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# The Concept of Time in Science Fiction Films.

## An Analysis of Time in Science Fiction Cinematography

Aura-Mariana ANGHELUȚĂ and Andrei ZAMFIR

### INTRODUCTION

Although people always seem to run out of time, time is endless. It is complex, linear, circular, round, flat, static, and dynamic. Time is life. And as for every other aspect of life, time has also been put under the microscope, dissected, diluted, and used by artists all over the world repeatedly, each time painting a different picture, each story told through a new unique perspective. Over time, film genres have been established, each with their specific themes and tropes. Science-fiction has found many of its stories dabbling into this concept of time.

Since the first time-travel based fictional piece, time travel and the concept of time itself has been changed and adapted in many ways, so much so that a pattern has been observed. In this essay, me and my partner will communicate the extent of our analysis of the concept of time in cinematography. And because westerners believe so much that time has a beginning and an end, allow us to start from the beginning. Before cinematography and screens, people could enjoy make believe stories by simply reading a book. What an outdated concept. *The Time Machine* by H. G. Wells, published in 1895 is considered by most to be the first ever time travel book. It tells the story of a nameless scientist simply called “The Time Traveller” who tells the story of his adventure into the future to his friends. He travelled far into the future into the year 802.701 AD, then to millions of years into the future, he saw the unfolding of the Earth, then back to his own year, where/when he started saying the tale. However, there was a Spanish book, Enrique Gaspar’s *El Anacronópete* published in 1887, but it was mostly forgotten (Gordon 2014). It is a rather unexpectedly open-minded book, talking about the faults of society that are still present to this day, such as divided societies, exploitation, capitalism and so much more. The book started an entire chain of actions which led us to our essay today. But, since we are talking about evolution, let us move on to cinematography (Marcus 2004). The book was adapted three times, first in 1960, under the direction of George Pal, then in 1978, directed by Henning Schellerup and in 2002, directed by Simon Wells, the great-grandson of the author H. G. Wells. The latter adaptation holds much importance because of a scene in which the main character goes into the future, finds what looks like a hologram and when he asks the hologram about the time machine, the book and the first adaptation are both referenced. As if, the book, the movies are all part of the real timeline.

Since then, the concept of time has evolved and has spread into millions of branches. The concept of time has been discussed in many pieces of cinematography, so much so that we can pair them up into some categories (Wells 1895).

## TIME AS SPACE

### ***Black Mirror*, Episode “San Junipero”**

Our first example will be the episode “San Junipero” of the TV show *Black Mirror*, a show known specifically for its science fiction themes and tropes. The episode was directed by Owen Harris, written and produced by Charlie Brooker. It was released on October 21, 2016, and is 01:01:03 long. The main cast is formed by Gugu Mbatha-Raw who plays Kelly Jane Booth, one of the protagonists of the episode, Mackenzie Davis as Yorkie, a woman who had been in a coma for most of her life, and Raymond McAnally as Greg, Yorkie’s nurse. There are also the older versions of the same characters, played by different actresses, Annabel Davis as Elder Yorkie and Denise Burse as Elder Kelly (Wikipedia, *San Junipero*).

The beauty of *Black Mirror* is that there is no time setting or explanation of each episode, but there is somehow an understanding that all these episodes tell futuristic stories. In “San Junipero”, the audience sees two girls, Kelly and Yorkie, having fun in what looks like the 80s era. Then, in the middle of the episode we see them in the 2000s, but looking exactly the same, age-wise. The setting changes in style throughout the episode, while Yorkie and Kelly change eras in San Junipero. The music also changes from one decade to another. They have a fight in a club bathroom and Kelly punches the mirror. It is revealed that her fist is not at all damaged, just as the mirror is not broken. That raises questions. How aren’t they older? How is the mirror not broken? Then, they talk about residents in the town and of another world, and so the audience understands that San Junipero is a virtual reality made for old and dead people, therefore a space where they live, breathe, interact.

It is revealed how the people come to be in that virtual reality in a scene which seems to take place in a modern setting, where an old Kelly visits Yorkie at a hospital. The nurses put some buttons on their heads that transport them into the virtual reality. When Yorkie and Kelly meet for the first time, Yorkie is wearing a striped shirt, round eyeglasses, khaki pants and her hair is voluminous. Yorkie is wearing a purple jacket, leather pants, a black top and a lot of jewellery. They both wear distinct types of eighties womenswear. Moreover, shortly after they meet, at the beginning of the episode, the song “Fake,” by Alexander O’Neal, a classic from the late eighties, starts playing in the club. When they meet again in the 2000s, Kelly and Yorkie wear different costumes. Kelly is wearing tight jeans, a big belt, a golden, sparkly shirt and a white leather jacket. She also wears a lot of jewellery, but the most noticeable are the big round earrings. Her curls are a different pattern, and her make-up is glossy.

The costumes are particularly important to the setting, but there are also other elements which reference the eras. In the club where they are partying there is always different music, as stated before, but there is also a game. In the eighties there is an advertisement for a Chrysler Cordoba. In the eighties there is Bubble Bobble, an arcade video game which came out in the eighties. When Yorkie and Kelly meet in the 2000s, Kelly is playing another video game called Dance Revolution 3rd Mix which appeared in the late 1990s (Wikipedia, *San Junipero*).

At the end of the episode we see an image of a company named TCKR SYSTEMS, then 2 robots who screw and unscrew some tech buttons in a wall system titled “SAN JUNIPERO 521-12” and then we see that there are what looks like millions of glowing buttons on those

walls, meaning that millions of dead people chose to spend their afterlife in San Junipero, a virtual reality which keeps them forever young.

It could be argued that virtual reality and time travel are completely different but when that virtual reality allows you to be young forever, never die and to travel through different eras of the past, we would argue differently.

### ***Loki (2021-2023)***

*Loki* is a TV show which was released in 2021. It was written by Michael Waldron, directed by Kate Herron and produced by Kevin Feige. It is adapted from the Marvel Comics. However, the show itself does not follow Loki's wicked shenanigans against his brother Thor. The show picks up at a moment in *Endgame* (2019), when the Avengers travel in time to 2012 to try and stop Thanos from getting the stones and destroying half of the universe.

The 2012 version of Loki steals the tesseract and travels to Mongolia where he is followed by Minutemen, officers of the TVA that go to different branches to exterminate them, using TemPads, devices which allow them to move through timelines. They arrest Loki for committing crimes against the Sacred Timeline, but he ends up working for them, hunting a variant of himself, a woman named Sylvie (Bui 2020).

The TVA (Time Variance Authority) is a bureaucratic organization which acts as the judge, jury, and executioner behind any temporal anomalies in the multiverse.

Miss Minutes is an AI that runs the TVA and knows everything there is to know about the Universe. Her and the TVA's mission is to protect the Sacred Timeline and therefore, He Who Remains.

Loki starts working for the TVA and befriends Mobius M. Mobius. His name is a reference to the Mobius strip, a one-sided shape with only one edge. It represents chaos.

During the first season, Loki meets many variants of himself. It is explained that variants are different variations of the same person, from timelines other than the Sacred Timeline. The employees of the TVA also learn that they were variants once and pulled out of their own timelines.

In season 2, while Loki is time-slipping between past, present and future and the branches of the timeline are expanding. Loki teams up with Mobius M. Mobius, Hunter B-15, and other TVA agents "in a battle for the soul" of the TVA. This includes a search through the multiverse for Sylvie, Ravonna Renslayer, and Miss Minutes (Tiwary 2023).

The audience also meets a new character: Ouroboros, or O.B. who represents the cycle of life and death (the snake that bites its own tail).

The whole final episode is a loop of scenes which even go back to the finale of the previous season. However, in the end, the only way for Loki to save the universe is by sacrificing himself and becoming He Who Remains, balancing the branches of the Multiverse together and finally finding his glorious purpose (Fuentes 2023).

## **TIME IN SPACE**

### ***Interstellar (2014)***

*Interstellar* (2014) was written and directed by Christopher Nolan with the help of his brother, Jonathan. The main cast is composed of Matthew McConaughey as Joseph Cooper, Anne



Hathaway as Dr. Amelia Brand, Mackenzie Foy as 10-year-old Murph Cooper, Jessica Chastain as adult Murph Cooper, Ellen Burstyn as Elderly Murph and Michael Caine as Professor John Brand (IMDB, *Interstellar*).

The story is set in 2067, when humanity faces extinction as a result of a global starvation brought on by ecocide. Joseph Cooper, a former NASA test pilot, farms with his children, Tom and Murph, and father-in-law Donald, as does the majority of humanity.

Cooper and his daughter find a gravitational anomaly that leads them to some coordinates where a NASA base is hiding. He becomes part of the team and gets sent in space. After years of travel, the team enters the wormhole and lands on the first candidate planet in the new galaxy, only to discover that it is an ocean world with tremendous tidal waves created by Gargantua's strong gravitational pull.

Time dilation has caused 23 years to pass onboard and on Earth since their departure from the vessel. On Earth in 2092, an adult Murph assists Dr. Brand with his continually unsolvable gravity manipulation equation, which is intended to transport humanity in large numbers to possibly habitable planets.

On his deathbed, Brand admits that the equation was a ruse. Murph decides to continue Brand's investigation and returns to her childhood home to look for evidence.

After almost dying, Cooper propels the craft towards the third and final planet by following a gravity-assist course around Gargantua, losing 51 years due to time dilation. Beyond the black hole's event horizon, Cooper's craft begins to disintegrate, and he ejects into a four-dimensional tesseract in which time is a physical dimension.

He utilizes gravity to communicate with Murph and his former self, and discovers he sent the NASA coordinates to himself, launching this mission. He concludes that the tesseract was developed by a future generation to assist humanity in an analogous way. Cooper eventually helps Murph solve the gravity equation by sending her quantum data acquired by TARS within the singularity. Murph discovers the information contained in Cooper's wristwatch while visiting her family home. She saves humanity by perfecting gravity manipulation. When he finally reunites with his daughter, who is now much older than him (Nugent 2022).

The time travel premise of the movie is not exactly that, but rather a mix of time dilation in space and a space outside of time, just like in *Loki*. Basically, in the film, an hour on Miller's planet is equivalent to 7 years on Earth. Moreover, the tesseract is a space that defies the logic of space and time, as Cooper from the future can look through it and see his daughter as a child and even himself from the past. He figured out that he was never going to change the past, that he was there to do as it had already been done, as it should have happened all along, a sort of an ouroboros, the snake that eats itself. The whole plot happened because he was there, in the future, to pull the strings.

## TIME AS CURRENCY

### *In time* (2011)

*In time* (2011) was created, written, and directed by Andrew Niccol. Him, Eric Newman, and Marc Abraham co-produced the film together and it was released in October 2011. The main characters, Will and Sylvia, are played by Justin Timberlake and Amanda Seyfried. Other characters are played by Cillian Murphy as Timekeeper Raymond Leon, Alex Pettyfer as Fortis,



Vincent Kartheiser as banker Philippe Weis and Olivia Wilde as Will's mother, Rachel (Wikipedia, *In Time*).

By the year 2169, genetic modification will have enabled humans to cease aging at the age of twenty-five. 'Living time,' which may be shared between people through physical touch, is shown on a clock implanted in their forearms. When the clock reaches zero, one dies immediately. Society is separated into socioeconomic classes, which live in specialized settlements known as 'Time Zones'. The impoverished reside in Dayton's ghettos, where youth predominate, and must work every day to earn a few more hours of life, which they must also use to pay for basic requirements, as time has replaced money as a currency.

The wealthy reside in the opulent New Greenwich, where the middle-aged and elderly predominate, despite the fact that they appear youthful because they stopped aging at the age of twenty-five (Berlatsky 2011).

Will and Sylvia, the daughter of a wealthy man, now on his side, initiate a series of Time Bank robberies, stealing Time Capsules containing time equivalents and distributing them to the needy, earning a ten-year bounty on their heads. They get in trouble with the police, almost time out a number of times, but at least their rebellion is making a change. Factory workers, now rich in Time, cross Time Zones as Timekeepers watch. The final scene depicts Will and Sylvia ready to loot an enormous Time Bank and further perturb the system.

As said before, the plot revolves around Will and Sylvia, two people from two different time-zones, who fall in love and get together to overthrow the unjust system. Will evolves from being a slave worker for the system to being against it, and Sylvia goes from being a bystander to the cruelty her father and their kind had been doing to the lower time zones to doing something to change the system and to help others.

## TIME TRAVEL

### ***The Adam Project (2022)***

*The Adam Project* was co-written by Jonathan Tropper, T.S. Nowlin, Jennifer Flackett and Mark Levin and directed by Shawn Levy. Tobias A. Schliessler was in charge of cinematography and production. It is a science fiction, action and comedy film that was released in March 2022. The cast is formed by Ryan Reynolds as Big Adam, Walker Scobell as Small Adam, Mark Ruffalo as Louis Reed, Jennifer Garner as Ellie Reed, Zoe Saldana as Laura, and Catherine Keener as Maya Sorian.

Adam Reed, aged 12 and still grieving his father's sudden death the year before, walks into his garage one night to find a wounded pilot hiding there. This mysterious pilot turns out to be the older version of himself from the future, where time travel is in its infancy. He has risked everything to come back in time on a secret mission. Together they must embark on an adventure into the past to find their father, set things right, and save the world (Horton 2022).

The first scene of the film is a depiction of Earth from space, and the text "Time travel exists. You just don't know it yet." The story, *per se*, begins with the scene of Big Adam, in space, in a stolen jet, getting into a black hole. Then, the scene cuts to Small Adam, running away from his bully.

From this point onward, the setting is the year 2022. Later that night, Adam sees his dog, Hawking, run in the woods and follows him, leading to him meeting his older self, from

the year 2050. They embark in an adventure together, Big Adam meets his thought to be dead wife again, and fights Maya Sorian, the woman who took advantage of his dad's death and used time travel to become powerful. The paradox that Sorian creates is called The Bootstrap Paradox because it creates an infinite loop. She goes back in time to her younger self to give herself advice on how to become powerful and rich, but if she already knows all of this, who gave the information to her?

The two sides fight Sorian and the two Adams travel back to 2018 to meet their dad, "the godfather of time travel," the one who is responsible for time-travel being real, to stop him from working with Sorian and being a scientist altogether. He is the sole reason time travel even existed.

Big Adam and his dad go to destroy a hard drive which contains a mathematical equation which will make time travel possible, but are interrupted by Sorian from 2050 and a younger version of herself.

Sorian wants to kill Small Adam, but the electromagnetic shield of the building gets destroyed and so, when Sorian tries to kill Reed, she accidentally shoots her younger version, therefore dying as both versions, young and old.

This paradox is explained as such: With time travel essentially gone, Reed and his son(s) have a heartfelt moment together and then each disappears in their own time. Small Adam doesn't remember the past events as if they have never happened but somehow has a feeling he should be a better son, something his old self advised him. The movie ends with Big Adam meeting his future wife for the first time (Chitwood 2022).

### ***The Tomorrow War (2021)***

The film *The Tomorrow War* was directed by Chris McKay, written by Zach Dean, and co-produced by David Ellison, Dana Goldberg, Don Granger, Jules Daly, David S. Goyer and Adam Kolbrenner, and it was released in 2021. Chris Pratt, Yvonne Strahovski and J. K. Simmons are part of the main cast (IMDB, *The Tomorrow War*).

The story is about Dan Forester, a biology teacher who is unable to secure a position at a famous research institution. Instead, he gets drafted to fight in a war against aliens in the future.

The opening scene is very ambiguous and only shows the main character falling into a pool. Then, the scene cuts and there is text on the screen that reads "28 years earlier". The scene which follows is set in December 2022, as showed on the screen.

Dan and the draftees are taken to Miami Beach, Florida in the future, but few survive after being dropped at the incorrect spot over the city and the film picks up to where the opening scene ended.

Dan discovers that Colonel Forester is his daughter, Muri. Muri finally tells him what occurred in his past: Dan abandoned her and his wife after coming from the future and later perished in a vehicle accident.

Muri is severely hurt and asks Dan to transport the toxin to kill the aliens to the past, as humankind can never survive in this scenario, and they reconcile. Dan is able to travel to the past with the toxin in order to mass produce it. He then attempts to give the toxin to the military so that it may be sent back to the future but discovers that the Jumplink has been destroyed by the Whitespikes.

After describing to his wife what happened in the future, they infer that the Whitespikes arrived considerably earlier than 2048. Dan and Dorian study the Whitespikes claw alongside Charlie, discovering volcanic ash fragments from a volcano in the Changbai Mountains.

They believe that Whitespikes were already on Earth and that global warming prompted their release as they thawed and erupted from beneath the polar caps. He seeks assistance from the military, but they refuse since he lacks proof. He begs his father to transport a squad. Dan leads a journey to Severnaya Zemlya, northern Russia, to assess his theory, and discovers an alien ship in an ice sheet.

Approaching the climax, they discover that the alien spacecraft is not a Whitespikes vessel, and that the Whitespikes were cargo for the slain alien crew. They inject the toxin into the hibernating Whitespikes, which kills those injected but awakens the others. The team decides to physically detonate the alien ship after realizing it is the only way to contain it, but the female escapes. Dan and his father seek down the female and kill her, preventing a future battle. Dan reunites with his daughter and introduces her to her grandfather.

If they have really prevented that future war from happening, that makes this timeline branch out from the one where he was bound to leave his family and die. That would also mean that the war never happens, so he never gets drafted. If, in reality, he had prevented that future from happening, then this is a new timeline, a parallel one, sort of like in *Loki*, which we have inspected earlier.

But the future isn't certain either way. There is no assurance that Dan won't deal with PTSD and leave his family or that they killed every alien (Libey 2021).

## CONCLUSIONS

In an era that has normalized Artificial Intelligence, robots and Virtual Realities, it is safe to say that people have no limitation of what is possible and what is not and so many of the concepts we have presented today have a real possibility of becoming true one day, sooner or later. And because so many absurd concepts have been normalised, the human brain, hungry for information and entertainment as it is, will have to think of more absurd and seemingly impossible concepts to introduce in art, and therefore in cinematography. As an avid audience for the science fiction genre, we cannot wait to see what the future has in store for us.

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# Revisiting “Barbenheimer” and Seeing the World in Black and Pink

Cristina BADIU and Iulia TUDORACHE-ARFIRE

## INTRODUCTION

Every few years, the cinema world is rocked by the seemingly contentious pairing of two films of opposing genres and aesthetic to be released the same day, pitting two very different audiences against each other. Some notable examples are “10 Things I Hate about You” and “The Matrix” on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1999, “Mamma Mia!” and “The Dark Knight” on July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008, “Pitch Perfect 2” and “Mad Max: Fury Road” on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015, and “A Star is Born” and “Venom” on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

The latest case of “pink” versus “black” films being released the same day is the pair “Barbie” and “Oppenheimer” on July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023, which even got a monicker, *Barbenheimer*. What they all share is that they are pairs formed from a film catered towards women, and the other towards men.

This paper aims to analyse the impact that the films have created on audiences, the discourse that is still prevalent even one year after their release, why these films have rocked the film world more than their predecessors.

“Barbie” is a film directed by Greta Gerwig, written by Gerwig and her partner, Noah Baumbach, following the *Stereotypical* Barbie’s descent into a state of depression, which disrupts the continuous state of happiness and optimism from Barbieland, a town where all the Barbie dolls reside and have the power, all the jobs, and all the houses, as each doll had been created to show a possible career path for young girls, while the Kens are relegated to just looking cool and being around the Barbies, especially *Beach* Ken, while at night they go to a place unknown to the Barbies and the audience. There is also Alan, a friend of Ken who is alone because “there are no multiples of Alan”.

*Stereotypical* Barbie (played by Margot Robbie) is plagued by existentialist thoughts, and then she gets cellulite, flat feet, and the awareness that nothing in Barbieland is real, but it is just pretending, as the shower has no actual water, the food is plastic and she cannot just float gracefully from her balcony to her car, things incongruous to her being the pretty, well dressed, feminine Barbie, so she goes to *Weird* Barbie (Kate McKinnon), a doll shunned from the town due to her scary appearance (face drawn with crayons, ripped hair, and always landing in contorted ways) who tells her that the only way to fix her is to go to the real world and find the girl who is playing with her. On her way out of Barbieland, *Stereotypical* Barbie (who will be referred to only as Barbie from now on) finds that *Beach* Ken (Ryan Gosling) (who will be referred to only as Ken from now on) has been in her car and wanted to join her to prove how much he liked her. In the real world of Venice Beach, Barbie discovers misogyny, and Ken discovers patriarchy. Barbie manages to find Sasha and her mother Gloria, who has been playing with her and caused her the dark thoughts, and become friends, mending the broken

relationship between daughter and mother, as well as their shared interest in uplifting women, especially since Ken has come back in Barbieland and told the other Kens about the power men in the real world have over women, so they indoctrinate the other Barbies into servient figures.

Upon returning home Barbie, Gloria, Sasha, Allan, and Weird Barbie create a plan to undo the brainwashing, and succeed right before the new, patriarchal, constitution is signed. Since both Kens and Barbies have seen what it means when only one group has the power and the other is invisible, they work out a way to make every doll be part of the social and political decisions, having equal rights. Barbie tells Ken that he should find a purpose outside pursuing her, and they part ways, as Barbie decides to become human.

“Oppenheimer” is a film written and directed by Christopher Nolan, adapting the 2005 book “American Prometheus” by Kai Bird and Martin J. Sherwin, the biography of J. Robert Oppenheimer. The film presents the story of the theoretical physicist who played the key role, in the World War II, in developing the atomic bomb.

The film digs in Oppenheimer’s life, concentrating on his influence of the Manhattan Project, the moral and ethical dilemmas that he had to face and the knowledgeable impact that his work had for the world. The narrative shows his complex personality (from the strict and focused on work man to a sensitive human being), his interactions with different scientists (different points of view regarding the atomic bomb) and the political challenges that he had to face: from being financed to create something so monstrous that killed innocent people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki to being ignored and denied for his work, being vanished from his own career and legacy. The film perfectly portrays the tension between scientific ambition/ man ego and human responsibility/ sensitivity, making us wonder if such technological advancements deserve the consequences that we have to face afterwards.

“Politically, it is the false sentiment, but indicative for 2023, that you need to pick one -pink or black and white, camp comedy or pretentious art, feminism or anti militarism-, when actually, these are just two fragmentary elements of some antiestablishment policies who’s surfaces are scratched tantalizingly by films such as Barbie and Oppenheimer.” (Toderici, 2023)

## **WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MAN**

### **“Has feminism failed men?”**

#### **Feminism and Femininity**

At the heart of “Barbie” stands the desire to look back at women’s toys and see how they have shaped the childhoods of girls.

Created by Ruth Handler in 1959, a few years after having observed that her daughter, Barbara, was trying to give more grown-up roles to her dolls which at the time only had the appearance of infants, the doll filled a gap in the toy market. This doll was surprisingly (for Handler’s husband who was one of the co-founders of Mattel, and the other directors of the company) a success, and went on to become one of the best known and influential figures of the past decades.

Mattel has created Barbies with over 200 career paths, spanning numerous categories, such as actress, chef, artist, business executive, farmer, teacher, doctor, presidential candidate etc., which, as mentioned in the Economist, “enabled girls to become whatever they want.” The Barbie dolls also became more diverse, including a variety of ethnicities and disabilities, all trying to make as many girls feel seen and empowered.

Yet with its fame came a lot of backlashes from people who believed that it promoted unhealthy or unreasonable expectations for girls’ bodies, as well as a hyper-feminine image, and, due to her saying “Math is hard” in 1992, or needing assistance from two male friends in programming (as depicted in the 2013 book “I Can Be a Computer Engineer”, which led to the company apologising and releasing, the next year, the Computer Engineer Barbie).

Through their films, the original, such as the “Barbie: Fairytopia” series, and the retellings of older stories, such as Charles Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol”, or “Swan Lake”, composed by Pyotr Ilych Tchaikovsky, the image of Barbie is one of a pretty, young, and resourceful woman. These were supposed to instil a sense of empowerment in their young audience made up of mostly girls who could see a woman solve problems while still being usually the best dressed. Without saying it out loud, the feminist themes of women being able to do whatever job or task, be feminine and still be rational, were woven in the characters’ development. Her femininity was apparent too, for example, in “Barbie and the Three Musketeers”, where she and her friends train with the old servant to wield ribbons and fans in a defensive way. And even when she does not have the most stereotypical jobs for a woman, such as astronaut, firefighter, or officer, she still maintains a level of glam. But that creates the concerns that girls will form a distorted image of themselves as working women, which when not maintained well, will feel more like a burden, than an empowering statement.

Barbie would not be the first to show that girls can do “manly” jobs dressed in pink, as one of the most iconic female characters of the early 2000s was Elle Woods, a blonde, pink-wearing girl who initially goes to Harvard to prove to her former boyfriend that she would be a good long-term partner for him, only to find that she does not need him at all. She manages to navigate the odd looks from the other students and professors regarding her bright wardrobe, bubbly personality, and undeniably feminine hobbies, which are frowned upon in those circles, and solves a murder case thanks to her hairstyle maintenance knowledge.

But Elle was one, while there are multiples of Barbie. And they are reunited in Greta Gerwig’s 2023 film. Regarded as an “advocate for girlhood”, throughout her filmmaking career, she has chosen to present the stories of young women dealing with the troubles of growing up and facing a world that is hostile to them.

In “Little Women” (2019), Gerwig revisits Louisa Alcott’s book, about four sisters with different personalities and wants, growing up during the American Civil War. Yet, no matter how different they are, the three older sisters, as the youngest one dies as a teen, express frustration against the way in which they are unseen and diminished by the men around them and, by extension, society, who undervalues them and only wants them to marry and produce children, not to develop themselves and create other ways to contribute to the world.

But a film that is reportedly Warner Bros’s highest grossing project of all time, with an estimate of over 1.5 billion dollars at the box office, started as a risky bet. In an interview for CBS, the director said that “Barbie’s been around since 1959, and everyone knows who she is, and everyone has an opinion, and she’s run the gamut ahead of time, behind time. She’s a hero,



she's a villain." With such a polarising source material, the possibilities for plotlines were endless, and Gerwig chose to create Barbieland as a utopian matriarchal society, which would open the scene for a critique of extreme gender-based power structures.

In Barbieland, Kens are relegated to only being accessories to the Barbies. They are not part of any jury, debate, or discussion, and they fight for the attention of their female counterparts. When *Beach* Ken discovers patriarchy, he misunderstands it, thinking it has something to do with horses, but he comes back to Barbieland and explains to the other Kens what he heard about the system, and then they brainwash the Barbies into being accessories and they change the aesthetic of the land, from bright colours to dark ones (and lots of horse imagery). Going from one extreme to the other broadens both parties' understanding of the other's feelings, and at the end, they come to a consensus that both Barbies and Kens (and Allan) be part of the decision-making process and apparatus.

With this, the film might have received the subtitle "Feminism 101", as it introduces new audiences to some key concepts regarding feminism, patriarchy and matriarchy, womanhood and girlhood, while maintaining a light-hearted tone. The technicolour cinematography and bright pink sets, the tongue-in-cheek humour of the leads, the absurd situations that they have to go through are interwoven with more serious moments, such as America Ferreira's monologue about what it means to be a perfect woman in the eyes of society, Barbie's constant fears for her existence as a "Stereotypical Barbie", the troubled relationship between Gloria and her daughter, Sasha etc.

The film was marketed as a light-hearted take on Barbie, one of the first promotional materials being a shot-for-shot remaking of the beginning of "2001: A Space Odyssey", with girls ditching their old toys for the much better Barbie. It seemed to be just another film in a long string of adaptations, remakes and retellings the audiences felt compelled to watch due to a sense of nostalgia or curiosity. Women were invited to rejoice one more time in their lost girlhood, with an almost "Toy Story-esque" tale about toys being controlled by humans, as well as having a mind of their own. But the actual film offered much more than nostalgia bait, as the audiences were surprised by the depth of some of the moments, the more or less subtle commentary on contemporary society, a heart-warming tale about friendship, family, and self-discovery, a cathartic experience that left some members of the audience in tears.

Not everyone was that moved though.

While the film focuses mostly on Stereotypical Barbie's journey of self-discovery, Ken, as her constant companion, also goes through an arc of development, but his is different, he (and the other Kens) being portrayed in a more comedic tone, as a comic relief moment, and thus, his opinions are taken much less seriously. From here, as well as the fact that the film has a girl's doll as a source material, some members of the audience have come out of the theatre with the impression that the film is man-hating film. In the same interview, Gerwig defends the film saying that "[...] this is not man-hating any more than Aristophane's 'Lysistrata' [...] was man-hating".

Another complaint was the "plastic feminism". With Barbie being a product of a large company, some people felt that the film was just an extremely long add for the toys. Some saw it as too unfocused (last two articles), or too caught up in the pretty fantasy to deal with the real-world issues (the film sage), or that it is not subversive enough, with self-aware lines from the



narrator (Helen Mirren), or from the other characters, even the Barbies' coup to undo the Kens' coup is not as subversive as expected.

Unlike the constant support that the Barbies show for each other, in "Oppenheimer" the question of women's place in society and job positions is always posed, given that women in science in the 1940s were a rather taboo subject. In the previous decades, women were thought to be too mentally, physically, and emotionally unfit to be part of scientific circles. They were relegated to domestic duties, and were expected to only care about creating a home for men and their children. But as the Second World War broke, and men were sent to the fight for what's right, their jobs were left to be funded by women who proved their abilities and diligence in front of the hostile conditions.

Kitty Oppenheimer, a learned woman, studying at several universities before settling for Pen UNI, and then taking a graduate programme at UCLA, where she met Robert Oppenheimer. They get married and she supports him in his work, even being a lab technician for a short while. Despite all her expertise, the film relegates her to domestic duties, as she is mostly seen in the house, caring for her child, and being an alcoholic. She is sent in the background, from where she is depicted as a chaotic woman, with post-partum depression, who abuses wine, and neglects her children. Yet, during the interrogation, she proves to be strong-headed, and does not back down. Despite being in the periphery, she is the one to ask the real questions, and emphasise the real consequences of the men's actions, especially her husband (who is not the strong and mighty man that one would expect from a person who changed the course of history), saying "You don't get to commit sin, and then ask all of us to feel sorry for you when there are consequences" and "Why don't you fight?" showing that behind every strong man is a stronger woman.

Opposed to the nagging wife, there is the temptress, Jean Tatlock. Following her degree in Psychology from Cambridge Ridge and Latin School, in Massachusetts, and Williams College in Berkley (where she met Robert Oppenheimer in 1936), and Stanford Medical School, in 1941. She and Robert had a tumultuous relationship spanning eight years, overlapping with his marriage to Kitty, ending with Jean's suicide in 1944.

She does not have a clearly defined character arc, existing more as an object of Oppenheimer's desire, her appearance suited more for the male gaze, someone to turn to when his wife is not appealing. She is his confidante, having more intimate discussions with her than with his wife. Her death, which greatly affects him, is depicted as a murder, rather than the official suicide claim, as a black glove is shown pressing down her head into the water.

### **"Barbie" equals peak femininity. "Oppenheimer" equals peak masculinity**

Barbie's seemingly first-world problems: cellulite, flat-feet, existential dread etc. offer a starting point for a bigger discussion on beauty standards, how society tends to chip at women's self-esteem little by little at first with small things, which devolve into much more serious problems.

The fact that "Barbie" was released almost six months and anticipated the "I'm just a girl" trend on social media, opposing the "Boys will be boys", as seen in the social media platforms where men and women fight for who is more entitled to be themselves and relish in a delayed childhood, such as "I'm just a girl" excuses overspending, while "Boys will be boys" excuses abuse.

Barbie, by virtue of being a doll, has the advantage of being easier to dress. Girls from around the world create elaborate wardrobes for their dolls, and this sense of fashion usually carries from dressing the doll, to the girl wanting to be dressed like the doll. But what kind of wardrobe does Barbie have? All throughout her over 200 careers, and dozens of iterations, a few key aspects remain constant. The pink overtones and undertones, the stereotypically feminine clothing, with silhouettes that accentuate her body, even when that would be inappropriate for a job, such as a fitted astronaut suit, heels on every occasion (even for a burglary) etc.

Barbie, before anything, is a fashion doll, and her main purpose is to be dressed prettily for whichever situation the child wants her in. She keeps up with fashion, and by constantly playing with them during the formative years of their lives, so many girls (especially) dream of having the power to own their dolls' fashion collection.

At the same time, with her typical slim body, long legs, and narrow waist, the doll also creates body expectations for girls, as Barbies are (or at least were) held in a positive light, and were on every shelf, girls would grow up with a stricter idea of what it means to be popular, to be appreciated, to be thought of as "beautiful", and so they would internalise the image of a doll that, if recreated to human-size proportions, would not be able to function properly (conversation). But as the body positivity movement started to grow, so did the concerns about the unattainable standards that the doll has on girls.

Thus, Mattel started a new project, "Project Dawn", in which they introduced a new cast of dolls, more body inclusive, as well as more career paths through their line of "role models", including Viola Davis, Helene Darroze (a Michelin Chef), Dr. Antje Boetius (a marine researcher and microbiologist).

"Barbie" has a diverse cast of characters in terms of body types, ethnicities, and identities, yet at the centre front is *Stereotypical* Barbie, the tall, blonde, perfectly dressed, perfectly shaped, white girl, who even at her lowest still looks beautiful, as seen in the ironic intervention of the narrator to break to fourth wall to say "Note to filmmakers: Margot Robbie is the wrong person to cast if you want to make this point [that she is not *Stereotypical* Barbie pretty]". Even with this self-awareness, the storyline of the perfect Barbie being the one feeling the least at home in Barbieland still strikes as a bit disingenuous.

As mentioned earlier, consumerism is a great part of the brand, and of the greater trends of young adult women, as a number of them participate in fast fashion's quick trends that come and fade in a few months, even before people get to own the clothes advertised on social media. With the rise of "-core" aesthetic trends (such as cottagecore, Y2Kcore etc.), Barbiecore has been a trend among internet users, from fashion, to roller skates, the Barbie image had had returned with a strong punch to the stores, and people, due to nostalgia or curiosity, depending on the age, were flocking to the cashiers, and then hurrying to post their Barbie inspired outfits on social media. As any trend, especially the current ones, it has the disadvantage of being liable to die down as quickly as it rose, and the only thing left to be another pile of clothes, dolls, and other accessories thrown over the other piles of branded stuff from other much hyped collaborations.

So is the film just another attempt at reviving a brand that has been through much controversy over the course of its 65 years of existence, and boost its profits by presenting the ideal world of girlhood while still holding a small banner that says "feminism" and

“representation” to appease the angry masses, or another attempt at rewriting history while adding feminist undertones, and genuinely wanting to improve the image of a brand too often accused of promoting stereotypes when it started as a project to take them down?

For Oppenheimer, his role is a simple one: be the leader of the Manhattan Project. This role has fuelled his ego and placed him in a position of monstrous responsibility and authority. With these great responsibilities, also came the expectations. Not only being a leader was important, but also knowing how to manage the relationships between the physics world and the military world, highlighting the traditional notions of how masculinity has the power and the authority.

Like other leaders that ever existed, there was also professional rivalries. Even if Oppenheimer really tried to put everything in place and not show little mistakes or inconveniences that existed between him and his colleagues, there were two characters that caught us off guard: army engineer Leslie Groves and physicist Edward Teller who had their doubts about Oppenheimer’s work. This “feud” between them shows the masculine struggle for recognition, influence and male competition.

Oppenheimer never managed to create a balance between his public figure and his private life. In a constant running for being the best in what he knows to do, he neglected his personal life, including his wife Kitty Oppenheimer and, surprisingly, his 2 children. Being the absent husband and absent father, he never noticed that his wife really cared for him and watched his back all the time (even when he had that extramarital relationship with Jean Tatlock). This highlights the balance that men have to consider: ambition and intimacy.

Oppenheimer’s role in creating the most powerful weapon that has ever existed for World War II, the atomic bomb, dragged him to confront profound moral and ethical questions. After doing what he did and couldn’t even watch the massacre that he created, the film presents the consequences that he has to endure now, not thinking/ not wanting to think of them before creating the bomb. His work reflects a dimension of masculinity that involves taking responsibility for one’s actions and their impact on the world. This aspect of his character highlights a sense of duty and the burden of leadership often associated with traditional masculine roles.

Just twelve years older than Barbie inventor (Ruth Handler), the real J. Robert Oppenheimer was born into a world ruled by man. The fact that Oppenheimer lived during World War II and the Cold War reflects the broader cultural expectations of masculinity during these periods. For the mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century American society, notions of masculinity were very simple: patriotism, scientific progress and (geopolitical) power.

Oppenheimer will forever be known as the film that offered us everything: from multifaceted portrayals of masculinity, challenging and expanding traditional stereotypes through the complex character of J. Robert Oppenheimer and his extraordinary contributions to science and history.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, “Barbie’s” Kens are introduced as only worshippers of the Barbies, usually on the side-lines, not invited to the big parties, the decision-making processes or anything of importance. As the narrator says, “Barbie has a great day every day, but Ken only has a great day if Barbie looks at him.” This is of course an extreme version of patriarchy, a vision of a gender-bent patriarchal society, that values men not as people with real feelings and desires, but as mere objects at the disposal of the ruling class, the women, and



they “are raised to understand their own value as being inextricably bound to their sexuality” (Noman, 2023). But as soon as Ken is out of the cave, he sees the men in the real world as powerful, strong, and totally in control of what is happening with them and of the people around them.

Ken overinflates immediately his findings, not only by misunderstanding what patriarchy is, maintaining his stance that it is about horses, but also in the scene when he wants to become a doctor, but is quickly declined by a female doctor who tells him that he cannot just ask for a job that he has no qualification for just because he is a man.

Back in Barbieland, after explaining his version of patriarchy, the Kens organise a coup to take the power and they transform the land into a Western film set, with dark colours, leather sofas, saloon doors, all in contrast with the hyperfeminine previous world; as Bel Hooks writes in “The Will to Change”, “A man who is unabashedly and unequivocally committed to patriarchal masculinity will both fear and hate all that the culture deems as feminine and womanly” (Noman, 2023).

The Western, a predominantly male led film genre, usually about a man on a horse defending a small, dusty town from the outlaws. They are brave, lawful, and determined to stand their ground. Popular during the 1950s, around the same time Barbie was created, they were based on the post-WW2 ideals of “conformity, strong family values, and a consensus of a moral exceptionalism” (The men of westerns). So, both *pink Barbie*, and *Westerns Ken* are indicative of archetypes of femininity and masculinity, even as just a performance. In the film, the extremes of matriarchy and patriarchy are visually represented by nods to older types of medias that the audiences have internalised as representative for the genders, either technicolour fantasy, or a dark Western.

As previously mentioned, in “Barbie”, the Kens are portrayed in a humorous manner, their obsession with getting Barbies’ attention, then their overreaction to every minor setback (such as the Barbies not being interested in them), to their battle to get the Barbies towards the end of the film, which starts as a fighting scene with toy weapons, and transforms into a musical number reminiscent of “Grease”, all while *Beach Ken* sings “I’m just Ken”, a song about his tragic life, which ends with a powerful message about acceptance, and all Kens hold hands and are ready to have a common front against the Barbies, yet too late, as the latter have already taken back the constitution.

Yet, the unserious tone of the discourse around Kens in the film sparked a lot of serious discourse in the real world, as people, usually conservative, saw the men of Barbieland as degraded, nothing more than a laughingstock, while Hollywood keeps pushing the so called “feminist agenda”, in which women can do no wrong, while the men are blamed for everything wrong in society.

Right-wing personalities from the United States have criticised the film for not promoting traditional values, for being “man-hating”, for overusing the word “patriarchy”, for being propaganda for anti-male sentiments, presumably telling its audience that men and women cannot collaborate effectively and are in a constant war of who should take the lead. (Murray, 2023)

But they completely missed the point.

By switching the genders of the people who lead versus people who are led in its society, Barbieland underlines the problems with extreme views of leadership, criticising both the



Barbies for not considering the Kens in the society and treating them badly, which leads to the Barbies being dethroned, and also being brainwashed into submissive servants to the men. After tasting their own medicine and living in the shoes of the oppressed, the Barbies start to make steps and take action against such inequities ever happening. Is it sad that they had to go through the same thing as the Kens to have sympathy for them? Yes. Is it a similar situation to the real world, just in the opposite direction? Also, yes.

But where was a similar criticism when *Oppenheimer* portrayed women as either temptresses or drunken shrews? (Alexander & Intson, 2024) The film shows the real-life events leading to the atomic bomb and the aftermath from the perspective of one of its inventors, and his grappling with the damage that it had done onto the world. Around him gravitate Kitty, his wife, and Jean, his mistress, yet one would forget that the Manhattan Project was not a one-man job, it involved thousands of people, some of them, though only eleven percent, women (Hafner & Scharf, 2023). And given the hostile climate that these women were in, a field vastly dominated by men, it would be important to acknowledge their contributions.

Perhaps because it feeds into the preconceived idea that “genius is often associated with boys, and girls from a young age tend to shy away from fields associated with innate brilliance” (Kurlander & Singh, 2023). Thus, there are only around 20 percent of “women in STEM” (Mulvey & Pold, 2024). And it is not because of the fact that they cannot keep up with the men, but mostly because of the biases and the societal expectations of where man and women should stand on the science versus humanities scale.

These women not only contributed to the science that made the bomb possible, but also to the dissent and protest that becomes a key cause of Oppenheimer’s own torture. They were just excluded from the larger power games that tear the men of this film asunder. They were not Promethei. They were not the main character in men’s telling of the broken and still-breaking world, and thus: they are not in a Nolan film.

Unfortunately, women in *Oppenheimer* seemed to be more sexualized rather than having a voice and be heard. I wouldn’t use the excuse that if “it’s a man’s story” women shouldn’t be included. Women were also human in the past, were also intelligent and had their ideas, so they deserved to have their stories heard as much as any guy’s story. All of these stereotypes and factors could have influenced women’s perception of their ability to do physics.

## **MEN IN WAR: FIGHTING FOR WHAT’S “RIGHT”**

### **Men with feelings**

The 2023 film *Barbie* has a vibrant and thoughtful exploration of identity, feminism and nonetheless becoming the advocate of girlhood in several meaningful ways.

With its diverse cast of characters, the film promotes acceptance and celebration of individual differences by highlighting the idea that there is no singular way to be a girl or a woman. After deciding to go on a self-discovery journey, Barbie steps in the real world that tests her assumptions about purpose and perfection. This journey reflects on the larger search for identity that many women and girls go through. Having strong, empowered female characters who take control of their own destinies, this film transforms Barbie from a stereotypical beauty icon to a symbol of empowerment and self-awareness.

The use of satire for describing traditional gender roles, both in the fictional world of Barbieland and in the real world, has sparked discussions about gender equality and the pressure established by social norms. Not only Barbie is struggling, but also Ken. Ken's character, from trying to get Barbie's attention and seeking validation (in Barbieland) to realizing his own worth outside Barbieland and outside their relationship, reflects the film's advocacy for breaking free from restrictive gender norms for both men and women.

Gerwig's directorial style has associated whimsical humour with profound social commentary to produce a film that is entertaining, meaningful, questionable (for women) and to produce a film that is both entertaining and inspirational. From the vibrant production design, mixed with Margot Robbie's dynamic performance, this film brings Barbie's world to life in a visually and emotionally compelling manner.

The 2023 film *Oppenheimer* not only presents J. Robert Oppenheimer as a brilliant physicist but also explores his philosophical introspections and moral difficulty. Not just because Cillian Murphy's portrayal of Oppenheimer succeeded in capturing the essence of a thinker grappling with the profound implications of his scientific achievements but he also managed to transform him into a philosopher on screen.

Oppenheimer's desire to create and to become the "father of the atomic bomb" has shown us that not every wish that you have is good, you can even go through ethical consequences because of a scientific discovery. Even if the film frequently returns to the theme of responsibility, how men have their good ideas that could save the world, towards the end of it, we can see how the director is trying to emphasize Oppenheimer's feelings and how he deals with the far-reaching consequences of his work for humanity and the world.

Nolan's use of non-linear storytelling mirrors the complexity of Oppenheimer's thoughts and the fragmented nature of his experiences. By using this, he allows viewers to become part of his philosophical journey in a more profound way. From using rich dialogues and introspective monologues (provided with deep insights into Oppenheimer's philosophical reflections), the director is trying to show a deeper meaning of his internal conflicts and contemplations evident.

The film utilizes symbolic imagery, such as the recurring visions of atomic explosions, to visually represent Oppenheimer's philosophical grappling with the destructive potential of his creation, the use of sound design and score accentuates the emotional and philosophical intensity of key moments, drawing the audience deeper into Oppenheimer's internal world.

After being in a debate with the film *Barbie*, the 2023 film *Oppenheimer*, directed by Christopher Nolan, delves deeply into the life of J. Robert Oppenheimer, showing both scientific achievements but also the profound moral and ethical dilemmas he faced as a consequence of his work.

Facing the consequences of his actions was not something that we really expected from such a tough looking man, we thought that after creating this atomic bomb he will be mentally pleased that his "dream" finally came true. Having birthed the bomb, Oppenheimer discovers that he's lit a spark he can't control. Nolan never shows the actual bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a decision that generated controversy. But he does show you Oppenheimer imagining a blinding blast, a charred corpse at his feet, the sudden blank space where his cheering colleagues once sat. The man won the war and lost the battle.

At the end of the film, his famous quote reflected his deep agony and the existential crisis that he had to face after bombing two cities and killing thousands of innocent people “Now I am become death, the destroyer of worlds.”

Not to forget how everything that he did when he was younger (associations with the Communist Party) was brought back to light, making Oppenheimer’s loyalty and character very questionable and leading to the revocation of his security clearance and becoming isolated from the scientific community and the political establishment, profoundly affecting his career and personal life.

Oppenheimer presents the physicist not just as a scientist but as a philosopher on screen, deeply engaged with the ethical, existential and moral questions arising from his work and also exploring the profound and often painful reflections of a man who irrevocably changed the world, making it a compelling narrative of scientific genius intertwined with philosophical inquiry.

### **Philosophy of (hu)man**

When it comes to the people behind the projects, Greta Gerwig is a filmmaker that throughout her career has dealt with themes of girlhood and womanhood, how society treats young women, and, though they exist in contrast to men, the stories revolve around rebellious girls at the gates of adulthood, discovering the real world, and trying to deal with the prejudices is has against them.

Christopher Nolan, named a “Philosopher on Screen” by Michael Caine, creates big films about big men, who are in a constant battle within themselves, of doing what is right by societal norms and volitions, and what they think are actually the best things for society.

With these contrasting stories they want to tell, it is not hard to understand the difference in demographics that they bring to the cinemas. Yet, why is it that when a man creates something, it is seen as a universal valuable piece of art? “The Godfather”, directed by Francis Ford Coppola is seen as the pinnacle of cinema, while Sofia Coppola is known for her feminine, oneiric images, usually understated pieces that deal with women and their femininity.

Well, for one, a study published in 2020 in the Journal of Experimental Social Psychology (adults and children) reveals that people of all ages and cultures tend to associate men with brilliance. This implicit bias makes women underrepresented in sciences, as well as in philosophy. Though one may see men and women as equally competent (especially in the past decades), brilliance, a distinguishing factor in appreciating their power and (in this case) artistry, is still low.

And across time, humanity has seen more male philosophers and men of science be put on a pedestal and be praised for what they have done, while women’s thoughts and ideas have been constantly challenged, their position in society reinforced as the homemakers who have to take care of the children, and not think too hard, while men have been afforded the instant favourable opinion. These events turned into intrinsic biases people have about men and women, as well as for what they stand for. Men usually are associated with power and rationality, while women are associated with weakness and emotional sensibility. (Pavco-Giaccia, et al., 2019)



## Dream world versus War world

The “Nuclear family” as a general concept, mother, father, and their children living in the same house, has existed since the dawn of time, yet the familial unit as it is known today started to pick up steam during the Industrial Revolution (and early capitalism), as it was the better financially than the community-based unit. The term first appeared in 1924, from the word “nucleus”, the core of something. It became even more widespread after World War II, to refer to the newly formed families, following traditional gender roles. Though it has lost its popularity, the “nuclear family” is still mentioned in conservative circles (Wikipedia, n.d.).

Given the trajectory that the world has taken in part due to the atomic bomb, Barbie is a result of Oppenheimer. Barbie was supposed to represent the young woman of the post-war America, well-dressed, pretty, and looking for a male partner. Yet, “Born under the atomic cloud, the creators of the Barbie doll never referenced Oppenheimer’s atomic world. Ken is not a nuclear physicist – even as a fantasy” (Oldenziel, 2024).

The destruction was well behind them, and it was time to rebuild what was lost. So, the coming back to old values and gender roles was a way to find a balance with the new changes. But that does not mean that the traditional roles were not subverted. Even Barbie was a response to the toy market that was selling only dolls resembling infants, trying to instil in the young girls the feelings of desire to be a mother; except girls wanted to think of a nearer future, seeing the older girls get ready and look pretty, they wanted to play pretend, not as mothers, but as young women.

Here comes Barbie, a pretty, all-American looking doll, with the figure (albeit exaggerated) of a young woman, and though girls did not actually instantly break their tea sets at the sight of the new toy, they did see her as a new pinnacle of something, and that something was the future they wanted.

Barbie begins with a utopia, the perfect land where everything seems to be perfect, everyone is happy, but this utopia will disappear soon with what happens during the film and with the last lines. Oppenheimer begins with a shot of raindrops symbolizing the reach of atomic blasts and ends with a vision of Earth on fire.

Since men are much more credible than women and are in charge of saving the world, their desire for a change might destroy the world without thinking about the consequences. For Oppenheimer, his burning desire was to create something so important and to prove that Americans are one step ahead in front of the nazis and soviets. But only one man, Leslie Groves (an army engineer), had the courage to ask if the world would be destroyed. Before the Trinity test, the first-ever detonation of an atomic bomb, Oppenheimer said that he’s confident that the chances of annihilating all life on Earth are near zero. “Near zero?” splutters Groves. “Zero would be nice!”

In reality, Groves’s concerns were those of Manhattan Project physicist Edward Teller. Teller was worried that the heat of the explosion “would cause the hydrogen in the atmosphere to undergo fusion, setting off a catastrophic chain reaction that would continue around the globe and destroy Earth” (Kelly, 2023). Oppenheimer said twice the famous quote of Bhagavad Gita: “Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds”, the meaning of the quote reflecting on Oppenheimer’s creation, becoming the literal destroyer of the world.



In their world, man creates chaos and always need female support. Kitty Oppenheimer could be associated with the quote “behind every strong man is an even stronger woman” but I would like to add a little twist to it: behind every career man, there is a strong woman.

On the opposite side, we discover Barbie and her world Barbieland. Described as the “perfect world”, Barbieland presents a world where women are much more diplomatic and cerebral. But what (men) don’t focus on (even in Barbie and real life) is the fact that even women have their sensitive side as well: being a woman in a society ruled (mostly) by man, it’s not quite easy:

It is literally impossible to be a woman. You are so beautiful, and so smart, and it kills me that you don’t think you’re good enough. Like, we have to always be extraordinary, but somehow, we’re always doing it wrong. [...] You have to answer for men’s bad behaviour, which is insane, but if you point that out, you’re accused of complaining. You’re supposed to stay pretty for men, but not so pretty that you tempt them too much or that you threaten other women because you’re supposed to be a part of the sisterhood. [...] It’s too contradictory and nobody gives you a medal or says thank you! And it turns out in fact that not only are you doing everything wrong, but also everything is your fault. (Gerwig 2023)

## IN LIEU OF CONCLUSION. CAN WE ENJOY BOTH?

Yes, we can enjoy both. But keep in mind that it depends on which film you want to see first.

For me, I’ll go on a heavier side first and choose *Oppenheimer* and after that I’ll end in a “that’s something to think about” note with Barbie. Why so? In both films we see human evolutions but from different perspectives: in *Oppenheimer* we have this image of man meaning “everything” and in *Barbie* we have this image of woman meaning “everything” but it is not being recognised, she just has to go through this journey of self-discovery.

For *Oppenheimer*, the male ego dictated to be the greatest man in history (especially since we discuss about the Second World War). Even his male colleagues have foreseen and abandoned this idea of creating the nuclear bomb because they have taught about the repercussions of it, *Oppenheimer* didn’t. When he was financed for this project (from special equipment to creating his own city for research purposes) he didn’t think or didn’t want to think about the massacre he was going to create. It’s a statement on whether it is worth it to serve your country. And the answer is, it’s not. You can be loyal to your country and it will still only ever treat you well if it’s in their favour. After the bloodbath in Japan, his human nature came and hit the scientist man so hard that he woke up to reality. The “war” between the scientist and the human being was lost.

For *Barbie*, we follow a modern hero(ine)’s journey. Not really prepared for what the real world has to “offer”, she has to face many controversial topics: consumer culture, growing up, parental relationships, gender dynamics and a multitude of other issues. I think the film really shattered the glass on how women are supposed to feel versus the reality of being a woman. In this film, it’s not about women supremacy (many got the wrong idea), but instead it is highlighting the idea of how important it is for everyone to have self-esteem and value that is based on who they are rather than outside validation. Even President Barbie, towards the end of the film, says “No Barbie or Ken should be living in the shadows.”

The movie is for everyone to see and enjoy, but ultimately “Barbie” is truly a film by women, about women, for women (McCabe & Oldfather, 2023).



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# *Edward Scissorhands and Tim Burton's Disabled Bodies*

Irina BOBOC

Tim Burton has been called in various ways, from visionary mind, eccentric, unforgettable dual or inventive to their opposite edges, being referred such as: twisted mind, isolated, too dark, gloomy and depressed. The stark difference between these two types of reception lies in the degree of intensity and depth critics have received and understood his artistic work. At some point in his career, he has been criticised for his constant preoccupation for the same themes, motifs, techniques, in one word, for his overall tone that he applies to his films. Unfortunately, many critics haven't had the proper profundity to analyse his artistic work and to deeply appreciate his consistency. By maintaining and applying the same filmmaking style on numerous works, from different historical and cultural periods, films that overall belonged to various cinematographic companies has led to the Burtonesque. His consistency, as opposed to the idea of evolution, according to some critics, could be added to his overall visionary filmmaking style that distinguishes his style among many other filmmakers.

The magical imagery of Burton's films is a consequence of overlapping "influence of past absurdities and eccentricities, the never-never land of children's books or the charnel house trappings of the existential horror writers." (Le Blanc, Odell, 2005, p. 5) Duality also strengthens Burton's cinematic style, eagerly discussed and analysed by critics: "There's a duality between the magically wonderful and grotesquely grim, the soul torn between wonder and despair." (ibid) This quality of always showing two sides of the same coin brought Tim Burton fame and consideration from the worldwide audience, stirring curiosity either through his animation films or those that treat serious, moral issues.

The autobiographical nature of Burton's films reflected in all of his films is another element that added uniqueness to his style allowing the viewers to step closer to the real self of such a complex director. As a puppeteer he always desired to conduct his characters and action in the right direction for him, especially to cover an empty space for his so debatable and unusual childhood memory: "Nostalgia plays on the gap between representations of the past and actual past events, and the desire to overcome the gap and recover what has been lost." (Cook, 2005, p. 4) In this respect, displaying an abnormal society doubled by the presence of an outsider in the person of Edward represents above everything the centre of the real nature of Burton: "The pervasive longing for a place or person to belong with provides the emotional core of all of Burton's films, and I would suggest that this universal aspiration continues to resonate with audiences twenty- five years later." (Barkman, 1998, p. 296) The functioning mechanisms of Burton's world are driven by nostalgia about his past and consequently he displays in *Edward Scissorhands* his childhood suburb from Burbank as a way to reiterate his conflicting childhood memories.

The role of yearning for something that is definitely lost has its crucial role in Burton's visionary world. For example, Fred Davis (1979, p. 69) in his study discussed the importance of nostalgia and its definitory role when referring to the way we construct our identity:"

nostalgia is one of the means...we employ in the never-ending work of constructing, maintaining and reconstructing our identities.” Furthermore, this process of reconstructing the past while bringing it to the present through various strategies in Burton’s world implies primarily emphasizing the fine border between what may be considered normal and abnormal in societal terms. The light difference between the previous antagonist terms may be translated in two directions which come to complete each other to some extent: environment and characters. As a “moderately destructive” child (Salisbury, 2006, p. 39), the environment functioned for Burton as the perfect setting as “new born characters” were about to make their appearance in order to sustain fears from an alienated childhood experience: “It was an environment, however, from which Tim Burton felt alienated at an early age, one that he would later portray in *Edward Scissorhands*. Indeed, it’s easy to see the young, introverted Tim Burton in Edward’s stranger - in - a - strange - land, removed from his hilltop castle home to a pastel - coloured version of suburbia.” (ibid)

For Tim Burton, as previously explained, every element he decided to introduce into one of his films is not a simple, but a deliberate and carefully planned action. Consequently, the setting and the characters make up the Burton’s universe a place where every corner is full of correspondences, metaphors, alternative images that altogether create a unique Gothic imagery. Still, the defining element for Burton that helps him to constitute the real Gothic universe with its subsequent symbolism remains the “body”, elements that brings with it the possibility of envisioning a cinematic world never before pictured.

For Burton, “the body” is reformulated and represented in such a way that the inside is doubled by the outside, meaning that the frustration, the psychological side of a character or the alienation is doubled by a deformed, dehumanized, strange, disfigured body. In this way, it powers the extraordinary Burton’s ability of expressing and representing new sides of a Gothic world when people considered that they heard and seen everything possible from *Frankenstein* or *The Castle of Otranto*.

As many critics state, Tim Burton’s cinematography is a perfect blending between visual effects and characters representations, making from his films a delightful experience, both aesthetic and psychological: “Over the past thirty years, Tim Burton has fixed his mark on popular culture with his stylized visuals, up - down storytelling, and, above all, his unique protagonists.” (Barkman, ibid, p. 309) Therefore, the journeys Burton’s characters embark are ones that allows self-discovery, carefully studied and anticipated by their unseen master, Burton, converting, though their journeys into outsiders, participants to a journey of discovery from an unwilling position: “The rigid worlds of normalcy that Burton’s protagonists inhabit, though repugnant and undesirable, have a profound impact on the protagonists. This influence seems to extend beyond characters’ choices and into their perception of the world, meaning that the characters seem incapable of controlling how they see the world or their place within that world. (Barkman, ibid, pp. 309-310)

In their long journey displayed as not possessing rational will or rational consideration of their actions (Barkman, ibid), they still show a great symbolism through their bodies by suggesting strong connection between the purpose they were constructed and disposed into the film and their interior voice and psychological side:

Broken and transgressive bodies in Burton's narratives are often juxtaposed with conformity and obedience, which his protagonists fail to recognise. Physical brokenness or exaggerated features occurring in characters such as Edward Scissorhands (Johnny Depp), Jack Skellington (Chris Sarandon), Emily as the Corpse Bride (Helena Bonham Carter), Willy Wonka (Johnny Depp), Alice (Mia Wasikowska), Sparky the Dog (Frank Welker) or Margaret Keane's (Amy Adams) big-eyed children reflect the psychological fragmentation that comes with the refusal to subscribe to a collective identity. (Helena Bassil-Morozow. *ibid*, p. 162)

In two major directions has been divided the process of analysing the main character from *Edward Scissorhands*, Edward. Firstly, he is revealed to the audience as a sadist, pervert due to its atypical sexual symbolism harshly criticised by Carol Siegel (2013), stating that the film is characterized by "blatant sexualised depictions of perversity" (Siegel, *ibid*, p. 197) even if the audience would never recognize or admit the existence of these uncomfortable aspects of a film character at the time of its release. Secondly, he is appreciated as a character with physical deformities that are translated also in his lack of ability of surviving in the real world: "Edward cannot cope with everyday life and needs guidance in order to survive in the "real" world. He does not know how to handle his feelings towards Kim and her boyfriend" (Page, *ibid*, p. 88).

The following lines will emphasize the complementary relationship between the outside of Edward, materialized through Edwards's disabled body and inside, meaning the way his deformity affects his social status. Physically speaking, Edward, cast by Jonny Deep, is an unfinished grotesque young man, manufactured by The Inventor, a father substitute, dressed entirely in leather, pale face and horrifying scissor hands that represent an imminent danger for him every second of his life. Edward also symbolizes: "an inversion of the genre conventions of the mad scientist film." (LeBlanc, Odell, *ibid*, p. 66) He is taught everything by his inventor through a series of short lessons especially courtesy and etiquette, but this information cannot be applied directly to society realities as long as he did not have this opportunity: "While his moral code is naïve but internally correct it doesn't reflect society's opinions." (*ibid*) Being isolated in his father's laboratory and educated or informed by his inventor in a romantic, old-fashioned manner, Edward fails from the start to understand and consequently to "taste" grasps from the real, outside world. As a parallel with Tim Burton, Edward may be interpreted as a self- image of him: "as the misunderstood artist outside of conventional life, trying to fit in but doomed by his very nature to fail in the process." (*ibid*, p. 66-67)

Designed as a small and personal fantastic work produced for a mainstream commercial audience, Burton's masterpiece has demonstrated that its interpretation can lead to higher alternative symbolism with a devoted cult audience interested in Gothic culture. These later interpretations are also a direct consequence of Burton's initial intentions, those of suggesting with the main aspects of the film America's tendency of categorization and conforming to certain requests imposed by the outside without taking into consideration the interior will. The image of a child from his primary school who has been rejected and categorized by their teacher as stupid and not conforming to the teacher's image was "the strongest impulse in the film" (Salisbury, *ibid*, p. 175) and consequently, Tim Burton invented a character that embodies "more of a reaction against that kind of categorization." (*ibid*)

Edward's horror appearance comes in contradiction with his behaviour both with strangers or later, with the persons that Edward feels familiarized with: "Edward rarely acts out



in anger or frustration and never indicates a desire to exert physical or psychological power.” (Hackett, *ibid*, p. 250) This lack of innate desire is a direct consequence of Edward’s absence from the outside world, from society and its subsequent realities, an absence, as previously stated, due to his physical disability.

Edward’s body language establishes for the audience his self-perception. In this respect, in the Lacanian mirror phase (*ibid*, p. 252) Edward’s broken mirror from his Gothic castle is a direct representation of his self-image: ugly, broken, anxious, unstable and dissatisfied. This scene of Edward analysing himself in the mirror becomes central for the way he perceives and acts for the rest of the film: insecure and anxious every time he has to manifest new unknown emotions. For example, when Kim, the one he loves, leaves Edward for her boyfriend he becomes terrified, angry, slightly violent by scratching the walls and acting in an uncontrollable manner.

Moreover, Edward fails to fulfil some of natural stages of his development, leading to a disruption in his psychological development. Not having a father figure in order to complete his process of being informed about the outside world, he loses his primal source from which a boy should learn about his masculinity especially. (*ibid*, page 253) Ronald F. Levant and William Pollack in their study discuss the presence of a father figure that raises a sense of self: “leading to a more stable sense of self through the boy’s identification with his father’s masculine role” (1995, p. 42) This gap in his masculinity leads to clumsiness, awkwardness and rigidity and discomfort in his physical movements. He always avoids eye-contact, he hesitates when he firstly encounters situations that involve expressing his feelings and he displays confusion rather than clear and deliberate actions. He even fails to artistically express himself. Although considered as being compulsive creating (Lennard, *ibid*, p. 222), his works suggest disablement and naivete due to his sculptures’ simplicity: “Like Burton’s own art Edward’s has a frailty, a sense of wonder about it. But this beauty and simplicity can also be turned into nightmare or grotesque.” (LeBlanc, Odell, *ibid*, p. 67) He transforms many of his neighbours’ gardens by sculpting for them different figures and then proceed to their hair, adding an element of surprise with his new ability of hairstyling them in unconventional styles. Furthermore, this new ability of transforming his neighbour’s gardens into real masterpieces represents another strategy of displaying Edward’s contradictory nature. He indeed possesses a pair of disabled hands that define his abnormal nature, but he still manages to reflect his real untouched and sensitive nature by manufacturing those magnificent sculptures.

In terms of his hands’ symbolism, there are certain aspects that should be discussed as not a single element in Burton’s cinematographic universe is unpredictable. As “the hand was a communicative device second only in eloquence to the face” (Kemp and Wallace, 2000, p. 28), in Edward Scissorhands’ situation his hand indeed communicates in a particular way Edward’s inner self. Consequently, his hands possess an ambivalent role from being capable of “display the skills and expertise that emphasise an individual’s proficiency and professionalism, from handiwork and handicraft and the trade of a handyman” (Conrich. Sedgwick, 2017, p. 131) Edward’s body is a reconstructed mechanism, which has failed to reach its ultimate purpose, that of serving his master needs as it was initially designed. Consequently, taking into consideration the body in its new adapted form employed by Edward’s father, that is deformed and abnormal for the rest of the world, we also are facing a new body formula which has been employed the prosthetics mechanisms in order to restore a part of the body that cannot function

properly: “[w]hile some prosthetic appliances were similar to work tools such as pliers, others resembled human body parts [...] In these cases, inanimate, inorganic devices were being reimagined as human.” (Panchasi, 1995, p. 128) The reinvention of Edward’s prosthetics function as a tool to set the difference between his own identity and the rest of the society he sooner manages to interfere with: “This Frankensteinian creature that consists of parts is left with hands made of scissors and shears which define his identity and which establish his difference within the sameness of the suburbia in which he emerges.” (Conrich. Sedgwick, *ibid*, p. 142)

As Burton himself confirms, the primarily communicative role of the hands is totally reversed in order to emphasise the stark difference between normal represented by the suburb community of Burbank and Edward’s disturbing appearance: “the film is about not being able to touch, to communicate. It’s about being at odds with your own body.” (Edelstein, 2005, p. 31) Furthermore, Edward desperately tries to conform to the rules or social behaviour expected from a normal human beings of the suburb he descends by on the one hand analysing their way of behaving in various social situations and on the other hand, by trying to perform actions similar to them in order to integrate himself despite the background of his existence and creation: “[w]hen Edward is looking for some form of closeness, the distance that separates him from other people remains unbridgeable, in direct proportion to the length of his scissors.” (Merschmann, 2000, p. 55).

By using his highly skilled unusual hands, he quickly demonstrates through the use of them that he possesses a “high level of precision and excellence that comes from the worker’s tools being a physical and fixed extension of the body.” (Conrich, Sedgwick, *ibid*) To some extent, Edwards represents the image of “the artist who speaks through his work” (*ibid*), even if this implies performing actions that come in contradiction with Edward’s real nature. The Gothic character by psychology and appearance gives the women exotic and modern haircuts, creates topiary crafted into animal and human shapes that from one point seem to stir contradictory reactions from the local rather than bringing Edward closer to them.

The closeness so much desired by Burton’s characters in general convert them into sympathetic monsters (Barkman, *ibid*, p. 298) as opposed to the traditional image of the Gothic character: “Burton’s sympathetic monsters are lovable and misunderstood, outsiders in the world of domesticity which wants to stifle their creativity and change them if they are to be accepted.” (*ibid*) In the end, Edward is considered dangerous for the community, he is blamed for a series of violent actions that put in danger the members of it, actions mostly determined by his strange appearance. All of these led to “This expulsion and re-isolation works to ensure the artist-hero’s difference is advantageously recognized and maintained. Scissorhands symbolically intermingles difference with creativity through Edward’s dicey digits; because of this, the “freakish” Edward is not merely hated for being different, but hated for being creative.” (Lennard, 2013, p. 222)

The artist hero is now prepared to step into another dimension, that of validating his own identity and fully independence, one that he was not aware of it but it was extremely desired from the moment he stepped away from his isolated gloomy castle to a world he deeply wished to integrate: “That hatred, however, far from being the opponent of artistic expression, is necessary for validating independent creativity. Taken this way, what we see in Scissorhands is the story of a character who is discovered by and rejuvenates an artistically challenged

neighbourhood before being conveniently exiled to avoid his assimilation into the inevitable, horrific sameness of the society around him.”(ibid) Moreover, despite Edward’s act of independence, the community he emerges as “resolve at the film’s conclusion from relatively distinct characters into a de-individuated mob that clearly and flatteringly distinguishes the artist from the revolting homogeneity of the talentless.”(ibid)

Burton’s monsters are a direct result of the emergence of opposite elements “born out of the in – between” spaces such as “life and death, the past and the future, the natural and the unnatural, the human and the inhuman.” (Barkman, ibid, p. 299) The interference of these contrasting elements sees the light once with their appearance in the domestic sphere, revealing themselves and “in so doing, become sympathetic by exposing the true horrors of the domestic”. (ibid)

In the end, Edward remains totally misunderstood by the other characters from the film. Throughout the film, all of them have tried to suggest different medical ways of fixing Edward’s disability, treating him as a dysfunctional creature who possesses several interesting skills, but nothing out of the ordinary. His disabled body is constantly “treated as somehow supernatural because it by definition lies outside the curative capabilities of science (i.e., the medical model of disability), remaining continually disavowed and misunderstood as abnormal.” (Church, 2006) What brings newness in Edward Scissorhands’ case is Burton’s ability of taking “a long-standing generic equation of images and meanings and ascribes different implications to those images, whereby the visually monstrous is made benevolent rather than malevolent.” (Geal, 2021, p. 260)

In conclusion, Tim Burton’s invention of an abnormal and disabled character has revealed itself as a magnificent figure in America’s 1990s cinematography and not only: “It is modern Hollywood’s finest film, a peerless, perfect example of the blend between art, emotion and the commercial that will rightly remain as one of the select classics of cinema.” (LeBlanc, Odell, ibid, p. 69) Some critics went beyond every limit and considered it a modern masterpiece, even if Le Blanc and Odell state that: “it does not need to be quantified or excused by the expression ‘modern’ at all.” (ibid)

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# Translating Idiomatic Expressions

Nicoleta-Cristina GIUȘCĂ

This paper intends to find, analyse, and interpret a corpus of Romanian idioms that are difficult to translate into English at first sight and that require a certain amount of research in terms of their roots or origins, structure and meaning.

Idioms are embedded in each culture. The study of idioms is inextricably linked to the examination of the cultural influences that have shaped their evolution. It is therefore necessary to consider the impact of society on the evolution of these terms. Most idioms have been formed through a process of evolution, being influenced by cultural aspects, religious beliefs, social norms and conventions, environment, myths or superstitions.

The idiomatic expressions of a certain language (SL) lack a precise counterpart in the target language (TL). This discrepancy may result in a loss of the original meaning during the translation process.

Idioms are defined in the Oxford Dictionary of English Idioms as “phrases that behave like words” (2010: 7). By attempting to interpret an idiom word by word would make no sense and that is the reason why these structures must be taken as a whole.

Scholars have pursued to define the concept of idiom for a long time, therefore many definitions and explanations exist, but to summarize all of them, I have selected the following one from Gramley and Pátzold who state that an idiom is a: “complex lexical item which is longer than a word form but shorter than a sentence and which has a meaning that cannot be derived from the knowledge of its component parts” (2003: 55).

However, G. Nunberg and I.A. Sag argue that idiomatic phrases such as *to kick the bucket*, *to be all ears*, *to break the ice*, etc. should not be confused with idiomatically combining expressions such as *to take advantage*, *to pull strings*, *to get along*, etc. the first ones “do not distribute their meanings to their components” (1994: 491), while the latter ones specifically do that.

In the Romanian language, idioms have been defined as “*expresie, locuțiune, perifrază, idiotism*”, while English calls them: *phrase, idiom, collocation, set phrase, syntagm, phrasal verb*” (Margan, 2018:59). Regardless of the name they have received throughout the years, one can choose to define them as the “set of more or less welded words with a determined unitary meaning, grammatically acting as a single part of speech” (Dimitrescu, 1958:154).

In the case of an idiomatic expression in the Romanian language, the most common format is that of a verb accompanied by one or two nouns (most of the time, there is a *preposition* between the *verb* and *noun*), *adjective*, *adverb* or *numeral*, as in the following examples:

### **Verb + Noun/ (preposition) + Noun**

R: *A sparge gheața, a căsca ochii, a căuta ceartă, a ieși la lumină, a da în vileag, a se împăca după o ceartă*

=

E: *To break the ice, to keep both eyes clean, to pick a fight, to come to light, to spill the beans, to bury the hatchet.*

### **Verb + Adjective**

R: *A călca strâmb, a trata cu răceală, a (nu) privi cu ochi buni*

=

E: *To tread away, to give someone the cold shoulder, to take a gloomy view of*

### **Verb + Adverb**

R: *A întoarce pe dos, a merge prea departe, a merge drept înainte*

=

E: *To turn something upside down, to run too far, to follow one's nose.*

### **Verb + Numeral**

R: *A fi la patru ace, a fi în al nouălea cer, a fi cu ochii în patru, a sta de șase, a fi a cincea roată la căruță*

=

E: *(Dressed) to the nines, on cloud nine/over the moon, to keep an eye out for, to be on guard, to play third fiddle.*

Whereas for the English language, a significant proportion of verbal phrases are constructed with a noun, the most widely recognized phraseological units are constructed with verbs such as *to have*, *to make*, *to give* or *to take*:

*to have an eye for something*= *a avea ochiul format/a se pricepe la ceva*;

*to have an edge on (someone or something)*= *a fi în avantaj cu ceva (față de cineva)/ a fi cu un pas înainte*;

*to have a feeling*= *a avea un presentiment*;

*to make matters worse* = *colac peste pupăză*;

*to make ends meet*= *a (o) scoate la capăt*;

*to make a living*= *a-și câștiga existența*;

*to give a hand* = *a da o mână de ajutor*;

*to give (something) a shot*= *a face o încercare*;

*to give someone a hand*= *a da o mână de ajutor*;

*to take a bad turn* = *a lua o întorsătură neplăcută*;

*to take (something) for granted*= *a lua de bun ceva*,

*to take the plunge= a-și lua inima în dinți.*

In translation studies, the concept of ‘faithfulness’ which according to Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere has been looked at as ‘equivalence’, meaning that the translator should offer the target language (TL) text the ideal translatable solution, being no longer understood “as the mechanical matching of words in dictionaries, but rather as a strategic choice made by translators” (1998: 3).

It must be acknowledged that in some instances, there exists no direct equivalent for the Romanian idioms in the English language; therefore, a translator should employ explication in order to faithfully render the meaning.

The following lines include an analysis of the following idiomatic expressions: *tîrîe-brâu*, *înghețat tun*, *doarme de poți da cu tunul*, *a căra apă la fântână*, *plouă cu găleata*, underlining the challenge of translating them into English.

The first one, *tîrîe-brâu*, an archaic compound term meaning *someone who is lazy and does not want to work or make any physical effort*; in English, there are many words referring to such a person, but because English lacks the cultural specificity of the word, it can only be translated through partial synonymy, e.g. *crabby*, *idler*, *loafer*, *good-for-nothing*.

The Romanian piece of clothing called *brîu/brâu* translated as *girdle* was wrapped according to its length around the wearer’s waist, with the last end tucked under the waistband. Sometimes the *girdle* would loosen, it would unfurl and the end would hang down, even be carried by the possessor behind him. Such a situation was considered negligence, attributing to the person in question an improper conduct. The verb chosen *tîrîe* (then), *a târâi* (now) has been selected according to the social and cultural context of that period of time.

*Înghețat tun*, a Romanian idiomatic expression meaning to be *extremely/bitterly cold*, *frozen or frozen to the bone/ to be chilled*, has been difficult to translate since the noun *tun-cannon* in English, cannot be translated word-for-word, suffering a loss in the second language. The phrase may be the result of an ellipsis, *frozen* just like “a body of water that you can drive a cannon over”.

“The same seems to be the explanation for *beat tun*, *a se îmbăta tun* - so drunk that you can shoot the cannon and not wake him up (in complementarity with the state of the respective person, described also by the syntagms *beat mort*, *~ turtă*, *~ leucă*,” (Dumistrăcel, 2001:424).

The expression *doarme de poți da cu tunul*, follows the same rule as above, *tun* being the culturally specific aspect incorporating the idiom. As for the English equivalent, *sleeping like a log/top*, means also to sleep very well.

*A căra apă la fântână*, another idiomatic expression in the Romanian language revolves around the word *fântână* (Latin *fontana* ), in this specific context having the meaning of *spring water*, not *a well* which is the man-made construction. Some other examples in Romanian would be: *a căra apă cu ciurul*, *a căra soarele cu oborocul*, *a căra apă la puț*, *a căra lemne în pădure sau a căra pietre la munte*. As for the English equivalent, *to gild refined gold* might be a suitable solution, both idioms referring to working in vain, fruitlessly. The English context may have been “adding unnecessary ornamentation to something beautiful in its own right”. (Merriam-Webster online)

The well known idiom *plouă cu găleata*, which translates into English as *raining cats and dogs*, is another situation where the cultural impact of certain idiomatic expressions has a



different meaning in the Romanian language than in English. Starting from distinct perspectives, each of the two mentioned cultures has created an expression that explained their past realities.

*A ploua cu găleata, găleată* referring to a large *bucket*, a *scuttle* or *pail*, means *to rain heavily*, a torrential downpour that seems to not have an end soon. However, for the British, the origin of the idiom *raining cats and dogs* can be traced back to a Greek saying *cata doxa*, which would be translated today as something unusual, contrary to belief or experience, but there is no evidence to support the borrowing. Meanwhile, other theories consider that the idiom is supposed to have originated in England in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. City streets were then filthy and heavy rain would occasionally carry along dead bodies from animals. Richard Brome's *The City Witt*, 1652 has the line "It shall rain dogs and polecats".

To conclude, this paper has been a demonstration of how different the context can be in the translation of idiomatic expressions in the Romanian and English languages. Nevertheless, it is difficult to reproduce the exact meaning in translation, but at least the translator's attempt to find a suitable phrase or combination of words would change the text's shape, bringing it more alive and closer to reality.

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# Aboriginal Children in Australia

Claudia-Mihaela OLTEANU

This paper is the result of a larger research project starting from Doris Pilkington's genre challenging text and it deals with the treatment the aboriginal suffered at the hands of the white colonizers during their stay in the land that is now known as Australia.

The sources employed were used to research the life of aboriginal children before the influence of the British government and during the colonization which changed the way of a generation that paints a dark cloud over future generations. Josephine Flood is the author of the book *The Original Australians – The Story of the Aboriginal People* that was originally released in 2006 and the second edition which was utilized in this paper was released in 2019. This book is a historical nonfiction that tackles the history of the Australian Aboriginal people spanning from the distant past to the present. The choice of this particular book was the description of the British colonization from the viewpoint of the Aboriginals.

The interest did not lie in the discovery of the land that today is Australia but instead was the traditions of Aboriginal that included children. In Flood's book the topics that are significant to mention is childbirth and what the aboriginal people do to protect the baby skin from the sun moments after being born. A few years after the child is taught to learn his or her mother's footprints on the ground and later of the animals that live among them warning them of the danger in the wild and stay safe.

Another topic that separates the two genders is the initiation of a child into adulthood with the help of the older generation. Starting with the girls that are recognized as an adult once they reach puberty and the body experiences some amount of pain which is usually cuts either done by someone else or self-inflicted. The other initiation for boys begins in the same age period as the opposite gender but compared to the female counterpart the boys suffered a circumcision and tooth pulling which for the two genders means to prove the survival of pain. Once the children were considered to be old enough, the adults introduced activities for the youths to help by either gathering or hunting for food to learn early on how to acquire food and become independent adults.

Doris Pilkington's *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* is a nonfiction book and also is an autobiography of the author prior of her birth and was released in 1996. In her autobiography she writes the side of Aboriginal people before and during colonization. Pilkington tells the story of her mother along with her two sisters that were half-caste which resulted in being placed in a boarding school and their daring escape. Pilkington herself having aboriginal origins wanted to make her mother and aunt's story known to the public so that the events that happened will not be forgotten. At the same time since the accounts of the events the aboriginal people lived though were sparse the intention was to gather all the stories from them and create evidence of the people that would have otherwise be a name in the past. While in Flood's book talked about childbirth, Pilkington with direct knowledge from family describes a sort of ritual that the grandmother's baby does in order for the child to be protected from evil. While the

gesture of warding spirits in Pilkington's book seem malicious from the outside in actuality is a good deed that is connected to the Aboriginal's livelihood. This autobiography is proof of three children that rebelled against the powerful oppression of the British and escaped without being caught and brought back to the boarding house.

Brain Attwood released his book in 1989 *The Making of the Aborigines* being a nonfiction detailing how the natives that resided in the land that today was Australia were not known as Aboriginals before the British invasion. The natives did not think of themselves as a single race but instead they were divided in multiple tribes, speaking a language that some tribes understood and some not. After the arrival of the British did the term "Aboriginal" appeared to describe all the indigenous people that lived in Australia prior of the white men discovering the land. The point of interest is the influence of the missionaries had on the aboriginal children and how the adults wanted the youths to alienate themselves from their culture. To make this possible the missionaries used religion and school lessons to change the minds of the young children that in the eyes of the adults were easily swayed. By introducing the culture of others, the children were taught to learn to love that culture and hate the culture they grew up in essentially erasing their identity.

John Boulton is the editor of the nonfictional book *Aboriginal Children, History and Health Beyond Social Detriments* released in 2016 that focuses on the aboriginal children and the measures taken by the British government in their attempt to make the children's lives better than it was before colonization. The laws created by the British government took the children away from their parents and the fates of those children fell in the hands of government officials. The laws were intended to help the aboriginal children have a better future and away from the custody of the adults that did not have the means of accomplishing such feats. The government eliminated the rights of aboriginal parents over the children who were either grown or infants to be used in the future by the British for their own gain under the disguise of offering jobs. Laws that made a single person responsible for dozens of children until a certain age to decide what is good for them and many similar laws including ones for the half-caste children.

On the ongoing quest of the white colonizers to gain the full control of the aboriginal people, the native's children were unfortunately caught in this one sided battle. While it may seem that the adults had some sort of will power to fight back against the tyranny no matter how useless the efforts, the children being smaller and weaker quickly fell apart in the hands of the greedy government intent on using them for their sole benefit. Aboriginal children in Australia acquired a new name over the years which is The Lost Generation because they lost so much and continue to lose today years after the colonisation of Australia. Before the intervention of the British government in the education of children of aboriginal descent, their education was the responsibility of their families. Compared to the non-indigenous children, the aboriginal education did not consist of subjects such as literature, history, mathematics or geography that helps shape a future career of those children. Instead, the indigenous children acquire survival skills and tips to help them in a life or death situation learnt from previous generations through trial and failure. An indigenous child had a different birth from a non indigenous child.

To illustrate this point with a specific instance, the birth of a non indigenous child can have two options. The first option is going to the hospital where the doctors and nurses provide the best care they can offer to the mother and child to obtain the greatest outcome the safely



delivery of the baby. The second option is for the mother to choose to give birth at home with the help of a midwife who has experience in child birth and can direct the mother during the birth. Sadly, the aboriginal mothers had one option and that was to give birth outside in nature, more specifically a place where the earth was soft, with the help of two aunts of the family and the mother of the woman giving birth present. According to Flood (2006, p. 277) the babies were born with lighter skin than their parents but the women applied “ashes and charcoal ... or mother’s milk” to prevent the sensitive skin of the baby of being burnt by the sun. Naturally after a few days have passed since the birth, the baby’s skin begins to darken to the same color as the parents, the only parts that remain lighter on the child are the “soles and palms.” (Flood 2006, p. 279) In comparison to the non aboriginal children who receive a name immediately after birth, the indigenous child receives a nickname and a personal name is given later when they “began to walk”. (Flood 2006, p. 279)

Another custom that is mentioned is in Pilkington’s (1996, p. 56) novel that states the grandmother throwing insults at the new born baby, which for many seems not a nice thing to do, to offer protection against malicious intents of spirits that had seen the birth. This custom can only be done specifically by the grandmother of the child and not the women assisting the mother or by the father because the men did not participate in the child birth. Another discrepancy between the two races is that the non aboriginal children had beautiful toys, this applies in the cases when the families have a stable income, while the aboriginal had “dolls in the form of twigs” and whatever they could find in nature that could be transformed as something to resemble a toy. Mostly, aboriginal children were supported by the family to pick up activities done by adults. For example, according to Flood (2006, p. 281) “miniature spears were made for the boys...girls were given baskets...”. Meaning from a young age the children learnt how to procure food and how to survive in the wild with the disguises of playing games to prepare them for adulthood. On the other hand, the non aboriginal children did not have that luxury because once they were put to work as an apprentice there was no time for playing and the actions of the child could have serious consequences.

Another smart skill that the parents taught the aboriginal children was to identify the foot prints on the ground “first of their mother” and then later on to recognize foot prints of the animals in Australia to know if the danger was nearby. (Flood 2006, p. 280) The children who were not of aboriginal descent did not learn this kind of survival skills rather they learned manners and how to work. Faced with dangers, many children during the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries learnt survival skills on their own without adult guidance especially with how poor the working conditions were for both children and adults.

In addition, the girls and boys had an initiation to adult society. The non aboriginal offspring had a similar term that was more practiced by people of higher status, more notably the nobility, to introduce their children to affluent families for the objective of strengthening their connection or obtain new ones for the sake of power and monetary gain. The initiation of indigenous girls is done by rituals once they reach puberty and some variations of this rituals include cicatrization to show “their conquest of fear and pain” and both genders had “cuts inflicted” in any part of their bodies to show a sign of mourning a family member that passed away. (Flood 2006, p. 283) The boys were initiated at the same period of their lives as the girls when they reach puberty by the appearance of facial hair. According to Flood (2006, p. 378) the boys were to be separated from the family especially women into a secluded location where

they would learn how to be a man. The boys who make the transition from youths to young men are subjected to tests which imply “fear and pain” and end in physical tests such as “tooth avulsion, circumcision” to make them real men. (Flood 2006, p. 378)

From an outsider’s perspective everything was going well for the aboriginal children and all in all there was peace on their island hidden and not discovered by the world. Then the missionaries made their presence known on the island by teaching the population, that in their eyes had no God, about Christianity and making them participate in religious services to indoctrinate them to the missionaries’ God. While the adults attended religious services and listened to the preachings of the white men, the children were to have a massive change. According to the missionaries the process meant “to bring the children up in a civilised and Christian way” and teaching them about “industry, cleanliness and order.” (Attwood 1989, p. 62) In order to do that, the missionaries built a boarding house where the children will feel safe enough to consider this new building their own home. The boarding house had two dormitories separated from one another that housed girls in one side and boys in the other with the goal to separate the two genders. Aside the separation that the dorms provided this also implied that they could not speak to one another unlike before the system was put in place.

The missionaries had gone a step further and created a playground for the two genders to play in and supervised by the teachers. In the boarding house the children were given a set of tasks that were put to be done the moment after they woke up. This set of tasks contained the girls helping the matron cooking and washing while the boys were to cut firewood and get milk from the cows. Just as the adults, the children after eating breakfast they would attend the service in the church built by the missionaries. After the service was over, the children stayed a bit longer to have a religious instruction and then they were allowed to play for one hour before school began. At school, the aboriginal youth learned about literature and numbers to transform them into excellent workers. At the same time they were encouraged enthusiastically to scorn their own race and culture while adoring the European culture and learnt its history and battles to push them away from the aboriginal heritage they were born in.

The attitude of the missionaries who, in their eyes seemed to be nice act in the name of God, was no more than bigotry by trying to convert the aboriginals to Christianity despite the fact that the natives had their own beliefs and teaching the children to hate their own culture, traditions and customs that were ingrained from a young age by the family and instead replace it with a culture unknown to them and are expected to love it. After hours of lessons the children were granted a break to eat then the lessons were resumed for a few hours more. The day ended for the children by doing more chores which afterwards they were allowed to play for exactly one hour and attend the evening service. The aboriginal youth returned to the boarding house to get ready for the same things to happen the next day because this was the schedule made by the missionaries for the aboriginal children. By making a routine the children will get used to the lessons and the religious services and end up expecting them and slowly forgetting their own sense of self and replacing it with the knowledge of a European child.

The introduction of the boarding house was a disguise to brainwash the children into believing what the missionaries wanted because they knew that children were easily manipulated and their minds were malleable compared to the adults that already had strong beliefs. That’s the reason the missionaries didn’t place the adults in the boarding house with the children because it was harder for them to manipulate especially if the aboriginal had a very

strong will that could not be shaken by anyone no matter how much the missionaries asserted their authority. From these examples alone, it is evident that the missionaries did not believe the violence was the answer of controlling the aboriginal race rather their punishments utilized other means. The aforementioned events were the approach made by the missionaries to educate the aboriginal offspring and change their sense of self. While on the leadership of the missionaries, the aboriginal people naturally resisted but it seemed that they fought more violently with the white men.

The methods utilized by the white colonizers were similar of that of the missionaries meaning that they had a massive building where the children had dormitories separated by gender and everyone had a bed to sleep on. They also had a courtyard where the children played and communicated with each other and lastly there was the school where the children had the amazing opportunity to learn a subject that will guarantee a job offered by the British. Compared to the missionaries, the colonizers started taking children that were of mixed descent, being half aboriginal half British. The children that were mixed were called half-caste with many having an aboriginal mother and British fathers.

All of these happened with the decreasing of pure blood aboriginal which lead to the native women having children with the British men. The British might have offered medical care for the aboriginal population, Protection Policy Regulation did not quite mention in their rule about pregnant women.

According to Pilkington (1996, p. 63) the Protection Policy Regulation refers to individual who become ill or suffer a serious accident in which the colonizers responsible for that particular aboriginal has to send the aboriginal to the hospital for treatment. Reading this regulation between the lines means that if the white colonizer considers that the illness or injury that an aboriginal person sustained does not require medical care when in fact it does they could simply refuse to send the native to the hospital and instead they can let the aboriginal to suffer. While not mentioned directly about the pregnant aboriginal women still could go to the hospital and give birth safely there but many chose not to for fear of their child being taken away after the birth.

A change from the past was that the baby received a name from the British father rather than from the family and the child will go unnamed unless the father decides to give a name. In her book, Pilkington (1996, p. 56) states that after the father has seen his child, he recorded this event but was not officially documented in government files but instead on files in which only his superiors has access to. In the novel, Pilkington describes how the maternal side of the baby's family received gifts from the father and everyone saw how well the family was treated after the birth of a half caste child. The half-caste still learnt about the traditions of the aboriginal but also learned the English language so they could converse with the white fathers that do not know the language of the aboriginal.

Although the aboriginal women had children with the white men that did not mean that they had a relationship the only thing connecting them were the child and nothing more, the aboriginal women had aboriginal partner and the white man either had a partner or remained single. The half caste children for the first years of life were given permission to stay with their maternal family but once the youth reached puberty or a certain age to be consider old enough, they were forcefully taken away from the aboriginal family and taken to school. Pilkington (1996, p. 58) writes "part – Aboriginal children were more intelligent" meaning that their



smarts were inherited from the white father and not from the aboriginal side which was indirectly considered to lack intelligence.

Whilst the aboriginal children regarded the half caste as nothing more than a black sheep, the government considered that the half caste to be useful for the thing they planned and should immediately be separated from “their darker relations.” (Pilkington 1996, p. 58) The plans that the British government orchestrated for the half caste children was to go to school and become future workers and laborers to be used by the British. The unfortunate families to have a half caste child experienced agonizing pain watching the child being ripped away from them and no matter how much they pleaded with the British officials not to take them, the officials turned a blind eye to their anguish cries and pleadings.

Once at school, the children be assured by the adults responsible for their care that when they finish school they will be reunited with their families back home but instead they will be sent immediately to their work place under a new employer. One of the rules at the school was to cease to speak the aboriginal language and instead speak English, the native language of the white fathers.

The half caste were expected to follow the rules and if they disobeyed there will consequences. Pilkington (1996, p. 88) writes about a detention room for misbehaving children that are locked up as punishment in a concrete room for days and will get only water and bread. If the children were caught running away beside the corporeal punishment they will be humiliated by having their hair bald and made a spectacle out of the children by making them walk in front of everyone and see what happens to those that want to run away.

Pilkington (1996, p. 89) states that the beds where the children slept there was no sheet or pillow coverings and those were only placed when the adults in the boarding house were alerted of an inspection will take place. After the inspection was over and the government official left the premises, the adults quickly took everything they put to make the dormitories look like the ones that only European children had the luxury of experiencing. In the eyes of the anguished aboriginals what the white colonizers were doing was unfair and downright cruel. Just as the aboriginal followed their rules and the British government made rules and laws that changed the lives of the natives without their consent and knowledge because while there might have been aboriginal people who knew the English language they were mostly illiterate. One of the many acts that revolved around the English Industrial Schools are the following legislations Destitute Persons Relief Act 1866, Better Care of Destitute Children Act 1866, Industrial and Reformatory Schools Act and the Training Schools Act, Neglected and Criminal Children’s Act 1864 and Industrial Schools Act 1874. This legislation had the objective of providing children with the care and a safe environment for learning but these rules clearly were not respected by the adults and only pretended to care under the watchful eyes of government officials.

In Aboriginal Australia there was a board that decided the legislation for the natives and they made the act in 1869 the Protection and Management of the Aboriginal Natives of Victoria thus giving the board the power to move aboriginal people as they wished and to control the education of their children including the care and custody. In 1886, the Board dealt with the half caste problem by creating the Half-Caste Act that permitted only pure blood aboriginal descent and half-caste people under fourteen and over thirty-four to remain on the allocated reserves. In western Australia in 1886 the Aborigines Protection Act gave the power to



magistrates over either pure blood aboriginal or half caste to instruct to work of any “suitable age” until twenty-three years old. (Boulton 2016, p. 301)

A new law in 1905 made it so the Chief Protector in Western Australia the legal guardian of every child of aboriginal blood either pure or half caste to the age of sixteen. Meaning that one British man was in charge of hundreds of aboriginal offspring while the biological parents of those children were cast aside. A similar Act happened in South Australia, the 1911 Aborigines Act who also made the Chief Protector the legal guardian of every child “notwithstanding that any such child has a parent or relative living” and the children were freed from the custody of the Chief Protector at the age of twenty-one. (Boulton 2016, p. 301) In conclusion, while the various laws issued by the British government can be seen as a means to help the aboriginal children were not in fact helpful and resulted in unhealed trauma and fear of speaking up years after the colonizers left Australia.

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# Guillermo del Toro's Gothic Reworking of *Pinocchio* (2022)

Simona TATU

Guillermo del Toro, an acclaimed Mexican filmmaker known for his distinctive blend of fantasy and horror, has established himself as a master of modern Gothic cinema. His notable works, such as “Pan’s Labyrinth” (2006) and “The Shape of Water” (2017), showcase his unique ability to intertwine dark, fantastical elements with deeply human stories. In 2022, del Toro brought his Gothic sensibilities to the timeless tale of *Pinocchio*, originally penned by Carlo Collodi in 1883. Collodi’s *The Adventures of Pinocchio* narrates the journey of a wooden puppet who yearns to become a real boy, embedding moral lessons within a whimsical yet often dark narrative.

Del Toro’s adaptation diverges significantly from both Collodi’s original story and its most famous adaptation, Disney’s 1940 animated film. By infusing the narrative with his signature Gothic style, del Toro reimagines *Pinocchio* as a visually stunning, thematically rich exploration of identity, morality, and monstrosity. This paper will explore how del Toro’s *Pinocchio* reinterprets the classic tale through the lens of Gothic literature and cinema. The discussion will begin with an overview of del Toro’s cinematic approach and a comparison between the original story and his film. Key Gothic elements introduced in the adaptation will be examined, alongside the thematic depth, visual aesthetic choices, and the portrayal of monstrosity. Additionally, the paper will delve into the social and cultural commentary embedded within the film, its reception, and its broader impact on contemporary cinema.

Del Toro’s filmmaking career began in the late 1980s as a special effects makeup artist and later transitioned into directing. His early films such as “Cronos” (1993) and “The Devil’s Backbone” (2001) demonstrated his penchant for blending supernatural elements with poignant human drama. One of del Toro’s most notable works came with “Pan’s Labyrinth” (2006), a dark fantasy film set in post-Civil War Spain. The film received widespread acclaim for its visually stunning imagery, intricate storytelling, and exploration of the power of imagination amidst the brutality of war. “Pan’s Labyrinth” won three Academy Awards and solidified del Toro’s reputation as a masterful storyteller. Del Toro’s other notable works include “Hellboy” (2004) and its sequel “Hellboy II: The Golden Army” (2008), both based on the Dark Horse Comics character. These films showcased del Toro’s ability to blend action-packed sequences with rich mythology and character development. In 2017, del Toro’s film “The Shape of Water” won the Academy Award for Best Picture. The romantic fantasy drama tells the story of a mute janitor who forms a unique bond with an amphibious creature held captive in a government facility. The film exemplifies del Toro’s fascination with outsiders and his ability to infuse fantastical elements with deeply human themes of love, acceptance, and empathy. Del Toro’s distinctive style is characterized by lush visuals, intricate production design, and a deep empathy for marginalized characters. He often explores themes of otherness, the supernatural, and the blurred lines between good and evil. His films are marked by a sense of wonder and a belief in the power of storytelling to illuminate the human condition.

The story he chose to adapt, “Pinocchio,” is a classic Italian children’s novel written by Carlo Collodi, originally titled “The Adventures of Pinocchio” (“Le avventure di Pinocchio”). First published as a serial in 1881 and later as a complete book in 1883, it has since become one of the most beloved and enduring children’s stories worldwide. The story follows the adventures of Pinocchio, a wooden puppet carved by the lonely woodcarver Geppetto, who dreams of becoming a real boy. Pinocchio’s journey is filled with a series of misadventures and encounters with various characters, including the kindly Cricket, the devious Fox and Cat, the fairy with turquoise hair, and the terrifying puppet-master, Mangiafuoco (the “Eater of Fire”). At its core, “Pinocchio” explores themes of morality, obedience, and the consequences of one’s actions. The story is a cautionary tale, warning against disobedience, dishonesty, and the allure of easy pleasures. Pinocchio’s character transforms from a mischievous and naive puppet into a more responsible and compassionate individual as he learns the value of honesty, courage, and selflessness. Throughout the narrative, Collodi employs motifs such as transformation, temptation, and redemption to drive the plot forward. Pinocchio’s desire to become a real boy serves as a metaphor for the universal human longing for identity and self-realization, while his encounters with various fantastical creatures and situations reflect the challenges and temptations inherent in the journey towards maturity. “Pinocchio” holds significant cultural importance as one of the most iconic and enduring children’s stories ever written. Its timeless themes and memorable characters have inspired countless adaptations, including animated films, stage plays, and literary retellings, ensuring its enduring relevance across generations and cultures. The story continues to resonate with audiences of all ages, offering valuable lessons about the importance of integrity, compassion, and the pursuit of one’s true self.

Starting with a comparison between the source material and the adapted one in terms of tone and atmosphere Collodi’s “Pinocchio” is renowned for its light-hearted yet moralistic tone, presenting a whimsical adventure filled with colorful characters and fantastical elements. In contrast, del Toro’s adaptation imbues the story with a darker and more atmospheric ambience, drawing inspiration from Gothic aesthetics and elements of horror. The film’s tone is noticeably more sombre, reflecting del Toro’s signature style characterized by intricate visuals and profound storytelling. Regarding the visual style Collodi’s “Pinocchio” relies on the reader’s imagination to envision the characters and settings described in the text. In contrast, del Toro’s film adaptation employs stunning visual effects and intricate set designs to bring the story to life on the screen. With its use of stop-motion animation and elaborate costumes, the film’s visual style reflects del Toro’s unique aesthetic, enhancing the fantastical nature of the narrative. Speaking of Character Depictions, In Collodi’s original story, Pinocchio is portrayed as a mischievous yet ultimately innocent wooden puppet on a quest to become a real boy. Other characters, such as Geppetto and the Blue Fairy, play significant roles in guiding Pinocchio on his journey. Del Toro’s adaptation offers a more nuanced portrayal of these characters, imbuing them with darker and more complex motivations. Pinocchio is depicted as a vulnerable and naive protagonist navigating a world filled with danger and deceit, adding depth to his character arc. Also, the themes and the messages from both works are important While both Collodi’s tale and del Toro’s adaptation explore themes such as honesty, obedience, and the consequences of one’s actions, they differ in their approach and emphasis. Collodi’s story serves as a moralistic fable aimed at teaching children valuable life lessons, whereas del Toro’s adaptation delves deeper into themes of identity, belonging, and the search for humanity. The film offers a more



mature and introspective exploration of these themes, reflecting del Toro's penchant for nuanced storytelling. Regarding the Narrative Changes Collodi's narrative follows Pinocchio's journey from a disobedient puppet to a real boy, chronicling his adventures and life lessons along the way. In contrast, del Toro's adaptation introduces new characters and subplots, expanding upon the original story while adding darker and more mature elements. The film's narrative structure differs from the original, incorporating del Toro's unique storytelling sensibilities to create a captivating and immersive cinematic experience.

Now that we have established the changes that the director made in the creation of the film, adapting the original story, we can move on to the fine details related to the gothic sphere that del Toro used in the creation of the film. Del Toro's film is characterized by elaborate set designs, intricate costumes, and visually stunning cinematography that evoke a sense of Gothic grandeur. From the imposing architecture to the shadowy landscapes, the film's aesthetics create an atmosphere of mystery and foreboding, immersing the audience in a world filled with dark beauty and macabre elegance. One of the defining features of del Toro's adaptation is its use of dark and macabre imagery. Grotesque characters, eerie landscapes, and unsettling visuals abound, heightening the sense of unease and suspense throughout the film. Del Toro masterfully blends elements of horror and fantasy, creating a visual tapestry that is both haunting and mesmerizing. Also, Del Toro explores the concept of the uncanny through his portrayal of Pinocchio as a wooden puppet striving to become human. The juxtaposition of the familiar and the unfamiliar—human desires and emotions contrasted with Pinocchio's wooden nature—creates an eerie and unsettling atmosphere reminiscent of classic Gothic literature. This exploration of the uncanny adds depth to the film's thematic resonance, inviting audiences to ponder the nature of humanity and identity. Speaking of themes, Central to del Toro's adaptation are themes of monstrosity and transformation, echoing classic Gothic tropes. Pinocchio's journey to becoming a real boy is fraught with challenges and dangers, mirroring the transformation of Gothic protagonists who grapple with their monstrous nature. Through Pinocchio's quest for identity and acceptance, del Toro explores the darker aspects of human existence, inviting viewers to confront their inner demons and desires. Also, Del Toro delves into the darker recesses of human psychology, exploring themes of identity, desire, and the subconscious. Characters in the film grapple with inner demons and existential questions, adding psychological depth to the Gothic narrative. Del Toro's depiction of the human psyche is both haunting and thought-provoking, inviting audiences to reflect on the complexities of the human condition. Not to mention that Del Toro incorporates supernatural elements into the story, blurring the lines between reality and fantasy. The presence of magical beings such as the Blue Fairy and the mysterious creatures that inhabit Pinocchio's world adds an otherworldly dimension to the Gothic narrative. Through these supernatural elements, del Toro creates a sense of wonder and enchantment, drawing viewers into a realm where anything is possible. Last but not least, Del Toro's adaptation introduces moral ambiguity into the story, with characters who exist in shades of grey rather than black and white. This moral complexity adds depth to the narrative and aligns with the Gothic tradition of exploring the darker aspects of human nature. Through the film's morally ambiguous characters and ethical dilemmas, del Toro challenges viewers to question their own perceptions of right and wrong, good and evil.

"Pinocchio," both in its original form by Carlo Collodi and in various adaptations including Guillermo del Toro's film, explores a multitude of themes that resonate with

audiences across generations. At its core, “Pinocchio” is a story about **identity and self-discovery**. Pinocchio, a wooden puppet brought to life, embarks on a journey to become a real boy. His quest for identity involves overcoming challenges, learning from his mistakes, and discovering what it truly means to be human. Throughout his adventures, Pinocchio encounters various characters and situations that test his **moral character**. The story explores the **consequences of his actions**, teaching him valuable lessons about honesty, integrity, and responsibility. “Pinocchio” emphasizes the **transformative power of belief** and the importance of having **faith** in oneself. Pinocchio’s desire to become a real boy is fueled by his belief in the possibility of transformation, highlighting the power of hope and determination. The relationship between Pinocchio and his creator, Geppetto, underscores the theme of **parental love and guidance**. Geppetto’s unconditional love for Pinocchio drives him to embark on a quest to find his son, demonstrating the strength of parental bonds and the sacrifices parents make for their children. “Pinocchio” explores the **nature of good and evil** through its portrayal of various characters, including the virtuous Blue Fairy and the deceitful Fox and Cat. The story highlights the importance of discerning right from wrong and the consequences of succumbing to temptation. Despite his flaws and misdeeds, Pinocchio is given multiple opportunities for **redemption** throughout the story. His journey is one of growth and self-improvement, emphasizing the possibility of redemption and the importance of forgiveness. Pinocchio’s transformation from a disobedient puppet into a responsible and caring individual parallels the **journey from childhood to adulthood**. The story reflects the challenges and obstacles encountered on the path to maturity, including the temptation to indulge in frivolity and the need to take responsibility for one’s actions. “Pinocchio” contains elements of social **commentary and satire**, addressing issues such as education, authority, and societal expectations. The story critiques the shortcomings of human nature and institutions while offering insights into the complexities of society.

Guillermo del Toro’s film adaptation of “Pinocchio” introduces several additional themes and layers of complexity to the classic tale, enriching the story with his unique vision and sensibilities. Here are some of the themes added by del Toro in his film adaptation. Del Toro’s adaptation explores themes of **otherness and acceptance**, emphasizing the struggles of those who are perceived as different or marginalized. Through characters such as Pinocchio, who is a puppet striving to become human, and other fantastical creatures, del Toro examines the theme of embracing one’s uniqueness and finding acceptance in a world that may reject what is perceived as different. Del Toro infuses his adaptation with **themes of war** and its devastating consequences. Set against the backdrop of World War II, the film explores the impact of conflict on both individuals and society, highlighting the horrors of war and the toll it takes on humanity. Del Toro uses the setting of fascist Italy to explore themes of **authoritarianism and totalitarianism**. Through subtle political allegories and imagery, the film addresses the dangers of oppressive regimes and the importance of resisting tyranny. Del Toro delves **into themes of loss and grief**, particularly through the character of Geppetto, who mourns the loss of his son, Pinocchio. The film explores the emotional complexities of grief and the journey towards healing and acceptance. Del Toro celebrates **the power of imagination and creativity**, emphasizing the transformative potential of storytelling and art. Through fantastical elements and visual symbolism, the film encourages viewers to embrace their imagination and creativity as a means of navigating the challenges of life.

Del Toro incorporates **themes of environmental conservation and stewardship** into his adaptation, highlighting the importance of protecting the natural world. Through the character of Jiminy Cricket and his role as a guardian of the forest, the film promotes ecological awareness and the need for environmental activism. Del Toro touches upon **themes of class struggle and social justice**, depicting the disparities between the wealthy elite and the working class. The film advocates for solidarity and collective action in the face of injustice, echoing themes of social activism and solidarity. Del Toro introduces moral ambiguity into the story, exploring the **complexity of morality and ethical decision-making**. Characters in the film grapple with difficult choices and moral dilemmas, blurring the lines between right and wrong and challenging viewers to confront their own beliefs and values. Through these additional themes, Guillermo del Toro's adaptation of "Pinocchio" offers a rich and multi-layered exploration of the human experience, addressing timely issues and universal truths with depth and nuance.

Guillermo del Toro's visual and aesthetic choices in creating the film "Pinocchio" are integral to the storytelling process, as they contribute to the film's immersive and fantastical atmosphere. Del Toro's distinctive style, characterized by richly detailed visuals and Gothic-inspired aesthetics, is evident throughout the film, shaping its overall look and feel. Here are some key visual and aesthetic choices made by del Toro in creating "Pinocchio." Del Toro infuses the film with **Gothic imagery and atmosphere**, drawing inspiration from classic Gothic literature and art. The film features dark, atmospheric landscapes, elaborate set designs, and intricate costumes that evoke a sense of mystery and foreboding. This Gothic aesthetic creates a visually striking backdrop for the story, enhancing its themes of darkness and transformation. His decision to utilize **stop-motion animation** for "Pinocchio" adds to the film's visual appeal and lends it a timeless quality. The meticulous craftsmanship and attention to detail characteristic of stop-motion animation imbue the film with a sense of artistry and craftsmanship, capturing the magic and wonder of Collodi's original story. He employs a rich and vibrant **colour palette** in "Pinocchio," using colour to convey mood and emotion throughout the film. From the warm, earthy tones of Geppetto's workshop to the cool, ethereal hues of the Blue Fairy's domain, each scene is carefully crafted to evoke a specific atmosphere and mood. Also, he incorporates **visual symbolism** into the film, using imagery to convey deeper meanings and themes. Symbolic motifs such as clocks, keys, and puppets recur throughout the film, serving as visual cues that enrich the narrative and add layers of meaning to the story. His meticulous **attention to detail** is evident in every frame of "Pinocchio," from the intricately designed sets to the finely crafted puppets and props. The film is replete with small visual touches and Easter eggs that reward attentive viewers, enhancing the overall viewing experience. Finally he seamlessly **blends elements of fantasy and reality** in the film creating a world that feels both magical and grounded in realism. The fantastical creatures and environments coexist alongside the human characters and settings, blurring the line between the mundane and the extraordinary.

Guillermo del Toro's adaptation of "Pinocchio" uses the backdrop of fascist Italy during World War II to explore contemporary social and cultural issues. The film critiques totalitarianism and oppression, highlighting the dangers of unchecked power and advocating for resistance against tyranny. It addresses themes of otherness and acceptance through Pinocchio's journey to find his place in a world that often rejects the difference. Environmental



conservation is emphasised through the destruction of forests, warning against industrialisation and the exploitation of nature. The film also touches on class struggle, promoting social justice and empathy for the less fortunate. Additionally, it portrays the loss of innocence as Pinocchio faces the darker sides of humanity. Overall, del Toro's "Pinocchio" is a thought-provoking commentary that challenges viewers to reflect on compassion, empathy, and resilience.

In Guillermo del Toro's adaptation of "Pinocchio," monstrosity takes on various forms, reflecting a darker and more mature tone within the narrative. The film explores physical monstrosity through characters like the grotesque puppeteer Mangiafuoco, whose appearance embodies the darker aspects of his role. Additionally, metaphorical forms of monstrosity are depicted through morally corrupt characters like the Fox and the Cat, revealing the ugliness beneath their facades of innocence. Existential monstrosity is also addressed as Pinocchio grapples with his own identity and inner demons, reflecting the universal human struggle with self-awareness and morality. The theme of the "monstrous other" emerges through characters perceived as outsiders, such as Pinocchio himself and the enigmatic Blue Fairy. Despite these portrayals of darkness, the film also explores themes of transformation and redemption, suggesting that characters can transcend their monstrous qualities through acts of courage and empathy. Overall, del Toro's "Pinocchio" offers a nuanced exploration of monstrosity, inviting viewers to contemplate the complexities of human nature and the potential for growth and redemption amidst darkness.

In terms of critical reception, given del Toro's track record as an acclaimed filmmaker known for his visually stunning and thematically rich films, the film received positive reviews from critics. Del Toro's unique vision and storytelling sensibilities were praised, as well as the film's artistic and technical achievements, such as its visual effects, animation, and production design. As for audience response: "Pinocchio" resonates with audiences of all ages, from fans of the original story to admirers of del Toro's work. The film's blend of fantasy, drama, and social commentary is expected to captivate viewers, inviting them into a world of magic, wonder, and profound storytelling. Its themes of identity, acceptance, and redemption are universal and timeless, making it accessible to a wide audience.

There was also an impact on animation industry because, as a stop-motion animated film, "Pinocchio" represents a significant achievement in the field of animation. Its innovative techniques and artistic ambition are likely to inspire future generations of animators and filmmakers, pushing the boundaries of what can be achieved through the medium. The film's success may also encourage more filmmakers to explore darker and more mature themes in animated storytelling.

The ending of Guillermo del Toro's "Pinocchio" holds significant meaning and beautifully concludes the film's themes. It signifies the acceptance of one's true self, showing that being 'real' is about one's heart and actions rather than conforming to external expectations. Addressing the cycle of life and death, it highlights that love and memories persist beyond physical existence, with Pinocchio continuing to carry the legacy and love of Geppetto and others who pass away. His ultimate act of selflessness and sacrifice underscores his growth into a truly 'human' character, emphasizing themes of acceptance, love, and bravery. Geppetto's journey to accepting Pinocchio as his son completes his personal growth and healing, while the backdrop of war and fascism serves as a critique of authoritarianism, emphasizing hope and resilience. The conclusion reinforces the timeless power of storytelling and legacy, showing



that true humanity is defined by love, sacrifice, and acceptance. Thus, the film's ending encapsulates its exploration of identity and the human condition, bringing a poignant and thoughtful closure to the narrative.

The film's exploration of Gothic elements such as dark imagery, existential monstrosity, and moral ambiguity adds depth and complexity to the narrative, elevating it beyond a simple children's story to a thought-provoking examination of the human condition. Del Toro's thematic additions, including themes of otherness, the horrors of war, and environmental conservation, imbue the story with contemporary relevance while retaining its timeless appeal. Moreover, del Toro's adaptation showcases the transformative power of storytelling and the boundless potential of the imagination. By breathing new life into Collodi's beloved characters and themes, del Toro invites audiences on a journey of self-discovery, redemption, and acceptance.

In conclusion, Guillermo del Toro's adaptation of "Pinocchio" stands as a testament to his visionary storytelling and creative genius. It is a testament to the enduring power of storytelling to illuminate the human experience and resonate across generations. Through his reworking of this classic tale, del Toro has created a cinematic masterpiece that will be cherished and admired for years to come.

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# Translating Culture Specific Items in *Memories of My Boyhood* by

Ion Creangă

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When translating literature, considering the cultural context is crucial for accurately conveying the intended meaning, tone, and cultural specific items of the original work. Therefore, many translation theorists have dealt with the definition of *culture*. Larson defines culture as "a complex of beliefs, attitudes, values, and rules which a group of people share" (1984: 431). She notes that the translator needs to understand the beliefs, attitudes and values of the source language (SL) audience in order to adequately understand the ST and adequately translate it for people who have a different set of beliefs, attitudes and values in the TT.

From this point of view, *Amintiri din copilărie* by Ion Creangă is a challenge. Translators must be aware of the unique structures, idioms, and expressions of the Romanian language, as well as the cultural references and style. The book is structured into four sections written over several years (from 1881 to 1888), the last one being left incomplete by the writer's death. There are two full English translations for this literary work: *Recollections from Childhood*, translated by A.L. Lloyd and published in 1956, Lawrence & Wishart and *Memories of My Boyhood, Stories and Tales* (the more circulated version), translated by Ana Cartianu and R. C. Johnston and published in 1978 Minerva Publishing House.

This paper examines short fragments of the third part from the version rendered into English by Ana Cartianu and R.C. Johnston. The abundance of terms associated with the life and customs of Romanian countryside in the 19<sup>th</sup> century represents a significant challenge for the translators, making it difficult to create a clear and accurate image of Creangă's literary craft for the foreign reader. In the introduction to their translation, Cartianu and Johnston acknowledge the lexical and syntactic features of the text as translation difficulties (1978: 9). Their self-professed strategy was to find an English-language equivalent, on occasion purposefully employing an archaism or dialectal word. In situations where this was not possible, native terms were also occasionally used as such and explained in footnotes, e.g. *sorocoveți*, *husași* (coins that were in use at the time in Moldavia) or *hora* (traditional Romanian country dance). A similar strategy of finding equivalents was employed for proverbs and sayings, except the "typically local" ones, where they wanted to preserve their "freshness" (1978: 9).

Cartianu and Johnston's translation has been analyzed with a focus on (cultural) identity (Aciobăniței, 2012; Mureșanu, 2021), cultural and historical elements (Cenac, 2014), and stylistic features (Mureșanu, 2019). When analyzing Creangă's style, Mureșanu emphasizes the way in which the writer employs the vernacular language, underlining that the originality of Creangă's work resides in recreating the folk language and "pouring it into the pattern of an individual narrative" (Mureșanu, 2019: 31).

Since the translators had to cope with difficulties in terms of cultural and historical coordinates, it is important to point out a few aspects related to the translation process and the

principles that a translator has to keep in mind. Thus, Susan Bassnet outlines five principles which contribute to the quality of a translated text: *the translator's full understanding of the ST author's message and meaning; his perfect knowledge of both the SL and the TL; avoidance of word rendering as well as the use of forms of speech in common use and the appropriate choice and ordering of words so as to produce the correct tone* (1991: 54). Hilaire Belloc (1930) laid down six general rules for the translator of prose texts: he should not 'plod on', word by word or sentence by sentence, but should 'always "block out" his work', considering it as an integral unit and translate in sections; he should render idiom by idiom 'demanding the translation into another form from that of the original; he must render 'intention by intention', bearing in mind that 'the intention of a phrase in one language may be less emphatic than the form of the phrase, or it may be more emphatic'. Belloc warns against *les faux amis*, those words or structures that may appear to correspond in both SL and TL but actually do not. The translator is advised to 'transmute boldly' and Belloc suggests that the essence of translating is 'the resurrection of an alien thing in a native body'. The translator should never embellish.

In 2002, by reviewing translation techniques proposed by several scholars including Vinay and Darbelnet (V&D) (1958), Nida (1964), Vazquez Ayora (1977), Margot (1979), Newmark (1988) and Delisle (1993), Lucia Molina and Amparo Hurtado Albir (2002) reclassified 18 translation techniques that we have tested in the study of the English translation of cultural specific items in *Amintiri din copilărie*, including: *adaptation, amplification, borrowing, calque, compensation, description, generalization, linguistic compression, literal translation, modulation, reduction, substitution, transposition*.

Out of the numerous and various difficulties, those in terms of cultural and historical coordinates are the ones in which the present paper will focus on. Therefore, it is a comparative and contrastive study of the translation strategies used by Ana Cartianu and R. C. Johnston in *Memories of My Boyhood, Stories and Tales*.

Romanian ST <i>Amintiri din copilărie</i>	English TT <i>Memories of My Boyhood</i>	Comments and interpretation of the equivalents of Culture Specific Items in the English version
<i>îmi zice cugetul meu</i>	<i>my better self said to me</i>	In the TT, <i>cuget</i> (sense of moral responsibility (sentiment al responsabilității morale) or <i>conștiință</i> ) has two correspondents: <i>self</i> (the set of someone's characteristics, such as personality and ability that make that person different from other people) and <i>conscience</i> (the part of you that judges how moral your own actions are) <a href="https://dexonline.ro/definitie/cuget">https://dexonline.ro/definitie/cuget</a> <a href="https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/self">https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/self</a> <a href="https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/conscience?q=conscience">https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/conscience?q=conscience</a>
<i>cugete</i>	<i>conscience mine</i>	
<i>nu te lasă inima să taci</i>	<i>you will not keep quiet</i>	Reduction: suppression of a ST information item in TT. (V&D's implicitation, Delisle's implicitation and concision, Vazquez Ayora's omission) The Romanian idiom is reduced, it's not included. We can also speak about a case of shift and a loss in translation.

<i>holdele fără jitar</i>	<i>the corn fields no watchman</i>	Generalization: using a more general or neutral term (V&D's proposal). In TT, <i>jitar</i> (regionalism: persoană angajată să păzească semănăturile; or <i>pândar</i> ) has been translated by a general word <i>watchman</i> (a person who is employed to guard a building or several buildings). <a href="https://dexonline.ro/intrare/jitar/29843">https://dexonline.ro/intrare/jitar/29843</a> <a href="https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/watchman?q=watchman">https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/watchman?q=watchman</a>
<i>nu știu ce-i judecata</i>	<i>know nothing of law-suits</i>	Generalization: <i>law-suits</i> (a problem taken to a law court: <i>acțiuni în justiție, procese</i> ) has been considered an equivalent for <i>judecata</i> (acțiunea de a judeca; dezbatere judiciară) <a href="https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/lawsuit?q=lawsuits">https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/lawsuit?q=lawsuits</a> <a href="https://dexonline.ro/definitie/judecata%20">https://dexonline.ro/definitie/judecata%20</a>
<i>Să fie de sufletul tatei!</i>	<i>That's for father, God rest his soul!</i>	Adaptation: replacing a ST cultural element with one from TC (V&D's adaptation, Margot's cultural equivalent). <i>God rest his soul!</i> is a religious expression used to show respect when speaking about someone who is dead, just like the Romanian equivalent. <a href="https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/god-rest-his-her-soul">https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/god-rest-his-her-soul</a>
<i>Bălățeștii, cei plini de salamură</i>	<i>Bălățești, famous for its salt-mines</i>	The collocation <i>salt-mines</i> (a mine where rock salt is extracted) is a compensation for <i>saramură</i> (water in which salt has been dissolved and which is used in the household to preserve food, in agriculture, in the tanning industry - apă în care s-a dizolvat sare și care se folosește în gospodărie la conservarea unor alimente, în agricultură, în industria tăbăcăriei etc.) <a href="https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/salt-mine">https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/salt-mine</a> <a href="https://dexonline.ro/definitie/saramura">https://dexonline.ro/definitie/saramura</a>
<i>peste Ozana</i>	<i>beyond the waters of the Ozana</i>	The TT translation adds details outside the ST to explain that reference is to <i>Ozana</i> river.
<i>mahalalele Pometea, Țuțuienii</i>	<i>districts Pometea, Țuțuienii</i>	We think that <i>districts</i> (an area of a town that has fixed borders that are used for official purposes, or that has a particular feature that makes it different from surrounding areas) is a word too general for <i>mahalale</i> (suburban district of a city; suburb, periphery - cartier mărginaș al unui oraș; suburbie, periferie). Maybe a better choice would have been <i>outskirts</i> : the areas that form the edge of a town or city. <a href="https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/district?q=districts">https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/district?q=districts</a> <a href="https://dexonline.ro/definitie/mahala">https://dexonline.ro/definitie/mahala</a> <a href="https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/outskirts">https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/outskirts</a>
<i>Țuțuienii veniți din Ardeal</i>	<i>Țuțuieni, whose people have come from across the mountains</i>	The TT does not mention the proper noun <i>Ardeal</i> , offering instead the syntagm <i>across the mountains</i> maybe because <i>Ardeal</i> or <i>Transylvania</i> is a historical and cultural region surrounded by mountains.
<i>se țin de coada oilor</i>	<i>get their livelihood</i>	The Romanian idiom is rather paraphrased or replaced with a description of people's habits and way of live.



	<i>from rearing sheep</i>	
<i>care mănâncă slănină râncedă</i>	<i>who eat rancid bacon</i>	<i>Slănină</i> isn't <i>bacon</i> in any sense of the word because properly, <i>slănină</i> is about 99% fat and no meat. <i>Bacon</i> (made from pig fat), as a noun, is a linguistic element used to substitute an unknown paralinguistic element to the target readers. A possible alternative could be the syntagm <i>pork fat</i> . <a href="https://kingofromania.com/2010/04/26/romanian-food-slanina/">https://kingofromania.com/2010/04/26/romanian-food-slanina/</a>
<i>Doina, care te umple de fiori</i>	<i>doina<sup>1</sup> that sends shivers down your back</i>	Amplification: adding details outside ST; <i>doina</i> is explained in the glosses at the bottom of the page: <i>doina</i> <sup>1</sup> : Romanian peasant song, lyrical and nostalgic.
<i>te umple de fiori</i>	<i>sends shivers down your back</i>	Here we can speak of a case of partial equivalence, since the translation is more of a concrete action, rather than a reference to a state of mind.
<i>Corăbiasca, Măriuța, Horodincea, Alivencile, Țiutura, Ca la ușa cortului</i>	<i>Corăbiasca, Măriuța, Horodincea, Alivencile, Țiutura, Ca la ușa cortului</i>	Amplification through glossing at the bottom of the page: ... <i>Ca la ușa cortului</i> <sup>2</sup> : names of Romanian popular songs and dances.
<i>hore</i>	<i>dance-songs</i>	Adaptation: replacing a ST cultural element with one from TC, which we consider rather insufficient for the actual meaning of the ST <i>hore</i> <i>Horă</i> is a Romanian folk dance with a slow rhythm, in which the players hold hands, forming a closed circle; circle formed by those who perform this dance; melody according to which this dance is performed. (dans popular românesc cu ritm domol, în care jucătorii se prind de mână, formând un cerc închis; cerc format de cei care execută acest dans; melodie după care se execută acest dans). <a href="https://dexonline.ro/definitie/hora">https://dexonline.ro/definitie/hora</a>
<i>...că doar acum o dădusem și eu pe ciubote.</i>	<i>for I was now wearing boots, if you please.</i>	<i>If you please</i> is a linguistic amplification in order to express self-irony, targeting also the would be listener.
<i>...din pricina lui Pepelea de moș Bodrângă...</i>	<i>sly, waggish old man Bodrângă</i>	<i>Pepelea</i> means a clever, joking, mischievous man who makes fun of everyone (om isteț, glumeț și poznaș, care își bate joc de toți.) or <i>păcală</i> . <i>Sly, waggish</i> is a linguistic amplification: <i>sly</i> means deceiving people in a clever way in order to get what you want; <i>waggish</i> : (of a person) funny in a clever way

		<a href="https://dexonline.ro/definitie/pepelea">https://dexonline.ro/definitie/pepelea</a>
<i>câine-câinește</i>	<i>willy-nilly</i>	The idiom <i>willy-nilly</i> is the TT cultural equivalent of <i>câine-câinește</i> meaning in a careless and unplanned way <a href="https://dexonline.ro/definitie/c%C3%A2ine%C8%99te">https://dexonline.ro/definitie/c%C3%A2ine%C8%99te</a>
<i>husăși</i>	<i>husași</i>	<i>Husași</i> is a naturalized borrowing which makes the ST fit the TL's spelling rules, keeping the name of an old Hungarian silver coin, which circulated in Romania, especially in Transylvania, in the last century (numele unei vechi monede ungurești de argint, care a circulat și la noi, mai ales în Transilvania, în veacul trecut.); sg. <i>husăș</i> <a href="https://dexonline.ro/definitie/hus%C4%83%C8%99">https://dexonline.ro/definitie/hus%C4%83%C8%99</a>
<i>bădișorule</i>	<i>my good man</i>	Generalization: using a more general or neutral term/syntagm, which results in some loss of meaning.
<i>un braț de lemne</i>	<i>an armful of wood</i>	Calque: literally translating a SL word or phrase and incorporating its elements into TL.
<i>câșlegile de iarnă</i>	<i>Christmas carnival</i>	Adaptation: replacing a ST cultural element with one from TC <i>Câșlegi</i> : time interval between two Orthodox fasts, during which Christians can eat whatever they want (interval de timp între două posturi ortodoxe, în care creștinii pot mânca de dulce). <i>Carnival</i> : (a special occasion or period of) public enjoyment and entertainment involving wearing unusual clothes, dancing, and eating and drinking, usually held in the streets of a city, translation which is rather too general, not specifying the religious meaning of the Romanian term. <a href="https://dexonline.ro/definitie/c%C3%A2%C8%99legi">https://dexonline.ro/definitie/c%C3%A2%C8%99legi</a> <a href="https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/carnival?q=Carnival">https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/carnival?q=Carnival</a>

## Conclusions

According to the American scholar Charles Raymond Larson culture is "a set of beliefs, attitudes, values and rules shared by a group of people" (1984: 95), The translator must therefore identify the set of beliefs, rules and values of the source society in order to truly understand the source text and render it as accurately as possible for readers who may not share the same set of attitudes, beliefs or rules.

The abundance of culture-specific items, aesthetic features, specific values, makes *Amintiri din copilărie* more challenging to be translated than other texts. There are certain words and phrases that are so embedded in the Romanian culture that they have no correspondent in English, the translation of which results more often in a cultural gap.

Cartianu and Johnston indicate their intention of preserving the spirit of the source text, focusing on rendering "the rhythm of Creangă's oral speech, the tone of a story sedate and nostalgic or spritely and full of fun" (1978: 9). Nida (1964) said that "differences between cultures may cause more severe complications for the translator than do differences in language structure". Therefore, it was for Cartianu and Johnston to decide which culture specific items of the ST were essential to be considered in TT. It depends on the translator's linguistic and cultural backgrounds but also on his ability to bridge cultural differences.

This paper's aim was to provide a glimpse into the labor the translators go through when it comes to maintaining and negotiating meaning, identity and cultural differences between the Romanian ST and the English TT.

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