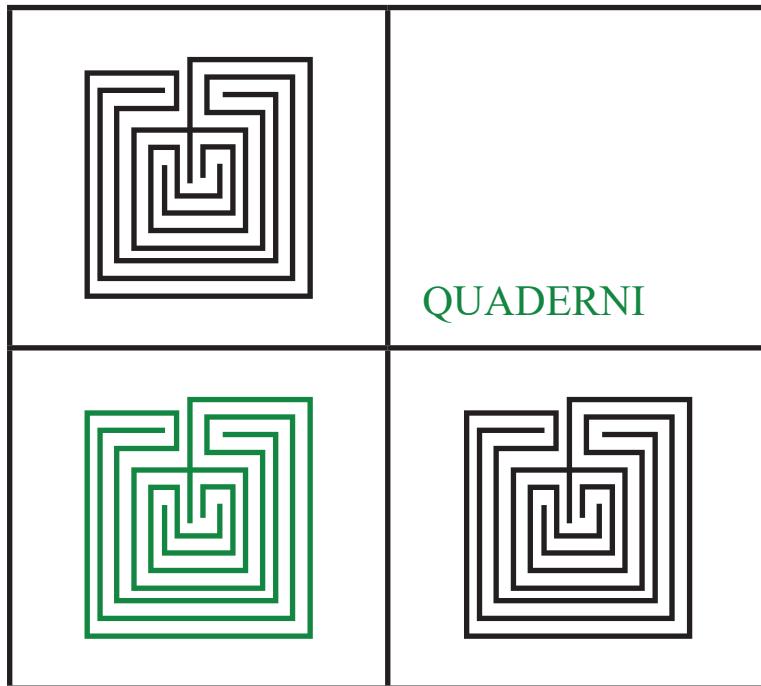# Adaptations of Stories and Stories of Adaptation

Adaptation(s) d'histoires et histoires d'adaptation(s)

edited by / sous la direction de
Sabrina Francesconi / Gerardo Acerenza

QUADERNI

Università degli Studi di Trento
Dipartimento di Lettere e Filosofia

A collection of interdisciplinary essays by thirteen international scholars in Canadian studies, this volume explores adaptation process and practice from synchronic and diachronic perspectives. These contributions critically analyze linguistic and textual dynamics across genres (opera, poems, short stories, novels, TV series, films, picture books) adopting a broad range of methodological frameworks and tools. They examine the adaptation of stories alongside stories of adaptation, exposing many facets of complex issues such as identity, agency, culture, space, and time. Attention is also devoted to how different media (e.g. books, TV, digital devices) and modes (e.g. writing, music, images) affect the codification, transcodification, and decodification of Canadian narratives. The authors convincingly argue that, when stories move and change, they emotionally and cognitively engage and transform readers, listeners, spectators, audiences – all of us.

Ce volume collectif regroupe les articles de treize chercheurs internationaux en études canadiennes et québécoises qui tentent de cerner les différents enjeux et stratégies de l'adaptation. En s'appuyant sur des cadres théoriques divers et des méthodologies variées, les contributions analysent de manière critique les dynamiques de l'adaptation à travers les genres littéraires (poésie, nouvelle, roman), les médias (littérature, cinéma, série télévisée, musique) et les cultures. Les lecteurs sont ainsi invités à découvrir d'un côté des adaptations d'histoires et de l'autre des histoires d'adaptations. Les auteurs soulèvent plusieurs questions liées à la pratique de l'adaptation, puisque à partir du moment où des histoires sont adaptées, elles voyagent à travers les pays et les langues, elles changent de médias et peuvent mobiliser des émotions différentes chez les lecteurs, les auditeurs ou les spectateurs d'une autre culture.

SABRINA FRANCESCONI is Associate Professor of English Linguistics and Translation at the University of Trento.

GERARDO ACERENZA est *Professore associato* en Langue et Traduction françaises à l'Université de Trento.

€ 15,00

Labirinti   187

Adaptation of Stories and Stories of Adaptation: Media, Modes and Codes

Adaptation(s) d'histoires et histoires d'adaptation(s): médias, modalités sémiotiques, codes linguistiques

edited by / sous la direction de
Sabrina Francesconi / Gerardo Acerenza

Università degli Studi di Trento
Dipartimento di Lettere e Filosofia

Table of contents / Table des matières

Canadian Studies in Italy

Oriana Palusci

President of the Italian Association for Canadian Studies
Università degli Studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale'

The Italian Association for Canadian Studies (Associazione Italiana di Studi Canadesi – AISC)[1] was born in Urbino in 1979, when a small group of Italian academics from different disciplines – history, geography, English and French literatures – decided to found a new area of studies centred upon Canada. Among them, Alfredo Rizzardi (University of Bologna) and Sergio Zoppi (University of Turin). I myself was among the first members. At that time, Canada was mainly known as an ice-ridden migratory country and as the land where many Italian «war brides» had sailed in search of a new life. Other fields of study were increasingly adopted by the Association, giving rise to an interdisciplinary approach to the study of manifold different fields concerning «Oceano Canada», as the Italian writer Ennio Flaiano called that country in 1971.[2] As a matter of fact, AISC slowly became a sort of ongoing workshop adopting Italian scholarly perspectives.

The Association has constantly tried to fulfil its mission, that is to promote Canadian Studies in Italy on both a scientific and didactic level, to engage with Canadian universities and cultural

---

[1] The AISC website is at www.aiscan.net

[2] Ennio Flaiano's documentary film *Oceano Canada*, together with director Andrea Andermann, 1971.

institutions, to encourage the cooperation of Italian scholars with other Canadian Associations, as well as to organize International Conferences and Seminars, always bearing in mind the two linguistic and cultural identities at least from the traditional point of view. This was made possible thanks to the financial contribution of the Canadian Government, which generously funded a number of associations, especially through the Understanding Canada-Canadian Studies Program.

At the very beginning, in the Italian academy of the late 1970s, Canadian Studies was taught as a secondary subject in the field of English and American Studies and French literature. I held a seminar on Hugh MacLennan's *Two Solitudes*, Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* and on Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* at the University 'G. D'Annunzio' of Pescara, encouraged by Carlo Pagetti. In the late 1980s, while I was a *ricercatrice* at the University of Turin with Claudio Gorlier and Ruggiero Bianchi, I started to collaborate with the feminist publishing house La Tartaruga in Milan, where Margaret Laurence, Alice Munro, Margaret Atwood, Marion Engel and Jane Urquhart were introduced to the Italian reading public.

After 40 years, it is fair to state that without doubt AISC has put Canada on the map of Italian culture through its many university courses, graduate theses and Ph.D. dissertations, conferences and seminars. Thus, Canada as a far-off and cold place of Italian immigrants started to take shape as a multicultural and plurilinguistic nation to dialogue with. Among the many positive consequences of the work of the Association, a relevant number of Canadian scholars and writers were invited to Italian Universities and *vice versa*, establishing stimulating partnerships; Canadian literature, both in English and in French, was translated on a regular basis into Italian; Italian university courses increasingly included topics on Canada, even though, it must be said, there is no specific discipline named Canadian Studies in Italy yet. In the meantime, Alice Munro has won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2013 and Margaret Atwood has gained international

status. Canada has been the guest country of the International Torino Book Fair in the past and also hopefully in the near future. By now, outstanding figures such as Northrop Frye and Marshall McLuhan have been duly appreciated by the Italian culture.

Especially in the first decades of the Association, a significant role was played by the Academic Relations Office of the Canadian Embassy in Rome, which, in many occasions, helped negotiate a strong linkage between the two countries. Meanwhile, AISC issued an annual journal – «Rivista di studi canadesi - Canadian studies review - Revue d'études canadiennes» (1989-2011) – edited by Giovanni Dotoli (University of Bari) and published by Schena Editore with articles written in French, English and Italian.

One significant change occurred in 1981 with the establishment of the International Council for Canadian Studies/Conseil international d'études canadiennes, being AISC amongst its founding members. ICCS/CIEC «is a federation of 23 national and multi-national Canadian Studies associations and 5 associate members in thirty-nine countries».[3] It is interesting to underline that the Italian historian Luca Codignola from the University of Genova was one of its first Presidents. AISC members are automatically part of ICCS/CIEC, connecting the Italian Association with Canadianists to a worldwide network. The AISC President is invited to participate in its annual general meeting held in Ottawa, or other Canadian cities, to discuss and plan the future of the network. The annual report of its activities held in Italy is shared with the other members of the international association. In 1989 ICCS/CIEC also launched the «International Journal of Canadian Studies - Revue internationale d'études canadiennes», a bilingual, multidisciplinary, and peer-reviewed journal publishing original research in Canadian Studies, bringing together scholarly research carried out both by Canadians and academics studying Canada from abroad. The journal is now published by the University of Toronto Press and available in print and online.

---

[3] See https://www.iccs-ciec.ca/about-iccs.php

A fatal blow for the whole Canadian network was 2012, when the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (DFAIT) decided to abolish the Understanding Canada-Canadian Studies Program, the longstanding program which was the financial backbone of the associations, as well as of ICCS/CIEC. Many grants to visiting scholars and to the international organizations fostering Canadian subjects were cancelled. Canadian writers and intellectuals lamented the closing of the Understanding Canada Program but with no visible result. Anyhow, still today ICCS/CIEC members are urging the federal government to replace the program, so vital to the flourishing of Canadian studies globally.

AISC has also been a member of the European Network for Canadian Studies/Réseau européen d'études canadiennes, created in 1990 in Brussels, coordinated by Serge Jaumain, to develop the European dimension of Canadian Studies, to facilitate the link between European and Canadian scholars and to contribute to the development of a new generation of European Canadianists.[4] Unfortunately the Network was closed just after the termination of the Understanding Canada Program, because of lack of funding.

Without funding, also AISC has found it difficult to continue the mandate of the association, even if luckily conferences and seminars have been regularly organized throughout Italy, from north to south. The AISC Conference at the University of Trento is a worthy witness of the work still being done on Canadian Studies in Italy through the financial contributions of the single universities. However, one chief regret is that AISC is unable to adequately sponsor the research of young promising Italian scholars.

Thanks to the AISC Presidents and to all the Italian scholars who have been working on Canadian topics – names I am not quoting, because I do not want to neglect any of them – the Italian Association for Canadian Studies is proud to have produced a long list of high quality research on Canada through the publi-

---

[4] See https://www2.ulb.ac.be/encs-reec/EN/home.htm

cation of books, conference proceedings, articles and translations into Italian offering an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary perspective from abroad.

In forty years, Canada has deeply changed. From the country of the «Two Solitudes», Canada has become a unique world stage, a post-nation, according to one definition, where many voices and languages, from the ones of the First nations and Inuit to those of recent migrants from the South Asian subcontinent to Siria, from Eastern Africa and South America, despite setbacks and failures, strive to build the foundation of a multiethnic nation of shared values, peace and justice for all. We, citizens of the Old World, must accept the challenge.

INTRODUCTION

Sabrina Francesconi - Gerardo Acerenza

Università degli Studi di Trento

Adaptations of Stories and Stories of Adaptation: Media, Modes and Codes is a response to the idea that, following Linda Hutcheon,[1] an open and fluid approach is required for us to make sense of adaptation(s). First, an inclusive reconceptualization implies addressing a wider range of text genres (radio, TV, film adaptations, stage plays, opera, ballets, videogames, art and architectural monuments, nature-park rides, among others), beyond the traditionally privileged page-to-screen transcodification of literary works into films. Second, a dynamic perspective is concerned with the telling and retelling of a story inherent in the process of adaptation, and with its endless interpretation, appropriation and recreation.

A culturally, socially, linguistically superdiverse country, Canada provides a privileged context for the codification and circulation of stories negotiating identity and culture through contact and tension. In the transfer and transformation across media, modes and codes, as well as across genres, cultures and ages, such dynamics are made even more prominent. Indeed, narratives radically move and change in the adaptation process and

---

[1] L. Hutcheon with S. O'Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation* (2nd edition), Routledge, New York-London 2012.

ceaselessly renegotiate identity at different layers, by engaging authors, adaptors, and audiences.

Multifold and multifaceted stories of adaptation are told in the following thirteen chapters by international scholars in Canadian studies from a range of disciplines, including history, literature, linguistics, cultural studies, semiotics, ELT and education. The interdisciplinary essays in this collection bridge the gap between apparently divergent practices, discourses, domains, and integrate epistemologies, frameworks, and tools: ethnographic research, translation studies, stylistics, multimodal studies, corpus linguistics, among others.

Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon's essay *Adapting His/Story: Louis Riel in History, Drama, Opera, and Staging(s)* opens the volume and discusses the tellings and retellings of Louis Riel's complex story through multi-media adaptations. With particular attention to the 20th-century Canadian opera and its various stages of adaptation to opera (from the creation of a libretto to the staging or mise-en-scène), the controversial figure in Canadian history is seen as negotiating Canada's national conscience.

In *The Lens and the Boat: Accommodating Objects in* The Love of a Good Woman *by Alice Munro*, Héliane Ventura inspects intertextual allusions in the 1998 story as performing an adaptive process of accommodation. She focuses her attention on an optometrist's red box, filled with different lenses and optical instruments, and on a boat, which is devoted to the preparation of a trip, and demonstrates that they are profoundly ambivalent, self-reflexive and metadiscursive.

Corinne Bigot's essay, *Alice Munro's* A Wilderness Station *and Anne Wheeler's* Edge of Madness*: Filling in the Blanks*, examines the 2002 Canadian feature film, as the adaptation of Munro's short story *A Wilderness Station*. In turn, Munro's literary text is read as adapting a family story about the accidental death of one of the author's ancestors. The French scholar discusses the gap-filling process across the various oral, literary, film narratives

and defines the filling of textual gaps as one of the specific strategies the adaptation process requires.

By adopting the framework and tools of multimodal stylistics, Francesconi's essay *Transparent Tricks: Looking in the Mirrors of Screen Adaptations* inspects the mirror as a heterotopic space in six audio-visual artefacts adapting Munro's stories. Expressing different stories of adaptations, the mirror scene is pervasive and pivotal. It operates as a semiotically layered and complex trope, encompassing emotional, cognitive, and aesthetic concerns, enacting issues related to identity, agency, textuality, staging introspection and inscribing tension within the narrative.

Marina Zito's essay *«Une payse dépaysée»: réflexions sur* Poèmes des quatre côtés *de Jacques Brault* is concerned with the genre of poetry. Defined as a hybrid, experimental work in which Brault practises the art of 'nontraduction', the *Poèmes des quatre côtés* start from non-translated anglophone poems by authors including Gwendolyn MacEwen and Margaret Atwood. Yet, the Montreal poet selects and omits, displaces and reorders, adds and deletes, thus profoundly transforming the source texts, as Zito demonstrates after a close comparative scrutiny.

In Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer *de Dany Laferrière: entre succès littéraire et échec cinématographique*, Ylenia De Luca explores the tension between the best-selling and critically acclaimed novel, with its subversive irony, and its film adaptation released under the same title. Set in Montreal, the engaging story is about two black educated men, Vieux and Bouba, who have regularly sex with white, blond feminist women. The film, De Luca argues, features a banal protagonist, as well as flat humour, dialogues and *mise-en-scène*.

Gerardo Acerenza's essay, La grande séduction / Un village presque parfait / Un paese quasi perfetto*: adaptations intersémiotiques et transculturation*, elucidates strategies of intersemiotic adaptation and transculturalization enacted by the French director Stéphane Meunier in the adaptation process from the hypofilm *La grande séduction* to the hyperfilm *Un village presque parfait*

(e.g. cricket-rugby) and, then, by the Italian director Massimo Gaudioso in *Un paese quasi perfetto* (e.g. *Virginie* TV series-*Un posto al sole*).

In her essay *«Don't You Forget About Me»: The Use of Music in* The Handmaid's Tale *TV Series*, Chiara Feddeck inspects the TV adaptation based on Margaret Atwood's popular novel. The German scholar questions the use of music the series and the effects it can have on the viewers. Among other functions, music effectively emphasizes the main themes of the narrative, reinforces character's thoughts and feelings, and signals temporal changes and gaps. Unexpected solutions are specifically addressed, both in terms of music choice and of textual composition.

Federico Pio Gentile investigates some adaptation strategies employed for the re-creation of a contemporary Canadian crime drama in *Rebooting Montreal in English: The* 19-2 *Case Study*. Born as a Francophone police procedural meant to propose some Montreal-based criminal stories, the Canadian-English *19-2* TV serial eradicates the entire Quebecois identity through a linguistic turnover simultaneously modifying the cultural, social, and ideological implications related to the original communicative code.

In her essay *New Discourses of Canadianness in* Anne with an E, Anna Mongibello analyzes the popular Netflix series adaptation of *Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maud Montgomery. By adopting a linguistic point of view, in a discursive perspective, Mongibello argues that the adaptation is also ideological in that it reinforces the contemporary, multicultural, Canadian national identity and produces new discourses about Canada.

Angela Buono inspects *Agaguk*, the 1958 novel by Yves Thériault and its 1992 film adaptation entitled *Agaguk. L'ombre du loup* by Jacques Dorfmann in her essay Agaguk*, le roman et le film: un double cas d'adaptation transculturelle*. Borrowing Linda Hutcheon's notion of 'transcultural adaptations', Buono argues that the literary work engages a transcultural dialogue between the Inuit diegetic cultural context and the québécois recep-

tion one. Differently, the film relies on cultural clichés and effects of spectacularization in its search for realism.

In *Le rôle identitaire de l'adaptation filmique dans le cinéma québécois*, Katarzyna Wójcik explores identity issues in three adapted films and observes how they engage with the literary tradition as well as with the cinematographic one in their processes of reinterpretation and recontextualization. The Polish scholar addresses *Maria Chapdelaine* (1916) by Hémon and its 1983 adaptation by Carle; *Un homme et son péché* (1933) by Grignon and its 2002 adaptation by Binamé; and *Le Survenant* by Guèvremont (1945) and its 2005 adaptation by Canuel.

Lynn Mastellotto's essay *Engaging Young Learners' Multiliteracies through Picture Books and Multimodal Storytelling* celebrates storytelling as a powerful pedagogical tool in ELT and intercultural education. She inspects a recent storybook by a Canadian author on themes of diversity and belonging, *Migrant* by Maxine Trottier, and shows how it offers rich linguistic input for the English L2 classroom whilst also providing a framework for discussing racial, gender, ethnic and social diversity with children.

From theoretical, methodological and thematic perspectives, the essays in this collection suggest that adaptation cannot be addressed through the filter of a «morally loaded rhetoric of fidelity and infidelity»,[2] as it is a transgressive and creative practice.

---

[2] *Ibidem*, p. 31.

Adaptation of Stories
and Stories of Adaptation

Adaptation(s) d'histoires
et histoires d'adaptation(s)

Adapting His/Story:
Louis Riel in History, Drama, Opera, and Staging(s)

Linda Hutcheon - Michael Hutcheon

University of Toronto

One of the intriguing examples of politically and ideologically conflicted tellings and retellings through multi-media adaptations of a story is arguably that of the most controversial figure in Canadian history for the 150 years of that country's existence: one Louis Riel (1844-1885). The reason? This is a man who has been called everything from colonial victim to postcolonial hero, from the statesmanlike Father of the province of Manitoba to the living embodiment of the Indigenous, French and English who peopled the nation called Canada. One critic has shown how this self-declared «David of the New World» has been depicted in Canadian culture as «a traitor to Confederation, a French-Canadian and Catholic martyr, a bloodthirsty rebel, a New World liberator, a pawn of shadowy white forces, a Prairie political maverick, an Aboriginal hero, a deluded mystic, an alienated intellectual, a victim of Western industrial progress, and even a Father of Confederation».[1] This, of course, is why Riel's complex story has been told and retold in many media: graphic novels, films, television shows, sculptures, paintings, novels, poems, plays, songs, and… an opera.

---

[1] A. Braz, *The False Traitor: Louis Riel in Canadian Culture*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2009, p. 3.

The 20th-century Canadian opera called *Louis Riel* retells, in a very controversial manner, this man's story, as told earlier in both history books and on the dramatic stage. No matter what earlier adaptation theorists have implied, it is actually opera – and not film – that is the original adaptive art form: since opera's inception in Italy in the late 16th century, the tried and tested, not the new and original, have been the norm in this (very expensive) art form. And little has changed, as over the years, operas have adapted epics, novels, plays, and historical narratives to the stage, bringing the textual, the musical and the theatrical together in a powerful intellectual and emotional manner. Adaptation is, in short, the very essence of opera, and it always involves a three-part process carried out by a whole series of adapters.

First, a source text (be it a work of literature or a historical narrative – or both) is adapted to create a libretto, that is, the words and dramatic story that will be set to music by the composer. Audience expectations and operatic conventions both come into play, as the librettist (as adapter) seeks to create a work that will be both recognizable (as an adaptation) and enjoyable (on its own). This move, often, from telling a story to showing it on stage, may entail drastic pruning of the plot lines and even of characters, because it takes so much longer to sing than to speak a line of text. The libretto, therefore, must be a tightly focused dramatic adaptation; yet it must also be full enough (while concise) to allow for the slowing effect of the music to which it will be set. Economy and concision must never be at the expense of emotional impact, however. The task of librettists as adapters is to render what they select from the adapted texts into equivalences within opera's various available sign systems – visual, aural, gestural, and so on. This is why, in opera, the adapted source text is usually condensed, rearranged, simplified, dramatized, and made to conform to operatic conventions; the result is therefore not just a reinvention in a different medium, but also inevitably both a new interpretation and also a recontextualization in a different social and political (as well as artistic) context – as we shall see with the story of Louis Riel.

That, briefly, is stage 1 of adaptation to opera. Stage 2 takes us from this libretto to the music to which it is set: both vocal and orchestral. The relationship between the vocal and orchestral can be one of doubling and supporting, or on the contrary, ironizing and contradicting. Composers must adapt (that is, dramatize) through their music the libretto's events, characters, actions, the dramatic world and its atmosphere, giving to all a rhythm and a pace, not to mention a certain emotional temperature.

With the libretto and score in place, the adaptation process moves into the hands of a much larger group of adapters who will take what Kier Elam calls these two «dramatic texts» (musical score and libretto) and create the «performance text» that we see on stage.[2] This list of adapters is long and it includes the conductor, orchestra and singing performers, but also the large and complex production team which is responsible for conceptualizing and creating the «staging» or the mise-en-scène: the director, the designers of lighting, sets, costumes, makeup, and wigs, the dramaturg, the technical director, chorus master, répétiteur, surtitlist, and so on – all of whom are both interpreting and creating agents.

Opera clearly involves a complex adaptation process, but one with a long history of over 400 years of retelling stories from comedies, tragedies, epics, novels, short stories, and so on. Many of those stories have engaged historical topics – and political ones – especially around the issue of nationhood. Benedict Anderson famously linked nationhood to what he called «imagined community» and pointed to the printed word and novelistic narrative as central to the creation of this sense of collective identity, especially in Europe.[3] But music too has played its role. Or to look at it from another angle (as Anthony Arblaster, a political scientist, has), there is no other ideological force or creed

---

[2] K. Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, Routledge, London-New York 1980, p. 3.

[3] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London-New York 2006.

that has had a more «profound and lasting impact on music in
the past two centuries than nationalism».[4] The 19th-century Eu-
ropean desire for a national musical idiom came to be insepa-
rable from nationalism and patriotism: witness the long history
of identification of Italians with «Va pensiero», the oppressed
Israelites' chorus from Giuseppe Verdi's opera, *Nabucco*.

Moving to the New World, to Canada, little changes. In 1967,
on the occasion of Canada's anniversary of its first hundred years
as a nation, the Canadian Opera Company presented an opera
commissioned from two prominent Canadian artists, the compos-
er Harry Somers and the actor and writer Mavor Moore. That
year, 1967, marked a high point in English Canadian cultural na-
tionalism, something that was relatively new in a country that
had, for so long, been culturally dominated by historical (and
obviously colonial) British values and contemporary (and obvi-
ously capitalist) American ones. The composer and librettist said
that their goal in writing the opera called *Louis Riel* was to «use
the conventions and traditions of Grand Opera as a form of na-
tion-building, a platform for discovering who we are».[5] At first
glance, given the centenary year (1967), this makes good sense,
for 19th-century French Grand Opera was a form that pitted a pri-
vate story (usually romantic) against public events (usually his-
torical). But why, then, would they choose as the subject for this
Canadian-identity platform the story of a man who resisted, even
defied the newly founded nation of Canada, and in which the na-
tional government in Ottawa is cast as the villain of the piece
for hanging him for treason? Perhaps, we suggest, it was less a
celebration of nation-building than an ironic, subversive cultural
questioning of (and commentary upon) it.

---

[4] A. Arblaster, *«Viva la libertà!»: Politics in Opera*, Verso, London-New
York 1992, p. 64.

[5] Liner notes to 3-record set of Harry Somers and Mavor Moore, with
Jacques Languirand, *Louis Riel*, Canadian Music Centre 1975 (no pagination).

In order to understand this subversion, we must back up and fill in some background about this historical figure whose story has been the subject of so many tellings and retellings. Louis Riel was born in 1844 in what was then called Rupert's Land, a part of North America given by royal charter in 1670 to the «Governor and the Company of Adventurers of England, trading in Hudson's Bay». Riel was the son of a French mother and a father who was Métis. At the time, the term used (though perhaps less acceptable to us today) for the mixed-race offspring of Indigenous and European parents was not Métis but «half-breed». Today, the Métis are recognized as one of the Indigenous peoples in contemporary Canada, along with the First Nations peoples (formerly called Indian) and the Inuit (formerly called Eskimo). Riel would go on to lead, represent, and fight for the Métis people as a whole, despite being actually only 1/8 Indigenous. At the age of 14, he left for Quebec, then called Lower Canada, where for 10 years he studied at the Collège de Montréal, thinking he would enter the priesthood. After his father's death and a traumatic rebuff from his fiancé's family, he returned to the West – educated and eloquent, in both French and English – but not a priest.

This was in 1868, the year after Ontario and Quebec (Upper and Lower Canada) had united with Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to form a new nation called Canada. Riel went to the Red River area in Rupert's Land. In 1868, this was still part of the holdings of the Hudson's Bay Company, which was in the process of selling these very lands to the new nation called Canada. The Canadian government wanted the land for many different reasons: it was attempting to build a railway across the large expanse of prairies and mountains to link up with British Columbia, the British colony which in 1871 would become the sixth province of Canada; it also wanted to populate that land – primarily with Anglo-Protestant Ontario settlers – and it was doing so out of fear that the Americans would invade, for they definitely had their sights on annexing parts of Canada at that time. This buying and selling was being done, however, without any consulta-

tion with the settlers already on the land, who included British, French, Irish, and Métis – not to mention, of course, the other Indigenous peoples. As an early historian put it: «the British and Canadian authorities ignored (almost ostentatiously) the 10,000 white and half-breed settlers of the Red River District».[6]

In fact, the government in Ottawa sent out survey crews to mark off the land even before the transfer was made legal. The Hudson's Bay Company, now a lame-duck administration, collapsed. The enraged Red River mixed-race settlers rebelled and set up their own provisional government which decided to owe allegiance not to Canada, but to the British Queen. Their capture of the Hudson's Bay headquarters in Fort Garry provoked the first Prime Minister of Canada, Sir John A. Macdonald, to send out William McDougall as governor, a man who was, pointedly, anti-French and anti-Catholic. This is where the opera opens, with the governor referring to what he calls the «damn half-breeds» whom he plans to teach, in his words, to «be civilized».

McDougall was not the only one to be abusive to the Métis settlers and their government – either in history or in the opera. An Irish Protestant named Thomas Scott was arrested for fomenting rebellion, as well as for physically and verbally abusing the Métis leaders. In the opera, to a question of «Pourquoi?», for example, he responds: «Speak English, mongrel!» and calls the questioner a «low Popish half-breed». For his armed insurrection, Scott was put on trial and Riel condemned him to death. Riel said he did so in order to command respect for his new government. The Prime Minister responded by sending out troops, ready to quash the rebellion with violence. Riel fled to the United States (soon with a price on his head), because the Canadian government – while now recognizing the Red River settlement as a province of Canada (Manitoba) – refused to provide amnesty for the rebels, despite having promised to do so.

---

[6] N.F. Black, *History of Saskatchewan and the Old North West*, North West Historical Company, Regina 1913, p. 144.

While exiled in the United States, Riel's Métis nationalism grew apace, but so too did a strong religious messianic drive, and he was actually secretly institutionalized for two years in psychiatric hospitals in Quebec. He claimed to have had a vision in which God had anointed him the «prophet of the new world» – and from then on, he called himself «David».

By the late 1870s, Riel had settled in Montana with his Métis wife and family, and actually took out US citizenship. But then, in 1884, a group of Saskatchewan Métis, led by Gabriel Dumont, arrived to entreat him to return to Canada. They wanted him to help them do for their people what he had succeeded in doing for the Red River settlers: that is, to negotiate with the government for provincial status in the face of the same onslaught by Canadians from the East – once again, surveying and settling the land. Riel agreed, but he did so more on religious and spiritual than political grounds, for he believed that it was part of God's larger plan for him to lead his people to freedom. The Métis delegation, however, had more political concerns, since their petitions to the distant, unresponsive, and still devious Canadian government had been ignored. With the radical reduction of the buffalo from millions to thousands, the quasi-nomadic Métis (who had previously followed the buffalo herds) had been forced to turn to agriculture to survive. But they needed to know that their farmlands were secure.

By the time Riel arrived in Saskatchewan in 1884, however, he had become increasingly radical and violent. Riel broke with the Catholic church (which had supported the Red River rebellion earlier) and had himself declared a 'prophet' by his provisional government. Inevitable armed conflict with government troops in 1885 ensued; Riel and the Métis forces, after initial victories, ultimately surrendered at Batoche. «The Toronto Mail» reported on 8 July 1885 that this Métis rebellion would have been avoidable, had the Canadian government acted honorably, writing: «Had they [the Métis] had voted, like white men, or if, like the Indians, they had been numerous enough to command respect and overawe red tape, without doubt the wheels of the office would have revolved

for them; but, being only Halfbreeds, they were put off with an eternal promise, until patience ceased to be a virtue».[7] Riel himself was imprisoned and tried for treason. When he refused his own lawyers' defense (a defense of insanity), he was hanged in Regina: as a traitor to Canada or – in some people's eyes – a martyr to Confederation.

These are the agreed-upon historical events from which many historians – French, English, Indigenous, Catholic, Protestant, those from Ontario, Quebec and the west – have selected and constructed different narratives of the fate of Louis Riel, depending on their social and cultural context: right after his death, ballads and poems written by Anglo-Canadians demonized Riel as a coward, outlaw, despot, impostor, and madman;[8] Quebec Catholic writers made him into a victim of ethnic, linguistic, and religious prejudice. In French Canada, he was seen as a martyr, assassinated by the English Canadian government establishment. Riel then seems to have disappeared from Canadians' attention, both French and English, until after World War II, when he became «an ancestor, an Aboriginal Maverick who valiantly opposes both the Eastern-dominated vision of Canada and the homogenization of Western civilization».[9] In fact, by 1970 when a national postage stamp was issued by the government, he had actually become a kind of mediating figure between Indigenous and European culture.

This is where John Coulter's 1950 play called *Riel* enters the picture. Interestingly – and perhaps surprisingly – his was one of the first plays in the country that dealt with Canadian history, and it was credited with starting a kind of 'Riel industry' thereafter. It also managed to contribute to the growing English Canadian cultural nationalism of the 1960s. The way the argument goes, Canadians at the time lacked (and so sought) a «leader of heroic proportions»[10]

---

[7] Quoted in N.F. Black, *History of Saskatchewan*, p. 263.

[8] A. Braz, *The False Traitor*, pp. 54-55.

[9] *Ibidem*, p. 89.

[10] G. Anthony, *John Coulter*, Twayne, Boston 1976, p. 62.

and found one in the 19ᵗʰ-century Métis figure. But is Riel not a strange 'leader' to choose? Hanged as a traitor to Canada, his death reawakened hostilities between Ontario and Quebec, Protestants and Catholics, English and French, the government and the Indigenous peoples, including the Métis. This was the figure whose story was chosen as the operatic platform to explore Canadian national identity in 1967, in celebration of the centenary of the nation – a rather perverse choice, we would argue. And by 2017, when national politics had changed even more drastically, what might a new production of this opera tell us about Canadian identity today?

In order to get to that question, we need to return to the theoretical issues involving adaptation. French-born Canadian-based musicologist Jean-Jacques Nattiez argues that the creation of music as an aesthetic object is tripartite: it involves a process of engagement and interpretation (which he calls esthetic) and a process of creation (which he calls poietic), all occurring within a specific context.[11] For opera, this means that there are sources with which the composer and librettist engage and then interpret in order to create those «dramatic texts» (libretto and score); in turn, the production team engages with and interprets the two dramatic texts in order to create a «performance text» that is the live opera in performance on stage.[12] Each of these processes is one of adaptation.

For the tellings and retellings of Louis Riel's story, in particular, the processes look like this: first, there are the historical events themselves and, most importantly, how we know them: that is, through eye-witness accounts, newspaper articles, letters, diaries, official documents, and so on. These are what historians adapt – or if you prefer, select and narrativize – in order to write their histories in the plural (and there is never only one, given the different social and political contexts in which historians each live and write).

---

[11] J.-J. Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Towards a Semiology of Music*, translated by C. Abbate, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1990.

[12] K. Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*.

Canadian playwright John Coulter, Northern Irish by birth, saw in Riel's cause (and the religious and political circumstances around it) an echo of the Troubles in Ireland. Therefore, Coulter's adaptation process involved this context as well as his research on and interpretation of the Canadian histories and the historical events themselves. From all this, he wrote three plays: the 1950 one called simply *Riel*, followed by another that was freely adapted from it, in 1966, called *The Crime of Louis Riel*, and a third, the next year entitled *The Trial of Louis Riel*, commissioned by the Regina Chamber of Commerce and performed in that city (where Riel was actually hanged) every year since that time.

Mavor Moore, the actor who had actually played Riel in the 1950 premiere of Coulter's first play, re-engaged and interpreted the plays, the histories and the past events, in order to create the libretto of the opera *Louis Riel*. Since, as noted earlier, this opera was commissioned for the Canadian Centennial celebrations, the social context in which it was created was one of intense cultural nationalism, especially in English Canada. By contrast, in Quebec, this was the time of what is called the Quiet Revolution: a period of secularization, intense social and political change, and a re-alignment of politics into sovereigntist and federalist factions. In fact, there was considerable linguistic and cultural tension between the so-called two «founding nations» of Canada at this time. This is the context in which the opera was written, first produced on stage, and first received by audiences in the 1960s. The core of the libretto, then, is a set of oppositions that historically, in Canada, have not listened to each other: French and English, East and West, Indigenous and European. The libretto, accordingly, shifts among several languages: English, French and Cree, with a smattering of church Latin. The text itself is sympathetic to Louis Riel, while not overlooking his darker messianic side. It does, however, identify the Canadian government as the real villain of the piece.

Composer Harry Somers needed to create music that both defined these historical oppositions and set the mood of each scene. Diversity of style thus became the most important element of the

musical language, leading to a very eclectic score. First of all, Somers had to engage with and interpret the historical sources, the histories, the plays, and, of course, the libretto. This he set to music within the social context of 1967 that he would share with his prospective audience. But there was an added context for the composer: the aesthetic context of the modernist musical conventions of the 20th century. The stylistically eclectic score that resulted uses all the resources available to adapt the libretto's characters and actions: «For Somers, the problems posed by the multiplicity of contrasts, tensions, and themes within the libretto translated themselves into a score in which diversity became the most important factor».[13]

Against vocal techniques that range from fully sung parts to inflected, semi-spoken, parlando sections, Somers laid down a core orchestral music that was abstract and atonal. This most frequently underlay scenes set in Western Canada – as it does from the start, in the opening scene of the opera. This was juxtaposed with contrasting musics (in the plural). For example, there were lyrical and melismatic vocal lines for the visionary and tortured Riel, who sang in French, of course. This, in turn, was set against the music of Canadian Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald, an opera character depicted as a cynical political opportunist who imbibed a bit too much alcohol. Macdonald was treated satirically in the libretto and so he was accompanied by banal dance music. Other types of music included more familiar diatonic music, both of Indigenous and European folk varieties. Finally, electronically produced sounds were introduced and layered over the orchestral music. This was used effectively to portray the battle scenes of the North West Rebellion leading to the defeat of the Métis at Batoche and Riel's capture.[14]

The social context of the 1967 Centennial – the context of both the creators and their prospective audiences – also conditioned

[13] B. Cherney, *Harry Somers*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1975, pp. 131-132.

[14] *Ibidem*, pp. 133-137.

the next stage of adaptation, as the production team engaged with and interpreted the two dramatic texts (libretto and score), but did so through their own sense of the historical events, histories, and plays. This team produced the performance text – the opera as experienced on stage in performance. The members of this team, as noted earlier, include: the director, set-, costume-, and lighting designers, surtitlist (though not yet invented in 1967), dramaturg, and of course, the singing actors, the conductor, and the orchestral musicians. Their collective task was to take the words and notes on the page and create from them a mise-en-scène that would literally bring them to life onstage. In 1967, the director, Leon Major, was responsible for all stage aspects, while the conductor, Victor Feldbrill, took charge of the musical dimension. The singing actors, of course, had to deal with both of these adapters when creating their own adaptation of the words and music.

The opera was performed by the Canadian Opera Company in Toronto three times in 1967, and three times in 1968; they brought it, for two performances, to Montreal for the international exhibition called Expo '67. The audience for these live performances was estimated at almost 20,000 people. The stage opera was then adapted for radio at the same time and over 50,000 listeners tuned in. In October 1969, the English network of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) adapted the opera for television (using the original cast) and almost 1½ million people watched it. The television version offered an overt recognition of the audience it was addressing. The transmission was introduced with two conflicting quotations from Pierre Elliot Trudeau. The first was: «We must never forget that in the long run a democracy is judged by the way the majority treats the minority. Louis Riel's battle is not yet won». And the second: «If a minority uses violence to blackmail the majority, our government and no government of Canada can back down in the face of such a threat».[15]

---

[15] H. Somers, M. Moore, *Louis Riel*, DVD, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 1969, Centrediscs 2011.

These together embody the paradoxes and tensions of 1960s Canada – dedicated to minority rights but feeling under siege by the violent turn taken by the Quebec desire for independence (the «threat» noted above).

At the end of his trial, the opera's Riel idealistically states: «When I am dead my children's child / will shake hands with Protestants / French and English side by side».[16] And the focus of the 1967 production was very much on French and English relations in Canada – not on the Métis or Indigenous peoples. The opera was revived in 1976 to send to Washington as Canada's contribution to the American Bicentennial celebrations. But once again, these were the years in Quebec not only of the Quiet Revolution, but also of the radical FLQ (Front de Libération du Québec), the rise of Quebecois separatism and the War Measures Act.

By the time the opera was revived, in 2017, by the Canadian Opera Company, the politics of Canada had changed. And these changes demanded a very different approach by the new production team. In the stage and television productions of the late 1960s and 1970s, the focus was, as we saw, very much on the tensions between French and English, East and West. Fifty years later, in what is now an officially bilingual and multicultural country, the focus shifted to the ongoing and unresolved conflicts between Indigenous and settler cultures. This is why director Peter Hinton opened the revival of the 2017 opera not with that framing focus on French and English relations, but rather with one on the Indigenous and European relations. Tellingly, his assistant was Métis director Estelle Shook (who had an ancestor who testified against Riel at his trial). The 2017 production opened with the introduction of a new character to the libretto. Called The Activist, he was played by Manitoba Métis actor Cole Alvis, and he addressed the audience in Toronto to deliver the *Land Acknowledgment*, a new but now entrenched official statement that recognizes the traditional territory of the Indigenous and Métis peoples who called

---

[16] Libretto accompanying. *Ibidem* (no pagination).

the land on which the theatre was built 'home' before the arrival of settlers. This immediately set a different political framework for the opera than that of 1967.

The curtain rose to reveal what the directors called the Land Assembly – a physical chorus added to the opera. This was made up of a group of local Métis and Indigenous men, women, and children who were on stage throughout the entire opera, forming a totally silent chorus, standing for the people to whom the opera (like history) denied a voice. As such, they acted as a constant, physically present representation of the Indigenous peoples who were (and are) directly impacted by both the positive and negative results of Riel's story. At the end of the opera, this entire Land Assembly turned, faced the audience, and confronted us all with their knowledge of the consequences of Riel's hanging. The audience (ourselves included) felt the weight of history – and of the contemporary politics of 2017.

Social context is crucial here: the Truth and Reconciliation Commission had just presented its report on the impact of the Canadian government's residential school system.[17] For decades, under this system, Indigenous children had been taken out of their families and homes in order to assimilate them to the dominant society, thereby depriving them of their own culture, language and identity. Sexual and physical abuse revelations came to light and shocked the country, as the residential school system came under scrutiny, and the nation engaged in a public facing of what was called, by the Chief Justice of Canada, «cultural genocide».[18]

There were other changes as well in the 2017 production of the opera that signalled this very different cultural context. The directors created a new role for Métis actor and singer Jani Lauzon as the Folksinger. Other Indigenous singers (like Joanna Burt,

---

[17] To see the full report, consult http://caid.ca/DTRC.html (accessed July 29, 2020).

[18] B. McLachlin, quoted in https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/chief-justice-says-canada-attempted-cultural-genocide-on-aboriginals/article24688854/ (accessed July 29, 2020).

playing Sara Riel) were featured in the production, as were Indigenous dancers. Surtitles – those translations projected above the stage – were now available (after their invention by the COC in 1983). In this production, they were in English, French, and Cree (as in the libretto, but the Cree ones were retranslated for greater accuracy for the 2017 production). Added now to these three translated languages was Michif, the traditional Métis language.

This is how Louis Riel, the historical figure (and *Louis Riel* the opera), can act today as Canada's national conscience: the relationship between the government of Canada and its Métis and other Indigenous peoples is still a fraught one. We are reminded daily of unsettled land claims and of the fate of Indigenous women, murdered or gone missing from the streets of Canadian cities. A step forward was made in 2017 when the Trudeau government signed on to the historic Canada-Métis Nation Accord and agreed to work toward tangible results and solutions to some of these issues. In this political and social context, the 2017 production of the opera (with its different political focus) can, in a way, be seen as an actual adaptation of the 1967 version, an adaptation that made the work startlingly relevant even after 50 years.

In fact, the very government that hanged Riel for treason has recently seen in him a visionary advocate of social welfare and multiculturalism. The former Governor General of Canada, Adrienne Clarkson, among others, has claimed that Riel helped lay the framework for minority rights – and as a result for cultural co-operation – in Canada. The former Chief Justice of Canada, Beverley McLachlin, wrote that Riel «fought Canada in the name of values that Canada now proudly embraces: respect and accommodation for pluralism».[19] But this ideal of what is called «reasonable accommodation»[20] for all in this country has come

---

[19] B. McLachlin, *Louis Riel: Patriot Rebel*, «Manitoba Law Journal», 35/1 (2011), p. 11.

[20] For the Canadian government definition, see https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/values-ethics/diversity-equity/disability-management/accommodation.html (accessed July 29, 2020).

under pressure from identity politics, from the politics of differ-
ence: Indigenous land claims, the Sikh turban for Mounties, the
Muslim hijab in Quebec, the influx of immigrants – all these have
been flash-points of conflict in parts of the country.

In this new context too, Louis Riel will likely continue to be a
controversial figure in Canadian history, his story told and retold
in diverse media, as in the past. In April 2017, immediately follow-
ing the premiere of the new production of *Louis Riel*, the Canadi-
an Opera Company and the Munk School of Global Affairs at the
University of Toronto co-hosted a sold-out conference on the con-
tinuing significance and relevance of both the historical Riel and
the opera written about him to English, French, Indigenous and
Métis communities in Canada.[21] But the particular adaptations we
have focused on here (centred on the opera version) will no doubt
be joined by many others. As one commentator has articulated the
reason for his controversial longevity: «Somers creates in *Louis
Riel* a musical-dramatic lens through which we witness more than
just a conveniently packaged version of historical events: instead,
we are reminded of some of the central challenges that we our-
selves continue to face (political, emotional, and spiritual) as we
construct our Canada of the 21st century».[22]

References

ANDERSON, B., *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin
    and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London-New York 2006.
ANTHONY, G., *John Coulter*, Twayne, Boston 1976.
ARBLASTER, A., *«Viva la libertà!»: Politics in Opera*, Verso, Lon-
    don-New York 1992.

---

[21] See *Hearing Riel*, special issue of «University of Toronto Quarterly»,
87/4 (2018).

[22] A. Zinck, *An Enduring Canadian Opera*, in H. Somers, M. Moore, *Louis
Riel*, p. 2.

Black, N.F., *History of Saskatchewan and the Old North West*, North West Historical Company, Regina 1913.

Braz, A., *The False Traitor: Louis Riel in Canadian Culture*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2009.

Cherney, B., *Harry Somers*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1975.

Elam, K., *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, Routledge, London-New York 1980.

Hearing Riel, special issue of «University of Toronto Quarterly», 87/4 (2018).

McLachlin, B., *Louis Riel: Patriot Rebel*, «Manitoba Law Journal», 35/1 (2011).

Nattiez, J.-J., *Music and Discourse: Towards a Semiology of Music*, translated by C. Abbate, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1990.

Somers, H., Moore, M., *Louis Riel*, DVD, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 1969, Centrediscs 2011.

Somers, H., Moore, M., Languirand, J., *Louis Riel*, Canadian Music Centre, 1975.

Zinck, A., *An Enduring Canadian Opera*, in H. Somers, M. Moore, *Louis Riel*, DVD, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 1969, Centrediscs 2011.

Sitography

Canadian Accommodation, available at URL: https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/values-ethics/diversity-equity/disability-management/accommodation.html (accessed July 29, 2020).

McLachlin, B., available at URL: https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/chief-justice-says-canada-attempted-cultural-genocide-on-aboriginals/article24688854/ (accessed July 29, 2020).

Truth and Reconciliation Commission, available at URL: http://caid.ca/DTRC.html (accessed July 29, 2020).

The Lens and the Boat:
Accommodating Objects
in *The Love of a Good Woman* by Alice Munro

Héliane Ventura

University of Toulouse-Jean-Jaurès

«Nous ne faisons que nous entre-gloser». So says Montaigne at the beginning of his *Essays*.[1] An anachronic translation would be: «we can only intertextualize ourselves». Alice Munro's stories are a case in point because they are fraught with allusions to other stories, other films, other plays, which are so many commentaries on the very story that she is re-presenting. Allusions should be distinguished from adaptations, yet the very process of referring to another story within the story that is narrated is necessarily a *mise en abyme*, which entails a process of reverberation from one story to another.

This process of reverberation may have a limited or extended scope but is never fortuitous or contingent. Even apparently casual allusions deserve to be followed up because they are consequential. They represent miniaturizations, enlargements, debts, detours, distortions, requiring visual accommodation for the similarity between the embedding story and the embedded one to be recognized. A story that alludes to or borrows from another story positions itself in a continuing process of evolutionary interconnectedness and derivation. I would like to select the word 'accommodation' as an alternative to 'adaptation' because one of the

---

[1] M. Montaigne, *Les Essais*, Gallimard, Paris 2009, III, p. 13.

main objects in *The Love of a Good Woman*, the story from 1998 by Alice Munro that I will specifically address, is an optometrist's red box, filled with different lenses, and optical instruments. It is an object that has mysteriously reappeared after the drowning of its owner and been anonymously consigned to a local museum. The second object that I will analyze is a boat as described in the last paragraph of the story, which is devoted to the preparation for a trip, the outcome of which is intriguingly left unresolved. According to the lens that we use to contemplate the boat, it may be said to be on the verge of accidentally or purposefully capsizing, or it may safely bring about a romantic reunion between a mature nurse and a farmer who used to be school fellows. The analysis of this story will be an exercise in adaptation through the natural accommodation of the eye, and the critical adjustment of the lens.

The Love of a Good Woman, a «pivotal work in the structure of Munro's fiction»,[2] is an unusually long short story of 75 pages that has unleashed an impressive bulk of criticism. Scholars have documented the fact that Munro borrowed from sources as diverse as Grimm's *Bluebeard Tales*, compounded with other Grimm tales, Gothic romance,[3] Bible myths,[4] or detective stories.[5] They have pointed out the revisiting of Nordic Mythology with the reinterpretation by Munro of the encounter between Brynhild and Sigurd.[6] They have signalled the influence of 19th-century American

---

[2] D. Duffy, *A Dark Sort of Mirror:* The Love of a Good Woman *as Pauline Poetic*, «Essays on Canadian Writing», 66 (1998), p. 169.

[3] See J. McCombs, *Searching Bluebeard's Chambers: Grimm, Gothic, and Bible Mysteries in Alice Munro's* The Love of a Good Woman, «American Review of Canadian Studies», 30/3 (2000), pp. 327-348.

[4] See D. Duffy, *A Dark Sort of Mirror*, pp. 169-190 and I. de P. Carrington, *«Don't Tell (on) Daddy»: Narrative Complexity in Alice Munro's* The Love of a Good Woman, «Studies in Short Fiction», 34 (1997), pp. 159-170.

[5] J. Miller, *Deconstructing Silence: The Mystery of Alice Munro*, «The Antigonish Review», 129 (2002), pp. 43-52.

[6] See C. Sheldrick Ross, *Too Many Things: Reading Alice Munro's* The Love of a Good Woman, «University of Toronto Quarterly», II/3 (2002), pp. 786-810.

or British novels such as Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) or Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) or beginning of the 20th-century American novels such as Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* (1925),[7] to quote only a few of the literary sources proposed. Catherine Sheldrick Ross has rightfully asserted that Munro's story was «an encyclopedic reservoir of stories».[8] Because an encyclopedia is infinite, I would like to exhume a series of further references, from the Middle Ages to the 20th century, which seem not to have been mentioned by critics so far.

I would like to posit that one principal source is a German short story by E.T.A. Hoffmann entitled *The Sandman* (1815) in which an optician plays the role of the archvillain and the other main source, also of German origin, is a silent movie *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans* by Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau (1927) with Janet Gaynor and Georges O'Brien. The scenario was written by Carl Mayer after a short story by Hermann Sudermann entitled *The Excursion to Tilsit* from the volume *Lithuanian Stories* (1917) in which a woman is drowned at the end of a boating excursion. In these two sets of sources, the lens and the boat respectively occupy pride of place and I would like to analyze them in turn comparing their original import with their subsequent treatment, or adaptive accommodation, in Munro's short story.

The optometrist's red box

The choice of the character of an optometrist in Munro's story is overdetermined by the name he is given: Mr. Willens's name insists on his will to power and on the lenses that he sells; he is a man with superpowers because he is equipped with modern technological accessories. He anticipates contemporary developments

---

[7] See C.A. Howells, *Alice Munro*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 1998.

[8] See C. Sheldrick Ross, *Too Many Things*, p. 808.

of augmented reality at the same time as he recalls the character of Coppola, the optician in E.T.A. Hoffmann's tale *The Sandman*. Coppola is an Italian peddler of optical instruments, lenses, and glasses who eventually brings about Nathanael's suicide because he equips him with a small telescope that opens up a world of lethal delusions. With his newly acquired telescope, Nathanael keeps his eyes riveted on a woman behind a window opposite his house. He becomes enthralled with her, although she is not a woman, but a doll made in the semblance of a young woman. He forgets his own fiancée whom he finally attempts to strangle, before throwing himself down a belfry and crashing on the pavement. Coppola is in fact the avatar of Coppelius, a lawyer interested in alchemy who brought about the death of Nathanael's father by enticing him to alchemical experiences that resulted in a lethal explosion. Munro borrows the theme of the devilish optometrist directly from Hoffmann and performs a major punitive reversal, as an act of poetic justice, in her own reworking of the original situation. Instead of bringing about the death of the male protagonist, her own story features an optometrist who is likely to have been murdered. She transforms Coppelius/Coppola into a sexual predator, who is mysteriously preyed upon and finally eliminated.

Coral Ann Howells has suggested that the plot of Munro's story, which hinges on the theme of adultery, is strongly reminiscent of Tay Garnett's film *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946).[9] But no one has remarked that the disposal of the optometrist's body is strangely evocative of the elimination of Marion's body in Alfred Hitchcock's movie *Psycho* (1960) in which she is killed by Norman Bates disguised as an old woman, deposited in her car and sunk in a near-by swamp. Mr. Willens's body is similarly deposited in his little Austin car and sunk into the Jutland Pond where his murder passes for a drowning. The story is built as a mystery since he who actually killed the optometrist is left unrevealed. He may have been killed by Rupert Quinn, as his wife Jeanette told

---

[9] C.A. Howells, *Alice Munro*, pp. 151-152.

Enid, the nurse who looks after her in the final months of her life. But the tale of the dying woman is utterly unreliable. Jeanette's accusation may very well be what Catherine Sheldrick Ross calls «a malicious lie».[10] The hypothesis that Jeanette might herself be the one who killed him cannot be readily dismissed, given the recurrence of the theme of the female murderer in Munro's fiction. The possible recycling and adaptation of the Hitchcock movie can be interpreted as a further suggestion of reversals and disguises. In Munro's story, a man is accused of murder by a woman who may herself be the murderer, or the instigator, or the accomplice. The optometrist may even have had a heart attack, or an epileptic fit, and Rupert and Jeanette may simply have decided to conceal his death as drowning in order to avoid further investigation.

One important clue comes from the description of the optometrist's box. The ophthalmoscope it contains is described as a snowman and this simile can be interpreted as another clandestine literary allusion. Wallace Stevens wrote a poem entitled *The Snowman* which has been regarded as a meditation on negative capability.[11]

One must have a mind of winter
To regard the frost and the boughs
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;

And have been cold a long time
To behold the junipers shagged with ice,
The spruces rough in the distant glitter

---

[10] C. Sheldrick Ross, *Too Many Things*, p. 787.

[11] A phrase coined by Keats to describe his conception of the receptivity necessary to the process of poetic creativity, which draws on Coleridge's formulation of 'Negative Belief' or 'willing suspension of disbelief'. He defined his new concept in a letter (22 Dec. 1817): «Negative Capability, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason». Keats regarded Shakespeare as the prime example of negative capability, attributing to him the ability to identify completely with his characters, and to write about them with empathy and understanding; he contrasts this with the partisan approach of Milton and the «wordsworthian or egotistical sublime» (letter to Woodhouse, 27 Oct. 1818) of Wordsworth. «Negative capability», *Oxford Reference*.

Of the January sun; and not to think
Of any misery in the sound of the wind,
In the sound of a few leaves,

Which is the sound of the land
Full of the same wind
That is blowing in the same bare place

For the listener, who listens in the snow,
And, nothing himself, beholds
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

The poet urges the reader not to project outside influences onto the bare landscape because it has nothing that is not there and is itself nothing. Munro in the meantime, ironically, allows outside influences to accrue in her text, for the reader to simultaneously accommodate and not accommodate them. Her narrative art, which has been described as outstandingly ambivalent, can also be regarded as sustaining mutually incompatible possibilities.

Seen from that angle, her story becomes permeated with an acute sense of the uncanny. The concept of the uncanny was successively defined by Jentsch in 1906, Freud in 1919, and revisited by Lacan, among others, in the 1950s. Jentsch stated that undecidability was the essential element in rendering an entity uncanny and particularly insisted upon the living/dead duality that was necessarily attached to it. In Munro, this duality is present in the description of the instruments used by the optometrist. The retinoscope, for example, is described as having «something like an elf's head».[12] This simile creates an ontological doubt as to the status of the instrument, in between an inanimate object, a metallic device, and a supernatural creature, an elf or a goblin. As remarked by many critics,[13] the retinoscope is also endowed with biblical overtones since it is said to be «a dark sort of mirror» thus echoing *1 Corinthians* 13:12 «through a glass, darkly». It

---

[12] A. Munro, *The Love of a Good Woman*, Vintage, London 1998, p. 4.
[13] Notably D. Duffy; cfr. the title of his essay, *A Dark Sort of Mirror*.

is finally represented as having «a pointed metal cap», «tilted at a forty-five-degree angle to a slim column and out of the top of the column a tiny light is supposed to shine».[14] The image of the column is taken up again at the very end of the story to describe a swarm of tiny bugs surrounding the characters as they walk down to the river:

> Then suddenly you would enter a cloud of tiny bugs. Bugs no bigger than specks of dust that were constantly in motion yet kept themselves together in the shape of a pillar or a cloud. How did they manage to do that? And how did they choose one spot over another to do it in? It must have something to do with feeding. But they never seemed to be still enough to feed.[15]

This swarm of bugs constantly in motion represents an eerie echo to the column-like description of the retinoscope. It constitutes a passage from the inanimate to the animate and embodies the principle of the living/dead duality. Jentsch used the doll Olympia from Hoffman's story, *The Sandman*, as an example for his theory and Freud picked up Hoffman's story to challenge Jentsch's theory. According to Freud, what creates the uncanny is not the living/dead duality but the fact of being robbed of one's eyes. To illustrate his point, he uses the tale told by the nurse about the sandman: she terrified young Nathanael and unleashed his fear of castration by telling him about a strange man who threw sand into children's eyes, and robbed them of their eyes in order to feed his own children.[16] In Munro's story, it is not simply the animation of the retinoscope transformed into a swarm

---

[14] A. Munro, *The Love of a Good Woman*, p. 4.

[15] *Ibidem*, p. 78.

[16] This is the description of the sandman given by Nathanael's nurse: «'Eh, Natty', said she, 'don't you know that yet? He is a wicked man, who comes to children when they won't go to bed, and throws a handful of sand into their eyes, so that they start out bleeding from their heads. He puts their eyes in a bag and carries them to the crescent moon to feed his own children, who sit in the nest up there. They have crooked beaks like owls so that they can pick up the eyes of naughty human children». *The Sandman*, online version, translated by J. Oxenford.

of moving bugs that creates the sense of the uncanny, it is also the fact that the bugs are supposed to be feeding at the same time as they are moving. There is an uncanny sense that they might be feeding on the protagonists, literally cannibalizing them. This description of the bugs represents the uncanny element because they remind us of our archaic impulses, these forbidden urges which have been repressed as civilization has gained ground.

The final description of the bugs forming a column similar to the retinoscope also reminds us of the initial ophthalmoscope, as if the instruments of the drowned or murdered optometrist were still haunting the premises, hovering overhead, from the beginning to the end of the story. Directly echoing the image of the retinoscope as a column and a dark sort of mirror, the swarm of bugs is compared to a pillar or a cloud. These comparisons cannot but acquire a religious overtone.[17] In *Timothy* 3:15 the church is compared to the pillar and foundation of the truth. Moreover, an anonymous work of Christian mysticism written in Middle English in the 14th century is called *The Cloud of Unknowing*. This spiritual guide on contemplative prayer in the late Middle Ages encourages the believers to seek God not through knowledge and intellection but through intense contemplation motivated by love and stripped of all thought. This *via negativa* can be compared to the negative capability hinted at in *The Snowman* and permeates Munro's description of the scene.

Munro creates a landscape touched by a supernatural light. The characters find themselves in a world of synesthesia where one sense merges into another; one element of the environment merges into another. Fire even merges with water: «Then a flash of water came through the black branches. The lit up water near the opposite bank of the river, the trees over there still decked out in light».[18]

---

[17] This is noted by C.A. Howells, *Alice Munro*, p. 153: «The imagery suggests a journey to the promised land, where even the swarms of tiny bugs take on the shape of the Lord's guiding spirit over the Israelites in Exodus».

[18] A. Munro, *The Love of a Good Woman*, p. 78.

The nominal sentence emphasizing burning water and burning bush confers a sense of timelessness onto the moment. The characters seem to be

> At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
> Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
> But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
> Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor
>   [towards,
> Neither ascent nor decline.[19]

They are poised at the conjunction of incompatible states.

The boat

The simultaneous presence of incompatible movements is remarkably enhanced through the description of the boat: «and the boat waiting, riding in the shadows, just the same».[20] Just as the boat is at the same time waiting and riding, the world around the characters is frenetically moving with a vortex of bugs constantly in motion and arrested in a silent pause: «If she tried to, she could still hear Rupert's movements in the bushes. But if she concentrated on the motion of the boat, a slight and secretive motion, she could feel as if everything for a long way around had gone quiet».[21] The inscrutable nature of this suspended moment of being has been diversely interpreted without ever taking into account Murnau's movie, entitled *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans*. In this movie, the plot develops around a country couple threatened by a woman from the city who seduces the husband and convinces him to get rid of his wife by drowning her. The husband goes with his wife on a boating excursion but, at the

---

[19] T.S. Eliot, *Burnt Norton*, *Four Quartets*, II, Faber & Faber, London 1944, p. 5.

[20] A. Munro, *The Love of a Good Woman*, p. 78.

[21] *Ibidem*.

moment of throwing her overboard, he is seized with remorse and realizes that he is about to commit a deadly sin. Instead of drowning his wife, he protects her from the upcoming storm. The story finishes as a rebirth after a moral failing, with the couple being reunited through the redemptive power of love and the woman from the city driving away defeated. Murnau's film reverses the plot of the short story by Herman Sudermann which inspired it. In Sudermann's short story *The Excursion to Tilsit*, Ansass is a rich farmer seduced by an impudent maid; he reconciles with his wife but finally drowns, thus expiating his betrayal. Contrary to the film, the German short story is a tragedy engendered by adultery. And death is the wages of sin.

In Munro's short story the outcome is left unresolved. Read as a romance, as Ildiko de Papp Carrington and Coral Ann Howells do, Munro's story can be envisaged as the silent and forgiving coming together in adult age of a woman and a man who had been school fellows in their childhood. Read as Gothic murder, as Dennis Duffy does and to a certain extent Marjorie Garson, the story is a Canadian tragedy in which a murderer who killed his wife's lover is about to kill her nurse. I would like to continue the series of hypotheses suggesting that the story should not be read in either/or terms. As indicated by Munro herself in the subtitle she used for the «New Yorker» version of the story (a subtitle that was dropped in the subsequent collection of stories), *The Love of a Good Woman* is *A Murder, A Mystery, A Romance*. Critics have proposed to read the subtitle successively, I suggest to read it simultaneously.

The boat that is simultaneously waiting and riding in the shadows furnishes an exemplary illustration of Munro's technique of reconciliation of opposites.

Michel Foucault has defined the boat as the very embodiment of the notion of spatial alterity. Of the boat, he said that it was «la plus grande réserve d'imagination. Le navire, c'est l'hétérotopie par excellence. Dans les civilisations sans bateaux les rêves se tarissent, l'espionnage y remplace l'aventure, et la police, les cor-

saires».[22] Foucault equates the boat with the boundlessness and lawlessness of the imagination. The boat opens limitless possibilities. It opens the uncanny region of dreams where opposites reverse into each other. The boat is at the same time the very image of heterotopy and heterochrony. In Munro's story, it provides an image of the future; it is waiting for Enid and Rupert to embark on their new existence, but it also provides an image of the past. The small boat riding and waiting is also a diminutive reminder of the past experiences of Rupert and Enid's forbears, those immigrants who left the old world to embark on a transatlantic journey, like Munro's own ancestors leaving the Vale of Ettrick to finally settle in Southwestern Ontario.

This boat riding in the shadows at dusk is also a miniature reminder of a number of mythic journeys. It has some of the ominousness of the boat crossing the river Styx to reach the infernal regions or some of the sacredness of the barge that carried King Arthur to Avalon. The link between Munro's story and the Arthurian Legend can be easily found through onomastics, which is another source not to have been investigated by critics. The very name given to the female protagonist, Enid, originally belonged to a Welsh legendary character from the *Mabinogion*, who found her way into the Arthurian Legends and whose story was retold in many ways and by many writers, Sir Thomas Malory, Chrétien de Troyes and Alfred Tennyson to name just a few of them. In Chrétien de Troyes, one of Arthur's loyal companion was called Érec and his wife Énide. Énide was a loyal and loving wife who never betrayed her husband and endured unflinchingly the ordeals that her suspicious husband inflicted upon her. Énide was put on trial, required to don a shabby dress, and go on a harrowing quest through the forest alongside her husband. She was ordered not to speak, even to forewarn her husband of upcoming dangers. She was eventually rewarded for her pains and enjoyed the reputation

---

[22] M. Foucault, *Des espaces autres. Hétérotopies*, *Dits et écrits*, «Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité», 5 (1984) [1967], p. 49.

of a good and loyal wife. She became the epitome of the «good woman». Catherine Ross is puzzled by the 'good woman' of the title. «The title sounds vaguely familiar, as if taken from some quotation such as 'Be thankful for the love of a good woman' or 'There, but for the love of a good woman, go I', although no such quotations can be found in Bartlett's».[23] There is no doubt that Munro has borrowed the name of her main protagonist and the title of her story from the Arthurian legends where Enid's love for her husband (called Érec in Chrétien de Troyes and Geraint in Tennyson) is an exemplary love based on selflessness and dedication. Munro's Enid acknowledges the fact that «silence is how to keep the world habitable»[24] in exactly the same way the legendary Enid realizes that she has to obey her husband and restrain herself to a modest silence. Enid realizes that «Jeanette's wicked outpouring talk»[25] is damaging and she adopts a prudent reserve that may save her life and ensure her final reunion with Rupert. At the end of the story, she follows him through the bush alongside the river having donned her most elegant attire just as the legendary Enid preceded her husband through the forest in a shabby apparel. Munro reverses the pattern of the romance from the Middle Ages better to confirm her borrowing from this original source.

With *The Love of a Good Woman*, Munro has rewritten a foundational myth of origins. Like all foundational myths, it originates with murder, or with «Violence and the Sacred» to put it in the words of René Girard, and it involves a state of undifferentiation. Unlike Murnau, who clearly differentiated characters with a villainous woman from the city and a saintly woman from the country, Munro has presented two women who are not pitted against each other as polar opposites but represent unexpected doppelgangers. If Jeanette is described as adulterous, careless, and sloppy, or in the words of Carrington «an unfaithful wife, a neglectful mother

---

[23] C. Sheldrick Ross, *Too Many Things*, p. 796.

[24] A. Munro, *The Love of a Good Woman*, pp. 75-76.

[25] *Ibidem*, p. 64.

and a slatternly housewife»,[26] Enid is not simply represented as a selfless care-giver. She is also portrayed as a woman plagued with erotic dreams that betray her state of deprivation and as a nurse who utterly neglects her duty towards her patient on the last day of her life. Enid is simultaneously «a good woman» who believes in the redemptive power of love, as the woman from the country does in Murnau's movie, and a woman whose dreams reveal the cruellest and vilest sex-fantasies. She is both associated with the woman from the country and the woman from the city, an association that Munro inscribes into the final lines of the story. Instead of making the reader witness the 'sun rise', Munro offers her reader a particular kind of twilight. She makes us see around the boat the water of the river lit up by the setting sun under the trees decked up in light and then the river turning tea-coloured but clear. In quick succession if not simultaneously, she presents the blaze of twilight and the ordinariness of apparently bland appearances. But Munro's world is never bland. The objects from this world she has chosen to highlight, the lens and the boat, are profoundly ambivalent, self-reflexive and metadiscursive: in the final analysis, they constitute new illustrations of the «deep caves paved with kitchen linoleum» that require from the reader that she should accommodate what is simultaneously «dull, simple, amazing and unfathomable».[27]

References

CARRINGTON, I. de P., *Controlling the Uncontrollable: The Fiction of Alice Munro*, Northern Illinois University Press, DeKalb 1989.

CARRINGTON, I. de P., *«Don't Tell (on) Daddy»: Narrative Complexity in Alice Munro's* The Love of a Good Woman, «Studies in Short Fiction», 34 (1997), pp. 159-170.

---

[26] I. de P. Carrington, *«Don't Tell (on) Daddy»*, p. 168.

[27] A. Munro, *Lives of Girls and Women*, Penguin, London 1971, p. 249.

De Troyes, C., *Érec et Énide*, traduction de J.M. Fritz, Lettres Gothiques, Paris 1992.

Duffy, D., *A Dark Sort of Mirror:* The Love of a Good Woman *as Pauline Poetic*, «Essays on Canadian Writing», 66 (1998), pp. 169-190.

Eliot, T. S., *Burnt Norton*, *Four Quartets*, II, Faber & Faber, London 1944.

Freud, S., *L'inquiétante étrangeté* (1919), traduction de F. Cambon, Folio, Paris 1988.

Foucault, M., *Des espaces autres. Hétérotopies*, *Dits et écrits*, «Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité», 5 (1984) [1967], pp. 46-49; available at URL: https://cinedidac.hypotheses.org/files/2014/11/heterotopias.pdf (accessed July 30, 2020).

Gerlach, J., *To Close or not to Close: Alice Munro's* The Love of A Good Woman, «Journal of Narrative Theory», 37/1 (2007), pp. 146-158; available at URL: 10.1353/jnt.2007.0017 (accessed July 30, 2020).

Hoffmann, E.T.A., *The Best Tales of Hoffmann*, Courier Dover, New York 1967; available at URL: http://www.ux1.eiu.edu/~rlbeebe/sandman.pdf (accessed July 30, 2020).

Howells, C.A., *Alice Munro*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 1998.

Jentsch, E., *On the Psychology of the Uncanny* (1906), «Angelaki», 2 (1995), pp. 7-16.

Kuzniar, A.A., *Ears Looking at You: E.T.A. Hoffmann's* The Sandman *and David Lynch's* Blue Velvet, «South Atlantic Review», 54 (1989), pp. 7-21.

Lacan, J., *The Freudian Thing: Or the Meaning of Returning to Freud in Psychoanalysis* (1955), in the first complete translation in English, Norton, New York 2006, pp. 334-363.

McCombs, J., *Searching Bluebeard's Chambers: Grimm, Gothic, and Bible Mysteries in Alice Munro's* The Love of a Good Woman, «American Review of Canadian Studies», 30/3 (2000), pp. 327-348; available at URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02722010009481057 (accessed July 30, 2020).

MILLER, J., *Deconstructing Silence: The Mystery of Alice Munro*, «The Antigonish Review», 129 (2002), pp. 43-52.

MONTAIGNE, M., *Les Essais*, Gallimard, Paris 2009.

MUNRO, A., *Lives of Girls and Women*, Penguin, London 1971.

MUNRO, A., *The Love of a Good Woman*, Vintage, London 1998.

«NEGATIVE CAPABILITY», *Oxford Reference*, Available at URL: https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority. 20110803 (accessed July 30, 2020).

SHELDRICK ROSS, C., *Too Many Things: Reading Alice Munro's* The Love of a Good Woman, «University of Toronto Quarterly», II/3 (2002), pp. 786-810.

SUDERMANN, H., *The Excursion to Tilsit*, *Lithuanian Stories* (1917), translated by L. Galantière, H. Liveright, New York 1930.

Alice Munro's *A Wilderness Station* and Anne Wheeler's *Edge of Madness*: Filling in the Blanks

Corinne Bigot

University of Toulouse-Jean-Jaurès

Alice Munro's short story, *A Wilderness Station*,[1] provides an interesting case of adaptation as it is both the source of a 2002 Canadian[2] feature film, *Edge of Madness*, and an adaptation. Munro adapted a 1907 family narrative giving an account of the accidental death in 1853 of James Laidlaw, one of Munro's indirect ancestors, written by the cousin who witnessed it. Munro's daughter, Sheila Munro, refers to «a memoir written many years later»[3] by Robert Laidlaw which her mother used, and explains Munro «incorporates some of the details from Robert Laidlaw's actual account»[4] in *A Wilderness Station*. Since 2006, readers have been able to experience the adapted text after the adaptation, since *The Wilds of Morris Township* (*The View from Castle Rock*) includes Robert Laidlaw's narrative. Alice Munro's explanation of how she came up with the story is also interesting: «it takes

---

[1] First published in 1992, it was then collected in her 1994 collection, *Open Secrets* (Penguin, London). Page references are to *Open Secrets*.

[2] Shot in Manitoba, the film boasts an almost entirely Canadian cast, including Canadian actors Brendan Fehr (Simon) and Corey Sevier (George) and Canadian actresses Caroline Dhavernas (Annie) and Tantoo Cardinal (Ruth).

[3] S. Munro, *Lives of Mothers and Daughters*, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto 2001, p. 125.

[4] *Ibidem*, p. 118.

off from my ancestors coming up to Huron County, except that I have completely invented a dreadful macabre incident that takes place, and I have no justification for this at all».[5] Her remark illustrates the process of adaptation – the creative «appropriation» of a source, which is transformed, in order to «mak[e] the adapted material one's own».[6] Using details from the original narrative, *A Wilderness Station* relies on «an extended intertextual engagement»[7] with the source. Involving a shift in ontology – from an account by a witness to the fictional –, and a change of frame – with the addition of different versions of the man's death –, as well as changes in the cast of characters, the short story is «an interpretative act of appropriation».[8] Revisiting her ancestor's story, Munro created a narrative which centres on the unwritten lives and hardships of 19th-century Canadian women. She also turned a family narrative into a typical Munro mystery story, maybe a murder mystery.[9] Her multi-layered and polyphonic adaptation suggests that the settler could have been killed by his wife – she confesses to the murder –, or by his brother – the wife later accuses him.

Munro's adaptation of a single-authored account into a short story comprising contradictory versions of the settler's death as well as letters written by those who wonder whether his wife is guilty or insane, leaves many unresolved issues. Various interpretations have been offered[10] since readers are confronted to many

---

[5] C. Gittings, *The Scottish Ancestor: A Conversation with Alice Munro*, «Scotlands», 2 (1994), p. 87.

[6] L. Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, Routledge, New York-London 2006, p. 20.

[7] *Ibidem*, p. 8.

[8] *Ibidem*.

[9] *A Wilderness Station*, to my mind, illustrates Judith Miller's idea that Munro writes «mystery stories, maybe murder mysteries». See J. Miller, *Deconstructing Silence: the Mystery of Alice Munro*, «Antigonish Review», 129 (2002), p. 43.

[10] See I. de P. Carrington, *Double-Talking Devils*, «Essays in Canadian Writing», 58 (1996); A. Hunter, *Taking Possession: Alice Munro's* A Wilder-

gaps and contradictory versions. According to reader-response theory, «whenever […] we are led off in unexpected directions, the opportunity is given to us to bring into play our own faculty for establishing connections – for filling in the gaps left by the text itself».[11] *A Wilderness Station* is elliptical and «silent», including through excess. My interest lies with these gaps, which Vincent Jouve calls 'silences'[12] («les silences du texte»), and Jean-Louis Dufays 'blanks'[13] («les blancs du texte»). In this essay, I examine filling in textual blanks as one of the strategies adaptation requires.

When Canadian screenwriters Charles Kristian Pitts and Anne Wheeler adapted *A Wilderness Station* into a film, they dealt with a narrative that centres on a woman' experience of pioneer life *and* silences the woman's voice. And with a confusing and elliptical story whose textual blanks required interpretation and whose very structure denied answers and resolution. I argue that Munro's adaptation of her ancestor's text – her filling in the gaps – resulted in an increased number of textual blanks triggering reader's engagement. I will show that Pitts and Wheeler's choice to privilege one version and to fill in numerous blanks allowed them to provide character motivation and a sense of resolution, and also forced them to find strategies to create viewer's engagement and introduce ambiguity.

While Alice Munro explains she «completely invented a dreadful macabre incident» and suggests that she has «no justification for this at all», it would be more accurate to say that she

---

ness Station *and James Hogg's* Justified Sinner, «Studies in Canadian Literature», 35/2 (2010); and I. Duncan, *Alice Munro's Narrative Art*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2011. In this essay, I will mostly refer to Carrington's, Hunter's, and Duncan's analyses, especially as Duncan and Hunter disagree with Carrington's reading and interpretation.

[11] W. Iser, *The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach*, «New Literary History», 3/2 (1972), p. 285.

[12] V. Jouve, *La quête du silence comme projet littéraire*, in A. Mura Brunel, K. Cogard (éds.), *Limites du langage*, l'Harmattan, Paris 2001, p. 287.

[13] J.-L. Dufays, *Stéréotypes et lectures*, Malaga, Liège 1994, pp. 156-157.

filled in textual banks in Robert Laidlaw's narrative and identi-
fied what Mary Snyder calls «the limitations [and] opportunities
of the text».[14] Munro saw the fictional and literary potential of
an account that was written fifty years after the event, and could
not be challenged as the other witness was dead. She introduced
a change in characters, turning the four men (three brothers and
a cousin) and three women (the man's wife, mother and sister)
into a triangle: two brothers, Simon and George Herron, and a
woman, Annie, Simon's wife. With such a cast of characters, both
sibling rivalry and a love triangle become possibilities, as world
literature has taught us.

   Munro has said that she could not make the family story into
a short story «until [she] brought a woman into it».[15] Yet women
are not exactly absent in Laidlaw's narrative. Rather, they are
nameless presences, who are defined in relation to a male Laid-
law, as a cousin, sister, aunt or mother.[16] They only appear as
cooks and housekeepers, secondary to men whose hardships are
detailed. With her adaptation, Munro revisited Robert Laidlaw's
male-centred account and created a narrative that «centres on a
female experience of a hard, punishing pioneer life».[17] She did
so by filling in the blanks in his narrative. For instance, I see
his elliptical reference to his (nameless) wife as a textual blank:
«the spring of 1857 when I got a wife to share my hardships,
joys and sorrows».[18] Munro interpreted and gave context to his
mysterious phrase, «got a wife». In *A Wilderness Station*, Simon
Herron acquires a wife with the complicity of the Orphanage and
the Church – the Matron agrees to help Simon because his letter
included a recommendation by his minister. She recommends

---

[14] M. Snyder, *Analyzing Literature-to-Film Adaptations*, Continuum, New
York 2011, p. 248.

[15] V. Ross, *A Writer called Alice*, «Globe and Mail», October 2, 1994, p. CI.

[16] A. Munro, *The View from Castle Rock*, Chatto and Windus, London
2006, pp. 112-116.

[17] I. Duncan, *Alice Munro's Narrative Art*, p. 62.

[18] A. Munro, *The View from Castle Rock*, p. 116.

two former pupils and after receiving her letter, Simon goes to Toronto to get Annie: «there was a girl that might fit the bill and Simon went off to Toronto and *got* her».[19] The implied violence of this process is later exposed by Annie under the guise of a tale, as recollected by another character: «she said a man had come to the Home and had all the girls paraded in front of him and said, "I'll take the one with the coal-black hair"».[20] Munro transcoded and drew attention to Laidlaw's silence about the women, thus she opened «lines of inquiry into the past – mostly the eccentric, liminal, unwritten pasts of women's lives».[21] Annie's voice is muted for half of the narrative as other characters speak of her and for her: the matron, George, The Reverend McBain, who announces Annie's arrival to the Clerk of the Peace in Walley, and Mullen, the Clerk of the Peace, who discusses her «case» with McBain.

The screenwriters interpreted Munro's intent to expose the silencing of women and made it explicit, filling in the gaps implied by the structure of the story – a series of documents that do not fit: George's 1907 account, an erratic and unfinished correspondence between McBain and Mullen, Annie's elliptic letters, and a 1959 account by Mullen's granddaughter in which she evokes «Old Annie». *Edge of Madness* successfully transcodes the violence done to women and turns it into a major theme. As argued by Cummins, «there is no respite from exploitation and male violence for Annie».[22] The violence of the process through which Simon «got a wife» with the complicity of the orphanage is shown on screen. In the first ten minutes of the film, we have access to Annie's memories of the day Simon came to the or-

---

[19] A. Munro, *Open Secrets*, p. 195. My emphasis.

[20] *Ibidem*, p. 217.

[21] A. Hunter, *Taking Possession*, p. 118.

[22] K. Cummins, *On the Edge of Genre: Anne Wheeler's Interrogating Maternal Gaze*, in B. Austin-Smith and G. Melnyk (eds.), *The Gendered Screen: Canadian Women Filmmakers*, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Waterloo 2010, p. 85.

phanage – they surface as Annie submerges herself in the water as she is given a bath. We see Simon looking at the girls on parade in front of him. The soundtrack, a pleasant piece of classical music played on the piano, is at odds with, and therefore underlines, Simon's harsh tone as he says «I need a wife who can work» (00:09:46). Simon then walks around Annie and examines her body while the matron praises Annie's skills, in a scene that evokes slave markets.

The film transcodes and expands on the violence implied by patriarchal and official discourse on Annie which in the short story is conveyed by the epistolary mode. Munro's Annie is the object of a series of letters written by the priest who knows the Herrons, and James Mullen, the Clerk of the Peace, who investigates the case when Annie confesses to having killed her husband. In the film, pan shots and close-ups show Annie in her cell, as she is being looked at. Clear images of voyeurism transcode the role the reader of *A Wilderness Station* is forced to play by reading the letters. Using crosscutting, alternating a close-up of the prison guard who looks at Annie and a pan shot of Annie who is being looked at, the film underscores the man's gaze and turns the viewer into a voyeur. In *A Wilderness Station*, Annie is appropriated by Mullen who refers to her as «*our* young woman»[23] and she soon becomes a «case» when Mullen tells McBain about the doctor's diagnosis: «You might be interested in hearing what the doctor who visited her had to say about her case. His belief is that she is subject to a sort of delusion peculiar to females, for which the motive is a desire for self-importance, and also a wish to escape the monotony of life».[24] In the film, low-angle shots are used to show Mullen and the doctor, whose bag, a symbol of his position, is quite visible, as men of authority when they discuss her case (00:05:28). The film makes the violence of male discourse on a woman explicit by turning it into physical

---

[23] A. Munro, *Open Secrets*, p. 204.

[24] *Ibidem*, p. 205.

violence: the two men physically restrain Annie and probe her body (00:11:22). The doctor's examination is rather brutal, as Annie resists, creating ironical parallel between his examination and his remark that «marriage had been consummated, although not kindly» (00:12:52).

The film expands on Munro's attempt to show the hardships of a woman's life in 19th-century Canada, by filling in the blanks in *A Wilderness Station*. Very little is known of Munro's Annie's life, although it is foreshadowed by George's account of his brother's requirements: «He wanted [a girl] between eighteen and twenty-two years of age, healthy, and not afraid of hard work».[25] Overall, the film successfully evokes the violence of Annie's life, from the orphanage, to her life in the homestead, and in jail, blurring differences between them. We see Annie working alongside Simon and George to build their house. Parallels between prison life (main narrative) and home life (Annie's memories) are created as pan shots showing the house's posts and beams alternate with numerous shots of the prison cell, in which bars are prominent. The motif of entrapment appears in the short story, albeit as an indirect clue: Christena Mullen recalls that «Old Annie», the Mullen's sewing woman, sometimes called the Jail «the Home»,[26] suggesting that both the Home (the orphanage) and home (the shanty) were like prison.

The film reveals the implicit violence women settlers endured in 19th-century Canada, although this involved a change in location. Munro inscribes the Herrons' story within the context of the Huron Tract and Canada's settler history, being faithful to the location of the original story, Huron County (today's Ontario), even though Walley and Carstairs are fictional towns. *Edge of Madness* takes place in the Red River Settlement (in today's Manitoba) as the words «Red River Valley 1851» that appear over a view of a settlement (00:05:16) indicate. The Red River

---

25 *Ibidem*, p. 194.
26 *Ibidem*, p. 217.

Settlement had been administered by the Hudson Bay Company
since 1835 and the new setting draws attention to the Fur Trade,
an obvious reminder/symbol of Canada's history, and its implied
violence. Wheeler's Mullen is Chief recorder with HBC, ballots
of furs can be seen on the streets of «the Fort» and we see Mullen
in his warehouse, amidst hanging furs (00:07:05). The Herrons'
life, in a remote Scottish settlement, is also determined by the
trade. The reference to HBC and the Fur Trade bring the vio-
lence of the wilderness into the fort, challenging the opposition
between civilization (the Fort) and the wilderness (the Scottish
settlement), which the doctor, as an Englishman, often mentions.
Violence invades the Fort on the very first night after Annie's
arrival as she witnesses a brawl between two drunken men on the
street. A close-up on Annie's face (00:23:13) reveals her fear and
the next shot, at the Herrons', plunges the viewer into a domestic
world of violence – sexual and physical abuse.

The Red River setting also functions to reveal Aboriginal
presence – we see tepees on the street, Aboriginal children at a
Christmas party at Mullen's house, and an Aboriginal woman
who works for Mullen and cares for Annie. Much prominence
is given to this new character, Ruth, about whom Cummins says
that she is «reminiscent of earlier Wheeler representations of Ab-
original women».[27] Aboriginal presence and the fur trade recall a
Canadian *colonial past* and therefore a violent context.

The film clearly foregrounds violence done to women, in a
much more explicit way than the story does, which may reflect
Wheeler's own interests, as adaptations usually do.[28] On Christ-
mas Eve, the doctor enters Annie's cell and tries to rape her under
the cover of a medical examination (00:54:16). The scene, as
such, does not exist in *A Wilderness Station*. Yet Pitts and Wheel-
er did not exactly invent it, rather they filled in the gaps contained
in one of Mullen's letters in which he evokes the cries of «another

---

[27] K. Cummins, *On the Edge of Genre*, p. 86.
[28] L. Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, p. 82.

insane female [who] has been admitted here recently [and who] has been driven insane by a rape».[29] The film, which repeatedly shows Simon raping Annie, transposes the idea that this female inmate, of whom we know nothing, represents Annie's unspoken fate. The gaps in the short story allow viewers to imagine that the fate of this woman who is said to be «another insane female» parallels Annie's. The possibility that the *two* attackers are nightmarish embodiments of Simon and George surfaces. Isla Duncan[30] comments on the fact that Annie's remark «And I would like for that yelling to stop»[31] is isolated, as a single paragraph. I agree that it can refer to the other inmate's screams but confusion is created since it appears in the letter in which Annie details George's transformation into a Simon-like character, bent on hurting her, and her dreams in which George and Simon, «one or the other chased her with the axe».[32]

The film, then, successfully transcodes Munro's depiction of Annie's unwritten life, as well as the silencing. But *A Wilderness Station* is also an enigmatic text, due to a combination of ellipses, textual blanks, and excess of text, which I see as creating more silence, or blanks. As the discussion Duncan engages with Carrington's interpretation shows,[33] the crucial elements in Munro's story are its ambiguity regarding «truth» – whether Annie is telling the truth or lying – and the question of Annie's insanity. Hunter argues that such ambiguity and the refusal to validate Annie's story are part of Munro's aesthetic choice.[34] While I agree with Hunter, I argue that the very ambiguity of the narrative – its

---

[29] A. Munro, *Open Secrets*, p. 206.

[30] I. Duncan, *Alice Munro's Narrative Art*, p. 70.

[31] A. Munro, *Open Secrets*, p. 215.

[32] *Ibidem*, p. 214.

[33] Duncan argues that Annie tells the truth in her letter (I. Duncan, *Alice Munro's Narrative Art*, p. 68) and disagrees with Carrington's point that Annie's version of the murder cannot be taken as true since Annie is a liar. See I. de P. Carrington, *Double-Talking Devils*, p. 78.

[34] A. Hunter, *Taking Possession*, p. 118.

gaps and excess – forces readers to interpret the narrative, which Carrington and Duncan (rightly) do.

As readers, Wheeler and Pitts do not betray the text, rather they fill in the blanks, by showing physical violence, a love triangle, and sexual abuse. However, as adapters, they present Annie's version as the truth, and so doing, they fail to give viewers the possibility to challenge Annie's version. The film's trailer, opening with striking images of violence, says it all by showing the words «enslaved in a loveless marriage» and, soon after, «torn between two brothers». In Munro's story, sexual abuse only surfaces obliquely. Annie's view on marriage can be guessed thanks to Christena Mullen's recollections of «Old Annie», the Mullens' sewing woman who hated making wedding dresses.[35] Physical violence is mentioned by Annie in a letter she writes to her friend Sadie, when she explains that Simon would «knock down [George] for a little thing […] the same way he did to [her]».[36] The film expands on the detail by showing a growing tension and violent fights between Simon and George, Simon's violent treatment of Annie, and the resulting affection between George and Annie. In *A Wilderness Station*, however, sexual tension only surfaces via textual blanks. Annie's elliptical and puzzling letter opens room for interpretation when she describes what happened after George confessed to having killed his brother. In her account, she got George to lay down on the *marital* bed, partially undressed him, and laid on the bed next to him, and took off her clothes, to look at bruises:

> […] I laid down on the bed beside him. I took off my smock and I could see the black and blue marks on my arms. I pulled up my skirt to see if they were still there high on my legs, and they were. The back of my hand was dark too and sore still where I had bit it.
>
> Nothing bad happened after I laid down and I did not sleep all night but listened to him breathing and kept touching him to see if he was warmed up.[37]

---

[35] A. Munro, *Open Secrets*, p. 217.

[36] *Ibidem*, p. 210.

[37] *Ibidem*, p. 213.

The paratactic style forces readers to puzzle out the connections between the elements. Nothing happens, but as something is missing, we feel that something happened. We imagine scenarios in which Annie would get these bruises, including «high on [her] legs» and would bite her hand. Duncan assumes that the bruises are evidence of Simon's rough treatment, in and out of the marital bed.[38] Carrington interprets the bite mark as evidence that Annie muffled the sounds of sexual intercourse so that George would not hear them.[39]

Annie's next sentence, «nothing bad happened after I laid down», strikes me as yet another blank in the text. If read in connection with the previous sentence, it could mean that she expected bad things to happen since bad things – violent sexual intercourse – usually happened in bed with her husband. Annie's enigmatic sentence can also be interpreted as meaning that «something good» happened – pleasurable sex with George. There are no other clues, except Annie's claims that she is pregnant when she arrives in jail, which shows that she *believes* she had sex with George. Drawing attention to references to heat in the passage, the fact that Annie undresses George after she carried him to the marital bed, Carrington argues that Annie is «intent on making something 'bad' happen»[40] with 14-year old George. In her reading, Annie is a seducer, not a victim. In Duncan's reading, Annie was abused by Simon and her letter testifies to this.

The blanks in the story trigger reader participation. They allow for a reading in which Annie was abused by Simon, and had sex with George, which is the interpretation Wheeler and Pitts chose. Three long scenes in which Simon rapes Annie are shown, and Annie is shown biting her hand when Simon rapes her for the first time (00:16:52). In the story, the bite mark is only mentioned in Annie's letter, but in the film it is used as evidence: the doctor re-

---

[38] I. Duncan, *Alice Munro's Narrative Art*, pp. 69-70.
[39] I. Carrington, *Double-Talking Devils*, p. 84.
[40] *Ibidem*.

marks on it when he examines her, which validates her story. The film also explicitly shows Annie and George falling in love, and having sex after Simon's death. Since George does not challenge Annie's claim that her baby is his at the end of the film, what we see in the memory scenes is validated. The film combines two strands, Mullen's investigation and Annie's memories and letters, which, as her body marks show, tell the truth. In this respect, the film departs from the story since, as pointed out by Carrington and Hunter, Munro gives us access to Annie's version, via her letter, but refuses to validate it: Annie herself blurs the difference between her dreams and reality.[41] In the film, the combined sexual abuse and the love story provide clear cause and effect motivation, which is then revealed when George tells Annie he killed Simon «for her», in order to protect her from further sexual abuse (01:24:15). Finally, in the film, Annie tells George her child is his, which must be how the screenwriters interpreted the words Annie spoke to George, a textual blank which is represented by a blank space on the page[42] since Christena Mullen, who gives the account of the meeting between George and Annie, did not hear. The screenwriters' choice strikes me as rather weak, compared with the blank which forces readers to speculate as to what Annie would have told George.[43]

From the beginning, the film suggests that there is a truth to be found out, with shocking subliminal images that ensure the viewer's participation. In the first two minutes, a long shot of Annie's painful and silent progress through the snow is interrupted by jump cuts introducing subliminal images. Rapid cutting prevents the viewer from seeing much and creates a sense of shock. The next series of shots reveals a fire that serves as a background to violence – characters fighting in front of a burning house, until the fire eats up house and characters, filling the

---

[41] A. Munro, *Open Secrets*, pp. 214-215.
[42] *Ibidem*, p. 223.
[43] *Ibidem*, p. 225.

screen. Other images flash in and out after Annie reaches the Fort and is being questioned. They are quite powerful because Annie refuses to speak. Each time, rapid cutting reinforces the violence of what we see, suggesting that Annie is haunted by brutal memories. For instance, when Mullen asks Annie who George is, the dark image of a man bringing down an axe flashes in and out (00:06:02). When asked why she killed her husband, Annie answers, «because I wanted to», but the cut to two very brief images (00:06:19), one showing Annie being raped, the next one a man hitting someone, contradicts her words. When faced with the contradiction between what is said and what they see, viewers cannot help thinking that the image speaks the truth so they assume that Annie's body and mind recall a traumatic memory. This scene successfully transcodes the contradictions in Annie's confessions in the short story – she gives two versions of how she killed Simon.

The film also expands on Mullen's role as investigator, until he finds the truth. In other words, the film creates suspense and mystery until the truth is discovered. Mullen's investigation is recorded in his journal, which we hear through voice-over. This investigation takes him to the Herrons' homestead to examine Simon's body, which Mullen and the viewer discover and examine at the same time. Mullen first finds an empty but bloody grave and then discovers bones in the fireplace. The image of the bones is fuzzy (01:12:57), which makes it difficult for the viewer to see much. These images of the empty grave and of the bones translate the contradictions between George's and Annie's accounts as to the location of Simon's grave in the story and the fact that Simon's body is never examined. Wheeler's Mullen manages to recover Simon's skull, and as we see him examining the bones, both his hands and the position of the remains create the image of a puzzle (01:30:18), which successfully transcodes the efforts readers make as they puzzle over George's and Annie's contradictory accounts of Simon's death, trying to guess whether his death was an accident or the result of murder and if so, who the

murderer is. While the story provides several answers, the film ultimately provides us with *the* answer. Mullen reads Annie's letter, which we hear through voice-over until images show us George confessing to having killed Simon with his axe, to protect Annie, and Annie subsequently throwing stones at Simon's body, smashing his skull. This reconciles the contradictory versions. Another major difference between film and story is that Annie's letter is read by Mullen, who has once more intercepted her correspondence, while in the story, we never know whether Annie's letter, which she hid in the curtains she made for the opera, was found and read, or lost.

Mullen eventually decides to free Annie after he reads her letter, after much hesitation – we see him start at least three letters. This fills in another blank in the short story, Mullen's «interest» in Annie: Christena Mullen explains that Annie came to work at the Mullens' because her grandfather had «taken an interest in» some inmates and «eventually brought them home».[44] In the film, Mullen's feelings for Annie are gradually revealed by the way he looks at her. The screenwriters thus provide a motive for Mullen to clear Annie of all charges. Not only does the film move from traumatic repressed memories to a disclosure of the truth, it also moves towards resolution.

The film seemingly moves in a linear and resolved plot development, from an unhappy marriage to the promise of a new relationship, from entrapment to freedom. More symbolically, it progresses from silence and invisibility to speech and prominent position. Ominous music, animal noises, and moans are the only sounds one hears in the first minutes. When questioned in jail, Annie says very little and a series of shots featuring a cell bar crossing over her mouth, like a gag, suggests she cannot tell the truth (00:06:17). In the final section, a medium close-up shows a confident Annie singing in the church at George's wedding and her voice is loud enough for George to hear and recognize it.

---

[44] *Ibidem*, p. 216.

While Annie first appears as a ghostly shape, the film moves on to a close-up on Annie's radiant face as she leaves the jail, and then to her radiant face as she dances with Mullen. Annie's agency appears as she separates George from his wife and forces him to listen to her and to acquiesce to provide for the child; furthermore, Mullen does not move towards Annie until she signals he can invite her to dance.

However, while the film seems optimistic, giving Annie a voice, a prominent position and a future, the way Mullen frees Annie is rather problematic. He writes that Annie «suffered from delusion brought on by harsh treatment at the hands of her husband» but is now restored (01:30:56). Simon may be blamed, but Annie is only freed when declared insane, by a man. Secondly, I feel that Anne Wheeler is, in Hunter's words, «taking possession» of Annie, as best exemplified by the first minute of the film (00:00:33). Annie appears as a ghostly figure on a very white landscape, and Anne Wheeler inscribes her own name on these whitish images, as if she were writing it on a white canvas, signalling her desire to tell Annie's story. This suggests she is speaking for Annie, which, Hunter argues, is something that Munro refuses to do.[45]

Dickinson calls the film a «confusing adaptation»[46] of Munro's story. To my mind, confusion arises because images of circularity challenge the linear development. At the very end, Annie and Mullen dance, and close-ups show their smiling faces, as if to suggest happiness. Yet a disturbing parallel is created by the similitude between the pan shots of Mullen and Annie dancing (01:34:50) and the pan shots of Annie and George dancing (01:33:54). They do not only show that Mullen replaces George in Annie's life, they confirm a repetitive pattern which was introduced by the book of Burns' poems. The fact that Mullen eventually gets holds of this book that used to belong to George creates a connection

---

[45] A. Hunter, *Taking Possession*, p. 166.

[46] P. Dickinson, *Canadian Literature into Films*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2007, p. 20.

between them. The possibility to see the book of poems as both
a symbol of attachment and of repetition also transposes some of
the story's ambiguity. The intertextual reference, although an ad-
dition, shows that the screenwriters were familiar with Munro's
interest in Scottish literature and aesthetics.[47] The final shot of the
film showing Mullen and Annie dancing confirms the pattern of
repetition and the entrapment motif. Annie and Mullen are seen
from the outside, as if they were in a box; finally a window bar
blocking the view (01:35:31) recalls previous bars – jail and the
homestead. It also recalls previous dancing scenes, in Annie's
cell and amidst the ruin of the Herrons' house.

These dancing scenes, although additions to the story, repre-
sent the most successful transposition of narrative ambiguity. The
screenwriters expanded on the mention of Annie's sewing cur-
tains for the Opera House and introduced a complex intertextual
game revealing an awareness of Munro's aesthetics. In the film,
Annie is asked to sew costumes for a play based on an opera en-
titled *Lucia*, as revealed by the stage director. *Lucia* is certain to
be Donizetti's *Lucia de Lammermoor* (1835), itself an adaptation
of Walter Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1818). Lying and
betrayals are crucial themes in the opera, which also features a
«mad scene» (act 3, scene 2): Lucia, who has just killed the hus-
band she was forced to marry, imagines she will marry the man
she loves. In the film we see Annie in her cell, putting on Lucia's
bridal dress, and wildly dancing (00:44:54 to 00:45:25). When
discovered by Mullen and McBain, Annie shouts, «I'm going to
marry the devil». The viewer cannot but wonder whether Annie
is confessing to having killed her husband, believing that she
will marry George. Or whether she uses the story she may have
pieced together from her conversations with the stage director
to confuse the men. The ambiguity of the scene increases since
Annie next stops in front of the mirror, looks at herself, and asks:

---

[47] Charles K. Pitts (the co-screenwriter) had previously written the screen
play for a television adaptation of Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* (1994).

«Am I wicked or insane?» (00:47:09). Again, it is unclear whether the question is genuine or whether Annie is repeating what men have been saying about her, mocking them. Although an addition, the scene successfully transcodes the problems readers face when reading Annie's letters, and transposes the way Munro uses intertextuality. As demonstrated by Carrington and Hunter, *A Wilderness Station* is Munro's playful re-writing of *The Private Memoir and Confessions of a Justifier Sinner* by Scottish writer James Hogg, another (indirect) Munro ancestor. Both critics point out that Munro's engagement with Hogg's novel reinforces ambiguity and casts doubt as to Annie's reliability.

Finally, a disturbing image of violence further suggests that Mullen could turn into George, in the same way as gentle George turned into Simon, which the film shows through low-key lighting and special effects that light up George's eyes (01:24:55), giving him a demonic look, when he violently brings his axe down in front of Annie and confesses to having killed Simon. When Mullen visits the homestead in the course of his investigation, he shares George's meal. On the surface, the scene is realistic and domestic: one rabbit is on the spit, George is skinning another, and Mullen is chopping wood. Yet violence seeps in through a close-up on George's hands that are inside the rabbit's innards, and a brief glimpse of Mullen's flinging a hatchet (01:16:21). Very fast cutting makes it difficult to see Mullen's gesture, recalling the subliminal image of George yielding his axe we see at the beginning of the film. Although an addition to Munro's story, this image reintroduces the possibility for the reader to engage with the film. To a Munro reader, this would also recall the short story *Images*[48] in which a little girl is frightened by a man with a hatchet. Thus, images that disturb the progression towards a happy ending may be confusing but they best capture what Munro readers are looking for – troubling contradictions, ghost scenarios, haunting, the workings of one's imagination.

---

[48] A. Munro, *Dance of the Happy Shades*, Ryerson Press, Toronto 1968.

References

CARRINGTON, I. de P., *Double-Talking Devils: Alice Munro's* A Wilderness Station, «Essays in Canadian Writing», 58 (1996), pp. 71-92.

CUMMINS, K., *On the Edge of Genre: Anne Wheeler's Interrogating Maternal Gaze*, in B. Austin-Smith and G. Melnyk (eds.), *The Gendered Screen: Canadian Women Filmmakers*, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Waterloo 2010, pp. 85-86.

DICKINSON, P., *Canadian Literature into Films*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2007.

DUFAYS, J.-L., *Stéréotypes et lectures*, Malaga, Liège 1994.

DUNCAN, I., *Alice Munro's Narrative Art*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2011.

GITTINGS, C., *The Scottish Ancestor: A Conversation with Alice Munro*, «Scotlands», 2 (1994), pp. 83-96.

HUNTER, A., *Taking Possession: Alice Munro's* A Wilderness Station *and James Hogg's* Justified Sinner, «Studies in Canadian Literature», 35/2 (2010), pp. 114-128.

HUTCHEON, L., *A Theory of Adaptation*, Routledge, New York-London 2006.

ISER, W., *The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach*, «New Literary History», 3/2 (1972), pp. 279-299.

JOUVE, V., *La quête du silence comme projet littéraire*, in A. Mura Brunel, K. Cogard (éds.), *Limites du langage*, l'Harmattan, Paris 2001.

MILLER, J., *Deconstructing Silence: the Mystery of Alice Munro*, «Antigonish Review», 129 (2002), pp. 43-52.

MUNRO, A., *Dance of the Happy Shades*, Ryerson Press, Toronto, 1968.

MUNRO, A., *Open Secrets*, Penguin, London 1994.

MUNRO, A., *The View from Castle Rock*, Chatto and Windus, London 2006.

MUNRO, S., *Lives of Mothers and Daughters*, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto 2001.

Ross, V., *A Writer called Alice*, «Globe and Mail», October 2, 1994, pp. CI-CIO.

Snyder, M., *Analyzing Literature-to-Film Adaptations*, Continuum, New York 2011.

Wheeler, A., *Edge of Madness*, Credo Entertainment Cinegroup-Gregorian Films, Canada 2002.

Transparent Tricks:
Looking in the Mirrors of Screen Adaptations

Sabrina Francesconi

Università degli Studi di Trento

Introduction

This essay discusses the trope of the mirror as a heterotopic space in a range of Munro's screen adaptations. Shot by different directors and expressing different stories of adaptations, a mirror scene is pervasive and pivotal for all six of the audio-visual artefacts analyzed here. The mirror scene operates as a semiotically layered and complex trope, encompassing emotional, cognitive, and aesthetic concerns, while enacting issues related to identity, agency, textuality. However, some recurring formal regularities – carrying potential semiotic implicatures – are found across these films.

The analytical framework of multimodal stylistic analysis is adopted, foregrounding the meaning-making potential and stylistic effects of integrated socio-cultural modes and modal resources in audio-visual dynamic artefacts (e.g. the size and position of the mirror, the use of voice-over or dialogue, the duration and position of the scene within the film). The aim is not to find rules to be followed from a prescriptive perspective, but to detect some recurring multimodal patterns and strategies enabling meaning-making in mirror-based scenes.

Across the films, both unmarked and marked functions of the mirror can be identified. Unmarked categories reveal material,

perceptual, and cognitive processes: mirrors enable the mirroring character to act, to feel, and to think. Unmarked functions include the mirror's functional, validating, expressive, and introspective roles. In marked categories, mirrors fulfil more oblique functions: the mirroring/mirrored subject has less control over the visual process and may be unaware, criticized, included, or excluded. Such mirrors can be critical, intrusive or inclusive.

After identifying several categories for the use of mirrors in the film adaptations, I turn my attention to the adaptation process and to how the adaptation affects the mirror trope. In audio-visual adaptations, the mirror scene undergoes multiple textual processes, including additions, omissions, expansions, and compressions. These intersemiotic dynamics are not regarded as betrayals of the adapted text but rather testify to the creative and transformative aspects of the adaptation. More specifically, they enact modal, medial, and aesthetic change.

This work is organized into eight distinct sections. After this introduction, the next section outlines the literature on film adaptation. The following three sections describe the six film adaptations, the mirror as trope and the multimodal stylistic methodology. Then come the analysis and the discussion. The final section includes the conclusion and describes future research plans.

Literature review

Over the last decades, the film adaptation of literary works has been explored intensively and pervasively. Research has been published in monographic works, starting with George Bluestone's pioneer *Novel to Film: A Critical Study* published in 1957,[1] and, more recently, in specialized editorial series such

---

[1] G. Bluestone, *Novel into Film: A Critical Study*, The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore 1957; B. McFarlane, *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1996; R. Stam, *Literature through Film: Realism, Magic, and the Art of Adaptation*, Blackwell, Malden 2005; R. Stam,

as Palgrave «Studies in Adaptation and Visual Culture». Articles in the field appear regularly in journals such as the «Journal of Adaptation Studies», the «Journal of Adaptation in Film and Performance» and the «Literature/Film Quarterly». Moreover, academic visibility has been acquired and reinforced through popular university courses with titles such as *From Page to Screen* or – indicating a more specific focus – *Austen and Film*.

The established and flourishing contemporary debate stands in stark contrast to the pervasive dismissal of adaptations as inferior and derivative productions.[2] This limited and limiting approach is found in both informal and academic settings. Such denigrations may mainly reflect the emotional bond readers feel to adapted literary texts. It could also be related to their underestimation and misunderstanding of an adaptation's semiotic potential, as instantiated in the net of clichés generally associated with adaptations.[3]

Thomas Leitch labels conceptual and methodological limits within academic research as «fallacies in contemporary adaptation theory».[4] Adaptations were first addressed from a comparative perspective, which failed to acknowledge the fundamental incomparability of adapted text and adaptation, due to differences in variables including text genre, logic, medium, and mode. This leads to a general disregard for adaptations, which are considered a form of betrayal of original source texts and assessed in terms of loss. Frequently, Leitch adds, research outputs in adaptation studies offer limited, specific case studies.

E. Raengo (eds.), *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, Blackwell, Malden 2004; R. Stam, E. Raengo (eds.), *A Companion to Literature and Film*, Blackwell, Malden 2004.

[2] L. Hutcheon with S. O'Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation* (2nd edition), Routledge, New York-London 2012, p. xiii; R. Stam, *Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Adaptation*, in R. Stam, A. Raengo (eds.), *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, pp. 1-52.

[3] L. Hutcheon with S. O'Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation*, pp. 52-68.

[4] T. Leitch, *Twelve Fallacies in Contemporary Adaptation Theory*, «Criticism», 45/2 (2003), pp. 149-171.

In order to overcome these biased approaches to adaptations, as well as simplistic conclusions, numerous scholars have advocated new epistemologies and robust methodologies, as well as a broader field of application. In this vein, this work adopts multimodal stylistics as methodological framework and addresses six distinct and independent audio-visual artefacts.

Six film adaptations

The mirror will be observed in six films based on Alice Munro's short stories. The first instances are three short Canadian films released in the 1980s. Produced by Atlantis Films and directed by Don McBrearty, the first is entitled *Boys and Girls* (1983). The protagonist of this 25-minute-adaptation is thirteen-year-old Margaret, played by Megan Follows, who lives in an Ontario farmhouse. Margaret liberates an old horse about to be killed (the meat is to be used to feed the silver foxes the father breeds), as a form of rebellion against gender roles and the constraints imposed upon her.[5] This film adapts a story with the same title from the first collection by Munro.[6]

An adaptation of another story from the same volume, the second film is *Thanks for the Ride* by John Kent Harrison (1983), a 28-minute adaptation starring Lesley Donaldson (Vicky), Melissa Bell (LoreAnn), Peter Kranz (George), and Carl Maroote (David). Set in Mission Creek, a little town on the shores of Lake Huron, the film tells the story of two cousins who meet two young girls and invite them out for a ride. The evening is underscored by the inability of these young men and women to

---

[5] See T. Ue, *Incarceration, Focalization, and Narration: Adapting the Two Selves in* Boys and Girls, «Short Fiction in Theory and Practice», 4/2 (2014), pp. 175-185; H. Ventura, *Alice Munro's* Boys and Girls*: Mapping Out Boundaries*, «Commonwealth Essays and Studies», 15/1 (1992), pp. 80-87.

[6] A. Munro, *Boys and Girls*, in *Dance of the Happy Shades*, Vintage, London 2000, pp. 111-127.

communicate with each other, mainly due to differences in social class and education.

The third short film is *Connection* (1986), an adaptation of the first part (also entitled *Connection*) of a double short story devoted to Munro's family history. This short story, *Chaddeleys & Flemings*, comes from *The Moons of Jupiter* (1982). Produced by Atlantis Films and the National Film Board of Canada, *Connection* was written by Kelly Rebar and directed by Wolf Koenig. The 24-minute-adaptation features Kate Trotter (Maureen), Patricia Hamilton (Iris) and Tom Butler (Richard). It revolves around a dinner shared by Maureen, her husband Richard, and Iris, a relative Maureen has not seen for years. The women enjoy many stories from their past, but Richard never fails to express his snobbish sarcasm.

These short films are followed by three longer films, released in the following three decades. The first is *Lives of Girls and Women*, directed by Ronald Wilson and written by Charles K. Pitts. The 91-minute-film was released in 1996 and actors include Tanya Allen (Del Jordan), Wendy Crewson (Ada Jordan), and Peter MacNeil (Tom Jordan). The plot follows the personal growth of a young woman, Del Jordan, through family tensions, spiritual and religious inquiries, as well as sentimental and sexual experiences. She finally acknowledges her creativity and passion for writing.

A much-admired adaptation is *Away from Her* by Sarah Polley (2007), featuring Julie Christie (Fiona) and Gordon Pinsent (Grant).[7] The plot follows a seventy-year-old woman, Fiona, who

---

[7] A. Berthin-Scaillet, *A Reading of* Away from Her*, Sarah Polley's Adaptation of Alice Munro's Short Story,* The Bear Came Over the Mountain, «The Journal of the Short Story in English», 55 (2010), pp. 157-171; C. Concilio, *The Mark on the Floor. Alice Munro on Ageing and Alzheimer's Disease in* The Bear Came Over the Mountain *and Sarah Polley's* Away from Her, in C. Concilio (ed.), *Imagining Ageing. Representations of Age and Ageing in Anglophone Literatures*, Transcript Verlag, Bielefeld 2018, pp. 101-125; R. McGill, *No Nation but Adaptation:* The Bear Came Over the Mountain*,* Away from

develops Alzheimer's disease. When her symptoms become evident, Fiona is hospitalized in a private clinic, where she establishes new social relations and falls in love with Audrey, an inmate also affected by senile dementia. This film adapts Munro's *The Bear Came Over the Mountain*, anthologized in *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage* (2001).

By the American director Liza Johnson, *Hateship Loveship* was released in 2013 and lasts 101 minutes, bringing the epistolary short story *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage* to the screen. Actors include Kristen Wiig (Johanna Parry), Guy Pearce (Ken), Hailee Steinfeld (Sabitha), and Nick Nolte (Mr. McCauley). The protagonist is Johanna, a reserved housekeeper working for the rich and elderly Mr. McCauley and his granddaughter Sabitha. With her friend Edith, Sabitha organizes a fake love correspondence between Johanna and her father, Ken. The joke, surprisingly, leads to the couple's wedding.

Shot by different directors and expressing different adaptation stories, all six of these audio-visual artefacts showcase pervasive and pivotal mirror scenes, which seem to carry some semiotic implicatures and deserve close textual scrutiny.

The mirror as heterotopic site

Either celebrated or condemned, the mirror has changed in form and material, use and function across the centuries.[8] Multiple, hybrid meanings and aims can be detected in mirror-related texts, practices, and phenomena. First, the mirror enacts visual representation, reduplication, and confirmation of someone or something; it is, thus, meant to reflect its object with precision

---

Her*, and What It Means to Be Faithful*, «Canadian Literature / Littérature canadienne», 197 (2008), pp. 98-111.

    [8] B. Goldberg, *Lo specchio e l'uomo*, trad. it. di N. Polo, Marsilio, Venezia 1989.

and clarity. This is, indeed, the first definition of the lemma 'mirror' provided by the *OED*: «A piece of special flat glass that reflects images, so that you can see yourself when you look in it». The definition places emphasis on the 'reflecting' function of the glass, which enables visual self-perception. However, from the perspective of self-analysis, a mirror can also be a screen for the projection of one's identity, fears, uncertainties, and desires. In this respect, the dictionary describes «a mirror of something», defined as «something that shows what something else is like». This second definition foregrounds the 'revealing' function of the glass, whose re-presentation is clear and faithful.[9] At the same time, this meaning suggests a tension between sameness and alterity: the mirror site contains the same content located in a different place.

In Munro's adapted texts, mirrors first play a role as everyday material items, described in terms of physical and circumstantial properties. In the short story *Boys and Girls*, the unnamed narrator hates a «wavy mirror» placed in her kitchen;[10] Del in *Lives of Girls and Women* describes a «dark mirror».[11] Both items show traces of decay. Dimensions also matter, like the «little bureau mirror» the mother in *Lives of Girls and Women* uses to put on her pillbox hat,[12] or the «full-length mirror»[13] Johanna finds at Milady's store, or, again, the «three-way mirror» Del, wearing her mother's dressing gown, uses to admire herself.[14] Generally, mirrors are domestic pieces of furniture, except for the «rear mirrors» of George's car in *Thanks for the Ride*, and the mirror in the fitting room at Milady's in *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship,*

---

[9] U. Eco, *Sugli specchi e altri saggi: il segno, la rappresentazione, l'illusione, l'immagine*, La nave di Teseo, Milano 2018.

[10] A. Munro, *Boys and Girls*, p. 117.

[11] A. Munro, *Lives of Girls and Women*, Vintage International, New York 2001, p. 61.

[12] *Ibidem*, p. 60.

[13] A. Munro, *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*, in *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*, Vintage, London 2001, p. 8.

[14] A. Munro, *Lives of Girls and Women*, p. 192.

Loveship, Marriage. Domestic mirrors, in turn, can also be differentiated in terms of the rooms where they are located (halls, bedrooms, or kitchens) and the pieces of furniture they are attached to («my little bureau mirror»,[15] «the deep mirror in the built-in sideboard»[16]).

When characters look into mirrors, the Canadian laureate carefully notes their manner of seeing: «I glanced in the rear mirror»,[17] «I would […] look at the reflection»,[18] «she peered aggressively at her own dim face»,[19] «I stared, goose-pimpled and challenging, into the three-way mirror».[20] In turn, mirrors enable characters to accomplish some act (e.g. «shaving»;[21] «combing [one's] hair»,[22] «put[ting] on a hat»,[23] «plucking [one's] eyebrows»[24]). Mirrors are sometimes described in relation to emotions and feelings: the wavy mirror is «hated» in *Boys and Girls*;[25] the mother in *Lives of Girls and Women* «peered aggressively» into the hall mirror.[26] Elsewhere, characters fulfil cognitive processes: glancing at a mirror becomes an act of introspection (e.g. «to wonder»).[27]

At times, the role of mirrors is marked in other ways. The mirroring/mirrored subject has less control over the visual process; she is unaware, criticized, or excluded. For instance, Johanna defines the mirror positioned in a dress store as a «transparent

---

[15] *Ibidem*, p. 60.

[16] *Ibidem*, p. 89.

[17] A. Munro, *Thanks for the Ride*, in *Dance of the Happy Shades*, Vintage, London 2000, p. 50.

[18] A. Munro, *Lives of Girls and Women*, p. 89.

[19] *Ibidem*, p. 135.

[20] *Ibidem*, p. 192.

[21] *Ibidem*, p. 96.

[22] A. Munro, *Boys and Girls*, p. 123.

[23] A. Munro, *Lives of Girls and Women*, p. 60.

[24] *Ibidem*, p. 227.

[25] A. Munro, *Boys and Girls*, p. 117.

[26] A. Munro, *Lives of Girls and Women*, p. 135.

[27] A. Munro, *Boys and Girls*, p. 123.

trick».[28] When mirrors fulfil such oblique functions, they operate as narrative triggers and profoundly impact the unfolding of the story itself. In *Lives of Girls and Women*, Del likes manipulating human figures in front of a mirror, by changing her position and perspective. Towards the end of the narrative, she tells a poem in front of the mirror, thus anticipating her future as writer.

Overall, across all of her stories, Munro pays attention to the semantic properties of the mirror, including its materiality, dimensions, position, as well as the intensity and duration of the gazing process. Mirrors, as such, operate as sites of action, conflict, performance and, in consequence, narrative construction.

The tension between unmarked and marked functions can be described by appealing to Michel Foucault's conceptualization of utopia and heterotopia in *Les mots et les choses*.[29] Following Foucault, the mirror may be first defined as a utopian space: a placeless place, an unreal virtual place that allows one to see one's own visibility. In order to question this unproblematic relation, Foucault himself evokes the traditional duplication function played by mirrors in Dutch paintings,[30] where the representation was never neutral, but implied processes of modification, restriction, bending, narrowing. He also observes that mirror re-presentations imply decomposition and recomposition. In the analysis of the notorious painting *Las Meninas* by Velazquez, Foucault observes the small, rectangular mirror depicted on the wall. The glass depicts King Philip IV and Queen Marianne, acting as models for the painter. The latter is situated outside the space of the room. In this vein, the French philosopher describes the mirror as a heterotopic, contradictory space. Offering more layers of meaning and relationships to places beyond the immediately visible, the mirror becomes a space of alterity, of difference. Unlike the

---

[28] A. Munro, *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*, p. 8.

[29] M. Foucault, *Le parole e le cose. Un'archeologia delle scienze umane*, traduzione di E. Panaitescu, Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, Milano 2001. On the notion of heterotopia, see H. Ventura's essay in this volume, pp. 30-31.

[30] M. Foucault, *Le parole e le cose*, p. 21.

consolatory space of utopia, heterotopia reveals intimate as well as social tensions: it disturbs and anticipates a crisis in the refracted character or the refracted story. The layered trope of the mirror never reduplicates or confirms, but upsets and transforms.

In a similar vein, this work explores the multimodal component of adaptations, with a focus on how their distinct manner of meaning-making – using different modes and modal resources – shapes the heterotopic trope of the mirror.

Multimodal stylistic analysis

Alongside formalist, functionalist, historical, and corpus stylistics, multimodal stylistics has become one of the most widespread and increasingly influential sub-fields of stylistics.[31] Multimodal stylistics has traditionally focused on literary discourse but, more recently, is increasingly applied to other domains. By integrating literary stylistics and multimodality, multimodal stylistics investigates a text through the co-presence and interaction of a range of modes and modal resources, often co-occurring with language in its written or oral forms.[32] In the case of static texts (novels, magazines or flyers) attention is given to modes and modal resources

---

[31] D. McIntyre, *Integrating Multimodal Analysis and the Stylistics of Drama: A Multimodal Perspective on Ian McKellen's* Richard III, «Language and Literature», 17/4 (2008), pp. 309-334; N. Nørgaard, *The Semiotics of Typography in Literary Texts. A Multimodal Approach*, «Orbis Litterarum», 64/2 (2009), pp. 141-160; N. Nørgaard, *Multimodality and Stylistics*, in M. Burke (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook to Stylistics*, Routledge, London 2014, pp. 471-484; L. Pillière, *Crossing New Frontiers? Investigating Style from a Multimodal Perspective*, «Études de stylistique anglaise», 7 (2014), pp. 99-120; M. Toolan, *Stylistics and Film*, in M. Burke (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook to Stylistics*, Routledge, London 2014, pp. 455-470; E. Zurru, *Breaking the Crystal Shoe: A Multimodal Stylistic Analysis of the Character of Cinderella in the* Shrek *Saga*, «Textus: English Studies in Italy», 23/1 (2010), pp. 235-261.

[32] G. Kress, *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication*, Routledge, London 2010; C. Jewitt (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis*, Routledge, London 2014[2].

including typeface, spacing, layout, and colour which make meaning simultaneously. In the case of dynamic textuality (films, TV series, and YouTube videos), modes and modal resources include (but are not limited to): perspectives, size-of-frames, depth, light changes, colour contrasts, soundtracks, and voice-overs. The present work addresses the latter – audio-visual artefacts that unfold over time – and concentrates on the mirror as trope.[33]

Pervasive and pivotal mirror scenes seem to make meaning in a systemic way: in relation *a*) to the type and function of the mirror as object; *b*) to the modes and forms of interaction with the mirroring character or other character(s), if present; *c*) to the intersemiosis of the mirror with different sounds. As for *a*), attention is devoted to mirror size, shape, material and typology. Related to this is the position of the mirror in a room, the piece of furniture on which it is stands, or the wall on which it hangs. As for *b*), significant elements include the material, behavioural, or mental activities the character performs while engaging with the mirror. The human subject may be sitting, standing, or moving and may make gestures or movements, or assume a posture. S/he may or may not look at the mirror, thus becoming either the subject or the object of the gaze, raising issues of agency. As for *c*), attention should be given to background music, noises, or voices.[34] In the case of background music, the kind of music should be identified. Is it vocal or instrumental? Is the volume low or high? What emotions does the melody evoke? If present, noises may be natural or artificial, have specific materiality, and various degrees of volume. Interacting sounds may in-

---

[33] J. Bateman, K.H. Schmidt, *Multimodal Film Analysis: How Films Mean*, Routledge, London 2012; A. Burn, *The Kineikonic Mode: Towards a Multimodal Approach to Moving Image Media*, in C. Jewitt (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis*, pp. 373-383; N. Carroll, *Theorizing the Moving Image*, Cambridge UP, Cambridge 1996; J. Wildfeuer, *Film Discourse Interpretation: Towards a New Paradigm for Multimodal Film Analysis*, Routledge, London 2014.

[34] T. van Leeuwen, *Speech, Music, Sound*, Macmillan, London 1999.

stantiate human voices and attention should be paid to: who is speaking, how s/he is speaking, what is being uttered, as well as the addressee of the utterance. The whole mirror scene should be also assessed in terms of its duration and position within the film narrative, as well as in its unitary or divided composition. From the point of view of cohesion, references and cross-references should be identified and mapped, both within the film and across films. Ultimately, the multiple and multifaceted function of a mirror scene should be discussed, as all these parameters and all these modes and modal resources carry specific semantic, narrative, and aesthetic implicatures. The following section seeks to identify, outline and discuss some of the semiotic categories instantiated in the mirror-related scenes.

Multifunctional mirrors: reflection and beyond

Across the films, the first basic mirror scene typology is of a functional nature: the mirror enables a character to fulfil material aims for which looking at one's refracted image is essential. It can be found in *Lives of Girls and Women*, *Away from Her*, and *Hateship Loveship*.

Lives of Girls and Women features two functional mirror scenes. Both involve the figure of Ada Jordan wearing lipstick, first in her room (17:45-17:52) and later in the kitchen (25:09-25:18). While she wears lipstick in both scenes, the context changes, as do the mother's attitude and expression: enthusiastic in the first, concerned in the second. The two mirrors are also different: the bedroom mirror is big, placed on a table, whereas the kitchen mirror is small, hanging on a wall. In both cases, the scene is accompanied by a dialogue. While addressing her friends, the smiling mother says: «I'm so glad you could come, ladies». Then she turns towards Del and adds: «You look charming!». In the second, the woman is getting ready for a funeral, while having a conversation with her husband about brain transplants and wondering

if doctors could transplant brains. Her husband asks: «Were you planning to discuss these ideas with the folks at the funeral?», explaining that «they do have a different set of notions, and they might easily be upset». These scenes portray Ada as a prismatic character: both active, sociable, exuberant as well as educated, intelligent, curious.

Notably, *Away from Her* features a similar scene. Fiona puts on light-brown lipstick (30:12-30:30) while looking at herself in an oval-shaped, face-sized mirror. This is followed by a shot/reverse shot series and a conversation. Fiona says to Grant: «I suppose I'll be dressed up all the time. I'll be sort of like…». She turns towards her husband and completes the sentence: «in a hotel». She asks how she looks, and Grant-as-mirror replies, «Just as you always looked», then adds four precise adjectives taken from Munro: «Direct and vague, sweet and ironic». The setting is the entryway of the house, a liminal site between the interior domestic space and the outside world: Fiona is leaving her house to be admitted to the nursing home. Instantiating the lacanian mirror-as-threshold,[35] the mirror symbolically marks the passage from present to future, from independence to dependence, from what is known to what is unknown and cannot be controlled. Yet, it signals and celebrates the woman's awareness and her irony as she confronts her fate.

At times, mirror scenes in the adaptations portray a quick act in which a character reasserts control over his/her face or figure before facing other people. The films that make use of this typology do not show the process of getting-ready in front of the mirror, but rather its outcome. The scenes are semi-private: technically, the character is alone in front of the mirror; practically, s/he is getting ready for social exposure and interaction. The mirror performs the function of checking, or, better yet, quickly validating, the character's personal appropriateness for a social situation in which

---

[35] J. Lacan, *Scritti*, Einaudi, Torino 1974, pp. 87-94. The significant number of mirrors in the corpus placed in a domestic entryway corroborates this line of interpretation.

s/he is about to take part. More specifically, in both films, these units of self-approval relate to privileged social and economic status. The characters are aware of, they want to display and profit from their privileged condition, symbolized by a car and house, respectively. In *Thanks for the Ride*, this happens to David who quickly checks his image in the mirror before leaving his house to pick up his cousin George. Positioned at the beginning of the film (01:13-01:37), the scene occurs in the living room. A small mirror hangs on the wall and shows the boy's charming face. He bites an apple and casts a self-approving smile. His sport jacket looks nice and he can borrow the father's expensive car: the ride looks promising. In *Connection*, a similar scene (08:47-08:49) involves Maureen in the front hall of her house, just before she opens the door for her dinner guest Iris, who has just rung the bell. She quickly glances at the mirror and approves of her own impeccable make-up and hairdo. Meanwhile, the voice-over utters her thoughts: «I'm afraid I also wanted Richard and his money and our house to impress Iris and forever lift me out of the category of poor relation». If the dynamic images show the surface hospitality, the voice admits her profound motivations: impressing her guest and marking the social distance between them. It is with this interplay between the visual and audio that the mirror scene projects the contradictions in the protagonist and inscribes the tension in the narrative.

The third category involves the mirror as a site for the expression of emotions and passions. This typology is relevant in *Hateship Loveship* and is visible in two instances. After receiving Ken's (fake) mail, Johanna stands in front of a mirror in her room (33:22-33:25), covering her mouth with her hands, unable to control the explosion of intense emotions. An uncanny earlier scene (27:50-29:08), set in the bathroom of her new house, had shown Johanna cleaning this very mirror. She inspected her image and tried to improve her hairdo. Unexpectedly, she then started kissing the mirror in a passionate way before going back to clean the mirror again. Thus, both before and after the kiss, Johanna

cleaned the mirror, assuming her role of the perfect housekeeper and respecting the traditional reflecting function of the mirror. But in the in-between moment, she suddenly started kissing the mirror's flat surface, projecting her passionate desires. The physical distance between the mirroring character and the mirror is here abolished and the viewing process at the basis of the mirroring process is overcome: the mirror, ultimately, is acted upon, being cleaned and being kissed. This heterotopic mirror enabled the subject to project her most intimate desires.

Elsewhere in the screen adaptations, the mirror is used to represent mental processes, whereby the subject questions his/her psychological world. Slowly and profoundly, Margaret, Vicky and Del engage in visible introspection in *Boys and Girls*, *Thanks for the Ride* and *Lives of Girls and Women* as they meditate upon their female identity and condition. In *Thanks for the Ride* (10:34-11:34), the camera shoots Vicky in her room as she sits in front of the mirror, putting on some make-up, getting ready for the ride. In this introspective unit, Vicky is self-absorbed in the moment, not projecting future events. Differently, in *Boys and Girls*, a central scene (13:12-13:58) captures Margaret in her room, while looking at her refracted image in a big mirror. She is sitting down, her posture static, her gaze profound: like Vicky in *Thanks for the Ride*, Margaret is not checking her appearance, but scrutinizing and questioning her identity. Poorly illuminated, these scenes enact tension: no narcissistic self-confidence can be traced on the faces of these female characters. In the fourth mirror scene of *Lives of Girls and Women* (41:00-41:15), the only participant is Del, sitting in her room in front of a table mirror, trying different hairstyles, with a self-admiring and self-approving expression. The soundscape is a soft and sensual melody, which accompanies this slowing down, introspective, and intimate unit. From the diegetic viewpoint, this meditative scene enables the character to acquire awareness of her identity and anticipates the climax of the story. The last introspective instance (1:09:15-1:09:25) shows Johanna in front of a mirror at Ken's place, while getting ready

for the night: she is wearing an old-fashioned nightgown and her expression projects desolation. After the mirror scene, yet, she enters Ken's bed while he is sleeping, gives him a soft kiss, and leaves the room.

In the categories discussed above, mirrors enable the mirroring character to act, to feel, and to think: they assist in the performance of material, perceptive, and cognitive processes. In the next categories, described below, mirrors fulfil more oblique functions: the mirroring/mirrored subject has less control over the visual process, is unaware, criticized, or even excluded.

A mirror, placed inside a fitting room, where Johanna tries on a green dress, plays a significant role in *Hateship Loveship*'s shop sequence (34:38-35:51). Unlike the validating mirror, this mirror criticizes the body. The scene is not private, the body is exposed. Johanna's refracted image is being observed, simultaneously, by herself and by the shop owner; the two visual perceptions are distinguished by the personality, sensitivity, and interest of the gazers. On the one hand, the owner wants to enhance and exploit Johanna's negative perception of her body and make her buy the green dress. On the other hand, the main character is trying to improve her figure with a new outfit, is trying to change her life. It is not by chance that the film ends with Johanna in her green dress, alongside her husband and her baby child. The layered heterotopic mirror, once more, operates as a diegetic trigger, which upsets and transforms the narrative.

Tension in the mirroring process is also suggested by several rear view mirrors and side mirrors present in *Thanks for the Ride*, *Lives of Girls and Women* and *Away from Her*. These items are always associated with a car and a male character and they deal with negotiated agency. *Away from Her* opens with Grant, who is holding an address written on a piece of paper (00:23-00:42). He is driving towards Marian's house to ask her to bring Audrey back to Meadowlake: this is his ultimate attempt to save Fiona, whose health condition has quickly deteriorated. The side mirror does not reflect Grant; it shows the street and the area behind

him. The reflected image is blurred and out of focus. Grant only casts a minor, almost imperceptible glance at the side mirror. This scene is followed by a flashback unit, in slow motion, accompanied by Grant's voice-over, in which Fiona proposed that the young man get married. Three rear view mirrors are shot later in the film: when Grant and Fiona drive back home after the medical examination in which her senile dementia is first diagnosed (11:44-11:55); when Grant drives Fiona to Meadowlake for her hospitalization (30:54-30:58); and when Grant drives home alone after visiting his wife at Meadowlake (49:55-50:05). In all cases, the rear view mirror at first only reflects Grant; then the camera moves to the front and shows the couple in a two shot.

A side mirror is also present in a short scene (1:13:43-1:13:45) in *Lives of Girls and Women*, set outside, just in front of Del's house. This scene depicts Garnet French, a boy Del is dating, gazing at the young woman in the side mirror of his pick-up. He has just convinced her to leave her books to follow him. Spectators do not have a view of Del but rather catch a close-up of Garnet's self-satisfied face in the mirror looking at Del. This shot is reminiscent of a similar one in *Thanks for the Ride*, with George gazing at Vicky in the rear view mirror. Both films rely on the rear view window in the car to capture a patronizing male gaze upon the female characters that negotiates agency. By bringing a power unbalance into play, the intrusive, aggressive, male gaze expresses the privileged position of the gazer over the gazee.

At other times, mirror scenes feature a clash between the mirroring and mirrored character. In *Lives of Girls and Women*, Del is refracted when her mother is in front of the mirror, while the mother is refracted when the daughter is in front of the mirror. In the already mentioned lipstick scene (17:45-17:52), the woman turns towards Del and says: «You look charming!» and the mirror shows the daughter. The third mirror scene in the same film (36:17-36:30) shows Del in her room, in front of a big mirror set on a table. The girl's face is not visible, but her mother's figure is refracted. The two are having a dialogue and Del is sharing some

negative gossip she has heard about Fern and Mr. Chamberlain, which the mother firmly rejects. Mirrors can include and exclude and, by their capacity to govern perspective, generate (dis)connections. Unlike the intrusive mirror, the unwanted reflection is not due to the character's gaze, but to the position of the camera. This inclusive compositional strategy has, indeed, an impact on the construction of the main character: Del's identity is strictly connected to that of her mother. This bond is valid and mutual, since her mother forms part of Del's growth as a young woman. Yet, inclusion is not unproblematic; it always carries tension and conflict.

Mirror and mirroring from page to screen

After identifying some categories for the use of mirrors in the selected six film adaptations, this section examines the adaptation process itself and how it affects the mirror trope. Are the mirrors present in the stories or not? How do the visual representations of mirrors in the film adaptations engage with their literary counterparts? In the process of audio-visual adaptation, the mirror scenes undergo semantically dense textual processes, including additions, omissions, expansions, and compressions.

In some cases, the film adaptations add mirrors to scenes although they are not present in the short stories. Polley's film relies on this strategy in a twofold way. On the one hand, as mentioned before, *Away from Her* significantly adds several rear windows to depict Grant. This device makes it possible to capture on screen the focalization on the male character found in the literary text. Yet, the use of rear and side mirrors also makes for a marked, oblique, uncanny sort of focalization. On the other hand, the film adds a scene in which Grant admires himself in the mirror in the entryway, echoing a similar scene featuring Fiona. In this way, Grant's character is made more relevant and more complex than in the story, consistent with his more frequent appearance as a

represented participant on the screen. From a stylistic perspective, these additions, then, operate as repetitions with variations, as subtle structuring and cohesive devices in the cinematographic narrative.[36]

Sometimes, film adapters expand the presence and role of mirrors that were only succinctly mentioned in the stories. For instance, in the short story *Boys and Girls*, the protagonist admits:

> I had not thought about it very often since, but sometimes when I was busy, working at school, or standing in front of the mirror combing my hair and wondering if I would be pretty when I grew up, the whole scene would flash into my mind.[37]

Margaret is remembering the scene in which her father killed a horse; the memory is triggered by the mirror. This self-mirroring action occurs «sometimes», as an alternative to schoolwork, and enables the protagonist to comb her hair and wonder. The passage outlines a network of actions, interconnected as alternatives or additions («or», «and»), among which the mirroring process takes place. The film instead selects and expands this mirror scene and makes it more relevant. In so doing, it reveals the high level of introspection that takes place in the story, which in the literary text is expressed through direct and indirect free thought.

Also differing from the written texts, in some scenes, the audio-visual adaptations compress a scene, which is more extended in the story. This is the case in *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage* and revolves around the green dress:

> Right ahead of her, a full-length mirror showed her in Mrs. Willets's high-quality but shapeless long coat, with a few inches of lumpy bare legs above the ankle socks.
>
> They did that on purpose, of course. They set the mirror there so you could get a proper notion of your deficiencies, right away, and then – they hoped – you would jump to the conclusion that you had to buy something to alter the picture. Such a transparent trick that it would

---

[36] A. Berthin-Scaillet, *A Reading of* Away from Her...
[37] A. Munro, *Boys and Girls*, p. 123.

have made her walk out, if she had not come in determined, knowing what she had to get.[38]

The oxymoronic syntagm «transparent trick» reveals the fact that the mirror is not a neutral instrument, but a device at the service of the shop's owner. It is meant to highlight the customers' «deficiencies» and to convince them to remedy them by purchasing items of clothing. The symbolic relevance of the mirror is confirmed by its position almost at the beginning of the short story, in the second section, and by the length of the passage. The whole story, indeed, revolves around a trick (fake correspondence) and its unexpected consequences (a wedding and a child). This passage seems to embed the meaning of the whole story: Johanna accepts the mirror's trick and the fake correspondence in order to transform her life.

However, the most significant mirror-based strategy in the adaptation process is that of omission. What is obliterated is a scene where Del plays in front of the mirror and manipulates the refracted image:

> I would go to the deep mirror in the built-in sideboard and look at the reflection in the room – all dark wainscoting, dark beams, the brass lighting fixture like a little formal tree growing the wrong way, with five branches stiffly curved, ending in glass flowers. By getting them into a certain spot in the mirror I could make my mother and Fern Doherty pull out like rubber bands, all wavering and hysterical, and I could make my own face droop disastrously down one side, as if I had a stroke.[39]

Del challenges the reflective function of the mirror with a subversive act. This scene is absent from the film *Life of Girls and Women*, which is more concerned with and confined within the sensorial and sensuous dimension of Del's growth. Del is, indeed, more prismatic in the literary than the filmic text.

Consistent with this, another mirror-related scene left out of the adaptation is when Del recites a poem in front of the mirror,

---

[38] A. Munro, *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*, p. 8.
[39] A. Munro, *Lives of Girls and Women*, p. 89.

thus anticipating her future as writer. In line with Leszczynska's observations,[40] Munro's text foregrounds Del's literary potential more than the film does.

> I turned around, went back into the hall to look in the dim mirror at my twisted wet face. Without diminishment of pain I observed myself; I was amazed to think that the person suffering was me, for it was not me at all; I was watching. I was watching, I was suffering. I said into the mirror a line from Tennyson, from my mother's *Complete Tennyson* that was a present from her old teacher, Miss Rush. I said it with absolute sincerity, absolute irony. *He cometh not, she said.*[41]

Notably, these last two mirror scenes are semantically dense and intertwined. Before assuming her destiny as a writer, Del needs to come to terms with the mother. She accepts being part of a tradition of girls and women who love art and literature. But these women are not faithfully followed. They are challenged, transformed, and exorcized. The short story foregrounds this crisis as the prerequisite for awareness. The film omits these two scenes using, instead, the inclusive mirror-scene typology, whereby it creates a relation between the two female characters.

Conclusion

A semiotically layered and complex trope, the mirror in the film adaptations analyzed here fulfils both marked and unmarked functions. It performs a basic function in material, perceptual, and cognitive processes: in front of a mirror, actors act, think, express emotions. However, more oblique functions are also enacted, as when rear mirrors project intrusive interpersonal gazes, critical mirrors reveal problems and limits, or inclusive mirrors refract unwitting characters and create (dis)connections. The mirror is,

---

[40] E. Leszczynska, *Time, Space and Events in* Lives of Girls and Women*: an Analysis of the Short Story Circle by Alice Munro and its Film Adaptation*, unpublished MA dissertation, 2015.

[41] A. Munro, *Lives of Girls and Women*, p. 304.

thus, a heterotopic space, which disturbs the setting, inscribes tension, and upsets the narrative. Conflict is expressed intratextually (e.g. among characters), intertexually (i.e., among adaptations and adapted texts), and intersemiotically (i.e., among modal systems).

The structure and role of mirror scenes is far from homogeneous in this corpus. Differences can be noticed across the screen adaptations in terms of distribution and semiotic implicatures. *Boys and Girls* features the meditation mirror to symbolically signal a profoundly introspective component in the story. Differently, *Thanks for the Ride* shows two mirror scenes: first a validating one, related to George; then a meditative one, related to Vicky. The two scenes (dis)connect the two characters and mark their profound differences in terms of personality and social status. *Connection* adopts a voice-over to reveal Maureen's intimate thoughts in front of a mirror, whereas the dynamic images project a more superficial level: narrative tension is here expressed at the intersemiotic level.

Longer and more recent film adaptations include a higher number and variety of mirror scenes. In *Lives of Girls and Women,* the functional, introspective, and intrusive mirrors reflect the complexity of the protagonist and her multifaceted relationships to her mother and Garnet. *Hateship Loveship* mainly deploys the expressive mirror to portray the passionate main character and the critical mirror to explain the diegetic twist. Like *Thanks for the Ride*, *Away from Her* adopts mirror scenes to problematize the relation between Fiona and Grant, to make Fiona's character more complex, and Grant's character more relevant within the narrative.

Not only does the mirror, as heterotopic space, negotiate intrapersonal dynamics and interpersonal relations. The mirror trope is also useful for exploring relations between the adapted text and the adaptation. Apparently aimed at mere replication, the adaptation process entails discontinuity as transformation: it enacts modal, medial, and aesthetic change. In this vein, intersemiotic processes of omission, addition, extension, and compression are

not regarded as betrayals but instead testify to the creative and transformative components of adaptation.

Specifically, adaptations tend to add or expand the mirror scene on the screen to suggest introspection (e.g. *Boys and Girls*) or focalization (e.g. *Away from Her*). By this, they are used to either symbolize interiority or to negotiate perspective and/as agency. They, however, omit or compress mirror scenes when they enact critical (e.g. *Hateship Loveship*) or playful gazes (e.g. *Lives of Girls and Women*), which impact on the unfolding of the narrative.

Limited in scope, this article is part of a broader project on television and film adaptations of Munro's stories.[42] The next step will be to examine the behaviour and function of verbal language in audio-visual artefacts, in dialogue, voice-overs, and/or as writing.

References

Books

Bateman, J., Schmidt, K.H., *Multimodal Film Analysis: How Films Mean*, Routledge, London 2012.

Berthin-Scaillet, A., *A Reading of* Away from Her*, Sarah Polley's Adaptation of Alice Munro's Short Story,* The Bear Came Over the Mountain, «The Journal of the Short Story in English», 55 (2010), pp. 157-171.

---

[42] This work follows four published articles: *La traduzione intersemiotica: da* The Bear Came over the Mountain *di Alice Munro a* Away from Her *di Sara Polley*, in P. Faini (ed.), *Terminologia, Linguaggi specialistici, traduzione. Prospettive teoriche e pratiche*, Tangram, Trento 2018, pp. 141-154; '*A sign of a letter coming': Adapting Munro's (Faked) Epistolary Correspondence*, «Lingue e linguaggi», 28 (2018), pp. 111-122; *Short-film Adaptations of Munro's Stories in the 1980s: A Multimodal Stylistic Analysis*, «Lingue e linguaggi», 33 (2019), pp. 87-99. *Film Adaptations as Intersemiotic Contact Zones:* Edge of Madness *by Anne Wheeler*, «Textus: English Studies in Italy», 32/2 (2019), pp. 77-91. The present article expands the corpus, elaborates upon the method, changes the focus.

Bluestone, G., *Novel into Film: A Critical Study*, The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore 1957.

Burn, A., *The Kineikonic Mode: Towards a Multimodal Approach to Moving Image Media*, in C. Jewitt (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis*, Routledge, London 2014², pp. 373-383.

Carroll, N., *Theorizing the Moving Image*, Cambridge UP, Cambridge 1996.

Concilio, C., *The Mark on the Floor. Alice Munro on Ageing and Alzheimer's Disease in* The Bear Came over the Mountain *and Sarah Polley's* Away from Her, in C. Concilio (ed.), *Imagining Ageing. Representations of Age and Ageing in Anglophone Literatures*, Transcript Verlag, Bielefeld 2018, pp. 101-125.

Eco, U., *Sugli specchi e altri saggi: il segno, la rappresentazione, l'illusione, l'immagine*, La nave di Teseo, Milano 2018.

Foucault, M., *Le parole e le cose. Un'archeologia delle scienze umane*, trad. it. di E. Panaitescu, Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, Milano 2001.

Goldberg, G., *Lo specchio e l'uomo*, trad. it. di N. Polo, Marsilio, Venezia 1989.

Hutcheon, L., with O'Flynn, S., *A Theory of Adaptation* (2nd edition), Routledge, New York-London 2012.

Jewitt, J. (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis*, Routledge, London 2014².

Kress, K., *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication*, Routledge, London 2010.

Lacan, J., *Scritti*, trad. it. di G. Contri, Einaudi, Torino 1974.

Leitch, T., *Twelve Fallacies in Contemporary Adaptation Theory*, «Criticism», 45/2 (2003), pp. 149-171.

Leszczynska, E., *Time, Space and Events in* Lives of Girls and Women*: An Analysis of the Short Story Circle by Alice Munro and its Film Adaptation*, unpublished MA dissertation, 2015.

McFarlane, B., *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1996.

McGill, C., *No Nation but Adaptation:* The Bear Came Over the Mountain*, Away from Her*, and What It Means to Be Faithful*, «Canadian Literature / Littérature canadienne», 197 (2008), pp. 98-111.

McIntyre, D., *Integrating Multimodal Analysis and the Stylistics of Drama: A Multimodal Perspective on Ian McKellen's* Richard III, «Language and Literature», 17/4 (2008), pp. 309-334.

Munro, A., *Connection*, in *Moons of Jupiter*, Vintage, London 1987, pp. 1-18.

Munro, A., *Boys and Girls*, in *Dance of the Happy Shades*, Vintage, London 2000, pp. 111-127.

Munro, A., *Thanks for the Ride*, in *Dance of the Happy Shades*, Vintage, London 2000, pp. 45-59.

Munro, A., *Lives of Girls and Women*, Vintage International, New York 2001.

Munro, A., *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*, in *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*, Vintage, London 2001, pp. 3-54.

Munro, A., *The Bear Came Over the Mountain*, in *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*, Vintage, London 2001, pp. 275-323.

Nørgaard, N., *The Semiotics of Typography in Literary Texts. A Multimodal Approach*, «Orbis Litterarum», 64/2 (2009), pp. 141-160.

Nørgaard, N., *Multimodality and Stylistics*, in M. Burke (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook to Stylistics*, Routledge, London 2014, pp. 471-484.

Pillière, L., *Crossing New Frontiers? Investigating Style from a Multimodal Perspective*, «Études de stylistique anglaise», 7 (2014), pp. 99-120.

Stam, R., *Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Adaptation*, in R. Stam, A. Raengo (eds.), *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, Blackwell, Malden 2004, pp. 1-52.

Stam, R., *Literature through Film: Realism, Magic, and the Art of Adaptation*, Blackwell, Malden 2005.

Stam, R., Raengo, E. (eds.), *A Companion to Literature and Film*, Blackwell, Malden 2004.

Stam, R., Raengo, E. (eds.), *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, Blackwell, Malden 2004.

Toolan, M., *Stylistics and Film*, in M. Burke (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook to Stylistics*, Routledge, London 2014, pp. 455-470.

Ue, T., *Incarceration, Focalization, and Narration: Adapting the Two Selves in* Boys and Girls, «Short Fiction in Theory and Practice», 4/2 (2014), pp. 175-185.

van Leeuwen, T., *Speech, Music, Sound*, Macmillan, London 1999.

Ventura, H., *Alice Munro's* Boys and Girls*: Mapping Out Boundaries*, «Commonwealth Essays and Studies», 15/1 (1992), pp. 80-87.

Wildfeuer, J., *Film Discourse Interpretation: Towards a New Paradigm for Multimodal Film Analysis*, Routledge, London 2014.

Zurru, E., *Breaking the Crystal Shoe: A Multimodal Stylistic Analysis of the Character of Cinderella in the* Shrek *Saga*, «Textus: English Studies in Italy», 23/1 (2010), pp. 235-261.

Movies

Harrison, J.K., *Thanks for the Ride*, National Film Board of Canada, Canada 1983.

Johnson, L., *Hateship Loveship*, IFC Films, USA 2013.

Koenig, W., *Connection*, Atlantis Films and the National Film Board of Canada, Canada 1986.

McBrearty, D., *Boys and Girls*, Atlantis Films, Canada 1983.

Polley, S., *Away from Her*, The Film Farm and Foundry Film, Canada 2006.

Wilson, R., *Lives of Girls and Women*, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canada 1994.

«Une payse dépaysée»: réflexions sur *Poèmes des quatre côtés* de Jacques Brault

Marina Zito

Università degli Studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale'

Bien du temps s'est écoulé depuis la parution de *Poèmes des quatre côtés* de Jacques Brault en 1975[1] et toutefois ce recueil conserve encore un charme étrange et comme un secret pas encore complètement dévoilé.

À l'époque, l'auteur était professeur à l'Université de Montréal; il avait chanté dans *Suite fraternelle*[2] à la fois la douleur pour la mort de son frère en guerre et l'humiliation de son peuple; il avait publié en 1966 *Miron le Magnifique*[3] en l'honneur de son confrère. *PQC* allait se situer au croisement de ces activités multiformes: un recueil poétique, comme l'indique son titre, mais aussi une pratique de la traduction et une réflexion sur celle-ci – un texte hybride, expérimental.

À part la beauté du chant qui se déroule à travers 33 poèmes, *PQC* est un livre difficile: aucune aide, à notre avis, ni de la critique immédiate ni des études ultérieures. La compréhension du recueil n'est assurée, semble-t-il, que par l'auteur lui-même – no-

---

[1] J. Brault, *Poèmes des quatre côtés*, Éditions du Noroît, Québec 1975. Désormais *PQC*.

[2] J. Brault, *Suite fraternelle*, in *Poèmes I*, Éditions du Noroît-La table rase, Québec 1986, pp. 45-55.

[3] J. Brault, *Miron le Magnifique*, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, Montréal 1966.

tamment grâce aux deux entretiens qu'il accorde à Alexis Le-
françois, la même année que la parution du recueil,[4] et à Robert
Melançon beaucoup plus tard, en 1987.[5]

   PQC apporte à la critique littéraire la notion de 'nontraduction'
– que le poète québécois élabore dans les introductions aux diffé-
rentes parties; selon lui le message de la poésie se forme à l'intérieur
de la collaboration de l'auteur et du traducteur au-delà de fausses
idées de supériorité de l'original ou de la traduction. En fait, au
début, Brault semble s'excuser: «j'ai connu que traduire est impos-
sible, que traduire est inévitable. De ce choc […] na[î]t la nontra-
duction»,[6] mais vers la fin du texte, il explique son néologisme:

> La nontraduction […] qu'on ne la regarde pas comme une théorie […]
> Elle n'est qu'une pratique ouverte à son auto-critique. Elle cherche, elle
> doute, elle trouve […]. Elle part d'un texte, elle arrive à un texte […]
> Le texte […] non traduit […] se trouve quelque part, *dans le passage*,
> dans l'inter-textes…[7]

Il avait d'ailleurs déjà examiné sa position:

> Je flotte dans une inter-langue, des mots-buées voilent mon regard; un
> texte, ni d'un autre, ni de moi, se dessine en forme de chiasme. Je m'y
> pends. Je m'y perds; je m'y trouve. Et je me dis que je n'ai rien à dire.
> Un inter-texte, voilà ce que dévoile la nontraduction.[8]

   Le recueil de Brault aurait donc un but précis, celui de bâtir la
vérité plus intime, plus profonde de chaque poème et de la poésie.
Il ne s'agit pas de vérité métaphysique, mais de la vérité de l'œuvre,
directement dépendante de la «clarté» – lexique braultien[9] – des
quatre poètes qui ont permis à Brault de prendre son essor.

---

   [4] A. Lefrançois (éd.), *Entretien avec Jacques Brault*, «Liberté», 100 (1975),
pp. 66-72.

   [5] R. Melançon, *De la poésie et de quelques circonstances. Entretien avec
Jacques Brault*, «Voix et Images», 12 (1987), II/35, pp. 188-211.

   [6] *PQC*, p. 15.

   [7] *PQC*, p. 95. L'italique est de l'auteur.

   [8] *PQC*, p. 50.

   [9] *PQC*, p. 90.

Bien entendu, Brault a opéré une sélection dans la production de «ses» poètes anglophones et, pour chacun d'eux, il juxtapose aussi des poèmes tirés de recueils différents. Ensuite, il organise le passage de l'un à l'autre auteur – John Haines, Gwendolyn MacEwen, Margaret Atwood et E.E. Cummings – sur la base des points cardinaux, faisant suivre au *Nord* l'*Est* – lequel, à son tour, est suivi de l'*Ouest*, et enfin il y aura le *Sud*: il ne dessine donc pas un cercle, mais souligne l'horizontalité des voix canadiennes (et féminines) – MacEwen pour l'*Est* et Atwood pour l'*Ouest* – par rapport aux voix étatsuniennes (et masculines) – Haines pour le *Nord* et Cummings pour le *Sud*.

Le fait que parfois Brault ajoute – des strophes entières, des vers, des mots –, que d'autres fois il enlève, ou qu'il mélange des poèmes différents démontre encore une fois qu'il ne s'agit pas d'une simple traduction, mais plutôt d'une prise en charge des possibilités du chant. C'est d'ailleurs ce qui, petit à petit, ressort des quatre introductions qui précèdent les quatre parties et qui sont intitulées *Nontraduire* (*1*, *2*, *3*, *4*).

Brault revendique la paternité de *PQC*; par exemple, au cours de son dialogue avec Lefrançois il affirme: «Ce texte je l'ai signé. J'en ai donc assumé la responsabilité».[10] Toutefois, le lecteur peut être dérouté par des déclarations opposées – quand par exemple Brault énonce le contraire: «Ce texte que je m'apprête à signer n'est pas mien […] il me parle et je le parle […] nous écoutons naître entre nous une langue, nôtre pour un instant, inscrite dans un texte in-différent».[11] Dans la dynamique de sa formation, la traduction devient personnelle, ce n'est plus une traduction, c'est une «nontraduction»: le mystère des quatre poètes-guides finit par reconduire le poète-traducteur «ici»,[12] en son «pays». Nous citons: «Maintenant je peux me recueillir en mon *pays*; le centre ne fuit pas vers toutes sortes d'alibis, il ne se ferme pas sur une

---

[10] A. Lefrançois, *Entretien avec Jacques Brault*, p. 71.
[11] *PQC*, p. 51.
[12] *PQC*, p. 90

identité peureuse et nostalgique, il va et vient comme un sens qui ne craint plus de se mêler aux contresens».[13] Pays, identité. Ce sont des mots forts dans la culture québécoise de l'époque. Brault en arrive à dire que la nontraduction «enfante une signification»[14] parce que «[l]a poésie est une payse dépaysée»[15] et que

> [à] la fin, si la nontraduction parvenait à réaliser (non pas à résoudre) la contradiction d'être, le même et l'autre ne formeraient qu'un seul. *Je* ne serait plus un autre. Ni appropriation, ni désappropriation, le tiers exclu des deux textes émergerait de son exclusion et par la force des choses signifiantes exclurait même les termes de son inter-langue. Ce texte non écrit, non parlé, voilà ce que vise la nontraduction. Non pas établissement par une métaphysique hors de l'histoire, non, jamais.[16]

Toutefois, la dimension esthétique pourra aussi, à un certain moment du discours critique, faire entrevoir une dimension géographique. Par exemple lorsque l'auteur avoue: «Je suis d'un pays où les relations humaines se caractérisent par la chaleur, vive et brève – comme notre été»,[17] tel est le Québec, pays de relations humaines.

Brault se sert aussi de ses dessins, et insère des encres avant chacune des introductions dont nous avons déjà parlé, ainsi qu'avant la *Contrenote*, qui se présente comme une sorte de conclusion. Les encres semblent destinées à aider: en commençant par les balises dans la neige qui précèdent les textes du premier poète, Haines, l'américain qui s'était installé en Alaska; en continuant avec le bonhomme de neige et le sous-bois qui précèdent les parties *Est* et *Ouest* des textes des deux poétesses canadiennes, MacEwen et Atwood – les chantres d'une réalité territoriale blanche et verte comme la neige et les bois. Encore

---

[13] *Ibidem*. C'est moi qui souligne.

[14] *PQC*, p. 50.

[15] *Ibidem*. Pour la signification de *payse*, «personne du même pays», cfr. L.-A. Bélisle, *Dictionnaire nord-américain de la langue française*, Beauchemin, Laval 1977, *ad vocem*.

[16] *PQC*, p. 70. L'italique est de Brault.

[17] *PQC*, p. 15.

un sous-bois pour introduire le *Sud* de Cummings, poète complexe et d'avant-garde. La dernière encre représente une comète qui se dirige vers le haut, sans doute un signe de la circularité de la démarche vers le Nord: tout peut recommencer. Les balises, le bonhomme de neige, les sous-bois et le retour au Nord, voilà des indicateurs précis. D'autre part, la juxtaposition immédiate de l'*Ouest* à l'*Est*, cette ligne horizontale qui coupe le dessin de la rose des vents, pourrait nous faire soulever le problème d'un possible souvenir de la citation biblique *A mari usque ad mare*, qui est devenue la devise du Canada. À vrai dire non seulement une lecture, mais aussi une vérification que cette union au niveau horizontal est encerclée par le froid du *Nord* (Haines) et par le plus pur lyrisme du *Sud* (Cummings).

À la suite des indications que Brault lui-même donne à la fin de son texte, ainsi que des traductions en regard qui, comme dans le cas de quelques poèmes de Atwood – par exemple –, avaient été publiés précédemment avec de petites corrections parfois,[18] il nous semble intéressant et didactique de retrouver la source de chaque poème. Brault ne se réjouirait sans doute pas à savoir que nous nous sommes efforcée en ce sens – il paraît ne pas tenir en grande considération «ceux qui croient encore à la notion de texte 'original'»[19] – et toutefois pour des étrangers comme nous – soit par rapport au Canada, soit par rapport à la francophonie et à l'anglophonie – cette recherche pourrait nous aider à en comprendre le sens. Expliquons davantage. Comme, selon Brault, le «métier de professeur», le sien et le nôtre, «on peut [le] voir comme un service à rendre»,[20] la juxtaposition des textes d'origine et des textes traduits permet de vérifier cette idée de service, un ser-

---

[18] Cfr. la revue «Ellipse», 3 (1970), p. 63.

[19] *PQC*, p. 88.

[20] À la question que lui pose Melançon, Brault répond: «La littérature [au Québec] est subventionnée. On nous fait jouer, parfois, des rôles dans les jurys […] [O]n peut voir ça comme un service à rendre, un peu comme dans notre métier de professeur», cfr. R. Melançon, *De la poésie et de quelques circonstances*, p. 206.

vice-créateur d'une réalité «autre», justement l'essence, la subs-
tance de la poésie – en tenant aussi compte du fait que les poèmes
que Brault choisit de traduire sont presque toujours très éloignés
l'un de l'autre dans les recueils-sources.

<center>* * *</center>

Nous allons examiner certains poèmes emblématiques de
chaque section en commençant par le premier du recueil, *Ce se-
rait…*:[21] jusqu'au v. 6 une traduction pure et simple du poème
The End of the Street du recueil *The Stone Harp* de John Haines.[22]
Toutefois, au v. 7 Brault reprend le titre de l'original utilisant
pour la métaphore anglaise «[t]he car is out of gas» la métaphore
française «au bout de la rue»; de plus, il indique bien avant sa
source anglaise la présence de l'interlocuteur, car «te voici» anti-
cipe de deux vers l'«autre» que l'anglais indiquait au dernier vers
par l'adjectif «your» («your evening […]») et, d'autre part, le
vague «someone» de Haines devient «l'ombre» qui appelle une
autre «ombre» (v. 8), – montrant ainsi une profondeur de signi-
fications:

John Haines
The End of the Street

1   It would be at the end
2   of a bad winter,
3   the salty snow turning black,
4   a few sparrows cheeping
5   in the ruins of
6   a dynamited water tower.

7   The car is out of gas;
8   someone has gone to look.

9   Your evening is here.

---

[21] *PQC*, p. 19.

[22] J. Haines, *The End of the Street*, in *The Stone Harp*, Wesleyan University
Press, Middletown CT 1971, p. 51.

Jacques Brault

1   Ce serait à la fin
2   d'un mauvais hiver
3   le sel de neige tournant au noir
4   quelques moineaux piaillant
5   dans les ruines
6   d'un château d'eau dynamité

7   te voici au bout de la rue
8   ombre venue voir une ombre
9   ton dernier soir
        qui tombe
            ici

La partie *Nord* du recueil se clôt sur une prière aux accents amérindiens, en fait une invocation, *Viens…*,[23] adressée au «hibou des hivers»; ce poème aurait comme point de départ *Prayer to the Snowy Owl*, du recueil *Winter News*.[24] Le *owl* avait de «golden eyes» (v. 2); en français les yeux deviennent «glauques»: c'est-à-dire que le son ['gəʊldən-glok] demeure presque pareil tandis que la nuance de la couleur est modifiée (du jaune au vert); toutefois, de façon analogue, les yeux sont capables de percer le suaire du monde.

John Haines
Prayer to the Snowy Owl

1   Descend, silent spirit;
2   you whose golden eyes
3   pierce the grey
4   shroud of the world – […]

Jacques Brault

1   Viens
      hibou des hivers
           descends

---

[23] *PQC*, p. 28.

[24] J. Haines, *Prayer to the Snowy Owl*, in *Winter News*, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown 1967, p. 39.

2   esprit de silence

3   tes yeux glauques
4   ouvrent la grisaille
5   un monde sort de son suaire […]

Une image se dessine, car on connaît l'identification de Brault avec le hibou:[25] il retrouverait dans l'anglais, et emprunterait à l'anglais, la possibilité de parler de son rôle dans le dédoublement du soi en «tu».

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

Sur l'expérience du poète qui souffre la douleur du monde, Brault ouvre la deuxième partie de *PQC*, le *Est*, inspirée par Gwendolyn MacEwen. *Je n'ai jamais…*,[26] engendré par le poème *The Hollow* du recueil *The Shadow-Maker*,[27] confirme la méditation du poète sur son propre rôle et sur sa condition de pleurs, de larmes. La première strophe est un autre des cas de traduction presque mot à mot:

Gwendolyn MacEwen
The Hollow

1   I never wrote from pain before
2   but then I saw the night-ship, star-ship
3   of our longing years leave this world
4   and all its fuel was tears

5   I never wrote from here before
6   but then I laid my head
7   in the hollow of your flesh
8   and heard unborn cities speaking […]

---

[25] «[…] je suis un solitaire, un 'lone-ranger', tout ce qu'on voudra; la figure du hibou, je m'y suis reconnu», cfr. A. Lefrançois, *Entretien avec Jacques Brault*, p. 68.

[26] *PQC*, p. 37.

[27] G. MacEwen, *The Hollow*, in *The Shadow-Maker*, Macmillan Canada, Toronto 1969, p. 72.

Jacques Brault

1   Je n'ai jamais écrit d'après douleur   jamais
2   et puis j'ai vu le navire-nuit   navire-étoile
3   nos années de convoitise en son creux quitter ce monde
4   et tout son carburant était de larmes

5   je n'ai jamais écrit d'après ici   jamais
6   et puis j'ai posé ma tête
7   au creux de ta chair
8   j'ai entendu des villes à naître qui parlaient […]

On remarque que dans le reste du poème français, un brin d'espoir se faufile – les «villes à naître» (v. 8) invitant à une certaine confiance – qui pourrait ne pas exister dans les «unborn cities» de l'anglais.

Le deuxième poème de cette section est *Verdie de sommeil…*,[28] une traduction magnifique, dirais-je, de *Green With Sleep* du recueil *A Breakfast for Barbarians*.[29]

Gwendolyn MacEwen
Green With Sleep

1   Green with sleep the skin breathes night
2   – I hear you turning worlds in your dark dream –
3   The sheets like leaves in a private season
4   Speak of the singular self which lies between.

5   Your breathing is a thing I cannot enter
6   Like a season more remote than winter;
7   Green with sleep breathes, breathes the skin,
8   I hear you turning worlds in your dark dream.

9   There is a great unspeakable wheel which keeps
10 Us slender as myths, and green with sleep.

---

[28] *PQC*, p. 38.

[29] G. MacEwen, *Green With Sleep*, in *A Breakfast for Barbarians* (1996), cfr. B. Gorjup (éd.), *Il geroglifico finale / The Last Hieroglyph*, Longo, Ravenna 1997, p. 96.

Jacques Brault

1   Verdie de sommeil ta peau respire la nuit
2   j'entends que tu remues des mondes en ton rêve obscurci
3   les draps comme feuilles d'une saison dépouillée
4   s'envolent du seul singulier qui repose entre nous

5   ton respire est brisure où je ne peux pénétrer
6   comme une saison plus reculée que l'hiver
7   verdie de sommeil respire ta peau respire
8   j'entends que tu remues des mondes en ton rêve obscurci

9   une espèce de grande roue tourne en nous
10 et nous diaphanise comme des mythes et nous verdit de sommeil

La traduction de Brault est particulièrement précieuse – par exemple grâce au choix du néologisme final, le verbe «diaphaniser» qui rend l'adjectif anglais «slender» ('frêle') tandis que la présence immédiate des personnages – aussi bien en anglais qu'en français («I hear you…» / «j'entends que tu…») – assure une forme de consolation. C'est une dynamique qui annonce l'union génératrice du poème suivant, *Quand le toucher…*,[30] transposition de *Seeds and Stars*:[31]

Gwendolyn MacEwen
Seeds and Stars

1   when touch is merest wish we swim
2   like fish, our seed the liquid night,
3   the length of seas, our first deep element
4   and love is the end of sleep and sight

5   when wish is merest touch I bend
6   like her whose curve is heaven over earth
7   and love beneath me far and far
8   makes of my flesh a miracle of stars

---

[30] *PQC*, p. 39.

[31] G. MacEwen, *Seeds and Stars*, in *The Shadow-Maker*, p. 71.

Jacques Brault

1   Quand le toucher est le moindre désir nous nageons
2   comme poisson   notre semence est nuit liquide
3   l'immense des mers notre ultime élément profond
4   et l'amour est la fin du sommeil et de la veille

5   quand le désir est le moindre toucher   je plie
6   comme celle dont la courbe est ciel au-dessus de terre
7   et l'amour dessous moi   loin et loin
8   fait de ma chair une semence d'étoiles

La traduction homogénéise deux termes anglais – et «semence» sert à Brault pour «seed» du deuxième vers et pour «miracle» du dernier. Mais ce qui est important, à mon avis, ce sont les espaces graphiques au milieu de quelques vers, comme entre «poisson» e «notre semence» au deuxième vers ou «moi» et «loin» de l'avant-dernier: ce sont des espaces qui n'existent pas dans la source et qui traduisent sans doute la respiration.

* * *

Sur le thème de la connaissance – qui peut ne pas être seulement linguistique – semble insister la troisième partie, l'*Ouest*, avec le choix de poèmes de Margaret Atwood. *Axiom*[32] présente la rencontre du locuteur et de la mer:

Margaret Atwood
Axiom

1   Axiom: you are a sea
2   Your eye-
3   lids curve over chaos

4   My hands
5   where they touch you, create
6   small inhabited islands

---

[32] M. Atwood, *Axiom*, in *The Animals in That Country*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston 1968, p. 69. Cfr. aussi *PQC*, p. 55.

7   Soon you will be
8   all earth: a known
9   land, a country.

Jacques Brault
Axiome

1   tu es océan
2   tes pau-
3   pières s'incurvent sur chaos

4   mes mains   là
5   où elle te touchent
6   parsèment
7   de petites îles habitées…

8   bientôt tu seras
9   terre entièrement
10   : une contrée
11   connue   un pays

Parfois le poème de Brault reflète obstinément le texte de départ – comme le montre la division en deux vers du mot «paupières» (vv. 2 et 3), semblable à la division de Atwood «eye-lids»: un transfert, au niveau typographique, du geste d'ouverture et fermeture des yeux! D'un tout autre ordre est, chez Brault, le phénomène de pousser à l'extrême certains choix lexicaux: «océan» (v. 2) pour «sea» de l'incipit anglais. Tandis que la valeur sémantique de «pays» (v. 12) reflète bien le mot «country» (dernier vers de Atwood), tous les deux contenant le sens de «nation», alors que le son de «country» [ˈkʌntri] est à son tour reflété par la traduction de «land» par le substantif «contrée» [k�õtʁe].

Les deux poèmes, *Resurrection*[33] de Atwood et *Voici ma résurrection* de Brault, permettent une vérification de l'attention de

---

[33] M. Atwood, *Resurrection*, in *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*, Oxford University Press, Toronto 1970, p. 58. En passant, je soulignerais ici l'emploi de la seule parenthèse d'ouverture chez Atwood (v. 14). Brault évitera ce signe.

Brault au thème du «pays». Nous allons juxtaposer quelques vers de l'original et de la traduction:[34]

Margaret Atwood
Resurrection

14 (… the land shifts with frost
15 and those who have become the stone
16 voices of the land
17 shift also…

Jacques Brault

14 … le pays bouge sous le givre
15 et ceux-là qui sont devenus les voix
16 de pierre du pays
17 bougent aussi…

Encore une fois «pays» est le substantif utilisé dans le texte braultien (v. 14 et v. 16) pour l'anglais «land» (v. 14 et v. 16; auparavant, dans *Axiom*, c'était «country»). Le «pays» est la réalité ultime de Brault: «je peux me recueillir en mon pays» dira-t-il dans la *Contrenote* finale.[35] Son pays, un lieu de recueillement.

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

La voie est ouverte à la dernière partie, le *Sud*, inspiré de Cummings, dont Brault cite en exergue un jugement fort: «but the very song of (as mountains / feel and lovers) singing is silence». C'est une citation emblématique soit pour l'utilisation de l'adverbe «very» pour modifier non pas un adjectif, mais le substantif «song», soit pour l'utilisation des parenthèses qui, chez le poète américain, ne servent pas qu'à préciser une partie du discours, mais veulent briser la syntaxe. À cette technique il faut s'habituer quand on lit Cummings.

---

[34] *PQC*, p. 62.
[35] *PQC*, p. 90.

Poète de «chanson[s] d'éternité quotidienne»[36] est Cummings: cela, dans le texte de Brault, invite à commencer l'analyse de la partie *Sud* par un poème d'amour parmi les plus beaux, *Je porte ton âme…*[37] – depuis *i carry your hearth with me* (*i carry it in…*)[38] Brault a ici la possibilité de répéter les choix de Cummings en utilisant lui aussi beaucoup de parenthèses. Toutefois, même s'il garde cette caractéristique de sa source, il se montre indépendant. Par exemple, la conclusion du poème anglais étant «i carry your heart (i carry it in my heart)», le texte français montre un ajout: «je porte ton âme (je la porte dans mon âme) dans ce qui m'emporte» avec un renvoi métaphysique – qui d'ailleurs existe en d'autres poèmes de Cummings.

Une technique semblable dans la traduction du très beau *if there are any heavens my mother will (all by herself) have…*:[39] *S'il y a des cieux…* chante Brault suivant sa source.[40] La parole passe ensuite au père qui indiquera la mère: «voici ma bien-aimée», alors que la voix du poète sera cachée deux fois à l'intérieur des parenthèses (l'original en cette occasion n'avait de parenthèse qu'une seule fois):

E.E. Cummings

15 … This is my beloved my
16   (suddenly in sunlight
17 he will bow,

18 & the whole garden will bow)

---

[36] *Ibidem*.

[37] *PQC*, p. 79

[38] E.E. Cummings, *i carry your heart with me (i carry it in)*, in *95 Poems*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York 1972, n° 92.

[39] E.E. Cummings, *if there are any heavens my mother will (all by herself) have*, in *100 Selected Poems*, Grove Press, New York 1959, n° 31, p. 39.

[40] *PQC*, p. 81.

Jacques Brault

15 … voici ma bien-aimée
16   (soudain sous le soleil
17 il saluera très bas)
18 ma racine et ma rosée
19 (et tout le jardin s'inclinera)

À notre sensibilité francophone *S'il y a des cieux…* est le poème qui justifie à lui seul l'entreprise de *PQC* en faisant du chant de Cummings un des plus purs exemples de sensibilité – filiale et de couple –, car tout ce qui pourrait demeurer d'artificiel, de baroque et d'expérimental dans le chant de l'Américain disparaît en français. Il se peut que l'existence de Brault, son long ménage avec son épouse, sa forte identité à l'intérieur des rapports familiaux aient – de quelque façon lointaine – influencé l'interprétation du chant de Cummings faisant devenir, par exemple, la figure du père un emblème de tendresse et de participation – «… mon père (penché comme une rose / ouvert comme une rose)…» – au lieu de la figure plutôt figée de l'original: «my father… (deep like a rose / tall like a rose)…».

L'autre merveilleux poème d'amour de Cummings, *it may not always be so; and i say*,[41] avait permis à Brault deux glissements: au début et à la fin. D'abord il s'était servi de l'italique pour le pronom neutre 'ça', l'incipit de Cummings devenant ainsi: «Peut-être que ça n'est pas pour toujours».[42] En 1975, le pronom «ça» avait une valence politique que peut-être le chant de Brault garde au deuxième plan. Quant à l'explicit, il introduit la forme graphique du décalage que Cummings n'avait pas utilisée cette fois-ci – comme si le traducteur était devenu plus royaliste que le roi! Il convient de vérifier ces observations dans le texte:

---

[41] E.E. Cummings, *it may not always be so; and i say*, in *100 Selected Poems*, n° 8, p. 9.

[42] *PQC*, p. 80. L'italique est de Brault.

Peut-être que *ça* n'est pas pour toujours
– et je dis tout bas je dis
que si tes lèvres tant et tant goûtées devaient se souder
à celles d'un autre   si tes doigts s'incrustaient dans
sa poitrine   comme en la mienne naguère
si sur un autre visage dévalait ta chevelure bleutée
en tel silence que je connais encore   ou si
    (par dernière douleur)
se crispaient tes mots muets   cherchant le plein-dire
se tenant désarmés devant une mémoire aux abois

si *ça* devait être ainsi
– je dis si *ça* devait être
toi au cœur de mon cœur   ne fais qu'un signe   à peine
que je puisse aller à lui   et prendre ses mains
    (comme les tiennes)
et lui murmurer   accueille ce bonheur (le mien) tout entier

alors détournant mon regard   j'entendrai l'oiseau-terreur
étrangler
    son chant
      au loin
        dans un pays
          perdu

Toute l'entreprise de Brault montre ici sa vraie signification: ce n'est pas une simple traduction/élaboration/interprétation, c'est le mouvement d'acquisition de la Poésie (avec une majuscule) qui devait passer à travers les poèmes des autres auteurs – de Haines, de MacEwen, de Atwood et enfin de Cummings – pour que se dessine l'espace «aérien» propre à *PQC*.

Nous aimerions présenter maintenant deux situations particulières. D'abord le très beau *Ce soleil de lilas* de la section *Ouest*[43] qui, si on comprend bien la division en deux pages du texte de départ de Atwood, réunirait en un seul chant deux poèmes de l'auteure anglophone; ensuite le poème qui pourrait ne pas exister en langue originale, *Nonsoleil…*[44]

---

[43] *PQC*, p. 64.
[44] *PQC*, p. 76.

Les deux poèmes de Atwood qui nous semblent en amont de *Ce soleil de lilas* sont *Returning…* et *Spring again…*,[45] étroitement liés et entremêlés. Suivons le texte de Atwood. Au bas de la page 39 de *Power Politics*, précédé de l'emblème que l'édition utilise pour chaque nouveau texte, ce court poème de quatre vers:

Returning from the dead
Used to be something I did well

I began asking why
I began forgetting how

Au début de la page suivante, le même emblème confirme qu'ici commence un nouveau poème (ce recueil, hélas, n'a pas de 'table des matières'!):

1   Spring again, can I stand it
2   shooting its needles into
3   the earth, my head, both
4   used to darkness

5   Snow on brown soil and
6   the squashed caterpillar
7   coloured liquid lawn

8   Winter collapses
9   in slack folds around
10 my feet / no leaves yet / loose fat

11 Thick lilac buds crouch for the
12 spurt but I
13 hold back

14 Not ready / help me
15 what I want from you is
16 moonlight smooth as
17 wind, long hairs of water

---

[45] M. Atwood, *Returning…* et *Spring again…*, in *Power Politics*, Anansi, Concord 1997, p. 39 et p. 40.

Brault chante:

1   Ce soleil de lilas
      me pénètre
2   comme un hameçon
3   l'œil du poisson

4   encore un printemps   puis-je permettre
5   qu'il darde ses aiguilles
6   dans la terre brunie dans ma tête vieillie
7   toutes deux si bien obscurcies

8   revenir de mort
9   me devenait si facile
10 je ne demande plus pourquoi
11 je commence d'oublier comment

12 et voici que la pelouse se liquéfie
13 le dur hiver s'affaisse en plis mous
14 des feuilles à mes pieds se réveillent
15 et regardent   se souvenant   les branches lisses

16 j'ai mal de cette vie nouvelle
17 revenir de mort n'est plus possible
18 aide-moi je t'en prie toi qui ruisselle
19 et ris sous le soleil-lilas
20 toi patient pêcheur de sursis

La lecture du poème de Brault ne renvoie pas nécessairement d'emblée aux deux poèmes de Atwood, car l'incipit de Brault – ainsi que l'explicit d'ailleurs – sont uniquement de lui (ni le «soleil de lilas» et toute la première strophe, ni le «pêcheur de sursis» ne figurent dans les originaux). Au contraire, à partir du v. 4, l'écho de Atwood est précis et, jusqu'au v. 7, il est facile de retrouver la première strophe de *Spring again…* C'est à partir du v. 8 que Brault insère le poème *Returning…* d'Atwood – mais, attention, le troisième vers de Atwood, qui est à la forme affirmative («I began asking why»), se change en forme négative, «je ne demande plus pourquoi» (v. 10)! Ensuite, faisons encore attention, le v. 17 de Brault s'oppose à ses vv. 8-9 (qui tradui-

saient bien l'incipit de *Returning...*). Finalement Brault substitue à celle d'Atwood une vision du futur veinée d'espoir, car la demande d'aide – un panorama réconfortant que Atwood adressait au fleuve («what I want from you is / moonlight smooth as / wind, long hairs of water», vv. 15-17), continue d'être adressée à cette composante de la nature («toi qui ruisselles», v. 18), mais sous une forme différente et surtout dans un but différent – le fleuve étant, selon Brault, le «patient pêcheur de sursis» (v. 20). Le fleuve, l'eau, cette omniprésence de la réalité canadienne et québécoise permet le rattrapage d'une prorogation existentielle. On arrive ainsi au problème fondamental de la signification de «soleil de lilas» (v. 1) et «soleil-lilas» (v. 19), les deux néologismes de Brault qui renvoient tous deux au printemps (v. 4) en unifiant la chaleur de la saison et ses parfums – ceux-ci étant cachés dans les «buds» du v. 11 d'Atwood.

Le poème *Nonsoleil...* se trouve dans la partie *Sud*:

1   Non soleil flou   une
2   froideur dans
3   un manque de ciel
4   feu visqueux

5   miens sont tiens
6   sont oiseaux   tous nôtres
7   et un   s'en est
8   allé   des leurs

9   feuille-fantôme   une
10 furtive rampe   là
11 ici   ou   sur
12 nonterre[46]

Ce poème pourrait être, – ou du moins nous semble être – l'un des «trois poèmes [qui] n'existent pas en langue originale».[47] À notre sensibilité, quelques images se précisent: les «oiseaux» du v. 6 pourraient représenter les poèmes – ceux-ci seraient partagés:

---

[46] *PQC*, p. 76.
[47] *PQC*, p. 93.

«miens sont tiens […] tous nôtres» (vv. 5-6). Né dans un milieu froid et hostile (v. 3), un d'eux (v. 7), un oiseau-poème, s'en va vers l'infini, la «nonterre» (v. 12), c'est un «fantôme» (v. 9), une reproduction sur la «feuille» (v. 9) – (sur papier?!) –, construite presque en cachette, dans la modestie et, à la fois, dans l'ascension, «une furtive rampe» (v. 10). En fait la poésie est un discours d'amour et cette méditation sur la poésie ne pouvait trouver sa place que dans la section dédiée à Cummings.

<div align="center">* * *</div>

Nous étions à la recherche du sens de l'entreprise de Brault. Quelle était la vérité que la nontraduction pouvait lui apporter? Et nous apporter. On se rappelle son jugement de la littérature comme un «service à rendre».[48] Il serait donc, lui, un serviteur – non pas un esclave, car il n'exécute pas passivement, mais il se met au service (de la poésie) de façon active et créatrice. La traduction, devenue «nontraduction», c'est-à-dire une œuvre personnelle et autonome, permet alors une forme de connaissance poétique profonde.

Il faut également considérer que Brault a continué des expérimentations en poésie – en publiant en 1998 avec le poète anglophone E.D. Blodgett, *Transfiguration*, un recueil où «[c]hacun a écrit dans sa langue et selon sa dictée […] en répondant à l'autre…» – chaque poème étant ensuite traduit par le collègue;[49] et en publiant finalement en 2006, le recueil *L'artisan* où il met en œuvre une autre technique – car le long, et magnifique, *Tombeau*, en l'honneur de Gaston Miron, est un poème parsemé de citations de celui-ci – en italique, naturellement.[50]

---

[48] Cfr. *supra*, n° 19.

[49] E.D. Blodgett, Jacques Brault, *Transfiguration*, Éditions du Noroît-Buschek Books, Québec 1998, p. 9.

[50] J. Brault, *L'artisan*, Éditions du Noroît, Québec 2006, p. 118.

Appendice hors-texte

Correspondances possibles

John Haines
– *The End of the Street*, in *The Stone Harp*, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown ct 1971, p. 51: cfr. *Ce serait…*, in *PQC*, p. 19;
– *The Tundra*, in *Winter News*, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown ct 1967, p. 71: cfr. *La toundra…*, in *PQC*, p. 20;
– *Into the Glacier*, in *Winter…*, p. 69: cfr. *Au cœur du glacier…*, in *PQC*, p. 21;
– *If the Owl Calls Again*, in *Winter…*, p. 11: cfr. *Si le hibou…*, in *PQC*, p. 22;
– *April*, in *Twenty Poems*, Unicorn Press, Santa Barbara 1973, p. 21: cfr. *Ce n'est rien…*, in *PQC*, p. 24;
– *Beginnings*, in *The Stone…*, p. 24: cfr. *J'ai oublié…*, in *PQC*, p. 25;
– *The Mole*, in *Winter…*, p. 14: cfr. *Parfois…*, in *PQC*, p. 26;
– *Prayer to the Snowy Owl*, in *Winter…*, p. 39: cfr. *Viens…*, in *PQC,* p. 28.

Gwendolyn MacEwen
– *The Hollow*, in *The Shadow-Maker*, Macmillan Canada, Toronto 1969, p. 72: cfr. *Je n'ai jamais…*, in *PQC*, p. 37;
– *Green With Sleep*, in *A Breakfast for Barbarians*, cfr. B. Gorjup (ed.), *Il geroglifico finale / The Last Hieroglyph*, Longo, Ravenna 1997, p. 96: cfr. *Verdie de sommeil…*, in *PQC*, p. 38;
– *Seeds and Stars*, in *The Shadow…*, p. 71: cfr. *Quand le toucher…*, in *PQC*, p. 39;
– *First Song from the Fifth Earth*, in *The Shadow…*, p. 68: cfr. *Je dis…*, in *PQC*, p. 40;
– *I Will Go Down No More*, in *The Shadow…*, p. 57: cfr. *Tu n'as pas…*, in *PQC*, p. 42;
– *The Shadow-Maker*, in *Volume One*, Exile Editions, Toronto 1993, p. 157: cfr. *Je suis venue…*, in *PQC*, p. 43;
– *Second Song from the Fifth Earth*, in *The Shadow…*, p. 70: cfr. *J'oublie…*, in *PQC*, p. 44;
– *Fire Gardens*, in *The Shadow…*, p. 74: cfr. *Je ne sais…*, in *PQC*, p. 46.

Margaret Atwood

– *Axiom*, in *The Animals in That Country*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston 1968, p. 69: cfr. *Axiome…*, in *PQC*, p. 55;
– *A Pursuit*, in *The Animals…*, p. 66: cfr. *Moi…*, in *PQC*, p. 56;
– *Pre-Amphibian*, in *The Circle Game*, Anansi, Toronto 1964, p. 76: cfr. *De nouveau…*, in *PQC*, p. 58;
– *River*, in *The Animals…*, p. 25: cfr. *Ici…*, in *PQC*, p. 60;
– *Resurrection*, in *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*, Oxford University Press, Don Mills 1970, p. 58: cfr. *Voici…*, in *PQC*, p. 62;
– *Returning…*, in *Power Politics*, Anansi 1997, p. 39 et *Spring again…*, *ibidem*, p. 40: cfr. *Ce soleil…*, in *PQC*, p. 64.

E.E. Cummings

– *Now i lay…*, in *73 Poems*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York 1963, 44: cfr. *Maintenant je m'étends…*, in *PQC*, p. 73;
– *now air is air…*, in *95 Poems*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York 1958, 3: cfr. *Maintenant l'air…*, in *PQC*, p. 74;
– *luminous tendril…*, in *100 Selected Poems*, Grove Press, New York 1959, 100, p. 119: cfr. *Vrille lumière…*, in *PQC*, p. 75;
– *a great…,* in *73 Poems*, 14: cfr. *Un homme…*, *in PQC*, p. 77;
– *love is more thicker than forget…*, in *100 Selected Poems*, 66, p. 82; cfr *Amour…*, in *PQC*, p. 78;
– *i carry your heart with me…*, in *95 Poems*, 92: cfr. *Je porte ton âme…*, in *PQC*, p. 79;
– *it may not always be so…*, in *100 Selected Poems*, 8, p. 9: cfr. *Peut-être…*, in *PQC*, p. 80;
– *if there are any heavens…*, in *100 Selected Poems*, 31, p. 39: cfr. *S'il y a des cieux…*, in *PQC*, p. 81;
– *these children singing*, in *100 Selected Poems*, 64, p. 80: cfr. *Ces enfants…*, in *PQC*, p. 82;
– *wild (at our first) beasts*, in *73 Poems*, 72: cfr. *Bêtes sauvage…*, in *PQC*, p. 84.

Bibliographie

Atwood, M., *Axiom*, in *The Animals in That Country*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston 1968, p. 69.

Atwood, M., *Resurrection*, in *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*, Oxford University Press, Toronto 1970, p. 58.

Atwood, M., *Returning… / Spring again…*, in *Power Politics*, Anansi, Concord 1997, pp. 39-40.

Bélisle, L.-A., *Dictionnaire nord-américain de la langue française*, Beauchemin, Laval 1977.

Blodgett, E.D., Brault, J., *Transfiguration*, Éditions du Noroît-Buschek Books, Québec 1998.

Brault, J., *Miron le Magnifique*, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, Montréal 1966.

Brault, J., *Poèmes des quatre côtés*, Éditions du Noroît, Québec 1975.

Brault, J., *Suite fraternelle*, in *Poèmes I*, Éditions du Noroît-La table rase, Québec 1986, pp. 44-55.

Brault, J., *L'artisan*, Éditions du Noroît, Québec 2006.

Cummings, E.E., *i carry your heart with me (i carry it in)*, in *95 poems*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich inc., New York 1972, n° 92.

Cummings, E.E., *if there are any heavens my mother will (all by herself) have*, in *100 Selected Poems*, Grove Press inc., New York 1959, n° 31.

Cummings, E.E., *it may not always be so; and i say*, in *100 Selected Poems*, Grove Press inc, New York 1959, n° 8.

Haines, J., *Prayer to the Snowy Owl*, in *Winter News*, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown CT 1967, p. 39.

Haines, J., *The End of the Street*, in *The Stone Harp*, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown CT 1971, p. 51.

Lefrançois, A. (éd.), *Entretien avec Jacques Brault*, «Liberté», 100 (1975), pp. 66-72.

MacEwen, G., *Green With Sleep* (*A Breakfast for Barbarians*, 1966), in B. Gorjup (éd.), *Il geroglifico finale / The Last Hieroglyph*, Longo, Ravenna 1997, p. 96.

MacEwen, G., *Seeds and Stars*, in *The Shadow-Maker*, Macmillan Canada, Toronto 1969, p. 71.

MacEwen, G., *The Hollow*, in *The Shadow-Maker*, Macmillan Canada, Toronto 1969.

Melançon, R., *De la poésie et de quelques circonstances. Entretien avec Jacques Brault*, «Voix et Images», 12 (1987), II/35, pp. 188-211.

Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer de Dany Laferrière: entre succès littéraire et échec cinématographique

Ylenia De Luca

Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro

En 1980, suite à la cinglante défaite du référendum, le Québec régresse, en tant que collectivité, vers la mentalité infantile qui l'avait caractérisé avant la Révolution tranquille. L'*âge de la parole*[1] qu'on a longtemps cru être un acquis d'un Québec adulte sera suivi de l'*âge du silence*, âge infantile pour le Québec. Signe évident de cette régression, les héros des films de cette période sont à nouveau hantés par les spectres du «roman familial», preuve que ce dernier n'a jamais été abandonné définitivement et une fois pour toutes.

Le référendum est vécu au Québec comme un traumatisme qui remet en question, ne serait-ce que temporairement, l'acquis psychologique de la *Révolution tranquille*. En effet, l'enfant franco-canadien cesse, en se transformant en québécois, d'être un enfant-infans, politiquement aphasique, sans paroles, pour devenir

---

[1] «L'âge de la parole – comme on dit l'âge du bronze – se situe, pour moi, dans ces années 1949-1960, au cours desquelles j'écrivais pour nommer, appeler, exorciser, ouvrir, mais appeler surtout. J'appelais. Et à force d'appeler, ce que l'on appelle finit par arriver. C'était l'époque, pas si lointaine, où nous croyions avoir tout à dire puisque tout était à faire et à refaire. Quelques amitiés suffisaient à nous persuader que nous pouvions transformer le monde», R. Giguère, *L'âge de la parole. Poèmes 1940-1960*, l'Hexagone, Montréal 1965, p. 10.

un sujet parlant. Or, à partir du référendum, le Québec, redevenant un *pays sans parole*,[2] régresse à nouveau à l'âge infantile, car les élites, les intellectuels retombent dans le silence. À leur place parleront les «comiques» qui vont proliférer au cours de ces années: le Québec veut rire, s'amuser, car il veut oublier, ne plus réfléchir, ni penser à sa situation politique et économique, linguistique, à son destin de peuple francophone sur le continent américain. *Panem et circenses!*, disaient les Romains. D'où une myriade de festivals qui vont se succéder frénétiquement au Québec, avec lesquels le Québécois s'étourdit et anesthésie son *mal de vivre*.

L'année 1989 est aussi celle où sort le film/provocation *Jésus de Montréal*, la «bombe théologique» que Denys Arcand fait exploser au Festival de Cannes. Ce chef-d'œuvre cinématographique, le plus complexe que le cinéma québécois n'ait jamais produit, peut être considéré, plus qu'un film, comme un phénomène représentatif de la société du Québec: un million de spectateurs l'avaient déjà vu la onzième semaine de sa sortie dans les salles de cinéma, un record pour une population totale, à l'époque, de six millions d'habitants. Il s'agit là d'un film où le local est intimement lié au global et où Montréal est un des principaux actants.

Jésus de Montréal représente la société post-moderne où tout est imbriqué: la Bible, le pub, les paroles du Christ. Et si le film d'Arcand ne parvient pas à transmettre son message, c'est parce que dans les faits, aucun message n'émane du Christ. Il recèle plutôt une ironie déconstructive qui rend parfois le spectacle peu agréable.

Le film raconte la mort d'un Québécois, Daniel Combe, dont la famille décide de donner les organes à un Anglais qui recevra son cœur et une Italienne ses yeux. Un corps mort franco-canadien qui revivra encore dans le corps de l'Autre, celui qui n'est pas franco-canadien. Nous retrouvons dans le film un des fondements de l'enseignement chrétien: l'amour non seulement à

---

[2] Cfr. Y. Préfontaine, *Pays sans parole*, l'Hexagone, Montréal 1967.

l'égard de son prochain, mais aussi de l'Autre, de l'étranger, de l'ennemi.

Ce film marque véritablement une avancée dans la perception de l'immigré et est révélateur, en ce sens, des changements survenus dans l'imaginaire québécois.

La complexité de l'identité cinématographique québécoise et les dilemmes politiques que crée cette complexité sont fort bien mis en évidence par Ella Shohat, qui soutient que: «The intersection of ethnicity with race, class and gender discourses involves a shifting, relational social and discursive positioning, whereby one group can simultaneously constitute 'norm' and 'periphery'. A given community can in a single context exist in a relation of domination toward another».[3]

Presque en même temps que *Jésus de Montréal* et dans ce contexte particulier, sort, dans les salles de cinéma, le film tiré du roman éponyme de Dany Laferrière: *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer*. Thème et adaptation des deux films sont complètement différents, mais l'objectif est le même: annuler l'ancienne dichotomie entre l'*ici* et l'*ailleurs*, la dépasser, au bénéfice du métissage culturel, en révélant ainsi les changements survenus dans l'imaginaire québécois, à travers l'image de l'homme projeté à l'écran.

Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer raconte la «culture fragmentée, déterritorialisée du Nègre métropolitain»,[4] en schématisant délibérément certaines théories développées de manière incisive par Fanon dans *Peau noire et masques blancs* (1952), avec la superficialité et la légèreté typique des années 1980. Le roman dont s'inspire le film eut un tel succès que Laferrière fut appelé par la chaîne *Quatre-Saisons* en 1986 pour présenter la météo. Le Québec regardera donc avec stupéfaction

---

[3] E. Shohat, *Multiculturalism, Postcoloniality and Transnational Media*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick 2003, p. 33.

[4] S. Simon, *Chercher le politique dans le roman, en vous fatiguant*, «Vice Versa», 17 (1986-1987), p. 21.

un Noir à la télé annoncer la neige et le mauvais temps de février avec légèreté et humour. Le succès de Laferrière à la télévision le mènera à la célébrissime Radio-Canada et au programme *La bande des six*, qui réunit les meilleurs journalistes de la presse québécoise. «Quand je fais un truc, je veux que ce soit le plus grand succès possible. Je ne suis pas modeste, comme certains écrivains intellectuels»:[5] et le 'truc' dont parle Laferrière est justement la version cinématographique de son premier roman *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer*, un succès de critique et de public qui lui a valu une traduction en anglais à Toronto et une réédition en français à Paris.

Le film, dont le titre est le même que celui du roman, sera immédiatement censuré par les médias tels que «New York Times», «Washington Post», «Herald Tribune», «Miami Herald», «Los Angeles Times» et non pas seulement du fait de son titre déstabilisant, mais à cause de l'utilisation du terme 'Nègre', ainsi que la référence à un grand pénis dans le manifeste.

Tous – réalisateur, producteur, acteurs – sont conscients que le film fera débat au sein de la communauté internationale, bien que: «The cast is full of enthusiasm, there's a sense of 'let's go'. We really want this to be a success»,[6] affirme Bankolé, l'acteur premier rôle.

Après le travail d'adaptation accompli avec Laferrière, qui se fendra aussi d'une courte apparition à la Hitchcock dans le film, le producteur engage le cinéaste Jacques W. Benoît qui, bien qu'ayant déjà une solide expérience comme premier assistant-réalisateur de films tels que *Les Plouffe II* et *Le déclin de l'empire américain*, et qui avait, de surcroît, réalisé un téléfilm pour Radio-Canada, *Le diable à quatre*, était à sa première expérience de direction d'un long-métrage au cinéma.

---

[5] Cité par M. Gilbert, *Défi détaillé pour un jeune réalisateur*, «La Presse», 30 juin 1988, p. A8.

[6] D. Winch, *A Film of a Different Colour; Ambitious New Film Laughs at Old Taboos*, «The Gazette», August 16, 1988, p. C9.

Benoît déclare dans une interview: «Je ne suis pas obsédé par l'aspect best-seller. De toute façon, comme toutes les adaptations, ce n'est pas une adaptation intégrale. Et c'est l'auteur lui-même qui a fait l'adaptation, alors on prend les risques à deux, même si c'est moi qui, en dernier lieu».[7]

Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer est l'histoire de deux Noirs qui vivent à Montréal. Le film a en effet été tourné au Carré Saint-Louis et aux abords de l'Université McGill, lieux également présents dans le roman.

Vieux, interprété par Isaac de Bankolé, est un écrivain en herbe qui s'apprête à écrire un roman ayant le même titre que le film, en même temps qu'il multiplie les dragues avec des jeunes filles blanches anglophones. Bouba, Maka Kotto, est un musulman toujours accompagné d'un iguane, qui écoute du jazz et lit Freud. Le lecteur du roman et le spectateur du film ont donc un autre choc: s'attendant à ce que les deux Noirs soient ignorants et primitifs, ils découvrent au contraire, à leur grande surprise, que Vieux et Bouba sont cultivés: ils lisent le Coran, écoutent du jazz, écrivent des livres et, après avoir fait l'amour, s'adonnent à la lecture!

Trois voyous du cru, pensant que ces deux Noirs peuvent devenir des rivaux en puissance pour leur commerce de drogue, mettent le feu au bâtiment où résident les deux amis et Vieux aura tout juste le temps de sauver son manuscrit du feu et des flammes. Le *fil rouge* qui sous-tend tout le film est émaillé par les rencontres sexuelles de Vieux et de Bouba avec des femmes rigoureusement blanches et anglophones.

Bouba joue comme s'il était le Sancho Panza de Vieux, tandis que Vieux se moque des riches femmes blanches qu'il rencontre aux réunions littéraires, les affublant de sobriquets tels que Miz Literature, Miz Beauty et Miz Sophisticated Lady.

Le film ne laisse transparaître aucune référence aux questions du Québec ou à d'autres problèmes inhérents à l'identité

---

[7] M. Gilbert, *Défi détaillé pour un jeune réalisateur*, p. A8.

nationale ou locale, mais plutôt à la mise en scène des dynamiques d'une communauté internationale d'hommes hétérosexuels où le Noir ou l'Autre devient une variation de celui qui est semblable, faisant ressortir la multitude de relations entre le centre et la périphérie. Cet élément est conforté par le statut de la coproduction du film: la France finance 20% du budget, insistant afin que soit engagé Bankolé, l'acteur premier rôle de *Black Mic-Mac* (réalisé par Thomas Gilou en 1986) et de *Chocolat* (réalisé par Claire Denis en 1988). La spécificité du Québec n'est pas particulièrement mise en évidence: hormis les références à Westmount, qui pourraient tout aussi bien se référer à l'Amérique, le film aurait pu se situer dans n'importe quelle ville francophone cosmopolite: le Carré St-Louis ressemble à une place de Paris et la croix sur le mont qui, dans le roman, joue le rôle d'une métonymie du Catholicisme québécois sert simplement d'arrière-plan au film.

Nous ne connaissons pas les pays d'origine de Vieux et de Bouba: Vieux, *Le Don Juan sans nom*,[8] aspire à l'intégration dans la société occidentale, même si souvent, il la raille, alors que Bouba, l'outsider, s'en moque éperdument.

Naturellement, le film incarne deux mythes: la *négritude* d'un côté et la masculinité de l'homme noir de l'autre, utilisés par Vieux, non seulement du fait de sa conquête sexuelle réitérée, mais aussi parce que la masculinité noire et la bravoure sont perçues comme étant des 'solutions' que les personnages adoptent pour affronter la complexité de l'identité et du pouvoir. Dans le roman, l'auto-ironie de Vieux engendre un certain élément caustique qui révèle l'absence de «a coherent cultural fund from which the narrator [could] draw the sustenance of identity».[9]

Ridiculisant les Blancs, totalement absents aussi bien dans le roman que dans le film et les réduisant à des stéréotypes dépour-

---

[8] Cfr. *Le Don Juan sans nom*, «Le Monde», 26 août 1989, p. 16.

[9] D. Winch, *A Film of a Different Colour*, p. C9.

vus d'humanité, Laferrière redonne corps, derrière le masque du *nègre narcisse*,[10] aux préjugés racistes et sexistes, se retrouvant à légitimer les fantasmes du Nègre, grand et habile *baiseur* de femmes blanches. Les femmes ne sont jamais invitées à verbaliser les raisons de leur recherche de l'homme noir: aphasiques, elles sont de purs et simples objets de désir et l'absence de cette dimension dialogique signifie que les femmes qui regimbent sont humiliées. S'ensuit une désobjectivisation de la femme blanche qui permet l'affirmation de la subjectivité du narrateur.

Toutefois, le schéma emphatique d'un esprit noir et de corps blancs a plus de succès sous la forme écrite. Les intentions ironiques et provocatrices du Laferrière écrivain sont balayées dans le film; les niveaux d'analyse sont extrêmement réduits: le rôle des *dealers* sert à représenter le racisme du Québécois blanc et Vieux se borne à dénigrer, par exemple, la surprise des femmes blanches qui voient lire un Noir.

Le seul élément qui pourrait déstabiliser la structure inerte du film est la vision du corps de Vieux, généralement torse nu. En dépit de l'orientation hétérosexuelle du film, cet élément érotique soulève de nombreuses questions ou plutôt révèle de nombreux aspects historiques et culturels: l'accent qui est mis sur la vigueur mâle du Noir, qui domine dans les cultures occidentales depuis l'époque de l'esclavage; un appât pour la femme spectatrice; l'esthétisation de la vie sociale et des relations dans la société contemporaine, coïncidant avec l'idéalisation de la figure du manager efficace séducteur et sportif des années 1980.

Une fois dépassé le choc du titre, on subodore, dans le roman, une grande ironie, un potentiel de dérision corrosive des *clichés* et des préjugés les plus tenaces et les plus connus sur la *négritude*. Cette ironie féroce, présente et prépondérante dans le roman (best-seller au Canada et aux USA) fonctionne, abonde et rend la figure du héros-narrateur désopilante.

---

[10] Cfr. D. Laferrière, *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer*, VLB, Montréal 1985.

Mais rien de tout cela ne subsiste dans le film. Le héros, Vieux, est presque banal. Son ami, pseudo-intellectuel freudien, est passionné de jazz et de citations coraniques. L'humour est aussi plat que les dialogues, l'érotisme et la mise en scène.

Sous couvert d'une gentille histoire hédoniste, les auteurs du film nous proposent une apologie sans vergogne de la drague, représentée comme un sport innocent. La séduction est une activité à sens unique où le sexe qui croit être le plus fort joue au chat et à la souris avec le sexe qu'il croit être le plus faible. Il semble qu'on ait commis l'erreur d'avoir confondu la séduction avec le flirt, activité, tout bien considéré, plus démocratique où les deux partenaires jouent à armes égales.

En réalité, dans le film, la parole est donnée à deux femmes qui n'ont nullement l'intention de jouer le rôle du sexe faible; mais l'une est une lesbienne hystérique et raciste et l'autre une intellectuelle frigide.

Toutes les femmes du roman sont des féministes, ce qui augmente le pouvoir de Vieux, car il en fait, malgré tout, ses esclaves consentantes.

En réalité, Vieux ne songe nullement à instaurer une quelconque justice sociale, mais simplement à se dominer lui-même.

D'après Laferrière, un vieux cliché dit que: «the belly of the woman is a way which you can enter into America».[11] Et Vieux tente de mettre ce *cliché* en pratique, en couchant avec des femmes, blanches et blondes, car le lit est le seul lieu où un homme et une femme, issus de classes sociales et races différentes, peuvent se reconnaître sans intermédiaires.

Dans le roman, de même que dans le film, la femme blanche est un simple objet sexuel, un instrument au service de l'homme noir et une allégorie. La sympathie considérable que s'attire le narrateur, les prestigieuses références culturelles (Fanon, Baldwin,

---

[11] L. Saint-Martin, *Une oppression peut en cacher une autre. Antiracisme et sexisme dans* Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer *de Dany Laferrière*, «Voix et Images», 36/2 (2011), p. 53.

Hemingway…), son humour séduisant, sa rhétorique et peut-être aussi une certaine mauvaise conscience blanche, tout cela semble susciter, chez la plupart des critiques, une sorte d'indifférence vis-à-vis de la façon dont sont traitées les femmes, comme si le racisme était plus 'réel' que le sexisme ou pire, plus 'important'.

Les femmes noires sont les grandes absentes avec l'homme blanc, désormais sexuellement mort, comme l'affirme Vieux, de manière provocante. Selon Laferrière, en effet, les hommes blancs ne détiennent pas le pouvoir sexuel; seule la présence de la femme blonde à leurs côtés le leur confère, en même temps que le pouvoir social, bien sûr. Pour les hommes noirs, c'est exactement le contraire: grâce à leur puissance sexuelle innée, les hommes noirs séduiront la femme blonde et obtiendront le pouvoir social qui leur manque. Ainsi, dans ce contexte, la beauté de la femme blonde joue exclusivement un rôle d'intermédiaire. Dans le triangle que forment le maître blanc, le séducteur noir et la femme blanche obsédée par le sexe «nègre», le discours anti-raciste fonctionne aux dépens des femmes blanches. En somme, dans le roman et dans le film, le discours de la masculinité noire efface les femmes noires et fait des femmes blanches des objets dépossédés de leur voix et de leur autonomie.

La femme n'existe pas en soi, elle n'est que la femme ou la fille de quelqu'un, *la chair du maître* (titre d'un ouvrage successif), un objet qui appartient au Blanc et dont le Nègre peut s'approprier pour se venger de l'histoire. «La vengeance nègre et la mauvaise conscience blanche au lit, ça fait une de ces nuits»,[12] et aussi: «Je suis ici pour baiser la fille de ces diplomates pleins de morgue qui nous giflaient à coup de stick. Au fond, je n'étais pas là quand ça se passait, mais que voulez-vous».[13] Et ainsi de suite dans tout le roman: les mêmes comportements sont racontés sur un ton ironique. En réalité, la femme blanche et surtout blonde représente l'Amérique, cette Amérique à laquelle aspire le nar-

---

[12] D. Laferrière, *Comment faire l'amour…*, p. 19.
[13] *Ibidem*, p. 103.

rateur. Cette question reviendra dans l'ouvrage qui suivra *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer*, *Cette grenade dans la main du jeune Nègre est-elle une arme ou un fruit?*, dans lequel posséder la femme blanche, symbole de la richesse et du succès, signifie posséder l'Amérique. Vieux rêve d'avoir une actrice célèbre à ses pieds: «Carole Laure, esclave d'un Nègre. Qui sait?»,[14] là où le mot 'esclave' ne peut être innocent, ni se trouver là par hasard.

Le succès retentissant du premier roman incite donc Laferrière à écrire une suite et à approfondir les thèmes du roman précédent, en reprenant les mêmes personnages.

Il n'en alla malheureusement pas de même pour le film: d'après les chiffres de l'époque, au bout d'une semaine de projection du film dans 17 salles de cinéma, *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer* avait encaissé 135.000 $ aux box-offices et huit semaines plus tard, il en avait à peine encaissé 300.000 $. Coût du film: 2,5 millions de $.

Pourtant, le film est doté d'un titre captivant, avec un producteur qui force le respect et s'inspire du roman désormais considéré comme un best-seller au Canada. Sans compter que les acteurs premiers rôles, Bankolé, acteur ivoirien, et Kotto, camerounais, font recette au *box-office* en Europe. L'affiche montrant un personnage au physique séduisant est d'Yvan Adam, qui avait déjà réalisé celle du film de Denys Arcand, *Le déclin de l'empire américain* (1986), la musique est de Manu Dibango (musicien, compositeur, saxophoniste, vibraphoniste et chanteur camerounais) et la bande-son est de Claude Dubois. À première vue, tous les ingrédients sont donc réunis pour que le film soit un succès.

L'ambition de Sadler de Stock International est de faire entrer le film dans l'Olympe de l'industrie cinématographique internationale après *Le déclin de l'empire américain*. Le producteur, vétéran de Montréal et célèbre pour avoir produit *Valérie* en 1970, engage deux acteurs très connus en France, noirs et éclectiques,

---

[14] *Ibidem*, p. 28.

Bankolé e Kotto, qui affirment que l'humour et l'intelligence du roman de Laferrière leur donnent la possibilité de s'affranchir des rôles standards liés aux *clichés* auxquels les acteurs noirs sont souvent relégués. Et Bankolé d'affirmer: «There are a lot of traps in the theme Laferrière deals with, but he has avoided them with his humor… it's parody. You have to be able to laugh at yourself».[15] De plus, les acteurs soutiennent que *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer*, sans pour autant être a *message film*, est un véhicule pour démystifier les faux mythes. Kotto affirme: «I first read about the novel in "Black", a paper in France. I was surprised by the title, of course, and when I read it I saw how very, very intelligent it was, and how it dealt with its themes in a very funny and ironic manner».[16]

Laferrière entend, par contre, parler de Bankolé pour la première fois lors d'une interview télévisée à Montréal à l'occasion du World Film Festival en 1986. L'acteur, intrigué par le titre du roman, entreprend de le lire et à son retour en France, envoie un télégramme à Laferrière pour lui dire qu'il serait ravi de jouer dans un film s'inspirant du roman.

Toutefois, bien que tout semble annoncer un grand succès aux yeux d'un public déjà habitué au phénomène médiatique qu'est Dany Laferrière, Jacques Benoît réalise un piètre téléfilm, dans lequel le matériel mis à sa disposition est bien loin d'une idée réelle du cinéma et se résume en une suite de scènes frôlant la banalité et la pornographie.

C'est vraisemblablement le casting qui a été à l'origine des problèmes auxquels ont été confrontés producteur et au réalisateur. Il est évident qu'on ne pouvait trouver d'acteurs au Québec, des acteurs noirs ayant l'air d'immigrés tout juste arrivés à Montréal, avec l'accent étranger en prime. L'équipe a donc fait des auditions un peu partout au Canada, mais ce n'est qu'à Paris qu'elle a trouvé ce qu'elle cherchait. Quant à Montréal, ville-personnage,

---

[15] D. Winch, *A Film of a Different Colour*, p. C9.
[16] *Ibidem*.

elle disparaît de l'écran, devant la caméra impersonnelle de Benoît, comme lieu d'énonciation du désir. Laferrière déclarera à la sortie du film: «Il n'y a rien dans le film que le verbe et le désir».[17]

De plus, le film ne parvient pas à faire comprendre au public pourquoi la communauté noire mise en scène est exclusivement composée d'hommes.

Outre cet insurmontable problème d'ordre politico-sexuel, le film est d'un point de vue narratif très mince. Il est rythmé par les conquêtes de Vieux et les leçons morales de Bouba, tout en s'efforçant d'insérer ici et là l'histoire, mince elle aussi, de la pègre du quartier. Benoît aurait pu mieux faire, en se penchant surtout sur les personnages secondaires. Il est insupportable d'entendre les jeunes actrices québécoises passer de l'accent montréalais au français international et les personnages anglophones perdre leur français pour prendre l'accent québécois.

Laferrière lui-même affirme que «le talent des acteurs et des actrices n'est pas en cause; les ratés viennent des personnages qui sont d'une minceur affligeante».[18] En effet, on ne croit en rien dans ce film dépourvu de sentiments: ni aux trafiquants de drogue qui prennent peur dès le premier coup de poing qu'ils reçoivent; ni aux Miz interchangeables; ni au racisme totalement inoffensif et presque ridicule; ni aux théories de Bouba; ni au roman que Vieux est en train d'écrire. On ne comprend pas où le réalisateur veut en venir, ni son intention. Benoît affirme avoir voulu mettre en scène la stupidité du racisme: dommage qu'il se soit contenté de réaliser une *comédie d'été*,[19] car le film, malgré quelques qualités, a confondu la légèreté, présente dans le roman de Laferrière, avec l'inconsistance, éludant ainsi le ton ironique, voire parfois sarcastique, du roman.

---

[17] G. Grugeau, B. Ben Sadoun, *Je fantasme donc je suis:* Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer *de Jacques W. Benoît*, «24 Images», 43 (1989), p. 80.

[18] D. Bélanger, Y. Rousseau, S. Beaupré, Comment faire l'amour sans se fatiguer *de Jacques W. Benoît*, «Ciné-Bulles», 8/4 (1989), p. 50.

[19] *Ibidem*.

La photographie de John Berrie est, elle aussi, de mauvaise qualité dans le film: il a réussi à faire de Montréal une ville lumineuse et scintillante, se détournant de la lumière nordique du cinéma national québécois. Et Larue de dire ironiquement: «Le public étranger, et surtout français, aura au moins la preuve qu'au Québec il fait aussi beau et chaud».[20]

Laferrière lui-même se remet en question comme scénariste: «Writing the screenplay was a mistake; it was a bad screenplay because the producer wanted to control the money and keep costs down. I think another screenwriter would have been better negotiating with the producer. It was also the director's first film. Another mistake was accepting a screenplay that didn't have the right vision. I was content that I had authored the book. If there had been another screenwriter, it would have been better because they would have only had to defend their screenplay».[21] La critique est accablante, mais fondée à l'égard du réalisateur et en effet, le second film *Vers le Sud* (2005), qui s'inspire d'un roman de Laferrière, *La chair du maître*, aura davantage de succès, car dirigé par un réalisateur d'une certaine carrure, Laurent Cantet, un homme qui a d'autant plus de respect pour la culture du peuple haïtien que ses parents ont fait du bénévolat en Haïti: de ce fait, la version filmique fut bien plus réaliste que celle de Laferrière qui tendait généralement à donner trop de place à la fantaisie et au désir.

Présenté à la 62ème *mostra* du cinéma de Venise, le film a obtenu le prix Marcello Mastroianni comme meilleur film émergent: il narre l'histoire de trois touristes nord-américaines d'âge mûr qui profitent de vacances sur l'île d'Haïti, se délectant de la compagnie de fringants jeunes hommes de la région. Elles séjournent dans un hôtel de luxe et fréquentent des plages de rêve sans vouloir voir la pauvreté et le manque de liberté qui affligent la po-

---

[20] J. Larue, *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer*, «Séquences», 140 (1989), pp. 61-62.

[21] *Ibidem*.

pulation. Mais deux d'entre elles commencent à se disputer le même garçon et l'atmosphère de ce qui aurait dû être une période insouciante se fissure. Ce n'est donc plus Montréal, mais Haïti. Ce n'est plus le *Nègre*, mais la femme blanche. Ce n'est plus la richesse américaine, mais la pauvreté haïtienne.

Là, le lit n'est plus un lieu de vérité et d'égalité, mais évoque l'hypocrisie des rencontres sexuelles entre deux races différentes. Dans ce film, les femmes vont vers le Sud, car elles ne se sentent pas considérées par la société à laquelle elles appartiennent. Un film différent et qui remporte cette fois un tout autre succès que le film *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer*. Toutefois, si plus de trente ans après la sortie du film on continue à parler de son échec, c'est parce qu'il raconte des rêves, qu'on y met en scène un imaginaire individuel, celui de Laferrière, et un imaginaire collectif, celui du Québec, devenu mass media, par là même accessible à toutes les couches sociales, et particulièrement adapté à cristalliser et à focaliser les fantasmes de toute une société.

Le film de Laferrière modifie, avec une ironie qui confine parfois à la vulgarité et, nous l'avons vu, à la pornographie, à la méfiance à l'égard de l'immigré, en élargissant l'horizon de l'avenir du Québec, car le Québec de demain existera dans la mesure où il saura accueillir l'immigré, l'Autre, sans qu'il y ait plus de différences de race, de préjugés ou de clichés; et peut-être le dégoût, la nausée que provoque le film créent-ils aujourd'hui, bien des années plus tard, un effet contraire chez le spectateur: l'acceptation de l'Autre, quel qu'il soit, femme ou homme, blanc ou noir, riche ou pauvre, portant à l'attention du spectateur des thèmes tels que l'identité et l'acceptation de l'Autre qui, à l'évidence, ne sont pas encore résolus dans la société contemporaine québécoise.

Bibliographie

Bélanger, D., Rousseau, Y., Beaupré, S., Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer *de Jacques W. Benoît*, «Ciné-Bulles», 8/4 (1989), pp. 50-51.

Caccia, F., *Jésus de Montréal: le dieu absent*, «Vice Versa», 27 (1989).

Giguère, R., *L'âge de la parole. Poèmes 1940-1960*, l'Hexagone, Montréal 1965.

Gilbert, M., *Défi détaillé pour un jeune réalisateur*, «La Presse», 30 juin 1988, p. A8.

Grugeau, G., Ben Sadoun, B., *Je fantasme donc je suis:* Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer *de Jacques W. Benoît*, «24 Images», 43 (1989), p. 80.

Gural-Migdal, A., *Cinéma de l'imaginaire québécois. Un entretien avec Heinz Weinmann*, «Vice Versa», 30 (1990), pp. 44-47.

Laferrière, D., *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer*, VLB, Montréal 1985.

Larue, J., *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer*, «Séquences», 140 (1989).

Le Don Juan sans nom, «Le Monde», 26 août 1989, p. 16.

Lever, Y., *Histoire générale du cinéma au Québec*, Les Éditions du Boréal, Montréal 1988.

Marshall, B., *Quebec National Cinema*, McGill University Press, Montréal 2001.

Nepveu, P., *Qu'est-ce que la transculture?*, «Paragraphes», 2 (1989), pp. 15-31.

Préfontaine, Y., *Pays sans parole*, l'Hexagone, Montréal 1967.

Saint-Martin, L., *Une oppression peut en cacher une autre. Antiracisme et sexisme dans* Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer *de Dany Laferrière*, «Voix et Images», 36/2 (2011), pp. 53-67.

Shohat, E., *Multiculturalism, Postcoloniality and Transnational Media*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick 2003.

Simon, S., *Chercher le politique dans le roman, en vous fatiguant*, «Vice Versa», 17 (1986-1987), pp. 21-22.

Valot, J., *J'écris dans l'espace*, «La Revue du cinéma», 452 (1989), p. 34.

Weinmann, H., *Cinéma de l'imaginaire québécois. De* La Petite Aurore à Jésus de Montréal, L'Hexagone, Montréal 1990.

Winch, D., *A Film of a Different Colour; Ambitious New Film Laughs at Old Taboos*, «The Gazette», August 16, 1988, p. C9.

La grande séduction / Un village presque parfait / Un paese quasi perfetto: adaptations intersémiotiques et transculturation

Gerardo Acerenza

Università degli Studi di Trento

Introduction

La grande séduction,[1] film québécois de Jean-François Pouliot, a été présenté pour la première fois à Cannes en mai 2003, à la «Quinzaine des réalisateurs», puis au Québec un mois plus tard. En quelques semaines seulement, le film attire dans les salles un million deux cent mille spectateurs et encore aujourd'hui il occupe la quatrième position dans la liste des films les plus vus au Québec.[2] Le film remporte rapidement un grand succès également dans le reste du Canada et dans plusieurs pays francophones. Le réalisateur et les acteurs raflent de nombreux prix surtout aux Génie et aux Jutra au Québec, mais également en Belgique, en Espagne, au Vietnam, au Brésil et le prix du public au prestigieux Sundance Film Festival de 2004.

Le film a été tourné à Harrington Harbour, une petite île habitée par trois cents habitants qui est située entre Natashquan et Blanc-Sablon dans la Basse-Côte-Nord du fleuve Saint-Laurent. Grâce à ce tournage, la région a vu ensuite augmenter le nombre

---

[1] J.-F. Pouliot, *La grande séduction*, Dogwoof Pictures, Canada 2003.

[2] C.-H. Ramond, *Box office québécois depuis 1985*, http://www.filmsquebec.com/box-office-quebecois-depuis-1985 (consulté le 4 septembre 2020).

de touristes attirés par la beauté des paysages montrés dans plusieurs séquences.

La grande séduction met en scène un minuscule village isolé sur une île, appelé dans le film Sainte-Marie-la-Mauderne, où les habitants ont toujours vécu grâce à la pêche et à la transformation du poisson pour la grande industrie. Toutefois, à cause de la fermeture de l'usine qui employait la presque totalité des habitants, tout le monde est au chômage et l'argent du bien-être social du gouvernement (le RSA français) est dépensé dans le seul bar-restaurant du village à l'occasion de fréquentes beuveries de groupe. À partir du moment où une compagnie manifeste l'intention d'ouvrir une nouvelle activité sur l'île, moyennant un pot-de-vin, tout le village voit la possibilité concrète de retrouver la dignité perdue. Ce qui refroidit l'enthousiasme des habitants est la nécessité de trouver un médecin décidé à déménager sur l'île, car il s'agit de la condition *sine qua non* pour l'ouverture de la nouvelle usine.

Dès lors que le médecin montréalais Christopher Lewis se voit forcé de passer un mois sur l'île pour échapper à une accusation de possession de drogue, dirigé par le maire, tout le village met en scène une série de tromperies, de mensonges, pour séduire le médecin et le convaincre que Sainte-Marie-la-Mauderne est le plus bel endroit au monde, le village où il faut vivre pour toujours. Leur plan de séduction est étudié et mis en œuvre avec beaucoup d'attention aux détails: il faut donner au médecin la meilleure maison du village, lui faire trouver toujours un billet de cinq dollars sur son chemin, lui faire découvrir la beauté de la pêche, lui montrer que le sport préféré par les habitants de l'île est le cricket, sport que le médecin pratique et adore, qu'ils apprécient aussi le *jazz fusion*, que ses plats préférés sont également préparés au bar-restaurant du village, notamment le bœuf Stroganoff, etc. Ainsi, dans cette espèce de conte moraliste tout est tricherie, même si la vérité ne sera pas cachée pendant très longtemps.

Le cinéma au «second degré»

Avant de voir de quelle manière ce film a été adapté, d'abord en France, et puis en Italie, nous aimerions convoquer les théories de Gérard Genette qu'il a exposées dans *Palimpsestes: la littérature au second degré*.[3] Ce petit détour dans le domaine des études littéraires nous permettra de proposer ensuite quelques réflexions sur le phénomène de la reprise, de la copie, bref de l'hypertextualité, assez fréquent dans le monde du cinéma.

Bien avant Gérard Genette, Julia Kristeva, dans son ouvrage intitulé *Sèméiotikè*, avait avancé l'idée qu'en général, à l'image d'une mosaïque, tout nouveau texte est construit grâce à des citations provenant d'autres textes, que tout texte absorbe et transforme la matière d'un texte qui existe déjà.[4] Nous serions alors en présence d'un processus de création qui exploiterait des ouvrages antérieurs qui seraient repris et en même temps transformés, voire altérés.

Dans *Palimpsestes: la littérature au second degré*, de manière plus approfondie, Gérard Genette propose cinq notions différentes pour décrire la transtextualité, c'est-à-dire «tout ce qui met un texte en relation manifeste ou secrète avec d'autres textes». Tout d'abord il décrit l'intertextualité, c'est-à-dire «la présence effective d'un texte dans un autre»;[5] puis l'architextualité, la relation implicite que le texte entretient avec des catégories génériques reconnues ou avec des traditions littéraires; ensuite il aborde la paratextualité, la relation entre le texte et ce qui entoure le texte (préface, postface, notes, etc.); et enfin la métatextualité, la relation qui unit un texte à un autre par le moyen du commentaire. Le domaine le mieux exploré par Genette est celui de l'hypertextualité, c'est-à-dire «toute relation

---

[3] G. Genette, *Palimpsestes: la littérature au second degré*, Seuil (coll. «Poétique»), Paris 1982.

[4] J. Kristeva, *Sèméiotikè. Recherches pour une sémanalyse*, Points (coll. «Essais»), Paris 1978, p. 85.

[5] G. Genette, *Palimpsestes*, p. 8.

unissant un texte B (l'hypertexte) à un texte antérieur A (l'hypotexte) sur lequel il se greffe d'une manière qui n'est pas celle du commentaire».[6]

Cette dernière notion est très importante pour nous, parce que l'hypertexte est le résultat d'une transformation postérieure d'une œuvre qui existe déjà qui est donc en quelque sorte retravaillée et critiquée par la nouvelle. Genette précise entre autres choses que la transformation hypertextuelle peut être «simple», comme lorsqu'on transpose «l'action du texte A dans une autre époque: *Ulysse* de Joyce», ou «indirecte», lorsqu'on crée un nouveau texte à partir «de la constitution préalable d'un modèle générique; ex: *L'Énéide*».[7] Puis, il distingue six pratiques hypertextuelles différentes: la parodie, le travestissement et la transposition, qui sont des transformations hypertextuelles «simples»; et le pastiche, la charge et la forgerie, qui sont des transformations «indirectes ou imitatives».[8] D'après lui, seulement la forgerie et la transposition sont des pratiques hypertextuelles sérieuses.

Il faut d'emblée noter que Gérard Genette précise quant à lui qu'on ne peut pas appliquer de manière automatique sa théorie de la transtextualité à d'autres domaines, car certaines pratiques de dérivation peuvent se retrouver, mais selon des modalités différentes.

L'hypertextualité se définit donc par son caractère intrasémiotique et cela permet de considérer une œuvre selon deux manières: on peut en effet la considérer sans faire référence à son hypotexte, ou bien on peut la considérer au *second degré*, comme le propose Genette, en la mettant en relation avec son hypotexte. Toutefois, la question qui s'impose est la suivante: l'hypertexte aurait pu exister sans son hypotexte? En d'autres mots, le texte B aurait pu exister sans le texte A? Pour situer ces propos dans le domaine de notre analyse, nous pouvons poser la question de la manière

---

[6] *Ibidem*, p. 12.

[7] *Ibidem*, p. 16.

[8] *Ibidem*, p. 40.

suivante: les hyperfilms *Un village presque parfait*[9] et *Un paese quasi perfetto*[10] auraient pu exister sans *La grande séduction*?

Il s'agit bien évidemment d'une question rhétorique puisque l'on sait que les adaptations hypertextuelles filmiques sont presque toujours une copie de l'hypotexte ou, parfois, ils véhiculent seulement une forte résonance de l'œuvre originale. Toutefois, très souvent, cette pratique de recyclage cinématographique défigure complètement l'hypotexte (hypofilm) jusqu'à le nier, à l'effacer.

Le petit détour via la critique littéraire terminé, nous allons tenter de montrer quelles transformations ont été mises en œuvre tout d'abord par le réalisateur français pour passer de l'hypofilm *La grande séduction* à l'hyperfilm *Un village presque parfait* et puis par le réalisateur italien pour aboutir à *Un paese quasi perfetto*. Mais avant cela, il est important de bien distinguer l''adaptation' du 'remake' cinématographique. L'élargissement du champ d'application de ces deux termes est à l'origine de la confusion que très souvent l'on fait entre le remake et l'adaptation, confusion qu'il convient de dissiper.

Une adaptation cinématographique est un film qui est créé à partir d'une œuvre antérieure différente. À la base de l'adaptation, il y a l'intermédialité: par exemple un roman qui est porté à l'écran ou un jeu vidéo qui devient une bande dessinée. Jakobson les désigne comme des traductions intersémiotiques.[11]

Le terme 'remake', né grâce aux professionnels de l'industrie cinématographique, désigne en français aussi bien l'objet que la pratique. Aujourd'hui, il existe toutefois de nombreuses définitions de cet(te) objet/pratique et il est difficile d'en trouver une qui soit partagée par tous. Alexis Blanchet propose une définition assez détaillée du remake:

---

[9] S. Meunier, *Un village presque parfait*, Miroir Magique *et al.*, France 2014.

[10] M. Gaudioso, *Un paese quasi perfetto*, Cattleya, Italie 2016.

[11] R. Jakobson, *On Linguistic Aspects of Translation*, in R.A. Brower, *On Translation*, Oxford University Press, New York 1959, p. 233.

> Le terme remake […] nomme un film ou un projet de production basé sur un film préexistant. Il désigne donc, dans son acception originelle, une technique particulière de (re)création filmique et de production cinématographique qui permet notamment, pour les producteurs, de minimiser le coût de production et la prise de risque en s'appuyant sur un scénario déjà écrit et sur un film ayant déjà connu un succès public.[12]

Bien que cette définition se limite à définir la pratique du remake, elle ne dit presque rien sur l'objet 'remake' et il est important de la compléter avec une autre définition de Gaëlle Philippe, selon qui le remake «est un film de fiction reprenant l'intrigue et les personnages d'un film antérieur de manière sérieuse et autorisée».[13]

Dans le cadre de cette étude, nous ferons surtout référence au remake transnational, c'est-à-dire le remake qui adapte un film étranger pour un public local avec un grand nombre de procédés transculturels. Le remake transnational tente en effet de transposer un film qui existe déjà, qui a déjà eu une vie dans un autre pays, dans un contexte culturel bien défini, pour être compris par un public cible. Les opérations d'acclimatation géographique reposent surtout sur des changements diégétiques, les lieux, les personnages, les références culturelles, etc. Cette adaptation culturelle conduit donc à des transformations de l'intrigue: on gomme toutes les particularités nationales et/ou on ajoute des éléments qui permettent d'inscrire l'objet dans la culture du pays concerné. Par exemple, le «B.S.», le bien-être social québécois de *La grande séduction*, a été rendu par le «RSA» (le revenu de solidarité active français) dans *Un village presque parfait* et par «disoccupazione» (chômage technique) dans la version italienne *Un paese quasi perfetto*.

Toutefois, la question qui s'impose d'emblée est la suivante: pourquoi faire un remake en France d'un film québécois qui est

---

[12] A. Blanchet, *Le cycle figement/défigement d'un stéréotype dans la presse vidéoludique française*, in H. Boyer (éd.), *Stéréotypage, stéréotypes: fonctionnements ordinaires et mises en scène*, t. 1, *Média(tisation)s*, l'Harmattan, Paris 2006, p. 38.

[13] G. Philippe, *Le remake-actualisation: une norme de création universelle?*, Université de la Sorbonne nouvelle - Paris III, Paris 2013, p. 49.

déjà en français et qui a déjà été à l'affiche en France? Cette question ne se pose pas, bien évidemment, pour la version italienne qui est en langue italienne.

La grande séduction *de Jean-François Pouliot*

La grande séduction, film sorti en France le 28 avril 2004 dans 124 salles, a été vu par 480.282 spectateurs. Tandis qu'au Québec, répétons-le, il a attiré un million deux cent mille spectateurs en quelques semaines. *Un village presque parfait*, sorti en France en 2014, a attiré dans les salles 464.902 spectateurs, un peu moins donc que l'original québécois. Tandis qu'en Italie, *Un paese quasi perfetto* a été vu beaucoup plus que *La grande séduction* doublé en italien.

Les critiques parues dans la presse française sur *La grande séduction* sont en général positives. Thierry Cheze écrit dans «Studio Magazine» qu'«une distribution sans faute, de belles idées de scénario et une humanité à fleur de peau sont la marque de fabrique de cette comédie populaire, au sens noble du terme, qui constitue un joli pied de nez à la mondialisation. Le petit village d'irréductibles n'est plus gaulois, mais québécois!». Véronique Le Bris, dans «Télé Ciné Obs», souligne aussi que *La grande séduction* est «une comédie enlevée, souvent très drôle, traitant d'un sujet rarement abordé au cinéma: la désertification des campagnes. Elle s'appuie sur une pléiade d'acteurs – de vraies gueules, inconnues chez nous [en France] – au meilleur de leur forme… sur un scénario en béton. Réjouissant!».[14]

Cependant, les seules critiques négatives du film portent sur la langue des personnages. Le critique Pierre Vavasseur écrit dans «Le Parisien» que «si le film a de nombreux atouts pour inspirer

---

[14] Critiques citées sur le site «Allociné»: http://www.allocine.fr/communaute/forum/message_gen_nofil=315838&cfilm=52613&refpersonne=&carticle=&refserie=&refmedia=&page=1.html (consulté le 30 juillet 2020).

la sympathie (la scène de la partie de cricket, par exemple), il pâtit en revanche à plusieurs reprises d'un accent particulièrement appuyé qui gêne la compréhension». Il suffit de lire également les commentaires des spectateurs sur les blogs de cinéma, tels qu'«Allociné» ou «Première», pour trouver des commentaires semblables. Un spectateur qui a aimé le film avoue toutefois que «l'équipe et le stade de criquet [*sic*] de ce petit village valent le coup d'œil. Seul défaut, à cause de l'accent québécois, on a du mal à comprendre et surtout apprécier pleinement certains dialogues». Un autre spectateur souligne également qu'«on pourra regretter un manque de surprise dans le scénario et une difficulté incontestable à comprendre certains comédiens à l'accent bien trempé». Et un autre spectateur encore ajoute que ceci: «J'aime les blagues et l'intrigue. Mais, l'accent canadienne [*sic*] est difficile pour [*sic*] comprendre quelquefois».

Les bons films québécois, comme d'habitude, ne sont pas toujours appréciés en France à cause de l'accent. Pour les spectateurs français, l'accent québécois pose toujours problème. Simone Suchet souligne que «le cinéma québécois […] parle français, mais avec un drôle d'accent» et Bruno Cornellier va dans le même sens en ajoutant que «le cinéma québécois est le cinéma d'un ovni insolite; l'œuvre d'une sorte d'exception francophone à l'accent étrange».[15] Il est clair que le cinéma québécois est victime d'un cliché linguistique que l'accent provoque chez les spectateurs français. Très souvent on pense régler ce problème avec des sous-titres, comme pour *CRAZY* de Jean-Marc Vallée ou *Mommy* de Xavier Dolan, mais le sous-titrage des films québécois en France est toujours perçu comme une pratique qui humilie en général les Québécois.

Le remake semble alors la solution idéale pour reprendre, pour copier une idée intéressante et la proposer à nouveau, avec

---

[15] Cités dans G. Plachenault, *Les standards du français parlé dans le cinéma francophone et la langue de l'autre: réception du cinéma québécois en France*, in M. Abecassis, G. Ledegen, K. Zouaoui (éd.), *La francophonie ou l'éloge de la diversité*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle 2011, p. 48.

le «bon» accent, dans une nouvelle sauce. Car, il ne faut pas avoir
peur d'appeler les choses par leur nom, le remake ne jouit pas de
bonne presse par le fait qu'il reprend et transforme un film qui a
eu du succès, le devance et le relègue aux oubliettes. Reproduire
une idée en réduit en quelque sorte son authenticité. Même le
remake le plus réussi véhicule toujours le soupçon de mauvaise
copie et de manque d'authenticité. Nous aurions nous-mêmes
du mal à considérer un remake comme une nouvelle œuvre, une
création authentique, puisque le remake est le résultat d'une
transformation qui garde de fortes résonances avec son hypofilm,
même si le réalisateur réécrit le scénario en y ajoutant de nou-
velles situations. Bref, le remake remplace le film original et ne
le glorifie pas puisqu'en le transformant, il le dénature pour le
rendre accessible à de nouveaux spectateurs.

Déjà si l'on compare les deux affiches, celle de l'hypofilm et
celle de l'hyperfilm, on voit bien qu'en France on a voulu présen-
ter cette création québécoise avant tout comme une comédie, ce
qui renforce le cliché du Québécois «sympathique», mais avec
un drôle d'accent, que l'on a du mal à prendre au sérieux, comme
le suggère la phrase: «120 menteurs prêts à tout pour trouver un
médecin».

Tandis que l'affiche de l'hypofilm dit autre chose, avec les couleurs plus neutres, on ne pense pas tout de suite à une comédie, à un film divertissant. L'affiche veut orienter les spectateurs vers une situation différente, plus mystérieuse, plus dramatique. On ne comprend pas ce que les personnages habillés en blanc font tous ensemble et le coin de village que l'on voit en arrière-plan inscrit le film dans une réalité géographique qui n'est pas la ville, mais la province, le petit village perdu au fin fond du Québec.

Nous allons maintenant nous servir d'une scène tirée de *La grande séduction* pour voir tout d'abord comment elle a été adaptée dans *Un village presque parfait* et puis dans le remake italien *Un paese quasi perfetto*.

Dans l'hypofilm, le médecin s'appelle Christopher Lewis, il est montréalais anglophone et adore le cricket, un sport pratiqué dans plusieurs pays anglophones (notamment en Australie, en Angleterre et en Inde) mais quasiment inconnu par les Québécois, qui sont plutôt fanatiques de hockey sur glace. Dans le bar-restaurant de l'île, il y a plusieurs photos de joueurs de hockey accrochées aux murs, ce qui montre que les habitants de Sainte-Marie-la-Mauderne se retrouvent toujours dans le bar pour suivre les matchs en direct à la télé. En arrivant sur l'île, lorsque le médecin voit qu'un match est en cours, il s'exclame que le cricket est un sport «plus civilisé que le hockey». Le conflit entre deux mondes, l'anglophone et le francophone, entre modernité et tradition, entre anglicisation des mœurs et affirmation de l'esprit de la nation, est mis tout de suite en scène par le réalisateur québécois Jean-François Pouliot.

Cela est encore plus évident dans la scène où tout le village se réunit dans le bar pour regarder un match de cricket en direct à la télé et rendre ainsi heureux le docteur Lewis. Le commentaire est en anglais et le médecin commente souvent le match en anglais. Il s'exclame à l'occasion «that is not cricket boys» sous les regards sombres des villageois qui ne comprennent rien et ne connaissent pas les règles du cricket. Et lorsque le mé-

decin s'absente pour aller aux toilettes, le propriétaire du bar change rapidement de chaîne pour regarder pendant quelques instants un match de hockey où les commentaires sont en français. Yvon, l'un des protagonistes du film, profite de l'absence du médecin pour s'exclamer avec un ton très grave qu'il n'est «plus capable» de regarder ce sport à la télé et qu'il a «l'goût d'prendre le bâton plat pis d'les battre, toute la gang de ces maudits anglais».[16]

L'opposition entre Montréal, ville bilingue, moderne et ouverte sur le monde et le village francophone rural, éloigné du reste du monde, où tout est en ruine, devient le motif dominant de cette comédie dramatique. Séparé par la mer du reste du Québec, le village sur l'île est alors présenté comme une scène de théâtre, comme l'archétype des villages québécois qui luttent contre la désertification et qui doivent lutter pour avoir les services d'un médecin généraliste. La migration à partir du milieu rural vers le milieu urbain est un problème toujours actuel au Québec, puisque loin des villes il n'y a pas beaucoup de possibilités pour les jeunes avec des diplômes universitaires de se réaliser professionnellement. À cause de la dispersion de la population, plusieurs activités commerciales et un grand nombre de services de proximité, comme la présence d'un médecin, sont fermés et cela oblige les habitants à migrer vers les villes.

Le début de *La grande séduction* met en scène cette réalité dramatique. Dès le générique, le spectateur est plongé dans une ambiance sombre où de vieux bateaux de pêche placés hors de l'eau et de vieilles maisons délabrées, abandonnées, suggèrent que le village est presque en ruine. De plus, les premières séquences du film montrent que depuis très longtemps les habitants du village attendent tous les mois l'arrivée des chèques du gouvernement pour compter sur un revenu à peine suffisant pour avoir un niveau de vie acceptable.

---

[16] J.-F. Pouliot, *La grande séduction*, 01:14:05.

Le remake français: Un village presque parfait *de Stéphane Meunier*

La version française, *Un village presque parfait*, a été tournée à Aulon, une petite municipalité située dans le parc des Pyrénées dans le Sud de la France. Dans le film, le village s'appelle Saint-Loin-la-Mauderne et à l'entrée du village un panneau informe les visiteurs que le bourg est jumelé avec Sainte-Marie-la-Mauderne au Canada. Il s'agit d'un clin d'œil hypertextuel qui passe inaperçu aux yeux des spectateurs qui ne connaissent pas l'original québécois. Le réalisateur Stéphane Meunier, connu surtout pour le documentaire *Les yeux dans les Bleus* réalisé sur l'équipe de France de football pendant la Coupe du monde de 1998, fait en quelque sorte du copier/coller et transpose les mêmes scènes de l'hypofilm, les dialogues sont presque toujours identiques, mais le «bon accent» est au rendez-vous. Il insère toutefois plusieurs renvois à la culture française. La fille de l'ancien maire du village est par exemple comparée au joueur de foot Ribéry à cause de ses dents qui nécessiteraient d'un appareil, la mannequin Nabilla, une célébrité française, sera évoquée par le médecin lors d'un contrôle de police et même une blague du Général de Gaulle sera citée à propos de la chasse: «la différence entre la chasse et la guerre c'est qu'à la guerre au moins le lapin a un fusil».[17]

Le médecin qui doit passer un mois dans le village s'appelle Maxime Meilleur et il est parisien. Il est présenté dans le film avec tous les clichés du Parisien snob qui est obligé, contre sa volonté, de s'éloigner de Paris. À ses yeux, le village est un trou, il est loin de tout comme le nom «Saint-Loin-la-Mauderne» l'indique et surtout loin d'être moderne. Il a l'impression d'être arrivé dans un camp de gitans, il ne comprend pas comment on peut habiter dans un endroit pareil où il n'y a que des «péquenauds». Il porte avec lui ses capsules de café Nespresso, mais il ne pour-

---

[17] Général De Gaulle: «La guerre, c'est comme la chasse, sauf qu'à la guerre les lapins tirent».

ra pas les utiliser. Bref, il trouve dans «ce village de merde une grosse ambiance et il est certain qu'il va bien se marrer» comme il le répète avec beaucoup d'ironie.

La version française met alors en scène l'opposition Nord/ Sud, Paris/Province, grande ville/petit «trou» perdu dans les montagnes des Pyrénées, mais surtout l'arrogance typiquement parisienne opposée aux manières campagnardes, mais en apparence sincères des villageois.

Le motif du cricket est repris tel quel par le réalisateur français. Toutefois, il ne sera pas mis en opposition avec le hockey, sport national au Québec, mais avec le rugby, le sport très populaire dans le Sud de la France. Le médecin, fraîchement débarqué de Paris s'exclame, en apercevant la mise en scène du faux match, que «le cricket est tellement plus civilisé que le rugby». Dans le bar-restaurant du village, les photos des joueurs de cricket vont prendre la place des photos des joueurs de rugby. Et le soir de la finale du match de cricket Angleterre contre Australie, la même situation de l'hypofilm est transposée dans la version française. Le commentaire du match sur la chaîne satellitaire est en anglais et lorsque le médecin s'absente pour aller aux toilettes, les villageois s'exclament à l'unisson «qu'ils n'en peuvent plus avec ce cricket de merde», «un jeu de dingues» avec des règles incompréhensibles.

Dans le remake français également, le propriétaire du bar change de chaîne pour suivre pendant quelques instants un match de rugby avec des commentaires en français. Cette opposition linguistique anglais-français ne revêt pas les mêmes implications que dans le film québécois, puisqu'on sait qu'encore aujourd'hui, au Québec, il persiste une attitude hostile à l'égard du français pour des raisons historiques et idéologiques. Mais elle sert à montrer que le médecin parisien est snob et qu'il est capable de comprendre l'anglais et les dynamiques du match à l'écran. Il répétera souvent la même phrase utilisée dans l'hypofilm «that is not cricket boys», pour montrer qu'il parle anglais et qu'il comprend parfaitement l'esprit de la situation du jeu. Bien que la désertification des campagnes et l'abandon des services publics soit

un thème d'actualité également en France, avec les écoles qui ferment, comme le montre également la chanson de 2019 intitulée *Les oubliés* de Gauvain Sers, le problème n'est pas tout à fait comparable à celui du Québec où les distances entre les villes et les campagnes sont plus importantes qu'en France. En effet, le spectateur du remake français n'est pas confronté de manière dramatique à cette réalité. Le film proposé par le réalisateur Stéphane Meunier est avant tout une comédie.

Le remake italien: Un paese quasi perfetto *de Massimo Gaudioso*

La version italienne de *La grande séduction* reprend le titre français et l'on ne comprend pas s'il s'agit du remake de l'original québécois ou s'il s'agit d'un remake du remake français. L'affiche italienne du film oriente de manière très claire les spectateurs…

Tout est dit: 120 menteurs (en italien *bugiardi*) vont tout faire pour convaincre un médecin à déménager dans le village. Le film a été tourné dans le Sud de l'Italie, dans deux villages de la région Basilicate qui s'appellent Pietrapertosa et Castelmezzano.

Dans le film, le bourg sera désigné avec le mot-valise Pietramezzana. Nous avons l'impression alors que le réalisateur Massimo Gaudioso transpose en italien la version française du film avec quelques adaptations transculturelles nécessaires pour le public ciblé. Par exemple, la femme du maire du village dira à son mari bien costumé, avant qu'il parte à la gare pour accueillir le médecin, qu'il est beau comme Berlusconi. Plus loin dans le film, la série télé *Un posto al sole* sera évoquée pour justifier l'absence des villageois dans l'unique bar-restaurant lors de la visite du responsable de la nouvelle activité qui mettra fin au chômage. Toutefois, la fin du film a été complètement réécrite et ne ressemble ni à l'original québécois, ni au remake français. Federico Gironi, dans son compte rendu publié sur le site «Cineforum», ne cache pas sa déception à l'égard du remake italien qu'il juge «involontairement comique», «gauche» et pas du tout original:

> Un filmino dalle dinamiche elementari e dal messaggio edificante e balsamico, che pesca a piene mani dai copioni originali e si permette qualche timida deviazione che non basta a dargli uno statuto identitario nuovo e riconoscibile. Se *Un paese quasi perfetto* racconta – per usare il titolo del film da cui tutto è nato – il tentativo di una 'grande seduzione', quella che il regista tenta nei confronti del suo pubblico […] è goffa e imbarazzante, involontariamente comica, come una fantozziana Signora Pina che si fosse messa in testa di fare la femme fatale.[18]

Mattia Pasquini est du même avis que Federico Gironi et considère que le film proposé par le réalisateur italien est une «comédie légère» sans épaisseur: «non c'è pedagogia nella trattazione di Gaudioso, che mette in scena una commedia leggera, forse troppo piatta e semplice rispetto alla più scoppiettante diretta da Luca Miniero nel 2010 [*Benvenuti al Sud*], alla quale è stata già più volte paragonata».[19]

---

[18] F. Gironi, *Un paese quasi perfetto*, http://www.cineforum.it/recensione/ Un_paese_quasi_perfetto (consulté le 30 juillet 2020).

[19] M. Pasquini, Un paese quasi perfetto*: la nostra recensione*, https://www.film.it/recensione/art/un-paese-quasi-perfetto-la-nostra-recensione-45363 (consulté le 30 juillet 2020).

Le médecin qui est obligé de passer un mois en exil à Pietramezzana s'appelle Gianluca Terragni, mais on ne saura jamais d'où il arrive, puisque dans le film il sera toujours question de la «ville», mais on ne saura jamais laquelle. À juger de l'accent, il vient du Nord de l'Italie et lui aussi est au début victime des stéréotypes qui existent à l'égard des habitants du Sud de l'Italie. Comme dans l'original québécois, et dans le remake français, en découvrant que les habitants de Pietramazzana pratiquent le cricket, le médecin Gianluca Terragni s'exclame qu'il s'agit de «uno sport molto più civile del calcio» (d'un sport beaucoup plus civilisé que le football). Et voilà que le hockey des Québécois, devenu rugby dans le Sud de la France, se transforme en football en Italie. Cela va sans dire…

Dans la version italienne, le réalisateur Massimo Gaudioso met en scène l'opposition typiquement italienne Nord/Sud. Le choc culturel qui frappe le médecin à son arrivée dans le village montre la distance économique qui existe entre les deux extrémités de la péninsule italienne et en même temps il réactive les clichés qui existent à l'égard des habitants du sud de l'Italie. Dès qu'il met les pieds dans le petit village de campagne, le médecin ne veut pas laisser son vélo sans surveillance, car il a peur qu'on le lui vole. Il a l'impression de n'être arrivé nulle part. À ses yeux, le village est «un buco in culo al mondo»[20] parce qu'il n'y a pas de connexion pour son téléphone mobile et, de plus, l'appartement qu'on lui donne n'est pas à son goût, puisqu'il déteste les meubles. Bref, aux yeux des villageois, le médecin apparaît comme un personnage ridicule par son snobisme et ses prétentions: il pense même pouvoir manger des sushis et des sashimis dans l'unique restaurant du village.

Dans la scène que nous avons choisie pour notre analyse, le commentaire du match de cricket que les villageois et le médecin Gianluca Terragni regardent en direct dans le bar-restaurant est en anglais, toutefois, le médecin semble bien suivre les dynamiques

---

[20] M. Gaudioso, *Un paese quasi perfetto*, 00:34:49.

du match, car il s'exclame lui aussi à deux reprises «this is not cricket boys». Ensuite, il répète plusieurs fois la même expression en italien. Et lorsque le médecin s'absente pour aller aux toilettes, l'un des personnages principaux, sollicité par les autres, change rapidement de chaîne pour regarder un match de football de la sélection nationale. Par rapport à la version originale québécoise, il n'y a aucun commentaire des villageois qui se limitent à faire des expressions de dégoût à l'égard du spectacle qu'ils regardent à la télé.

Tout le monde sait que le football est considéré comme un sport populaire partout en Italie, même dans les villages les plus éloignés, tandis que le cricket est un sport quasiment inconnu en Italie du Sud et aussi dans le Nord, mais adoré par le médecin Gianluca Terragni qui est snob. Cependant, les implications linguistiques et idéologiques de l'hypofilm ne se retrouvent pas dans le remake italien et ne peuvent pas se retrouver telles quelles puisque la situation linguistique italienne est loin de ressembler à la situation québécoise. De ce point de vue, le remake italien ne glorifie pas l'original québécois du réalisateur Jean-François Pouliot.

Conclusion

En guise de conclusion de ce rapide voyage à travers les remakes français et italien de ce film québécois, nous pouvons constater que la version française de Stéphane Meunier et celle italienne de Massimo Gaudioso ne glorifient pas l'original québécois. Les opérations de copier/coller faites par les réalisateurs français et italien proposent des produits qui ne sont ni authentiques, ni singuliers. Car, il faut le souligner encore une fois, le remake, qu'il soit réussi ou raté, ne contient jamais l'élément de la nouveauté. Aux yeux de ceux qui connaissent l'original, le remake sera toujours perçu comme un déjà vu, comme une copie réalisée sans effort et sans originalité. La multiplication d'une œuvre a toujours tendance à banaliser l'original.

Bibliographie

Allociné, http://www.allocine.fr/communaute/forum/message_
    gen_nofil=315838&cfilm=52613&refpersonne=&carticle=&ref
    serie=&refmedia=&page=1.html (consulté le 30 juillet 2020).

Blanchet, A., *Le cycle figement/défigement d'un stéréotype
    dans la presse vidéoludique française*, in H. Boyer (éd.), *Sté-
    réotypage, stéréotypes: fonctionnements ordinaires et mises
    en scène*, t. 1, *Média(tisation)s*, l'Harmattan, Paris 2006.

Gaudioso, M., *Un paese quasi perfetto*, Cattleya, Italie 2016.

Genette, G., *Palimpsestes: la littérature au second degré*, Seuil
    (coll. «Poétique»), Paris 1982.

Gironi, F., *Un paese quasi perfetto*, http://www.cineforum.it/re
    censione/Un_paese_quasi_perfetto (consulté le 30 juillet 2020).

Jakobson, R., *On Linguistic Aspects of Translation*, in R.A. Brower,
    On Translation, Oxford University Press, New York 1959.

Kristeva, J., *Sèméiotikè. Recherches pour une sémanalyse*,
    Points (coll. «Essais»), Paris 1978.

Meunier, S., *Un village presque parfait*, Miroir Magique *et al.*,
    France 2014.

Pasquini, M., Un paese quasi perfetto*: la nostra recensione*,
    https://www.film.it/recensione/art/un-paese-quasi-perfetto-
    la-nostra-recensione-45363 (consulté le 4 septembre 2020).

Philippe, G., *Le remake-actualisation: une norme de création
    universelle?*, Université de la Sorbonne nouvelle - Paris III,
    Paris 2013.

Plachenault, G., *Les standards du français parlé dans le cinéma
    francophone et la langue de l'autre: réception du cinéma qué-
    bécois en France*, in M. Abecassis, G. Ledegen, K. Zouaoui
    (éd.), *La francophonie ou l'éloge de la diversité*, Cambridge
    Scholars Publishing, Newcastle 2011.

Pouliot, J.-F., *La grande séduction*, Dogwoof Pictures, Canada
    2003.

Ramond, C.-H., *Box office québécois depuis 1985*, http://www.
    filmsquebec.com/box-office-quebecois-depuis-1985 (consulté
    le 4 septembre 2020).

«Don't You Forget About Me»: The Use of Music in *The Handmaid's Tale* TV Series

Chiara Feddeck

Aachen University

Introduction

Music can be a powerful tool to underline visual images and add to a story. The creators of the TV series based on Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* have made some particular choices for the series' music. In this paper I will explore how the music used in the series functions and which effects it can have on the viewer. I will first explain what film music is, how it functions, and how it can affect the audience. This short theoretical introduction is based on Kathryn Kalinak's book *Film Music: A Very Short Introduction*.[1] I will then move on to Atwood's novel[2] and finally I will explore the use of music in the TV series with examples.

Film Music

There are two types of film music: music composed especially for a film or TV series, which is called a score, and music which

---

[1] K. Kalinak, *Film Music: A Very Short Introduction* (Kindle edition), Oxford University Press, Oxford 2010.

[2] M. Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto 1985.

already exists chosen to accompany the images on the screen. While there are different traditions of film music through history and culture, there is, according to Kalinak, one thing that is always true for film music: «it is characterized by its power to define meaning and to express emotion: film music guides our response to the images and connects us to them».[3]

Furthermore, Kalinak lists the functions film music can have:
- establish setting;
- specify time and place;
- create atmosphere;
- call attention to elements onscreen and off-screen;
- reinforce or foreshadow narrative developments;
- clarify characters' motivations;
- contribute to emotions of the characters and the audience;
- unify images that might seem disconnected.[4]

These possible functions of film music hopefully make it clear how important it is when watching a film or TV series. If we think about some iconic or favourite scenes from movies or TV series, we will quickly realize how often they are connected to music. A famous example is the shower scene in Alfred Hitchcock's movie *Psycho* (1960): surely, anyone who knows the movie cannot imagine the scene without the music, and without it, it would most likely not have become such a famous scene.

Returning to the functions of film music, it is of importance that it is used to influence the audience in some way or another. It can easily create an atmosphere or mood so that the audience reacts to what they are watching; this is especially true when a famous piece of music is used, a recognizable song can evoke powerful emotions in a viewer which in turn creates an emotional connection to the movie or TV series they are watching. In this way, music can shape the narrative of the images seen on the

---

[3] *Ibidem*, Preface.
[4] *Ibidem*, Chapter 1.

screen. This is a process that can unfold on a conscious or sub-conscious level, but it has the strongest effects when it happens without the viewer being aware of it.

The Handmaid's Tale

The Handmaid's Tale is Margaret Atwood's most famous work. Published in 1985, the novel is her first work of specula-tive fiction. The most important themes are gender roles, power and control, autonomy and identity. As we will see, these are also the main themes that the music relies on, with an emphasis on the themes of power and control (and the lack or loss thereof) and autonomy and identity (and again the lack or loss thereof). It deals with a totalitarian and theocratic society called Gilead in which women are defined by status and fertility: women with the ability to have children are forced to become handmaids for the upper-class families in Gilead. Other women are divided into the following groups: Marthas, the housekeepers; Wives, upper-class women married to Commanders; Aunts, trainers of the hand-maids; Econowives, lower-class women; Jezebels, prostitutes and entertainers; Unwomen, women who do not conform to the strict gender roles of Gilead.

The story is about Offred, a handmaid whose actual name is June, but she now belongs to Fred Waterford hence her new name. Through her narrative we get to know about the handmaids' lives in the society and the society itself; intermingled with her story, there are flashbacks of her former life and how society slowly changed. As a handmaid, June has become an object without any rights. She is mainly confined to the house and her room except for daily walks and the monthly ritual trying to conceive a baby with the Waterfords.

The novel ends with a chapter called *Historical Notes*, which makes it clear that June managed to escape, and that Gilead did fall, but we do not get to know the details. The TV series' first

season tells the whole story of the novel without the *Historical Notes*, the next seasons then go further than the book delving into what presumably happened between the ending and the *Historical Notes*.

Music in The Handmaid's Tale

The music of *The Handmaid's Tale* consists of an original score composed by Adam Taylor and already existing music. While the original music is beautiful and haunting and it accompanies the series perfectly, it is the use of the other music I want to focus on, because these songs are often chosen for shock value as a jolt to the system and to transport the viewer into June's thoughts or her past. One of the music supervisors, Maggie Phillips, asserts: «Bruce [Miller] has this idea that the songs are what June would play […]. They reflect what's on her playlist, what would be going on in her head at that moment. We try to give it that tongue-in-cheek attitude that she has to deal with the hardships of Gilead». They work especially well because many of the songs are well-known pop or rock songs a lot of viewers will recognize. They feel out of place and pull viewers out of the experience of what they are watching because they are not part of the world in Gilead, which forbids music; hence they can have a powerful effect while watching the show and Phillips claims that:

> Those ironic choices that are jarring and pull you out of the moment, they are Bruce's intention. He wants you to be jarred and have to be pulled back to reality. Remember, we are only a few years in the future on *The Handmaid's Tale*. The past is not a distant past. Gilead starts in 2012. It's not that long ago. It's scary.[5]

The first season's music was chosen by music supervisor Michael Perlmutter and the second season's music had Maggie Phil-

---

[5] S. Halperin, Handmaid's Tale *Music Supervisor on the Show's 'Jarring' Soundtrack*, «Variety», August 23, 2018.

lips as its music supervisor, who says she especially turned to more female artists because the show is such «a female driven show».[6] Perlmutter on the other hand focused on the theme of music as freedom because «little moments of freedom were really important in how we were going to express the story and the inner soundtrack of Offred for the most part».[7]

It is clear that there is no single song used in the series that has been chosen randomly, a lot of thought has gone into the music selection by the music supervisors, the directors, the writers, and even the actors. Some of these choices are rather obvious and underline what we are watching or have just seen, while other choices are more ironic and are meant to shock the viewers to their core. Furthermore, the music in the flashbacks will remind viewers that it was not long ago that Gilead was still the United States and how a society can change, in the words of June:

> Now I'm awake to the world. I was asleep before. That's how we let it happen. When they slaughtered Congress, we didn't wake up. When they blamed terrorists and suspended the Constitution, we didn't wake up then either. They said it would be temporary. Nothing changes instantaneously. In a gradually heating bathtub, you'd be boiled to death before you knew it.[8]

Examples of Music in The Handmaid's Tale

I will first look at some of the music used in the flashbacks. There is a clear difference between the kinds of flashback: on the one hand we have flashbacks to actual happier times when Gilead was not in sight at all yet, and on the other hand there

---

[6] Z. Laws, *Music Supervisor Maggie Phillips Chats Adding Female Voices to* The Handmaid's Tale *and Going 'Bigger and Weirder' for* Legion, «Gold Derby», May 8, 2018.

[7] E. Qualey, *Music is the Queen of Freedom in* The Handmaid's Tale *Soundtrack*, «Hidden Remote», May 27, 2017.

[8] *Late* (*The Handmaid's Tale*, season one, episode three), Hulu, April 26, 2017.

are flashbacks where it becomes clear things are going downhill and a change is coming. The happy carefree moments are emphasized by upbeat pop songs or generally happy songs. A poignant example of this is the song *Daydream Believer* by The Monkees (1967), which, as a huge contrast to life in Gilead, plays during a happy flashback of June, her partner Luke, and their daughter Hannah. In this case it is a stark juxtaposition: a carefree life full of hopes, dreams, and happiness on the one hand, and on the other hand June in Gilead banished to her room without any hopes, dreams, and happiness. The only thing she has left are these precious memories making her a quite literal daydream believer. Another interesting example of upbeat pop music used in a flashback is a scene in which June and her mother Holly are driving carefree and singing along to Gwen Stefani's song *Hollaback Girl* (2004). The song does not only emphasize how life was before but it also shows the influence her feminist mother had on her, instilling the fighting spirit we can see in June now: «So I'm gonna fight, gonna give it my all / Gonna make you fall, gonna sock it to you / That's right, I'm the last one standing / Another one bites the dust».[9] A further important flashback, and a good example of the change that is coming, is the use of a 2016 remix of Blondie's *Heart of Glass* (1978) during a scene where June and her friend Moira are protesting the changes that are being made. It functions as a powerful symbol for the world that is crashing down around the protesters as their efforts end in a bloody shooting while we hear the haunting music and vocals of the song. While it was becoming clear to them before already that something was wrong, it is during this scene their hearts of glass shatter to pieces as they realize how bad things have actually got, the metaphorical glass becoming real by shattered windows.

As June is the main character and we see this new world through her eyes, it is obvious that most songs underline her ex-

---

[9] Gwen Stefani, *Hollaback Girl*, in *Love. Angel. Music. Baby*, Interscope Records, 2004.

periences and her story; furthermore, the songs are often something she plays in her head or would be playing. The first episode significantly ends with Lesley Gore's feminist song *You Don't Own Me* (1963) after she tells the viewers her real name. The song emphasizes that she still is her own person and underlines her autonomy and will to live: «You don't own me / I'm not just one of your many toys / You don't own me / Don't say I can't go with other boys / And don't tell me what to do / Don't tell me what to say».[10]

   This empowerment is brought to a halt at the end of the second episode, which makes use of a particular song during the last scene, and it is the first instance of the viewer being jolted into certain feelings as most people will recognize this song and it seems very much out of place in Gilead. The song is *Don't You (Forget About Me)* from Simple Minds (1985), and in the first moments we see a confident June walking out of the house because she has information to share about the resistance May Day. She feels empowered until the shocking moment of discovering her usual shopping partner has been replaced; June's mood changes, the music stops as she realizes what has happened, she utters the word «Fuck»[11] in a voice-over, and the screen goes to black with the song playing again. The lyrics of the song and the theme of the song are mainly disconnected from the scene except for the brief moments of June's confidence and giddiness as she walks past Nick, the Commander's driver, filled with excitement that she has become a part of the resistance. Moreover, the music is very upbeat and gives the viewer a feeling of optimism for June and her future until we realize that we are completely thrown off track.

---

[10] Lesley Gore, *You Don't Own Me*, in *Lesley Gore Sings of Mixed-Up Hearts*, Mercury Records, 1963.

[11] *Birth Day* (*The Handmaid's Tale*, season one, episode two), Hulu, April 26, 2017.

Eventually after having been forced by Serena to have sex with Nick to finally conceive a baby, there is a turning point for June when she rebels by taking control of her own body and desire by sleeping with Nick, finding small kernels of happiness and love where she can. Hence the choice of song for the end credits, underlining this act, Nina Simone's *I Want a Little Sugar in My Bowl* (1967): «I want a little sweetness / Down in my soul / I could stand some lovin' / Oh so bad / I feel so funny and I feel so sad».[12]

Another rather surreal experience for June is when the Commander takes June to the one place in Gilead where debauchery and everything else this society disapproves of is still allowed, the club Jezebel's. As they walk inside, the song *White Rabbit* (1967) by Jefferson Airplane is played. The song uses images of *Alice in Wonderland*, which mirrors June's entry into the club to Alice's journey into an unknown world.

The final song of the first season is Tom Petty's *American Girl* (1976), a fitting end to the series when June gets into a van unclear about her destiny and if she is going to get out of Gilead: «Whether this is my end or my new beginning, I have no way of knowing. I've given myself over into the hands of strangers. I have no choice. It can't be helped. And so I step up into the darkness within or else the light».[13] June's words are underlined by the lyrics of the song: «After all it was a great big world / With lots of places to run to / Yeah, and if she had to die / Tryin' she had one little promise».[14]

After some harrowing experiences June manages to escape from Gilead at the end of the first episode of the second season. During the end credits the song *Going Back Where I Belong*

---

[12] Nina Simone, *I Want a Little Sugar in My Bowl*, in *Nina Simone Sings the Blues*, BMG, 1967.

[13] *Night* (*The Handmaid's Tale*, season one, episode ten), Hulu, June 14, 2017.

[14] Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers, *American Girl*, in *Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers*, Gone Gater Records, 1976.

(1960) from Sugar Pie DeSanto plays, leaving the viewer with hope for June's journey: «I'm leaving this town / no use in hang-out round / I may be wrong but we can't get along / and I'm going back to where I belong».[15]

The second episode of season two opens with June being driven out of the city, the song playing during this scene is not something a viewer will immediately recognize, or recognize at all, but it is worth mentioning because the translation of the title of the song *Piel* (2017) by the Venezuelan artist Arca means 'skin' and the song is about taking of one's skin, becoming a new person, and that is exactly what is happening. June is becoming June again after having been Offred for several years of her life, she is shedding the skin of the oppressed woman to become her true self again.

The second song of the episode is during scenes in which June after exploring her hiding place, the «Boston Globe» offices, realizes the massacre that took place there. She builds a shrine for the victims and while she says a prayer, *I'm Clean Now* by Grouper (2016) starts to play: «And I'm clean now / Mimicking hawks / I've climbed to the top of a poisonous valley / Valleys, pastel sheets draped across my feet / Violet flowers weep beneath my feet».[16] She ends up having to hide out at the «Boston Globe» offices for some time and we start the third episode of season two with music, which is a major change from the first season where music was used sparingly underlining the silence of life in Gilead. June is jogging through her hiding place and the song we hear, and she is listening to, is *Go!* by Santigold (2012). It is symbolic of June's life in Gilead when her authority was stripped from her. We hear the same song again in the next scene where Moira is jogging in Canada, and just like with June it is symbolic for her previous life in Gilead, even though she never became a

---

[15] Sugar Pie de Santo, *Going Back to Where I Belong*, in *In the Basement: The Chess Recordings*, UMG Recordings, 2018.

[16] Grouper, *I'm Clean Now*, in *Paradise Valley*, Yellowelectric, 2016.

handmaid, she had no power or authority of her own during her time at Jezebels either: «People want my power, / And they want more station, / Stormed my winter palace, / But they couldn't take it!».[17] Sadly, June is discovered and returned to Gilead. This is underlined by music mainly being absent once more being back in this silent society.

The next episode ends with June seemingly having become Offred and having lost her spirit after she has returned to the Waterford's house. While she stands outside of the gate the song *Hate* by Cat Power (2006) starts to play as she repeats the typical Gileadan phrase «We've been sent good weather»[18] in her head; all of this underlines the idea that she has given up and succumbed to Gilead: «Anyone can tell you there's no more road to ride / Everyone will tell you there's no place to hide».[19] The quietness and grimness of Gilead and June retreating into Offred is underlined by more silence in the following episodes before she snaps out it and becomes June again for the sake of her unborn baby. Before this happens, we only see a defiant Offred, who even tries to kill herself when she thinks she has had a miscarriage. The episode ends however with her and her baby, alive and fine at the hospital and the quiet song *Heading Home* (2016) by Julianna Barwick shows us that June is still within her, having realized she has to live for her baby, she has to head home, wherever that may be.

The next rather surreal experiences during June's journey are the short-lived moments of a partnership with Serena. She asks June to read over some documents, and as June clicks her pen in a powerful moment at the end of the episode Shocking Blue's *Venus* (1969) starts to play, underlining the significance of this moment when June is allowed to do something that has been forbidden for years and the viewer feels as if something positive is

---

[17] Santigold (feat. Karen O), *Go!*, in *Master of My Make-Believe*, Atlantic Recording, 2012.

[18] *Other Women* (*The Handmaid's Tale*, season two, episode four), Hulu, May 9, 2018.

[19] Cat Power, *Hate*, in *The Greatest*, Matador Records, 2006.

on its way: «A goddess on a mountain top / Was burning like a silver flame».[20]

This theme is picked up in the next episode which starts out with June and Serena working to the tunes of the song *Easy* by Commodores (1977). It is of significance that they are actually listening to it, another thing they are forbidden to do in addition to reading and doing the absent Commander's work. For just a short while it seems like the world is normal again and life for the women is easy. However, the lyrics also question this easy life which is exactly what happens at the end of the scene when Serena informs June that the Commander will be coming back the next day and their days of working together are over: «Why in the world would anybody put chains on me? / I've paid my dues to make it / Everybody wants me to be what they want me to be / I'm not happy when I try to fake it, no».[21]

After the Commander comes home, we return to a viewing experience that does not have a lot of music except for the score and background music during some scenes. This then underlines June's life becoming even more gruesome than it was before. However, a certain sense of optimism also remains; the end credits feature Rihanna's *Consideration* (2016) after Nick tells June that Luke is alive and loves her and that Moira has managed to flee Gilead and is alive. There is a palpable sense of optimism at Moira having got out, she realizes that she can do it too and she ends her voice-over with «Fuck that»[22] when she thinks she should make her peace with her second child being born in Gilead. The lyrics of the song underlining June's recently rekindled strength and autonomy: «I got to do things my own way darling / Will you ever let me / Will you ever respect me? No».[23]

---

[20] Shocking Blue, *Venus*, in *At Home*, Red Bullet, 1969.

[21] Commodores, *Easy*, in *Commodores*, Motown Record Company, 1977.

[22] *Smart Power* (*The Handmaid's Tale*, season two, episode nine), Hulu, June 13, 2018.

[23] Rihanna (feat. SZA), *Consideration*, in *Anti*, Roc Nation Records, 2016.

The more quiet viewing experience continues during what is most likely the most horrifying episode of the series so far: June is raped by the Commander while Serena holds her down to induce labour, and she gets to see her daughter Hannah who is then taken away again. So the choice to use only the score is quite deliberate, there are no flashbacks with happy moments, there are no significant scenes that can be emphasized with any kind of song, the images are bad enough and the haunting original score makes the scenes even more harrowing than any original song could have done. June is left behind in an abandoned house after having seen Hannah and she finds a car with a working radio and comes across a resistance station which plays Bruce Springsteen's *Hungry Heart* (1980). A symbol of the old America and June's quest to flee from Gilead: «Everybody needs a place to rest / Everybody wants to have a home / Don't make no difference what nobody says / Ain't nobody like to be alone».[24] The song makes a reappearance at the end of the episode during the end credits after the bittersweet moment of giving birth all by herself yet also being found and brought back to Gilead. However, the episode also ends on an optimistic note where June tells the newborn about her sister Hannah and how she keeps telling her story for her new daughter willing her into existence «I tell, therefore you are».[25]

The final episode of the second season returns with some powerful musical moments. After what seems a yet again successful escape for June, she decides to hand her baby over to Emily and remain in Gilead herself. As she pulls her cap over her head, June stares into the camera with a demonic look in her eyes before walking away, as the tunes of Talking Heads' *Burning Down the House* (1983) start to play. She is now more than ever determined to burn down this house called Gilead, whatever the cost may be: «Here's your ticket, pack your bag / Time for jumpin' overboard /

---

[24] Bruce Springsteen, *Hungry Heart*, in *The River*, Columbia, 1980.

[25] *Holly* (*The Handmaid's Tale*, season two, episode eleven), Hulu, June 27, 2018.

The transportation is here / Close enough but not too far / Maybe you know where you are / Fightin' fire with fire».[26]

There are some instances where other handmaids' stories are underlined by the use of music. The most horrific instance of this is when we discover what happened to the first Ofglen, whose real name is Emily. She was taken away because she was in a relationship with a Martha and has now undergone genital mutilation. As she realizes what has been done to her, she screams and her feelings are underlined by the loud and angry music of Jay Reatard's *Waiting for Something* (2006), mirroring her feelings of anger, confusion, shock, and pain: «I must compete / Stand on my feet / Live with these creeps».[27]

Two more instances of interesting but also ironic choices of music occur to underline Emily's story once more. The last episode of season two features a rock song called *Itchycoo Park* by Small Faces (1967) at Emily's new placement when she hears the song being played by the Commander on the night of the first ceremony and it is an eerie contrast to what is about to happen, and which eventually does not happen because this Commander simply does not participate in this Gileadean ritual; the lyrics are oddly ironic: «It's all too beautiful, it's all too beautiful».[28] There is another crucial moment for Emily in the last episode of the second season when her new Commander drives her somewhere without telling her where they are going. He plays Annie Lennox's *Walking on Broken Glass* (1992) while Emily sits in the back having no idea what is going to happen to her, full of fear and emotions. The rather cheerful pop sounds of the song are a big contrast to Emily's emotions; the title and the lyrics underline her confused feelings: «And I've got so little left to lose / That it

---

[26] Talking Heads, *Burning Down the House*, in *Speaking in Tongues* [deluxe version], Sire Records, 2006.

[27] Jay Reatard, *Waiting for Something*, in *Blood Visions* [reissue], Fat Possum Records, 2009.

[28] Small Faces, *Itchycoo Park*, in *Small Faces* [deluxe edition], Charly, 2012.

feels just like I'm walking on broken glass».[29] The glass of this song is a throwback to the earlier use of the song *Heart of Glass* as the women have been walking on broken glass, a symbol of their old lives, since the beginning of Gilead.

The last episode of the first season features another big musical choice. The handmaids defy Aunt Lydia by rebelling against her order to stone their fellow handmaid Janine; as they walk through the streets in a formation almost seeming an army, Nina Simone's song *Feeling Good* (1965) plays, underlining this small act of power and victory for the handmaids: «It's a new dawn / It's a new day / It's a new life for me yeah».[30] This sense of power does not last long as it quickly becomes clear during the first episode of the second season when the handmaids are all being gathered and put on a scaffold about to be hanged as punishment for not participating in the stoning. The images alone are gruesome and haunting but the scene being set to Kate Bush's *This Woman's Work* (1989) makes it all the more difficult and powerful to watch. The palpable fear and despair of the women, the haunting music and vocals combined with the lyrics make for a surreal experience: «I know you've got a little life in you yet / I know you've got a lot of strength left / I should be crying, but I just can't let it show / I should be hoping, but I can't stop thinking».[31]

Another big musical moment happens once more during the end credits after a climactic moment which can be considered the beginning of the end of Gilead because of a big instance of rebellion by a handmaid. After the explosive scene where the new Ofglen bombed the new Red Center in an act of suicide and rebellion, the viewer is treated to the explosive feminist punk rock song *Oh Bondage, Up Yours!* by X-Ray Spex (1977): «Some peo-

---

[29] Annie Lennox, *Walking on Broken Glass*, in *Diva*, Sony Music BMG Entertainment, 1992.

[30] Nina Simone, *Feeling Good*, in *I Put a Spell on You*, UMG Recordings, 1965.

[31] Kate Bush, *This Woman's Work*, in *The Sensual World*, Novercia Overseas, 1989.

ple think little girls should be seen and not heard / But I think "oh bondage, up yours!"».[32]

The next episode opens with a funeral scene for the fallen handmaids and it features the song *My Life* by Iris DeMent (1994) in a sort of macabre celebration of the precious lives lost, the song alternating between how the narrator brought joy but her life did not count much: «My life, it's half the way travelled / And still I have not found my way out of this night / An' my life, it's tangled in wishes / And so many things that just never turned out right».[33]

Conclusion

As I hope has become clear music can indeed be a powerful tool to emphasize the main themes of a movie or a TV show. It can underline a character's journey in a way the images, stories, and actors cannot do alone. With June it helps us to understand her thoughts and feelings beyond what is already voiced through her voice-over and in other cases, as we have seen with Emily and during the big punishment scene, it makes the characters' pain and confusion all the more powerful and palpable. Moreover, it can highlight differences between time periods, as we have seen with the flashbacks and the utilization of more carefree and happy pop songs until it becomes clear things are changing and the music choices become more haunting and dramatic. The fact that for this series the creators have made such particular and unexpected choices makes the chosen music even more powerful. The juxtaposition often created between the horrible images we are seeing, and the surprising song choices, make for an all-around fascinating audio-visual experience.

---

[32] X-Ray Spex, *Oh Bondage, Up Yours!*, in *Germfree Adolescents: The Anthology*, Sanctuary Records Group, 2001.

[33] Iris DeMent, *My Life*, in *My Life*, Yep Roc Records, 1994.

References

BOOKS

ATWOOD, M., *The Handmaid's Tale*, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto 1985.

CARROLL, L., *Alice in Wonderland*, Macmillan, London 1865.

KALINAK, K., *Film Music: A Very Short Introduction* [Kindle edition], Oxford University Press, Oxford 2010.

ELECTRONIC SOURCES

HALPERIN, S., Handmaid's Tale *Music Supervisor on the Show's 'Jarring' Soundtrack*, «Variety», August 23, 2018; available at URL: https://variety.com/2018/music/news/handmaids-tale-music-supervisor-soundtrack-interview-maggie-phillips-1202915175 (accessed August 3, 2020).

LAWS, Z., *Music Supervisor Maggie Phillips Chats Adding Female Voices to* The Handmaid's Tale *and Going 'Bigger and Weirder' for* Legion *[exclusive video interview]*, «Gold Derby», May 8, 2018; available at URL: https://www.goldderby.com/article/2018/the-handmaids-tale-legion-music-supervisor-maggie-phillips-interview-news-153796420/ (accessed August 4, 2020).

SMITH, C.E., The Handmaid's Tale *Wields Music Like a Weapon in Season 2*, «Refinery29», May 20, 2018; available at URL: https://www.refinery29.com/en-gb/2018/05/199723/handmaids-tale-season-2-music-kate-bush-maggie-phillips (accessed August 3, 2020).

QUALEY, E., *Music is the Queen of Freedom in* The Handmaid's Tale *Soundtrack*, «Hidden Remote», May 27, 2017; available at URL: https://hiddenremote.com/2017/05/27/music-queen-freedom-handmaids-tale-soundtrack/ (accessed August 3, 2020).

MOVIES

HITCHCOCK, A., *Psycho*, Paramount, USA 1960.

Music

Annie Lennox, *Walking on Broken Glass*, in *Diva*, Sony Music BMG Entertainment, 1992; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/4CcSw8wQAHYf4XNckayPoc

Arca, *Piel*, in *Arca*, XL Recordings, 2017; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/3klBAH0wi8hR1kvRmiHRvw

Blondie & Philip Glass, *Heart of Glass* [Crabtree Remix], Suite 28 Records, 2016; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/0YA9Ofybww924Dy12PkaXq

Bruce Springsteen, *Hungry Heart*, in *The River*, Columbia, 1980; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/1KsI8NEeAna8ZIdojI3FiT

Cat Power, *Hate*, in *The Greatest*, Matador Records, 2006; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/2luxaiKCpNvVSncN28hnJB

Commodores, *Easy*, in *Commodores*, Motown Record Company, 1977; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/1JQ6Xm1JrvHfvAqhl5pwaA

Grouper, *I'm Clean Now*, in *Paradise Valley*, Yellowelectric, 2016; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/4qm8sWdYoXkdhMN8EL9mAL

Gwen Stefani, *Hollaback Girl*, in *Love. Angel. Music. Baby*, Interscope Records, 2004; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/0eqH0ALoDQevq59YcQ53KE

Iris DeMent, *My Life*, in *My Life*, Yep Roc Records, 1994; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/6FsjMLk0XWSNRbrai6A4aG

Jay Reatard, *Waiting for Something*, in *Blood Visions* [reissue], Fat Possum Records, 2009; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/1iO2TX147EbAmLdzjDZSvR

Jefferson Airplane, *White Rabbit*, in *Surrealistic Pillow*, RCA Victor, 1967; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/4vpeKl0vMGdAXpZiQB2Dtd

Juliana Barwick, *Heading Home*, in *Will*, Dead Oceans, 2016; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/4Nj7jHfEE44ppiAmVex7yJ

Kate Bush, *This Woman's Work*, in *The Sensual World*, Novercia Overseas, 1989; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/1Q0sruYhnsq6lmhWgeRFh5

Lesley Gore, *You Don't Own Me*, in *Lesley Gore Sings of Mixed-Up Hearts*, Mercury Records, 1963; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/7ngRS53kqxLcEt9Pythc5d

Nina Simone, *Feeling Good*, in *I Put a Spell on You*, UMG Recordings, 1965; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/6Rqn2GFlmvmV4w9Ala0I1e

Nina Simone, *I Want a Little Sugar in My Bowl*, in *Nina Simone Sings the Blues*, BMG, 1967; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/3NcJu9876GBJuNU6vJOrbb

Rihanna (feat. SZA), *Consideration*, in *Anti*, Roc Nation Records, 2016; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/6t90Z9XkdsHD8xMxro6KRP

Santigold (feat. Karen O), *Go!*, in *Master of My Make-Believe*, Atlantic Recording, 2012; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/2hxSwyXevgF9G8LyL0LWhQ

Shocking Blue, *Venus*, in *At Home*, Red Bullet, 1969; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/0Z3xhSOhrawLV81YdiDiiJ

Simple Minds, *Don't You (Forget About Me)*, in *Celebrate: The Greatest Hits*, Virgin, 2013; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/0A4PZuepTcIQVvA5m7R0M1

Small Faces, *Itchycoo Park*, in *Small Faces* [deluxe edition], Charly, 2012; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/4P9qbRFA26qtfZNLCwizwH

Sugar Pie de Santo, *Going Back to Where I Belong*, in *In the Basement: The Chess Recordings*, UMG Recordings, 2018; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/6UQK0VtVqDLj1Z5QMhA3sP

Talking Heads, *Burning Down the House*, in *Speaking in Tongues* [deluxe version], Sire Records, 2006; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/3yO1OjqT59JyjHaQZcCYDX

The Monkees, *Daydream Believer*, in *The Birds, The Bees, and The Monkees* [reissue], Rhino Entertainment, 1994; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/7uEcCGtM1FBBGIhPozhJjv

Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers, *American Girl*, in *Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers*, Gone Gater Records, 1976; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/7MRyJPksH3G2cXHN 8UKYzP

X-Ray Spex, *Oh Bondage, Up Yours!*, in *Germfree Adolescents: The Anthology*, Sanctuary Records Group, 2001; Spotify, https://open.spotify.com/track/7weMJXfu8leOPWd4COj2Qp

<div align="center">Television Episodes</div>

Birth Day (*The Handmaid's Tale*, season one, episode two), Hulu, April 26, 2017; Amazon Prime Video, https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/video/detail/B071J6HJFW/ref=atv_dp

Holly (*The Handmaid's Tale*, season two, episode eleven), Hulu, June 27, 2018; Amazon Prime Video, https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/video/detail/B07CTYP6KL/ref=atv_dp

Late (*The Handmaid's Tale*, season one, episode three), Hulu, April 26, 2017; Amazon Prime Video, https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/video/detail/B071J6HJFW/ref=atv_dp

Night (*The Handmaid's Tale*, season one, episode ten), Hulu, June 14, 2017; Amazon Prime Video, https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/video/detail/B071J6HJFW/ref=atv_dp

Other Women (*The Handmaid's Tale*, season two, episode four), Hulu, May 9, 2018; Amazon Prime Video, https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/video/detail/B07CTYP6KL/ref=atv_dp

Smart Power (*The Handmaid's Tale*, season two, episode nine), Hulu, June 13, 2018; Amazon Prime Video, https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/video/detail/B07CTYP6KL/ref=atv_dp

Rebooting Montreal in English: The *19-2* Case Study

Federico Pio Gentile

Università degli Studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale'

> Life is neither static nor unchanging. With no indi-
> viduality, there can be no change, no adaptation and,
> in an inherently changing world, any species unable
> to adapt is also doomed.
>
> Jean M. Auel, *The Valley of Horses* (1982)

Introduction

Deriving from Medieval Latin *adaptare* (*ad-* implying a procedure to be applied for a «functional purpose», and *aptare* meaning «to fix»), adaptation techniques can involve multiple communicative layers, contexts and – of course – modes altering the subject transmissibility and understandability for heterogeneous plateaux of receivers.

> In other words, the different media and genres that stories are transcoded to and from in the adapting process are not just formal entities; […] they also represent various ways of engaging audiences. […] Some media and genres are used to *tell* stories (for example, novels, short stories); others *show* them (for instance, all performance media); and still, others allow to interact physically and kinesthetically with them (as in videogames or theme park rides).[1]

---

[1] L. Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, Routledge, New York-London 2006, p. XIV.

In this transubstantiation of original creations into their recrudesced *alter ego*, something is often missed, something else is most likely emphasized in consideration of the end-users, and the overall harmony is modified, in order to convey some newly achieved perspectives.

Broadcasters often purchase interesting formats to be aired in a different socio-cultural context and language. Hence, they require the employment of a narrative and structural adaptation redefining the main communicative patterns to be reshaped in accordance with the targeted hosting environment. Nonetheless, the milieu within which a similar study takes place is not represented by any theoretical scheme lucubrating on the matter, yet the core of the investigation resides in the pragmatic examination of the Canadian intra-national fragmented identities. There, the emblematic and everlasting linguistic ambivalence summoning, on the one hand, the Anglophone (basically Canadian) majority and, on the other hand, a Francophone minority basically defined within the political boundaries of the Province of Quebec, is mirrored into some socio-cultural reflections of their respective communicative codes.

The Quebec situation is, indeed, quite controversial. Historically bound to its Francophone colonial foundation, the territory has ever resisted the paramount pressure of the surrounding Anglophone domains until the enactment of the *British North America Act* in 1867, whose Article 133 sanctioned the equatable legal value of both English and French for debates occurring in the Houses of the Parliament of Canada and the Legislature of Quebec, as well as in the official records and journals. As a consequence, since that very year, the Francophone heritage of the Province was somehow «degraded» on a par with the Anglophone one, which started sneaking inside those geographic limits and strengthening in time. Moreover, despite the declared Francophone spirit of the Province, between 1963 and 1971 the *Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism* established that «French-speaking Canadians did not hold the

economic and political place their numbers warranted», with relevantly lower percentages than English-speaking Canadian citizens and professionals in Quebec as much as in the rest of the Country.[2] The fading «minor» linguistic code was perceived as put in jeopardy by the intense spreading of the English language, hence Quebec nationalistic aims led to a definitive resolution in 1977, when the *Bill 101* (in French, *Loi 101*) promulgated the *Charte de la langue française* «in a bid to bolster and protect the French language while freeing the Province from the dominance of English».[3] Such a show of strength not only contributed to utterly changing the ideological mould of Quebec, but – along with political decisions – it also affected workplace conditions, business and trade, and – above all – education, where immigrants (even those merely coming from other Provinces) started being compulsory required to achieve a Francophone proficiency, despite the self-proclaimed open-mindedness of Provincial Government to solely recognize «the right of the Amerinds and the Inuit of Quebec, the first inhabitants of this land, to preserve and develop their original language and culture».[4] Over the years, this very process of *francization* setting a bureaucratic and identity representative milestone in the history of the territory also «encouraged» English-speaking and allophone Canadians to migrate from the area, assuring Quebec its authoritative French-speaking slant,[5] somehow erecting the walls of a cultural heterotopic (possibly emancipating but yet self-exclusive) social reality.

Notwithstanding the righteousness and the complexity of a similar governmental provision along with its still actual pragmatic implicatures – since whatsoever legal issue appraisals are not relevant in the current examination –, one crucial matter re-

---

[2] M.D. Behiels, R. Hudon, *Bill 101: charte de la langue française*, «The Canadian Encyclopedia», August 18, 2015 [July 31, 2013].

[3] K. Laframboise, *How Quebec's Bill 101 Still Shapes Immigrant and Anglo Students 40 Years Later*, «CBC», August 26, 2017.

[4] Charter of the French Language, *Légis Québec*, *Preamble*.

[5] See K. Laframboise, *How Quebec's Bill 101…*

mains. The multicultural environment nourishing the Canadian population blossoms in a multilingual atmosphere, where every individual is entitled to bequeath its proper familiar, cultural and linguistic heritage to its legacy as far as the Canadian-English values are maintained as unifying traits casting national identity (since English is one of the official languages of Canada and, simultaneously, the predominant communicative, aggregative and mediating code as well). For this reason, such expressive choices also amply influence ordinary interactive contexts, especially through media. Quoting Jane D. Brown and Susannah R. Stern's work on TV communication and social impact on life and sexuality:

> According to Cultivation Theory, television is the most powerful storyteller in the culture, one that continually repeats the myths and ideologies, the facts and patterns of relationships that define and legitimise the social order. TV tells its stories through news programs as well as in prime-time situation comedies and serials, daytime soap operas and talk shows, and the steady stream of commercials that fuel the entire industry. According to the Cultivation hypotheses, a steady dose of television, over time, acts like the pull of gravity toward an imagined centre.[6]

Thus, in consideration of the enormous authority of such a device over its viewers,[7] some smart and economic commodification strategies undertaken by the broadcasters aim at trading and merchandising news and products (and therefore socio-cultural identities by means of those) via a solid feeling of Canadianness. Inasmuch as the maximization of profits is achieved through the reaching of the widest possible portion of receivers, mass media are urged to invest more on contents to be transmitted in English rather than in any other languages. Indeed, the *Economic Report*

---

[6] J.D. Brow, S.R. Stern, *Mass Media and Adolescent Female Sexuality*, in G.M. Wingood, R.J. Di Clemente (ed.), *Handbook of Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health*, Springer Science-Business Media, New York 2002, p. 99.

[7] See R. Williams, *Television. Technology and Cultural Form* (1974), Routledge, London 2003, and G. Gerbner, *Science on Television: How It Affects Public Conceptions*, «Issues in Science and Technology», 3/3 (1987), pp. 109-115.

on the Screen-Based Media Production Industry in Canada displays statistical values determining 74% of TV productions being in English, in contrast with 26% of French-language contents and minimum 1% of other shows being bilingual or adopting other minor codes.[8] A similar contingency slightly matches other data granting Quebec a solid third place in the shares of total volume of film and television production sorted by province and territory, with 20% of national screen-based projects (~1,824), in comparison with British Columbia's gigantic volume (40% with ~3,576 projects) and Ontario's second position in the rankings with ~2,892 projects counting 32% of the whole panorama.[9] In light of these statistics, the similar ratio of English TV contents (74%) with the sum of British Columbia and Ontario projects (72%), per contra facing 26% of French-speaking shows – associable with Quebec's 20% scores on the national volume parameter –, seems to actually reveal the bosom of almost all the Francophone broadcastings, justifying and consolidating the linguistic dominance and contextualization of said codes in the different areas of Canada.

Moreover, the attention displayed on the matter is not only linguistic but is also ascribable to the narrative modes preferred by the main communicative and expressive modes of the observed medium. Referencing some more data collected in *Profile 2018*, the best quantity of on-screen transmissions in the two-year period 2017-2018 (and yet in the wake of previous biennial relationship reports) is committed to seriality. With ~2,351 projects, TV series in Canada overwhelmingly outnumber films (~256

---

[8] *Profile 2018: Economic Report on the Screen-Based Media Production Industry in Canada*, Canadian Media Producers Association *et al.*, p. 29.

[9] Besides British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec, remaining 8% of Canada's 2017-2018 volume of film and television productions is subdivided into 3% from Alberta, 2% from Manitoba, 1% from Nova Scotia, and <1% fractions from Newfoundland and Labrador, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and the Territories of Yukon, Nunavut and Northwest Territories (*ibidem*, p. 10, exhibits 1.4 and 1.5).

projects) and other TV categories (~127, inclusive of single-episode shows and television pilots), representing 86% of television production type, whose 55% is related to the fiction genre with ~1,295 ideas, followed – in order – by children's and youth programs, documentaries, lifestyle and human interest shows, and visual and performing arts.[10]

At that extent, the examination of the chosen case study – that is the *19-2* one – constitutes an emblematic instance of Canadian television product adaptation involving the two main communicative codes attested in the County and consolidated by the medium, along with the major narrative typology and genre proposed to its domestic spectators. Thus, English and French languages whirl in an original-to-adapted relationship of a televised serial show limited to the contemporary Crime Drama fiction genre.

The 19-2 *TV serial adaptation*

Adaptation techniques are mostly thought to be attributable to products passing from one channel or medium to another (e.g. from literature to television). Nonetheless, this intermediality is not always necessary and, in many cases, can be supplanted by an intra-media approach, when the contents originated by a source culture get modified via using the same initial channel to fit a target environment. This process of adaptation becomes, thus, much similar to what is commonly known as localization (like translations, from one language to another), where those main altering phenomena involve audiences that are alien to each other and still supposed to access identical displays in consideration of some peculiar social and receptive schemata. When it comes to television, adaptations might summon a number of expedients and strategies. A film (or series) that has to be transcoded into any other communicative dimension for diverse addressees is required to undergo a

---

[10] *Ibidem*, pp. 27-29.

linguistic – as much as cultural – reshaping that is mostly fulfilled through voice-over, dubbing or subtitling strategies, in accordance with budget investments at disposal of the producers.

Here, the *19-2* TV serial situation appears uncommon. The producers of the show – instead of adopting any of the aforesaid strategies – preferred to purchase the entire format and then proceed to the utter «re-creation» of the series via the usage of the English language, reaching beyond the 'mere' adaptation.

The original TV serial (*Dixneuf-Deux*), aired between 2011 and 2015 by Télévision de Radio-Canada, went on intermittently for three seasons and was characterized by a clear Quebecois perspective of a crime drama centred on the Franco-Quebecois Canadian language narrating the gloomy and rotten atmosphere of Montreal. Contrariwise, its adaptation (*Nineteen-Two*) expanded the episode duration from the original 42 minutes to 43-to-45 minute length stretching the narrative segments and outnumbering *Dixneuf-Deux* seasons.[11] Where the Francophone format only included three annual broadcasts, the Anglophone one implemented those contents – transmitted by *Bravo!* from 2014 to 2016 – with a fourth and final season (in 2017, when the channel was acquired by CTV) that lastly gave birth to a divergent plot. Moreover, as stated by Safeyaton Alias, an expert on Multimodal Discourse Analysis:

> Cities are more than a place to live, to work or to play in. As people observe the city while they move through it, the city serves as a political and social statement, and in some cases symbolises and encompasses the achievement and political prowess of the country's ruling elite.[12]

---

[11] Both the Francophone and the Anglophone versions of the TV serial use the cyphered title of *19-2*. Nonetheless, in order to avoid confusion and redundancy, the products are referred to via their spelled out equivalents of *Dixneuf-Deux* (the French one, 2011-2015) and *Nineteen-Two* (the English one, 2014-2017) throughout the paper.

[12] S. Alias, *A Semiotic Study of Singapore's Orchard Road and Marriott Hotel*, in K.L. O'Halloran (ed.), *Multimodal Discourse Analysis. Systemic Functional Perspectives*, Continuum, London-New York 2004, p. 55.

Therefore, if the urban context of the setting was maintained because of its symbolic, political and cultural value, the Quebecois Montreal (/mɔ̃ʁeal/) oriented towards the Francophone world enclosed within the Province was outrooted and radically supplanted by an Anglophone rendition of the city (which became the English-speaking /mʌntriːˈɒl/). This process contributed to utterly exclude any French-speaking iteration through the annihilating dissemination of Canadian-English authoritative spores phagocytizing the initial expressive code to get in control of any iterative dialogic exchange.

Together with the TV serial façade refurbishment, not just the scenic language was changed, but also the acting crew mutated. The original number of significant characters was kept, displaying a Captain, a Sergeant, a Detective and seven officers patrolling the streets (plus other collateral extras). Nonetheless, where *Dixneuf-Deux* portrayed a homogeneously Caucasian-white environment – Tyler Joseph (interpreted by Ben Antoine) being the sole black individual –, the *Nineteen-Two* product opted for a more heterogeneous cast where a few 'purely' Canadian characters remained in lieu of a more balanced ethnic redefinition. Thus, the white Nicolaï Berrof (interpreted by Réal Bossé) turned into the black Jamaican-Canadian Nick Barron (Adrian Holmes), Bérengère Hamelin (Véronique Baudet) became the Vietnamese-Canadian Beatrice Hamelin (Mylène Dinh-Robic) and Sergeant Julien Houle's original character performed by the Quebecois Sylvain Marcel was substituted by the Hispanic-Canadian Conrad Pla.[13] In light of this, along with CBC craving for showing some angles of Montreal on Canadian screens that finally were diverse from the habitual Quebec

---

[13] Actors' turnover is also possibly related to the modification of the linguistic and communicative *substratum*. Even though it is not clearly mentioned, cast members from *Dixneuf-Deux* who were in *Nineteen-Two* as well may have been kept because of their bilingual proficiency, where those who were released – the majority of them – only spoke French.

ones,[14] the adapted version, however, failed to mirror the actual descriptive scenario imaging the city, since the unlikely experience of benefiting from «a racially diverse English-speaking police force»[15] that its dwellers have never lived.

It is also worth noting that this preliminary procedure already reveals its rebooting aim. The modification of the ethnic origin of the characters develops a different milieu that does not correspond anymore to the initial social model foreseen by the format. In addition to that, on a linguistic level, the re-christening praxis modifying first and last names detaches from the solid but smaller reality encased in the Quebecois Montreal and heads towards the advertised broader Canadian multicultural mosaic. Such a linguistic operation occurs simultaneously with a cultural moulding. Definitely Francophone names like Benoît and Bérengère are given up for the adoption of the more neutral Benjamin and Beatrice, although even in that form deprived of their quintessential nature and formulated with pronunciations (/ˈbɛndʒəmɪn/ instead of /bɛ̃.ʒa.mɛ̃/ for Benjamin) or nicknames (e.g. Ben for Benjamin, Bear for Beatrice since her harsh temper) remarking the English-speaking point of view. In some other cases, the optional adoption of renaming practices is deployed to emphasise other aspects or facilitate comprehension dynamics to the Anglophone audience. Thus, Julian Houle saves his original name but is visually represented by a Latino actor for the multicultural reason explained above. Nevertheless, the Sergeant is also a proven paedophile, hence the narrative ethnic change could be associated to some sort of deflection between the visibly Canadian traits and similar impieties, justifying the on-screen preference for a different somatotype. This hypothesis is also supported by Nicolaï Berrof's Slavic origin turning into

---

[14] K. Brendan, *English Version of Quebec Cop Show* 19-2 *Being Made for CBC*, «Montreal Gazette», August 22, 2012.

[15] L. Carpenter, *Montreal Cop Show* 19-2 *Pulls No Punches*, «Cult MTL», February 7, 2016.

Nick Barrons's Jamaican one, funnelling the North American mediatic and social stereotype 'framing' the African-American borderline character as allegedly corrupted in place of blaming Caucasian people. As per some characters that keep their surname but replace their names (e.g. Bérengère/Beatrice Hamelin), some others undergo the opposite situation, like Nick's half-sister called Amélie De Granpré in *Dixneuf-Deux*, but shortened into De Grace in *Nineteen-Two* for the ease of mentioning in the dialogic sequences as much as of a name assimilability for TV spectators (yet this latter being uttered with the French pronunciation, /d:grɑ's/).

Taking the overall linguistic ground up again, the Francophone *Dixneuf-Deux* dialogic sequences are constituted by Quebecois exchanges only. Nonetheless, a few English words still occur in a limited range of communicative contingencies, determining a situational valence that retraces several functional usages shifting from Specialized Discourse to blue language. At that extent, the Anglophone expressive code is 'ennobled' by means of sporadic terminological recurrence and formal register enunciations within a police procedural peer-to-peer communication updating patrols on their schedules or giving orders (e.g. «lunch»; «fall in/back»; «back-up(s)»). Diametrically opposite to this linguistic deployment, English is also used for vulgarity and swearing comments (e.g. «fuck (off)!»), where – similar to police precinct environment – its widespread understandability is anyhow summoned to distance everyday language (here, Quebecois) from uncommon or inconvenient verbal episodes (like police jargon or profanity that should cinematically belong to cops and criminals accordingly, but not to civilians and ordinary citizens). On the silver thread of said considerations, this code is also conventionally used as a mediating language. Whenever *Dixneuf-Deux* officers are required to interact with immigrants and strangers, they put their native competence aside and endeavour to establish a phatic channel with their interlocutors in English (e.g. «stay there!»; «back off! back off!»; «get up, sir»; «slowly, slowly, slowly!»),

emphasizing the feeling of estrangement perceived by the watching receivers via code-shifting events as well (e.g. «belle job»). On the contrary, if the original product allows some inter-linguistic intrusions, its recent adaptation relinquishes any hint of French on the verbal level, except for scant integrated loanwords and calques (e.g. «rendez-vous»; «RSVP» for *répondez, s'il vous plaît*; «touché»).

The utmost erasure of Quebecois language iterations in *Nineteen-Two* is compensated by the unopposed dominance of Canadian-English throughout the totality of verbal interactions on-screen. In addition to that, since the relevant presence of World Englishes, even in those cases where officers use the Anglophone code for mediation purposes in the Francophone serial, no signs of code-switching are present here.

One emblematic instance is immediately retrievable in the pilot episode, *Partners*, where the same scene about disorders inside a Chinese restaurant is narrated differently. The Francophone original[16] proposes the heroes of the serial, Nick and Ben, intervening to sedate the argument. Finding two Chinese individuals – a man and a woman – apparently unable to speak or understand French, the cops use English to communicate with them. However, these latter individuals continue nervously gesturing and shouting in Chinese, accusing the cook (who is in the kitchen) of theft. The young woman secondarily seems to understand English and, in turn, acts as a mediator among the Francophone patrols and the elder Chinese-speaking man. On a visual level, the whole situation is implemented via the insertion of French subtitles translating police officer's English sentences but leaving unfold the meaning of the man's shouts in Chinese, given the «consecutive translation» operated by the woman. There, the linguistic representation mirrors cultural issues on integration. Through the exemplified sequence, the Quebecois society is once

---

[16] *Dixneuf-Deux*, season one, episode one (*Télévision de Radio-Canada*, Feb. 1st, 2011), 09:22-11:03.

more imag(in)ed as an enclosed strictly Francophone community where immigrants struggle to be assimilated. The old Chinese man is tightly connected to the representation of the traditional and stubborn (also loud) Asian *cliché* cut out from the surrounding social life, while the younger woman – who is able to speak English and mediate between the target and the source languages – is identifiable with the educated new generations exploring the outer world set beyond their cultural barriers (although displaying a stubborn, loud and naive character as well).

On the contrary, the Anglophone adaptation[17] subverts the rendition. Here, Nick and Ben are, in fact, native English-speakers, thus they simply maintain their communicative code when dealing with the restaurant owners, preliminarily deleting the first narrative *stratum* differentiating the three linguistic and contextual channels inclusive of French, English and Chinese as in *Dixneuf-Deux*. Moreover, the abolition of French does not come alone. The Chinese man interacting with patrols in this sequence speaks Chinglish, hence his code is not anymore to be considered as a mediating one, but it has to be considered as a recognized variety of English that all the characters present on the scene (and spectators as well) are able to understand, even though connoted with a slight estrangement fashion. At that extent, subtitle support vanishes like French. On the visual representative level, the linguistic modifications carry as many cultural changes. *Nineteen-Two* also inverts gender connotation. The differentiation between the Chinese man and woman is flattened middle-age, yet the male character is, here, the one that interacts with cops using Chinglish. The woman shouts in Chinese, yet this time the Asian language is not self-marginalizing; on the contrary, it is used to express the female character's uncontrolled passionate concern (she gives the impression of understanding Nick and Ben even if talking to them in a different language). In *Nineteen-Two*, like

---

[17] *Nineteen-Two*, season one, episode one (*Bravo!*, January 29, 2014), 09:35-11:32.

in its Francophone relative, immigrants are still depicted as caricatures, but they also appear as an integral part of the social web they inhabit, shaping an Anglophone inclusive context that rigidly faces its Francophone and more 'hostile' commensurate place.

Notwithstanding the cultural connotation, it is also clear that television – as a medium – has its own peculiar modes of communication to be dealt with and that stretch beyond the sole linguistic aspects. One crucial issue is, indeed, represented by the examination of the narrative and descriptive modalities presenting Montreal (and eventually Quebec) on the visual and possibly ideological levels in the analyzed serials. It is evident that the Quebecois perspective of *Dixneuf-Deux* promptly reproduces and transmits the florid Francophone milieu of both the city and Province through the verbal level above all. Nevertheless, the transcodification operated in *Nineteen-Two* via the complete transposition of original dialogues into English within the format remake shatters this immediacy. Through the erasure of the French language, the only markers revealing the bonds between the serial and its cultural and geographic settings are represented by clear references and visually iconic signals. Therefore, as said, the Anglophone product renounces any French iterations but it cannot avoid toponymic mentions either. The list of street and place names referred to throughout the four seasons of *Nineteen-Two* (2014-2017) is quite dense, because of the police procedural slant of the cinematic product. As a matter of fact, the narration of the series presupposes the showing of in-action cops that are required to intervene on the scene to resolve criminal violations and felonies (ranging from the fraudulent 911 call to assault and homicide, and from Amber alerts and APBs to paedophilia). Hence, patrols are often displayed while beating the streets onboard their RMP cars (mostly the *19-2* one, of course)[18]

---

[18] Indeed, it is worth noting that the TV serial title, *19-2*, is a terminological cypher denoting the code assigned to the car or the two main protagonists of the show – Nick and Ben –, where '19' stands for a police precinct located in a precise area of the city, and '2' determines the second vehicle out of the fleet at

and being updated by dispatcher communications indicating the type of crime determined and its meaningful location. Accordingly, the explicitation of toponyms encompassing the whole city – although mainly concentrating downtown – gives birth to a huge quantity of Francophone names that could hardly be associated with any other Canadian place different from Quebec. This verbal dimension is, then, flanked by other salient frames characterized by identifying markers disposed all over the scenes for contextualization needs. As a consequence, camera techniques alternating close-shots on dialogue participants to wide shots or cut-ins of types of furniture, stationery items and other tools reveal even more pieces of information. The sequences filmed inside the police precinct and public offices always carefully show the *fleur-de-lis* flag representative of the Province of Quebec.[19] Along with the banner, law enforcement offices are also furnished with tables and maps of the city of Montreal, pointing out more precisely the geographic pertinence of the serial, together with further details like the Canadian maple leaf stamp glued onto many envelops or some newspapers displaying the 'Montreal' capital title. Besides those hints of *francization*, other signals marking out the localization of *19-2* consist of the actual glimpse of the urban context and panoramas. An exemplary case is, once more, the pilot episode of both the Francophone and the Anglophone versions, respectively characterizing their subsequent plot developments and seasons.

By the first fifteen minutes of the instalment Ben, who has just joined precinct 19 team, hangs out with Tyler at the end of their shift and this latter colleague declares to the newcomer his will to introduce him to the most important lady of his life, that he calls

---

disposal of law enforcement station. Other recurring numbers are 19-4, which is the vehicle often assigned to Beatrice/Bérengère and Tyler, and 19-7, which is the one that J.M. frequently rides solo or seldom in duo with Audrey or a rookie agent.

[19] However, despite the presence of Quebec's provincial banner, the Canadian 'maple leaf' flag that should be there as well by law is always remarkably missing.

«ma femme» (fr.) / «my wife» (en.). This very lady is Montreal. Therefore, Tyler drives Ben uphill, in front of the panorama of the entire city, in order to show him its beauty. On the one hand, in *Dixneuf-Deux* the dialogue lasts about two minutes (12:48-14:46), where close shots onto the speakers are juxtaposed to wide shots framing them on a bench while having a view down to the capital. There, at a distance, in adherence to Montreal's structure in 2011, the scene is quite dark with only sparse lights from the streets and the houses underneath. Silence dominates the whole narration (except for the dialogues), infusing into the spectators an inner feeling of peace via some sort of bucolic rendition of the urban area. On the other hand, *Nineteen-Two* recreates that scenario with the same characters (although only Tyler's actor is kept) and poetic view over the city. Notwithstanding the similar aim, however, 2014 Montreal looks different. The bucolic – countryside style – area has developed and the city is now a metropolis brimful of bright skyscrapers (like CIBC Tower, De la Gauchètiere Tower, and the Tour McGill), where the initial sombre and sadly naive place where sparkles of goodness used to struggle but survived is overwhelmed by a gigantic, shiny and fascinating context (possibly influenced by US narrative tendencies) and vices representing just a small price to pay for progress, with no more room for grimness or romanticism either. Here, lights are everywhere, and the few lamps visible in the Francophone original are supplanted by multicolour glitters and enormous spotlights sliding in the enlivened night-time sky. The representations of this crowded and busy place – where silence has long been hushed by rumbles and screeches, and horns and sirens – does not focus on the psychological dimension of contemplation, transforming the Province into a different entity from before.

If some interesting differences can be retrieved within the *19-2* TV serial narrations and plot developments, one as much relevant feature characterizing these products is their respective presentation introduction correlated by a theme song and (usually) anticipating charming hints about the topics encountered in

the televised show to its spectators. Both *19-2* versions preserve
the same intriguing soundtrack of acute slow tempo string instru-
ment notes implemented by deeper and faster beats on the back-
ground. Contrariwise, the images displayed in the introduction
diverge. Where *Dixneuf-Deux* contents have been described as
highly evocative of the Quebecois atmosphere mostly through
the Francophone linguistic code branding its communicative
and interactive events accompanied by the aforementioned vi-
sual details contextualizing the show, the 2011-2015 TV serial
fails to emulate the same achievement in its introduction. This
presentation lasts about thirty seconds and its style is quite asep-
tic, with a candid white background where a limited number of
static frames merely shows police equipment items while sparse
credits appear. In order, the viewer is administered a few sec-
onds of the light police logo sewed onto the uniform sleeve at the
height of the shoulder, Nick and Ben's tags, a pair of shiny steel
handcuffs – then the theme narration changes into darker objects
standing out the bright background –, a radio microphone and
baton, then the introduction speeds up onto a black gun frame
(placed vertically onto the support surface, holding up on the tips
of magazine, barrel, and trigger guard) cut into the boots display,
and a final oblique upside-down «police» capital-word patch.
After that, a closing «19-2» title frame – with the «19» numbers
written in black and the «-2» part in azure (in the same style of
credit titles appearing along with the images) – ends the presen-
tation. As said, music is intensely catchy, and the minimalistic
montage is also worthy. Nonetheless, besides the iconicity of the
tools shown, it is only clear that the spectator is approaching a
television Crime Drama, but its actual nationality and cultural
thesaurus are not appreciable at all. The absence of a proper back-
ground and a visible support surface, as much as of a realistic en-
vironment, displaces the product in a non-localizable space. The
original one could, thus, be the casual introduction of any show
dealing with crime all over the world, and the tag names – Berrof
and Chartier – are not symptomatic for any identification process.

The only element that could narrow down the geographic collocability of the *Dixneuf-Deux* serial (once more, in both the French and English versions the title is solely numeric and has just been spelled out in this paper to avoid potential misunderstandings) is the initial police logo reporting the wording «Police – Service métropolitain», plausibly ascribable to the Francophone milieu, but, still, there would be no further clues establishing a more accurate and precise provenance.

Oppositely, *Nineteen-Two* opts again for the utter subversion of the initial narrative schemata. The 2014-2017 serial introduction maintains the same soundtrack and duration but turns the original bright background into a thick black one constantly gliding over the Montreal skyline standing out in a filtered play of shadows. Here, law enforcement gears are also present, although they do not have monopolistic control of the expressive situation as in its Francophone negative. The presentation, indeed, holds the not-stationary Montreal diaphanous black background when Nick and Ben appear while driving their RMP to patrol the streets on the foreground with the identical shady technique of the beginning. Then, a dolly camera shot widens the view onto some CGI eagles flying over the stitches of a wound that, at a distance, even reminds of a railway, to only fade in a split frame where the lighter bottom side contrasts with the darker top made of the ubiquitous skyline projected onto the barrel of an armed gun and a finger ready to trigger it. After that, the montage fades again in black, where the naked back of a woman being caressed by a manly hand vanishes – in order – into a sequence showing the close-up unclear silhouette of an officer sitting at his desk, some shattered glass, and Nick crouched on the bench of a locker-room followed by two hands carrying bullets in their palms. A sudden deer frame leads to Ben's image in the locker-room as well as Nick's previous one, always maintaining hints of the Montreal urban panorama randomly sparkling. The original final frame of the TV serial title is re-proposed here. However, «19-2» stands huge and lighter (but not actually white), projected on the bul-

letproof vest of an agent turned back and framed via a tracking close shot while walking. Coherently with the subverting aim explained above, as *Dixneuf-Deux* reveals its French slant in the episodes but not in the introduction, *Nineteen-Two* is less faithful in terms of Quebecois contextualization within its instalments but displays a clear Canadianness goal through the presentation. Together with the rating system label expressing age restriction (+14) by means of a logo shaping the classic maple leaf contour, the Montreal skyline is the irrevocable element of the Anglophone theme. Yet the urban ground is alternated to other visual perspectives like the Canadian wilderness represented by the deer (associated to Ben) and the psychological-to-noir style counterpoised to the merely descriptive police procedural one of the original version. In line with the Film Industry and market, the *Nineteen-Two* product feels the grip of the North American narrative influence nevertheless.[20] A similar contingency is perceivable in the introduction as well via the observation of the 'stitches frame', where two bald eagles (a famous and universally acknowledged USA symbol) unfurl their wings and glide over the CGI scenario.

Considering what has been examined so far, the two versions of the *19-2* TV serial – the source and its adaptation – appear unexpectedly different under many significant and characterizing aspects, determining their own points of strength as much as some weaknesses, respectively identifying the narrative, linguistic and cultural peculiarities of each of the two televised products and their coherence with the actual traits of the environment they aimed at mirroring on-screen.

---

[20] It is worth noting that the Canadian channel *Bravo!* (currently owned by Bell Media) was launched in 1995 by CHUM Limited, flanking the homonymous *NBC Universal* (USA) original broadcaster born in 1980. Nonetheless, while the US network was characterized by a reality focus, the Canadian one established an evident orientation to fiction and dramatized contents since its first light, as required by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunication Commission (CRTC) demands.

Conclusions

Analyzing television products under the classifying lenses of nationalism, every producer, broadcaster and politically determined commissions would emphasize the recognizability of its branded shows on-screen via some highly emblematic and immediately evocative features. Over the years, the Canadian television policy has tended to encourage TV transmissions to involve huge percentages of national, purely Canadian contents through dedicated «Cancon programs»[21] contributing to portraying the ideological, social, cultural and linguistic identity of the territory, aiding the medium to form and forge its citizens' communal consciousness, or better Canadianness. Although, as explained by the American sociologist Benedict Anderson in the early 1980s:

> What appeared in most of the scholarly writings as Machiavellian hocus-pocus, or as bourgeois fantasy, or as disinterred historical truth, struck me now as deeper and more interesting. Supposing 'antiquity' were, at a certain historical juncture, the necessary consequence of 'novelty'? If nationalism was, as I supposed it, the expression of a radically changed form of consciousness, should not awareness of that break, and the necessary forgetting of the older consciousness, create its own narrative? Seen from this perspective, the atavistic fantasizing characteristic of most nationalist […] appears an epiphenomenon; what is really important is the structural alignment of […] 'memory' with the inner premises and conventions of modern biography and autobiography.[22]

As a matter of fact, it appears evident that the simplistic mental patterns of humanity operate via a minimalistic effort reducing neuronal associations to direct univocal relationships that facilitate the inferential processes. Consequently, the mediatic narrative perspective funnelling recounts aplenty through stereotyped recurring models inevitably originates bogus representation (or, as Anderson would say, 'imagined communities'). These fake repre-

---

[21] S. Gittins, *CTV: The Television Wars*, Stoddart, Toronto 1999, p. 95.

[22] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* [1983], Verso, London-New York 2006, p. XIV.

sentations of the world feed TV-viewers with *clichés* that create artificial expectations and (sometimes) doctored mystifications on the reality that they, however, expect to detect in real-life situations. Considering a similar examination, it is clear that the television products (at least those pertaining to the dramatized genres) are not faithful chronicles but fictional reflections of societies.

The case study observed in this paper has involved the survey of some adaptation strategies employed for the up-to-date re-creation of an original material to be redesigned for a new and different – also potentially broader – audience. The *19-2* TV serial, a contemporary Canadian Crime Drama, was born as a Francophone police procedural meant to propose some winsome criminal stories sketching out a Quebecois televised reflection of Canada within the Montreal context. Yet, its Canadian-English subsequent reboot subtly eradicated the entire identity of the format through a simple and prompt linguistic turnover simultaneously modifying the cultural, social, and ideological implications related to the original communicative code. If one assumed as valuable the position according to which these products are mere and imaginary representations only capable of entertaining their end-users but void of any other meaning, then a similar alteration could just have been considered legitimate. The abstract connoted nature of television shows would then allow any creative operation modifying former realistic intents. However, it is worth noting that despite the standardized modes abusing recurring characters and impressions, TV products – and, in this case, *19-2* – do act as projections of enclosed and actual communities, whose pros and cons can be allegorized (not parodied) on-screen. The *Nineteen-Two* adaptation of *Dixneuf-Deux*, via its overbearing imposition of the English codes and cultures supplanting the original perspective, not only jeopardized the Quebecois attributability of the product but also irreparably harmed the quintessential nature of the serial by means of a stone-cold and despotic process of Anglo-phony-sation cancelling Francophonie from a uchronic only-English-speaking Canada.

In addition to that, the devouring attitude of this adaptation served as catalyst for the complete deletion of the French-speaking original from any physical as much as abstract supports, whereas any users interested in browsing and purchasing either of the TV serials described in this paper and typing «19-2» on the Internet are destined to merely access news on the English version. The sole way to retrieve tiny pieces of information on the Francophone source is, in fact, spelling out the title number into letters and gather the only few links available about an interesting show utterly annihilated by its translation in less than half-decade.

Hence, to conclude, re-thinking the very title of this study, an open finale is proposed here for further examinations, whether opting for a Montreal *reboot* or, perhaps, a more proper *rebuttal*.

References

ALIAS, S., *A Semiotic Study of Singapore's Orchard Road and Marriott Hotel*, in K.L. O'Halloran (ed.), *Multimodal Discourse Analysis. Systemic Functional Perspectives*, Continuum, London-New York 2004, pp. 55-81.

ANDERSON, B., *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* [1983], Verso, London-New York 2006; available at URL: https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/jaro2016/SOC757/um/61816961/Benedict_Anderson_Imagined_Communities.pdf (accessed July 28, 2020).

BEHIELS, M.D., HUDON, R., *Bill 101: charte de la langue française*, «The Canadian Encyclopedia», August 18, 2015 [July 31, 2013]; available at URL: https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/bill-101 (accessed July 22, 2020).

BRENDAN, K., *English Version of Quebec Cop Show* 19-2 *Being Made for CBC*, «Montreal Gazette», August 22, 2012; available at URL: https://montrealgazette.com/entertainment/english-version-of-quebec-cop-show-19-2-being-made-for-cbc (accessed July 18, 2020).

British North America Act, 1867, available at URL: http://
    www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/30-31/3 (accessed July 22,
    2020).

Brow, J.D., Stern, S.R., *Mass Media and Adolescent Female
    Sexuality*, in G.M. Wingood, R.J. Di Clemente (eds.), *Hand-
    book of Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health*, Springer
    Science-Business Media, New York 2002, pp. 93-112.

Carpenter, L., *Montreal Cop Show* 19-2 *Pulls No Punches*, «Cult
    MTL», February 7, 2016; available at URL: https://cultmtl.
    com/2016/02/montreal-police-tv-show-19-2/ (accessed July 7,
    2020).

Charter of the French Language, *Légis Québec*; available at
    URL: http://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/showdoc/cs/C-
    11 (accessed July 22, 2020).

Gerbner, G., *Science on Television: How It Affects Public Con-
    ceptions*, «Issues in Science and Technology», 3/3 (1987), pp.
    109-115.

Gittins, S., *CTV: The Television Wars*, Stoddart, Toronto 1999.

Hutcheon, L., *A Theory of Adaptation*, Routledge, New York-
    London 2006.

Laframboise, K., *How Quebec's Bill 101 Still Shapes Immigrant
    and Anglo Students 40 Years Later*, «CBC», August 26, 2017;
    available at URL: https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/
    quebec-bill-101-40th-anniversary-1.4263253 (accessed July
    22, 2020).

Profile 2018: Economic Report on the Screen-Based
    Media Production Industry in Canada, Canadian Media
    Producers Association - Department of Canadian Heritage -
    Telefilm Canada - Association québécoise de la production
    médiatique; available at URL: https://cmpa.ca/wp-content/
    uploads/2019/03/Profile-2018.pdf (accessed July 24, 2020).

Siefkes, M., *How Semiotic Modes Work Together in Multimod-
    al Texts: Defining and Representing Intermodal Relations*,
    «10plus1 – Living Linguistics», 1 (2015), pp. 113-131.

SIEFKES, M., ARIELLI, E., *The Aesthetics and Multimodality of Style: Experimental Research on the Edge of Theory*, Peter Lang, Berlin-New York 2018.

WILLIAMS, R., *Television. Technology and Cultural Form* (1974), Routledge, London 2003.

TV SERIALS

BOSSÉ, R., LEGAULT, C., *19-2*, season one, Sociéte Radio-Canada, Canada 2011.

SMITH, B.M., *19-2*, season one, Sphere Media Plus-Echo Media-Bell Media, Canada 2014.

New Discourses of Canadianness in *Anne with an E*

Anna Mongibello

Università degli Studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale'

Introduction

It was 1908 when a young woman from the north shore of Prince Edward Island, named Lucy Maud Montgomery, published *Anne of Green Gables*,[1] a book that was bound to become a Canadian classic and surely one of the most popular Canadian novels written in English that ever existed. Set in late 19th-century Avonlea, a fictional town on Prince Edward Island (PEI), inspired by the farming communities of Cavendish, New Glasgow and New London where Montgomery actually lived, the novel features Anne Shirley, an eleven-year-old orphan, whose optimism and imagination soon turned her into a Canadian icon, «with the moose, the beaver and the Mountie».[2] Since 1908, the book has been translated into thirty languages and sold a tremendous number of copies, more than fifty millions around the globe. In Japan, the Canadian classic, published under the title of *Akage no an*, is studied in schools to learn about West-

---

[1] L.M. Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*, Page & Co., Boston 1908.

[2] T. Sheckels, *Anne in Hollywood: The Americanization of a Canadian Icon*, in I. Gammel, E. Epperly, *L.M. Montgomery and Canadian Culture*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1999, p. 184.

ern culture,[3] and it is so rooted into the local culture that in the 1990s the city of Ashibetsu became a perfect replica of Avonlea, hosting a theme park, Canadian World, now abandoned.

Followed by its seven sequels, *Anne of Green Gables* has also given rise to an endless number of different adaptations, from movies, plays and musicals, to cartoons and TV series, which have ultimately contributed to perpetuate its fame while also testifying to its persistence as a modern story. So much so that in 2016 the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), together with the Toronto-based production company North-wood Entertainment, financed another reworking of the original novel, initially titled *Anne* and then *Anne with an E*, later distributed by the American media services provider Netflix. The series premiered on CBC on March 19, 2017 and on Netflix on May 12, 2017. The new adaptation effort was signed by the Emmy-award winning writer Moira Walley-Becket, known to the most for the much-acclaimed series *Breaking Bad*, along with a team of international experts. Contrary to previous movies and TV adaptations, the script, throughout its three seasons, takes unexplored directions, with additional characters being included into the plot and significant alterations to the original story. This study intends to explore *Anne with an E* from a linguistic point of view, in a discursive perspective, by looking at the Netflix series as an adaptation work that is also ideological in that it reinforces the contemporary, multicultural, Canadian national identity and produces new discourses about Canada. The analysis will concentrate on some aspects of season two, that premiered on CBC and Netflix in 2018.

---

    [3] D. Allard, *Reader Reception of* Anne of Green Gables *in Japan*, «CREArTA», 5 (2005), pp. 97-111.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The present study moves from a conceptualization of television as the most powerful tool of «national» images.[4] More specifically, we consider TV series as popular cultural products that are ideologically produced within specific historic and cultural contexts. The notion of ideology has been widely studied from a variety of perspectives. In the present study what we embrace is a definition of ideology coming from Roger Fowler's studies which has to do with values, perspectives, power, assumptions and beliefs.[5] Therefore, the implication is that TV series have to do with expressing perspectives, beliefs and assumptions. At the same time, and consistently, we see TV series (and the media as well) as sophisticated narrative devices that can create discourses that carry ideologies.[6] Such discourses produce and reproduce social realities in ways that can shape, hijack and influence both national cultures and public opinions. Therefore, if we assume with Stuart Hall that «national cultures construct identities by producing meanings about 'the nation'»,[7] it stands out clear how TV series and nation building processes are connected at multiple levels.

The role that the media play, in general, in nation building processes has already been investigated by Chris Barker,[8] Philip

---

[4] E. Castelló, *The Production of Television Fiction and Nation Building: The Catalan Case*, «European Journal of Communication», 22 (2007), pp. 46-98.

[5] R. Fowler, *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press*, Routledge, London 1991.

[6] M. Bednarek, *Corpus-Assisted Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Television and Film Narratives*, in P. Baker, T. McEnery (eds.), *Corpora and Discourse Studies*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke-New York 2015, pp. 63-87.

[7] S. Hall, *The Question of Cultural Identity*, in S. Hall, D. Held, D. Hubert, K. Thompson (eds.), *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*, Blackwell, Malden-Oxford 1996, p. 613.

[8] C. Barker, *Television, Globalization and Cultural Identities*, Open University Press, Buckingham 1999.

Schlesinger[9] and many others, who have first identified the intersections of cultures, identities and television representations as vehicles to promote power ideologies, standardized national languages and officially accepted views of national identities. However, as Anderson and Chakars maintain,[10] television programs in general could also be sites of contest and challenge, that undermine those representations of reality and ideologies in power. What is of interest to us, in this context, is that television programs, television series or, as Monika Bednarek proposes to call them, «digital series»,[11] a term that includes both traditional TV series and newly developed series broadcast on streaming platforms, do hide ideologies and counter-ideologies that speak to and of the nation.

Canada is not new to such mechanisms. Let us not forget that the very history of Canadian broadcasting intertwined with the government's aim to make communication the channel through which an ideal national identity or a crafted sense of «Canadianness» could be built and promoted. In fact, the intent of the government in 1949, when a policy for television development was approved, was to create a «technologically mediated nation»,[12] against the Americanization of Canada, and to build a national identity that would be distinct from the American one. Beaty and Sullivan note that there was a circulating idea of broadcasting as a federal initiative for the creation and maintenance of a shared sense of national unity.[13] According to Maurice Charland, the es-

---

[9] P. Schlesinger, *Media, State and Nation: Political Violence and Collective Identities*, Sage, London 1991.

[10] S. Anderson, M. Chakars (eds.), *Modernization, Nation-Building, and Television History*, Routledge, New York 2015.

[11] M. Bednarek, *Corpus-Assisted Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Television and Film Narratives*, p. 66.

[12] M. Charland, *Technological Nationalism*, «Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory / Revue canadienne de théorie politique et sociale», 10 (1986), p. 197 (1-2).

[13] B. Beaty, R. Sullivan, *Canadian Television Today*, University of Calgary Press, Calgary 2006.

tablishment of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), for instance, is part of a Canadian technological nationalism, which ascribes to technology the capacity to create the nation by enhancing communication.[14] In this sense, CBC has allowed the circulation of a discourse that seeks to construe a «Canadian national identity», whose rhetorical effect is that it calls a particular myth of Canada into being.

Turning to our case study, the first aim of this paper is to investigate CBC produced show *Anne with an E* as a cultural product providing a representation of Canada as a multicultural nation and, at the same time contributing to the construction of some discourses of Canadianness that are consistent with this representation. What is meaningful to us is that the show is not a brand-new product, but it is the result of a process of adaptation. Borrowing from Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation,[15] it can be stated that *Anne with an E* is an announced and extensive transposition of *Anne of Green Gables*, transcoded into a Netflix series for worldwide online streaming. In this sense, shifts in discourses, as well as the activation of potential, un(der)explored contents, part of which already existed in the original, will be detected and provide further evidence of how the original has been widely appropriated. In advancing such hypotheses, we draw from Straubhaar's concept of «cultural proximity».[16] According to the scholar, a remake of a work usually necessitates some reformation and editing to develop a closer cultural proximity to the host country. In our case, the cultural proximity created by the producers of the show is also diachronic rather than being merely diatopic, since its final product wishes to speak to a more contemporary and potentially global public. In advancing such

---

[14] M. Charland, *Technological Nationalism*, p. 197.

[15] L. Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, Routledge, New York-London 2006.

[16] J.D. Straubhaar, *Beyond Media Imperialism: Assymetrical Interdependence and Cultural Proximity*, «Critical Studies in Mass Communication», 8 (1991), pp. 39-59.

premises, we want to push Straubhaar's theory forward, by show-
ing how cultural proximity is an ideological process that involves
the construction of new meanings aiming at providing a given
representation of reality, not simply to meet the show's new tar-
get audience, but also to shape it.

Recent critical attention has been paid to the multilayered dis-
cursive dimension of TV series. Suffice it to mention the studies
conducted by Bednarek[17] and Richardson,[18] who have analyzed
TV series as multimodal narratives involving semiotic modes
other than language, including language.[19] While these products
call for a multimodal approach that aims at investigating the
diverse semiotic modes of expression as well as at seeing how
they interact to make meaning, for space constraints we will here
focus on the linguistic construction of characters. In so doing,
we maintain that linguistic forms are not transparent and univer-
sally understood but culturally specific and meant to represent
(i.e. build) rather than reflect (i.e. mirror) social realities in the
form of discourses. As we decided to concentrate on the reali-
zation of characters, in this context we want to offer a study of
characterization, as «the way characters are construed through
linguistic and other resources».[20] In introducing the concept of
characterization, we draw from Jonathan Culpeper's cognitive
linguistic model,[21] that can be applied in the analysis of a diverse
range of characters. While Culpeper is concerned with both the
narrative construction of characters and how they are perceived

---

[17] M. Bednarek, *The Language of Fictional Television: Drama and Iden-
tity*, Continuum, London-New York 2010; M. Bednarek, *Construing 'Nerdi-
ness': Characterisation in* The Big Bang Theory, «Multilingua», 31 (2012),
pp. 199-229.

[18] K. Richardson, *Television Dramatic Dialogue: A Sociolinguistic Study*,
Oxford University Press, Oxford 2010.

[19] M. Bednarek, *Corpus-Assisted Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Televi-
sion and Film Narratives*.

[20] M. Bednarek, *Construing 'Nerdiness'*, p. 199.

[21] J. Culpeper, *Language and Characterisation: People in Plays and Other
Texts*, Longman, Harlow 2014.

by the readers/viewers, we align with Bednarek's approach in focusing on the linguistic choices attributed to characters and on how they concur in the construction of character identities, since «the category of character is, for its very formation, dependent on linguistic forms».[22]

Due to our interest in the linguistic/discursive construction of characters, our analysis is corpus-driven and makes use of two specifically designed corpora, the BASH_CORPUS (6,318 tokens) and the AWAE_CORPUS (166,177 tokens), the latter being used as a reference corpus. Both corpora comprise transcribed episodes from season two. The software program for corpus interrogation AntConc was chosen. The analysis is both quantitative and qualitative. In fact, the framework herein employed for retrieving data and making sense of the findings combines Critical Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics.[23] Therefore, raw frequencies and statistically significant lexical patterns in the corpora under investigation were considered. The investigation was also informed by notions of keyness. Keyness refers to the level of significance of higher or lower frequencies (keywords). Keyness values were generated automatically based on log-likelihood calculations.

Multicultural Avonlea

In her seminal, already-mentioned, study on adaptation, Linda Hutcheon maintains that adaptations are palimpsestuous recreations.[24] The statement triggers at least two considerations. First of all, it implies a process of re-interpretation of the original; and

---

[22] W. van Peer, *The Taming of the Text: Explorations in Language, Literature and Culture*, Routledge, London 1988, p. 9.

[23] See R. Wodak, M. Meyer, *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, Sage, London 2001; N. Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, London, Longman 1995.

[24] L. Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, p. 6.

second of all, it suggests that adaptation works are multilayered in nature, since they present the audiences with multiple layers of meanings that potentially exist in the original and are re-activated in the transposed work. Which bundles of meanings are to be re-activated is a decision made by the adaptors on the basis of the cultural ground where the newly text is about to land and, consequently, in consideration of those who are going to experience it. Therefore, the process of meaning re-activation cannot but be influenced by ideological purposes, either consciously or unconsciously, on the side of the decision-makers. This is mainly because we cannot escape discourse but we do live embedded into discursive threads. In advancing such an hypothesis, what we are implicitly stating is that adaptation is an ideologically-driven process. As Hassler-Forest and Nicklas suggest in their introduction to *The Politics of Adaptation*, «any adapted text must by necessity also involve the repurposing of ideas that implicitly or explicitly articulate a sense of political engagement».[25]

While adapting *Anne of Green Gables* for the contemporary global audience, creator and show-runner Moira Walley-Beckett affirmed that when she first conceived *Anne with an E*, she was troubled «by the lack of diversity in the book, especially since Canada is such a diverse nation, both then and now».[26] Her concerns moved from a discrepancy between an understanding of the book as a Canadian classic, on the one hand, and the urgency to drag it closer to the contemporary audience on the other, while also providing a representation of Canada that was consistent with her (and the public's) expectations. Her political engagement results into a significant ideological shift emerging from the adaptation work, since a new character from Trinidad, Sebastian Lacroix (then called Bash), is introduced in season two.

---

[25] D. Hassler-Forest, P. Nicklas, *The Politics of Adaptation: Media Convergence and Ideology*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2015, p. 1.

[26] E. Vlessing, Anne of Green Gables *Gets First Black Character in Netflix Reboot*, «The Hollywood Reporter», July 3, 2018.

What we want to argue at this stage is that the politics behind her adaptation engage with current debates on multiculturalism, race and identity in Canada. In fact, the presence of Sebastian/Bash is not merely a marginal alteration to the original story, but represents an ideological turn in that the originally (almost) all-white world of Avonlea (and its surroundings) is updated to a multicultural reality. In this sense, the addition of Sebastian/Bash to the story signifies the outburst of cultural diversity into an otherwise all white Canadian universe and the rise of instances of racism as well as issues concerning adaptation and integration. As we will see, Sebastian/Bash's presence also allows one of the main characters, Gilbert Blythe, Anna's beloved and hated classmate, to travel into the turn of the 19th-century colonial space, thus acknowledging Canada's colonial past (and multicultural present).

Sebastian/Bash in Walley-Beckett's adaptation is a manual laborer, played by Toronto based actor Dalmar Abuzeid, famous for starring in the TV show *Degrassi*. He acts as a Trinidadian stoking coal in the engine of a steamship with Gilbert, who had left his home town to explore the world and figure out his future. Sebastian/Bash has a high ideological function in that he is the first major black character to be introduced into Green Gables' world. However, he supposedly activates some remote potential already existing in *Anne of the Island*, the 1915 sequel to *Anne of Green Gables*, where Pacifique Buote, a hired man working for Gilbert Blythe's aunt, features a short passage in the novel. As we will see, Pacifique is described in the 1915 novel as «a brown, round, black-eyed face»,[27] speaking a very broken English. In her attempt to re-create cultural proximity to the contemporary audience, Walley-Beckett ends up producing an updated version of Canadianness, construed at the level of discourse by means of specific strategies of characterization.

---

[27] L.M. Montgomery, *Anne of the Island*, Page & Co., Boston 1915, p. 319.

Corpus design

According to Culpeper, the words in a text create a particular impression of a character, by means of what the scholar calls «textual cues», i.e. textual features that give rise to information about a character in a particular context. Culpeper distinguishes between explicit characterization cues, when the characters present themselves through explicit statements, and implicit characterization cues, when character information is retrieved from linguistic behavior. Implicit information about a character can be derived by inference on the basis of our assumptions with regard to conversational, lexical, grammatical, paralinguistic, non-verbal and contextual features, including accent and dialect.

In analyzing Sebastian/Bash's language, we will focus on the latter, in that accent variations are stereotypically associated with identity traits marked by often stigmatized spelling, grammar and lexis features of non-standard English. Our hypothesis is that the ideological shift in this adaptation of *Anne of Green Gables* towards a representation of Canada as a multicultural land, and therefore, the cultural proximity produced by certain additions to the plot, are both realized by means of implicit textual cues in the characterization of Sebastian/Bash. Such cues, at the linguistic level, signal Sebastian/Bash's otherness compared to other characters' and trigger a multicultural discourse within a quintessentially Canadian classic. What we want to unveil is how such otherness is construed linguistically, also taking into account the pressure of language ideologies, seen here as «representations, whether explicit or implicit, that construe the intersection of language and human beings».[28]

In order to do so, we have designed and assembled a corpus of 166,177 tokens named AWAE_CORPUS, comprising 10 transcribed episodes from season two aired in 2018, for a total running

---

[28] K.A. Woolard, *Language Ideology as a Field of Inquiry*, in B. Schieffelin, K. Woolard, P. Kroskrity (eds.), *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1998, pp. 3-47.

time of 44 hours, with an average running time of 44 minutes for each episode.

A sub-corpus of 6,318 tokens extracted manually and named BASH_CORPUS was also compiled. This corpus contains Sebastian/Bash's statements only, from all 10 episodes of season two, extracted manually from the main corpus. Although the corpus is not annotated with specific pronunciation features, the use of contracted forms and non-standard choices is reported.

Since Netflix does not allow the download of subtitles, we compared an initial set of transcriptions retrieved from the subtitling platform Opensubtitles.org to the official Netflix subtitles appearing on screen. The plain text files were then uploaded to the software program for corpus analysis AntConc. Since the BASH_CORPUS is not annotated with pronunciation features, we have integrated the investigation of the character's construal with a qualitative approach, i.e. an observation of selected frames featuring Sebastian/Bash, and have therefore combined corpus investigation with audiovisual analysis in order to grasp features of pronunciation and intonation in the character's talk, including prosodic features such as pitch movements and end-stress. Quantitative analyses across the whole corpus are combined with close examinations of contexts of use and meanings.

The analysis of Bash's talk

What we noticed by means of a general observation of the AWAE_CORPUS is that Sebastian/Bash's talk differs significantly from the other characters'. He seems, in fact, to be characterized by implicit features of what Richard and Jeannette Allsopp refer to as «Creolized English» in the *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage*,[29] i.e. a form of spoken English «that has retained

---

[29] R. Allsopp, J. Allsopp (eds.), *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1996.

some obvious structural characteristics of Creole (language) while it develops more of the features of internationally accepted spoken English».[30]

Creolized English in the Caribbean is characterized by morphological and syntactic reductions of English structures, such as zero copula or unmarking of past reference verbs. It also presents some other features of decreolization which are widely differentiated according to social class and style within a continuum of sociolinguistic variation that includes Trinidadian Standard English on the one hand, and Trinidad English Creole, a combination of West Bantu languages, French, Caribbean French Creoles and Spanish,[31] on the other.

Sebastian/Bash's characterization is not merely linguistic but broadly multimodal because it is backed up by the character appearance and skin colour, and is stereotyped, since it draws on previous representations circulating in popular culture. As a matter of fact, the actor impersonating Sebastian/Bash is not of Trinidadian descent, which means that the regional accent was specifically targeted and is, ultimately, fake. However, it has been pointed out that non-standard varieties in fictional contexts are loaded with communicative and socio-semiotic meanings.[32] Therefore their recreations in audiovisual products are not meant to accurately portray the variety as it is spoken in real life, but to position the character's identity within the socio-cultural structure, while also making it visible and recognizable. Linguistic varieties in films and TV shows, as

---

[30] R. Allsopp, *The English Language in British Guyana*, «English Language Teaching», 12 (1958), p. 61.

[31] See L. Winer, *Trinidad and Tobago*, Benjamins, Amsterdam 1993, and D. Deuber, G.A. Leung, *Investigating Attitudes Towards an Emerging Standard of English: Evaluations of Newscasters' Accents in Trinidad*, «Multilingua», 32 (2013), pp. 289-319.

[32] R. Pinto, *Film, Dialects and Subtitles: An Analytical Framework for the Study of Non-standard Varieties in Subtitling*, «The Translator», 24/1 (2018), pp. 17-34.

Lippi-Green[33] maintains, have been widely used in order to construe interpersonal relationships and discursive situations, and to fulfil diegetic functions. For instance, they introduce realism, define relations of power and solidarity and contribute to special localization.[34] In our case, Sebastian/Bash's talk aims at indirectly depicting himself as other than white Canadian. It introduces an element of difference within the quite homogeneous sociolinguistic background of Avonlea, while also dislocating, linguistically and geographically, the setting from PEI to Trinidad and from Trinidad back to PEI. The aim is achieved by means of lexical, syntactical, morphological and phonetical choices affecting the pronunciation of words that comply with forms of Creolized English and Trinidad English Creole and therefore retain some linguistic element of estrangement.

As Deuber points out in *English in the Caribbean*, «what makes English in the Caribbean even more distinctive is the variation that arises as a result of the coexistence of Standard English with English based contact varieties»[35] in communities that present a high degree of variation in language use. More specifically, spoken English in Trinidad, described by Blouet as being «like no other Caribbean island»,[36] comprises creole-influenced varieties embedded in a continuum of sociolinguistic variation that is usually difficult to grasp. It has gone through centuries of linguistic contact between speakers of a variety of languages, including English, Spanish, French and the Arawakan and the Cariban languages, with French and French Creole being the lingua franca

---

[33] R. Lippi-Green, *English with an Accent: Language, Ideology and Discrimination in the United States*, Routledge, London 1997.

[34] R. Pinto, *Film, Dialects and Subtitles*.

[35] D. Deuber, *English in the Caribbean. Variation, Style and Standards in Jamaica and Trinidad*, Cambridge University Press, New York 2014, p. 2.

[36] O. Blouet, *The Caribbean*, in B.W. Blouet, O.M. Blouet (eds.), *Latin America and the Caribbean: A Systematic and Regional Survey*, Wiley, New York 2002, p. 352.

of the island until the mid-1900s.[37] Such a linguistic and cultural background intertwining with the history of English colonization, may explain why, in the construction of the character, the French-sounding name Sebastian Lacroix was chosen. When the British came into the picture, after winning control over the island in 1797, British English became the high standard variety, while Trinidad English Creole, emerging in the 19th century from such a mixture of languages and the input of English-derived language varieties introduced from the Barbados,[38] was the low variety associated with the black laboring underclass. Therefore it can be stated that, historically, Trinidad English Creole is usually perceived as connected with poverty, slavery and blackness and, overall classified as «broken English», although it has been argued that attitudes are changing in the Caribbean.[39] While negative attitudes were the norm in the 1970s, since the 1990s Trinidad English Creole has risen in prestige, also thanks to computer mediated communication that has facilitated the association of this variety with a new sociocultural group. In fact, Trinidad English Creole is now being used at school, as a medium of literary expression in written texts and by the media.[40] Today, it is the native language of the majority of the population, and a symbol of local cultural identity, while motivation towards pure Standard is disappearing.[41]

---

[37] J. Holm, *Pidgins and Creoles: Theory and Structure*, Cambridge University Press, New York 1988.

[38] L. Winer, *Early Trinidadian Creole: The «Spectator» Texts*, «English World-Wide», 5 (1984), pp. 181-210.

[39] Further discussion is provided by D. Craig, *The Use of the Vernacular in West Indian Education*, in H. Simmons-McDonald, I. Robertson (eds.), *Exploring the Boundaries of Caribbean Creole Languages*, University of the West Indies Press, Mona 2006, pp. 99-117.

[40] D. Deuber, *English in the Caribbean*.

[41] D. Deuber, *Standard English in the Secondary School in Trinidad: Problems, Properties, Prospects*, in T. Hoffmann, L. Siebers (eds.), *World Englishes: Problems, Properties and Prospects: Selected Papers from the 13th IAWE Conference*, Benjamins, Amsterdam 2009.

Creolized English and Trinidad English Creole differ from Standard English predictably in more than one way. Substantially, as emerges from the corpus-based study by Deuber,[42] conducted on the Trinidad and Tobago section of the ICE, for what concerns the grammar, Trinidad English Creole and Creolized English in the Caribbean are similar to other non-standard, creole-influenced, often classified as «broken» English varieties. For instance, both varieties do not make use of *do* to support questions nor they would present inversion in *wh*-questions.[43] The copular forms of *to be* are generally absent, as are the morphological indicators of past tenses and plural markers. The verb *to go* usually functions as an auxiliary verb marking future tenses. Also subject-verb agreement is usually avoided, as is the passive form of verbs. In general, number, case and gender are not morphologically marked, and tense marking is also marginal and optional. However, Trinidad English Creole in particular is distinguishable from other creoles by the words borrowed from Spanish, French, Chinese and Hindi,[44] so much so that this creole is not understood by the majority of Standard English native speakers.

Although it is not the purpose of the present study to provide an exhaustive description of all features associated with English in the Caribbean, we want to propose in *Table 1* a list of some combined, selected and salient grammatical characteristics of both Trinidad English Creole and Creolized English, reworked on the basis of the data collected by Deuber,[45] so as to ease the analysis of Sebastian/Bash's talk that will follow.

---

[42] D. Deuber, *English in the Caribbean*.

[43] D. Solomon, *The Speech of Trinidad: A Reference Grammar*, UWI School of Continuing Studies, St. Augustine 1993.

[44] M.C. Pang, *Aspects of Trinidadian Creole*, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver 1981.

[45] D. Deuber, *Standard English in the Secondary School in Trinidad*.

Table 1: Selected grammatical features of Trinidad
English Creole and Creolized English reworked from Deuber[46]

	TRINIDAD ENGLISH CREOLE CONSTRUCTION
VERB PHRASE	
Present tense, progressive aspect	∅ *ing*
Present tense, habitual aspect	*does*
Present tense, 3rd person singular	∅
Past tense	∅ or *did* V
Negation	*ain't*
Copula before adjectives	∅
NOUN PHRASE	
Plural	∅
3rd person singular feminine possessive pronoun	*she*
3rd person plural subject personal pronoun	*them*

One interesting instance is that related to stress and syllable timing. Trinidad English Creole speakers specifically, for instance, tend to have full vowels where English presents reduced forms, which implies that in this variety each syllable receives an equal amount of time and no syllable is reduced. Intonation is another aspect that is worth noticing. Intonation patterns, in fact, are very different from Standard English since they show some influences coming from African languages and their own intonation patterns. Rising is a noticeable trait common in Trinidad English Creole speakers, who opt for a question like rising intonation at the end of utterances as if they were asking questions.[47] The

---

[46] For more details, see D. Deuber, *Standard English in the Secondary School in Trinidad*, and W. James, V. Youssef, *The Creoles of Trinidad and Tobago: Morphology and Syntax*, in B. Kortmann, K. Burridge, R. Mesthrie, E.W. Schneider (eds.), *A Handbook of Varieties of English*, *Vol. 2: Morphology and Syntax*, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin 2005, pp. 454-481.

[47] Additional information regarding the phonological system of Trinidad English Creole can be garnered from L. Winer, *Trinidad and Tobago*.

above features, however, do not occur consistently and homo-
geneously across the community of speakers in Trinidad. Forms
of Standard English where Creole is not overtly adopted do exist
with high degrees of variability, depending on the speakers, the
genre, the medium and the social context in general. Overall, the
linguistic situation in Trinidad has been often defined as a contin-
uum «between the most creolized forms at one end and language
forms which are closer to (and virtually indistinguishable from) a
standard language at the other end».[48]

Having set a general premise to the analysis of Sebastian/
Bash's talk, we can now turn to the corpora in order to identify
the main linguistic features and, eventually, unveil some ideolog-
ical inputs in the discursive construction of the character. We are
going to assess this by comparing the BASH_CORPUS and the
AWAE_CORPUS so as to understand how Sebastian/Bash differs
linguistically from any other character in the series under inves-
tigation; then, we will consider the character's linguistic features
within the wider spectrum of Trinidad English to disclose the
ideological load in the discursive construction of Sebastian/Bash.

The analysis of keywords

For the purpose of the analysis, the BASH_CORPUS was up-
loaded to the software program for corpus analysis AntConc and
the AWAE_CORPUS was selected as a reference corpus for com-
parison purposes. At this stage, our focus is placed on keyness[49]
in order to unveil the specificity of the BASH_CORPUS by
spotting its keywords. Keywords are significant words «whose
frequency is unusually high in comparison with some norm».[50]

---

[48] A. Donnell, S. Welsh, *The Routledge Reader of Caribbean Literature*,
Routledge, New York 2005, p. 13.

[49] M. Bondi, M. Scott (eds.), *Keyness in Texts*, Benjamins, Amsterdam 2010.

[50] M. Scott, *WordSmith Tools (Version 5)*, Lexical Analysis, Liverpool 2008,
p. 135.

Their keyness, i.e. their importance in the corpus, is calculated statistically and tells a lot about the specificity of a corpus. According to Scott,

> keyness is a quality possessed by words, word-clusters, phrases etc., a quality which is not language-dependent but text-dependent. That is, in this view of keyness, words are not generally or simply key in a given language, but they may be key in a given text, or in a given set of texts, or in a given culture […] as such, keyness theory suggests these wordings are prominent in some way in that texts. Their prominence, their outstandingness […] may be useful in certain ways. It may lead us to perceive the aboutness of the whole text or of certain parts of it, or it may help us to perceive something about the style of the text which is different from styles of other texts.[51]

A list of salient words (*Table 2*) was therefore retrieved from the BASH_CORPUS as these are keywords in our corpus compared to the reference one. More specifically, this means that the list in *Table 2* contains words that are used in our corpus more frequently compared to the AWAE_CORPUS, and consequently characterize Sebastian/Bash's talk in ways that make it linguistically unique. Only the keywords with a keyness rate higher than 5 were selected:

Table 2: List of keywords retrieved from the BASH_CORPUS

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keyword
1	19	45.592	blythe
2	8	22.420	ain
3	47	20.503	me
4	28	17.021	like
5	41	16.981	this
6	7	16.627	taste
7	6	12.972	bog
8	5	12.350	ship
9	5	11.540	medicine

---

[51] M. Scott, *Problems in Investigating Keyness, or Clearing the Undergrowth and Marking out Trails*, in M. Bondi, M. Scott (eds.), *Keyness in Texts*, p. 44.

RANK	FREQUENCY	KEYNESS	KEYWORD
10	8	10.012	work
11	21	9.650	here
12	4	9.387	crab
13	3	9.277	coal
14	3	9.277	doc
15	3	9.277	mom
16	3	9.277	thyme
17	3	9.277	tooth
18	6	9.146	trouble
19	16	8.542	good
20	3	8.150	bush
21	4	7.992	trinidad
22	22	7.982	don
23	12	7.893	some
24	2	7.794	goin
25	6	7.595	friend
26	10	7.437	boy
27	3	7.242	food
28	5	6.750	open
29	6	6.628	door
30	2	6.184	blend
31	2	6.184	carnival
32	2	6.184	coconut
33	2	6.184	doctors
34	2	6.184	fella
35	2	6.184	mommy
36	2	6.184	nobody
37	2	6.184	spoonful
38	2	6.184	warm
39	6	6.058	place
40	5	6.047	land
41	4	5.955	next
42	3	5.842	cook
43	3	5.842	marry
44	32	5.763	what
45	5	5.727	sir
46	6	5.295	every
47	3	5.285	eh

RANK	FREQUENCY	KEYNESS	KEYWORD
48	3	5.285	ladies
49	2	5.116	babash
50	2	5.116	farming
51	2	5.116	mango
52	2	5.116	prepare
53	2	5.116	sunday
54	2	5.116	swallow
55	2	5.116	throw
56	2	5.116	trinidadian
57	47	5.115	t

We can ideally divide the retrieved keywords into two catego-
ries: function words and lexical words. From the observation of
the function words, some relevant features pertaining to the char-
acterization of Sebastian/Bash's talk emerge, especially in the use
of verbs. For instance, items such as *ain*, *don*, and *t* are keywords in
the BASH_CORPUS, since they are statistically more frequently
used by Sebastian/Bash rather than by any other character in the
series. Sebastian/Bash's talk is therefore informed by the contract-
ed forms of the verbs *to be* and *to do* in the negative form, which
confer to the character's way of speaking an aura of informality
that we do not find in the other characters', such as his exquisitely
Canadian friend Gilbert Blythe's. Negativity in the use of verbs is
statistically salient in this corpus, since the negative particle *not*
contracted in *'t* is used 47 times by Sebastian/Bash and presents a
keyness rate of 5.115. *Ain't* as a verb negator occurs 8 times and is
used interchangeably as a substitute of either *isn't*, *am not*, *aren't*
and *don't / doesn't* as the following concordance strings show:

Figure 1: Concordance strings of *ain't* in the BASH_CORPUS

```
1      on't make that man vex. Or me.  Ain't funny. We're good, sir. E BASH_Corpus.txt 0 1
2      , this is it for me. And there   ain't nothin' for me on dry lar BASH_Corpus.txt 0 2
3      oing. Oh! Sea leg and seashore   ain't friend, you know. You nee BASH_Corpus.txt 0 3
4       What's wrong? What is it? She   ain't have one, and her brothel BASH_Corpus.txt 0 4
5      e have to get help. Crazy? You   ain't delivering that baby. Wha BASH_Corpus.txt 0 5
6       that hay while the sun shine.  Ain't that what you farm boys s BASH_Corpus.txt 0 6
7      busy. If you cook and the food   ain't have no taste, I chew anc BASH_Corpus.txt 0 7
8      u up and marry you. This place   ain't no worse than some. I do. BASH_Corpus.txt 0 8
```

However, if we dive deeper into the analysis of the BASH_
CORPUS, we will see that Sebastian/Bash's talk is lacking most
of the features that normally characterize Trinidad English Cre-
ole. For instance, at the level of syntax, while in 'authentic' Trin-
idadian Creole, the infinitive *to be* does not exist, the third person
contracted form of the auxiliary verb (*'s*) features amongst the
ten most frequent word in our corpus, according to the word list
retrieved through the software program AntConc.

Figure 2: Concordance strings of *'s* in the BASH_CORPUS

```
1    ege. Two days of this. Fireman' s not the only one who don't ap
2    e that song. Well, don't. That' s not why. I been trimmer for 1
3    re! How'd she prepare it? That' s it? Crab with... salt? Nothir
4    u cook it up right. Like Mommy' s crab callaloo. Sunday food. S
5    idad would be flooded. Now let' s get us to a better neighborhc
6    n't cry. Hold this for now. It' s a mango. Prepare for an exper
7     One rum, one babash. No. That' s what makes it good. The dange
8    Only a boy can't admit when he' s gone over a lady. There there
9    he gets your love letter? What' s wrong? What is it? She ain't
10   rld. But he knows birthing. He' s my brother and I trust him. I
11    and I trust him. If your baby' s coming, he can't leave you. W
12   . Now you're sure? Guess there' s other things calling out to y
13   lant don't ask to grow." Thyme' s hardy, yeah? Doesn't need mir
14    Sebastian. I'm Gilbert Blythe' s friend. Yes. I live here now.
15    Of course, yes. Blythe! There' s a very surprised lady here tc
16   Thank you. I almost forgot. It' s curry. Yes, it's a blend of f
17   st forgot. It's curry. Yes, it' s a blend of fantastic spices.
18    blend of fantastic spices. It' s good for stews. Thank you. I'
19   r. Tooth trouble. Actually, it' s gum trouble causing the tootr
20   ith some <i>huang lian?</i> It' s Chinese. You don't like me. E
21   ctors 'round here for me. That' s what the man said. I want to
22   oology, and the invitation. It' s Blythe that needs help. Cure
23    him of thinking he knows what' s good for everybody else. Blar
```

As *Figure 2* shows, in 21 out of 23 cases, *'s* is used as the con-
tracted form of *to be*, which indicates that it is used by Sebastian/
Bash with no significant deviation from the norm of Standard
English. This means that within the wider spectrum of socio-
linguistic variation in Trinidad, Sebastian/Bash's talk is placed
in-between Standard English and Trinidad English Creole, opt-

ing more often for instances of Creolized English than Trinidad
English Creole, overall, at least for what concerns grammatical
choices.

At the level of discourse, the characterization of Sebastian/
Bash as a young man from Trinidad who speaks a non-stan-
dard form of English serves to construct his alienness. This is
achieved through some culture-bound lexical items presenting
high scores of keyness, such as *babash* and *mango* that are in-
cluded into Sebastian/Bash's talk as explicit features and cultural
markers of his non-PEI provenance. At the same time, they also
serve didactic purposes in that they are used here to introduce
some social knowledge about Sebastian/Bash's background. As
for grammatical choices, if we have a closer look at a dialogue
between Sebastian/Bash and Gilbert confronting the fireman who
coordinates the workers tending the furnace of the steam engine,
we will identify some recurrent features in Sebastian/Bash's talk:

EXTRACT 1

1. 00:07:39,915 --> 00:07:43,704
2. [Bash] ***Ain't*** funny.
3. [Gilbert] I wasn't trying to be funny.

4. 00:07:44,116 --> 00:07:47,407
5. [Gilbert] Well… maybe a little.
6. [chuckling]

7. 00:07:47,673 --> 00:07:50,627
8. [FIREMAN] Maybe you boys want
9. some different job?! Is that what you want?

10. 00:07:51,247 --> 00:07:52,741
11. [Bash] Sorry, sir.

12. 00:07:53,304 --> 00:07:56,637
13. [Gilbert] Sometimes the music in my soul
14. just needs to come out.

15. 00:07:56,724 --> 00:07:58,513
16. [FIREMAN] You want the slit trench?

17. 00:07:58,600 --> 00:08:01,430
18. [FIREMAN] That suit you better?
19. [Bash] ***We good***, sir. ***Everything fine***.

20. 00:08:03,939 --> 00:08:05,646
21. [Bash] Coming to you, sir.

22. 00:08:05,733 --> 00:08:08,857
23. [FIREMAN] I suspect latrine duty
24. would be particularly repugnant.

25. 00:08:08,944 --> 00:08:11,204
26. [Bash] Don't act doltish now.
27. [FIREMAN] What's that?

28. 00:08:11,822 --> 00:08:13,426
29. [FIREMAN] You want no job?
30. That it?

31. 00:08:13,513 --> 00:08:16,142
32. [Bash] ***We goin'*** real good, sir.
33. ***We does like to make she go***.

34. 00:08:16,248 --> 00:08:17,487
35. [Bash] ***This work be*** a privilege.

Some of the features pertaining to the linguistic characterization of Sebastian/Bash can be noticed in this extract, including but not limited to the use of the negator *ain't* (2), the absence of the auxiliary verb in progressive forms and of the copula (32 and 19) and the use of habitual does (33). Speakers of English in the Caribbean also tend to replace the verb *do* with the verb *go*, a feature that is retained in the characterization of Sebastian/Bash, as visible in (32). In (33), the direct-object pronoun *her* is replaced with the subject pronoun-form *she*, which, according to James and Youssef,[52] aligns with Trinidadian English Creole speakers, since pronouns are not marked for case. What emerges here is that language variety is some sort of a shortcut to characterization

---

[52] W. James, V. Youssef, *The Creoles of Trinidad and Tobago*.

since it allows the construction of a character based on blatant linguistic stereotypes to avoid the narration of the character's history. Let us not forget that this is the first sequence that introduces Sebastian/Bash onto the screen and to the viewers. His linguistic otherness is therefore key to his representation as a man from another cultural and linguistic setting.

Phonological features

On a side note, although our corpus does not include phonemic annotation and therefore lacks phonological and prosodic features, still through a closer analysis of *Extract 1*, some patterns concerning pronunciation are detectable. For instance, the initial [d] is used in place of [ð]. Therefore, words such as *the*, *that*, and *them*, become *dee*, *dat*, and *dem* or *dis* as in (35). Consistently, the «th» sound [θ] is replaced by the voiceless alveolar stop [t] as in the pronunciation of *everything* in (19). The medial and final [r] is nonexistent as the pronunciation of *work* as *wok*. The regional marks in the phonological output of the character are consistent with some phonological features of Trinidad English Creole[53] such as the occlusivization of slit dental fricatives ([θ] turning into [t] and [ð] into [d]). Similar considerations also apply to *Extract 2* taken from episode 2, where Sebastian/Bash and Gilbert are strolling around the food market in Trinidad, and Sebastian/Bash talks about his food memories.

EXTRACT 2

1.   00:01:16,641 --> 00:01:19,352
2.   [Bash] When I was a boy,
3.   I would come down here every day.

4.   00:01:19,435 --> 00:01:21,938
5.   [Gilbert] I had no idea
6.   such a place could exist!

---

[53] M.C. Pang, *Aspects of Trinidadian Creole*.

7.   00:01:22,021 --> 00:01:24,687
8.   [Bash] Bet you never thought
9.   you'd find yourself this far from…

10.   00:01:24,755 --> 00:01:26,726
11.   Hey, what the name again?
12.   [Gilbert] Avonlea.

13.   00:01:26,794 --> 00:01:28,361
14.   [Bash] I used to shop here for my mom.

15.   00:01:28,444 --> 00:01:30,738
16.   Every ingredient she cooked with
17.   had to be fresh.

18.   00:01:30,821 --> 00:01:32,323
19.   Nothing stale in her kitchen.

20.   00:01:32,406 --> 00:01:34,367
21.   [Gilbert] All these smells
22.   are making me hungry.

Gilbert and Sebastian/Bash's journey in Trinidad stands out visually on a number of levels. The sequence is shot in the busy food market of the city, made to appear as the crossroads of different languages and exotic foods. The clothes, the colours, the voices, and the accompanying music, all contribute to the construction of the colonial space as an alternative universe that may or may not end up overlapping with the white, Avonlea one. Here Sebastian/Bash makes use of a Trinidad-English-Creole-like rising pitch that makes declarative sentences sound like questions to speakers of Standard English. Intonation in Sebastian/Bash's utterances starts high or goes up quickly and then falls towards the end of the sentence, however without reaching as low an ending pitch as in Standard English.[54] His utterances are characterized by an interpretation of the 'sing-song' trait,[55] typical of Trinidad En-

---

[54] L. Winer, *Trinidad and Tobago*.

[55] V. Youssef, J. Winford, *The Creoles of Trinidad and Tobago: Phonology*, in B. Kortmann, K. Burridge, R. Mesthrie, E.W. Schneider (eds.), *A Handbook*

glish speakers. For instance, in (2) and (3) intonation starts with a high pitch culminating on *boy*, it goes lower on *come* to rise again on *here* and end on *day* with a lower ending pitch compared to the beginning of the utterance, but still higher compared to Standard English intonation patterns. As a prosodic feature, intonation as well plays a crucial role in the characterization of Sebastian/Bash as a foreigner.

Generally speaking, Sebastian/Bash's talk tends to align with the reduction in inventory of phonemes typical of creoles although no instances of occlusivization of voiced palatal fricatives were found nor unreduced vowels. Still, the features identified in Sebastian/Bash's talk tend to be associated with lower classes and uneducated people in mainstream media. In fact, here and elsewhere in the series, they mark a substantial difference in geographic as well as sociocultural provenance between Sebastian/Bash and the other characters from PEI. According to Dragokevic *et al.*,[56] foreign accents tend to be associated with incomprehensible others and their speakers are less likely to be portrayed with higher-status-related traits. In fact, Sebastian/Bash, who speaks a creolized variety of English, is construed as a former slave looking for his way out of poor life conditions on a steamship, whereas his friend Gilbert Blythe, who speaks Standard Canadian English, aspires to become a doctor, since standard accents and dialects usually connote high status and competence.[57]

Interestingly, as mentioned earlier in this study, Sebastian/Bash is not entirely estranged to the *Anne of Green Gables* universe. Potentially, some space for the introduction of a non-Canadian character was already made by Montgomery in *Anne of the Island* where a man called Pacifique Buote was included in the

---

of Varieties of English, *Vol. 1: Phonology*, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin 2005, pp. 508-524.

[56] M. Dragojevic, D. Mastro, H. Giles, A. Sink, *Silencing Nonstandard Speakers: A Content Analysis of Accent Portrayals on American Primetime Television*, «Language in Society», 45/1 (2016), pp. 59-85.

[57] J. Edwards, *Language, Society, and Identity*, Blackwell, Oxford 1985.

narration. Montgomery herself first characterized Pacifique as a non-Canadian addition to the plot by means of linguistic choices construing his otherness, as this extract highlights:

> Anne's physical strength suddenly failed her. If she had not clutched at a low willow bough she would have fallen. Pacifique was George Fletcher's hired man, and George Fletcher lived next door to the Blythes. Mrs. Fletcher was Gilbert's aunt. Pacifique would know if – if – Pacifique would know what there was to be known. Pacifique strode sturdily on along the red lane, whistling. He did not see Anne. She made three futile attempts to call him. He was almost past before she succeeded in making her quivering lips call, «Pacifique!» Pacifique turned with a grin and a cheerful good morning. «Pacifique», said Anne faintly, «did you come from George Fletcher's this morning?»
>
> «Sure», said Pacifique amiably. «**I got de word las' night dat my fader, he was seeck. It was so stormy dat I couldn't go den, so I start vair early dis mornin'. I'm goin' troo de woods for short cut**».
>
> «Did you hear how Gilbert Blythe was this morning?» Anne's desperation drove her to the question. Even the worst would be more endurable than this hideous suspense.
>
> «He's better», said Pacifique. «**He got de turn las' night. De doctor say he'll be all right now dis soon while. Had close shave, dough! Dat boy, he jus' keel himself at college. Well, I mus' hurry. De old man, he'll be in hurry to see me**». Pacifique resumed his walk and his whistle. Anne gazed after him with eyes where joy was driving out the strained anguish of the night. He was a very lank, very ragged, very homely youth. But in her sight he was as beautiful as those who bring good tidings on the mountains. Never, as long as she lived, would Anne see Pacifique's brown, round, black-eyed face without a warm remembrance of the moment when he had given to her the oil of joy for mourning.[58]

Here, Pacifique's talk (highlighted in bold) retains the features of an unidentified non-standard variety of English, as Montgomery tried to resemble the pronunciation and intonation that a man with a different cultural and linguistic background might have had according to a 1908 Canadian writer. The extra-linguistic meanings associated to the variety being used immediately lead to a specific interpretation of the character and the discursive sit-

---

[58] L.M. Montgomery, *Anne of the Island*, p. 319.

uation. Pacifique is, in fact, described as a brown faced man and, although the depiction of his appearance comes after his verbal outcome, still the readers can picture in their minds a non-white character speaking to Anne in a non-Standard, alternative variety of English. Montgomery attempts to reproduce language as it would be spoken by a man who pronounces [d] instead of [ð], for instance, and elides final *t*s in words like *just*, *last* and *must*. Although the author was probably not an expert in English varieties across the globe, the point we want to advance here is that Sebastian/Bash's talk may be seen as a linguistic manipulation and re-adaptation of Pacifique Buote's lines in *Anne of the Island* and that, regardless of the different means of communication and adaptation, characterization still relies on an exquisitely linguistic effort.

Conclusion

The present study aimed at exploring the 2016 CBC adaptation of *Anne of Green Gables*, *Anne with an E*, from a linguistic viewpoint, privileging a discursive perspective, to identify the ideological load embedded in the production of new discourses about Canada. In order to do so, the corpus-based analysis focused on processes of characterization. More specifically we examined the newly introduced character of Sebastian Lacroix, then re-named Bash, probably inspired by Pacifique Buote in *Anne of the Island*, «a brown, round, black-eyed face»,[59] speaking a very broken English.

The findings that emerged from the analysis conducted onto two specifically designed corpora, the BASH_CORPUS and the AWAE_CORPUS, the latter being used as a reference corpus in the analysis of keywords, showed that Sebastian/Bash is characterized by some linguistic features which place his talk in-between Standard English and Trinidad English Creole, opting

---

[59] *Ibidem*.

more often for instances of Creolized English than Trinidad English Creole, overall. We argued that, based on the findings, the characterization of Sebastian/Bash as a young man from Trinidad who speaks a non-standard variety of English, is instrumental to the construction of his alienness. In fact, his linguistic diversity, realized by means of lexical, grammatical and intonation features, not only differentiates him from the rest of the Avonlea community, but also serves as a short-cut to avoid the narration of his own personal history, leaving it to the assumptions and attitudes emerging in the audience as a response to his linguistic utterances. This is because foreign accents are usually perceived as being connected with speakers that are less inclined to be represented with higher-status-related traits. Since Sebastian/Bash speaks a creolized variety of English, he is automatically construed as a former slave looking for his way out of poor life conditions. Linguistic varieties in multimedia products not only define relations of power and solidarity, but also contribute to introducing difference within quite homogeneous sociolinguistic realities, while also dislocating plots and characters, linguistically and geographically. In our case, through Sebastian/Bash's talk and mediatic presence, the spectators are brought from PEI to Trinidad and then from Trinidad back to PEI. Therefore, Sebastian/Bash's inclusion in the storyline changes the representation of PEI and of Canada as well, from an all-white universe into a more diverse reality that accommodates pluralism.

To conclude, it stands out clear, then, that specific linguistic choices are strategically made in the characterization of Sebastian/Bash. In the introduction to the present study, we claimed that digital series can hide ideologies and counter-ideologies that speak to and of the nation. In our case, *Anne with an E* seems to be an adaptation work where reformation and editing have been conducted diachronically, so as to develop a closer cultural proximity to its contemporary, global audience. Hence, new meanings are constructed to represent Canada as a multicultural society, even at the times when Anne Cuthbert/L.M. Montgomery lived,

thus unveiling stories about Canada's neglected colonial past. Such a reformation cannot but be understood as strategic, in that it reveals an ideological, or better counter-ideological load, working against a representation of Canada as a monocultural land and in favour of multiculturalism. Seen in this light, multiculturalism itself is an ideological formula employed to construct a crafted version of 19th-century Canada where inter-ethnic bonds are seen as positive forces cutting across lines of conflict. In this sense, the counter-ideology of multiculturalism emerging from today's adaptation serves to highlight the successfulness of Canada as a heterogeneous nation versus the anti-immigration trends of other modern social and political realities; at the same time it aims at shaping the audience's perception of multiculturalism as a model for rebuilding peaceful and integrated societies. Consequently, we maintain that adaptations such as *Anne with an E*, which entail processes of reconnection to the social realities in which they are supposed to be received, may be seen as politically and socially engaged.

Nonetheless, such an ideological intent does hide some fractures in its turn. If it is true that Sebastian/Bash and his language are the narrative gear that makes the multicultural story work, the other facet of the coin is that his linguistic diversity is stereotyped and exoticized to remark his cultural otherness. Therefore, the representation ends up reinforcing the stigmatization of non-standard accents and dialects, popular in Hollywood movies.[60] Moreover, «the other», the excluded and the marginalized, here, is appreciated for his diversity by the main characters, but he is also expected to adjust to the Canadian setting in order to be accepted. His original name, Sebastian, is, in fact, Canadianized into Bash to signal the character's successful transition from being a Trinidadian man into becoming an inhabitant of a newly shaped multicultural Avonlea.

---

[60] R. Lippi-Green, *English with An Accent*.

References

Allard, D., *Reader Reception of* Anne of Green Gables *in Japan*, «CREArTA», 5 (2005), pp. 97-111.

Allsopp, R., *The English Language in British Guyana*, «English Language Teaching», 12 (1958), pp. 59-66.

Allsopp, R., Allsopp, J. (eds.), *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1996.

Anderson, S., Chakars, M. (eds.), *Modernization, Nation-Building, and Television History*, Routledge, New York 2015.

Barker, C., *Television, Globalization and Cultural Identities*, Open University Press, Buckingham 1999.

Beaty, B., Sullivan, R., *Canadian Television Today*, University of Calgary Press, Calgary 2006.

Bednarek, M., *The Language of Fictional Television: Drama and Identity*, Continuum, London-New York 2010.

Bednarek, M., *Construing 'Nerdiness': Characterisation in* The Big Bang Theory, «Multilingua», 31 (2012), pp. 199-229.

Bednarek, M., *Corpus-Assisted Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Television and Film Narratives*, in P. Baker, T. McEnery (eds.), *Corpora and Discourse Studies*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke-New York 2015, pp. 63-87.

Blouet, O., *The Caribbean*, in B.W. Blouet, O.M. Blouet (eds.), *Latin America and the Caribbean: A Systematic and Regional Survey*, Wiley, New York 2002, pp. 311-366.

Bondi, M., Scott, M. (eds.), *Keyness in Texts*, Benjamins, Amsterdam 2010.

Castelló, E., *The Production of Television Fiction and Nation Building: The Catalan Case*, «European Journal of Communication», 22 (2007), pp. 46-98.

Charland, M., *Technological Nationalism*, «Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory / Revue canadienne de théorie politique et sociale», 10 (1986), pp. 196-275 (1-2).

Craig, D., *The Use of the Vernacular in West Indian Education*, in H. Simmons-McDonald, I. Robertson (eds.), *Exploring the*

Boundaries of Caribbean Creole Languages, University of the West Indies Press, Mona 2006, pp. 99-117.

CULPEPER, J., *Language and Characterisation: People in Plays and Other Texts*, Longman, Harlow 2014.

DEUBER, D., *Standard English in the Secondary School in Trinidad: Problems, Properties, Prospects*, in T. Hoffmann, L. Siebers (eds.), *World Englishes: Problems, Properties and Prospects: Selected Papers from the 13th IAWE Conference*, Benjamins, Amsterdam 2009.

DEUBER, D., *English in the Caribbean. Variation, Style and Standards in Jamaica and Trinidad*, Cambridge University Press, New York 2014.

DEUBER, D., LEUNG, G.A., *Investigating Attitudes Towards an Emerging Standard of English: Evaluations of Newscasters' Accents in Trinidad*, «Multilingua», 32 (2013), pp. 289-319.

DONNELL, A., WELSH, S., *The Routledge Reader of Caribbean Literature*, Routledge, New York 2005.

DRAGOJEVIC, M., MASTRO, D., GILES, H., SINK, A., *Silencing Nonstandard Speakers: A Content Analysis of Accent Portrayals on American Primetime Television*, «Language in Society», 45/1 (2016), pp. 59-85.

EDWARDS, J., *Language, Society, and Identity*, Blackwell, Oxford 1985.

FAIRCLOUGH, N., *Critical Discourse Analysis. The Critical Study of Language*, Longman, London 1995

FOWLER, R., *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press*, Routledge, London 1991.

HALL, S., *The Question of Cultural Identity*, in S. Hall, D. Held, D. Hubert, K. Thompson (eds.), *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*, Blackwell, Malden-Oxford 1996, pp. 595-634.

HASSLER-FOREST, D., NICKLAS, P., *The Politics of Adaptation: Media Convergence and Ideology*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2015.

HOLM, J., *Pidgins and Creoles: Theory and Structure*, Cambridge University Press, New York 1988.

Hutcheon, L., *A Theory of Adaptation*, Routledge, New York-London 2006.

James, W., Youssef, V., *The Creoles of Trinidad and Tobago: Morphology and Syntax*, in B. Kortmann, K. Burridge, R. Mesthrie, E.W. Schneider (eds.), *A Handbook of Varieties of English*, *Vol. 2: Morphology and Syntax*, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin 2005, pp. 454-481.

Lippi-Green, R., *English with an Accent: Language, Ideology and Discrimination in the United States*, Routledge, London 1997.

Montgomery, L.M., *Anne of Green Gables*, Page & Co., Boston 1908.

Montgomery, L.M., *Anne of the Island*, Page & Co., Boston 1915.

Pang, M.C., *Aspects of Trinidadian Creole*, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver 1981.

Pinto, R., *Film, Dialects and Subtitles: an Analytical Framework for the Study of Non-standard Varieties in Subtitling*, «The Translator», 24/1 (2018), pp. 17-34.

Richardson, K., *Television Dramatic Dialogue: A Sociolinguistic Study*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2010.

Schlesinger, P., *Media, State and Nation: Political Violence and Collective Identities*, Sage, London 1991.

Scott, M., *WordSmith Tools (Version 5)*, Lexical Analysis, Liverpool 2008.

Scott, M., *Problems in Investigating Keyness, or Clearing the Undergrowth and Marking out Trails*, in M. Bondi, M. Scott (eds.), *Keyness in Texts*, Benjamins, Amsterdam 2010, pp. 43-58.

Sheckels, T., *Anne in Hollywood: The Americanization of a Canadian Icon*, in I. Gammel, E. Epperly, *L.M. Montgomery and Canadian Culture*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1999, pp. 183-191.

Solomon, D., *The Speech of Trinidad: A Reference Grammar*, UWI School of Continuing Studies, St. Augustine 1993.

STRAUBHAAR, J.D., *Beyond Media Imperialism: Assymetrical Interdependence and Cultural Proximity*, «Critical Studies in Mass Communication», 8 (1991), pp. 39-59.

VAN PEER, W., *The Taming of the Text: Explorations in Language, Literature and Culture*, Routledge, London 1988.

VLESSING, E., Anne of Green Gables *Gets First Black Character in Netflix Reboot*, «The Hollywood Reporter», July 3, 2018.

WALLEY-BECKETT, M., *Anne with an E*, CBC-Netflix, Canada 2017-2019.

WINER, L., *Early Trinidadian Creole: The «Spectator» Texts*, «English World-Wide», 5 (1984), pp. 181-210.

WINER, L., *Trinidad and Tobago*, Benjamins, Amsterdam 1993.

WODAK, R., MEYER, M., *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, Sage, London 2001.

WOOLARD, K.A., *Language Ideology as a Field of Inquiry*, in B. Schieffelin, K. Woolard, P. Kroskrity (eds.), *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1998, pp. 3-47.

YOUSSEF, V., WINFORD, J., *The Creoles of Trinidad and Tobago: Phonology*, in B. Kortmann, K. Burridge, R. Mesthrie, E.W. Schneider (eds.), *A Handbook of Varieties of English*, *Vol. 1: Phonology I*, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin 2005, pp. 508-524.

AGAGUK, LE ROMAN ET LE FILM: UN DOUBLE CAS D'ADAPTATION TRANSCULTURELLE*

Angela Buono

Università degli Studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale'

En 1958, Yves Thériault fait paraître son «roman esquimau» *Agaguk*.[1] Dans le contexte littéraire de l'époque ce roman témoigne d'«une tout autre conception de la littérature, qui intègre le divertissement et le document ethnographique».[2] L'intérêt de Thériault pour les sujets ethniques s'était déjà manifesté en 1954 dans son roman *Aaron*, qui met en scène la communauté juive de Montréal, et se confirmera au début des années 1960 par la parution de deux romans à thème amérindien, *Ashini*,[3] publié en 1960 et *Le ru d'Ikoué* en 1963.[4] D'après la critique, ces romans, «plus que d'un simple exotisme, […] témoignent d'un déplacement de l'enjeu identitaire et d'une connaissance sans doute quelque peu idéalisée de ces communautés».[5]

---

[1] Y. Thériault, *Agaguk*, Typo, Montréal 1993.

[2] M. Biron, F. Dumont, É. Nardout-Lafarge, *Histoire de la littérature québécoise*, Boréal, Montréal 2007, p. 347.

[3] Y. Thériault, *Ashini*, Fides, Montréal-Paris 1960.

[4] Y. Thériault, *Le ru d'Ikoué*, Fides, Montréal-Paris 1963.

[5] M. Biron, F. Dumont, É. Nardout-Lafarge, *Histoire de la littérature québécoise*, p. 348.

Pour ce qui concerne *Agaguk*, la représentation de la société inuite est, à notre avis, moins idéalisée qu'adaptée à la sensibilité nouvelle de la société québécoise et aux enjeux culturels qu'elle s'apprêtait à affronter au cours de la Révolution tranquille des années 1960. Dans son souci de réalisme, doublé d'une intention didactique qui vise à déjouer les stéréotypes affectant l'image des peuples qualifiés de «sauvages», Yves Thériault aurait accompli cette «adaptation transculturelle» dont parle Linda Hutcheon:[6] le même dialogue qui d'ordinaire se déroule entre la société où un texte est produit et la société à laquelle l'adaptation est destinée se réalise, dans le roman de Thériault, entre le contexte culturel diégétique – inuit – et le contexte de réception du livre – québécois.

Chez Thériault, l'adaptation transculturelle poursuivrait donc autant le but d'assurer la meilleure compréhension des mœurs primitives que de rapprocher du public québécois l'univers éloigné du Grand Nord par des stratégies de focalisation croisées: ainsi que la critique l'a bien affirmé, «*Agaguk* donne à voir le Nord du point de vue inuit, et ce sont les Blancs qui deviennent l'objet du regard ethnologique d'Agaguk et d'Iriook».[7]

L'intérêt documentaire est affiché dès le début par l'*Avertissement* placé en tête du roman:

> L'action de ce roman se déroule chez les Esquimaux tels qu'ils étaient dans les années quarante. Que leur vie soit aujourd'hui modifiée par l'invasion du progrès dans l'Arctique est indéniable.[8]

L'allusion à la civilisation envahissante qui aurait bouleversé le mode de vie des Inuit semble aussi suggérer que l'auteur

---

[6] «There is a kind of dialogue between the society in which the works, both the adapted text and adaptation, are produced and that in which they are received, and both are in dialogue with the works themselves», cfr. L. Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, Routledge, New York-London 2006, p. 149.

[7] M. Biron, F. Dumont, É. Nardout-Lafarge, *Histoire de la littérature québécoise*, p. 348.

[8] Y. Thériault, *Agaguk*, p. 1.

prend position en faveur de la tradition esquimaude; néanmoins il demeure un homme de son temps et son point de vue 'blanc' s'impose, sans doute malgré lui, dans la caractérisation des personnages principaux et notamment de la protagoniste féminine Iriook.

Tout au long de la narration au ton tantôt descriptif, lorsqu'il peint le paysage arctique, les activités quotidiennes et les scènes de chasse, tantôt didactique, lorsqu'il donne des explications ou fait des commentaires sur les mœurs inuites,[9] le narrateur ne manque aucune occasion de marquer la diversité des points de vue des Inuit et des Blancs, leur psychologie et les assises différentes de leurs raisonnements respectifs, dans le but affiché de surmonter les stéréotypes culturels, et de favoriser la compréhension de la civilisation inuite par la comparaison constante avec les attitudes et les comportements des Blancs. D'accord avec André Brochu, «il faut louer l'habileté avec laquelle Thériault a su représenter la mentalité dite primitive, en lui conservant sa part de mystère, d'altérité, et pourtant en la rendant proche et comme familière au lecteur».[10]

La morale toute particulière des Inuit fait volontiers l'objet de telles remarques du narrateur. C'est sans le moindre scrupule de conscience qu'Agaguk tue un Blanc dénommé Brown, trafiquant d'eau-de-vie au village, qui lui avait enlevé ses peaux par fraude. Et que ce meurtre soit justifié comme un acte de toute logique est ainsi commenté par le narrateur:

---

[9] «(Ainsi ils se nomment, de l'un à l'autre, *Inuk*, l'homme: *Inuit*, les hommes. Il n'y a d'autres hommes qu'eux, les Esquimaux, les *Inuit*. Pour tout autre race, ils auront des noms de mépris. Pour les Blancs, pour les Montagnais, pour les gens venus du sud – selon le cas, Abénakis, Apaches, Sangs-mêlés, Couleuvres, Shoshones, tous ces Indiens des régions boisées à pleine largeur du Canada – pour tous ceux, enfin, qui ne sont pas nés du Ciel, qui ne sont pas les maîtres du Sommet de la Terre. Seul l'Esquimau est un *Inuk*, un homme. 'Regarde là-bas l'homme qui vient!' Ce sera un Esquimau, rien d'autre)», *ibidem*, p. 38.

[10] A. Brochu, Agaguk, *roman d'Yves Thériault*, in M. Lemire (éd.), *Dictionnaire des œuvres littéraires du Québec*, tome III, Fides, Montréal 1982, p. 18.

Qui était ce Blanc? D'où venait-il? Et puisqu'il faisait un trafic défendu,
chercherait-on vraiment à punir son meurtrier? Raisonnement d'Esqui-
mau qui n'était sûrement pas celui de la Gendarmerie Royale, mais
qui servait à calmer les angoisses de Ramook et de gens de sa tribu.
Ils déduisirent, dans leur logique particulière, que si le Blanc était un
mauvais Blanc, personne ne chercherait à punir sa mort.[11]

Il n'en demeure pas moins que l'effort de dépasser le cliché
exotique pour mieux représenter la réalité des Inuit est poussé
jusqu'à attribuer au protagoniste et à sa compagne Iriook des at-
titudes et des comportements contradictoires ou carrément irréa-
listes. Le choix d'Agaguk de s'exiler de son village et de vivre
seul avec sa compagne dans la toundra pour se soustraire à l'auto-
rité de son père Ramook, qui est aussi le chef de la communauté,
apparaît en contradiction patente avec l'esprit communautaire des
Inuit dû aux contraintes du climat arctique, qui rend extrêmement
dangereuse la vie en solitude. L'éloignement du protagoniste ne
saurait donc répondre à un souci de réalisme ethnographique,
mais il pourrait bien être considéré comme un cas d'adaptation
du sujet romanesque à la réalité spécifique du contexte québécois
de réception du livre: la poussée novatrice et l'esprit de rupture
qui se faisaient jour dans la société québécoise de l'époque se re-
flètent dans l'évolution psychologique des protagonistes et dans
leur prise de distance de certaines valeurs de la tradition. Ainsi
qu'André Brochu l'a bien remarqué:

La révolte individualiste d'Agaguk, son ralliement à un code éthique
qui ne saurait être, en fin de compte, que celui des Blancs, annonce le
grand bouleversement des années 1960 et 1970, où l'idéologie tradi-
tionnelle fera place massivement, après ou à travers un intermède na-
tionaliste, à une fragmentation poussée du consensus social et à l'affir-
mation des valeurs du *moi*.[12]

Il en va de même de l'évolution psychologique de la protago-
niste féminine qui, par son sens moral proche de celui des Blancs

---

[11] Y. Thériault, *Agaguk*, p. 52.

[12] A. Brochu, Agaguk, *roman d'Yves Thériault*, pp. 18-19.

et par «le processus de pacification et de 'civilisation'»[13] qu'elle
met en place, est moins une représentante de la condition de la
femme dans la société inuite de l'époque que, par sa capacité
d'autonomie et sa prise de parole dans une société dominée par
les hommes, l'expression des revendications féminines qui au-
ront bientôt cours dans les sociétés occidentales. Lorsque Agaguk
est gravement blessé à la suite du combat avec le loup blanc,
elle n'hésite pas à se charger de toute tâche d'homme – la chasse
pour pourvoir la nourriture, la démolition de la hutte habitée pen-
dant l'été, la construction de l'igloo au début du nouvel hiver.
Et lorsque les policiers, avec des gens du village dont son père
Ramook, viennent chercher Agaguk accusé d'avoir tué Brown,
c'est encore Iriook, femme parmi tant d'hommes et donc, d'après
la tradition inuite, censée garder le silence, qui répond aux ques-
tions du policier à la place d'Agaguk rendu méconnaissable par
sa blessure au visage, et c'est elle qui le sauve de l'arrestation
en confirmant les doutes sur son identité de façon intelligente et
rusée: «Agaguk a quitté son village. Il a cessé d'être Agaguk.
Il n'est plus le fils de la tribu, il n'est plus le fils de Ramook. Il
n'existe plus».[14]

Ces mots en apparence sibyllins ne font que mettre en valeur
la métamorphose intérieure d'Agaguk, dont la défiguration du vi-
sage n'est que la métaphore. Des sentiments étrangers à la morale
inuite traditionnelle – le remords, le respect de la vie de l'autre et
le respect de la femme – se font jour dans l'esprit d'Agaguk en
marquant son évolution à la suite de sa compagne Iriook:

> Elle savait […] que si Agaguk avait un jour tué un homme, il n'en se-
> rait probablement plus capable désormais. Esquimau, donc possesseur
> d'une morale bien à lui, à l'opposé extrême des principes jugés normaux
> par les Blancs, tuer – pour ce qui était de lui – pouvait n'être qu'un
> acte de toute logique, un geste d'une conséquence attendue. Personne,
> dans les igloos, comme dans les tribus, ne lui en voudrait. Et pourtant

---

[13] M. Biron, F. Dumont, É. Nardout-Lafarge, *Histoire de la littérature qué-
bécoise*, p. 348.

[14] Y. Thériault, *Agaguk*, p. 248.

Iriook répugnait à cette acceptation du meurtre comme geste normal. Elle ne l'avait jamais approuvé. Était-elle, ces instants-là, différente de ces congénères? Une évolution humaine s'était-elle manifestée en elle? Elle n'aurait pu le dire, elle n'en cherchait même pas l'explication.[15]

Si le roman a su déjouer le cliché exotique en privilégiant le point de vue inuit, la transposition cinématographique *Agaguk. L'ombre du loup*,[16] réalisée en 1992 par Jacques Dorfmann, déplace le point de focalisation du côté du Blanc face au Sauvage et propose d'autres stéréotypes faisant partie de l'imaginaire occidental, et que le livre n'avait pas explorés. Le film garde aussi à sa façon un certain intérêt documentaire, la caméra s'arrêtant volontiers sur des scènes de vie des Inuit – la construction d'un igloo, le mâchage des peaux pour les rendre souples, les méthodes de chasse et de pêche, et encore les fêtes, les jeux, les chants de gorges – mais tout cela semble plus marqué par une volonté d'exotisme qu'orienté par un intérêt ethnographique véritable.

L'adaptation transculturelle que le roman met en place par son souci de réalisme et par sa charge symbolique s'affirme dans le film par le recours au cliché culturel et à l'élément spectaculaire, plus fonctionnel au médium cinématographique. Cela se produit en particulier dans une longue séquence montrant une épique chasse à la baleine tout à fait absente dans le roman, qui remplace dans le film l'épisode de la chasse au phoque, où l'attente l'emporte sur l'action: cette scène marque pourtant l'un des moments majeurs du roman, où s'amorce le renversement des rôles dans le couple de deux protagonistes. Les prises exceptionnelles qui consacrent définitivement la valeur d'Agaguk ayant «accompli une grande chasse dont on parlerait longtemps»[17] sont le fruit de l'attente patiente que Iriook lui avait suggérée et qui avait d'abord suscité la réaction vexée du mâle:

---

[15] *Ibidem*, p. 253.

[16] J. Dorfmann, *Agaguk. L'ombre du loup*, Eiffel Productions-Canal+, France-Canada 1992.

[17] Y. Thériault, *Agaguk*, p. 134.

Agaguk se hérissa. Il n'était point dans les habitudes qu'une Esqui-
maude discute ainsi avec son homme. Lors même qu'il était le maître,
n'était-ce pas contre lui-même qu'elle cherchait à le protéger?[18]

Le réalisme du roman cède le pas au spectaculaire jusque dans
la scène finale du film qui donne à la narration un dénouement
tout autre que celui imaginé par Thériault, en montrant la mé-
tamorphose en aigle, animal totémique, du père d'Agaguk, chef
et chaman du village, tandis qu'il est emporté en avion vers une
condamnation à mort certaine, en tant que responsable du meurtre
d'un policier blanc venu enquêter sur son territoire.

Les stratégies de simplification et de généralisation que sou-
ligne Linda Hutcheon[19] sont à l'œuvre dans l'adaptation cinéma-
tographique d'*Agaguk* à partir de l'indication géographique qu'on
affiche au début du film et qui dans les versions doublées n'est
pas la même que dans la version originale française. Si dans le
roman dès le début sont précisés les lieux de l'action dont le dé-
roulement est situé «entre le village des huttes et le pays nommé
Labrador»,[20] dans le film français l'indication de «Grand Nord»
est bien plus générique mais elle évoque quand même une dimen-
sion géographique bien présente à l'imaginaire québécois. Dans
les versions doublées en d'autres langues, l'action est déplacée
de plein pied en… Alaska! – un lieu censé évidemment être plus
facilement identifiable pour le public américain et international
que le nord du Québec ou le Labrador.

Ce film présente aussi un exemple de cette manière d'adapta-
tion que Linda Hutcheon qualifie d'*indigenization*:

In political discourse, indigenization is used within a national setting to
refer to the forming of a national discourse different from the dominant;

---

[18] *Ibidem*, p. 126.

[19] «Because Hollywood films are increasingly being made for international
audiences, the adaptation might end up not only altering characters' nation-
alities, but on the contrary, actually deemphasizing any national, regional, or
historical specificities», cfr. L. Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, p. 147.

[20] Y. Thériault, *Agaguk*, p. 5.

in a religious context, as in mission church discourse, it refers to a na-
tivized church and a recontextualized Christianity.[21]

Deux épisodes du film en particulier manifestent ce processus
d'*indigenization* en y impliquant le discours religieux, là où il
n'en est pas question dans le roman. L'épisode du troc des four-
rures dans le magasin de la Compagnie de la Baie d'Hudson est
assez significatif à maints égards. Il est reproduit assez fidèle-
ment dans le film, sauf qu'à l'humiliation du marchandage inique
s'ajoute une risible tentative d'évangélisation de la part du fac-
teur de la Compagnie. Pour l'auteur du roman cet épisode n'est
qu'une occasion de plus pour mettre en regard le point de vue
blanc et le point de vue inuit. Face à la frustration et au sentiment
d'impuissance d'Agaguk,

> McTavish n'avait pas de remords. L'Esquimau ne partait pas les mains
> vides. Il avait un fusil, des balles, de quoi chasser et se nourrir. Il avait
> du sel pour apprêter les peaux et les conserver. […] Il pouvait se passer
> du reste. Une pioche… Pour quoi faire? Du coton pour sa femme…
> À quel usage servirait-il? Rien d'utile, certes. Et le chaudron? Allons
> donc! Selon son raisonnement, tout allait bien et l'Esquimau n'était pas
> lésé. McTavish n'éprouvait aucune inquiétude de conscience.[22]

Dans le film la même scène est plongée dans une chaude at-
mosphère d'église; des enfants passent en chantant *Adeste fide-
les*; toutefois le troc suit les mêmes règles injustes: tout en refu-
sant à Agaguk les quantités de balles pour son fusil ou de sel qu'il
demande, on lui offre des bonbons et… une bible – «pour rien!»,
on s'empresse de préciser – une bible dont évidemment Agaguk,
qui ne sait même pas lire, n'aurait que faire! La séquence fil-
mique demeure entièrement centrée autour de la perspective du
Blanc qui infantilise le primitif et le considère toujours comme
quelqu'un qu'il faut prendre en charge, qu'il faut civiliser par le
progrès ou par le salut de l'âme offert gratuitement, tandis qu'on
lui vole tout bonnement le fruit de sa chasse et de son travail.

---

[21] L. Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, p. 150.
[22] Y. Thériault, *Agaguk*, p. 67.

La volonté de dénonciation des attitudes coloniales qu'on pourrait décrypter dans l'incongruité de cette scène n'est cependant pas l'intention véritable du film qui serait plutôt la réconciliation entre les Blancs et les peuples indigènes. Lors du voyage d'Agaguk et d'Iriook au Sommet de la Terre aux bords de la mer arctique, le chaman du village fournit l'exemple d'une adaptation transculturelle de la religion chrétienne à la spiritualité des Inuit. Il pose le parallèle entre le chaman et le Christ; comme le Christ est mort et revenu à la vie, le chaman pour devenir tel doit mourir, visiter le monde des esprits et revenir sur Terre. Et c'est sur cet aspect commun de la spiritualité primitive avec la religion chrétienne que se fonde la fraternité de l'Inuk avec l'homme blanc.

Agaguk, roman esquimau et sa transposition à l'écran constituent, chacun à sa façon, deux modes d'adaptation de l'étrangeté des peuples du Grand Nord à la perspective culturelle des publics respectivement ciblés. Le roman, paru à l'orée d'une période de bouleversements sociaux et culturels, adresse un message spécifique au lecteur québécois:

> On le voit, bien que dépaysé […] chez les Inuits, le passage de l'ancien monde au nouveau est le même […]: une génération doit s'arracher durement à celle qui l'a précédée, non sans que les uns et les autres aient à payer le prix de ce passage.[23]

Plus de trente ans après la publication du livre, son adaptation au cinéma, visant un public élargi et indifférencié, s'inscrit dans la vague de pacification des rapports entre les Blancs et les peuples Autochtones qu'entame la production cinématographique et télévisée des années 1990.[24] Les dénouements différents du roman et

[23] M. Biron, F. Dumont, É. Nardout-Lafarge, *Histoire de la littérature québécoise*, p. 348.

[24] On peut citer, à titre d'exemple, le célèbre film *Dance with the Wolves* (1990), et les séries télévisées *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman* (*Docteur Quinn, femme médecin*, 1993-1998) et *Northern Exposure* (*Bienvenue en Alaska*, 1990-1995).

du film témoignent des deux messages également différents dont
le roman et le film sont respectivement porteurs. Dans le roman,
ainsi qu'André Brochu l'a bien remarqué, «c'est un libéralisme à
l'américaine qui prend ainsi sa revanche sur le vieil impératif communautaire. Il est significatif à cet égard que la tribu, au moment où
se termine le roman, reste sans chef, chacun préférant le plein exercice de sa liberté».[25] Le film se termine, au contraire, sur un message de réconciliation complète: Agaguk avec sa femme réintègre
leur communauté et il en devient le chef et le chaman, après l'arrestation de son père. D'ailleurs le conflit intergénérationnel aussi est
surmonté par la réconciliation d'Agaguk avec son père, lequel en
tant que chaman, sous le semblant d'un aigle majestueux, réintègre
lui aussi sa place dans le monde des esprits, tout en se sauvant de la
justice des Blancs par cette métamorphose spectaculaire.

La métamorphose qui clôt le film se pose en métaphore parfaite du renversement du message et de l'intention du roman: si
«chez Thériault, […] c'est l'héritage ancestral et le lien avec le
passé qui constituent l'aliénation du sujet; il s'en détache par une
énergie souvent violente afin de se recréer»,[26] le film de Dorfmann
marque, au contraire, sous l'affirmation renouvelée des valeurs
ancestrales inuites, le retour du cliché exotique que les moyens
cinématographiques contribuent à entretenir.

<p style="text-align: center">*Bibliographie*</p>

Biron, M., Dumont, F., Nardout-Lafarge, É., *Histoire de la
     littérature québécoise*, Boréal, Montréal 2007.
Brochu, A., Agaguk*, roman d'Yves Thériault*, in M. Lemire
     (éd.), *Dictionnaire des œuvres littéraires du Québec*, tome III,
     Fides, Montréal 1982, pp. 16-21.

---

[25] A. Brochu, Agaguk*, roman d'Yves Thériault*, p. 19.

[26] M. Biron, F. Dumont, É. Nardout-Lafarge, *Histoire de la littérature québécoise*, p. 348

DORFMANN, J., *Agaguk. L'ombre du loup*, Eiffel Productions-Canal+, France-Canada 1992.

HUTCHEON, L., *A Theory of Adaptation*, Routledge, New York-London 2006.

THÉRIAULT, Y., *Agaguk* [1958], Typo, Montréal 1993.

THÉRIAULT, Y., *Ashini*, Fides, Montréal-Paris 1960.

THÉRIAULT, Y., *Le ru d'Ikoué*, Fides, Montréal-Paris 1963.

Le rôle identitaire de l'adaptation filmique dans le cinéma québécois

Katarzyna Wójcik

Université de Varsovie

La situation minoritaire du Québec – celle d'une société francophone en Amérique du Nord – fait que son cinéma aussi bien que sa littérature sont particulièrement sensibles à la problématique identitaire. Ce sont le cinéma et la littérature d'une minorité, mais aussi cinéma et littérature «mineurs». En fait, la littérature québécoise peut être considérée comme «littérature mineure» définie, en référence à Kafka, par Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari, selon lesquels il s'agirait d'«une littérature qu'une minorité fait dans une langue majeure».[1] Régine Robin, en se référant, elle aussi, à Franz Kafka, insiste sur le caractère politique, collectif et identitaire de la littérature «mineure»: «Cette littérature est collective. La voix du *on*, du *nous* domine, beaucoup plus que celle du *je*. Elle est immédiatement politique, quels que soient les thèmes qu'elle aborde, puisque tout y est décodé en termes de 'problème national' et en termes de 'maintien de l'identité culturelle'».[2]

Gilles Deleuze applique la notion de «mineur» au contexte du cinéma en comparant la situation des réalisateurs québécois

---

[1] G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *Kafka: pour une littérature mineure*, Éditions de Minuit, Paris 1975, p. 33.

[2] R. Robin, *À propos de la notion kafkaïenne de 'littérature mineure': quelques questions posées à la littérature québécoise*, «Paragraphes», 2 (1989), p. 6, en italique dans le texte.

à celle dont parle Kafka en regard de la situation des écrivains d'une langue minoritaire qui créent dans le champ culturel d'une autre langue, majoritaire et dominante.[3] Selon Deleuze, cette impossibilité d' «écrire», c'est-à-dire de faire des films, et de ne pas «écrire» – garder le silence – est applicable aussi aux cinéastes québécois qui sentent l'impératif à s'exprimer au nom de la collectivité et de le faire en langue française.[4]

«Mineurs», le roman et le film québécois abordent les questions collectives, en particulier celles de la recherche identitaire. Pour Christian Poirier, les liens entre le cinéma, l'identitaire et le contexte sociopolitique marquent fortement la production cinématographique québécoise:

> Il semble exister, au Québec, un lien étroit entre cinéma et politique, entre le cinéma et l'identité collective québécoise d'une part, et le contexte politique global, d'autre part. Les cinéastes ont d'ailleurs eux-mêmes véhiculé à plusieurs reprises, dans l'histoire cinématographique québécoise, cette idée d'un pont entre la situation particulière présentée dans le film et vécue par quelques personnages et le contexte plus général de la société. Pierre Perrault déclarait au sujet de *Pour la suite du monde*: «Et quand je dis l'Îles-aux-Coudres je songe à tout un peuple. Ce film est exemplaire». En fait, toute l'histoire du cinéma québécois est marquée par un questionnement perpétuel et un profond sentiment de précarité qui rejoignent certaines préoccupations globales de la société québécoise.[5]

Poirier se propose de considérer le cinéma comme un terrain propice à l'analyse du discours social, favorisant «une articulation de l'imaginaire de la société et de ses représentations iden-

---

[3] Kafka écrit: «Ils vivaient entre trois impossibilités (que je nomme par hasard des impossibilités de langage, c'est le plus simple, mais on pourrait aussi les appeler autrement): l'impossibilité de ne pas écrire, l'impossibilité d'écrire en allemand, l'impossibilité d'écrire autrement, à quoi on pourrait presque ajouter une quatrième impossibilité, l'impossibilité d'écrire». F. Kafka, *Journaux. Œuvres complètes III*, Gallimard, Paris 1984, pp. 1987-1988.

[4] G. Deleuze, *L'Image-temps*, Éditions de Minuit, Paris 1985, p. 194.

[5] C. Poirier, *Le cinéma québécois. À la recherché d'une identité?*, t. I: *L'imaginaire filmique*, PUL, Québec 2004, p. 2.

titaires».[6] Il considère le cinéma aussi comme une des pratiques discursives. Le cinéma peut, selon lui, représenter, mais aussi mettre en question les discours en circulation dans une société, ceux qui narrent la société, mais aussi ceux qui la transforment. Ces discours peuvent s'inscrire dans la mémoire collective, mais ils peuvent aussi remettre celle-ci en question, en montrer les abus ou les non-dits.

Le rôle identitaire de l'adaptation filmique

L'adaptation filmique partage ce rôle identitaire de la littérature et du cinéma: parler de l'identité, pour l'affirmer ou la mettre en doute, devient un sujet important aussi dans les adaptations cinématographiques des romans québécois. Situées à l'intersection de la littérature et du cinéma, celles-ci non seulement reprennent les sujets littéraires, mais aussi les problématisent dans un nouveau contexte socioculturel et médiatique (filmique).

D'abord, par la référence à un texte antérieur, l'adaptation met en valeur le patrimoine littéraire. Cela est visible surtout si le roman mis sur l'écran est jugé comme 'canonique', bien ancré dans la tradition littéraire québécoise. De plus, si le texte littéraire dépeint une époque passée, le film qui s'en inspire peut lui-même agir comme véhicule des valeurs.

En reprenant des textes importants du point de vue de l'affirmation de l'identité canadienne-française et québécoise, les adaptations assument elles-mêmes une fonction identitaire. Celle-ci ne doit pas se limiter à la reprise du discours déjà exprimé par le roman, les adaptations pouvant également véhiculer leur propre imaginaire de l'identité. Celui-ci peut, d'une part, être propre au réalisateur et les artistes engagés dans le processus de création; d'autre part, il peut être marqué par l'époque contemporaine à la réalisation du film. Ainsi, les adaptations dialoguent à la fois avec

---

[6] *Ibidem*.

la tradition littéraire et avec la production culturelle contempo-
raine (surtout filmique). Leurs rôle ne consiste pas uniquement à
rappeler le passé; elles peuvent le revisiter de manière critique,
voire le réécrire.

En fait, l'adaptation est à la fois un texte dérivé qui se ré-
fère au roman comme texte de départ et une œuvre à part qui est
une prise de parole personnelle de son auteur. Œuvre créée par
un individu, l'adaptation constitue en même temps une pratique
culturelle qui rend visibles «des rapports d'échange entre un ima-
ginaire individuel et un imaginaire collectif».[7] C'est pourquoi
Jeanne-Marie Clerc et Monique Carcaud-Macaire considèrent
l'adaptation comme lecture individuelle et expression d'un ima-
ginaire social:

> L'adaptation, qu'elle soit tentative de transposition cinématographique
> d'un texte littéraire, ou de transposition littéraire d'un texte cinémato-
> graphique, suppose toujours une «restitution différée» et un «partenaire
> différent». Le texte original se donne à lire à travers une réécriture qui
> présuppose une lecture dans laquelle s'inscrit le mode d'appropriation
> spécifique d'un individu, lui-même inscrit le plus souvent dans un autre
> temps et un autre espace. À travers cette lecture, c'est aussi tout une so-
> ciété qui se dit par l'intermédiaire de ce qu'elle reconnaît dans le texte
> initial, mais aussi de ce qu'elle n'en retient pas. Dès lors, une pluralité
> de voix réceptrices et une historicité se nouent dans l'acte qui les pose
> par le même geste de réécriture. Ainsi, l'analyse de l'adaptation permet
> de repérer les divers modes d'appropriation d'une œuvre et les déplace-
> ments qu'ils lui font subir.[8]

Jeanne-Marie Clerc et Monique Carcaud-Macaire proposent
d'analyser l'adaptation avec les outils de la sociocritique. Elles
remarquent que l'adaptation est à la fois une lecture et une écri-
ture (au sens de création). L'analyse de l'adaptation devrait iden-
tifier les déplacements par rapport au texte littéraire et essayer de
déterminer leurs significations du point de vue sociocritique. Par
exemple, elle peut essayer de définir les présupposés idéologiques

---

[7] J.-M. Clerc, M. Carcaud-Macaire, *L'adaptation cinématographique et lit-
téraire*, Klincksieck, Paris 2004, p. 13.

[8] *Ibidem*, p. 11.

du cinéaste en tant que lecteur d'une œuvre antérieure qui est porteuse d'un discours propre à l'écrivain et son contexte social.

Le rôle identitaire de l'adaptation cinématographique dans le contexte québécois sera analysé avec trois exemples: *Maria Chapdelaine* (1916) de Louis Hémon et son adaptation par Gilles Carle en 1983, *Le Survenant* de Germaine Guèvremont (1945) et son adaptation par Érik Canuel en 2005, et enfin *Un homme et son péché* (1933) de Claude-Henri Grignon et son adaptation – *Séraphin, un homme et son péché* – réalisée par Charles Binamé en 2002. L'analyse de ces adaptations aura pour but d'observer comment et par quels moyens elles prennent en charge le discours identitaire exprimé dans les romans québécois et comment elles reflètent ou réagissent au discours contemporain à leur réalisation en transformant l'image de l'identité véhiculée par le texte littéraire. L'adaptation ne sera pas considérée dans les termes de fidélité au roman, mais comme sa réinterprétation et recontextualisation.

Maria Chapdelaine *(1916) de Louis Hémon et son adaptation par Gilles Carle (1983)*

Roman du canon de la littérature canadienne-française, *Maria Chapdelaine* est une œuvre d'un écrivain français qui, venu au Québec, a rédigé son «récit du Canada français». Ce sous-titre témoigne, selon J. Debbie Mann, de l'étrangeté du monde décrit par Hémon qui est «un Français observant les Québécois par les yeux d'un étranger et écrivant pour un public français».[9] Sa perspective est celle d'un étranger qui veut donner l'image de la vie de ces «Français d'outre-mer» que sont pour lui les Canadiens du Québec.

---

[9] J.D. Mann, *Maria Chapdelaine in Literature and Film. Between Tradition and Modernity*, in M.-C. Weidmann Koop (éd.), *Le Québec à l'aube du nouveau millénaire. Entre tradition et modernité*, Presses de l'Université Laval, Québec 2008, p. 194.

Le roman raconte la vie de la communauté canadienne-fran-
çaise du début du XXᵉ siècle. Il trace l'image de la vie rurale
des colons dans la région du Lac-Saint-Jean. Roman du terroir
ou «roman de la colonisation», selon la terminologie d'Aurélien
Boivin,[10] le texte aborde des sujets typiques pour ce groupe de
romans, à savoir le défrichement, le travail de la terre, le phéno-
mène de l'émigration aux États-Unis ou le conflit entre les modes
de vie (nomade vs sédentaire, urbain vs rural). Il s'agit d'une his-
toire d'une jeune femme – Maria – fille des Chapdelaine, colons
défricheurs de Péribonka. Maria est sur le point d'être mariée et
choisit entre trois candidats qui incarnent des modes de vie et
des valeurs différents: Lorenzo Surprenant qui symbolise la vie
urbaine et l'américanisation; Eutrope Gagnant qui représente la
fidélité à la tradition et à la terre; et François Paradis, coureur de
bois qui a gardé des liens avec la nature et la vie nomade. Maria
aime François, mais quand celui-ci meurt dans la neige en route
vers Péribonka, elle décide d'épouser Eutrope. Elle prend sa dé-
cision en entendant les «voix des ancêtres» qui l'incitent à rester
fidèle au passé, prolonger la tradition et maintenir la «race cana-
dienne-française».

Cette fin a encouragé l'appropriation du texte par l'idéologie de
la survivance. En fait, comme le remarque Normand Villeneuve,
le roman a subi des interprétations qui s'éloignent souvent du texte
et du projet idéologique de l'auteur en l'adaptant aux besoins du
moment.[11] Villeneuve constate que l'élite canadienne-française, fi-
dèle à l'idéologie de la survivance, s'est appropriée du roman pour
en faire un «témoin de l'âme canadienne-française» et «un plai-
doyer pour le maintien d'une société traditionnelle».[12] Alors que
l'œuvre d'Hémon est loin d'idéaliser la réalité des défricheurs, on
l'interprète comme une image idyllique de la vie traditionnelle des

---

[10] A. Boivin, *Le roman du terroir*, in Y. Gasquy-Resch (éd.), *Littérature du
Québec*, EDICEF, Vanves 1994, p. 49.

[11] N. Deschamps, R. Héroux, N. Villeneuve (éds.), *Le mythe de Maria
Chapdelaine*, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, Montréal 1980, p. 9.

[12] *Ibidem*, p. 187.

Canadiens français. Villeneuve explique le rôle que le roman s'est vu attribuer en se référant au contexte sociopolitique:

> Ce mythe paraît s'être développé par la rencontre d'aspirations et de besoins les plus divers. Depuis longtemps abandonnée, la petite collectivité canadienne-française semblait ressentir la nécessité de signaler son existence et son originalité pour se valoriser face à elle-même et aux autres. Le récit de Louis Hémon en devint l'instrument: il permit de récupérer et de restaurer le passé dans tout son prestige. Avec *Maria Chapdelaine*, l'élite chercha à démontrer que les Canadiens français n'étaient plus ce peuple sans histoire dont avait parlé Durham mais une nation qui avait survécu au temps par une lutte acharnée. Grâce au sol, à la religion et aux traditions, cette nation devenait finalement le symbole de la force. Le passé devait donc se prolonger dans l'avenir pour conserver l'intensité de vie d'autrefois.[13]

Villeneuve situe la fin du mythe de *Maria Chapdelaine* dans les années 1950, où avec les transformations qui préparent la Révolution tranquille, on rejette les valeurs qu'on avait attribuées au roman.[14] Cela s'accompagne d'un retour au texte qui se voit réinterprété selon un nouveau contexte socio-culturel.

L'adaptation du roman réalisée par Gilles Carle en 1983 s'inscrit dans ces réinterprétations. Il s'agit de la troisième adaptation du texte de Hémon[15] qui diffère des adaptations précédentes par un décalage temporel important entre la publication du texte littéraire (1916) et la réalisation du film (1983). De ce fait, le film s'inscrit dans un contexte social et politique fortement différent. À cette distance temporelle et contextuelle, s'ajoute la différence des perspectives. Or, le point de vue de Gilles Carle est celui d'un Québécois qui regarde son pays. Selon J. Debbie Mann,

> l'adaptation [de Carle] construit un jeu de miroirs d'une grande réflexivité où les spectateurs québécois se voient représentés par les acteurs qui partagent leur héritage culturel et linguistique dans une histoire qui

---

[13] *Ibidem*, p. 217.

[14] *Ibidem*, p. 214.

[15] Le roman a été adapté avant par un réalisateur français Julien Duvivier en 1934 et par un cinéaste canadien Marc Allégret pour le cinéma anglophone en 1950.

est transmise à travers les lentilles du réalisateur québécois mais qui trouve son origine dans le regard d'un auteur français les regardant en tant que l''autre'.[16]

Cette perspective est visible dans le film de Carle à plusieurs niveaux. Les acteurs sont des vedettes du cinéma québécois (Carole Laure dans le rôle de Maria) ou canadien (Nick Manusco comme François), bien connues aux spectateurs. Ils parlent avec un accent marqué et n'évitent pas les «québécismes». Carle renonce à l'idéalisation qui caractérise par exemple l'adaptation cinématographique du roman réalisée en 1934. Ainsi, la nature est représentée de manière réaliste: comme c'est la fin de l'hiver où la glace dégèle, on ne voit pas la blancheur de la neige, mais la boue omniprésente et le gris des arbres qui n'ont pas encore revécu après le froid. Le film se place ainsi plus près du texte littéraire qui met en relief le caractère hostile de la nature et les conditions de vie difficiles de la communauté des défricheurs.

En même temps, le réalisateur effectue plusieurs transformations du texte de départ de sorte que son film entre en dialogue avec l'œuvre littéraire et ses lectures précédentes. On peut constater que le cinéaste se sert du roman pour prendre parole sur la société dans laquelle il vit dans le contexte qui lui est contemporain. En fait, les années 1980, marquées par l'échec du premier référendum sur la souveraineté de la province du Québec et par l'hétérogénéité croissante de la société, qui ne se perçoit plus comme une unité relativement homogène du point de vue culturel et linguistique, constituent un moment de transformations identitaires de la communauté qui, de canadienne-française, devient québécoise. Ce changement dans la conception de l'identité, entamé déjà avec la Révolution tranquille des années 1960, va de pair avec une autre attitude envers le passé.

L'adaptation de Carle est une relecture du roman de Hémon dans ce contexte nouveau. Le film s'ouvre par la reprise des «voix

---

[16] J. Debbie Mann, *Maria Chapdelaine in Literature and Film*, p. 195. Nous traduisons.

des ancêtres» de la fin du roman, mais omet le fragment qui appelle à la fidélité complète au passé. Les images que l'on voit sous les génériques présentent la nature sauvage et le personnage de Maria. Contrairement au roman qui commence par une description du paysage et une scène de la sortie de la messe, le film s'ouvre par la scène où les parents de Maria discutent de son proche retour.

Par ces modifications par rapport au roman, Carle met en relief le personnage féminin. Sans en faire un personnage focalisateur ou narrateur du film, le réalisateur privilégie l'identification avec la jeune femme. La subjectivité de Maria est favorisée aussi par les monologues intérieurs prononcés en forme de voix *off* par l'actrice. Cela participe à l'autonomisation du personnage féminin qui dans le roman gardait souvent le silence, ses pensées étant rapportées par le narrateur mais jamais prononcées. L'adaptation rend audibles les paroles de la jeune femme silencieuse du roman et de cette manière lui donne le droit de s'exprimer.

En substituant la scène de la sortie de l'église de l'incipit du roman par les images de la nature et la scène chez la famille Chapdelaine, le début du film met aussi en valeur le rôle identitaire de la nature au détriment de celui de l'église. Si la religion n'est pas absente du film, elle est traitée comme élément secondaire par rapport à la nature: c'est un élément qui participe à l'identité québécoise sans la définir entièrement.

La fin du film est révélatrice des transformations encore plus importantes au niveau du discours sur l'identité. Maria de Carle finit, elle aussi, par épouser Eutrope et ainsi, prolonger la tradition. Pourtant, elle le fait de son propre gré. Carle clôt le film par la scène où la jeune femme accepte le mariage avec Eutrope et reprend littéralement la réponse que Maria donne à Eutrope dans le roman: «Oui… Si vous voulez, je vous marierai comme vous m'avez demandé, le printemps d'après ce printemps-ci, quand les hommes reviendront du bois pour les semailles».[17] Mais

---

[17] L. Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine. Récit du Canada français* [1921], Bernard Grasset, Paris 1954, p. 245.

les dernières paroles que l'on entend dans le film sont «Oui, je reste» prononcées par la voix intérieure de la jeune femme. En fait, le réalisateur non seulement élimine les «voix des ancêtres», mais aussi ajoute une scène dans laquelle la caméra se focalise sur Maria qui semble s'adresser au spectateur en prononçant ces paroles.

Relecture du roman, l'adaptation se distancie ainsi de l'identité et de l'attitude des Canadiens français telles que présentées dans le texte littéraire. Le film semble refuser la passivité de la collectivité qui s'enfermait dans les valeurs traditionnelles et dans le passéisme, et sans rompre totalement avec les valeurs anciennes, il propose aux Québécois d'adopter une attitude active. D'une part, on peut y voir une tentative de se retrouver après l'échec du référendum, le réalisateur proposant d'assumer la nouvelle situation non pas comme imposée de l'extérieur, mais comme résultant de la décision de la société québécoise elle-même. D'autre part, l'attitude de responsabilité prônée par Carle s'inscrit dans une nouvelle vision de l'identité des Canadiens français devenus Québécois. La nouvelle société ne doit plus être tournée vers le passé, mais avancer dans l'avenir et s'assumer. Le personnage principal sert d'emblème de cette société nouvelle. Or, Maria de Carle diffère de l'héroïne de Hémon. Elle est à la fois plus active et plus autonome, elle prend ses décisions elle-même et ne se laisse pas guider par des voix extérieures.

Une autre transformation par rapport au roman concerne l'image de l'identité québécoise véhiculée par le film. La société québécoise de l'adaptation de Carle n'est pas si homogène que la communauté des Canadiens français du roman de Hémon. Le cinéaste insiste sur la présence des Amérindiens. Il montre ainsi la diversité de l'identité québécoise qui ne peut plus être limitée à l'identité canadienne-française. La sensibilisation à l'hétérogénéité sociale témoigne de la participation du film dans le discours identitaire des années 1980, caractérisé par la reconnaissance de la présence de l'Autre dans la société québécoise.

Un homme et son péché (1933) de Claude-Henri Grignon et son adaptation Séraphin, un homme et son péché *(2002) de Charles Binamé*

Roman du terroir ou «roman de mœurs paysannes»[18] d'après son auteur, *Un homme et son péché* (1933) de Claude-Henri Grignon a aussi – comme *Maria Chapdelaine* – marqué l'imaginaire des Canadiens français et des Québécois. Le roman s'inscrit dans le courant du roman de la terre ou roman régionaliste. Pourtant, comme le remarquent Michel Biron, François Dumont et Élisabeth Nardout-Lafarge, il constitue à la fois un classique et une ouverture qui annonce la fin du genre.[19] En fait, on n'y trouve plus d'images idéalisées de la campagne.[20] Au contraire, selon les mots de l'auteur lui-même, il s'agit de «la peinture réaliste, parfois brutale, jamais vulgaire de l'avarice».[21]

Un homme et son péché présente la vie des villageois et des paysans à l'époque de la colonisation du nord du Québec, en insistant sur les difficultés de leur existence relatives à la situation socio-économique. L'action se situe dans les années 1890, dans la région du village de Sainte-Adèle, dans les Laurentides. L'intrigue se concentre autour de trois personnages: Séraphin, avare usurier, sa femme Donalda et son cousin Alexis. Donalda tombe malade et meurt, faute de soins médicaux. Sa maladie et son décès

---

[18] C.-H. Grignon, *Troisième préface*, in C.-H. Grignon, *Un homme et son péché*, édition critique par A. Sirois et Y. Francôli, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, Montréal 1986, p. 222.

[19] M. Biron, F. Dumont, É. Nardout-Lafarge, *Histoire de la littérature québécoise*, Boréal, Montréal 2007, p. 219.

[20] A. Sirois et Y. Francôli expliquent ce refus d'idéaliser le monde rural par la position idéologique du romancier: «Grignon condamne les façons de voir des auteurs de la ville, éloignés des réalités de la vie terrienne et qui versent dans la propagande. Il rompt ainsi avec la tradition idéaliste du roman du terroir. Peindre la réalité de la vie c'est pour lui mettre en scène des personnages avec leurs qualités et leurs défauts». A. Sirois, Y. Francôli, *Introduction*, in C.-H. Grignon, *Un homme et son péché*, édition critique par A. Sirois, Y. Francôli, p. 15.

[21] C.-H. Grignon, *Troisième préface*, p. 222.

servent de prétexte à décrire l'avarice de son mari et l'attention, voire l'amour, que lui porte Alexis, ainsi que les conditions de vie des colons canadiens-français.

Le projet artistique de décrire la réalité d'une région s'accompagne d'un projet politique et culturel: celui de mythifier la conquête des territoires au Nord. Selon Antoine Sirois et Yvette Francôli, Grignon est favorable à la colonisation du Nord du Québec: «Grignon admirait profondément le curé Labelle (auquel le roman fait allusion) et adhérait pleinement à sa mission de reconquête de la terre promise du Nord. Que ce soit en 1880 ou en 1930, la colonisation est toujours considérée 'comme un remède miracle à tous les maux collectifs […]'».[22] Sa vision de la colonisation est presque mythique – il ne s'agit pas d'un simple événement historique ou d'une période parmi les autres de l'histoire du Québec. C'est «[l]a sainte colonisation au nord de Montréal. Temps héroïques, temps barbares».[23]

Le texte littéraire est à l'origine d'une série médiatique qui englobe un roman radiophonique,[24] des pièces de théâtre, une bande dessinée,[25] deux téléromans[26] et trois adaptations cinématographiques.[27] Celle de Charles Binamé de 2002 constitue la troisième et la plus récente des adaptations. Le film se dit, selon son auteur, être «le plus fidèle possible au roman».[28] D'une

---

[22] A. Sirois, Y. Francôli, *Introduction*, p. 13.

[23] C.-H. Grignon, *Préface*, in *Un homme et son péché* [1933], Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec, Montréal 2011, p. 17.

[24] Il est diffusé par Radio-Canada de 1939 à 1963 et à CBF de 1963 à 1956.

[25] Il s'agit de *Seraphin illustré*, publié en 1951 dans «Le Bulletin des agriculteurs».

[26] Deux séries télévisées tirées d'*Un homme et son péché* sont *Les Belles Histoires des pays d'en haut*, sur l'écran de 1956 à 1970 et *Les pays d'en haut*, diffusée depuis le 11 janvier 2016 sur ICI Radio-Canada Télé 1.

[27] Avant, le roman a été adapté au cinéma sous forme de deux longs métrages produits par P. L'Anglais et réalisés par P. Gury: *Un homme et son péché* (1949) et *Séraphin* (1950).

[28] Interview avec C. Binamé, in *Pierre Lebeau incarnera Séraphin*, «Le Journal de Québec», 18 juillet 2001.

part, il s'agit d'un retour au roman en tant que texte de départ de l'adaptation. L'objectif de Binamé est en fait de revenir au texte littéraire, sans passer par exemple par le radioroman ou la série télévisée qui se sont imposés comme lectures d'*Un homme et son péché*.[29] D'autre part, l'adaptation veut lire le texte sans les partis pris idéologiques, comme ceux de l'idéologie de la survivance, et sans les limites imposées par la censure. En ce sens, *Séraphin, un homme et son péché* est, comme les adaptations précédentes et malgré les déclarations de Binamé, une relecture du roman.

Il s'agit d'une relecture et d'une interprétation dans un contexte socio-culturel nouveau et à la lumière d'un autre rapport au passé. En fait, le film semble à la fois glorifier ou procéder à une mythification de l'époque de la colonisation et en montrer les côtés jusque-là mis sous silence, car jugés trop gênants ou peu dignes d'attention. Ainsi, l'adaptation de Binamé reproduit avec détails le contexte de l'époque: les vêtements, les accessoires, les intérieurs font preuve d'une grande attention portée à la vérité historique dans un film d'époque. D'une part, on esthétise ces éléments, par exemple par le choix des plans pittoresques ou les soins accordés aux costumes des acteurs. D'autre part, on n'hésite pas à montrer la pauvreté, l'exiguïté et l'ascétisme des logements ou la physiologie (par exemple dans la scène de la maladie de Donalda).

Si le film reprend la plupart des personnages, il en modifie la psychologie de manière importante. Ainsi, si Séraphin est toujours un avare, il a une psychologie plus développée et plus profonde. Dans le roman, son avarice était due aux conditions économiques sévères; dans le film, elle trouve sa source dans un traumatisme de l'enfance. L'adaptation s'ouvre par une scène présentant Séraphin qui, enfant, regarde sa mère faire l'amour

---

[29] Retour au texte littéraire, l'adaptation s'inspire en même temps du film de 1949: elle revient à la période qui précède le mariage de Donalda avec Séraphin et raconte la naissance de l'amour de celle-ci envers Alexis. Mais, contrairement au film de Gury, l'adaptation de 2002 reprend l'intrigue du roman: la maladie et la mort de Donalda, l'incendie et le décès de Séraphin.

pour gagner de l'argent. Le lien entre le corps féminin, l'argent et la transgression des normes sociales va peser sur la vie du garçon.

Quant à Donalda, il s'agit d'une jeune femme courageuse et indépendante. Elle semble plus osée que le personnage littéraire dans les relations avec son amoureux, Alexis. En même temps, grâce à la distribution des rôles, elle semble plus jeune que ses avatars télévisuels et filmiques et ainsi plus proche du personnage romanesque. Cela souligne le tragique de son sort et, sur un autre plan, met en lumière la condition féminine de l'époque.

En fait, outre une attention accrue portée à la psychologie des personnages, l'adaptation de Binamé développe la problématique de la condition féminine. En ce sens, le film revient au texte littéraire et se distancie des autres adaptations qui mettaient en avant la rivalité masculine. Il s'agit à la fois d'un retour et d'un développement: or, Binamé fait des ajouts par rapport au roman pour décrire la situation des femmes à la fin du XIXe siècle. Ainsi, Séraphin abuse de Donalda non seulement physiquement (pour les travaux de ménage) mais aussi sexuellement – aspect complément absent du roman qui insiste d'ailleurs sur le manque de relations intimes dans le couple. Le film explicite que Donalda est littéralement vendue à Séraphin contre les dettes de son père. L'adaptation fait d'autres ajouts dans l'intrigue concernant la problématique féminine: Séraphin est responsable du viol et, indirectement, du suicide d'une domestique, Nanette. Les jeunes femmes ne trouvent ni aide ni appui dans la communauté qui reste indifférente. Ce n'est qu'après la mort de Donalda que les hommes – son père, le curé, le docteur – s'accusent de leur inaction. Le curé se défroque pour ne plus devoir cacher sa relation amoureuse avec une femme.

Ces ajouts et transformations par rapport au texte littéraire relèvent d'une réactualisation de celui-ci. En fait, le film de Binamé peut être considéré comme une recontextualisation du roman. Sans déplacer l'action dans les années 2000, le réalisateur en propose une lecture qui prend en compte les enjeux du présent et profite d'une perspective contemporaine et de la pos-

sibilité d'aborder certains sujets sans se soucier de la censure qui contrôlait les films encore dans les années 1940. Il en résulte une autre attitude envers la religion, qui n'est ni critiquée ni idéalisée, la mise en valeur du côté humain des religieux, une analyse psychologique approfondie des personnages, une sensibilisation à la problématique féminine. Il s'agit donc d'une prise de parole sur le Québec contemporain, une relecture qui dit autant sur le passé que sur le présent.

Le Survenant *de Germaine Guèvremont (1945) et son adaptation (2005) de Érik Canuel*

Un homme et son péché de Claude-Henri Grignon n'est pas le seul roman du terroir à être mis sur l'écran dans les années 2000. En fait, un autre texte, considéré lui aussi comme un «classique» du roman régionaliste[30] a été adapté au grand écran. Il s'agit du *Survenant* (1945) de Germaine Guèvremont, porté à l'écran par Érik Canuel en 2005. Comme *Un homme et son péché*, *Le Survenant* a inspiré une série de textes qui relèvent des médias différents. Le texte littéraire a été adapté à la radio sous forme de radioroman (1952-1955) et à la télévision, en téléroman,[31] puis au cinéma en 1957 par Denys Gagnon, Maurice Leroux, Jo Martin et Paul Martin. L'adaptation de Canuel est la dernière de la série de ces transferts intermédiatiques du roman.

Le roman de Guèvremont, comme celui de Grignon, dépeint la société rurale du Québec au moment où celle-ci est en train de disparaître. En ce sens, il n'a pas de force idéologique des romans précédents qui appelaient au retour à la terre et décrit la campagne avec un accent nostalgique. Aurélien Boivin considère

---

[30] M. Biron, F. Dumont, É. Nardout-Lafarge, *Histoire de la littérature québécoise*, p. 239.

[31] *Le Survenant*, 1954-1957 et 1959-1960; *Au Chenal du Moine*, de 1957 à 1958; et *Marie-Didace*, de 1958 à 1959.

Le Survenant comme le roman qui annonce les transformations futures du roman urbain. Or, l'attachement à la terre n'y est plus représenté comme garant de la survivance de la communauté canadienne-française.[32] Celle-ci fait face aux changements de la modernité. Le texte de Guèvremont garde pourtant les valeurs et les oppositions principales du roman du terroir: celle entre l'espace rural – endroit de survie de la race canadienne-française et l'espace urbain – lieu de perdition et de dépravation, ainsi que celle entre la vie sédentaire, associée à l'idéologie de la survivance et le nomadisme menaçant la continuité, par exemple sous forme d'émigration aux États-Unis. Le roman raconte l'arrivée d'un étranger dans un petit village, Le Chenal du Moine. Jeune homme d'une grande taille, beau et mystérieux, le «Survenant» (comme l'appellent ses hôtes) est accueilli par la famille Beauchemin. En échange de travaux, il reste chez les Beauchemin et participe à la vie du village. Il entre en relations avec les membres de la famille: connivence et sympathie grandissante avec le père Didace, rivalité et hostilité avec le fils. Il devient amoureux d'Angélina, fille d'un autre habitant du village.

Le Survenant, personnage principal aussi bien dans le roman que dans le film, peut être considéré comme une figure de l'Autre. En mettant en scène ce personnage et ses interactions avec la communauté du Chenal du Moine, le roman et son adaptation interrogent la présence de l'Autre au sein de la société québécoise. En fait, la présence du Survenant perturbe la vie tranquille du village et interroge les valeurs selon lesquelles vivent les habitants. Sa vie de nomade s'oppose à leur sédentarité.[33]

L'écart important entre la date de la publication du roman (1945) et celle de la sortie du film (2005) fait que l'adaptation du roman de Germaine Guèvremont par Érik Canuel se situe dans un autre cadre que le texte littéraire: le film s'adresse à un autre pu-

---

[32] A. Boivin, *Le roman du terroir*, p. 57.

[33] Voir L. Gauvin, *Aventuriers et sédentaires. Parcours du roman québécois*, Honoré Champion Éditeur, Paris 2012.

blic dans un autre contexte socioculturel. On peut poser donc la question sur la manière de présenter l'Autre dans les deux œuvres et sur la configuration identitaire dans laquelle s'inscrivent le roman et son adaptation.

L'analyse de l'adaptation permet de noter un changement de perspective significatif en ce qui concerne le rapport à l'Autre. Dans le roman, le narrateur observe l'arrivée du Survenant chez les Beauchemin en se plaçant du côté de ces derniers ou plus généralement de la communauté du Chenal du Moine qui devient un «nous» collectif. Sa perspective est celle des habitants qui voient l'Autre au moment où celui-ci frappe à leur porte. Dans l'adaptation, bien que le spectateur voie l'arrivée du Survenant de l'intérieur de la maison, la perspective du «dedans», celle des habitants n'est pas complètement gardée. Or, le «nous» du roman auquel participe le narrateur est remplacé par «vous» par lequel le héros s'adresse aux Beauchemin dans le dialogue créé par les scénaristes du film. En plus, le film ajoute deux scènes qui englobent l'intrigue romanesque: au début on voit le Survenant qui parcourt les routes et, à la fin, on suit son départ du Chenal du Moine. Cela aide à renforcer le degré d'identification avec le personnage de l'Autre et avec son point de vue. Par contre, le roman revient toujours au point de vue de la collectivité et c'est par cette perspective qu'il finit.

Ainsi, on peut constater qu'en portant à l'écran le roman, Érik Canuel modifie la perspective choisie par Germaine Guèvremont. Le récit du film suit le personnage de l'Autre dans sa route en s'arrêtant avec lui au village et adopte son point de vue. En sorte que, moyennant les images qui relèvent d'une vision 'objective' de la caméra, l'adaptation refuse l'identification avec le 'nous' collectif et permet aux spectateurs de s'identifier avec l'étranger en donnant la parole à celui-ci, mais surtout en le représentant par les images.

Le film serait ainsi l'illustration d'une société où la place de l'Autre a changé. L'adaptation cinématographique du *Survenant* renforce certains éléments déjà présents dans l'œuvre roma-

nesque et en ajoute d'autres, modifiant ainsi la représentation de l'Autre proposée dans le texte littéraire. Le film s'inscrit dans le paysage culturel et identitaire du Québec du début du XXIᵉ siècle où l'altérité reste inhérente à l'imaginaire social. Et si le lecteur du *Survenant* en 1945 était avant tout «sédentaire», le spectateur du 2005 est «nomade».

Maria Chapdelaine, *Séraphin, un homme et son péché* et *Le Survenant* sont des films qui, pour reprendre les mots de Josiane Ouellet, «sont à leur deuxième génération audiovisuelle, ce qui n'est pas sans provoquer des impressions de déjà-vu, voire de recyclé».[34] Recyclées, ces œuvres peuvent être considérées, selon Ouellet, comme des objets de recherche intéressants en tant qu'exemples de «la manière dont des auteurs se réapproprient certains des mythes québécois et, surtout, de voir comment la perspective change à travers le temps».[35]

Effectivement, en reprenant des textes importants pour l'expression de l'identité canadienne-française et québécoise, ces adaptations jouent un rôle identitaire. Celui-ci ne se limite pas à une reprise du discours exprimé par le roman. Par les transformations du texte de départ (ajouts, omissions, réinterprétations), les adaptations véhiculent une autre vision de la problématique identitaire qui s'inscrit dans les idées de l'époque contemporaine à leur réalisation. De cette manière, elles dialoguent avec la tradition littéraire et son discours sur l'identité. Elles se servent des histoires du passé pour raconter de nouveaux récits, sur le présent: sur la pluralité de la société québécoise, l'ouverture à l'altérité, sans pourtant nier le rôle et la valeur de la tradition. Elles en proposent des relectures et ainsi, présentent de nouvelles attitudes envers le passé.

---

[34] J. Ouellet, *L'adaptation cinématographique québécoise depuis* Séraphin, un homme et son péché*: résurgence d'un phénomène cyclique ou exploration de nouvelles voies?*, in J.-F. Plamondon (éd.), *Littérature et cinéma au Québec, 1995-2005: Actes du Colloque du Centro Interuniversitario di Studi Quebecchesi*, Pendragon, Bologna 2008, p. 99.

[35] *Ibidem*, p. 100.

Bibliographie

Biron, M., Dumont, F., Nardout-Lafarge, É., *Histoire de la littérature québécoise*, Boréal, Montréal 2007.

Boivin, A., *Le roman du terroir*, in Y. Gasquy-Resch (éd.), *Littérature du Québec*, EDICEF, Vanves 1994.

Clerc, J.-M., Carcaud-Macaire, M., *L'adaptation cinématographique et littéraire*, Klincksieck, Paris 2004.

Deleuze, G., *L'Image-temps*, Éditions de Minuit, Paris 1985.

Deleuze, G., Guattari, F., *Kafka: pour une littérature mineure*, Éditions de Minuit, Paris 1975.

Deschamps, N., Héroux, R., Villeneuve, N. (éds.), *Le mythe de Maria Chapdelaine*, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, Montréal 1980.

Gauvin, L., *Aventuriers et sédentaires. Parcours du roman québécois*, Honoré Champion Éditeur, Paris 2012.

Grignon, C.-H., *Un homme et son péché* [1933], Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Montréal 2011.

Grignon, C.-H., *Troisième préface*, in *Un homme et son péché*, édition critique par A. Sirois et Y. Francôli, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, Montréal 1986.

Guèvremont, G., *Le Survenant* [1945], Éditions FIDES, Montréal 1974.

Hémon, L., *Maria Chapdelaine. Récit du Canada français* [1921], Bernard Grasset, Paris 1954.

Kafka, F., *Journaux. Œuvres complètes III*, Gallimard, Paris 1984.

Mann, J.D., *Maria Chapdelaine in Literature and Film. Between Tradition and Modernity*, in M.-C. Weidmann Koop (éd.), *Le Québec à l'aube du nouveau millénaire. Entre tradition et modernité*, Presses de l'Université Laval, Québec 2008.

Ouellet, J., *L'adaptation cinématographique québécoise depuis* Séraphin, un homme et son péché*: résurgence d'un phénomène cyclique ou exploration de nouvelles voies?*, in J.-F. Plamondon (éd.), *Littérature et cinéma au Québec, 1995-2005*,

Actes du Colloque du Centro Interuniversitario di Studi Que-becchesi, Pendragon, Bologna 2008.

Pierre Lebeau incarnera Séraphin, «Le Journal de Québec», 18 juillet 2001.

Poirier, C., *Le cinéma québécois. À la recherché d'une identité?*, t. I: *L'imaginaire filmique*, PUL, Québec 2004.

Robin, R., *À propos de la notion kafkaïenne de 'littérature mineure': quelques questions posées à la littérature québécoise*, «Paragraphes», 2 (1989), pp. 5-14.

Sirois, A., Francôli, Y., *Introduction*, in C.-H. Grignon, *Un homme et son péché*, édition critique par A. Sirois et Y. Francôli, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, Montréal 1986.

Engaging Young Learners' Multiliteracies through Picture Books and Multimodal Storytelling

Lynn Mastellotto

Free University of Bolzano

Introduction

In her influential work, *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon examines the concept of adaptation as both «a product and a process of creation and reception»,[1] revealing how the different media and genres that stories are transcoded to and from are not just formal entities, but also represent various ways of engaging audiences. She distinguishes three main modes of engagement with stories: being told a story (e.g. through novels, short stories); being shown a story (e.g. through performance media); and interacting with a story physically and kinesthetically (e.g. through videogames or theme park rides).

Drawing on Hutcheon's conceptualization of how we engage with stories, children's picture books and classroom storytelling practices can be seen to potentially combine all three modes by immersing children in story worlds through «transmedia storytelling».[2] By reading stories and hearing stories read aloud, seeing stories performed through animated readings, dramatiza-

---

[1] L. Hutcheon with S. O'Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation* (2nd edition), Routledge, New York-London 2012, p. XIV.

[2] *Ibidem*, p. XXIII.

tions, roleplays, and film adaptations, and interacting with stories through tactile engagement with picture books and related cultural artefacts such as masks, puppets, lapbooks, and props, children participate in storytelling in all three modes. Multimodal approaches to storytelling offer rich opportunities for communication and meaning-making activities with young learners through multi-sensory input that activates their learning on multiple levels, as we shall see below.

The article begins with an examination of how stories, in general, are an effective teaching-learning tool that make use of different modes of communication[3] to develop children's multiple literacies, from functional literacy to visual literacy to cognition and metacognition, as well as their social, emotional and intercultural competences. Then, through an analysis of Canadian author Maxine Trottier's picture book *Migrant*, the article unpacks specific modes of engagement, showing how stories are selected and adapted for pedagogical purposes in order to immerse young learners in compelling story worlds or «heterocosms»[4] that are both accessible and instructional.

Language and literacies through stories

As a rich source of high-quality language input, children's stories lend themselves to language and literacy work with young learners. They gain language exposure in a rich, authentic and meaningful context, first through the sounds of the language, then gradually through the recognition of words as their literacy de-

---

[3] G. Kress defines mode as a «socially shaped and culturally given resource for making meaning. *Image*, *writing*, *layout*, *music*, *gesture*, *speech*, *moving image*, *soundtrack* are examples of modes used in representation and communication». See *What is Mode?*, in C. Jewitt (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis*, Routledge, Abingdon 2009, p. 54.

[4] L. Hutcheon with S. O'Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation*, p. XXIV.

velops.[5] The images and peritextual features offer scaffolding to help unlock the meaning of the text in early literacy. Story books stimulate learners' emotions and inspire their creativity while activating their prior knowledge about how language works (metalinguistic awareness) as well as their prior knowledge about the world (metaphysical awareness).

Wright also suggests that authentic stories are highly motivating and rich in language experience, allowing learners to develop a «reservoir of language»[6] as vocabulary and sentence constructions are introduced first through receptive learning. Reading aloud stimulates children's listening and reading fluency as they search for textual meaning and predict outcomes of stories. Listening to and telling stories helps them learn the rhythm, intonation, prosody and pronunciation since stories present the language through repetition and rhyme, which are predictable and memorable, thus facilitating language acquisition and retention through pattern practice.[7] Speaking and writing fluency develop gradually as children build up knowledge of lexis and grammar, moving the acquired language into their productive control through an input-intake-output cycle wherein language exposure leads to language emergence. Story-based activities for lexis and grammar development alongside reading and writing activities enable all learners, including second-language learners, to acquire productive control of the target language.

---

[5] I.-K. Ghosn notes that exposure to «rich, natural language typical of quality children's literature will facilitate the procedural memory's processing of the correct structures to the cerebellum» (see I.-K. Ghosn, *Storybridge to Second Language Literacy: The Theory, Research, and Practice of Teaching English with Children's Literature*, IAP, Charlotte NC 2013, p. 134), claiming that conventional ELT course books, by contrast, often present discourse in de-contextualized and artificial situations, thus «minimizing opportunities for meaningful learner engagement and cognitive development» (*ibidem*, p. XVII).

[6] A. Wright, *Storytelling with Children*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001, p. 5.

[7] See L. Mastellotto, G. Burton, *Storytelling*, in L. Dozza (ed.), *Maestra Natura. Per una pedagogia esperienziale e co-partecipata*, Zeroseiup, Bergamo 2018.

Gail Ellis suggests that using picture books also helps children develop key transversal competences. Her research on «learning literacy» (learning how to learn) demonstrates that cognitive and meta-cognitive skills are supported by picture books, including wordless picture books, since they ignite curiosity and nurture «an inquisitive mindset».[8] Metacognitive strategies encourage children to reflect on their learning in order to plan, monitor and evaluate how they learn, enabling them to develop an awareness and understanding of their own learning processes, preferences, and learner autonomy. Cognitive strategies are more task-specific and involve children using the language and their learning materials for specific purposes, including information retrieval, sorting, classifying, hypothesizing, predicting, sequencing, and summarizing.[9] Both cognitive and metacognitive learning strategies can be embedded in book-based approaches and storytelling activities in the language arts classroom.

As Ellis further notes, written-linguistic modes of communication interface with oral, visual, audio, gestural, tactile and spatial patterns of meaning as teachers make use of multimodal resources for teaching and learning in the classroom; consequently, children must be able to decode information from many sources, reflect on it and discuss their learning.[10] Janice Bland claims that through their *multi-layered* (i.e. readable in different ways at different levels of linguistic sophistication and cognitive maturity) and *multi-modal* (i.e. combining written text, visual images and graphic elements) dimensions, children's stories encourage engaged analysis on many levels.[11] This complexity helps foster children's multi-literacies, that is, not only their functional literacy (the ability to read and write) but the many different literacies – visual literacy,

---

[8] G. Ellis, *Promoting 'Learning Literacy' through Picturebooks: Learning How to Learn*, «Children's Literature in English Language Education», 4/2 (2016), p. 30.

[9] *Ibidem*, pp. 31-32.

[10] *Ibidem*, p. 28.

[11] See J. Bland, *Introduction*, in J. Bland, C. Lütge (eds.), *Children's Literature in Second Language Education*, Bloomsbury Academic, London 2014, p. 2.

emotional literacy, cultural literacy and digital literacy – needed to interpret and decode information today.

The term «multiple literacies» embraces the notion that knowledge is constructed through many sources and modes that extend beyond language itself, and children must become literate in all of these. A multi-literacies pedagogy is thus underpinned by multimodal theory which recognizes that children create meaning using a «multiplicity of modes, means and materials»[12] for self-expression. Immersive and participatory story worlds encountered through diverse media enable children to receive, reproduce and produce new stories. Kress notes that children move easily between and across modes, semiotically recycling information in creative and transformative ways according to their interests. The ability to express their thoughts, to be understood, and in so doing to act upon their culture is, according to Kress, an essential part of the child's development of a sense of agency and voice.[13]

Social, emotional and intercultural learning through stories

Listening to stories in class is a social experience and allows children to share emotions as a group and forge a deep connection with others. Roney notes that the «co-creative and interactive»[14] dimension of sharing stories makes storytelling a powerful tool for social learning in childhood. Discussing stories allows children to express a range of emotions and understand their sources. Stories link fantasy or imaginative worlds with children's real worlds, helping them make sense of their everyday lives. Stories also help children situate themselves in the world and identify ever-widening circles of belonging – home, school, community.

---

[12] G. Kress, *Before Writing: Rethinking the Paths to Literacy*, Taylor & Francis, London 1997, p. 97.

[13] *Ibidem*.

[14] R.C. Roney, *Storytelling in the Classroom: Some Theoretical Thoughts*, «Storytelling World», 9 (1996), p. 7.

Storytelling also offers a dynamic, multi-sensory way to familiarize young learners with the rich tradition of children's literature in English by considering various narrative genres (fairy tales, folktales, myths, legends, fables) as well as informal narratives, and by examining how stories circulate in every culture as a means of entertainment, cultural preservation and moral education. By analyzing the structural elements of stories (characters, plot, setting, narrative point of view), children learn how narrative technique is used in making meaning. Narrative literacy, the ability to «read between the lines» of a story and understand its subtext and context, is a vital complement to functional literacy, the ability to read and write. It relies on an understanding of the pragmatic function of language, which generally evolves from ages 6 to 10 years. The ways in which new forms of media are enhancing our ability to record, express, consume and share stories make an understanding of narrative a key component of the primary curriculum.

Narrative literacy is key to cultivating cultural understanding. Stories reflect cultural information (values, customs) which helps children understand their own and different realities and construct an identity. Bruno Bettelheim[15] and other scholars who research identity formation point to the value of stories not only in reflecting identities, but also in helping shape them.[16] Since stories transmit cultural information, they are ways for children to understand what makes them the same as or different from others encountered in storyworlds. Narratives and story-

---

[15] See B. Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairytales*, Vintage Books, New York 1989.

[16] See also: J. Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2001; A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Polity Press, Cambridge 1991; A. Nehamas, *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1998; M.C. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*, Oxford University Press, New York 1990; C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1989.

telling are, in fact, part of a «hidden curriculum» in primary education since they nurture children's psychosocial and emotional development through the transmission of values related to self-definition, empathy for and connection with others, intercultural awareness, and respect for diversity.[17] Martha Nussbaum signals the ethical force of stories which help to cultivate a «narrative imagination»: through imaginary encounters with difference, readers can develop an ethical orientation by thinking about «what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have».[18]

The imaginary encounters which take place through the telling and receiving of stories facilitate an engagement with other perspectives from the horizon of one's own positions and experiences, making self-awareness and critical distance an integral part of self-other narrative encounters. Edward Said reminds us that identities are dialogically constructed through difference: one defines oneself based on the recognition of what one is not in relation to others; thus «the Other» acts as «a source and resource for a better, more critical understanding of the Self».[19]

Perspective-taking tasks through reading and imaginary encounters with others can help develop empathy by enabling readers to project themselves into a character, to see the world through different eyes, and vicariously experience a spectrum of emotions. Goleman claims that «fundamental ethical stances in

---

[17] A hidden curriculum refers to the unspoken or implicit values, behaviours, procedures, and norms that exist in an educational setting. While such expectations are not explicitly written, 'hidden curriculum' is the unstated promotion and enforcement of certain behavioural patterns, professional standards, and social beliefs while navigating a learning environment. See J.P. Miller, W. Seller, *Curriculum: Perspectives and Practice*, Copp Clark Pitman, Toronto 1990.

[18] M.C. Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2010, pp. 95-96.

[19] W.E. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, Columbia University Press, New York 2004, p. XI.

life stem from underlying emotional capacities» which constitute what he calls «emotional intelligence».[20] These capacities, as defined by Mayer *et al.,* include emotional perception (ability to identify emotions), emotional understanding (knowledge about emotions through experience or through empathy), emotional facilitation (ability to relate one's feelings and state of mind to emotions) and emotional management (ability to choose appropriate responses to emotions). By enabling children to explore their emotions at many levels, stories can help them develop all these capacities.[21]

Recent studies in psychology and behavioural science point to the value of indirect contact with diverse outgroups (immigrants, homosexuals, refugees) in educational settings as a strategy to reduce prejudice and lead to improved intergroup attitudes. Vezzali *et al.*'s[22] research with adolescents shows that indirect contact through book reading on intercultural topics can help foster an open mindset and more flexibility in perspective-taking: those who read a book with an intercultural theme showed a reduction in stereotyping, improved intergroup attitudes and intentions, and a willingness to engage in future contact with immigrants.[23] Furthermore, the effects of indirect contact were mediated by an increased inclusion of the other in conceptualizations of the self.[24]

---

[20] D. Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, Bantam Books, New York 1995, p. XII.

[21] For a further analysis of literature and the development of emotional intelligence, see: B. Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment*; I.-K. Ghosn, *Storybridge to Second Language Literacy*; D. Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*; J. Mayer, D. Caruso, P. Salovey, *Emotional Intelligence Meets Standards for a Traditional Intelligence*, «Intelligence», 27 (1999), pp. 267-298.

[22] See L. Vezzali, S. Stathi, D. Giovannini, *Indirect Contact through Book Reading: Improving Adolescents' Attitudes and Behavioural Intentions towards Immigrants*, «Psychology in the Schools», 49/2 (2012), pp. 148-162, and L. Vezzali et al., *The Greatest Magic of Harry Potter: Reducing Prejudice*, «Journal of Applied Social Psychology», 45 (2015), pp. 105-121.

[23] L. Vezzali *et al.*, *The Greatest Magic of Harry Potter*, p. 148.

[24] *Ibidem*, p. 158.

In this way, storybooks and storytelling practices can help teachers and pupils navigate the multilingual and multicultural dynamics of today's classrooms that are increasingly defined by diversity, offering strategies to ensure that each person has a voice, is recognized, and feels a sense of belonging.[25] A guided analysis of how identity and inclusion are represented in storybooks can provide a gateway for teachers to discuss racial, gender, ethnic and social diversity with children, as we shall see below. In the section that follows, I refer to a recent storybook by the Canadian author Maxine Trottier which offers rich opportunities for work on multiliteracies with young learners through a story that engages them in various modes, guiding their discovery and learning about difference through being told, being shown and interacting with the selected text and its peritextual features.

Diversity in Migrant

Maxine Trottier's picture book *Migrant*,[26] illustrated by Isabelle Arsenault, addresses the theme of diversity in a direct way in seeking to raise social awareness about a marginalized group of Mexican migrants who work as seasonal farm labourers in Canada. It is a «social conscience book» in Amina Chaudhri's sense of a book that explicitly presents the problem of racial, ethnic or class invisibility, or of a character's struggle with marginalization from mainstream society.[27] *Migrant* is told from the perspective of Anna, the child protagonist and narrator, who describes her family's seasonal migration, their work picking fruit in the fields, and their lives lived on the edges of society.

---

[25] See L. Mastellotto, *Developing Young Learners' Multiliteracies through Multimodal Storytelling*, in S. Bratož, A. Kocbek, A. Pirih (eds.), *Pathways to Plurilingual Education*, University of Primorska Press, Koper 2020, pp. 253-267.

[26] M. Trottier, *Migrant*, Groundwood Books, Toronto 2011.

[27] A. Chaudrhi, *Multiracial Identity in Children's Literature*, Routledge, New York-London 2017, p. IX.

In an afterword to the story, Trottier introduces specific historical details contextualizing the real lives of these migrants, descendants from a group of Mennonites who migrated to Canada in the early 1900s then moved to Mexico in the 1920s hoping to become landowners there while finding religious freedom through withdrawal from the modern world. These dreams were, however, never realized due to economic hardships in Mexico and, having held onto their Canadian citizenship from the first stage of their migration, the Mennonites were able to find seasonal work as fruit and vegetable pickers on Canadian farms, returning to their homes in Mexico after the annual harvest.

As a group, the Mennonites are highly visible – standing out by virtue of their old-fashioned style of dress and their Low German dialect or *Plautdietsch* – yet simultaneously invisible, living on the margins of a rural community in Southwestern Ontario. Inspired by the author's encounters with the Mennonites from Mexico through summers spent in Leamington, Ontario, the book is an adaptation of historical events through an imaginative re-telling of the migrant story, pondering what it might be like to be a child in a migrant family. As the protagonist Anna wonders: «What would it be like to stay in one place – to have your own bed, to ride your own bicycle? […] Now that would be something», readers can measure the distance between themselves and Anna through these everyday objects, which for her are only aspirational. Her opening question presents a hypothetical musing, a «what if», that is sadly thwarted by the intervening pages of the story which provide glimpses into the precarious conditions of her life. The book does not offer false hope that her situation will change; the final double-page spread gently confirms this: «But fall is here, and the geese are flying away. And with them goes Anna, like a monarch, like a robin, like a feather in the wind».

Trottier's rhythmic narrative is ripe with metaphor as Anna's reality is interpreted through her imaginative associations: she sees herself alternately as a butterfly, a bird, a rabbit and a feather; too young to work herself, she sees her family «like a hive

of worker bees». This poetic language offers an opportunity for readers to explore what Lazar calls the «literary metalanguage» of stories through the use of metaphor, simile, personification, paradox, and alliteration.[28] Metaphoric language is the language of approximation, and through Anna's use of metaphor, Trottier seeks to render her displacement in terms that are more recognizable and more readily grasped by young readers.

Arsenault's illustration of a solid tree with an empty swing on one page, with Anna depicted among the caravan of departing migrants on the facing page, makes it clear that rootedness to place is not part of her story. As the reader follows Anna's head tilted upwards, her gaze fixed on a flock of birds flying away in V-formation, the final image leaves little doubt about the rootlessness of her situation and the inevitable repetition of the seasonal migration cycle for her. Young readers identify with Anna as they too are small people in a world full of adults and feel, at times, powerless. These images are a vital component of Trottier's tale, providing details about the main character and her world, details that render the storyscape more realistic and believable and, consequently, more likely to rouse readers' identification and empathy. As noted by Krashen and Bland,[29] empathizing with characters in compelling stories is important for initiating young readers to the pleasure of literature.

Other juxtapositions of imagery and text subtly suggest Anna's social isolation and economic hardship. We see her looking over at a local boy, dressed in modern clothes and a cap, being pulled away on the street by a parent, ostensibly to prevent contact with the Mennonite girl. The image supports the text's articulation of Anna's discomfort: «When they shop for food at the cheap store, Anna is shy because people often stare». Similarly, when Anna

---

[28] G. Lazar, *Literature and Language Teaching: A Guide for Teachers and Trainers*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1993, p. 43.

[29] S. Krashen, J. Bland, *Compelling Comprehensible Input, Academic Language and School Libraries*, «Children's Literature in English Language Education Journal», 2/2 (2014), p. 8.

describes her brothers «burrowing together like puppies» in their single bed under a single, worn blanket, a blanket too small to cover them all, the reader appreciates the scarcity of resources available to Anna's family. The illustrations are always tender and wistful, here depicting a joyous ruckus of playful puppies, but the text reveals a more sober truth than may be apparent in the images at first glance.

As Bland reminds us, multimodal texts contribute to narrative meaning through multiple modes – including pictures, words, design, and peritext – but these «do not reiterate identical messages in each mode» since the messages can «overlap, complement, amplify or contradict each other», thus telling stories «from differing perspectives».[30] Understanding how meaning is created in stories through the intersemiosis of verbal and visual elements is key to developing narrative literacy. Bland[31] notes that authentic picture books are powerful in early learning since the pictures transform into dynamic mental images that remain in the young reader's repertoire of experience, anchoring ideas, concepts and feelings along with new language. She states: «The sensory anchoring supplied through the pictures in children's literature constitutes one of the most supportive features for comprehension of the text: the illustrations simplify the understanding of the verbal text both for L1 and L2 readers».[32] Ellis and Brewster[33] also note that using authentic storybooks can be motivating for second-language learners and can provide a greater sense of achievement than conventional ELT materials.

Yet, the rich language of Trottier's story could present obstacles for second-language speakers since expressions like «burrowing», «rolling off their tongues as sweetly as sugar», «of

---

[30] J. Bland, *Pictures, Images and Deep Reading*, «Children's Literature in English Language Education Journal», 3/2 (2015), p. 25.

[31] See *ibidem*.

[32] *Ibidem*, p. 25.

[33] G. Ellis, J. Brewster, *Tell it Again! The Storytelling Handbook for Primary English Language Teachers*, British Council, London 2014, p. 14.

yet another», «words as spicy as the hottest chilis», «the rooms filled with the ghosts of last year's workers», «slow and rich as dark molasses» are beyond the minimal language of L2 learners in the 6-10 age range. Mastellotto and Burton[34] suggest that language difficulties associated with using authentic storybooks that provide input beyond the minimal language of young learners can be overcome by fully exploiting illustrations as visual support and by using dialogic readings with scaffolded gestures and prosody to aid comprehension. Arsenault's images can help provide effective disambiguation if teachers draw children's attention to the emotional cues suggested in her depictions of characters and place.

The illustrations in *Migrant* help contextualize Anna's situation as the story unfolds, making the linguistic input more readily comprehensible. The images not only reinforce the story's message by offering visual scaffolding to support textual meaning, but also force a reconsideration of readers' preconceptions, most notably regarding «home». Arsenault's illustrations challenge the reader by presenting glimpses into Anna's life that are not quite what they seem at first glance, thereby subverting readerly expectations. An image of Anna sitting at the kitchen table wearing fluffy rabbit ears, for example, seems initially to suggest that she, like all children, enjoys wearing costumes and playing dress up; however, the text contradicts such a conventional reading, forcing the reader to look again: «There are moments when she [Anna] feels like a rabbit. Not the sort with the white fluff of tail, but a jack rabbit. Those rabbits live in abandoned burrows, her father has told her». Looking more closely, the image is not of a fluffy cottontail but of a tough and sinewy hare. With intertextual echoes of Alice in Wonderland following a white rabbit into a surreal world, Trottier's protagonist navigates a world that is surreal to most young readers whose realities may be distant from such a peripatetic lifestyle.

---

[34] See L. Mastellotto, G. Burton, *Storytelling*.

On another page, we see a mother washing dishes in the kitch-
en as a rabbit hops out the window; the image is accompanied
by the following lines of text: «When her mother works hard to
make a home of yet another empty farmhouse, the rooms filled
with the ghosts of last year's workers, Anna feels like a jack rab-
bit». The text provides a filter to accurately interpret the domestic
scene; this is not an idyll of 'home sweet home', as underlined by
Anna's association with a jack rabbit escaping through an open
window. Similarly, the figure of the mother is bent over a sink,
suggesting domestic labour that does not idealize homemaking.
This portrayal of parental disempowerment is unexpected and
disturbing since young readers are invited to see the all-powerful
parental figure here subjected to social and economic forces be-
yond her control.

The combination of text and image to create a layering of
messages is suitable for capturing the conflicting feelings – op-
timism, longing, isolation, togetherness, frustration – of the im-
migrant experience. At times, the word-image juxtaposition lacks
correspondence, what Barthes terms «relay»,[35] whereas at other
times these elements correspond in an instance of «elaboration».
Word-image interactions can change in the course of one picture
book, creating different types of textual-visual interanimations
across a book. A thorough intermodal analysis of *Migrant* would
require a detailed and systematic description of how each image
coheres with the verbal text accompanying it, which is beyond
the scope of this article. However, teachers considering using this
picture book with young learners ought to pay attention to sym-
metries and asymmetries in the intermodal messages conveyed.
Moya-Guijarro[36] explains that concurrence between image and
text requires less inference since the intermodal input has a «sym-

---

[35] R. Barthes, *Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives: Image-
Music-Text*, Fontana, London 1977.

[36] See A.J. Moya-Guijarro, *A Multimodal Analysis of Picture Books for
Children: A Systemic Functional Approach*, Equinox, Sheffield 2014.

metrical relationship», which in turns lightens the cognitive load of the reader. In several instances in *Migrant*, however, the verbiage and image do not fully concur, making scaffolding necessary to help support young readers' understanding of the story.

Overall, Trottier's picture book lends itself to rich language and literacy work with children, first through verbal and non-verbal warm-ups, then dialogic readings – pausing for clarification, sign-posting key actions and events, drawing attention to the images and graphic elements of the book. In the post-reading phase, the story can be revisited through dramatized storytelling which draws on different media (music, rhyme, raps, masks, puppets, scenery, mini-books, props) to enhance storytelling and re-telling. Empathy building through perspective-taking tasks in the classroom might involve having children adopt a character's perspective in post-reading activities, such as a writing a journal entry from Anna's point of view or engaging in a roleplay based on characters and settings, for instance an imagined encounter between Anna and the little boy outside the supermarket. Extended interactive activities might include inviting children to imagine what they would bring with them on an uncertain journey, using Anna's little suitcase from the story as an object of realia in class; naming each object placed in the suitcase presents an opportunity to recycle related lexis from the text. These types of activities stimulate children's physical interaction with the story, albeit in a different way than through gamification and digital media as described by Hutcheon.

By adapting the real story of Mennonite migrants from Mexico to a fictional narrative presented in a children's picture book, Trottier hopes to draw wider attention to the precarious working conditions of migrants, their living conditions in shabby homes with high rents, and to the dreams and aspirations of children like Anna who imagine a more stable life. In Nussbaum's words, the story seeks to put the reader «in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that

someone so placed might have».[37] Trottier's book clearly serves
an explicitly didactic purpose of educating young readers (and
the adults who read with them) about those who live at the mar-
gins of society.

Conclusion

Drawing on Bruner's[38] understanding of the key role narrative
plays in the construction of meaning, it is widely acknowledged
that stories function as a powerful tool to pass on knowledge and
values in a social context. Recent studies in psychology and cog-
nitive science show that the human brain is predisposed to under-
stand, remember and tell stories: humans think in, remember facts
according to, and shape their personal and group identities along
narrative structures.[39] Philosophers such as Alasdair McIntyre[40]
suggest that storytelling is so central to human nature that *Homo
sapiens*, the thinking person, could more aptly be called *Homo
narrans*, the storytelling person, given our propensity to orga-
nize and interpret the world in terms of narrative plots that shape
our lives. Stories and storytelling thus occupy a privileged status
in human cognition and cultural expression, offering a power-

---

[37] M.C. Nussbaum, *Not for Profit*, pp. 95-96.

[38] See J. Bruner, *The Narrative Construction of Reality*, «Critical Inquiry»,
18/1 (1991), pp. 1-21, and J. Bruner, *The Culture of Education*, Harvard Uni-
versity Press, Boston 1997.

[39] See, for example: J. Bruner, *The Narrative Construction of Reality*; A.C.
Graesser, V. Ottati, *Why Stories? Some Evidence, Questions, and Challenges*,
in R.S. Wyer (ed.), *Knowledge and Memory: The Real Story*, Lawrence Er-
lbaum Associates, Hillsdale 1995, pp. 121-132; M. Glaser, B. Garsoffky, S.
Schwan, *Narrative-Based Learning: Possible Benefits and Problems*, «Com-
munications - European Journal of Communication Research», 34/4 (2009),
pp. 429-447; D.C. Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions: The Cognitive Psychol-
ogy of Epic, Ballads, and Counting-out-Rhymes*, Oxford University Press, New
York 1995; R.C. Schank, R. Abelson, *Knowledge and Memory: The Real Story*,
in R.S. Wyer (ed.), *Knowledge and Memory: The Real Story*, pp. 1-86.

[40] A. McIntyre, *After Virtue*, Bloomsbury Academic, London 1981, p. 216.

ful pedagogical tool when harnessed in early learning. Learning theorists and educators point to the benefits of using stories as a strategy for designing meaningful and anchored learning experiences for young learners.[41]

In terms of educating children for inclusion, stories can be a powerful pedagogical tool for navigating issues of identity and inclusion in the primary classroom. This, however, requires books that present diversity in affirming contexts and that elicit intercultural reflection and discussion. A recent report on ethnic representation in children's literature issued by the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE) and funded by the Arts Council England grimly found that only 1% of British children's books featured a main character who was black or minority ethnic (BAME) compared to the 32.1% of schoolchildren of minority ethnic origins in England identified by the Department of Education in 2017.[42]

A longstanding study on diversity in American children's literature carried out by the Cooperative Children's Book Centre (CCBC) at the Faculty of Education, University of Madison-Wisconsin, similarly seeks to document the number of books received annually that are by and about people of colour and from First/Native Nations. The 2017 statistics on multicultural representation are somewhat better: of the approximately 3,700 books received in 2017, mostly from US publishers, 9% (340 books) had significant African or African American content/characters;

---

[41] See, for example: S. Järvelä, K.A. Renninger, *Designing for Learning: Interest, Motivation, and Engagement*, in K. Sawyer (ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of the Learning Sciences* (2nd edition), Cambridge University Press, New York 2014, pp. 668-685; M. Glaser, B. Garsoffky, S. Schwan, *Narrative-Based Learning*; R.E. Mayer, *Applying the Science of Learning*, Pearson-Allyn & Bacon, Boston 2011.

[42] The CLPE study (2018) administered a survey to UK publishers in which they were asked to identify books featuring BAME (Black, Asian, minority ethnic) characters. CLPE found that a total of just 391 (4%) of the 9115 children's books published in 2017 had BAME characters and that only 1% had a BAME main character.

2% (72 books) had significant American Indian/First Nations content/characters; 8% (310 books) had significant Asian/Pacific or Asian/Pacific American content/characters; 6% (216 books) had significant Latinx content/characters.[43]

By signalling an overall dearth of multicultural representation in contemporary children's literature, the UK and US studies raise important questions about the impact of cultural invisibility on children's psychosocial development: what happens when children fail to see themselves and their realities reflected in the books they read? Rudine Sims Bishop[44] warns that the effects of cultural marginalization or erasure can be debilitating since picture books function as *windows* that offer views on different realities, *mirrors* which reflect the reader's own reality, and *sliding glass doors* which act as thresholds between storyworlds and real worlds.

Bishop further states: «When children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when images they see are distorted, negative or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part».[45] Bland argues that those who are misrepresented, marginalized, hidden or absent from texts must be made visible through an inclusive pedagogy in language education: teachers must be aware of ideological issues underpinning cultural representation and misrepresentation/erasure in children's literature and carefully select texts that metonymically represent a full spectrum of diversity.[46]

---

[43] For a summary of the 2017 CCBC findings, please see: http://ccblogc. blogspot.com/2018/02/ccbc-2017-multicultural-statistics.html. For information on CCBC's expanded analysis of diversity that looks at other dimensions of representation, including gender, religion, (dis)ability, and LGBTQ, see findings reported at the previous link.

[44] R.S. Bishop, *Mirrors, Windows and Sliding Glass Doors*, «Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom», 6/3 (1990), p. IX.

[45] J. Bland, *Picturebooks and Diversity*, «Children's Literature in English Language Education Journal», 4/2 (2016), p. 44.

[46] *Ibidem*, p. 43.

Trottier's picture book reflects diversity in an authentic context through a compelling story that can move young readers to be open, flexible, and kind toward others. More research is needed to map out the ways in which Canadian children's literature, as distinct from the US and UK traditions, is making a unique contribution to the positive representation of diversity and inclusion in stories for young readers.

References

BARTHES, R., *Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives: Image-Music-Text*, Fontana, London 1977.

BENNETT, J., *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2001.

BETTELHEIM, B., *The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairytales*, Vintage Books, New York 1989.

BISHOP, R.S., *Mirrors, Windows and Sliding Glass Doors*, «Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom», 6/3 (1990), p. IX-XI.

BLAND, J., *Introduction*, in J. Bland, C. Lütge (eds.), *Children's Literature in Second Language Education*, Bloomsbury Academic, London 2014, pp. 1-11.

BLAND, J., *Pictures, Images and Deep Reading*, «Children's Literature in English Language Education Journal», 3/2 (2015), pp. 24-36; available at URL: http://clelejournal.org/pictures-images-and-deep-reading-bland/ (accessed July 31, 2020).

BLAND, J., *Picturebooks and Diversity*, «Children's Literature in English Language Education Journal», 4/2 (2016), pp. 41-64; available at URL: http://clelejournal.org/article-3-picturebooks-and-diversity/ (accessed July 31, 2020).

BRUNER, J., *The Narrative Construction of Reality*, «Critical Inquiry», 18/1 (1991), pp. 1-21.

BRUNER, J., *The Culture of Education*, Harvard University Press, Boston 1997.

Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE), *Reflecting Realities – Ethnic Diversity in UK Children's Books*, 2018; available at URL: https://clpe.org.uk/library-and-resources/research/reflecting-realities-survey-ethnic-representation-within-uk-children (accessed July 31, 2020).

Chaudrhi, A., *Multiracial Identity in Children's Literature*, Routledge, New York-London 2017.

Cooperative Children's Book Centre (CCBC), *Multicultural Statistics*, 2017; available at URL: http://ccblogc.blogspot.com/2018/02/ccbc-2017-multicultural-statistics.html (accessed July 31, 2020).

Dawkins, S., O'Neill, M., *Teaching Literate Language in a Storytelling Intervention*, «Australian Journal of Language and Literacy», 34/3 (2011), pp. 294-307.

Dunn, O., *Introducing English to Young Children: Spoken Language*, Collins, London 2012.

Ellis, G., *Promoting 'Learning Literacy' through Picturebooks: Learning How to Learn*, «Children's Literature in English Language Education», 4/2 (2016), pp. 27-40.

Ellis, G., Brewster, J., *Tell it Again! The Storytelling Handbook for Primary English Language Teachers*, British Council, London 2014.

Ghosn, I.-K., *Nurturing Emotional Intelligence through Literature*, «English Teaching Forum», 39/1 (2001), pp. 1-10.

Ghosn, I.-K., *Storybridge to Second Language Literacy: The Theory, Research, and Practice of Teaching English with Children's Literature*, IAP, Charlotte NC 2013.

Giddens, A., *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Polity Press, Cambridge 1991.

Glaser, M., Garsoffky, B., Schwan, S., *Narrative-Based Learning: Possible Benefits and Problems*, «Communications - European Journal of Communication Research», 34/4 (2009), pp. 429-447.

Goleman, D., *Emotional Intelligence*, Bantam Books, New York 1995.

Graesser, A.C., Ottati, V., *Why Stories? Some Evidence, Questions, and Challenges*, in R.S. Wyer (ed.), *Knowledge and Memory: The Real Story*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Hillsdale 1995, pp. 121-132.

Greene, E., Del Negro, J.M., *Storytelling: Art and Technique*, Libraries Unlimited, Santa Barbara 2010.

Hutcheon, L., with O'Flynn, S., *A Theory of Adaptation* (2nd edition), Routledge, New York-London 2012.

Järvelä, S., Renninger, K.A., *Designing for Learning: Interest, Motivation, and Engagement*, in K. Sawyer (ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of the Learning Sciences* (2nd edition), Cambridge University Press, New York 2014, pp. 668-685.

Krashen, S., Bland, J., *Compelling Comprehensible Input, Academic Language and School Libraries*, «Children's Literature in English Language Education Journal», 2/2 (2014), pp. 1-12; available at URL: http://clelejournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Article-Stephen-Krashen-Janice-Bland-CLELEjournal-Vol-2.2-2014.pdf (accessed July 31, 2020).

Kress, G., *Before Writing: Rethinking the Paths to Literacy*, Taylor & Francis, London 1997.

Kress, G., *What is Mode?*, in C. Jewitt (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis*, Routledge, Abingdon 2009, pp. 60-75.

Kress, G., Van Leeuwen, T., *Reading Images. The Grammar of Visual Design*, Routledge, London-New York 2006.

Lazar, G., *Literature and Language Teaching: A Guide for Teachers and Trainers*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1993.

Mastellotto, L., Burton, G., *Storytelling*, in L. Dozza (ed.), *Maestra Natura. Per una pedagogia esperienziale e co-partecipata*, Zeroseiup, Bergamo 2018, pp. 137-146.

Mastellotto, L., *Developing Young Learners' Multiliteracies through Multimodal Storytelling*, in S. Bratož, A. Kocbek, A. Pririh (eds.), *Pathways to Plurilingual Education*, University of Primorska Press, Koper 2020, pp. 253-267.

Mayer, J., Caruso, D., Salovey, P., *Emotional Intelligence Meets Standards for a Traditional Intelligence*, «Intelligence», 27 (1999), pp. 267-298.

Mayer, R.E., *Applying the Science of Learning*, Pearson-Allyn & Bacon, Boston 2011.

McIntyre, A., *After Virtue*, Bloomsbury Academic, London 1981.

Miller, J.P., Seller, W., *Curriculum: Perspectives and Practice*, Copp Clark Pitman, Toronto 1990.

Moya-Guijarro, A.J., *A Multimodal Analysis of Picture Books for Children: A Systemic Functional Approach*, Equinox, Sheffield 2014.

Nehamas, A., *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1998.

Nussbaum, M.C., *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*, Oxford University Press, New York 1990.

Nussbaum, M.C., *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2010.

Roney, R.C., *Storytelling in the Classroom: Some Theoretical Thoughts*, «Storytelling World», 9 (1996), pp. 7-9.

Rosenblatt, L.M., *Literature – S.O.S.!*, «Language Arts», 68 (1991), pp. 444-448.

Rubin, D.C., *Memory in Oral Traditions: The Cognitive Psychology of Epic, Ballads, and Counting-out-Rhymes*, Oxford University Press, New York 1995.

Said, E.W., *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, Columbia University Press, New York 2004.

Schank, R.C., Abelson, R., *Knowledge and Memory: The Real Story*, in R.S. Wyer (ed.), *Knowledge and Memory: The Real Story*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Hillsdale 1995, pp. 1-86.

Taylor, C., *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1989.

Tomlinson, B., *Humanizing the Coursebook*, in B. Tomlinson (ed.), *Developing Materials for Language Teaching*, Continuum, London 2003, pp. 162-173.

TROTTIER, M., *Migrant*, illustrated by I. Arsenault, Groundwood Books, Toronto 2011.

VEZZALI, L., STATHI, S., GIOVANNINI, D., *Indirect Contact through Book Reading: Improving Adolescents' Attitudes and Behavioural Intentions towards Immigrants*, «Psychology in the Schools», 49/2 (2012), pp. 148-162.

VEZZALI, L., STATHI, S., GIOVANNINI, D., CAPOZZA, D., TRIFILETTI, E., *The Greatest Magic of Harry Potter: Reducing Prejudice*, «Journal of Applied Social Psychology», 45 (2015), pp. 105-121.

WRIGHT, A., *Creating Stories with Children*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2000.

WRIGHT, A., *Storytelling with Children*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001.

AUTHORS / AUTEURS

Gerardo ACERENZA est *professore associato* en Langue et Traduction françaises au Département des Lettres et Philosophie de l'Università degli Studi di Trento. De 2003 à 2005, il a enseigné le français et l'italien au Département d'Études françaises et italiennes de St. Jerome's University, à Waterloo (Ontario, Canada), où il a organisé un colloque international ayant pour thème la présence des dictionnaires français dans les littératures québécoise et canadienne-française (*Dictionnaires français et littératures québécoise et canadienne-française*, Éditions David, Ottawa 2005). Il a publié plusieurs articles sur le débat linguistique au Québec, sur la traduction des canadianismes en italien et sur l'œuvre de l'écrivain québécois Jacques Ferron: *Des voix superposées: plurilinguisme, polyphonie et hybridation langagière dans l'œuvre romanesque de Jacques Ferron* («Labirinti», 129, 2010). En décembre 2019, il a édité le volume collectif *Qu'est-ce qu'une mauvaise traduction littéraire?* («Labirinti», 183). Il est membre du conseil directif du CISQ - Centro Interuniversitario Studi Quebecchesi.

Corinne BIGOT is senior lecturer at the University of Toulouse (Jean Jaurès) in Commonwealth literature and Canadian civilization. She holds a Ph.D. in Canadian literature (Nanterre University, 2007). Her research focuses on Canadian literature,

the genre of the short story and autobiography. She has published extensively on Alice Munro's short stories; her publications include a monograph, *Alice Munro: Les silences de la nouvelle* (PUR, Rennes 2014) and, as co-author with Catherine Lanone, *Sunlight and Shadows, Past and Present: Alice Munro's* Dance of the Happy Shades (Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 2015). She edited a special issue of «Commonwealth Essays and Studies» (*Alice Munro: Writing for Dear Life*, 2015) and co-edited *«With a Roar from Underground»: Alice Munro's* Dance of the Happy Shades (2016). Recent publications on Munro's short stories were published in «Short Fiction in Theory & Practice», 7 (2017); *Alice Munro and the Anatomy of the Short Story* (O. Palusci ed., 2017), and *Space and Place in Alice Munro's Fiction* (Christine Lorre Johnston & Eleanor Rao eds., 2018).

Angela Buono enseigne les littératures francophones à l'Université de Naples 'L'Orientale'. Spécialiste de la littérature franco-canadienne et québécoise, elle fait partie du Conseil de Direction de l'Association Italienne d'Études Canadiennes (AISC). Elle a écrit des articles et prononcé plusieurs communications sur l'œuvre de Hédi Bouraoui, de Marie-Claire Blais et sur les écritures migrantes. Ses intérêts de recherche portent actuellement sur les littératures autochtones du Québec et sur les nouvelles approches critiques des littératures émergentes.

Ylenia De Luca est *professore associato* de Littérature française à l'université Aldo Moro de Bari. Elle s'intéresse à la poésie canadienne de langue française entre les XXe et XXIe siècles et à la poésie française du XXe siècle, ainsi qu'à la littérature francophone contemporaine. Elle a publié *Intertextualité dans le roman québécois: les charmes du mythe* (Tangram, Trento 2019) *La poesia quebecchese fra tradizione e postmodernità. Claude Beausoleil* (Schena, Fasano 2002) et de nombreux essais dans des revues nationales et internationales.

Chiara Feddeck is a Ph.D. candidate at RWTH Aachen University in Germany. Her research deals with gender stereotypes in Canadian Literature, and she has focused on two seminal Canadian writers: Margaret Atwood and Timothy Findley and the ways they have made use of gender stereotypes from their beginnings to their later works, taking into account the themes of war and dystopia as well. Before that she concentrated on Margaret Laurence's Manawaka Cycle and its female protagonists and their search for identity. Her research interests include Canadian and Australian literature, female writing, dystopian literature, violence, trauma, and gender studies.

Associate Professor of English Linguistics at the University of Trento, **Sabrina Francesconi** is a member of the AISC scientific board. Her research interests are tourism and heritage discourses, inspected through multimodal genre analysis, and Alice Munro's style, explored through systemic-functional stylistics. Recent publications include the articles *Film Adaptations as Intersemiotic Contact Zones:* Edge of Madness *by Anne Wheeler* («Textus», 2, 2019) and *Dynamic Intersemiosis as a Humour-enacting Trigger in a Tourist Video* («Visual Communication», 2017), as well as the monographic volumes: *Heritage Discourse in Digital Travel Video Diaries* (Tangram, Trento 2018), *Alice Munro, il piacere di raccontare* (Carocci, Roma 2015) and *Reading Tourism Texts: A Multimodal Analysis* (Channel View Publications, Bristol 2014). She is currently working on film and television adaptations of Munro's short stories.

Linda Hutcheon holds the rank of University Professor Emeritus in the Department of English and the Centre for Comparative Literature at the University of Toronto. She is author of nine books on contemporary postmodern culture in Canada and around the world, including *A Theory of Adaptation* (Routledge, 2006; new edition in 2012; Italian translation, Armando Editore,

Roma 2011). She has edited five other books on cultural topics and is associate editor of the «University of Toronto Quarterly».

Michael Hutcheon is Professor of Medicine at the University of Toronto. A pulmonologist specializing in lung transplantation, his extensive scientific research publications encompass a number of areas: pulmonary physiology; bone marrow transplantation; AIDS. He has also published in the fields of medical education and the semiotics of both cigarette and pharmaceutical advertising.

They have done collaborative and interdisciplinary work on the cultural construction of sexuality, gender and disease in opera (*Opera: Desire, Disease, Death*, 1996), both the real and the represented operatic body (*Bodily Charm: Living Opera*, 2000), the lessons opera teaches about mortality (*Opera: The Art of Dying*, 2004), and the later creative life and «late style» of opera composers (*Four Last Songs: Aging and Creativity in Verdi, Strauss, Messiaen, and Britten*, 2015). They are also the authors of «Opera and Adaptation» in *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*, edited by Thomas Leitch for Oxford University Press (2017).

Lynn Mastellotto has a Ph.D. from the University of East Anglia (Norwich, UK) and is a researcher (RTDa) at the University of Bolzano, Faculty of Education, in English Language and Translation (LIN-12). She works primarily in teacher education for English Language Teaching with young learners. Her research interests include travel writing and life writing, English as a second/foreign language with young learners in multilingual contexts, multimodal approaches to multiliteracies (including storytelling and children's literature), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and methodologies which integrate content and language in higher education (ICLHE).

Anna Mongibello (Ph.D.) is tenure track Researcher in English Language at the University of Naples 'L'Orientale'. Her research interests include the intersections of Language, Ideology

and Identity in the Canadian context, explored through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis and the tools of Corpus Linguistics. She has worked on the discursive constructions of nationhood and national identity by focusing on the crucial role of ethnic and mainstream media in the representation of people and events. In 2012, she was awarded the Doctoral Student Research Award by the International Council for Canadian Studies. In 2017, she joined the board of the Italian Association for Canadian Studies (AISC). She has authored two books, *Indigenous Peoples in Canadian TV News: A Corpus-based Analysis of Mainstream and Indigenous News Discourses* (Iniziative Editoriali Paolo Loffredo, Napoli 2018) and *Geografie alternative: scrittrici indigene contemporanee del Canada anglofono* (Tangram, Trento 2013). She has also published articles in national and international journals such as the «British Journal of Canadian Studies» and «Anglistica».

Oriana Palusci is full professor of English at the University of Naples 'L'Orientale'. She is the President of the Italian Association for Canadian Studies, and editor of the «International Journal of Canadian Studies». She has published extensively on 19th- and 20th-century women novelists, Travel writing, Utopian literature, Cultural studies, Postcolonial studies, Translation studies, tourism and Englishes. She has written on Canadian culture, linguistics and literature, with essays on James de Mille, Emily Carr, Alice Munro, Margaret Atwood, Margaret Laurence, Marian Engel, Jane Urquhart, Anne Michaels, Italian-Canadian authors and on Canadian English. She has edited and prefaced the Italian edition of works by Atwood, Laurence, Munro, Engel, and Urquhart. She has recently edited *English, But Not Quite, Locating Linguistic Diversity* (Tangram, Trento 2010), *Traduttrici: Female Voices across Languages* (Tangram, Trento 2011), *Translating Virginia Woolf* (Peter Lang, Bern 2012), *Crossing Borders: Variations on a Theme in Canadian Studies* (with B. Rizzardi, Edizioni ETS, Pisa 2014), *Translating East and West* (with K.E. Russo, Tangram, Trento 2016), *Green Canada* (Peter Lang, Brus-

sels 2016) and *Alice Munro and the Anatomy of the Short Story* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne 2017).

Federico Pio Gentile holds a Ph.D. in English Linguistics at the Department of Literary, Linguistic and Comparative Studies of the University of Naples 'L'Orientale'. His main interests involve Multimodality, Media Studies, Canadian Studies, Specialized Discourse and Translation. He has authored *La linguistica del delitto* (Tangram, Trento 2015) and has translated the novel *Embassytown* by China Miéville (Fanucci, Roma 2016).

Héliane Ventura is a professor of contemporary and Canadian literatures at the University of Toulouse-Jean Jaurès. Her area of specialization is the contemporary short story in the anglophone world with special emphasis on the rewriting of the canon, intermedial relationships and the emergence of transatlantic literatures. She has contributed two monographs on Margaret Atwood and Alice Munro respectively, directed or co-directed close to 20 volumes of essays and written more than 90 articles published in Canada, France, Great Britain, Italy, The Netherlands, The United States, principally on women short story writers from Canada, Britain, New Zealand, South Africa as well as on Aboriginal writers.

Katarzyna Wójcik est doctorante à l'Institut d'Études romanes de l'Université de Varsovie où elle travaille, sous la direction du Prof. Dr. hab. Józef Kwaterko, sur les adaptations cinématographiques du roman québécois. Elle est lauréate de la Bourse Gaston Miron 2017 accordée par l'AIÉQ (Association Internationale des Études Québécoises) avec le concours de CRILCQ (Centre de Recherche Interuniversitaire sur la Littérature et la Culture Québécoises) et de la bourse du Conseil International d'Études Canadiennes. Elle est auteure de plusieurs articles sur le cinéma québécois et les adaptations cinématographiques des romans québécois publiés entre autres dans les revues «Transcanadiana», «Echo des Études romanes», «Acta Philologica».

Collana «Labirinti»

I titoli e gli *abstract* dei volumi precedenti sono consultabili sul sito
https://www.lettere.unitn.it/154/collana-labirinti

100 Charles Bauter, *La Rodomontade*, texte établi, annoté et présenté par L. Rescia, 2007.

101 Walter Nardon, *La parte e l'intero. L'eredità del romanzo in Gianni Celati e Milan Kundera*, 2007.

102 Carlo Brentari, *La nascita della coscienza simbolica. L'antropologia filosofica di Susanne Langer*, 2007.

103 Omar Brino, *L'architettonica della morale. Teoria e storia dell'etica nelle* Grundlinien *di Schleiermacher*, 2007.

104 *Amministrare un Impero: Roma e le sue province*, a cura di A. Baroni, 2007.

105 *Narrazione e storia tra Italia e Spagna nel Seicento*, a cura di C. Carminati e V. Nider, 2007.

106 Italo Michele Battafarano, *Mit Luther oder Goethe in Italien. Irritation und Sehnsucht der Deutschen*, 2007.

107 *Epigrafia delle Alpi. Bilanci e prospettive*, a cura di E. Migliario e A. Baroni, 2007.

108 *Sartre e la filosofia del suo tempo*, a cura di N. Pirillo, 2008.

110 *Quando la vocazione si fa formazione. Atti del Convegno Nazionale in ricordo di Franco Bertoldi*, a cura di O. Bombardelli e G. Dalle Fratte, 2008.

111 Jan Władysław Woź, *Per la storia delle relazioni italo-polacche nel Novecento*, 2008.

112 Herwig Wolfram, *Origo. Ricerca dell'origine e dell'identità nell'Alto Medioevo*, a cura di G. Albertoni, 2008.

113   Italo Michele Battafarano, *Hildegart Eilert, Probleme der Grimmelshausen-Bibliographie*, 2008.

114   *Archivi e comunità tra Medioevo ed età moderna*, a cura di A. Bartoli Langeli, A. Giorgi e S. Moscadelli, 2009.

115   Adriana Anastasia, *Ritratto di Erasmo. Un'opera radiofonica di Bruno Maderna*, 2009.

116   *Il Bios dei filosofi. Dialogo a più voci sul tipo di vita preferibile*, a cura di F. de Luise, 2009.

117   *De los sonetos, canciones, mandriales y sextinas del gran poeta y orador Francisco Petrarca, traduzidos de toscano por Salomón Usque (Venecia: 1567)*, estudio preliminar y edición crítica de J. Canals, 2009.

118   Paolo Tamassia, *Sartre e il Novecento*, 2009.

119   *On Editing Old Scandinavian Texts: Problems and Perspectives*, edited by F. Ferrari and M. Bampi, 2009.

120   *Mémoire oblige. Riflessioni sull'opera di Primo Levi*, a cura di A. Neiger, 2009.

121   Italo Michele Battafarano, *Von Andreas Gryphius zu Uwe Timm. Deutsche Parallelwege in der Aufnahme von Italiens Kunst, Poesie und Politik*, 2009.

122   *Storicità del testo, storicità dell'edizione*, a cura di F. Ferrari e M. Bampi, 2009.

123   Cassiodoro Senatore, *Complexiones in epistulis Pauli apostoli*, a cura di P. Gatti, 2009.

124   *Al di là del genere*, a cura di M. Rizzante, W. Nardon e S. Zangrando, 2010.

125   Mirko Casagranda, *Traduzione e* codeswitching *come strategie discorsive del plurilinguismo canadese*, 2010.

126   *Il mondo cavalleresco tra immagine e testo*, a cura di C. Demattè, 2010.

127   Andrea Rota, *Tra silenzio e parola. Riflessioni sul linguaggio nella letteratura tedesco-orientale dopo il 1989. Christa Wolf e Kurt Drawert*, 2010.

128   *Le Immagini nel Testo, il Testo nelle Immagini. Rapporti fra parola e visualità nella tradizione greco-latina*, a cura di L. Belloni, A. Bonandini, G. Ieranò e G. Moretti, 2010.

129   Gerardo Acerenza, *Des voix superposées. Plurilinguisme, polyphonie et hybridation langagière dans l'œuvre romanesque de Jacques Ferron*, 2010.

130 Alice Bonandini, *Il contrasto menippeo: prosimetro, citazioni e commutazione di codice nell'*Apocolocyntosis *di Seneca*, 2010.

131 *L'allegoria: teorie e forme tra medioevo e modernità*, a cura di F. Ferrari, 2010.

132 Adalgisa Mingati, *Vladimir Odoevskij e la* svetskaja povest'*. Dalle opere giovanili ai racconti della maturità*, 2010.

133 Ferruccio Bertini, *Inusitata verba. Studi di lessicografia latina raccolti in occasione del suo settantesimo compleanno* da P. Gatti e C. Mordeglia, 2011.

134 *Deutschsprachige Literatur und Dramatik aus der Sicht der Bearbeitung: ein hermeneutisch-ästhetischer Überblick*, a cura di F. Cambi e F. Ferrari, 2011.

135 *La poesia della prosa*, a cura di M. Rizzante, W. Nardon e S. Zangrando, 2011.

136 Sabrina Fusari, *«Flying into uncharted territory»: Alitalia's crisis and privatization in the Italian, British and American press*, 2011.

137 *Uomini, opere e idee tra Occidente europeo e mondo slavo*, a cura di A. Mingati, D. Cavaion e C. Criveller, 2011.

138 *Les visites guidées. Discours, interaction, multimodalité*, J.-P. Dufiet (éd.), 2012.

139 Nicola Ribatti, *Allegorie della memoria. Testo e immagine nella prosa di W.G. Sebald*, 2012.

140 *La comprensione. Studi linguistici*, a cura di S. Baggio e del gruppo di Italiano scritto del Giscel trentino, 2012.

141 *Il prisma di Proteo. Riscritture, ricodificazioni, traduzioni fra Italia e Spagna (sec. XVI-XVIII)*, a cura di V. Nider, 2012.

142 Serenella Baggio, *«Niente retorica». Liberalismo linguistico nei diari di una signora del Novecento*, 2012.

143 *L'acquisizione del tedesco per i bambini parlanti mòcheno. Apprendimento della terza lingua in un contesto bilingue di minoranza*, a cura di F. Ricci Garotti, 2012.

144 *Gruppi, folle, popoli in scena. Persistenza del classico nella storia del teatro europeo*, a cura di C. Mordeglia, 2012.

145 *Democracy and Difference: The US in Multidisciplinary and Comparative Perspectives. Papers from the 21st AISNA Conference*, edited by G. Covi and L. Marchi, 2012.

146 Maria Micaela Coppola, *The im/possible burden of sisterhood. Donne, femminilità e femminismi in «Spare Rib. A Women's Liberation Magazine»*, 2012.

147 *Persona ficta. La personificazione allegorica nella cultura antica fra letteratura, retorica e iconografia*, a cura di G. Moretti e A. Bonandini, 2012.

148 *Pro e contro la trama*, a cura di W. Nardon e C. Tirinanzi De Medici, 2012.

149 Sara Culeddu, *Uomo e animale: identità in divenire. Incontri metamorfici in* Fuglane *di Tarjei Vesaas e in* Gepardene *di Finn Carling*, 2013.

150 *Avventure da non credere. Romanzo e formazione*, a cura di W. Nardon, 2013.

151 Francesca Di Blasio, Margherita Zanoletti, *Oodgeroo Noonuccal. Con* We Are Going, 2013.

152 *Frontiere: soglie e interazioni. I linguaggi ispanici nella tradizione e nella contemporaneità*; vol. I a cura di A. Cassol, D. Crivellari, F. Gherardi e P. Taravacci; vol. II a cura di M.V. Calvi, A. Cancellier e E. Liverani, 2013. Pubblicazione online: http://eprints.biblio.unitn.it/4259

153 *Umorismo e satira nella letteratura russa. Testi, traduzioni, commenti. Omaggio a Sergio Pescatori*, a cura di C. De Lotto e A. Mingati, 2013.

154 *L'objet d'art et de culture à la lumière de ses médiations*, J.-P. Dufiet (éd.), 2014.

155 *Sparsa colligere et integrare lacerata. Centoni, pastiches e la tradizione greco-latina del reimpiego testuale*, a cura di M.T. Galli e G. Moretti, 2014.

156 *Comporre. L'arte del romanzo e la musica*, a cura di W. Nardon e S. Carretta, 2014.

157 Kurd Laßwitz, *I sogni dell'avvenire. Fiabe fantastiche e fantasie scientifiche*, a cura di A. Fambrini, 2015.

158 *Le parole dopo la morte. Forme e funzioni della retorica funeraria nella tradizione greca e romana*, a cura di C. Pepe e G. Moretti, 2015.

159   *Poeti traducono poeti*, a cura di P. Taravacci, 2015.

160   Anna Miriam Biga, *L'*Antiope *di Euripide*, 2015.

161   *Memoria della guerra. Fonti scritte e orali al servizio della storia e della linguistica*, a cura di S. Baggio, 2016.

162   Charlotte Delbo. *Un témoin écrivain et dramaturge*, sous la direction de C. Douzou et J.-P. Dufiet, 2016.

163   *La parola 'elusa'. Tratti di oscurità nella trasmissione del messaggio*, a cura di I. Angelini, A. Ducati e S. Scartozzi, 2016. Pubblicazione online: http://hdl.handle.net/11572/155414

164   *Ut pictura poesis. Intersezioni di arte e letteratura*, a cura di P. Taravacci, E. Cancelliere, 2016.

165   *Le forme del narrare: nel tempo e tra i generi*; vol. I a cura di E. Carpi, Rosa M. García Jimenez e E. Liverani; vol. II a cura di G. Fiordaliso, A. Ghezzani e P. Taravacci, 2017.

166   Kiara Pipino, *Il teatro e la* pietas *(Theatre and* pietas*)*, 2017.

167   *Sull'utopia. Scritti in onore di Fabrizio Cambi*, a cura di A. Fambrini, F. Ferrari e M. Sisto, 2017.

168   *La invención de la noticias. Las relaciones de sucesos entre la literatura y la información (siglos XVI-XVIII)*, G. Ciappelli y V. Nider (eds.), 2017.

169   Morena Deriu, Mixis *e* poikilia *nei protagonisti della satira. Studi sugli archetipi comico e platonico nei dialoghi di Luciano di Samosata*, 2017.

170   Jorge Canals Piñas, *Noticias desde el frente bélico italiano. Los reportajes de Enrique Díaz-Retg (1916 y 1917)*, 2017.

171   Albina Abbate, *Il sogno nelle tragedie di Eschilo*, 2017.

172   *La Siberia allo specchio. Storie di viaggio, rifrazioni letterarie, incontri tra civiltà e culture*, a cura di A. Mingati, 2017.

173   *Mitografie e mitocrazie nell'Europa moderna*, a cura di A. Binelli e F. Ferrari, 2018.

174   *Il racconto a teatro. Dal dramma antico al Siglo de Oro alla scena contemporanea*, a cura di G. Ieranò e P. Taravacci, 2018.

175 Margherita Feller, *La* Recensio Wissenburgensis. *Studio introduttivo, testo e traduzione*, 2018.

176 *Brevitas. Percorsi estetici tra forma breve e frammento nelle letterature occidentali*, a cura di S. Pradel e C. Tirinanzi De Medici, 2018. Pubblicazione online: http://hdl.handle.net/11572/210052

177 *«La cetra sua gli porse…». Studi offerti ad Andrea Comboni dagli allievi*, a cura di M. Fadini, M. Largaiolli e C. Russo, 2018.

178 Matteo Largaiolli, *La* Predica d'Amore. *Indagine su un genere parodistico quattro-cinquecentesco con edizione critica dei testi*, 2019. Pubblicazione online: http://hdl.handle.net/11572/237254

179 *Contact Zones. Cultural, Linguistic and Literary Connections in English*, edited by M.M. Coppola, F. Di Blasio and S. Francesconi, 2019.

180 *«Tra chiaro e oscuro». Studi offerti a Francesco Zambon*, a cura di D. Mariani, S. Scartozzi e P. Taravacci, 2019.

181 *Malas noticias y noticias falsas. Estudio y edición de relaciones de sucesos (siglos XVI-XVII)*, a cura di V. Nider y N. Pena Sueiro (eds.), 2019.

182 *Rielaborazioni del mito nel fumetto contemporaneo*, a cura di C. Polli e A. Binelli, 2019.

183 *Qu'est-ce qu'une mauvaise traduction littéraire? Sur la trahison et la traîtrise en traduction littéraire*, sous la direction de G. Acerenza, 2019.

184 Annibale Salvadori, *Vocabolario solandro*, a cura di P. Cordin, P. Dalla Torre e T. Gatti, 2020.

185 *La lettera in versi. Canoni, variabili, funzioni*, a cura di P. Taravacci e F. Zambon, 2020.

186 *Regards sur les médiations culturelles et sociales. Acteurs, dispositifs, publics, enjeux linguistiques et identitaires*, dirigé par J.-P. Dufiet et E. Ravazzolo, 2020.

187 *Adaptation of Stories and Stories of Adaptation: Media, Modes and Codes / Adaptation(s) d'histoires et histoires d'adaptation(s): médias, modalités sémiotiques, codes linguistiques*, edited by / sous la direction de S. Francesconi / G. Acerenza, 2020.