (even if that is only the English phonetic version of Hindi words) clearly differ from the English text and contribute to creating the exotic atmosphere and the local colour of the setting. They should perform the same function in the Polish text. Apart from that, in my opinion the Hindi names would look unnatural in a Polish phonetic version. Besides, Polish readers are used to the convention of leaving foreign names in their original language version. The only names that I have changed are those conventionally written in the Polish version (e.g. 'Oksford', 'Koczin').

Another problem that appears is the translation of the expressions that have a structure typical for English, but not existing in the Polish language (especially when the author transforms or uses this structure in a creative way). Such is the case of compound nouns, e.g. 'cuff-links'. In the case of this particular word, its structure and meaning were crucial for the whole second paragraph (as the structure of the word 'cuff-links' was for Estha and Rahel the

first 'morsel of logic' they noticed in the English language). Therefore it was necessary to find (and introduce somehow in the first paragraph) a Polish word created on the base of two other words, and meaning 'some object made of metal' (fit for being made into jewellery). 'Naszyjnik' is such a word. Originally I intended to translate 'cuff-links' into 'naszyjniki' but, as it would be a bit strange for a man to keep a box of necklaces, I decided to translate the unimportant word 'pendants' into 'naszyjniki'.

Phrasal Verbs are an obvious example of a whole class of words that does not exist in Polish. One can of course always find a Polish single verb to be a counterpart of a Phrasal Verb, but such translation becomes impossible when the structure and properties of the Phrasal Verb are important, and used by the author in a pun. In one moment Roy makes fun of immense productivity of the Phrasal Verbs formation pattern: when Rahel hears the adjective 'humbling' she mistakes it for a verb and a Phrasal 'humbling along' immediately comes to her mind. As it is impossible to render the process of a Phrasal Verb formation in Polish, I omitted the sentence that includes 'humbling along' in my translation. In another case Roy uses the ambiguity of a Phrasal Verb 'come down' to play on words (taking advantage of a fact that one meaning of 'come down' is rather apparent and easy to guess, while another – quite non-transparent).

Roy often creates her own words (in accordance with the word formation patterns of English) – such us 're-dream'. It could be translated as 'prześniwa' (using the Polish prefix 'prze-' as a counterpart of English 're-') but it sounds rather awkward (especially in present tense). That's why I decided to use a longer expression 'śnić na nowo', instead of one word.

Problems with translation were sometimes caused by the fact that some words have in Polish fewer meanings than in English. Such was the case of 'dispose' (Polish 'usposobić'). The only solution was to make the dictionary definition of 'dispose' shorter in translated text (as 'usposobić' has two meanings, while 'dispose' – three). A slightly different problem was caused by the translation of a fragment about the 'War of Dreams'. The context made it possible to translate 'dream' either as 'marzenie' or as 'sen'; it depended only on my interpretation. I decided to use the word 'sen' – whose meaning is wider (and in this context interchangeable with the meaning of 'marzenie').

I have already mentioned a difficulty in translating the ambiguous verb 'come down'. It means either 'to leave a university' or 'to fall and crash'. The fact that two so different meanings are expressed by one form was crucial (as it became the basis for a sarcastic joke). To preserve such sense of using 'come down' and its importance in the play on words, I translated it into 'lądować', adding 'wysoko' to render the first, and 'z hukiem na ziemi' to render the second meaning of 'come down'.

The expressions that do not have Polish counterparts can also cause difficulties in translation (for instance 'read at Oxford', which I have translated simply into 'studiować w Oksfordzie'). A case of 'Reading Aloud' was a bit different. One cannot translate it into a single verb, but it would be possible to use a phrase 'czytać na głos' or 'czytać z książki'. However, for stylistic reasons I decided to translate 'Reading Aloud Voice' into 'Dostojny Głos'. The meaning slightly changes, but the expression 'Dostojny Głos' is stylistically better than a lengthy phrase 'głos jakby czytał z książki'.

The most difficult translation problem in the sphere of vocabulary was rendering in Polish the English puns of various kinds: I have already mentioned the author's plays with the structure or ambiguity of numerous expressions. Nevertheless, the most difficult to translate was the expression 'Locusts Stand I' – the effect of transforming by a child an unknown and not understood phrase 'locus standi'. I tried to render this pun by transforming the Polish counterpart of 'locus standi' ('status prawny') but it turned out to be impossible to transform it in a way that would allow a reader to guess the original meaning. That's why I introduced another play on words, which (like the original one) is based on a distortion of an expression not understood by a child ('Ammu nie może sobie rościć' is the only thing the children remember from the sentence 'Ammu nie może sobie rościć praw do majątku').

The style and the narrative technique

A translator obviously has to render somehow in Polish the syntactic constructions typical for English (e.g. 'to go something' – 'Englishman who had "gone native"'; 'to have something done' – 'Chacko (...) had labels designed and printed'). It is usually quite easy, although the Polish constructions (and as a result the sentences too) are in most cases longer than the English ones. A more complex issue is rendering the time perspective. The fragment that I translated is an analepsis in analepsis (the most of the novel is retrospective – the main protagonist Rahel is about thirty when the novel begins, and the story is mainly about her recollections of the childhood). In this analepsis there are also prolepses ('They didn't know then, that soon they *would* go in'). It is not difficult to translate, but requires a lot of attention and accuracy in order not to distort the original time perspective.

Another translator's task is to render two very frequently alternating styles of narration: dialogues and description. The style of Roy's description is very distinctive: she uses short, broken sentences to create an impression of

somebody gradually recalling and telling slowly, with lots of breaks, his childhood memories.

A translator has to remember that the greater part of a fragment translated here presents the reality from the point of view of a child (Rahel–the child is the focaliser). That's why I tried to render as faithfully as possible a lofty, pompous style of Chacko's speech (which often causes the children to misunderstand him). For this reason I wanted to render the sense of various plays on words, which reflect the children's lack of understanding or peculiar way of distorting certain expressions.

The most distinctive feature of Roy's style is its sensousness. Roy describes the world by referring to feelings coming from all senses: sight ('ship-shaped shadows', 'slushgreen fields'), hearing ('ancestors (...) gossiped in sibilant, papery whispers'), smell ('old roses on the breeze'), touch ('cool stone floors'). Sometimes the author combines the feelings of various senses to create synaesthetic expressions such as 'Twinkle was a word with crinkled, happy edges.' In this case the sound of the word causes a child to imagine it visually in a very specific way. I believe that the Polish word 'iskierka' ('Iskierka była słowem z radośnie pofalowanymi brzegami.') makes a similar impression - but a translator cannot of course predict the subjective impressions of the readers. Anyway, I wanted to render as faithfully as possible the sensual impressions described by Roy, so that a Polish reader could feel the same when reading what an English-speaking reader felt.

Cultural context

The God of Small Things is a very 'Indian' novel: imbued with local colour, and thus exotic for a Western reader. A translator must be very careful when he tries to make the text clear and comprehensible for a Polish reader – not to make it too clear and not to lose anything from its exoticism. Such was the intention of the author, who claims

> 'that her novel hasn't been in any way 'smoothed' for the sake of a Western reader. 'It's not a guide to Indian culture. The American publishers said that I should explain more, that I am exploring an unknown territory. Unknown for whom? – I asked. When I read Updike, I don't want him to explain to me some American idiosyncrasies.''[1] (Roy 1998: 316)

The sensousness of Roy's style, which I have mentioned, is also connected with cultural context: it is typical of the Indian literature. That makes it even more important to render the author's style faithfully.

Another problem that a translator of *The God of Small Things* has to face

is the translation of names, words, and quotations in Hindi. I have already explained the issue of translating the names. Apart from names, however, there are words and expressions referring to everyday in India; to Indian houses, dishes, clothes (e.g. 'mundu'). I decided to follow Roy's intentions and not to create a Polish version of such words, and not to give any footnotes either – so that a reader could explore the exotic world of this novel himself. For this reason I didn't consider it necessary to give any explanations of the fragments concerning historical or political problems of India (e.g. the English influence on Indian culture, which is referred to in Chacko's story about the War of Dreams).

The last issue connected with cultural context is the intertextuality of the novel. The author often uses bits and pieces of different works – not necessarily literary ones (for instance songs, a dictionary). In case of referring to other works of literature, especially those translated long ago and well known (*Heart of Darkness*) I simply cited their Polish titles (*Jądro Ciemności*). In case of the quotations from the works, which do not have a Polish version (if there exists one, anyway I did not have access to it) – like *Reader's Digest Great Encyclopaedic Dictionary* – I tried to translate the given fragment faithfully, consulting similar sources (Polish dictionaries) for the stylistic reasons.

The fragment of the novel that I translated exemplifies the most important problems that a translator of *The God of Small Things* has to face. I tried to translate this fragment as faithfully as possible - and at the same time I wanted it to make the same impression on the Polish reader as it made on the reader of the English version: the impression that the author had intended to make.

Notes

[1] Roy 1998, p.316 (translation mine)

Bibliography

Roy, A. *The God of Small Things*. Flamingo. London 1997
Roy, A. *Bóg Rzeczy Małych*. Zysk i S-ka. Poznań 1998

Poem Translations

One Cigarette
Edwin Morgan

No smoke without you, my fire.
After you left,
your cigarette glowed on in my ashtray
and sent up a long thread of such quiet grey
I smiled to wonder who would believe its signal
of so much love. One cigarette
in the non-smoker tray.
As the last spire
trembles up, a sudden draught
blows it winding into my face.
Is it smell, is it taste?
You are here again, and I am drunk on your tobacco lips.
Out with the light.
Let the smoke lie back in the dark.
Till I hear the very ash
sigh down among the flowers of brass
I'll breathe, and long past midnight, your last kiss.

(from: Roderick Watson ed. and intro., Three Scottish Poets. Maccaig, Morgan, Lockhead. Cannongate Classics: Edinburgh 1998, p. 51)

Papieros

Edwin Morgan

Przekład: Uczestnicy seminarium magisterskiego z translatoryki, IV rok, jesień 2000.

Nie ma dymu bez Ciebie, mój ogniu.
Po Twym odejściu,
Twój papieros tlił się w mojej popielniczce
i słał długą nić cichej szarości.
Zabawne – kto by uwierzył w sygnał
tak wielkiej miłości. Papieros
w popielniczce niepalącego.
Gdy ostatnia smuga
unosi się drżąc, nagły podmuch
oplata mi dymem twarz.
Czy to zapach, czy to smak?
Jesteś tu znów, a ja upajam się smakiem Twych ust.
Niech zgaśnie światło.
Niech dym ścieli się w ciemności.
Póki nie usłyszę szeptu popiołu
pośród mosiężnych kwiatów,
będę wdychać, długo po północy, Twój ostatni pocałunek.

Kubla Khan, or a Vision dream
Samuel Taylor Coleridge

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to men
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! That deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedar cover!
A savage place! As holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this Earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chafty grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
and sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
and 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
ancestral voices prophesying war!
The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure dome with caves of ice.

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was a Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air
That sunny dome! Those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on the honeydew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

Kubla Khan albo senne marzenie

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Przekład: Joanna Dymitruk

Rozkazem Chana z Xanadu
Pałac przepiękny wyrósł na skale
W miejscu gdzie Alfa, najświętsza rzeka
Płynąc przez skryte przed okiem człowieka
Jaskinie
W otchłani bezkresnej morza nagle ginie.
Na ziemi żyznej pałac ten się wznosi,
Ogród baśniowy mury pierścieniem otacza,
Strumień srebrzystym się śmiechem zanosi
Aromat drzew wonnych wokół się roztacza.
Prastary las rośnie na tych starych wzgórzach,
W soczystej zieleni blask słońca się nurza.
Lecz oto swym cieniem duch romantyczny
Przeciął szczeliną wzgórza cedrem otulone
O Dzika Kraino! Tak piękna, tak święta
Jak księżyca oblicze blade, zmęczone

Jak księżyca oblicze blade, zmęczone
Płaczem kobiety tęskniącej za swym kochankiem demonem!
Nagle z tej szczeliny kipielą gorącą
Jak gdyby ziemi gardziel się ogniem dławiła,
Strumieniem fontanna pod niebo się wzbiła.
W jej gniewnych gwałtownie plujących językach
Runęły na ziemię pałacowe zgliszcza
Jak grad, jak plewy kiedy z nich gospodarz
Złote ziarno pszenicy, młócąc, oczyszcza.
Wśród deszczu skał roztańczonych spiętrzyły się wody
Alfy, rzeki świętej gwałtownie wzburzone.
Pokrętne meandry poniosły wartko rzekę
Przez doliny górskie, wąwozy, lasy zielone
Aż wdarła się w jaskinie skryte przed człowiekiem
By w oceanu runąć głębie niezmierzone.
Usłyszał w fal łoskocie Kubla Chan niespokojne
Przodków swoich głosy zwiastujące wojnę.
Cień pałacu niewyraźny
Znika w wody martwej toni
Słychać tylko jak fontanna
Gdzieś w jaskiniach cicho dzwoni.
Jak gdyby cudem piękne komnaty malowane słońcem
Zmieniły się w jaskinie srebrnym lodem lśniące.
Sen przepiękny kiedyś śniłem:
Z Abisynii dziewczę śliczne
Na cymbałach pieśń swą grało
O górze, Aborze, magicznej.
Czy będę umiał w sobie odnaleźć
Tę pieśń, tę symfonię
By tak znów oszaleć
By muzyką tą niebiańską wytrwale
Zbudować pałac? jak tamten, na skale?
Malowane słońcem komnaty lodowe-
-ciało majestatyczne zbudowane słowem!
Przez wszystkich widziane. Lecz oto przestroga:
Przed Nim, natchnionym posłańcem od Boga.
Włosy wiatrem splątane, trwogą dziwną przejmujące oczy,
A wokół niego moc magiczne kręgi toczy.
Ten boski posłaniec z nieba pochodzi,
Z raju, gdzie miód złoty mleczne rzeki słodzi.

Men Talk (Rap)

Liz Lockhead

Women
Rabbit rabbit rabbit women
Tattle and titter
Women prattle
Women waffle and witter

Men Talk. Men Talk.

Women into Girl Talk
About Women's Trouble
Trivia 'n' Small Talk
They yap and they babble
Men Talk. Men Talk.

Women gossip Women giggle
Women niggle-niggle-niggle
Men Talk.

Women yatter
Women chatter
Women chew the fat, women spill the beans
Women aint been takin'
The oh-so Good Advice in them
Women's Magazines.

A Man Likes A Good Listener.

Oh yeah
I like A Woman
Who likes me enough
Not to niptick
Not to nag and
Not to interrupt 'cause I call that treason
A woman with the Good Grace
To be struck dumb
Be my Sweet Reason. Yes –
A Man Likes A Good Listener

A Real
Man
Likes a Real Good Listener

Women yap yap yap
Verbal Diarrhoea is a Female Disease
Woman she spread the rumours round she
Like Philadelphia Cream Cheese.

Oh
Bossy Women Gossip
Girlish Women Giggle
Women natter, women nag
Women niggle niggle niggle
Men Talk.

Men
Think First, Speak Later
Men Talk.

(from: Liz Lockhead, True Confessions & New Cliché's, Edinburgh: Polygon Books 1985, pp. 134-5)

Mąż Rzecze (Rap)

Liz Lockhead

Przekład: Jakub Nowicki

Żona
Ględzi ględzi ględzi żona
Gęga gulgocze
Żona kwęka
Żona smęci szczebiocze

Mąż Rzecze. Mąż Rzecze.

Żona i Córka
O Babskich Sprawach
Bzdetach Blahostkach
Wciąż mogą nadawać

Mąż Rzeczc. Mąż Rzeczc.

Żona bzdurzy Żona brzęczy
Żona dręczy-dręczy-dręczy
Mąż Rzeczc.

Żona pytluje
Żona trajluje
Żona leje wodę, chlap – wygada się
Żona ma za nic
Ach-jak-Dobrą-Radę w tej tam
Kobiecej Prasie.
Mąż lubi kiedy Żona slucha.

Tak tak
Ja to lubię kiedy
Żona lubi mnie
I nie zrzędzi
I nie truje
I nie wchodzi w słowo bo to dla mnie zdrada
Lecz ma Dobre Chęci
By oniemieć
Gdy Me Słowo pada. Tak –

Mąż lubi kiedy Żona slucha

Mąż-
czyzna
lubi kiedy Ż-ona slucha

Żona traj-trajkocze
Biegunka Słowna to Choroba Żony
Żona plotki ona wkrąg roznosi ona
Jak mleczarz mleko co rano do domów

Oo
Władcza Żona Bzdurzy
Żona-Trzpiotka Brzęczy
Żona paple truje wciąż
Żona dręczy dręczy dręczy

Mąz Rzecze.

Mąż
Pomyśli Zanim Powie
Mąż Rzecze.