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Introduction

“Adaptation as Translation: Transferring Cultural Narratives”

The discipline of adaptation studies has come a long way from its academic inception in novel-to-film studies. Since George Bluestone’s seminal 1957 study *Novels into Film*, often regarded as the starting point of modern day Anglo-American adaptation studies,¹ the discipline has seen a continual widening of its methodology as well as of the material scholars are willing to regard as adaptations. Particularly since the turn of the 21st century and the increasing institutionalization of the discipline as distinct from literary or film studies, adaptation scholars have widened the scope to include a broad range of media, encompassing not only the traditional adaptations from novels and drama into film, but also novelizations of various other media, video game and comic adaptations, TV series, opera, theme parks and tie in vacations, and many more.² Others have included the study of media franchises as dependent on adaptation.³ As part of this redefinition of the discipline, scholars have also widened their discussion to bring to the centre aspects that were not originally the main focus of adaptation researchers’ comparative textual analyses, including industrial structures, legal frameworks, and, most frequently and emphatically, questions of intertextuality and the cultural and ideological embeddedness of adapted texts.⁴ Since the late 1990s, cultural and societal questions have

¹ George Bluestone. *Novels into Film*. Berkeley 1957. Bluestone is most often cited (and misrepresented) as a starting point in a discipline that, as Kamilla Elliott has convincingly shown, suffers from (strategic) amnesia in its attempts to claim novelty for already established concepts (Kamilla Elliott. “Theorizing Adaptation/Adapting Theories.” In: Jørgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvik, and Eirik Frisvold Hanssen (eds.). *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions*. London et al. 2013, pp. 19-45; esp. pp. 19-31). As Elliott shows, this stands in contrast to older (and significant) contributions to film and adaptation studies, including Vachel Lindsay’s *The Art of the Moving Picture*, Lester Asheim’s *From Book to Film*, or some of André Bazin’s essays such as “In Defense of Mixed Cinema”. Vachel Lindsay. *The Art of the Moving Picture*. New York 1915. Lester Asheim. *From Book to Film: A Comparative Analysis of the Content of Selected Novels and the Motion Pictures Based upon Them*. Chicago 1949. André Bazin. “In Defense of Mixed Cinema.” In: John Harrington (ed.) *Film and/as Literature*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ 1977, pp. 13-26. Harrington’s *Film and/as Literature* also collects other significant early texts of adaptation theory, particularly on the relation between literature, film, and theater.

² E.g. Linda Hutcheon with Siobhan O’Flynn. *A Theory of Adaptation*. 2nd ed. New York / London 2013.

³ Clare Parody. “Adaptation Essay Prize Winner: Franchising/Adaptation.” *Adaptation* 4, no. 2 (2011): 210–218.

⁴ It should, once again, be noted that early critics like Bluestone or Bazin were not as oblivious to such issues as they are often portrayed.

occupied particularly those adaptation scholars eager to introduce larger theoretical or cultural studies questions and move away from purely formal analyses.⁵ Such questions include what Linda Hutcheon, building on Jill L. Levenson's work, calls processes of "indigenization", i.e. an examination of the ways in which "[c]ultures that adapt stories [...] reshape narratives [...] according to their own tastes and preoccupation, according to the politics, ethics, and aesthetics of their day".⁶

While cultural transfer is thus not foreign to adaptation scholars' work (e.g. Lucia Krämer's work on Bollywood adaptations),⁷ their questions are still largely organized around the transfer of texts or narratives from one medium to another in a process that Irina Rajewski calls "medial transposition",⁸ although some scholars also allow for intramedial adaptation.⁹ In this special issue, we want to follow this trend of rethinking and broadening the scope of adaptation studies. We therefore propose to expand the notion of adaptation even further to include transpositions not only (and not even necessarily) from one medium to another, but also from one cultural field into another. This focus can include what would traditionally be regarded by most scholars as classic cases of adaptation/ translation that focus on notions of cultural embeddedness (as in Caroline Lusin's contribution), but they may also go beyond the direct transfer of concrete texts, as in Kai Fischer's discussion of the 'adaptation' of rave culture into a novel, Solvejg Nitzke's use of adaption to explain how ideas travel between scientific and popular literature, or Dorothee Birke and Johannes Fehrle's examination of the adaptation to the internet of book culture as a discursive regime tied to both material objects and cultural practices. Regarded in this broader context, the concepts of adaptation and translation can be productive categories to make sense of otherwise seemingly unrelated phenomena that would usually be treated under widely different categories.

Expanding and bringing into contact the fields of adaptation and translation studies offers new insights for a comparative study of different and seemingly unrelated kinds of cultural transfer. Rather than further decentering a discipline which has already been described by so many scholars as a field without a centre (a trait seen as either a strength or weakness depending on the particular critic's perspective), we want to suggest using adaptation and translation as both lenses and metaphors to explore the traveling of cultures, discourses, and concepts across a wide array of fields.

To do so we propose the concept of cultural 'translation'. Translation as a trope to redefine adaptation studies was already suggested by Robert Stam in one of adaptation studies' most foundational and most cited essays, but it is usually forgotten when Stam's work is referenced, taking the back seat behind the more

⁵ Cf. Elliott. "Theorizing Adaptation/Adapting Theories."

⁶ Linda Hutcheon. "Moving Forward: The Next Step in Adaptation Studies." In: Nassim Winnie Balestrini (ed.). *Adaptation and American Studies: Perspectives on Research and Teaching, With an Afterword by Linda Hutcheon*. Heidelberg 2011, pp. 213-17; p. 217.

⁷ Lucia Krämer. *Bollywood in Britain: Cinema, Brand, Discursive Complex*. New York, et. al. 2016, pp. 187-225.

⁸ Irina O. Rajewsky. "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality." *Intermédialités* 6 (2005): pp. 43-64; p. 51.

⁹ E.g. Hutcheon with O'Flynn. *Theory*, p. 7-8.

popular “intertextual dialogism” suggested later in the same essay.¹⁰ As Stam argues, “art renews itself through creative mistranslation”,¹¹ and so does culture, as we will suggest below. By taking Stam’s textual and artistic translation and reframing it as cultural translation, we hark back to the term’s linguistic origin, which – as the late Laurence Raw explains – came into use in the Middle Ages “to describe a process of carrying across cultures (originally used to refer to the physical transfer of relics), linked to the Latin words *translatio* or *transfere*”.¹² As Raw and other scholars including Katja Krebs and Márta Minier have pointed out, such an approach that brings into contact the disciplines of adaptation and translation studies reveals not only that the boundaries between translation and adaptation are highly diffuse and dependent on historical and cultural contexts. It also means that many of the questions and methods developed in the respective fields are, in fact, compatible and can be fruitfully brought into contact.

Questions of cultural specificity, difference, and belonging connect adaptations and translations insofar as both processes have to come to terms with questions of origin and destination. Rather than merely finding ways to employ most effectively the respective media involved in adaptation processes, media which according to some scholars “can” and “can’t” do certain things,¹³ adapters, like translators, are confronted with the challenge of adequately transferring a text and its meaning from one semiotic system into another. Where their challenges converge is precisely in the embeddedness of such processes of adaptation/ translation in cultures, their conventions and codes between which they adapt/ translate. These can be the contexts of a certain political climate as in case of the Turkish translations/adaptations aiming to Westernize Turkey under Atatürk that Raw discusses;¹⁴ or they can be attempts to transform e.g. adaptations of cult comic books to meet the taste and expectations of a Hollywood audience while retaining enough of a (sub)cultural appeal to build a bridge between different audiences and different media regimes. Likewise, the work of the translator is by no means restricted to finding semiotic equivalents. In order to convey the meaning of a text in another language and to a culturally different audience, the translator will have to build a bridge between cultures that is not exclusively restricted to the linguistic sphere. The translator as transposer between different languages frequently encounters cases in which the target language does not have the proper semiotic equivalents necessary to convey the meaning of the source text. Thus, just like adapters, translators are challenged by questions of cultural context and their task in these in-

¹⁰ Robert Stam. “Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation.” In: Timothee Corrigan, Patricia White, and Meta Mazaj (eds.). *Critical Visions in Film Theory: Classics and Contemporary Readings*. Boston, New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s 2011, pp. 541-557; here pp. 549-550.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 549.

¹² Laurence Raw. “Introduction: Identifying Common Ground.” In: Laurence Raw (ed.). *Translation, Adaptation and Transformation*. London and Oxford 2012, pp. 1-20; p. 4 (italics in orig.).

¹³ Seymour Chatman. “What Novels Can Do That Films Can’t (and Vice Versa).” *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 1 (1980): 121-140; Anne Gjelsvik. “What Novels Can Tell That Movies Can’t Show.” In: Jørgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvik, and Eirik Frisvold Hanssen (eds.). *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions*. London et al. 2013, pp. 245-264.

¹⁴ Raw. “Introduction”, pp. 6-8.

stances flows into that of adaptation: will the signs in the target language be intelligible without the specific context of the source language and if not how much change is necessary, permissible or desirable to make it comprehensible? In this respect, as Katja Krebs has argued, translation and adaptation are, once again, comparable processes in that both are concerned with questions of “faithfulness” and “equivalence”.¹⁵ Both practices are ultimately “phenomena of constructing cultures through acts of rewriting”.¹⁶

An example for this kind of challenge in which a translator must struggle to adapt the text within a different cultural semiotic context is Irvine Welsh’s novel *Trainspotting* (1993). *Trainspotting* confronts the reader (and the translator) with a number of transcribed dialects and sociolects rooted in Scotland’s capital Edinburgh. This type of prose not only proves to be challenging for non-native readers, but also for those whose native tongue is English, but who may not be familiar with the linguistic details of Scottish dialects and sociolects. In an interview conducted by Nadine Schwandt, literary translator Peter Torberg recalls his own problems while translating *Trainspotting* into German in the 1990s. As readers familiar with both the German and the English version of the novel know, one particular chapter is entirely missing in the German edition. Only two pages long, “The Elusive Mr Hunt”, is building towards a pun which is so unique to the phonetic and semiotic particularities of the Scottish dialect that it proves to be virtually untranslatable. In the chapter, Kelly, one of the novel’s main protagonists, falls victim to a prank phone call by one of her male friends while working at a pub. Sick Boy asks for a pub dweller named Mark Hunt, which prompts Kelly to yell across the bar: “ANYBODY SEEN MARK HUNT? [...] This guy on the phone wis after Mark Hunt”. It is only after the male guests collapse into “lynch mob laughter” that Kelly realises the cruel joke she has fallen prey to: “Mark Hunt”, if pronounced with a Scottish inflection, is homophonous with “ma [my] cunt.”

Several things are thus necessary for an adequate translation of this chapter: one has to be aware of the specific cultural semiotic context within which the term “cunt” assumes its significance. While it might be possible to find a lexical equivalent in the target language that has the same drastic and vulgar meaning as “cunt”, a proper translation would also have to find an equivalent for the phonetic intricacies on display in Welsh’s source text. As Katherine Ashley has argued, with a text like *Trainspotting*, translations into other languages are very likely to gloss over aspects and thereby to neutralise issues of social class, regional difference, ethnicity and gender. In *Trainspotting*, and one could extend this to all texts, no linguistic feature is “culturally neutral”. Careful attention to adapting the novel’s cultural details is therefore a crucial task which goes beyond translation on the lexical level and enters the realm of ‘cultural translation’ that we have identified as the terrain of adaptation.

In our special issue we thus aim to scrutinize the notion of translation as a process of bringing different cultures into contact through the comparative lens of

¹⁵ Katja Krebs. “Translation and Adaptation – Two Sides of an Ideological Coin?” In: Laurence Raw (ed.). *Translation, Adaptation and Transformation*. London / Oxford 2012, pp. 42-53; p. 43.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 42.

adaptation studies. We work with a broad definition of what cultures are, ranging from the hegemonic definition of “national cultures” via different subcultures to the separate discursive and ideological fields of science and the humanities and the possible exchange between the two.

In this context, the notion of “rewriting” is of central importance for this definition of translation and adaptation. Following Homi Bhabha, such “rewriting” could be described as the very essence of cultural encounters. Drawing on Walter Benjamin, Bhabha regards cultural translation as always marked by a fundamental “foreignness”.¹⁷ Translation is thus a performative process which embodies the “staging of cultural difference”.¹⁸ According to Bhabha’s reading of Benjamin, culture will always remain fundamentally “untranslatable” – and yet, this very untranslatability is that which lets “newness” enter the world.¹⁹ It is the “constant state of contestation and flux caused by the differential systems of social and cultural signification” which is paradoxically that from which the possibility of cultural communication arises.²⁰ While Bhabha explicitly develops his argument about cultural translation and the emergence of “newness” from in-between spaces that emerge in encounters of migrant cultures, his argument can also be considered in the context of what we regard in this special issue as the transferral of cultural narratives through adaptation or cultural translation.

What is central to our understanding of adaptation and cultural translation is the question of inter- and intrasemiotic transposition.²¹ Thus, the analyses in our issue touch upon questions that are central to both adaptation and translation studies. They are concerned with the process of translation and adaptation as the work of a “*transcultural actor* who can adapt the source text to respond to the demands/values of the audience, taking into account cultural and behavioural differences”.²² The uses of the concepts of adaptation and translation are therefore not restricted to textual levels or to transferring a narrative from one medium to the other or from one language into a different one. Rather, adaptation and translation entail a much more complex understanding of what cultures are. As Edwin Gentzler states with regard to the intersection of translation studies and cultural studies: “In a world with increasing forms of communication and migration of people, translation will become increasingly more important at those multiple sites where different cultures come into contact”.²³ This is also true for the kinds of interdiscursive adaptation and translation considered in the articles of this special issue.

¹⁷ Homi K. Bhabha. *The Location of Culture*. New York 2010, p. 325.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Cf. Márta Minier. “Definitions, Dyads, Triads and Other Points of Connection in Translation and Adaptation Discourse.” In: Katja Krebs (ed.). *Translation and Adaptation in Theatre and Film*. New York 2014, pp. 13-35; p. 18.

²² Edwin Gentzler. “Translation and Cultural Studies.” In: Harald Kittel et al. (eds.). *Übersetzung. Ein internationales Handbuch zur Übersetzungsforschung*. Berlin / New York 2004, pp. 166-170; p. 167 (emphasis in orig.).

²³ Ibid., p.169.

In all cases, processes of rewriting are a fundamental part of constructing cultures.²⁴

The power of narrative (be it in strictly fictional discourse or in other not primarily fictional texts) frequently functions as a vehicle for such processes of translation from one specifically coded semiotic field into a different cultural and discursive context aiming, among other things, to adapt certain notions and values associated with these fields and contexts into different ones. The process of adaptation / translation thereby appropriates and complicates the supposed aura of the 'original' artefact or discourse, sometimes paradoxically while aiming to re-inscribe it. By focusing on these processes of adaptation and their implications for 'original' and 'adaptation,' the issue highlights the contradictory forces at the heart of transferring and reworking culturally coded narratives and practices. A decidedly comparative approach to these processes illuminates the strategies with which discursive patterns are being translated and re-employed within the adapted text or discourse. By looking at these strategies as a *tertium comparationis*, the contributors aim at studying the commonalities and differences between individual discursive fields. The articles deal with processes of adaptation/ translation employing a variety of approaches, including ones from the fields of literary, media, adaptation, cultural, and translation studies.

Dorothee Birke and Johannes Fehrle's article "#booklove: How Reading Culture is Adapted on the Internet" examines the cultural practice of reading and its changes in past decades. Starting from widespread conceptions of a split between "old media" book culture and new media "digital culture" the authors employ concepts from media studies such as Henry Jenkin's concept of "convergence culture" to question such clear either/or conceptions of worthwhile cultural practices like reading and a presumably post-literate, wholly commercialized, and empty internet age. Examining new media variations of older institutions like the book club, Birke and Fehrle examine how the cultural capital associated with the practice of reading and "bookishness" has been appropriated and transformed in today's digital economy, bringing to the fore forms of "performative reading" (Birke and Fehrle) that are at once new in form and old in function.

In his contribution "'Prole Politics' – Adaptation as Appropriation of Techno in the Works of Rainald Goetz", Kai Fischer considers German writer Rainald Goetz's literary and journalistic writings on techno as a case in which the text is not only about a certain style of music and its subculture, but in which the structural patterns and the (emotional) effect of the music are being appropriated and thus adapted by and into literary language. Fischer shows how Goetz ultimately arrives at an aesthetic and political programme through his writing about and with techno by adapting from the music scene of the 1990s.

Caroline Lusin focuses on the considerable impact of Russian literature on British writers in the 20th and 21st centuries by exploring the cultural transfer of Venedikt Erofeev's *Moskva-Petushki*. In her article "A One-Way Ticket to Paradise? Adapting the Bible in Venedikt Erofeev's *Moskva-Petushki* (1973), Stephen Mulrine's *Moscow Stations* (1993), and A.L. Kennedy's *Paradise* (2004)", she utilises Yuri Lotman's notion of culture as a "semiosphere" to assess the relationship of

²⁴ Katja Krebs. "Translation and Adaptation", p. 42.

“original” and “adaptation”. Building on Lotman’s concepts, Lusin considers adaptation and translation on two levels: first, the adaptation and translation of Russian motifs and themes in British literature, and, on a second level, the adaptation of Biblical motifs in these texts. Lusin is thus concerned with multiple processes of adaptation and translation in which the use of more or less transversal motifs serves as a bridge between cultures which otherwise are challenged, among other factors, by language barriers.

In “The Adaptation of Failure: Representations of Environmental Crises in Climate Change Fiction”, Solvejg Nitzke takes her cue from the “Two Cultures” debate initiated by C. P. Snow in his 1959 Rede lecture. As is well known, Snow diagnosed a growing gap between literary intellectuals, the humanities and scientists who in his view form distinct groups and even speak different academic languages. Nitzke reconsiders this hypothesis by looking at current examples of popular “climate change fiction”, i.e. narratives (literary texts, films, and documentaries) which translate scientific knowledge and language into the realm of the fictional in order to give their narratives a “scientific feel”. By analysing Roland Emmerich’s film *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) and the novels *Freedom* (2010) by Jonathan Franzen and *Solar* (2010) by Ian McEwan, Nitzke shows how scientific knowledge (or what is assumed to be scientific knowledge) is appropriated by the filmic and literary narratives as well as by the characters on the diegetic level. Adaptation, Nitzke argues, is thus a negotiating process both in scientific knowledge production and fictional representation. Seeing adaptation as a link can thus bridge the gap between the “two cultures.”

Together the articles in this special issue extend the potentials of adaptation studies by shedding light on a variety of textual phenomena regarded under a wider angle of adaptation and translation of cultural phenomena. The analyses exemplify the translational aspects of narrative as a cultural practice across discourses and media, extending beyond literature and film and opening up new areas of discussion for the thriving new field of adaptation studies and its intersection with translation studies when approached from a cultural studies perspective.

Caroline Lusin (Mannheim)

A One-Way Ticket to Paradise?

Adapting the Bible in Venedikt Erofeev's *Moskva-Petushki* (1973),
Stephen Mulrine's *Moscow Stations* (1993),
and A.L. Kennedy's *Paradise* (2004)

1. Introduction

In the early 21st century, scientists once more declared God a delusion and announced the end of faith, boosting the current critique of religious belief known as 'New Atheism'.¹ Yet the contemporary British and Irish novel engage with religion in various forms, and religion has indeed "returned", Andrew Tate argues, "to the study of literature".² The Bible in particular proves a rich source for novelists as different as Colm Tóibín, Zadie Smith, and Philip Pullman among others. Where Colm Tóibín's *The Testament of Mary* (2012) offers a fictional memoir by the mother of God, depicting the Virgin Mary as "a powerful, unsparing figure" (*Guardian*), Zadie Smith's *NW* (2012) describes the lives of its two female protagonists against the backdrop of the stories of Mary and Elizabeth in the Gospel of Luke. And Philip Pullman's bestselling trilogy *His Dark Materials* (1995-2000) is a re-writing of Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) that "only really makes sense" according to Tate "if the reader has a detailed knowledge of the biblical scriptures against which it writes".³ Despite being written from a very critical, ironic or atheist stance, all these novels rely on the Bible as an intertext in crucial ways. The Bible, in other words, is once more living up to its ancient reputation as "the Book of Books"⁴, "the *Urtext* of Western literature".⁵

In line with this current trend in British and Irish literature, the Bible provides a central intertext for two Scottish texts, Stephen Mulrine's play *Moscow Stations* (1993), an adaptation of Venedikt Erofeev's short Russian novel *Moskva-Petushki* (1973), and A.L. Kennedy's novel *Paradise* (2004). Erofeev has modelled the life of his protagonist on the Passion of Christ, and allusions to the Bible abound

¹ See Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion* (2006) and Sam Harris' *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (2004).

² Andrew Tate. "Introduction: Literature and Religion in the Twenty-First Century." In: Andrew Tate (ed.): *Literature and Religion. Yearbook of English Studies* 39.1. & 39.2 (2009), p. 1-6, p. 2.

³ Ibid., p. 3.

⁴ Joe Carruthers, Mark Knight and Andrew Tate (eds.). *Literature and the Bible: A Reader*. London, New York 2014, p. 3.

⁵ Tate. "Introduction", p. 4.

in his text; Mulrine, in turn, has adapted *Moskva-Petushki*, translated into English as *Moscow to the End of the Line* or *Moscow Circles*,⁶ for the British stage in a multilayered process of linguistic, cultural, and generic translation. Kennedy, finally, has arguably imbibed both influences in what reads like an implicit adaptation of *Moskva-Petushki* to a contemporary Scottish context.⁷ These processes of adaptation, and in fact adaptation in general, I would suggest, can be conceptualised drawing on Yuri Lotman's model of culture as a semiosphere. This model, which Lotman first introduced in an essay⁸ and later developed in *Universe of the Mind* ("Vnutri myslyashikh mirov", in *Semiosfera*, 2000), can account for how texts (in the broadest sense of the word) are translated from one semiotic system to another. What light, then, can Lotman's semiosphere shed on adaptation in *Moskva-Petushki*, *Moscow Stations*, and *Paradise*, and what can this concept contribute more generally to a theory of adaptation and appropriation? And, finally, to what extent can Lotman's model of culture as a semiosphere help to elucidate the cultural functions of adaptation?

2. Adaptation and Yuri Lotman's Concept of the Semiosphere

Yuri Lotman's notion of culture as a semiosphere profitably highlights critical features of current approaches to adaptation and appropriation, especially where the relationship between 'original' and 'adaptation' is concerned. While critics discarded earlier attempts to conceptualise this relationship with one-to-one translation models already in the 1960s⁹, current approaches try to come to grips with the connections between texts or media drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism and the related notion of intertextuality.¹⁰ From this point of view, adaptation and appropriation form "a sub-section of the over-arching practice of intertextuality".¹¹ Bakhtin's fellow Russian Yuri Lotman and his notion of culture as a semiosphere, by contrast, seem to have largely escaped the attention of adaptation theory so far.

This omission is all the more relevant because the concept of the semiosphere can help to describe the more complex relationship between adaptation

⁶ To distinguish the Russian original from its translation, I will in the following refer to it by its original title *Moskva-Petushki*.

⁷ For the connection between *Paradise* and *Moskva-Petushki* see also Caroline Lusin. "Kennedy, A.L.: *Paradise*." In: Heinz Ludwig Arnold (ed.): *Kindlers Neues Literaturlexikon*. Stuttgart 2009; "'We Live Again Anew': Loss, Introspection and Redemptive Meta-Narratives in British and Irish Fiction since 2000." In: Anja Müller-Wood and Ulrike Tancke (eds.): *Trauma and Catastrophe. Critical Engagements: A Journal of Criticism and Theory* 6.2 (2013), p. 9-26.

⁸ Yuri Lotman, "O semiosfere." *Trudy po znakovym sistemam* 17 (1984), p. 5-23. ("On the Semiosphere." Translated by Wilma Clark. *Signs Systems Studies* 33.1 (2005), p. 205-29).

⁹ Kamilla Elliott. "Theorizing Adaptations/Adapting Theories." In: Jørgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvik and Eirik Frisvold Hanssen (eds.): *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions*. London, New York 2013, p. 19-45, p. 27.

¹⁰ See for instance Linda Hutcheon. *A Theory of Adaptation*. London, New York 2013, p. 21 and Robert Stam. *Film Theory: An Introduction*. Malden, Mass. 2000, p. 64.

¹¹ Julia Sanders. *Adaptation and Appropriation*. London, New York 2006, p. 17.

and source texts which contemporary theorists advocate. Julie Sanders emphasises the complexity of semiotic shifts involved in many adaptations by suggesting that “when we discuss adaptations [...] we are often working with reinterpretations of established texts in new generic contexts or perhaps with relocations of an ‘original’ or source text’s cultural and/or temporal setting”¹² Since adaptations often entail a change in the cultural, temporal, and generic setting, they obviously defy simplistic notions of unidirectional, one-level transfer. Critics have therefore called for considering adaptations not as “one-directional”, but as “multi-directional”, and suggested appraising them “within a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural and textual networks”.¹³ Conceiving of adaptation in terms of a process in the cultural semiosphere facilitates conceptualizing this multiple embeddedness in a complex system.

The complexity of the semiosphere as a model of culture derives from the fact that Lotman is here building on the notion of the biosphere, the space of all life on earth, the sum of all ecosystems. By analogy, Lotman defines the semiosphere as the cultural space where all semiotic processes take place. Just as the biosphere consists of different ecosystems, the semiosphere consists of different semiotic systems. What he is referring to here are all kinds of semiotic systems or ‘languages,’ such as academic disciplines, dialects or literary genres. For Lotman, the semiosphere as the entirety of these semiotic systems is both the result of culture and the condition that culture can develop and change. This is due to three features of the semiosphere above all: its heterogeneity, asymmetry, and dynamism. According to Lotman, every culture or semiosphere is heterogeneous, because it is composed of many ‘languages’ of varying statuses and functions:

The languages which fill up the semiotic space are various, and they relate to each other along the spectrum which runs from complete mutual translatability to just as complete mutual untranslatability. Heterogeneity is defined both by the diversity of elements and their different functions.¹⁴

The impression of heterogeneity is boosted by the highly asymmetrical relationship between the different languages composing the semiosphere, which encourages communication between them. This communication becomes manifest in what Lotman describes as “currents of internal translations with which the whole density of the semiosphere is permeated”.¹⁵ Different languages are in constant exchange both on a horizontal, synchronic and on a vertical, diachronic level; this dialogue between different languages and levels entails “a constant renewal of codes”.¹⁶ As a result, the hierarchical position of these languages within the semiosphere is always shifting, too. Far from being

¹² Ibid., p. 19.

¹³ Bruhn, Jørgen, Anne Gjelsvik and Eirik Frisvold Hanssen. “‘There and Back Again’: New Challenges and New Directions in Adaptation Studies.” In: Jørgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvik and Eirik Frisvold Hanssen (eds.): *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions*. London, New York 2013, p. 1-16, p. 8.

¹⁴ Yuri Lotman. *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*. Translated by Ann Shukman. Introduction by Umberto Eco. London, New York 1990, p. 125.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 124.

static givens, “all elements of the semiosphere are in dynamic [...] correlations whose terms are constantly changing”.¹⁷

On a larger scale, the heterogeneity and asymmetry of the semiosphere become most potent in the distinction between its centre and periphery. While the centre is the area of the semiosphere in which the languages are organised most strictly according to ideal cultural norms, the periphery marks the cultural fringe associated with deviation from the norm. The centre promotes ideal versions of ‘self,’ whereas the periphery tends towards the ‘other’. As a result, with increasing distance from the centre, “the relationship between semiotic practice and the norms imposed on it becomes ever more strained”.¹⁸ It is precisely this strained relationship between centre and periphery which assures the ongoing development and vitality of culture, because the normative centre inclines towards inflexibility and stasis:

[I]n the centre of the cultural space, sections of the semiosphere aspiring to the level of self-description become rigidly organized and self-regulating. But at the same time they lose dynamism and having once exhausted their reserve of indeterminacy they become inflexible and incapable of further development.¹⁹

In contrast to the centre’s tendency towards ossification, the periphery functions in Lotman’s model as “the area of semiotic dynamism”.²⁰ The semiotic difference between central and peripheral languages as well as between languages from within and without the semiosphere creates a productive friction that keeps the semiosphere in a constant process of dynamic (ex)change. Due to the differences between languages and codes, this process of exchange necessitates a medium of translation, a function fulfilled in Lotman’s model of culture by the concept of the boundary.

The concept of the boundary is the central feature of Lotman’s notion of culture in so far as it safeguards the existence and continuous development of the semiosphere. First and foremost, the boundary separates what is inside the semiosphere from what is outside it; that is, the boundary separates one culture from others to protect its individuality. But there are also boundaries inside the semiosphere which separate different semiotic systems or languages:

The notion of the boundary separating the internal space of the semiosphere from the external is just a rough primary distinction. In fact, the entire space of the semiosphere is transected by boundaries of different levels, boundaries of different languages and even of texts [...]. These sectional boundaries which run through the semiosphere create a multi-level system.²¹

These sectional boundaries as well as the external boundary of the semiosphere differ in a crucial way from Lotman’s earlier concept of the boundary, which he put forward in in *The Structure of the Artistic Text* (*Struktura khodozhestvennogo*

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 134.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 134.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 124.

²¹ Ibid., p. 138.

teksta, 1970). While *The Structure of the Artistic Text* emphasised the impermeability of boundaries, *The Universe of the Mind* – and this is essential to Lotman's notion of culture – presents them as permeable. Building again on the analogy to the biosphere, Lotman²² compares the boundary to a membrane, which separates cells, yet facilitates exchange between them. The boundary of the semiosphere thus allows separating self and other, but it simultaneously acts as a filter or unit of translation:

The boundary is a mechanism for translating texts of an alien semiotics into 'our' language, it is the place where what is 'external' is transformed into what is 'internal', it is a filtering membrane which so transforms foreign texts that they become part of the semiosphere's internal semiotics while still retaining their own characteristics.²³

Influences from without the semiosphere and from separate languages within the semiosphere can be filtered and translated through the boundary to the inside. The boundary, that is, "both separates and unites".²⁴ As Michael C. Frank²⁵ has pointed out, instead of highlighting the static dominance of certain cultural texts, the notion of the semiosphere foregrounds how the semiotic space of culture is continuously changed and remodelled.

In formulating his notion of boundaries as "the hottest spots for semioticising processes" in a multi-level system²⁶, Yuri Lotman has proposed a model of cultural translation that tallies with a current direction in adaptation studies. Building on Irina Rajewsky's suggestion that adaptations "cannot be a matter of 'fixed' and 'stable' borders between 'fixed' and 'stable' entities"²⁷, Regina Schober proposes to emphasise "the process of interaction between [...] media borders".²⁸ This focus on fluid borders calls to mind Lotman's emphasis on the boundary as a place of dialogue and exchange. The same metaphor of filtration is actually used by other adaptation scholars, who conceptualise adaptation and appropriation similarly to how Lotman conceives of cultural processes in general. In her ground-breaking *Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon argues that "what is involved in adapting can be a process of appropriation, of taking possession of another's story, and filtering it, in a sense, through one's own sensibility, interests and talents".²⁹ From this point of view, the cultural and aesthetic sensibility of the

²² Ibid., p. 140.

²³ Ibid., p. 136-137.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 136.

²⁵ Michael C. Frank. "Die Literaturwissenschaften und der spatial turn: Ansätze bei Jurij Lotman und Michail Bachtin." In: Wolfgang Hallet and Birgit Neumann (eds.): *Raum und Bewegung in der Literatur: Die Literaturwissenschaften und der Spatial Turn*. Bielefeld 2009, p. 53-80, p. 69-70.

²⁶ Yuri Lotman. *Universe of the Mind*, p. 136.

²⁷ Irina Rajewsky. "Border Talks: The Problematic Status of Media Borders in the Current Debate about Intermediality." In: Lars Ellerström (ed.): *Media Borders, Multimediality and Intermediality*. Basingstoke 2010, p. 51-68, p. 54.

²⁸ Regina Schober. "Adaptation as Connection: Transmediality Reconsidered." In: Jørgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvik and Eirik Frisvold Hanssen (eds.): *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions*. London, New York 2013, p. 89-112, p. 91.

²⁹ Linda Hutcheon. *A Theory of Adaptation*, p. 18.

artist acts as a filter in the sense of Lotman's boundary. Julie Sanders suggests a similar notion of adaptation, but avoids the contested agent of the artist or author, when she reflects in more general terms: "Perhaps it serves us better to think in terms of complex processes of filtration, and in terms of intertextual webs or signifying fields, rather than simplistic one-way lines of influence from source to adaptation".³⁰ With his emphasis on dynamic interchange and interaction on multiple levels, Lotman is meeting the need of adaptation studies to comprehend its subject in a wider context that goes beyond simplifying notions of 'source' and 'adaptation'. As Regina Schober puts it, "to discuss adaptations means to acknowledge their complex textual environment, their cultural implications and their multi-layered processes of signification".³¹ Lotman's model of culture, I would argue, facilitates considering adaptations in a broader field that includes cultural and historical context as well as cross-influences between different 'texts' in the widest sense.

Mapping adaptation with Yuri Lotman's model of the semiosphere helps foregrounding the cultural dynamics of this practice. The semiosphere projects a highly dynamic notion of a culture continuously renewed from its margins. It represents the space where, as Susi Frank, Cornelia Ruhe, and Alexander Schmitz illustrate in their afterword to the German translation of *Universe of the Mind*, "culture originates from communicative processes, where a canon comes into being and is challenged again".³² Adaptation critics likewise emphasise how adaptation and appropriation are fundamental literary practices essential to a lively literary tradition.³³ If adaptation always involves, as Linda Hutcheon maintains, "a double process of interpreting and then creating something new",³⁴ this process often unfolds its revisionary potential to challenge the canon. Julie Sanders thus highlights the "ability of adaptation to respond or write back to an informing original from a new or revised political and cultural position".³⁵ Precisely this revisionary potential is also at the heart of culture as defined by Lotman, and it becomes particularly apparent in the processes of adaptation involving the Bible in *Moskva-Petushki*, *Moscow Stations*, and *Paradise*.

³⁰ Julie Sanders. *Adaptation and Appropriation*, p. 24.

³¹ Regina Schober. "Adaptation as Connection", p. 92. Kamilla Elliot, too, calls for models of adaptation "that *integrate* rather than simply juxtapose formal and contextual analyses" ("Theorizing Adaptations", p. 33).

³² Susi K. Frank, Cornelia Ruhe and Alexander Schmitz. "Semiotik der Übersetzung." In: Susi K. Frank, Cornelia Ruhe and Alexander Schmitz (eds.): Jurij Lotman, *Die Innenwelt des Denkens: Eine semiotische Theorie der Kultur*. Transl. Gabriele Leupold and Olga Radetzkaja. Berlin 2010, p. 379-414, p. 398.

³³ Julie Sanders. *Adaptation and Appropriation*, p. 1.

³⁴ Linda Hutcheon. *A Theory of Adaptation*, p. 20.

³⁵ Julie Sanders. *Adaptation and Appropriation*, p. 98.

3. The Journey of the Bible from *Moskva-Petushki* to *Paradise*

The Bible is a remarkable example of a text that has been adapted time and again in a variety of contexts. Its adaptations include cultural artefacts as different as John Milton's classic epic *Paradise Lost* (1667) and films such as Monty Python's highly irreverent religious satire *Life of Brian* (1979) or the American box-office hit *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), directed by Hollywood star Mel Gibson. Itself a hybrid text – “a synthesis of law, prophecy, poetry, narrative and letters”³⁶ – the Bible has on a more general plane left its mark on the European literary tradition like few other books, as the editors of the anthology *Literature and the Bible* stress.³⁷ Besides providing a nearly endless repository of characters and stories, it is particularly influential in the concise structure of its overarching plot, which stipulates a teleological narrative of birth, death, and redemption. This biblical narrative of redemption is designed to furnish believers with a meaningful foil against which to pin and understand their own lives.³⁸

In *Moskva-Petushki*, *Moscow Stations*, and *Paradise*, the biblical narrative plays out against the backdrop of a conflict between centre and periphery which is at the core of these texts. In Lotman's system of the semiosphere, the Bible clearly belongs to the highly organised, normative structures associated with the centre of European cultures, at least for the period in question. If adaptation is defined as “a more sustained engagement with a single text or source than the more glancing act of allusion or quotation, even citation, allows”,³⁹ *Moskva-Petushki*, *Moscow Stations*, and *Paradise* can certainly count as adaptations of the Passion of Christ. While all three texts contain a wealth of single quotations and allusions to the Bible, these combine to form a coherent subtext modelled systematically on the plotline of the Gospels. More specifically, the lives of the protagonists appear analogous to the Via Dolorosa, to the ‘Way of Grief’ in Jerusalem, which Christ is said to have walked on his way to crucifixion. In the Christian tradition, this way of grief is associated with a number of so-called ‘Stations of the Cross’. Christianity emulates the actual way of grief in old Jerusalem in a symbolical ‘Way of the Cross’ that most often contains fourteen stations, either as pictures or as sculptures. Walking along this Way of the Cross and praying at each station, believers re-enact Christ's own way of grief. Yet while the Bible is invested with a certain moral as well as metaphysical authority as the foundational text of Christian religious belief, *Moskva-Petushki*, *Moscow Stations*, and *Paradise* use the canonical narrative of birth, death, and redemption in a subversive way. In these texts, the religious narrative contrasts sharply with the bleak and largely meaningless everyday reality of the protagonists, who belong to the periphery of their cultures and societies.

The peripheral status of the protagonist becomes nowhere more apparent than in Venedikt Erofeev's short novel *Moskva-Petushki*. This subversive classic

³⁶ Joe Carruthers, Mark Knight and Andrew Tate (eds.). *Literature and the Bible: A Reader*. London and New York 2014, p. 5.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 6.

³⁹ Julie Sanders. *Adaptation and Appropriation*, p. 4.

tells the story of Venya Erofeev, alter ego of the author and a vulnerable, endearing drinker who likes to philosophise about everything. At the beginning of the novel, Venya sets out from a random house entrance in Moscow, where he has spent the night, to travel by train to the small town Petushki. While he is chatting away lost in thought and chronicling the kind of booze he is taking in, he increasingly loses touch with his surroundings, and the train journey turns into a nightmare. Apocalyptic darkness falls, and Venya has to face horrendous creatures, such as a gang of furies, Satan, and a maimed sphinx. Instead of reaching Petushki, he suddenly finds himself back in Moscow and ends up in the same place he started out from; the most plausible explanation is that he actually left this place only in his imagination.⁴⁰ At the end, four unknown men accost and attack him, ultimately killing him on a staircase with a cobbler's awl or screwdriver. Venya's outsider status derives less from his addiction than from the fact that his story is steeped in literary allusion. Indeed *Moskva-Petushki* itself could hardly fall shorter of implementing the aesthetics of social realism prescribed by the Soviet regime, which shows in its chequered publication history.⁴¹ Celebrated as the beginning of Russian postmodernism⁴², *Moskva-Petushki* consists of a collage⁴³ of allusion and citation which comprises the entire history of Russian and Western European literature, history, and philosophy from classical antiquity, in a manner that purposely defies any finite interpretation.⁴⁴

One of the most fertile sources of *Moskva-Petushki* is no doubt the Bible, whose echoes permeate the text, as criticism has widely acknowledged.⁴⁵ In his introduction to the edition published in 2000 by Vagrius, Evgeni Popov identifies the Bible as a book which Erofeev cherished all his life.⁴⁶ In *Moskva-Petushki*, already the name of the protagonist gestures towards the significance of the Bible as a subtext: 'Venya' and 'Venichka' are affectionate forms of 'Venedikt', which

⁴⁰ Mark Althsuller also proceeds from the assumption that Venya is hallucinating. Mark Altshuller. "Moskva-Petushki Venedikta Erofeeva i traditsii klassicheskoy poemy." *Novy Zhurnal* 146 (1982), p. 75-85. Vladimir Tumanov argues that Venya returns to Moscow because he accidentally switched trains, but there is no real indication of that in the text. Vladimir Tumanov. "The End in V. Erofeev's Moskva-Petuški." *Russian, Croatian and Serbian, Czech and Slovak, Polish Literature* 39.1 (1996), p. 95-114, p. 102.

⁴¹ First circulated in samizdat after its conception in 1969 and 1970, it was first published in tamizdat in Israel in 1973 and saw its first Soviet edition only in 1988 (Mulrine 1998: 50). The full authoritative text was published in Russia by Sakharov as late as 2005.

⁴² Karen L. Ryan-Hayes. "Introduction." In: Karen L. Ryan-Hayes (ed.): *Venedikt Erofeev's Moscow-Petushki: Critical Perspectives*. New York 1997., p. 1-17., p. 1.

⁴³ Neil Stewart. 'Vstan' I vspominaj': *Auferstehung als Collage in Venedikt Erofeevs Moskva-Petuški*. Heidelberger Publikationen zur Slavistik B. Literaturwissenschaftliche Reihe. Vol. 10. Frankfurt am Main 1999.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 15. In fact, such is its richness in intertextual reference that in the Russian edition of 2000, the commentary by Eduard Vlasov takes up more than four times as much space as the actual narrative.

⁴⁵ Among others Stewart ('Vstan' I vspominaj', p. 21; 57) also emphasises the special role of biblical allusions in *Moskva-Petushki*.

⁴⁶ Evgeny Popov. "Sluchay s Venediktom." Venedikt Erofeev, *Moskva-Petushki: Poema*. S kommentaryami Eduarda Vlasova. Moscow 2000, p. 5-12., p. 8.

derives from 'Benedictus', Latin for 'the Blessed'.⁴⁷ This name provides the starting point for a plethora of conspicuous and inconspicuous references to the Bible from the first chapter. When Venya muses how the alcohol he has consumed the day before has rendered his soul strong, but his body weak,⁴⁸ this clearly refers to the Gospel of Matthew (26,41): "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak".⁴⁹ Apart from the Gospels, the biblical sources cited in *Moskva-Petushki* include the Song of Solomon and the Book of Revelation.⁵⁰

The most prominent biblical subtext in *Moskva-Petushki*, however, is the story of the Passion of Christ,⁵¹ which the novel incorporates on several levels. On a structural level, Venya proceeds through various stations and ends up being virtually crucified; the Russian original explicitly says about Venya's attackers at the very end that "they nailed me to the floor".⁵² On the level of content, too, his story flaunts numerous parallels to the Passion. As Neil Stewart illustrates, it is set on a Friday, and Venya encounters Pontius Pilate (here masked as Mithridates) as well as a disloyal Peter.⁵³ In terms of quantity and quality, the passage that occurs most frequently is from chapter five of the Gospel of Mark,⁵⁴ where Jesus resurrects a dead girl: "And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee arise. And straightaway the damsel arose, and walked [...]." (Mark, 5,41-42) The phrase "stand up and go", or only "go", or the Hebraic original "Talitha cumi", permeates the novel in many variations.⁵⁵ Erofeev mostly associates this leitmotif in a desecrating manner with either going somewhere to get drunk, or standing up after a hangover.⁵⁶ Vladimir Tumanov hence considers Venya's allusions to the Bible as "a mixture of mockery and reverence, desecration and veneration",⁵⁷ a result of adaptation that illustrates

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 3.

⁴⁸ "[M]y soul was strengthened in the highest degree while my members were weakened" (Venedikt Erofeev. *Moscow to the End of the Line*, p. 13).

⁴⁹ Yuri Levin. *Kommentari k poeme "Moskva-Petushki" Venedikta Erofeeva*. Predislovie Khainrikha Pfandlya. Graz 1996, p. 30.

⁵⁰ Neil Stewart. 'Vstan' I vspominaj', p. 58. For a detailed identification of quotations and allusions see Svetlana Gaiser-Shnitman. *Venedikt Erofeev 'Moskva-Petushki': ili 'The Rest is Silence'*. Slavica Helvetica. Vol. 30. Bern, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Paris 1989.

⁵¹ As Neil Stewart ('Vstan' I vspominaj', p. 25) illustrates, Paperno and Gasparov (1981) first identified the Passion as a central subtext of *Moskva-Petushki*. Cf. Iris Paperno and Boris Gasparov. "Vstan i idi." *Slavica Hierosolymitana* 6-7 (1981), p. 387-400.

⁵² "oni prigrvizdili menya k polu" (Venedikt Erofeev. *Moskva-Petushki: Poema*. Pervoe v Rossii izdanie polnogo avtorskogo teksta. Moscow 2004, p. 141).

⁵³ Neil Stewart. 'Vstan' I vspominaj', p. 68-69.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 34-35.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 35.

⁵⁶ This transpires for instance in the chapter "Novogireevo – Reutovo" on one of the numerous occasions where Venya is talking to himself: "Go on and get drunk, Venichka, go on and get drunk as a skunk" (Venedikt Erofeev. *Moscow to the End of the Line*, p. 42).

⁵⁷ Vladimir Tumanov. "The End in V. Erofeev's Moskva-Petuški." *Russian, Croatian and Serbian, Czech and Slovak, Polish Literature* 39.1 (1996), p. 95-114, p. 105.

the dynamic renewal of codes suggested by Lotman's model of the semiosphere. The resulting conflation of the sacred and the profane introduces an ironic distance that recedes again towards the end of the novel, when the biblical references acquire a more serious, urgent tone. Shortly before his murderers virtually crucify him on the staircase, Venya quotes the words of Jesus in the ninth hour on the cross:⁵⁸ "Trembling all over, I said to myself, *Talife cumi*, that is, 'Get up and prepare for the end ...' This isn't *Talife cumi*, it's *lama savahfani*, as the Saviour said ... That is, 'Why hast thou forsaken me?'"⁵⁹ In thus expressly connecting the leitmotif "talitha cumi" with his impending crucifixion, Venya implicitly underscores the notion of resurrection inherent in it. However, he is disrupting the chronology of the Passion; unlike Jesus, he is not crucified at this stage. Indeed breaking up the chronology is a hallmark of Erofeev's adaptation of the Passion that directly bears on its significance.

Moskva-Petushki juxtaposes notions of teleology with a marked emphasis on circularity, which contributes decisively to the subversive functions of the subtext. At first glance, Venya's story seems to follow a clear-cut linear structure. The sequence of chapters, which is oriented on the train stations on the line from Moscow to Petushki, implies a teleological journey from one place to another, evoking the literary conventions of the travelogue.⁶⁰ The biblical subtext, too, initially reinforces this impression of linearity and teleology. Where Moscow appears as "the fallen Third Rome, [...] the seat of the Antichrist and therefore a *Godless city*",⁶¹ Venya identifies Petushki as his own Paradise or Garden of Eden (ibid.): "Petushki is the place where the birds never cease singing, not by day or by night, where winter and summer the jasmine never cease blooming."⁶² Yet, Neil Stewart⁶³ underlines that *Moskva-Petushki* not only breaks the chronology of the Gospels – Satan here appears on the way to Calvary; the motif of resurrection proliferates in this novel to an extent that creates the impression of a never-ending circle of death and resurrection, which leads the notion of redemption *ad absurdum*. This notion of circularity also fits with the oft-noted paradox that Venya should still be able to narrate his story in retrospect after his death.⁶⁴ In conjunction with the ironic contrast between the sacred and the profane, this

⁵⁸ "And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15,34).

⁵⁹ Venedikt Erofeev. *Moscow to the End of the Line*, p. 162, emphasis in orig.

⁶⁰ Critics have accordingly placed *Moskva-Petushki* in the context of travel literature (Katerine V. Moskver. "Back on the Road: Erofeev's *Moskva-Petuški* and Traditions of Russian Literature." *Russian, Croatian and Serbian, Czech and Slovak, Polish Literature* 48.2 (2000), p. 195-204.) and made connections to Lawrence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768) (Neil Stewart. 'Vstan' I vspominaj', p. 85ff.) and the tradition of the picaresque (Karen L. Ryan. *Contemporary Russian Satire: A Genre Study*. Cambridge 1995) in particular.

⁶¹ Vladimir Tumanov. "The End in V. Erofeev's *Moskva-Petuški*." *Russian, Croatian and Serbian, Czech and Slovak, Polish Literature* 39.1 (1996), p. 95-114, p. 102. Emphasis in orig.

⁶² Venedikt Erofeev. *Moscow to the End of the Line*, p. 43.

⁶³ Neil Stewart. 'Vstan' I vspominaj', p. 70-71.

⁶⁴ Vladimir Tumanov. "The End in V. Erofeev's *Moskva-Petuški*", p. 95.

juxtaposition of teleology and circularity underscores the subversive functions of the Bible in *Moskva-Petushki*.

In sum, the biblical references in *Moskva-Petushki* emphasize the element of non-conformity and subversion that is central to Erofeev's life and work. The Bible as such is an incongruous, even subversive element in a culture like the Soviet one that pursued a politics of state atheism,⁶⁵ a fact which the author's own biography illustrates pointedly: According to Erofeev himself, he was expelled from the Vladimir Pedagogical Institute on the grounds of possessing a Bible.⁶⁶ True or not, this anecdote illuminates the self-conception of the author, who evidently modelled his fictional alter ego closely on himself. His association with Roman Catholicism – Erofeev had himself baptised a Catholic towards the end of his life⁶⁷ – appears especially subversive, since Roman Catholicism is traditionally not considered a Russian religion. If Erofeev himself refused early on to become involved in Soviet institutions like the Pioneers or the Comsomol,⁶⁸ *Moskva-Petushki* subverts central tenets of the Soviet regime on an aesthetic level. While some critics have identified Venya's murderers as the four horsemen of the Apocalypse,⁶⁹ others consider them as the four titans of Soviet communism, Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin.⁷⁰ From this point of view, narrating his story all the same appears as an act of defiance against the attempt of these communist authorities to silence his subversive voice. The motif of resurrection, in other words, opposes the silencing or death of Russian literature under the Soviet Regime.⁷¹ As if to support Lotman's assertion that semiotic processes are especially lively and dynamic in the periphery of the semiosphere, *Moskva-Petushki* subversively incorporates the Bible into a dense and heterogeneous network of intertextual allusion celebrating the productivity of culture.

If the motif of resurrection is central to *Moskva-Petushki*, the novel itself experienced a resurrection of sorts when the prolific Scottish poet, playwright, translator, and adapter Stephen Mulrine adapted it for the stage in 1992. Adapting a Soviet novel with a plethora of culture- and time-specific references into a contemporary Scottish play obviously necessitates a variety of minor and major updates; at the same time, *Moscow Stations* is an excellent case in point of the

⁶⁵ Cynthia Simmons also emphasises the repression of the church by the Soviet State in her analysis of *Moskva-Petushki*, and simultaneously identifies alcohol as the prime means of 'opting out' of this repressive society, see "An Alcoholic Narrative as Time Out and the Double in *Moskva-Petushki*," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 24.2 (1990), p. 155-68, p. 156.

⁶⁶ Karen L. Ryan-Hayes. "Introduction", p. 3.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 4.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 2.

⁶⁹ Vladimir Tumanov. "The End in V. Erofeev's Moskva-Petuški", p. 103; David M. Bethea. *The Shape of Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction*. Princeton 1989., p. 275. Vladimir Tumanov offers a concise analysis of the apocalyptic features of *Moskva-Petushki*. See Tumanov. "The End in V. Erofeev's Moskva-Petuški", p. 103f.) also sees these men as a reference to Book of Daniel (7,7) with its vision of four destructive beasts.

⁷⁰ Iris Paperno and Boris Gasparov. "Vstan i idi", p. 390.

⁷¹ Neil Stewart. 'Vstan' I vspominaj', p. 38.

necessity for contraction which Linda Hutcheon⁷² finds involved in the process of adaptation. In the case of *Moscow Stations*, adaptation involved a tripartite process of translation into a different linguistic, cultural, and generic system. Stephen Mulrine has described this process in detail in a journal article tracing the way, as the title says, “From Novel to Play”. Mulrine here relates not only how he translated the play from Russian into English, but also how he adapted it for a British audience and for the stage (which necessitated a reduction in material by as much as four fifths). The drama was first produced as a radio play for BBC Radio 3, which meant that the first adaptation had to be further cut to fill only one hour.⁷³ Where the adaptation to a contemporary British horizon of reference is concerned, Mulrine simply swapped less well known personages with figures more prominent in the 1990s; he thus substituted the political figures Indira Gandhi, Moshe Dayan, and Carel Dubcek with the more universally known George Bush, Saddam Hussein, and Margaret Thatcher. More interesting are the choices he made in reducing the subject matter to fit the new genres of radio play and dramatic monologue. According to Mulrine, the task of every adapter from novel to play “is first to expose the basic structure of the novel, thinning out its texture [...], to make it more overtly purposeful, for the much shorter-winded medium of drama”.⁷⁴ From Mulrine’s point of view, this basic structure consists of the story of the Passion, which he carved out in much detail.

The title of the adapted play reflects Stephen Mulrine’s central principle of adaptation by alluding to the Way of the Cross,⁷⁵ to which Mulrine accords especial prominence. *Moscow Stations* establishes a straightforward analogy between the stations of Venya’s railway journey and the stations of the Way of the Cross.⁷⁶ From the start, Mulrine sets up a clear-cut intertextual frame for the text. To condense the text and simultaneously highlight the subtext, Mulrine reduced the railway halts of the edition on which he based his adaptation from thirty-five to twelve.⁷⁷ When *Moscow Stations* thus ends with the station at which Jesus is nailed to the cross, skipping those where he is taken from the cross and placed in his grave, this corresponds to the ending of *Moskva-Petushki*. Yet Mulrine depicts “Venya’s drunken Odyssey-cum-Via Dolorosa”⁷⁸ in a light that reduces the ambivalence of Erofeev’s text regarding the notion of resurrection. Where *Moskva-Petushki* keeps up the contradiction between linearity and circularity, *Moscow Stations* tilts the balance in favour of linearity. As Venya muses in *Moscow Stations* on one occasion: “God is good, yes. He is leading me out of suffering towards the light. From Moscow – to Petushki. From the torments of Kursk Station, through the Purgatory of

⁷² Linda Hutcheon. *A Theory of Adaptation*, p. 19.

⁷³ Stephen Mulrine. *Moscow Stations*. London, 1993, 20, p. 52-53.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 57.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 53.

⁷⁶ In accordance with the conventions of drama, Mulrine substitutes the chapter headings in the ongoing text of his play with interjections of the on-board announcer naming the next stations. This approach also increases the ambivalence of the title.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 53.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 51.

Kuchino, to light, and Petushki.”⁷⁹ Indeed Mulrine eliminates the repetitive references to the circularity of death and resurrection contained in *Moskva-Petushki*, arguing that the “overt references to Christ’s Passion give *Moscow Stations* a discernible purpose and direction which belie its meandering texture”.⁸⁰ If anything, though, *Moscow Stations* therefore turns out even more pessimistic than *Moskva-Petushki*; the emphasis on linearity leaves readers even more conscious of the fact that Venya fails to reach Petushki, i.e. paradise, especially since his own Way of the Cross breaks off at his crucifixion. In thus adapting the Russian play for a British audience, Mulrine not only promoted the reception of *Moskva-Petushki* in Britain; his emphasis on the Way of the Cross may well have inspired the Scottish stand-up-comedian and novelist A.L. Kennedy.⁸¹

If adaptation and appropriation “frequently affect[.] a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain”,⁸² *Paradise* is certainly far removed from *Moskva-Petushki* at first glance. Written in the autobiographical mode of a confession, *Paradise* tells the life-story of the 36-year-old first-person narrator Hannah Luckraft, whose biblical name encapsulates the use of religion in this novel. The fact that it signifies “favour” or “grace”⁸³ ironically contrasts with her entirely meaningless existence. In mediating Hannah’s story from her own subjective point of view, *Paradise* offers the psychological profile of an intelligent, oversensitive, and egocentric outsider who has failed in all spheres of life. Without any professional training, or a job, or friends, or a family of her own, Hannah concludes: “Every prior experience proves it – there is no point to you.”⁸⁴ The equation she draws of her life so far could hardly be bleaker; it amounts to “Hannah Luckraft = Nothing”.⁸⁵ This mathematical equation puts her almost on a par with the narrator of Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Notes from the Underground* (1864)⁸⁶, another monologue addressed to an imaginary audience. The so-called ‘underground man’, a literary type which had a strong impact on Russian as well as Western literature and philosophy,⁸⁷ lives isolated beyond society, and his relationship to the world is deeply troubled. Like Hannah, Dostoevsky’s monologist is morbidly sensitive and completely centred on himself; like her, he lives beyond all social institutions. Determined to depict his retreat from society as a voluntary act, he tries to negate any determination from outside, going as far as to claim that $2 + 2 = 5$.⁸⁸ While Hannah’s disposition towards society

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 31.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 53.

⁸¹ Kennedy professes a certain foible for Russian literature when she names Anton P. Chekhov as her second favourite writer (after R.L. Stevenson) on her homepage (“ALK FAQ.” A. L. Kennedy, www.a-l-kennedy.co.uk/alk-faq/. Accessed 14 June 2016).

⁸² Julie Sanders. *Adaptation and Appropriation*, p. 26.

⁸³ Wilfried Seibicke. “Hanna.” *Historisches deutsches Vornamenbuch: AE*. Vol. 1. Berlin, 1996, p. 268.

⁸⁴ A.L. Kennedy. *Paradise*. London, 2004, p. 234.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 281.

⁸⁶ Caroline Lusin. “Kennedy, A.L.: *Paradise*”

⁸⁷ Robert Louis Jackson. *Dostoevsky’s Underground Man in Russian Literature*. Gravenhage 1958.

⁸⁸ Fyodor Dostoyevsky. *Notes from the Underground*. Unabridged. New York 1992, p. 23.

is very similar, her strategy of refusing to engage with her surroundings or herself is to drink. The way in which Kennedy develops this motif is so strikingly reminiscent of *Moskva-Petushki* as to suggest a very close intertextual relationship.

Drinking defines the style and above all the structure of Hannah's narrative, which is contingent and remarkably regular at the same time. The novel begins with Hannah's slowly regaining consciousness during a serious hangover in what turns out to be a hotel at Heathrow airport. At first Hannah neither knows where she is nor how she got there, and neither does the reader, as the story is told entirely from Hannah's limited and highly unreliable perspective. Only piece by piece do Hannah and the reader discover what happened, and Hannah herself is often unsure of what is true and what is not. Due to her frequent blackouts, many things remain unclear and uncertain, and her narrative is often fragmentary and associative. On one occasion, she even concedes that the coexistence of alternatives characterises her narration as a whole: "This is how my stories stop, they peter out into more and more lists and I find myself saying *or* far too often."⁸⁹ Yet, the fourteen chapters of the novel fall into a regular pattern. In a flashback interspersed with childhood memories, chapters one to seven retrospectively tell the story of how Hannah meets and falls in love with Robert, embarks on an affair with him, and of how Hannah's parents and brother send her to a clinic in Canada when her condition deteriorates. Chapter fourteen, finally, is again set in the Heathrow hotel. *Paradise* thus combines linearity and circularity in a similar manner as *Moskva-Petushki*.

Apart from the associative style motivated by the narrators' bouts of drinking, *Paradise* and *Moskva-Petushki* also share the peculiar association of alcohol and religion. At least as explicitly as Venya, Hannah describes her drinking habit in biblical terms. Just like *Moskva-Petushki*, *Paradise* establishes a connection between drinking and the motif of resurrection, when Hannah reflects: "My whiskey is down to the final glass [...]. And this is the lesson of life: all that was full will be emptied. But there is always the chance of resurrection, a bar at hand to sort things out."⁹⁰ For Hannah, alcohol and "the ideal degree of drunkenness" promise "the undiluted flavour of paradise".⁹¹ In an idiosyncratic attempt at biblical exegesis, Hannah draws on this authoritative text to support her conviction that drinkers are favoured by God. Reading the Bible, she argues,

I learned that Isaac chose Rebecca to be his wife because she offered him a drink and Gideon – the warrior, not the book-pusher – was ordered by God to pick his troops according to the way they drank: [...] watchful drinkers, those are the ones the Lord prefers.⁹²

⁸⁹ A.L. Kennedy. *Paradise*, p. 29, emphasis in orig.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 25. A very similar imagery reoccurs later: "I drink myself higher, it's all I need do to ascend. [...] Alkhol, ethanol, ethyl alcohol – we christened drink in the magic of distillation" (85).

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 187. In line with this imagery, Hannah also refers to drinking as "playing with the snakes" (p. 296).

⁹² Ibid., p. 38.

Drinkers, Hannah tries to prove, must be particular favourites of God.⁹³ The title of the novel – *Paradise* – appears to confirm this identification in setting Hannah's story directly in relation to the story of the Passion.

More explicitly than either *Moskva-Petushki* or *Moscow Stations*, *Paradise* follows the structure of the Passion, with its fourteen chapters imitating the fourteen stations of the Way of the Cross.⁹⁴ The key to this structure is hidden in plain sight in Chapter 8, where two of Hannah's drinking pals are having an argument about whether the Way of the Cross has twelve or fourteen stations.⁹⁵ More distinctly than in *Moskva-Petushki*, each of the chapters of *Paradise* corresponds to one of the stations of the Passion. When Hannah's brother Simon tries to help her to become sober in Chapter 5, this is reminiscent of Simon of Cyrene, who relieved Christ of the cross to carry it himself at the fifth station. Her cross is twofold: on the one hand it is drink, as Hannah implies in Chapter 4: "Robert said he'd be the cross that I would bear, because he didn't understand my situation and couldn't know that was a lie. I already have my cross: we've been getting acquainted for years."⁹⁶ On the other hand, Robert identifies himself as her cross in Chapter 2: "You'll see – I'll be the cross you have to bear".⁹⁷ This corresponds to the second station in the Passion where Christ is given his cross. The subversiveness of biblical references emerges most bluntly in Chapter 11, which corresponds to the station where Jesus is nailed to the cross. In this chapter, Hannah accidentally steps on an upturned plank with nails protruding from its surface:

So I get to feel the odd, slow sink of my foot as the nail slides clear through the rubber sole of my baseball boot and – in a way that is almost interesting – climbs, as my foot descends on it, to spike in through my skin.

And I could do something about this – [...] relieve the damaging pressure in any number of [...] ways – but I don't. I keep very quiet and finish my step, force it absolutely flat, and then, rather more slowly than usual, I raise my foot back up again, drag it off the cling of metal until it's free.⁹⁸

This scene amounts to a parody of crucifixion, in which Hannah minutely registers and self-consciously embraces being pierced by a nail. On a psychological level, the dissociated way in which she savours the self-injurious experience is reminiscent – along with other aspects of her narrative – of an identity disorder associated with

⁹³ This becomes also apparent in the following passage: "[...] God is on our side. He left word to that effect in the Bible. Surprising this, I realise, but I have known the Bible for many years and it's all there: we are His favourites" (ibid., p. 37).

⁹⁴ Caroline Lusin. "Kennedy, A.L.: *Paradise*"; Julie Scanlon. "Unruly Novels, Unruly Selves." In: Madelena Gonzalez and Marie-Odile Pittin-Hédon: *Generic Instability and Identity in the Contemporary Novel*. Newcastle upon Tyne 2010, p. 139-159, p. 154.

⁹⁵ This might well be in mockery of *Moscow Stations*, which reduces the Way of the Cross to twelve stations; traditionally, the Way of the Cross has seven or, most frequently, fourteen stations. Bavaria and Austria also knew ways with fifteen stations (Notger Eckmann. *Kleine Geschichte des Kreuzweges*. Regensburg 1968, p. 23), while twelve or nineteen stations existed in the Netherlands in the 16th century (ibid., p. 12).

⁹⁶ A.L. Kennedy. *Paradise*, p. 84.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 60.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 281-282.

auto-aggressive behaviour, such as the borderline personality disorder.⁹⁹ On a metaphorical level, the scene distinctly recalls a previous one, where Hannah uses a similar imagery to pinpoint her situation in life: “I am helplessly nailed between two second-rate locations and trying not to find this symptomatic of my moral state.”¹⁰⁰ While Julie Scanlon argues that “Kennedy frames this self-harm as an attempt to transcend the physical”,¹⁰¹ the scene in fact indicates how Hannah’s state is self-inflicted, which contrasts ironically with the genuine tragedy and poignancy of the Passion of Christ. Far from “searching for some true self”, as Scanlon maintains,¹⁰² Hannah is – like Dostoevsky’s underground man and Erofeev’s Venya – trying to escape a reality and identity she cannot cope with, as the last lines of the novel confirm. Back in the Heathrow hotel and with the circle closed, Hannah envisions herself in Chapter 14 poised for a new beginning:

I smile. I reach into my holdall and find the full bottle of Bushmill’s undisturbed: that marvellous label: the long, slim door to somewhere else. When Robert has finished, when he steps through, pink with scrubbing, wrapped snug in a towel, then we’ll lie on the bed together and [...] we’ll tell each other everything. I’ll ask him to bring through the glasses and then we’ll begin.¹⁰³

Corresponding to the station at which Jesus is placed in his grave, and following a chapter that clearly indicates Hannah’s death,¹⁰⁴ this scene completes a circular movement which promises a new beginning in what Hannah conceives of as ‘paradise’, but which undermines the teleology of the Bible. After all, Hannah expressly defines alcoholic blackouts as “the art of escaping linear time”.¹⁰⁵ Yet despite the unresolved ironic contrast between the sacred and the profane, between linearity and circularity, Hannah’s explicit reliance on the Bible as well as the implicit intertextual references to the Way of the Cross bespeak a yearning for meaning and transcendence in a world that otherwise seems to lack both.¹⁰⁶

4. Conclusion

The processes of adaptation at work in *Moskva-Petushki*, *Moscow Stations*, and *Paradise* bear eloquently witness to the fact that adaptation should be considered a key principle of any lively literary tradition. All of these texts are certainly literary artefacts in their own right which refute the prejudice long ingrained in Western culture that adaptations are in some way inferior to the ‘originals’. But considering them as adaptations facilitates tracing the dynamic flows of translation and exchange which, according to Yuri Lotman, are an essential component of every culture. If we regard the texts in question as semiotic systems within the

⁹⁹ I would like to thank Barbara Magin for this suggestion.

¹⁰⁰ A.L. Kennedy. *Paradise*, p. 199.

¹⁰¹ Julia Scanlon. “Unruly Novels, Unruly Selves”, p. 155.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 139.

¹⁰³ A.L. Kennedy. *Paradise*, p. 344.

¹⁰⁴ Caroline Lusin. “We Live Again Anew”, p. 14.

¹⁰⁵ A.L. Kennedy. *Paradise*, p. 18.

¹⁰⁶ Caroline Lusin. “We Live Again Anew”, p. 14.

semiosphere, each of which is governed by a specific code, the boundaries of these systems act as a filter that virtually translates aspects of other semiotic systems into the system's own code. According to Lotman, this very process of exchange between semiotic systems is absolutely vital to the continuous development, and thus the continued existence, of culture.

If the dynamics of culture rely, as Lotman argues, on the exchange of periphery and centre in particular, the adaptation of the Bible in *Moskva-Petushki*, *Moscow Stations*, and *Paradise* is a salient example. In the atheist universe of *Moskva-Petushki*, the Bible acts as a peripheral text which underscores the peripheral protagonist's rebellion against the rigid norms of the Soviet centre, an aspect which Mulrine retained in his adaptation of Erofeev's novel as *Moscow Stations*. In *Paradise*, by contrast, the subversive function of the Bible derives from the fact that Hannah associates a central authoritative text with her own peripheral status and worldview. In the upshot, then, *Moskva-Petushki*, *Moscow Stations*, and *Paradise* go a long way towards asserting the independence of 'original' and 'adaptation' in their subversive approach to the story of the Passion. In all three cases, however, the references to the Way of the Cross reflect a self-ironic desire of the narrators to latch onto a grand narrative that provides them with structure, coherence and a metaphysical foundation of life in a narrated world perceived as devoid of any orientation or transcendence.

There certainly remains an element of friction between the religious narrative of the Passion of Christ on the one hand and the transgressive, peripheral subcultures to which Venya and Hannah belong on the other. It is precisely this friction which allows for the particular resonance involved in the adaption of the Passion in these texts. While religion and the Bible are, as Andrew Tate maintains, "often connected with closure, monolithic creeds, and exclusion",¹⁰⁷ *Moskva-Petushki*, *Moscow Stations*, and *Paradise* break up these restrictions. In translating the culturally authoritative Bible into new peripheral contexts, *Moskva-Petushki*, *Moscow Stations*, and *Paradise* perpetuate the influence of this narrative beyond the constraints of the normative centre. Continuously oscillating between linearity and circularity, the three texts replace the teleology of the Bible with an evocative network of intertextual allusions geared towards creating ambivalence. If all these texts thus refuse their protagonists the single ticket to paradise, adaptation is clearly not a one-way track. The multiple echoes between *Moskva-Petushki*, *Moscow Stations*, and *Paradise* are certainly a case in point.

¹⁰⁷ Tate. "Introduction", p. 1.

Kai Fischer (Bochum)

Prole Politics – Adaptation as Appropriation of Techno in the Works of Rainald Goetz

The adaptation of one work of art into another can take a number of different forms. Regarding the relation between literature and music one can distinguish literary texts that refer to a specific piece of music, or describe the structure and effect of music or try to base the text itself on a mimicry of musical structures. Thomas Mann's novel *Dr. Faustus* (1947) is an outstanding example for the description of a certain kind of music as well as of its intended effects. An adaptation of musical structures into a fictional text can be found in Jonathan Littell's novel *Les Bienveillantes* (2006). Littell named the chapters of the book, "Toccata", "Courante", or "Menuet (en rondeaux)", referring to certain styles of ballroom dancing and the respective pieces of music.¹ Of course adaptations can work the other way around. In the context of popular music one can think of Mastodon's *Leviathan* (2004) and Sepultura's *Dante XXI* (2006), both loosely based on works of fiction.² Recently, Detroit rapper Danny Brown adapted J.G. Ballard's experimental novel *The Atrocity Exhibition* in his record of the same title. Without going into further detail whether these examples are adequate adaptations of their chosen source material, one can identify one thing they have in common: they illustrate the usual understanding of adaptation, which is based on the assumption that one piece of art is translated into another. From this follows that adaptation can be understood first as the process of translating or transferring any given content from one text into another, from one medium into another, and second as the product of an adaptation process, whereupon two distinct, individual works exist.³

But this is a rather narrow understanding of adaptation. In this article, I will argue for a different notion of adaptation as a form of appropriation that allows a more

¹ For a systematic approach to music in fiction see Werner Wolf. *The Musicalization of Fiction. A Study in the History and Theory of Intermediality*. Amsterdam 1999.

² Mastodon has adapted Melville's *Moby Dick*, whereas Sepultura based their record on Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

³ Cf. Julie Sanders. *Adaptation and Appropriation*. London 2006. For a critique of Sanders' approach see Pascal Nicklas, Oliver Lindner. *Adaptation and Cultural Appropriation*. In: Pascal Nicklas, Oliver Lindner (eds.). *Adaptation and Cultural Appropriation. Literature, Film, and the Arts*. Berlin/Boston 2012, p. 5: "In her book, Sanders, in fact, sails very much in the wake of French Poststructuralist theories of *jouissance*, *intertextualité* and *bricolage*. Her focus is neither on intermediality nor intercultural aspects of adaptation and appropriation but rather on the ›over-arching of intertextuality‹. Therefore, her definition of the terminology is strongly biased towards literary strategies and traditions of intertextual reference and the creative adoption of texts by latterday authors."

productive analysis of the literary works of German author Rainald Goetz. Therefore I will draw on a specific understanding of pop music, which derives from Dietrich Diederichsen *Über Pop-Musik* (On pop music). According to Diederichsen, pop-music is not limited to certain kinds of music, but moreover to the practices pop-music entails.

Dieses Buch befasst sich mit Pop-Musik. Sein Autor hält Pop-Musik für einen eigenen Gegenstand. Pop-Musik ist für ihn kein Spezialfall aus dem größeren Gegenstandsbereich Musik. Und Pop-Musik ist nicht nur sehr viel mehr als Musik. Pop-Musik ist eine andere Sorte Gegenstand. Im Folgenden werde ich das Wort ausschließlich in diesem Sinne verwenden: Pop-Musik ist der Zusammenhang aus Bildern, Performances, (meist populärer) Musik, Texten und an reale Personen geknüpften Erzählungen. [...] Den notwendigen Zusammenhang aber zwischen z.B. Fernsehausstrahlung, Schallplatte, Radioprogramm, Live-Konzert, textiler Kleidermode, Körperhaltung, Make-up und urbanem Treffpunkt, zwischen öffentlichem, gemeinschaftlichem Hören und der Intimität von Schlaf- und Kinderzimmer stellt kein Medium her – die Hörer, die Fans, die Kunden von Pop-Musik selbst sorgen für diesen Zusammenhang.⁴

So, with regard to Rainald Goetz I will use adaptation as a means to describe the aesthetic implications of his writing as an attempt to translate the affective immediacy of experiencing pop-music, especially Techno. To this end Goetz abandons, even in most of his journalistic texts, any form of argumentative writing for a style of writing that could more accurately be described as “oral writing.”⁵ Furthermore, he is trying to diminish any form of critical distance to techno. Regarding the concept of adaptation, it will become clear that adaptation does not mean the translation of one work of art into another with the result of a new work of art. Goetz’s adaptation of Techno resembles much more an ongoing and open process of writing, aiming at producing a specific form of immediacy that is able to mimic the experience of taking part in a rave. But Goetz’s involvement with Techno does not exhaust itself on an aesthetic level. Furthermore, I will try to demonstrate what Goetz perceives as the political dimension of Techno as a commercial form of music. In reference to the politics of pop-music it is particularly interesting to see

⁴ Dietrich Diederichsen. *Über Pop-Musik*. Cologne 2014, p. XI. “This book deals with pop-music. Its author believes that pop-music is an object in its own right. To him pop-music is no special case of music. And pop-music is not only much more than music. Pop-music is a different kind of object. Below I will use the word pop-music strictly in this sense: Pop-music is the connection between images, performances, (often popular) music, texts and narratives bound to actual persons. [...] But the necessary connection between e.g. TV appearances, records, radio feature, live-concert, clothing, posture, make-up, and urban venue, between public, collective listening and the intimacy of the bed- or children’s room is not established by a medium – the listeners, the fans, the customers of pop-music generate this connection themselves.” [transl. KF].

⁵ The oral quality of Goetz’s texts is obvious and the result of his appreciation of the act of talking: “Reden: toll. Dauernd passiert dabei so viel, und kein Mensch weiß, was alles und wie genau. Auf jeden Fall reitet auf dem / gesagten Text [...], das eigentlich Mitgeteilte mehr so aura-artig daher: wie einer lebt und denkt, das Ganze eines Menschen, seine individuelle geistige Gestalt. Sozusagen die Musik, die einer ist.” (Westbam, Rainald Goetz. *Mix, Cuts & Scratches mit Rainald Goetz*. Berlin 1997, pp. 7-8). “Talking: great. In doing so a lot is happening constantly, and nobody knows what or how. In any case the actual message rides along on the spoken text [...] more or less like an aura: how one lives and thinks, the whole of a human being, his individual intellectual gestalt. In a manner of speaking the music one is.” [transl. KF].

how Goetz subverts the conventional binary between Techno as an underground or subcultural scene and Techno as a commercialized or mainstream form of music. His stance on Pop in general was perceived as provocative, because it was in opposition to those who wanted Techno to be more than just another commercial commodity. So Goetz's attempt at an adaptation of Techno on a political level can be described as a form of appropriation, which means taking something out of one context and putting it into a different one to the effect that intentions are reversed.

To accomplish this, my argument takes the following form. First, I will present Goetz in the context of Punk, a style of music that bears striking similarities to Techno. Second, I will briefly sketch out the development of Techno as a style of music as well as a scene in order to make clear, which elements of Techno Goetz was interested in on an aesthetic level and why his appropriation of the political dimension of Techno was received as a provocation. In the third part, I will discuss the aesthetic implications of his adaptation of Techno. Finally, I will try to demonstrate in which way Goetz saw a political potential in Techno.

1. Punk and Pop

From the beginning of his career as a writer, Rainald Goetz was interested in pop-cultural phenomena. Regarding the appropriation of Techno in his works since 1997 it is important to notice the similarities between the development from punk to techno that characterizes the history of techno as well as Rainald Goetz's development as an author.

Goetz gained much attention with his appearance at the 1983 Ingeborg-Bachmann-Prize in Klagenfurt. The text he read at this event was titled *Subito* and consisted largely of an attack on the literary establishment and business (and one has to remember that the word establishment is deeply linked to the 1968 protest movement). Goetz's text was rather offensive:

Daß ich jetzt dies Jahr hier schon wieder sitze und schon wieder so ein Blödel liest, die müssen sich das ja vier Tage soundsoviele Stunden an den Kopf hauen lassen, die ganze Literatenphantasie, so eine Riesenscheiße [...]. Das muß ja dann eine Scheiße sein, wenn das so eine Scheiße ist, das Klagenfurt, dann fährst du da logisch hin, immer voll rein in die Scheiße, noch dazu wenn es so eine schöne Scheiße ist wie diese Klagenfurter Scheiße.⁶

But Goetz's attack was not restricted to the literary establishment but rather to its notion of literature or, in Goetz's words, to the "literarische Literatur,"⁷ literary literature:

⁶ Rainald Goetz. *Hirn*. Frankfurt 2003 (1986), pp. 12-13. *Subito* is part of the volume *Hirn*, which contains several of Goetz's more journalistic texts. With the inclusion of a text like *Subito* one can see that the difference between literary and non-literary texts is of no great importance for Goetz. *Hirn* was originally published in 1986. I refer to the paperback issue of 2003. "This year I'm sitting again here and again a meathead is reading, they have to get hit in the head with this for four days for countless hours, the whole man of letters fantasy, such a huge pile of shit [...]. It has to be shit, if it is such shit, Klagenfurt, of course you're going, fully head-on into the shit, especially if it's such beautiful shit like this Klagenfurt shit." [transl. KF].

⁷ Ibid., p. 18.

[...] dann hast du die Identität, die Stabilität, und am Ende sogar noch einen Sinn. Da rief ich aus: Gehe weg, du blöder Sausinn [...]. [...] den sollen die Peinsackschriftsteller vertreten, die in der Peinsackparade, angeführt von den präsenilen Chefpeinsäcken Böll und Grass, [...] den geistigen Schlamm und Schleim absondern, den das Weltverantwortungsdenken, das Wackertum, unaufhörlich produziert, dieses ganze Geschwerl, dieses Nullenpack soll ruhig noch jahrelang den BIG SINN vertreten.⁸

One would miss a central element of Goetz's attack, if one were to understand it solely in a literary context. Without a doubt, his text is part of a tradition that goes back to the European avant-garde-movements like the French Surrealists and their manifestos and performances. But if one looks at the end of Goetz's performance in Klagenfurt, it is absolutely plausible to place him in the context of punk or performance art. When he read the sentences: "Ich schneide ein Loch in meinen Kopf, in die Stirne schneide ich das Loch. Mit meinem Blut soll mir mein Hirn auslaufen"⁹, he took a razorblade and cut open his forehead, thus putting his words into immediate action. It is precisely this act of self-harm that makes Goetz's Klagenfurt-performance similar to a punk concert, e.g. of the Sex Pistols and their self-destructive bass-player Sid Vicious.

Obviously, this act of self-harm adds a special kind of authority or weight to Goetz's appearance in Klagenfurt, because what he read could hardly be construed as ironic or even metaphorical. But one has to take into account the specific context of the Ingeborg-Bachmann-Prize, i.e. the institutional boundaries of this well respected competition. One is expected to act like an author or artist, but when one actually bleeds for his art, one could argue that this is as an ironic commentary as well as the subversion of said irony by self-harm. Goetz's act of auto-aggression presents a curious case on the tension between the expectations of the audience towards an artist and the authenticity of his/her work and the necessarily staged, artificial performance of the artist. This sheds light on the relation between writing and living or theory and practice. In a weird and admittedly idiosyncratic way Goetz agrees with Adorno's view of modern literature and art. The concept of "literarische Literatur", i.e. literature as an autonomous and self-sufficient art form, has no social function anymore, because literature in its modern form has exhausted itself. But instead of employing Adorno's dialectical trick that it is the "Funktionslosigkeit" of literature and art that guarantees its impact on society,¹⁰ Goetz disbands this notion of literature. He finds truth in areas Adorno despised:

⁸ Ibid., p. 19. "[...] then you got identity, stability, and in the end even something like a meaning. I exclaimed: Go away, you stupid ass meaning [...]. [...] the pain-in-the-ass-writers should represent this, the ones in the pain-in-the-ass-parade, led by the pre-senile pain-in-the-asses-in-chief Böll and Grass, [...] excreting the intellectual mud and slime, ceaselessly produced by the world-responsibility-thinking, the decentuary, this whole vermin, this bunch of zeros should go for years representing the BIG MEANING." [transl. KF].

⁹ Ibid., p. 19. "I cut a hole in my head, in the forehead I cut the hole. With my blood my brain shall run out." [transl. KF].

¹⁰ "Gesellschaftlich an der Kunst ist ihre immanente Bewegung gegen die Gesellschaft, nicht ihre manifeste Stellungnahme. Ihr geschichtlicher Gestus stößt die empirische Realität von sich ab, deren Teil doch die Kunstwerke als Dinge sind. Soweit von Kunstwerken eine gesellschaftliche Funktion sich prädisieren läßt, ist es ihre Funktionslosigkeit." (Theodor W. Adorno. *Ästhetische Theorie*. Frankfurt 1998 [1973], p. 336)

e.g. TV, popular music, or simply Pop. But Pop as an object is difficult to handle for a writer. To be interested in Pop – and that includes Punk and Techno – necessarily means to write in a different way than before. Pop demands a different kind of involvement from a writer because writing about Pop almost always fails to mimic the experience of being a part of Pop. Therein lies the challenge of writing about as well as the fascination with Pop. In Goetz's words:

Pops Glück ist, daß Pop kein Problem hat. Deshalb kann man Pop nicht denken, nicht kritisieren, nicht analytisch schreiben, sondern Pop ist Pop leben, fasziniert betrachten, besessen studieren, maximal materialreich erzählen, feiern. Es gibt keine vernünftige Weise über Pop zu reden, als hingerissen auf das Hinreißende zu zeigen, hey, super. Deshalb wirft Pop Probleme auf, für den denkenden Menschen, die aber Probleme des Denkens sind, nicht des Pop. So simpel diese Unterscheidung ist, so schwierig ist sie zu realisieren im Schreiben über Pop.¹¹

Here Goetz forms a concept of Pop that makes it somewhat impossible to write adequately about Pop, because one cannot react to it, other than being entranced by it. In this sense, Pop allows no other reasonable way of dealing with it than to become a part of it, and trying to adapt Pop to a written text is a difficult task.

2. A Brief History of Techno as a Subculture

Techno emerged in the mid-1980s in Detroit, but it was not until the late 1980s that it developed a scene in Berlin. The editors of the oral history *Der Klang der Familie. Berlin, Techno und die Wende*, Felix Denk und Sven von Thülen, explain the success of Techno based on three main reasons:

Dass Techno der Soundtrack des Ausnahmezustands nach der Wende wurde, hat drei Gründe: Die Wucht der neuen Klänge, die Magie der Orte und das Freiheitsversprechen, das in dieser Musik steckte.¹²

The power of the new sounds as well as the promise of freedom are two attributes Techno shares with another subculture: Punk.

Plötzlich, so schien es, konnte jeder seine eigene Welt programmieren: Platten auflegen, produzieren, Magazine gründen, T-Shirts bedrucken – Techno war eine Musik, die zur Teilhabe aufrief, ein Sound der flachen Hierarchien.¹³

The do-it-yourself ethos, the possibility to participate as a listener and as a producer, are two elements shared by Punk and Techno. Both react against

¹¹ Rainald Goetz. *Hirn*, p. 188. "Pop's fortune is, Pop's got no problem. Hence one cannot think Pop, not criticize, not write analytically, but Pop is to live Pop, to view fascinated, to study obsessively, to tell with the maximum amount of material, to party. There is no rational way of talking about Pop, other than pointing enchanted at the enchanting, hey, awesome. Hence, Pop raises questions, for any thoughtful human being, that are questions of thinking, not of Pop. As simple as this distinction is, as difficult it is to realize it in writing about Pop." [transl. KF].

¹² Felix Denk, Sven von Thülen. *Der Klang der Familie. Berlin, Techno und die Wende*. Frankfurt 2014, p. 10. "There are three reasons for Techno becoming the soundtrack of the state of emergency after the Fall of the Wall: the impact of the new sounds, the magic of places, and the promise of freedom, encapsulated in this style of music." [transl. KF].

¹³ Ibid. "Suddenly, it appeared, anyone was able to program his own world: play records, create music, launch magazines, print on T-shirts – Techno was a style of music, calling for participation, a sound of flat hierarchies." [transl. KF].

corporate Rock music with its relationship of star and fan, of crowds of followers worshipping the charismatic, Messiah-like lead singer. This relationship was and is reflected in the clear distinction between the stage and the auditorium which inhibited any interaction except for euphoric applause as a sign of appreciation. But in contrast to Punk, Techno went further in its refusal of Rock. In Punk one did not need any kind of musical skills to form a band and get on stage, but it held on to the idea of musicians, amateurs or dilettantes playing instruments. Techno in its purest form and vision wanted to delete any human factor.

Nicht umsonst hieß es in den Anfangstagen von Techno immer, diese Musik brauche keine Stars. Für sie schien es gar keinen Platz mehr zu geben. Der Mensch verschwand ja aus den Stücken. Das Künstlersubjekt löste sich auf in den Schaltkreisen der Drum Machines, den binären Codes der Sampler und den immer neuen Projektnamen der Produzenten. Selbst der DJ war anfangs Teil der Party, nicht ihr Fokus.¹⁴

But, as Denk und von Thülen state in their introduction: this was in the beginning. By looking at Techno, one can learn many things about the corruption, or, to put it in a more neutral term, the popularization, of a subculture and its vision and ideals. The prime example in the case of Techno is the development of the Loveparade which started in 1989 as a political demonstration with 150 participants. Ten years later, in 1999, the Loveparade reached the peak of its commercial success and attracted around 1.5 million participants. By this time it was a huge, corporate-sponsored event. Techno's time as a subculture, as it was envisioned by its early protagonists, was over.

3. Techno in *Heute Morgen*

Techno becomes one of the central themes in Goetz's fifth book *Heute Morgen* (*Today in the morning; or Today Tomorrow*), which consists of the volumes *Mix, Cuts & Scratches* in collaboration with DJ Westbam (1997), *Rave* (1998), *Jeff Koons* (1998), *Dekonspiratione* (2000), *Celebration. Texte und Bilder zur Nacht* (1999; *Celebration. Texts and Images for the Night*), *Abfall für alle. Roman eines Jahres* (1999; *Waste for all. Novel of a Year*) und *Jahrzehnt der schönen Frauen* (2001; *Decade of Beautiful Women*).¹⁵ As the publication of *Mix, Cuts & Scratches* is based on collaboration with the DJ Westbam it is clear that Goetz was not interested in Techno as a subculture. As the founder of the music label Low Spirit, organizer of the Techno event Mayday and, since 1993, one of the organizers of the Loveparade, it seems accurate to regard Westbam as one of the people who helped to popularize, or depending on the point of view, to vulgarize Techno. It is not surprising that Westbam increasingly became a controversial figure within the

¹⁴ Ibid. "It is no coincidence that in the starting days of Techno it has always been said, this style of music does not need stars. There seemed to be no place for them. Humans disappeared from the songs. The artist dissolved into the circuits of the drum machines, the binary codes of the sampler and the constantly renewed names of projects of the producers. Even the DJ initially was a part of the party rather than its focal point." [transl. KF].

¹⁵ Technically, *Mix, Cuts & Scratches* is a book by Westbam with a contribution by Rainald Goetz, but the thoughts expressed by Goetz seem to justify to view this book as a part of his overall project *Heute Morgen*.

Techno community. And for a lot of the old school protagonists like DJs Tanith and Wolle XDP it was Westbam with his label Low Spirit who sold out Techno.¹⁶ Consequently, Rainald Goetz as a kind of chronicler of Techno was far from being accepted. DJ Tanith recalls meeting Goetz at a Mayday event.

Ich hab auf der Mayday Rainald Goetz kennengelernt. [...] Ich war total begeistert, weil ich alle seine Bücher gelesen hatte. Das war einer meiner Lieblingsschriftsteller. Ich wusste nicht, dass er Raver war. Rainald fand alles super, alles. Ich kannte den als den RAF-Schreiber, den fand ich super, später schleppte er Sven Väth und Westbam die Platten. Der war komplett ausgetauscht.¹⁷

Two things are important here: The first is that Tanith conveys the impression of Goetz being completely, and maybe uncritically, enthusiastic about Techno and it is this form of excitement that Goetz tries to adapt to text. This leads him to experiment with a different style of writing. The second is that Tanith perceives Goetz as some sort of lackey for the famous and commercially successful DJs Westbam and Sven Väth. He deprecatingly describes Goetz as the record carrier. Both things combined demonstrate what kind of personal involvement Goetz was willing to undertake and what kind of Techno he was interested in: Techno not as an isolated and closed scene of insiders, but as a mass movement open for

¹⁶ Cf. the statement by the musician and now producer Thomas Feldmann in *Der Klang der Familie*: "Pop ist für mich absolut kein Schimpfwort. Man kann ja sehr guten Pop machen. Was Low Spirit gemacht haben, war in meinen Augen einfach Scheißpop. Als die mit den Platten von Marusha und Mark Oh an den Start gekommen sind, gab es endgültig klare Abgrenzungen. Die Platten, die sich plötzlich an der Spitze der Charts wiederfanden, waren für mich mit meiner Idee von Techno vollkommen unvereinbare Produkte. Das war Major-Business mit allen Nebeneffekten." (Felix Denk, Sven von Thülen. *Der Klang der Familie*, p. 375; "For me Pop isn't a swearword. One can produce very good Pop. From my point of view, what Low Spirit had done, was just shitty Pop. When they released the records by Marusha and Mark Oh, finally there were strict demarcations. These records, going to the top of the charts, were products completely incompatible with my understanding of Techno. It was major business with all side effects.") In contrast to Feldmann Goetz saw nothing wrong with the success of Low Spirit: "Westbams Plattenfirma ›Low Spirit‹, neulich 10 Jahre alt geworden, hat das alles mit erfunden: die Musik, den Überbau, die Riesen-Raves, die kommerzielle Geschäftsgrundlage, richtige Teenie-Pop-Stars wie Mark Oh und Marusha und obendrein das ideell Allübergreifende einer ganzen Jugend-Kultur. / Die Kritik war immer zur Stelle. Die House-Puristen, die Kultur-Reaktionäre in der sogenannten taz, ganz normale Publikums-Blätter [...]: alle haben den Erfolg von ›Low Spirit‹ besonders gerne unter dem Aspekt dargestellt, was es daran zu ›enthüllen‹ gibt. Könnte es etwa gar sein, daß damit Geld verdient wird? Eine unglaubliche Sauerei. Wer hätte das gedacht?" (Westbam, Rainald Goetz. *Mix, Cuts & Scratches*, p. 10; "Westbam's record company Low Spirit, recently turned 10 years old, has invented all of this: the music, the superstructure/überbau, the giant raves, the company's commercial base, real Teeny-Pop-Stars like Mark Oh and Marusha and on top of that an overall Ideal of a whole youth culture. Critics were always there. The House purists, the cultural reactionaries of the so-called taz, ordinary magazines [...]: they all presented the success of Low Spirit with emphasis on what could be ›disclosed‹. Could it be they are making money? What an incredible mess. Who would have thought?")

¹⁷ Felix Denk, Sven von Thülen. *Der Klang der Familie*, p. 228. "I met Rainald Goetz at Mayday. [...] I was completely enthusiastic, because I had read all of his books. He was one of my favourite writers. I didn't know he was a raver. Rainald was excited by everything, everything. I knew him as the RAF-writer, which was awesome, later he carried the records of Sven Väth and Westbam. He had changed entirely." DJ Tanith here is referencing of course Goetz's novel *Kontrolliert* (In control) on the Rote Armee Fraktion, not the Royal Air Force.

everyone. In this regard, his involvement with Techno is a continuation of his interest in Pop since the early 1980s. But in contrast to the destructive tendencies which were a trademark of Punk, Techno delivered a different message, and that was happiness, to be happy as an individual, to be happy as part of a large crowd. And incidentally, for Goetz, both were made possible by a commercial art form.

In *Mix, Cut & Scratches* Goetz gives an outline of the aesthetics of Techno as a form of music. Techno as a style of music can be characterized as a form of electronically generated dance music which is bass-focused and, in terms of composition, relies on repetitive arrangements of different sounds and soundscapes. According to Goetz the achievement of Techno marks the “Abschied vom Terror der Tonalität, dem Knast der Akkordwechsel in Kadenzen, diesen alten Traum der Frühmoderne, für den sich angeblich ja auch der sogenannte Jazz interessiert hat.”¹⁸ But for the writer Goetz not only the changes on the musical level are important in his appreciation of Techno, it is primarily its relation to language that interests him.

Außerdem, neben diesem umfassenden musikalischen Selbst- und Neuerfindungs-Fundamentalismus, hat Techno im Raum der Sprache gearbeitet und dort bekanntlich das Diktat der auktorialen Erzählung durch einen die Musik immerzu mit sprachlicher Mitteilung und dem Gestus des Expressiven behelligenden Text abgeschafft. Gerade anfangs, 1988, beim ersten Acid-House-Boom, kam einem das wie eine Erlösung vor. Kein Rock-Geschrei, kein Rap-Teaching mehr: das pure Parlament der vielen Stimmen eines kollektiven Glücks: Monotonie und Einzelworte, Fetzen, Reste.

Nichtkohärenz, Nichttext. Danke.¹⁹

It is interesting that Goetz claims here that Techno has brought on a change in the way language is used in music.²⁰ Techno has replaced the ‘dictatorship of the omniscient narrative’, the rock-screaming and rap-teaching with the many voices of collective happiness. These voices are characterized by monotony and single words without any context, shreds of language. The result is, as Goetz states, a form of non-coherence and non-text. So Goetz’s appreciation of Techno can be

¹⁸ Westbam, Rainald Goetz. *Mix, Cuts & Scratches*, p. 16. “[...] farewell to the terror of tonality, the jail of altering chords in cadences, this old dream of early modernism, which allegedly the so-called Jazz was interested in.” [transl. KF].

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 18 “Besides, in addition to this extensive musical self- and re-invention fundamentalism, Techno has labored in the space of language, and, as is well known, got rid of the dictatorship of the omniscient narrative, which always bothered the music with linguistic message and the bearing of expression. Especially early, in 1988, during the first Acid-House-Boom, it was like a salvation. No rock-screaming, no rap-teaching anymore: the pure parliament of the many voices of collective joy: monotony, single words, shreds, remains. Non-coherence, non-text. Thank you.” [transl. KF].

²⁰ Cf. Elizabeth Bridges’ assessment of Techno: “Techno was and is a music of dissolution, lacking clear boundaries both musically and in terms of its relationship to authorial intent and notions of ‘the artist’ as an elevated entity. The typical techno track lacks a centrally authoritative narrative at the musical level, based instead on a particular bass-driven pattern that gives techno its signature ‘thumping’ rhythm, which serves as a theme and which variations are layered subsequently throughout the track. Techno has little if any verbal content to give it the recognizable ‘chorus verse chorus’ verbal narrative structure often associated with other popular musical genres such as pop and rock.” (Elizabeth Bridges. “BerlinTM. Techno and the Ambient Politics of Venue.” In: Gerd Bayer (ed.). *Mediating Germany. Popular Culture between Tradition and Innovation*. Newcastle upon Tyne 2006, pp. 92-106, p. 97).

understood as a commentary on his own poetological agenda which then needs to be translated into literary texts, though, as stated before, the term literary is somewhat confusing, because part of this program is that distinctions like literary and non-literary, fictional or non-fictional are being blurred in the process of writing.

One example is Goetz's "Roman eines Jahres" (novel of a year) which despite its paratextual characterization as a novel resembles no conventional novel. "Abfall für alle" (waste for all) can be understood as the most extensive realization of his aesthetic program. The text is a chronicle of the year 1998 and consists of entries of different lengths on various topics. There is no particular topical or artistic order to them, the entries just follow a chronological sequence, starting on February 2nd 1998 and ending on January 10th 1999. And because there is no such order, everything is of the same value, no topic is more important than any other. There are, to be sure, repetitions of certain topics, such as literature in general, criticism as profession, the current TV-program. But all this is embedded in descriptions of numerous errands Goetz had to run on a particular day, e.g. when he had trouble with his insurance company, or in listings of stuff. This way of writing has another literary dimension to it which can be traced back to Techno. As I have said in the beginning about the history of Techno, part of the fascination and of the potential to refuse rock ideology was the idea that in electronic music you can delete the human factor and thus de-subjectify the production process of art. In a similar way Goetz tries to de-subjectify the production of text in "Abfall für alle" as well as in *Dekonspiratione* or *Rave*. Take for example this text passage from *Rave*:

Olaf sagte: ›Wir waren Gefangene des Drogenbarons der Insel.‹

Ich rief: ›Ja!‹ und lachte.

Dann sagte wer: ›Die eine von vorhin war gerade nochmal da.‹

›Echt?‹

Und ich sagte zu Hardy: ›Auch den – ‹

›Hey!‹

›Wie?‹

›Gut.‹

Max sagte: ›Gut, gut, gut.‹

Und ich wiederholte das direkt: ›Gut, gut, gut.‹

Heiterkeit, Gelächter, usw usw –²¹

²¹ Rainald Goetz. *Rave. Erzählung*. Frankfurt 2001, p. 27. "Olaf said: ›We were prisoners of the drug-lord of the island.‹

I yelled: ›Yes!‹ and laughed.

Then someone said: ›The one from before was just here again.‹

›Really?‹

In most of the texts since his Techno phase, the appropriate understanding of the writing process would be that Goetz rather records than writes his texts.²² Hence, on an aesthetic level the adaptation of Techno entails a new way of writing which can be properly construed as an act of recording.

4. Techno and Politics

According to Goetz, the political dimension of Techno is based around the experience of happiness, the experience of being part of a mass and the attempt to write about it adequately. In *Celebration*, a collection of interviews and journalistic texts, Goetz has to defend his political idea against the criticism of Isabelle Graw and Astrid Weigel, the editors of the magazine *Texte zur Kunst*. Subject of their discussion is an article Goetz had written for the newspaper supplement of the weekly paper *DIE ZEIT*. In the article, which is captioned "HARD TIMES, BIG FUN. Das Kapital des Glücks und seine Politik," (The capital of happiness and its politics) Goetz on the one hand tries to describe the experience of being at the Loveparade, and on the other tries to outline his perception of the politics of Techno.

Sie nannten es: Techno.

Diese Geschichte wurde oft erzählt, und es war immer eine andere. Es war immer die Geschichte der letzten, gerade erlebten Nacht. In unendlicher Variation wurde ein ums andere mal neu mit Worten dem irgendwie unfaßbar Erlebten hinterher geredet. [...]

Jede Nacht ging es auf genau diese Art irgendwie um alles, nicht zuletzt um Auslöschung. Auslöschung von Erinnerung, Bewußtsein, Reflexion, Vernichtung von Geschichte.²³

In this passage one finds, again, the already known problem of capturing what was "just experienced." The snap-shot quality of the experience leads to the effacement of memory, consciousness (because it is focused on the body as the medium of the experience), history. All is reduced, or better, condensed to the moment and to the body which experiences this moment. Herein lies the difficulty of writing about this specific experience which derives out of the difficulty to translate a body experience into language, or at least into conventional journalistic writing.

And I said to Hardy: ›Even the –‹

›Hey!‹

›How?‹

›Fine.‹

Max said: ›Fine, fine, fine.‹

And instantly I repeated: ›Fine, fine, fine.‹

Cheerfulness, laughter, and so on, and so on." [transl. KF].

²² Appropriately one of the volumes of Goetz's next project *Schlucht* is captioned *loslabern*, which could be translated as babbling or blabbering and has the paratext "Bericht" (report).

²³ Rainald Goetz. *Celebration. Texte und Bilder zur Nacht*. Frankfurt 2004, p. 213. "They called it: Techno. This story has often been told, yet it was always a different one. It was always the story of the last night, just experienced. In endless variation one tried repeatedly to get hold of the somehow inconceivable experience with words. [...] In the same way it was somehow every night about everything, not least about extinction. Extinction of memory, consciousness, thinking, annihilation of history." [transl. KF].

If it seems impossible to put techno into words, mainstream media and pop-culture magazines like *SPEX* nevertheless try to do this and, according to Goetz, fail.

Die selbstbezogene, fast autistische Komponente dieser Demonstration der Glückserfahrung war vielleicht, weil so irritierend, mit ein Kern-Politikum. Und das hochnervöse ›Neu‹-Organ, das die Realität dauernd fahrig suchend durchzuckt, meldete sofort: He, was ist da los?

Gerade, weil die Aktivisten selbst es nicht so genau wußten, schon gar nicht sagen konnten, entstand im Nu ein hochstereotypes Medien-Mantra: wie verrückt die Leute ausschauen, wie lange sie tanzen, wie laut und dumpf die Musik wäre.²⁴

Because Techno resists the usual analytical categories and defies description as well as definition, most people in the media reduced it to the unconventional clothing-style and the loudness and simplicity of the music. For Goetz, however, it is not only this element of resistance that makes it political, it is precisely the openness of the event to everyone that makes it possible to understand it as an egalitarian utopia.

Ironically the vision of equality is the result of the commercialization or vulgarization of techno. In the beginning only the usual night-life people took part in techno, but now, Goetz states, everyone could join: the unhappy creatures, the mass of simple-minded, and the broken and dumb people. The reason for this lies in the permanent availability of techno. In the beginning focused on a group of insiders who knew the rules and codes and thereby could function as filters, techno became a commercial commodity which everyone could buy or at least listen to on the radio:

Das Schöne dabei: gute Ideen, die man kaufen kann. Keiner muß denen beitreten, nirgendwo muß man sich ausweisen, der Zutritt wird nicht über Exklusiv-Mitgliedschaft vergeben und verwehrt.

Man dreht einfach das Radio auf.

Das sind für mich glückliche Momente für, ich wiederhole, die Demokratie.²⁵

Goetz concludes his thoughts on Techno with a comparison to art in general. As I have pointed out, strangely he agrees with Adorno on the lack of a social function of art and literature. While the early Goetz adapted Punk to attack certain institutions and ideas, his adaptation of Techno wants to articulate the possibility of changing the world.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 214. "The self-involved, almost autistic component of this demonstration experiencing joy was maybe, because it was so irritating, a core political issue. [...] Because the activists themselves didn't really know, let alone couldn't talk about it, a highly stereotypical media-mantra arose: how crazy the people look, for how long they dance, how loud and dull the music is." [transl. KF].

²⁵ Ibid., p. 233. "The beauty is: good ideas one can buy. Nobody has to join them, nowhere one has to identify oneself, access is not granted or denied by exclusive membership. Just turn on the radio. These are happy moments for me, and, I repeat, for democracy." [transl. KF].

So ist insgesamt durch Dance geschehen, wovon Kunst, seit es sie gibt, träumt: mitzuwirken daran, daß es eine neue Welt gibt, die – und sei es nur ein Mikrobißchen – besser ist als die, die war.²⁶

Based on the assumption about the world-changing ability of Techno, Westbam and Rainald Goetz even outline “Prolegomena zu einer Theorie des real existierenden Prollismus” (Prolegomena to a Theory of real existing Prolism) based on the idea of societal happiness and the complete immersion of the individual in a dancing mass. And although it sounds silly and ironic, they were serious.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 235. So, in general Dance made it happen, what was dreamt of by art since it was invented: creating a new world which is, even just for a little bit, better than before.” [transl. KF].

Solvejg Nitzke (Dresden)

The Adaptation of Disaster:

Representations of Environmental Crises in Climate Change Fiction

In light of climate change, the attempt to overcome the gap between the ‘Two Cultures’ appears more urgent than ever. With climate change being only one of the environmental crises marking the so-called Anthropocene, knowledge production and representations are constantly challenged. The very reason that led to the idea of proclaiming a new geological epoch can be taken as evidence for the collapse of the Cartesian dichotomy between nature and culture. The Anthropocene marks an epoch in Earth’s history in which the human species has become a geological force.¹ That is, the effects of industrialized civilization are now forming geological strata that irreversibly change the face of the planet and its future. However, if nature and culture cannot be meaningfully distinguished anymore, how, one might ask, is a divide within academia still of concern? Would it not naturally perish with the insight that what has been regarded as nature has now been thoroughly pervaded by remnants of human actions? To the contrary, the persistence of the gap between the sciences and the humanities is one of the main reasons that complicates the representation and, ultimately, hinders the understanding of the problems which characterize the new epoch. Inability or unwillingness to change behavior on a collective level will most probably lead to environmental, political and social disaster on an unprecedented scale.

What we are looking at can thus be described as a failure to adapt. Adaptation is a central aspect in the current debate since it both refers to the ability (of an individual or a species) to adapt to a set of circumstances and the practice of inter-medial adaptation. In this paper, I will argue that adaptation of climate change, that is, the (fictional) representation of environmental crises, is crucial in understanding the failure to adapt in ‘real’ life. By analyzing examples of so-called Climate Fiction (Cli-Fi), I will explore the relation of scientific fact and fiction with regards to Global Warming by means of looking at processes of adaptation. Hence this paper focuses on texts in which climate change is represented in regards to its establishment as knowledge and to the consequences that are derived from this knowledge (or not). Michael Crichton’s *State of Fear* (2004) and Roland Emmerich’s *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), while featuring opposing views toward

¹ The Working Group on the Anthropocene has presented its proposal to declare the time from 1950 onward “Anthropocene” on the International Geological Congress. While the official acceptance and thus naming of the geological epoch might take several years, it is already remarkably fast in comparison to historic decisions about the designation of an epoch, pointing to the political weight the decision is expected to carry. See for example: Damian Carrington. “The Anthropocene Epoch: Scientists Declare Dawn of Human-Influenced Age” 29 May 2016 *The Guardian*, www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/aug/29/declare-anthropocene-epoch-experts-urge-geological-congress-human-impact-earth.

the “truth” of anthropogenic Climate Change serve as striking inquiries into the formation of scientific fact, which, as both strikingly show, depends both on the ability of (a) scientist(s) to perform the necessary research as on its representation to the public. In my analysis I will parallel the depictions with the discussion of ‘scientific accuracy’ and legitimization of a fictional representation as scientifically valid. While Crichton and Emmerich focus on the ‘reality’ or ‘truth’ of Global Warming in a manner of life-and-death, *Solar* by Ian McEwan (2010) and *Freedom* by Johnathan Franzen (2010) depict their protagonists’ relationship to climate change and environmental crises in a very different manner. The denial of a straightforward stance towards activism and allowing for the possibility that life does go on as usual is not to be confused as a denial of climate change. Rather, as I will show, they must be read as expressions of the contradictions and incompatibilities of scales characteristic of the Anthropocene.

Analyzing Climate-Fiction requires, as Drexler and Johns-Putra have argued, a re-evaluation of literary scholarships bias toward the ‘literary’.² Instead, focusing solely on those texts that might be deemed ‘literary’ reproduces, as I will show, the Two-Cultures-Debate in the same manner as judging a text by its perceived ‘scientific accuracy’. Consequently, where Crichton and Emmerich were criticized for exaggeration, Franzen and McEwan were called out for not offering a stance. By regarding adaptation as a negotiating practice that is part of knowledge production *and* representation, this paper aims to revisit expectations and bias on both sides and to point out that neither science nor fiction is entirely determined by scientists or literary scholars.

1. Adaptation and the “Two Cultures”

In his 1959 Rede Lecture, C.P. Snow famously identified the sciences and the humanities as two different cultures which not only entertain a strong sense of belonging, but use completely different languages (Snow 1961: 4).³ When Snow declared this “polarisation” to be “a sheer loss to us all” (12), he based this verdict on the promises the industrial, or rather, “the scientific revolution” (30) held for him. A broad education could, according to Snow, not only bridge the gap between the Two Cultures, but also between the rich and the poor and thus ensure social justice. The ignorance of “productive industry” (33) Snow detects in literary intellectuals and “pure” scientists, threatens development in a very broad sense: “For, of course, one truth is straight-forward. Industrialisation is the only hope for the poor” (27).

² Adam Trexler, Adeline Johns-Putra. “Climate Change in Literature and Literary Criticism”. In: Royal Meteorological Society/ Wiley *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, 2 (2) 2011, pp. 185-200; p. 186.

³ C. P. Snow, C.P. *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*. New York 1961, p. 4.

For an overview of the Two-Cultures-Debate see: Daniel Cordle. *Postmodern Postures. Literature, Science and the Two Cultures Debate*. Aldershot 1999.

More than fifty years after his lecture, Snow's claims have a very different ring to them. While development and progress are still hailed as a patent solution to many problems by politicians and industrialists, the environmental movement has called attention to the devastating effects of industrialization, especially on the poor. Although Snow's sturdy optimism toward the positive consequences of industrialization as well as the steadfastness of scientific facts has turned sour in many ways, the problems of, in Snow's term, intercultural communication are still prevalent.⁴ While the products of industrialization form a material and cultural reality that threatens the continuation of lifestyles and life itself on a global scale, the integration of scientific fact into cultural consciousness constitutes a problem with potentially fatal consequences. What Snow describes as ignorance resulting in an utter lack of understanding is, indeed, a much more complex problem involving not only Two Cultures, but several interests, ideologies concerning humans and non-humans alike.

Until the 18th century, the concept of climate was thought of as a spatial category, i.e. climate was a property of a place or region that expressed itself in local flora and fauna as well as in the shape and character of local peoples.⁵ Meteorological and climatological research especially during the 19th century changed the perception of climate by introducing a scientific perspective. While the category did not lose its spatial component entirely, today climate is thought of primarily as "the history of weather – the average state of the atmosphere over periods of years, decades, centuries, and more."⁶ Climate became an abstract category only through the accessibility of massive amounts of data and statistics, which revealed its ability to change on a global scale. Hence, the evolution of the concept of climate from a (mostly) static and spatial to a dynamic and temporal category goes along with a profound extension of the spatial and temporal frame from a human to a cosmic scale.⁷ In effect, climate appears to defy experience as well as representation in a traditional sense. Mathematical computerized climate models only intensify the problem, since they seem to render the representation of climate (change) as an exclusively scientific endeavor.⁸

The problem at hand is a problem of adaptation. Climate change in particular poses a twofold challenge in regards to adaptation as, on the one hand, the term refers to the necessity of adaptation *to* climate change, i.e. to a change of material conditions in response to climate change, and, on the other, of the adaptation *of* climate change, i.e. as the topic of a fictional text. The neat division between the adaptation *to* and the adaptation *of* is itself a heuristic tool to analyze attempts of representing current and future environmental crises, which "chal-

⁴ See for example Bruno Latours recapitulation of scientist's impression that Science Studies are aimed at destroying science's ability to talk about facts (Bruno Latour. *Pandora's Hope. Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*. Harvard 1999).

⁵ See for example: Lucian Boia. *The Weather in the Imagination*. London 2005.

⁶ Paul Edwards. *A Vast Machine. Computer Models, Climate Data and the Politics of Global Warming*. Cambridge, MA 2010, p. xiv.

⁷ Cf. Timothy Clark. "Scale." In: Tom Cohen (ed.): *Telemorphosis. Theory in the Era of Climate Change*, (Critical climate change, 1) Ann Arbor 2012, p. 148–166.

⁸ See Edwards, who aims to show "how we came to know what we know about climate — how we make climate knowledge" (Edwards. *A Vast Machine*, p. xiv).

lenge [the] basic assumptions that have underpinned the modern world.”⁹ In this paper, I aim to analyze how notions and practices of adaptation in both senses feature in discourses on climate change. During this endeavor, the heuristic distinction between adaptation *of* and adaptation *to* climate change serves as an orientation for the argument but is ultimately to be deconstructed.

The current crises complicate Snow’s opposition in many respects. As “Hyperobjects”, “things that are massively distributed in time and space relative to humans”¹⁰, they cause an aesthetic (i.e. perceptual and representational) paradox: While their spatial and temporal scope exceed human scales by far, they nevertheless bring their anthropogenic causes into view. In a way they reveal an entirely new, anthropogenic, nature. At the same time, the agency of the non-human becomes undeniable, as the unintended consequences of two centuries of industrialization come into view. Thus, as storms, cars, CO₂ levels, radiation, and weather events gain agency, the anthropocentric organization of the world is merely a phenomenon of the past. This is reflected in an enormous increase of scholarship dealing with questions regarding the dissolution of categorical oppositions in the face of (post-)modern development over the last two decades: above all the dichotomy of nature and culture is called into question. Instead, several concepts have emerged which describe the relationship as a network, assemblage, or mesh of human and non-human actors.¹¹ Nevertheless, especially with regards to the cultural representation of science and scientific knowledge, the structure of the conversation remains surprisingly oppositional. For example, when it comes to the ‘scientific accuracy’ of fiction. Whereas this seems to be an example of successful intercultural and interdisciplinary collaboration, a closer look shows that the primarily promotional interest in a scientist’s validation of a work of fiction’s ‘accuracy’ affects our understanding despite being primarily financially motivated.

2. Climate between Science and Fiction

The attribution of ‘scientific accuracy’ is a common tool to promote works of fiction as legitimate representations of reality, or at least very probable versions of it. Unlike (literary) realism however, the relation to the outside world is not only determined by a common set of laws which render the representation plausible and familiar to an audience, but depends on outside validation. In the attempt to legitimize a work of fiction as (partially) ‘real,’ the claim to ‘scientific accuracy’ does more than enhance the pleasure or thrill to read or watch a work of fiction. Rather, it causes a shift in the relation of science and fiction by valuing the supposed truthfulness of the (scientific) content over inherently narrative qualities.

⁹ Serenella Iovino, Serpil Oppermann (eds.). *Material Ecocriticism*. Bloomington 2014, p. 2.

¹⁰ Timothy Morton. *Hyperobjects. Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*. Minneapolis 2013, p. 1.

¹¹ Cf. The instructive introduction of *Material Ecocriticism* as well as Serpil Oppermann’s article “From Ecological Postmodernism to Material Ecocriticism” in the same collection.

However, besides the perception of the fictional work at hand, the claim also affects the understanding of scientific facts. Asserting ‘scientific accuracy’ suggests that a scientific fact can be adapted interdisciplinarily without being compromised. In this inherently modern view, the scientific fact is regarded as an autonomous entity without history. While this view of science as the institutionalized uncovering of an unchangeable reality might still prevail, looking at the intersection of science and fiction through the lens of adaptation, adds to an understanding of scientific fact as the result of practices of inscription or translation.¹² Following Latour, then, one could say that scientific fact is already in itself the result of processes of adaptation. In consequence, fictional adaptations of science are not to be understood as a transformation or change of an original ‘fact,’ but as another translation in the chain of inscriptions leading from a thing or observation to the scientific fact and fictional adaptation respectively. Although this point cannot be further investigated within the scope of this paper, it should be noted that from this perspective science studies and adaptation studies are not only very closely related but could furthermore profit from each other.¹³

With regards to the relation between science and fiction, adaptation is to be understood as an ongoing process of negotiation rather than a method to transport something from one medium or discipline to another. Although its institutional organization might suggest otherwise, ‘science’ cannot serve as a fixed source-text. Hence, fidelity to ‘science’ can neither be measured nor validated by scientists. The resulting adaptations can therefore not be judged in regards to their ‘truthfulness’ either. Put differently, when it comes to science (and) fiction “the goal for science consultants is to let filmmakers negotiate scientific accuracy within their own context of narrative, genre, and audience” (Kirby 2011: 8). In fact, adaptations of science (facts, practices, perspectives) make for ideal vantage points to analyze networks of commercial interests, politics, epistemology, material agents, and emotional response.

Climate-Fiction (Cli-Fi) makes such an approach necessary at the same time as it proves its validity. Almost no other topic forms as strong an example as climate change to prove that there is no ‘neutral’ adaptation. The ‘nature’ of climate change discourse requires obvious choices in positioning the text/work with regard to its politics, particularly its stance towards the ability of complex scientific models to predict a future, and its attitude towards human responsibility for environmental crises. Viewing adaptations as both “products and producers of cul-

¹² Cf. Bruno Latour. “Drawing Things Together”. In: Michael Lynch, Steve Woolgar (eds.). *Representation in Scientific Practice*. Cambridge, Mass. 1990, pp. 19-68; Bruno Latour. *Pandora’s Hope. Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*. Harvard 1999.

¹³ This becomes evident for example in Kamilla Elliott. “The Adaptation of Adaptation: A Dialogue between the Arts and Sciences.” In: Pascal Nicklas, Oliver Lindner. *Adaptation and Cultural Appropriation*. Berlin 2012, pp. 145-161. Elliott investigates the interrelations of adaptation theories as “A Dialogue between the Arts and Sciences.” Julie Sanders’s suggestion to “think [of adaptation] in terms of complex processes of filtration, and in terms of intertextual webs or signifying fields, rather than simplistic one-way lines of influence from source to adaptation” also has a very Latourian ring to it (Julie Sanders. *Adaptation and Appropriation*. New York 2006, p. 24).

tures and political ideologies”¹⁴ in no way defies scientific evidence for anthropogenic climate change (or any scientific theory, result, or prediction for that matter). Focusing on the historicity of scientific fact, their ‘fabrication’ as it were, instead of their unmediated existence is the opposite of claiming that they are untrue.

I will demonstrate this point by briefly looking at Roland Emmerich’s film *The Day After Tomorrow* and Michael Crichton’s novel *State of Fear*. Emmerich’s disaster movie portrays a completely exaggerated scenario in which denial and inaction lead to “rapid climate” change that causes the whole northern hemisphere to freeze over within a matter of days. *State of Fear* on the other hand is (in)famous for its conspiracy theory that climate change is a scheme fabricated for its profitability. Both works claim ‘scientific accuracy’ through a combination of the intradiegetic representation of scientific discourse, a paratextual frame, and the ensuing debates respectively. Crichton’s text is particularly interesting in this regard because it paradoxically denies the need of outside validation by integrating it. In his “Author’s message”¹⁵ at the end of the book, Crichton puts himself in the position of the outside expert asserting the claims of the novel. By means of bullet points, he sketches out his road to becoming a sceptic of climate change. In the manner of a true conspiracy theorist he transcends scientific reason (and common sense) by alleging hidden agendas behind climate research, ecology, and political calls for action, thereby claiming that instead of anti-climate-change-lobbyists it is the environmental movement that obscures the facts. His concluding point “Everybody has an agenda. Except me”¹⁶ may carry some notion of self-irony, but in light of his claims and his plot, he appears to be adamant about his convictions. Emmerich’s film of the same year, though intended as a warning voice within the debate, is no less suspicious in its dealings with science.¹⁷ While embraced by those who were “hoping the film could do what scientists themselves could not”¹⁸, many researchers (and activists) rejected the “Faustian bargain”¹⁹ that was offered: accepting “flagrant inaccuracies”²⁰ and the gross exaggeration of a marginal hypothesis as a vehicle for the public acceptance of anthropogenic climate change as a reality. However, as David Kirby convincingly argues, it is not the ecological catastrophe that makes a contribution to the debate, but the depiction of the “science/politics interface.”²¹ Like Crichton, Emmerich spends a good deal of effort (and screen-time) on the adaptation of scientific discourse. Kirby quotes physicist Stephan Rahmstorf from the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, who thinks of the film as “chillingly realistic”²² in regard to its representations of the U.S. government’s response to climate research at the time. While the scenario might be ‘pure’ fiction, the film takes an

¹⁴ Kamilla Elliott. “The Adaptation of Adaptation”, p. 149.

¹⁵ Michael Crichton. *State of Fear*. New York 2004, pp. 569-573.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 573.

¹⁷ David A. Kirby. *Lab Coats in Hollywood*. Cambridge, MA 2011, pp. 177-184.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 184.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 178.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 177.

²¹ Ibid., p. 180.

²² Ibid., p. 183.

opportunity to highlight a central aspect of scientific discourse. Since something may well be regarded as an irrefutable fact within the scientific community, the way in which scientific conclusions are reached and presented often lead to confusion and skepticism among non-scientists, especially those with an interest in doubting the results. While the admission of 'high probability' (as opposed to certainty) or 'scenario' (as opposed to prediction) do not challenge the scientific value of a statement, *The Day After Tomorrow* demonstrates how adherence to the linguistic requirements of scientific accuracy can challenge the believability of a scientist's prediction in the public eye.

When climatologist Jack Hall presents his theory of abrupt climate change in the geological past and its indication for the current environmental crisis to policy makers, two questions from the audience stand in for a problem of communication that ultimately, as the film suggests, causes the cataclysmic events to unfold. The first question, as to the specific date when an event such as Hall is describing might occur in the future, forces the climatologist to 'admit' that he does not know, which spurs the vice president of the USA to put further pressure on the scientist, asking him about the cost and posing the question: "Who is going to pay the price?" Confronted with this all too familiar argument in climate debates, Hall's return – the price of not to react now would be much higher – echoes the frustration of many scientists and environmentalists. Nevertheless, he manages to get the last word in the scene, when he counters the vice president's accusation of putting forth "sensationalist claims" with the almost arrogant reply that an iceberg the size of Rhode Island breaking off the Antarctic ice-sheet seems pretty sensational to him. What is striking about this and other scenes at the interface of science and politics is, again, not the validation it might receive from 'actual' scientists, but the precision with which the movie, despite being a prime example for a Hollywood-blockbuster, maps the confrontation of two different discourses. The inability or unwillingness of the politician to interpret Hall's limitations regarding the prognostic capacity of his model, i.e. his reluctance to give a specific date despite his call for immediate preventive steps, is neither just a moral or intellectual shortcoming of the vice president, nor is it solely a dramatic necessity within the movie. It is a cultural misunderstanding. That Hall resists doomsday-prophecy in order to stay true to the facts proves to be a disadvantage within the political discourse. What signifies scientific truthfulness for the scientist, sounds like an acknowledgement of fundamental uncertainty to the skeptical politicians.

Instead of simply presenting a (political) counterpart to *State of Fear* by claiming a privileged access to reality for scientists, *The Day After Tomorrow* actually manages to contextualize the significance of the aforementioned encounter between scientists and politicians. The "fabrication" of facts, while certainly a rich source for conspiracy theorists (such as Michael Crichton), here, is represented as a dynamic practice of the production and application of knowledge. What Hall and his fellows present is characterized as a work in progress dependent on a global network of scientists and scientific instruments. However, the movie is surprisingly aware of the challenges that such a network presents with regards to the interaction between disciplines, between colleagues, and between humans and non-humans: Hall's reaction to a colleague's compliment on his talk – "That's

what we're here for. Put on a good show." – reveal the, albeit frustrating, recognition of the communicational barrier between the two discourses. At the same time, while the audience already expects the catastrophe to hit, the scientists take the first evidence for the disruption of the North Atlantic current as a technological malfunction. Hall, too, needs to be convinced of the sudden relevance of his model, which "is a reconstruction of a prehistoric climate shift. It's not a forecast model." The movie dramatizes the unfolding scenario by extending the scientist's surprise to meteorological services, weather channel presenters, observational instruments, and finally the city of Los Angeles being literally hit by the unprecedented climate change.

Despite exaggerated scale of the catastrophe in the movie, the scenario is embedded in a discussion of the adaptation of knowledge. Even when tornadoes destroy Los Angeles the discussion in the ensuing NDAA (National Defence Authorization Act) meeting revolves around hierarchies and what is believed to be possible. The meeting in which scientists and military personnel come together to decide on a course of action (and are authorized to implement it) functions complementary to the climate change conference. Once Hall's hypothesis proved to be accurate – although, ironically, he did get the time-frame wrong – he is now able to directly influence decisions on how to proceed. While the results from a 48-hour adjustment to the computer models by four scientists (in itself a *very* rapid change) does still not serve to convince the vice president, it stands in for the struggle to catch up with reality. The potential cost of inaction is immediately actualized when a Tsunami floods Manhattan and freezes over in a manner of hours. The blizzards, as Hall predicted in his new model, cover the entire Northern Hemisphere with ice. The spectacular images enforce above all the instant adaptation to a completely new, though not unprecedented, environment.²³

Suddenly, modern civilization (from "1,500 \$-waterproof coats" to cell phones and shopping malls) is rendered useless or even dangerous and survival depends on very basic skills and knowledge. While this sets the stage for very stereotypical heroism within the movie, it is nonetheless not to be dismissed too easily, since it raises questions about what one considers 'basic' knowledge and how much of the (physical) adaptation to climate change a society thrusts upon individuals, how many people it is willing to abandon, and which parts of culture (and Culture) it deems necessary.²⁴ The ultimate legitimization of Hall's predictions, however, takes a personal sacrifice: the government is finally convinced to take action. Hall suggests evacuating only the southern half of the U.S., because it is too late to help those in the north, while knowing that his son is in Manhattan.

²³ Immediately before the extent of the storm is confirmed, Hall's son and a group of friends visit the Natural History Museum in New York City where a mammoth exhibition anticipates the coming events.

²⁴ In this respect, the burning of books in the New York Public Library for warmth on the one hand, and the closing of the Mexican border to US-American refugees on the other provide stunning examples (cf. Solvejg Nitzke. "Is there an End to it? Fictional Shelters and Shelter-fiction." In: Angela Krewani, Karen Ritzenhoff (eds.). *The Apocalypse in Film. Dystopias, Disasters, and Other Visions about the End of the World*. Lanham 2015, pp. 79–90.

If it takes not only a “superstorm” but a scientist practically sacrificing his own son to convince politicians of the necessity to change course, the movie indeed presents an apocalyptic outlook on the possibility of successful exchange between science and politics. Nevertheless, *The Day After Tomorrow* succeeds in making the negotiation of fact and fiction a structural and a topical aspect of the story by confronting the adaptation of climate change with the struggle of its characters to adapt to the rapidly changing conditions. Whether or not the “film could do what scientists themselves could not”²⁵ remains questionable, however. In comparison to Crichton’s novel, the disaster movie suffers from the credibility issues it addresses. That is, it stages a scientific scenario which fails to convince the (especially scientifically educated) audience of its accuracy. In a final adaptation – this time of an image and connected discourse –, the movie ends with a shot of earth seen from space – the familiar icon of the environmental movement in the “new Ice Age” but, as an astronaut comments, seen through an atmosphere that has “never [been] so clear.” In this image and its cultural connection to claims such as atmospheric scientist James Lovelock’s Gaia theory, in which earth/Gaia will reinstate the balance of the earth-system,²⁶ and the protagonist’s prediction that humanity (and civilization) will survive, the cataclysmic potential of the movie is contained. The stunning images of a frozen earth, although they are meant to convey the sense of an imminent catastrophe that many environmentalists share, appears to tilt the science to fiction relation heavily in favor of the latter. It could even be read to justify “nature’s destructive forces” as a necessary and ultimately welcomed consequence to humanity’s inaction.²⁷ The speech of the reformed ex-vice president, thus, refers to a strange world.

At the core of Crichton’s and Emmerich’s Cli-Fi lies a gesture of revelation which rests on the assumption that ‘behind’ (public) climate science there is a truth to be discovered that is not or cannot be appropriately/properly mediated by the scientists themselves. The revelatory gesture in both *State of Fear* and *The Day After Tomorrow* paradoxically reinforces the gap between the ‘Two Cultures’ by oversimplifying the science underlying the study of earth’s climate. *State of Fear* grounds its skepticism toward climate change in a (false) dichotomy between ‘sound science’ (i.e. data, visible changes, etc.) and scientific modeling that widely underestimates the complexity and reach of scientific models as well as the effectiveness of peer-review systems.²⁸ Whereas Crichton doubts the validity of scientific models with regard to climate change altogether, Emmerich’s attempt to illustrate the consequences of Global Warming takes ‘rapid’ climate change all too literally by piling on disastrous weather events. Despite their opposing attitudes regarding anthropogenic climate change, both stories implicitly react to a

²⁵ David. A. Kirby. *Lab Coats in Hollywood*, p. 184.

²⁶ It should be noted that Lovelock’s theory assumes that Gaia will burn “the human plague” off the face of the Earth if necessary (cf. James E. Lovelock. *The Revenge of Gaia: Earth’s Climate in Crisis and the Fate of Humanity*. New York 2006).

²⁷ It is this conclusion, where Emmerich’s movie strongly resembles a ‘secular apocalypse’, outsourcing the definitive action to a ‘higher’ entity (Nature). See also Greg Garrard. *Ecocriticism*. New York 2012, pp. 97-101.

²⁸ On the false dichotomy of “data vs. models” in climate science as well as “citizen science” see: Edwards xviii-xix.

skeptical perspective towards man-made climate change by either confirming suspicions or drowning them in cataclysmic imagery. What may seem a marginal similarity at first, proves to be a decisive factor in distinguishing adaptations of climate change. Without the (imagined) materiality of the conspiracy-plot or the disaster that looms behind the scientific discourse on climate change neither representation could reach a conclusion, thus, both suggest that there is a discrepancy between the perception of climate change discourse and the 'actual' climate that can only be bridged by adding materiality, even if it is only an imagined materiality. Climate change, however, is a "catastrophe without event."²⁹ While public renderings of climate change often legitimize their proposed plan by illustrating climate change by means of a series of disasters of different scale, climate change cannot be subsumed by any one single event or symbol such as 'the bomb' within the framework of Nuclear Winter.³⁰ In this respect both examples fail to adapt climate change since they either deny its existence because it is not directly perceptible or seek refuge in an attribution of weather extremes to climate change.³¹ This is by no means a scientific but rather a moral endeavor that is not interested in observations but in (rather sensationalist) attempts to put the blame on individuals.

3. Non-Catastrophic Climate Plots

The desire to establish causes to daily weather events is far older than the current debate on anthropogenic climate change. "When weather 'misbehaves', or delivers meteorological devastation through windstorm, torrent, blizzard, drought or intense heat, the psychological need to attach blame to such events becomes overwhelming."³² In recent decades, climate change has evolved from a descriptive category of past shifts of climatic conditions to "an independent causative agent."³³ This opens up room for a complex debate on responsibility and liability, even if it can hardly ever be attached to an individual weather event, however disastrous its consequences.

Being able to finally prove a theory right or being able to adapt it according to an unfolding series of events must remain a phantasy that ignores both the complexity of climate modeling and the time-scale and randomness with which individual weather events occur. As a result, the attribution of blame and the attempt to compensate those who suffer the consequences is extremely difficult. Yet, while the difficulties to unambiguously identify cause and effect does not – as Crichton's plot suggests – prove wrong the anthropogenic nature of the current climate change, it poses intricate challenges to the adaptation of knowledge. The

²⁹ Eva Horn. *Zukunft als Katastrophe*. Frankfurt 2014, pp. 112-113.

³⁰ Cf. Matthias Dörries. "The Politics of Atmospheric Sciences: "Nuclear Winter" and Global Climate Change." In: *Osiris*, Vol. 26, No. 1, Klima (2011), pp. 198-223

³¹ Cf. Mike Hulme. "Attributing Weather Extremes to 'Climate Change': A Review." In: *Progress in Physical Geography* 38 (4), pp. 499-511.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 499.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 500.

representational problem, thus, gains political traction since, as Rob Nixon argues, not only the changes in climate itself are invisible, but so are those already suffering from the consequences. In order to ensure the answerability of those responsible for current environmental crises, rather than presenting them as a series of catastrophic events, they must be reconsidered in terms of “slow violence [...] a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all.”³⁴ Framing the effects of climate change as “slow violence” is a way of emphasizing the unequal distribution of power rather than individual liability, and, more importantly in this context, it accepts that there is no “event” to hold on to. The attempt to “plot and give figurative shape to formless threats”³⁵ in order to “keep front and center the representational challenges and imaginative dilemmas posed not just by imperceptible violence but by imperceptible change whereby violence is decoupled from its original causes by the workings of time”³⁶ acknowledges and reacts to what Timothy Clark describes as “derangement of scale.”³⁷ This is crucial, because it points to the difficulties of adaptation not only between but also within discourses. That is, it is not (only) a matter of different cultures of knowledge and representation but a more general perceptual problem of “scale effects”:

Scale effects in relation to climate change are confusing because they take the easy, daily equations of moral and political accounting and drop into them both a zero and an infinity: the greater the number of people engaged in modern forms of consumption then the less the relative influence or responsibility of each but the worse the cumulative impact of their insignificance. As a result of scale effects what is self-evident or rational at one scale may well be destructive or unjust at another. Hence, progressive social and economic policies designed to disseminate Western levels of prosperity may even resemble, on another scale, an insane plan to destroy the biosphere. Yet, for any individual household, motorist, etc., a scale effect in their actions is invisible. It is not present in any phenomenon in itself (no eidetic reduction will flush it out), but only in the contingency of how many other such phenomena there are, have been and will be, at even vast distances in space or time. Human agency becomes, as it were, displaced from within by its own act, a kind of demonic iterability.³⁸

³⁴ Rob Nixon. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge (Mass.) and London (UK) 2011, p. 2.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 10.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 11.

³⁷ Timothy Clark. “Scale”, p. 158. “One symptom of a now widespread crisis of scale is a derangement of linguistic and intellectual proportion in the way people often talk about the environment, a breakdown of ‘decorum’ in the strict sense. Thus a sentence about the possible collapse of civilization can end, no less solemnly, with the injunction never to fill the kettle more than necessary when making tea. A poster in many workplaces depicts the whole earth as giant thermostat dial, with the absurd but intelligible caption ‘You control climate change.’ A motorist buying a slightly less destructive make of car is now ‘saving the planet’” (ibid., pp. 150-151).

³⁸ Ibid., p. 150.

This is a problem that confronts the representational problem of climate change as a “catastrophe without event” on a day-to-day basis. And the crucial thing in the present context is that the problem of scale effects pervades the ‘Two Cultures.’

Ian McEwan’s novel *Solar* sets the stage for an investigation both of the interaction between the Two Cultures and between scientists and a general public by choosing a scientist for a sceptical protagonist.

In contrast to most other novels ostensibly treating ecological crisis, McEwan’s novel does not stage a dystopian future or develop an apocalyptic ecological scenario that culminates in a gigantic collective disaster. Thus, there is neither a climax of delightful horror at the sight of extreme natural events, nor a personified nature taking revenge against humanity.³⁹

Hence, *Solar*’s adaptation of climate change provides a categorically different constellation of discourses, characters, moral and ethical considerations than a disaster- or conspiracy-focused narrative. Since it refuses to qualify the actions of its characters by means of catastrophe, it is at liberty to play with genre conventions and reader expectations. Michael Beard is the opposite of the dedicated hero-scientist Jack Hall from *The Day After Tomorrow*. Stealing the intellectual property of his post-doc research colleague to profit from the increasing awareness of climate change is only one of the occasions in which the novel suggests that scientific and personal integrity are closely related but not always distinguishable from the outside.

As Evi Zemanek points out, McEwan was expecting severe criticism for presenting a character, and a scientist at that, who could not care less about the impact his actions have on anyone but himself.⁴⁰ Tough morally repugnant or, indeed, because of it, Beard proves to be quite adaptable to the public discourse of climate change. His reputation as a Nobel Prize laureate allows for a relatively lush lifestyle while requiring only a minimum of actual scientific work.

One thing was certain: two decades had passed since he last sat down in silence and solitude for hours on end, pencil and pad in hand, to do some thinking, to have an original hypothesis, play with it, pursue it, tease it into life. The occasion never arose – no, that was a weak excuse. He lacked the will, the material, he lacked the spark. He had no new ideas.⁴¹

Not only do his views of climate change resemble those voices in *State of Fear* which claim that climate change is based on a PR-act rather than on sound science⁴², his behavior seems to prove them right. Although not “wholly skeptical about climate change,” Beard mistrusts the entanglement of apocalyptic narrative and climate science:

³⁹ Evi Zemanek. “A Dirty Hero’s Fight for Clean Energy: Satire, Allegory, and Risk Narrative in Ian McEwan’s *Solar*.” In: *Ecozon@ 3* (1) 2012, pp. 51-60; p. 51.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 51.

⁴¹ Ian McEwan. *Solar*. London 2010, pp. 15-15.

⁴² Cf. Evi Zemanek. “A Dirty Hero’s Fight”, p. 53.

he was unimpressed by some of the wild commentary that suggested the world was in 'peril,' that humankind was drifting towards calamity, when coastal cities would disappear under the waves, crops fail, and hundreds of millions of refugees surge from one country, one continent, to another, driven by drought, floods, famine, tempests, unceasing wars for diminishing resources. There was an Old Testament ring to the forewarnings, an air of plague-of-boils and deluge-of-frogs, that suggested a deep and constant inclination, enacted over the centuries, to believe that one was always living at the end of the days [...]. The end of the world was never pitched in the present, where it could be seen for the fantasy it was, but just around the corner, and when it did not happen, a new issue, a new date would soon emerge.⁴³

Taken independently, this quote could find approval both from scientists⁴⁴ and environmentalists, who fear that catastrophism hinders action rather than enabling it.⁴⁵ This, however would mistake Beard's attitude, for his dismissal of apocalyptic rhetoric does not lead to a more considerate way of discourse but justifies his own ignorance of the matter, since "he himself had other things to think about".⁴⁶ Analogous to the way he lives of a reputation he built decades ago, Beard adapts a progressive attitude toward climate change not because he is convinced the current warming is anthropogenic (or because he is even interested in this question) but because he profits from being labelled a 'climate change activist'.

Again, the depiction of the interface between scientific, political, and artistic discourses presents the communication of scientific fact as a process of negotiation.⁴⁷ In this instance the "show," as Hall rather regretfully comments, scientists are expected to put on, is the determining factor of Beard's career and, as one might argue, his life. Those parts of the novel which deal with climate change most directly do so by observing Beard in his struggle to keep up appearances. Interestingly, despite his own attitude Beard is met with almost no skepticism. Neither on the expedition to the Arctic, nor during a compelling speech to pen-

⁴³ Ian McEwan. *Solar*, pp. 15-16.

⁴⁴ See the above-mentioned caution against the "Faustian bargain" offered by movies such as *The Day After Tomorrow* (David A. Kirby. *Lab Coats in Hollywood*, p. 178, 191).

⁴⁵ Cf. Garrard. *Ecocriticism*, pp. 113-116.

⁴⁶ Ian McEwan. *Solar*, p. 15. "The Gulf Stream would vanish, Europeans would freeze to death in their beds, the Amazon would be a desert, some continents would catch fire, others would drown, and by 2085 the Arctic summer ice would be gone and the polar bears with it. Beard had heard these predictions before and believed none of them. And if he had, he would not have been alarmed. A childless man at a certain age at the end of his fifth marriage could afford a touch of nihilism" (ibid., p. 75). Cf. Evi Zemanek. "A Dirty Hero's Fight", p. 54.

⁴⁷ And again, the depiction is acclaimed by Stefan Rahmstorf (see Evi Zemanek. "A Dirty Hero's Fight", p. 55 and David A. Kirby. *Lab Coats in Hollywood*, p. 181). The website RealClimate.org on which Rahmstorf published his review of *Solar* would be an interesting subject for further analysis, especially since it claims that "the discussion here is restricted to scientific topics and will not get involved in any political or economic implications of the science" (Stefan Rahmstorf. "Solar." Review. *RealClimate. Climate Science from Climate Scientists*. 4 May 2010. Web. 14 July 2011).

sion-fund managers on the necessity to cure the “sick planet”⁴⁸ is he met with doubt. Instead he is embraced as a voice of reason. From a reader’s perspective, this is somewhat surprising because Beard often behaves, bluntly put, like an idiot. In Spitzbergen, he proves his utter inability to view natural environments as anything else than an inconvenience:

Perhaps he could only have avoided the inevitable if he had accepted one of the other invitations, to the Seychelles or Johannesburg or San Diego, or if, as he thought later with some bitterness, climate change, radical warming above the Arctic Circle, was actually taking place and was not a figment of the activist imagination. For when his business was done, he discovered that his penis had attached itself to the zip of his snowmobile suit, had frozen in hard along its length, the way only living flesh can do on sub-zero metal. [...] He saw Jock Braby on TV proclaim an obituary through a forgiving smile. *He went to see global warming himself*. Nonsense, of course he would survive. But this was it, a life without a penis. How his ex-wives, especially Patrice, would enjoy themselves. But he would tell no one.⁴⁹

Even when faced with his own incompetence, Beard is unable to accept it – instead blaming it on choosing the wrong destination – and even before trying to solve the actual problem, he thinks about his appearance. While this scene, were it a solitary instance, could be interpreted as the somewhat endearing though ridiculous incapacity of a “pure scientist” (Snow) to deal with ‘actual’ nature, *Solar* repeatedly confronts Beard’s supposed brilliance with his unhealthy and at times disgusting corporeality. His most eloquent speech against global warming is, as the reader knows all along, a product of his struggle against nausea and thus becomes “one of the comic highlights in this satire.”⁵⁰ While the audience apparently listens unsuspectingly, “Beard’s nausea intensifies and ends in his vomiting behind the curtain; the hypocrite gets violently sick at his own words. Beard’s speech is staged as mock theatre and is played by an actor knowing his role all too well.”⁵¹ Concluding the novel, Beard, still oblivious to his imminent downfall, orders a meal of “orange-coloured cheese, dipped in batter, rolled in bread-crumbs and salt and deep-fried, with a creamy dip of pale green”⁵² and “four wedges of skinless chicken breast, interleaved with three minute steaks, the whole wrapped in bacon, with a honey and cheese topping, and served with twice-roasted jacket potatoes already impregnated with butter and cream cheese.”⁵³ Beard’s ‘last meal’ is not only a mockery of any health concern a man his age might consider, it displays his attitude, a consumerism that is unconcerned with the future. The question whether the “unfamiliar, swelling sensation” Beard feels in his heart when he sees his daughter at the end of the novel is the heart-attack that is at least implied by his dietary choices or an actual emotional

⁴⁸ Ian McEwan. *Solar*, pp. 148-156.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59 (emphasis in orig.).

⁵⁰ Evi Zemanek. “A Dirty Hero’s Fight”, p. 55.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Ian McEwan. *Solar*, p. 276.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

feeling, is overshadowed by his first (and last) instance of sincere self-doubt: “he doubted as he opened his arms to her that anyone would ever believe him now if he tried to pass it off as love.”⁵⁴

McEwan artfully ridicules Beard as the protagonist of a satire that scrutinizes a certain type of scientist as well as a certain type of man, husband, and lover. Thanks to the many comic and humorous elements, the taking of individual, voluntary, familiar and often trivial risks is apparently quite pleasurable for Beard. But read allegorically with reference to the collective, involuntary and unfamiliar ecological risk, this satirical portrait demonstrates the consequences of inadequate risk perception and disastrous risk management.⁵⁵

Zemanek’s reading of *Solar* as a “risk narrative” takes a first step in the direction of Clark’s demand to “read[...] and reread[...] texts on different scales.”⁵⁶ Michael Beard, in his role as a model consumer and a scientist with a supposedly privileged access to the ‘bigger picture’, serves as a focal point for the confrontation of and contradiction between the personal and the planetary scale.

Looking at Beard’s explicitly egoistic and petty behavior not as isolated incidents but as points in a network that connects individual acts with global consequences reveals the ‘derangement of scales’ (Clark) within the novel and within the discourse on climate change. Although the failure of his career, love-life, and, ultimately, of his own body seem to be the inevitable result of personal lifestyle choices, they become, in Zemanek’s terms, an allegory for a (failed) collective risk assessment. As a final indulgence in an abundance of corporeal pleasure – by far surpassing any satisfaction of needs – Beard’s ‘last meal’ becomes a symbol for a consumerist desire that is apparently incorporated in a way that makes conversion impossible. While the expectation for Beard’s reformation through the adaptation of a healthier, more considerate, and ultimately happier lifestyle forms a subtext, the novel refuses to succumb to self-improvement imperatives. In the same manner, “saving the world”⁵⁷ is anything but a selfless act for Beard. The realization of his inability to do so is, thus, not a grounds for regret or a thing that exceeds his personal ambitions, but the failure of a career move. Still, at no point in the novel, does Beard lose agency. Although his actions follow a pattern that seems at the least hard to escape, they are always the result of personal choice and thus hold at least the possibility to be different. That Beard nevertheless shamelessly chooses to be who he is feels somewhat counterintuitive for a novel dealing, if only in parts, with climate change. The detached narrative perspective that neither condemns nor praises Beard’s choices presents the story as the opposite of a *Bildungsroman*. *Solar* even makes sure to give rise to any notion of a resolution towards the future by killing off its one upright character, thus rejecting the task of educating its readers.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 279.

⁵⁵ Evi Zemanek. “A Dirty Hero’s Fight”, p. 58.

⁵⁶ Timothy Clark. “Scale”, p. 156.

⁵⁷ Ian McEwan. *Solar*, p. 278.

The apparent confusion and even disappointment *Solar* was met with reveal an interesting expectation for Cli-Fi in general and McEwan's novel in particular, that is to provide guidance in the political and social confusion caused by climate change. While the more genre-bound examples discussed above happily oblige to this expectation by delivering a 'message' regarding their stance towards climate change, a non-catastrophic approach apparently opens room for a more complex discussion of the worlds (and lifestyles) that are at stake. Whereas *State of Fear* and *The Day After Tomorrow* thus can be regarded as representations of different sides of a debate, non-catastrophic adaptations elude this classification. Even though Jonathan Franzen's *Freedom* initially appears to present an opposing version of the handling of (knowledge about) climate change as it relates to personal lives from McEwan's *Solar*, my concluding reading of Franzen's novel aims to show that both *Freedom* and *Solar* deal in surprisingly similar ways with the central question of adaptation and the role of literature within climate change discourses.

Apart from a few demographic similarities, Walter Berglund and Michael Beard do not have much more in common than a personal and professional relation to environmental issues, which are, however, overshadowed by their personal lives in both cases. Walter, a family man from Minnesota, and his wife Patty form the center of a large novel revolving around the struggle to reconcile ambitions and ideas about life and relationships with their lived reality. In contrast to *Solar*, *Freedom* does not focus on a single character but is structured by relationships. Hence, an allegorical reading such as the one Zemanek proposes for *Solar* is not possible in the same straightforward manner. Nevertheless, the expectations toward the novel as a plea for environmentalism and ensuing disappointment toward its role in environmental discourse are surprisingly similar. This is grounded largely in Walter's role in nature conservancy and his conviction that global overpopulation is the leading cause for the destruction of natural environments and the ensuing danger to social, political, and personal freedom. However, despite his good intentions, Walter's environmentalism turns out to be a story of utter failure:

According to a long and very unflattering story in the *Times*, Walter had made quite a mess of his professional life out there in the nation's capital. His old neighbors had some difficulties reconciling the quotes about him ('arrogant', 'high-handed', 'ethically compromised') with the generous, smiling, red-faced 3M employee they remembered pedaling his commuter bicycle up Summit Avenue in February snow; it seemed strange that Walter, who was greener than Greenpeace and whose own roots were rural, should be in trouble now for conniving with the coal industry and mistreating country people. Then again, there had always been something not quite right about the Berglunds.⁵⁸

In contrast to Beard, whose immoral and opportunistic attitude secures his success as a promoter (and salesman) of necessary technological adaption to climate change, Walter's genuine concern for the environment seems to cause the exact

⁵⁸ Jonathan Franzen. *Freedom*. New York 2010, p. 3.

opposite. His enthusiastic and well-meaning activism fails as soon as he tries to implement his personal convictions on a larger scale. The opening of the novel establishes an analytical approach to Walter's and his family's lives that is followed through the entire course of the novel. The concluding sentence of the novel's first paragraph sets its course. As it turns out, there is something about the Berglunds that is "not quite right." Hence the novel's analytical approach concerns both the tracing of Walter's professional and personal failures. Moreover, the approach is, as it turns out, literally (psycho-)analytical, since the most revealing part of the novel consists of Patty Berglund's autobiography "Mistakes Were Made" which she has "composed at her therapist's suggestion."⁵⁹

Besides Walter's explicit interest in environmental issues, it is the form, or rather the scope of the novel, that qualifies it as an adaptation of climate change and the perceptual and conceptual transformations it causes respectively: "In a lot of ways, *Freedom* looks more like a 19th century novel than a 21st century one. [Franzen] remains a devotee of the wide shot, the all-embracing, way-we-live-now novel. In that sense he's a throwback, practically a Victorian" (Grossman 2010). It is interesting that Franzen, here, is himself held up for his conservationist efforts; in the title of this *Time* review, he is called "the great American novelist," suggesting that his way of writing and his way of life, his own mid-western origin, and not least his ornithological passion are inseparably linked to the way he writes. It explains above all the expectations directed towards his fiction. Not only is he (apparently) expected to provide a truthful depiction of contemporary American family-life, he also – as has been shown for McEwan – is expected to provide guidance in the matters at hand.⁶⁰

Intriguingly, *Freedom*'s critical reception often resembles the barely hidden *Schadenfreude* some of St. Paul's citizens feel toward their "greener than Greenpeace" ex-neighbor. It is aimed mainly at Walter's lengthy speeches on overpopulation. While, as Margaret Hunt Gram argues, other "totalizing political problems" are successfully emplotted "by having its characters encounter them as experiences or dilemmas",⁶¹ "[u]nsustainable population growth, in contrast, arrives in *Freedom* not as part of the story but via passages of monologue or dialogue or thought, each characterized by a kind of discursive excess or overflow."⁶² Especially when he tries to convince his college-friend Richard Katz, a childless single man with a rather successful career in rock music, to "help" him and his (later) lover Lalitha "with overpopulation",⁶³ Berglunds' speeches gain a sermon-like quality that stands out throughout the novel.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 27.

⁶⁰ See for example Colin Hutchinson, who discusses Franzen's "Politics of Disengagement" in regards to his earlier novels ("Jonathan Franzen and the Politics of Disengagement." In: *Critique* 50.2 (2009), pp. 191-207).

⁶¹ Margaret Hunt Gram. "Freedom's Limits: Jonathan Franzen, the Realist Novel, and the Problem of Growth." In: *American Literary History*, 26:2 (2014), pp. 295–316; p. 295.

⁶² Ibid. 295.

⁶³ Jonathan Franzen. *Freedom*, p. 219.

Think about how crowded the exurbs are already, think about the traffic and the sprawl and the environmental degradation and the dependence on foreign oil. And then add fifty percent [of the population; SN]. And that's just America, which can theoretically sustain a larger population. And then think about global carbon emissions, and genocide and famine in Africa, and the radicalized dead-end underclass in the Arab world, and overfishing of the oceans, and illegal Israeli settlements, the Han Chinese overrunning Tibet, a hundred million poor people in nuclear Pakistan: there's hardly a problem in the world that wouldn't be solved or at least tremendously alleviated by fewer people. And yet [...] we're going to add another three billion by 2050. [...] if the population keeps increasing nothing else we're going to do is going to matter. And yet *nobody* is talking about the problem publicly. It's the elephant in the room, and it's killing us.⁶⁴

Walter's convictions, fueled by the admiration of his assistant Lalitha and later by her death, increasingly appear to drift into a fundamentalist direction. What looks like a slightly paranoid and/or apocalyptic variety of typical environmental rage directed at the unwillingness and ignorance of governments and general public alike to change (supposedly) simple things in order to save the planet, is turned into a personal vendetta, when Walter's grand scheme fails. Initially, he plans to use a Texan billionaire's pleaded interest in saving the Cerulean Warbler by reserving large habitats exclusively for the bird for his own interest in reversing population growth. The Texan's plan, however, turns out to be a truly Faustian bargain in which a large area of rural Wyoming is to be completely exhausted of coal by means of "Mountain Top Removal"⁶⁵ and finally renatured for the Warbler. When Walter is convinced that he is finally able to spark actual change, his world crumbles around him and he is forced to move back into the house on "Nameless Lake" and reduce his environmental efforts to (unsuccessfully) terrorizing his neighborhood, trying to convince them to put bells around their cat's necks in order to protect endangered song birds. His fate as a crazy bird enthusiast and potential cat killer seems fixed,⁶⁶ when he is himself saved from himself by his reconciliation with his estranged wife.

Although Walter Berglund is characterized as a thoroughly good guy, the comparison to *Solar*'s protagonist shows a surprisingly similar perspective. While Beard's interest in 'saving the world' exhausts itself in selfish motives, he is in many ways more successful than Berglund whose motives seem 'pure.' That Berglund, too, fails miserably, despite his best efforts, could be interpreted as a rather grim perspective of both texts on people's ability to change. Walter lacks the opportunist and selfish qualities which allow Beard to implement climate change rhetoric and profit from it and thus – regardless of his motives – possibly move other people to consider changes in their lifestyles. At the same time, Walter's honest qualities and personal efforts at least secure him the continuation of his life as part of a community, of which his marriage is the smallest form. Reading *Freedom* on a larger scale, however, reveals that Walter and his family lead a double life with regards to his environmentalist efforts. His aim to "make having

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 220.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 212.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 541-561.

babies more of an embarrassment”⁶⁷ has a severe effect on how he is seen and, ultimately, on how he sees himself: an embarrassment and a hypocrite. Although he himself may be known for his commuter bicycle, his family is a prime example for the (American) lifestyle whose freedoms are extremely energy-intensive.⁶⁸ As his views on overpopulation clash with his own past “breeding”⁶⁹ and his doubts about Lalitha’s wish to have her “tubes tied”⁷⁰, the larger contradictions of (personal) freedoms become apparent. Aware of these contradictions, Walter describes the difficulties in adapting to global problems in terms of scale effects:

But the problem now is that more life still is beautiful and meaningful on the individual level, but for the world as a whole it only means more death. And not nice death, either. We’re looking at loosing half the world’s species in the next hundred years. We’re facing the biggest mass extinction since at least the Cretaceous-Tertiary. First we’ll get the utter wipeout of the world’s ecosystems, then mass starvation and/or disease and/or killings. *What’s still ‘normal’ at the individual level is heinous and unprecedented at the global level.*⁷¹

As this passage conclusively shows, the emplotment of Walter’s speeches is not a problem of Franzen’s writing, or as Hunt Gram claims, due to “a fundamental affective incompatibility between antigrowth content and narrative in general [...] and *realist* narrative in particular”⁷² but grounds in the literary character’s outlook. Hunt Gram’s conclusion that “*Freedom* cannot risk alienating its potential consumer”⁷³ disregards the complexity of the novel’s perspective on adaptation of and adaptation to environmental crises. Although she identifies the problems of scale and time in regards to the representation of overpopulation as the cause for the apparent dissonance between the narrative in general and Walter’s “didacticism”,⁷⁴ Hunt Gram’s criticism of *Freedom*’s (or even Franzen’s) apparent succumbing to the presupposed expectations of its implied readers misses the point.⁷⁵ It overlooks the awareness of its characters, especially Walter, for the discrepancies between the personal and the global/planetary. The novel’s sup-

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 221.

⁶⁸ “The period I have mentioned, from 1750 to now, is also the time when human beings switched from wood and other renewable fuels to large-scale use of fossil fuel—first coal and then oil and gas. The mansion of modern freedoms stands on an ever-expanding base of fossil-fuel use. Most of our freedoms so far have been energy-intensive.” (Dipesh Chakrabarty. “The Climate of History.” In: *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2009), pp. 197-222; p. 208). See also Margaret Hunt Gram. “Freedom’s Limits”, p. 8.

⁶⁹ Jonathan Franzen. *Freedom*, p. 220.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 307.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 222 (emphasis in orig.).

⁷² Margaret Hunt Gram. “Freedom’s Limits”, p. 302.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 309.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 303.

⁷⁵ “The novel assumes an implied reader with an affective relationship to capital that abides, like that same implied reader’s affective relationship to childbearing, by the rules of the reproductive futurist game. If the novel assumes that its readers want to see capital reproduce and will be averse to any thwarting of capital’s legitimate cultivation, then it is no surprise that *Freedom* relegates unsustainable economic growth, like unsustainable population growth, to discourse” (ibid., p. 308).

posed “struggle to reconcile [realist] narrative to one of the most urgent political problems of its moment”, while indeed a signal for “a larger and higher-stakes representational struggle”⁷⁶, can only be considered a failure if literature is expected to maintain the Enlightenment dictum of *prodesse et delectare* (be useful and entertain). However, as I have argued above, the expectation of a straightforward moral lesson or ‘message’ is at a disadvantage when it comes to the hyper-complex global problems of the present. Since there is no binding guideline, i.e. a religious belief-system, any narrative takes part in the negotiation of fact and fiction.

Framing climate change as a matter of one-way adaptation, i.e. the ‘truthful’ translation of scientific facts into fiction and public discourse, fails to take into account the simultaneity of different realities. That is, non-catastrophic adaptations of climate change, though they are able to represent the representational struggle itself, are apparently not suited as agents of political change, as long as an ‘optimistic’ or ‘hands-on’ approach to (climate) change is expected. However, “[t]hinking of climate change in relation to literary or cultural criticism will not be a matter of inventing some new method of reading [or writing; SN] *per se*, for its most prominent effect is of a derangement of scales that is also an implosion of intellectual competences.”⁷⁷ In other words, adaptation of climate change into modes of thinking and reading leads into uncharted territory. Calls for change – behavioral, perceptual, and representational – often still ignore the perseverance of discursive practices and the reach of intellectual (and, for that matter, scientific) thought. As Hannes Bergthaller puts it in regards to new materialism:

We [literary scholars] may have good theoretical reasons to decry the invidious effects of denialist thinking on the way in which societies conceptualize their relationship to the natural world, yet we cannot hope to simply replace it, like a faulty engine, with a better ontology, because such semantic patterns are themselves products of social evolution and deeply ingrained in the autopoiesis of communication.⁷⁸

In effect, the adaptation both *of* and *to* climate change must acknowledge the non-eventful nature of the problem at hand, even though this leads, as Beard and Walter painfully prove, almost certainly to personal and political failure. The acceptance of failure, to act, to (properly) represent, and to understand, however, holds potential both in regards to literature and the current political struggle. While, as I have argued, the reviews accusing McEwan and Franzen respectively of denying climate change or reducing global problems to tedious speeches miss

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 311. “That the novel as a representational form has trouble telling stories about the growth problem signals that problem’s particular difficulty. Politics requires narrative. Often it requires conventional narrative, something like realist narrative. When a novel struggles to reconcile such narrative to one of the most urgent political problems of its moment, it may mean there’s a larger and higher-stakes representational struggle in the offing” (ibid.).

⁷⁷ Timothy Clark. „Scale“, p. 164.

⁷⁸ Hannes Bergthaller. “Limits of Agency: Notes on the Material Turn from a Systems-Theoretical Perspective.” In: Serenella Iovino, Serpil Oppermann (eds.). *Material Ecocriticism*. Bloomington 2014, pp. 37-50.

the point, the force of the reactions might be an indicator for the political power of these narratives. While more straightforward adaptations of climate change (debate) such as the ones attempted in *State of Fear* and *The Day After Tomorrow* oblige the demand for a clear 'message' they leave behind a sense of closure (and pleasure) that has nothing to do with the real world problems negotiated. In this perspective, *Solar* and *Freedom* present the contradictions and incompatibilities of scales that characterize the current epoch of environmental crisis without offering any relief. In this fashion they refuse attempts to reduce literature to a dependent medium, a mere tool that can "do what scientists themselves [can] not."⁷⁹ Whether read allegorically or not, the failure of adaptation in regards to climate change and vice versa holds profound representational and political potential in that it explores the limits of human capability when the Anthropocene seems to substantiate humanity as a natural force.

⁷⁹ David A. Kirby. *Lab Coats in Hollywood*, p. 184.

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#booklove: How Reading Culture is Adapted on the Internet

In September 2017, model and actress Cara Delevingne brought a shitstorm upon herself by posting an image on Instagram that seemed innocuous enough. The black-and-white photograph shows a young woman dressed in 1950s style sitting outside on a flight of stairs, reading a book, a stack of hardcovers piled up next to her. The photo is overlaid with the caption “One girl liked reading so much // She forgot how to take a selfie.” Not everybody appreciated the implications: a sizeable number of Instagrammers called Delevingne out for “selfie-shaming” and pointed to the irony of the model’s post, considering the fact that she, too, depended very much on self-presentation for her fame. In response, Delevingne professed surprise over the negative echo: “wow! The backlash on this picture is heavy!! I am not trying to say that I am better than anyone. It’s a nice reminder to me and anyone. The power of getting lost in a book.”¹

More than a tempest in a teapot, Delevingne’s post and the reactions it sparked highlight a deeply ingrained notion of a clear cut between two different media practices and a set of value judgments attached to them. On the one side there is book culture, centered on the printed book as a material object; on the other digital culture, centered on what is displayed on a screen, by now more often than not that of a mobile phone. In the cultural imaginary, the two practices are separated by far more than just media technology. The girl in Delevingne’s picture, in choosing to read a book rather than participate in the social media arena, opts (as the black-and-white blocking of the caption neatly reflects) for a commendable type of media use: She sharpens her intellect and exercises her imagination, she digs deep rather than staying on the surface, and she engages – in a seemingly disinterested manner – with valuable content rather than obsessing over how to present herself in the best light. Her absorption is a badge of honor, much different from the ‘bad’ absorption of digital media users, a recurring trope that is artistically represented, for example, in the much-acclaimed surrealist photo series “SUR-FAKE” by the French photographer Antoine Geiger, which represents mobile phone users whose faces are sucked into their devices.²

In Delevingne’s Instagram post and the cultural assumptions and anxieties it capitalizes on, the evaluation of book culture as superior is subtly reinforced by the sense that it is an old-fashioned, possibly threatened practice – a notion that is

¹ Suzanna Weiss. “Cara Delevingne Faces Criticism for Instagram Post About Selfies.” *Teen Vogue* Sept 23, 2017 <<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/cara-delevigne-selfie-shaming-instagram>> Last Access 28 March 2018.

² Antoine Geiger. “SUR-FAKE” (Paris, 2015). <<http://antoinegeiger.com/PHOTOGRAPHY/SUR-FAKE>> Last Access 28 March 2018.

strengthened by the picture's nostalgic iconography, referencing the 1950s. This nostalgic vision not only amplifies the image's meaning, it also connects it to other moments in media history in which new media have elicited anxieties over the disappearance of cultural values and practices and a dumbing down of consumers of these new media. After all, the underlying univocally positive connotation of reading a book shared and understood by Delevingne and her followers is both culturally and historically situated: novels have in the past likewise been seen as endangering their users, e.g. in the 18th century novel fever panic—especially when they intersect with issues of gender.³ Today, by contrast, novel reading has come to be seen as a prototype of positively connotated book reading as such.⁴

In contrast to the simple binary conception underlying Delevingne's post, we argue in this article that, firstly, far from simply supplanting book culture, digital culture has adapted (to) it in manifold ways (and vice versa). Secondly, this adaptation has happened in a dialectical fashion: the convergence of book and new media cultures includes ways that feed on and reinforce, as well as ways that repudiate and question, the construct of the 'media culture gap.' As we will show, evocations of book culture abound on the internet and in social media in ways that 'translate' the medial regime of the book and value judgments associated with the symbolic dimensions of reading, books, and book use. In line with the widening of the concept of adaptation undertaken in this issue, we examine not only the "medial transposition" of individual texts (the usual approach and corpus of adaptation studies),⁵ but the transposition of book culture as a social/cultural phenomenon and a practice into a different medial regime.

The developments we discuss do not, of course, stand in isolation. They are situated in larger cultural, economic, and medial contexts. Much of what happens at the intersection of book publishing and consumption on the one and digital media technologies and frameworks on the other hand is similar to the larger trends that Henry Jenkins has described as "convergence culture." Jenkins argues against the idea of newer media simply replacing older media,⁶ a hypothesis that is at the base of most fears about the end of book culture and reading as we know it. Sven Birkerts, an early proponent, makes many of the points prevalent in this debate in his 1994 *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age*. Like other critics of new media, Birkerts sees a close link between print culture and concentrated, immersive, reflective reading. He fears that the rising consumption of electronic media is rendering this type of reception – and indeed the cognitive capacity to engage in it – an endangered practice.⁷ Jenkins, in contrast, posits the

³ See Rudolf Schenda. *Volk ohne Buch. Studien zur Sozialgeschichte der populären Lesestoffe 1770-1910*. München 1977 [1970], pp 507-566. See also Karin Littau. *Theories of Reading. Books, Bodies and Bibliomania*. Cambridge 2006, pp. 39-45.

⁴ Jim Collins. *Bring on the Books for Everybody. How Literary Culture Became Popular Culture*. Durham, NC 2010.

⁵ Irina O. Rajewsky. "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation. A Literary Perspective on Intermediality." *Intermedialités* 6 (2005): pp. 43-64, p. 51.

⁶ Henry Jenkins. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. Updated ed. New York 2008.

⁷ Sven Birkerts. *The Gutenberg Elegies. The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age*. New York 1994. More recently Manfred Spitzer pushed the fear behind a media shift to new heights of panic when

notion of a “convergence culture, where old and new media collide,” which, for him, means the intersection of various media, their producers and consumers.⁸

While Jenkins’ focus is mostly on popular culture and larger media franchises, many of the developments he describes happen in a somewhat similar fashion when it comes to books. Here, too, new and old media intersect and draw on each other, and here, too, does the internet transform interaction between consumers as well as between consumers and producers. For one thing, traditional book culture has been fundamentally adapted to digital environments in a number of ways. The internet has become the most extensive archive, storing and giving access to books through sites like Project Gutenberg or Google Books. Bookselling is increasingly becoming an online business, controlled by the online retail giant Amazon. At the same time, book reviewing has exploded in Amazon’s customer review section. E-books have become a serious competitor for printed books.

Meanwhile, traditional print culture is far from simply being swallowed up by a new digital environment. For example, statistics about the share of e-books in the UK in 2017 suggest that print books are even experiencing a come-back, and printed books still made up more than 50% in the US and more than 60% in the UK in 2017.⁹ What is more, as the Delevingne controversy shows, there is a cult of reading and print culture that is not diminished, but to the contrary fuelled in digital environments. The internet abounds in ‘bookish’ sites and sub-communities, which book lovers and some people in the publishing industry dub the “bookternet.”¹⁰ The rise of the bookternet further advances the integration of traditional book reading with new medial practices that Jim Collins describes in his seminal study *Bring on the Books for Everybody* (2010). Collins posits the rise of a “popular literary culture” that is promoted by diverse media channels such as Oprah Winfrey’s Book Club, movie adaptations of novels, and Amazon.com. The notion of the impending obsolescence of the book in the wake of a new media revolution has, as Collins argues, even become a touchstone for (re)ascribing special cultural value to the printed book and “reading as a transformative cultural activity that can occur only in books and nowhere else in the hypermediated culture where that reading takes place.”¹¹

Since the publication of Collins’ study, readers’ investment in book culture has continued to thrive and evolve in digital environments. The cataloguing site Goodreads, launched in 2007, by 2018 counts 65 million members who list, review and debate their reading – by 2013 it was already so popular that Amazon bought

he spoke of “digitale Demenz” (digital dementia). Manfred Spitzer. *Digitale Demenz. Wie wir uns und unsere Kinder um den Verstand bringen*. München 2012.

⁸ Henry Jenkins. *Convergence Culture*, p. 2.

⁹ “E-book share of total book sales in selected countries worldwide as of February 2017.” *Statista* <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/190847/ebook-share-of-total-consumer-book-sales-in-the-us-till-2015/>>. Last accessed 20 May 2018. “Great expectations for UK book sales: Market set to surpass £2 billion in 2017.” *Mintel.com* <<http://www.mintel.com/press-centre/leisure/uk-book-market-set-to-surpass-2-billion-in-2017>>. Last accessed 20 May 2018.

¹⁰ E.g. TEDx Talks. “Why I Heart the Bookternet: Rachel Fershleiser at TEDxGowanus.” *Youtube* 25 Feb 2014. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=7pQF70mYmp8>>. Last Accessed 20 May 2018.

¹¹ Jim Collins. *Bring on the Books*, p. 82.

it in a bid to increase its outreach.¹² On YouTube, users who describe themselves as BookTubers are vlogging about books and reading, on Instagram we find posters using hashtags such as #bookstagram, while Tumblr has a sub-community Booklr. Beyond these social networks, there is also a host of book blogs and online reading clubs with widely varying reach.

While in mainstream media as well as in scholarship, little attention has been paid to the bookternet as a general phenomenon, one aspect of it has sparked debates that resonate with the already described binary thinking about media culture: the proliferation of online book reviews, most prominently but by no means exclusively on popular sites like Amazon and Goodreads. In a 2012 opinion piece, Sarah Fay outlines the sides in the debate and posits the “bad news” about online reviewing:

In theory, customer reviews are quick, easy, egalitarian, and make the “consumer” (as opposed to the reader) feel in control of his or her reading choices. But there’s a difference between a recommendation and a review. Customer reviews are heavy on opinion and light on insight. [...] Fiction customer reviews typically contain “I-loved-it” or “I-hated-it” declarations based on an affinity for or dislike of the characters and discuss them as if they were real people. Customer reviews rarely include plot summaries--even dull ones. They tend to consider books in terms of whether or not they were worth the money and need not pertain to the book at all.¹³

In her criticism of online book reviews, Fay is joined by others. John Sutherland famously called them a “degradation of literary taste.”¹⁴ Sven Birkerts, in turn, argues that “the very nature of the blogosphere is proliferation and dispersal” and worries that it will push out the traditional book review and its virtues: “addressing itself to the idea of a center, by upholding the premise of a public voice, and by hewing to high editorial standards, it [the traditional book review] can do a great deal to keep alive the possibility of shared discourse.”¹⁵

Fay’s, Sutherland’s, and Birkerts’ contributions throw into sharp relief the faultlines in the discussions of the proponents of ‘old’ and ‘new’ media. Internet book culture, in the eyes of its critics, stands for commercialization (readers become consumers), the dumbing down of recipients and discourse, and an overall loss of cultural standards and authority. This last point, by contrast, is seen as a crucial advantage by their opponents, who regard the proliferation of reviews online as a sign of democratization – a trope that regularly comes up in both

¹² Goodreads.com “About Goodreads.” <<https://www.goodreads.com/about/us>> Last Accessed 20 May 2018. Rob Spillman. “Amazon buys Goodreads. We’re all just data now.” Salon.com <https://www.salon.com/2013/03/31/amazon_buys_goodreads_were_all_just_data_now/>. Last Accessed 20 May 2018.

¹³ Sarah Fay. “Could the Internet Save Book Reviews?” *The Atlantic*, 7 May 2012. <<https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2012/05/could-the-internet-save-book-reviews/256802/>>. Last accessed March 29 2018.

¹⁴ “John Sutherland IS SHOCKED BY THE STATE OF book-Reviewing on the web.” *The Telegraph* 19 Nov 2006. <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/3656629/john-sutherland-IS-SHOCKED-BY-THE-STATE-OF-book-Reviewing-on-the-web.html>>. Last accessed 18 May 2018.

¹⁵ Sven Birkerts. “Lost in the blogosphere. Why literary blogging won’t save our literary culture.” *The Boston Globe* 29 July 2017. <http://archive.boston.com/news/globe/ideas/articles/2007/07/29/lost_in_the_blogosphere/>. Last accessed. 22 May 2018.

popular and academic debates about the internet's potential. Prominent examples include Jenkins' celebration of "grassroots creativity" and John Perry Barlow's praise of the www in its early days, when he called it "the new home of the Mind" and demanded its independence from the governing bodies of the "old" pre-digital world.¹⁶ That Barlow's view of internet culture seems idealistic and already tinged with nostalgia from today's perspective only underlines the limits of binary thinking about media cultures and the impulse to ascribe wholesale evaluations to medial developments.¹⁷

Instead of taking sides in an emotionally loaded debate, we want to look at how the practitioners of the booknet themselves adapt 'old' book culture to 'new' internet culture. We will ask in what ways the structures and practices they create and engage in reflect values such as democratization, cultural sophistication, sociability and self-expression. Moreover, we will sketch not only the differences between 'traditional' book culture and its digital adaptations, but also investigate the continuities between these. After all, to name just two examples,

¹⁶ Henry Jenkins. *Convergence Culture*, p. 135 and *passim*. John Perry Barlow. "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace." *Electronic Frontier Foundation*. <<https://www.eff.org/cyberspace-independence>>. Last accessed 22 Aug 2016.

¹⁷ There are various ways of approaching this debate. Literary blogger Katharina Herrmann has interpreted the contempt expressed by journalists in the German press towards bloggers and Bookstagrammers within a Bourdieusian framework, reading their dismissal as both an expression of their different *habitus* and an interest in retaining their position within the literary/critical field. As Herrmann points out, many of the strategies employed for delegitimizing online book culture in German newspapers stand in a long historical tradition that employs sexist stereotypes against those reading by highlighting their gendered *habitus* that is perceived as inappropriate by the journalists attacking them from an established position of cultural gatekeeper (Katharina Herrmann. "Zur Kritik des normierten Lesens." *54 Books* 7 May 2017. <<https://www.54books.de/zur-kritik-des-normierten-lesens/>>. Last accessed 27 May 2018).

Daniel Allington and Ann Steiner, taking a very different approach, have made first attempts to put subjective impressions about the tendencies in on- and offline book reviews on a broader empirical basis. Allington's analysis of content bears out some of the points raised by Fay: he identifies a tendency of online reviewers to value books on the basis of likeable characters, exciting events relating to 'real' issues and to avoid structural, stylistic, or symbolic analyses (Daniel Allington. "'Power to the reader' or 'degradation of literary taste'? Professional Critics and Amazon Customers as Reviewers of *The Inheritance of Loss*." *Language and Literature* 25.3 (2016): 254-278, here p. 258). Steiner, on the other hand, points to significant differences between online reviewers' treatment of 'non-literary' books like chick lit and 'literary novels' like Ian McEwan's *Atonement*, which on its Amazon page garners reviews closer to traditional literary criticism (Ann Steiner. "Private Criticism in the Public Space: Personal Writing on Literature in Readers' Reviews on Amazon." *Particip@tions* 5.2 (2008): n. pag. <http://www.participations.org/Volume%205/Issue%202/5_02_steiner.htm>. Last accessed 28 May 2018). Both Allington's and Steiner's contributions, however, suggest that more is at stake than just the concrete content of the reviews. Considering Amazon as a professional retailer operating according to an economic model, Allington, drawing on Bourdieu, raises the specter of a loss of autonomy of the cultural field (Daniel Allington. "'Power to the Reader'", p. 256), whose reverse economic logic for Bourdieu depended on its relative autonomy from the fields of economics and politics (Pierre Bourdieu. *The Field of Cultural Production. Essays on Art and Literature*. Ed. and Intro. Randal Johnson. New York 1993, e.g. pp. 29-73; cf. also Bourdieu's warning about this loss of autonomy in the postscript to *The Rules of Art*: Pierre Bourdieu. *The Rules of Art. Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*. Trans. Susan Emanuel. Stanford 1995, pp. 339-48). Steiner, in turn, at the end of her article points to the social purpose of online reviews as a way of connecting with others.

neither anxieties about the commercialization of culture nor hopes about its positive effects on sociability first arose with the advent of digitalization.

In order to do this, we focus on two case studies. First we analyze the Guardian Reading Group to explore how an already established player within a traditional medium and the culture it represents, i.e. the century-old bourgeois culture of educated reading, adapts to the internet. We then turn our gaze to BookTube, the conglomeration of book-related channels on the video streaming site YouTube, in order to analyse how mostly millennial readers, i.e. those who grew up with the internet, adopt reading and the internet to their demands. The ways in which this group discusses and represents reading, and in the process themselves as readers, brings together traditional reading and book discussion with patterns of interaction and self-presentation coming out of internet culture. As we will suggest, the kinds of activities that have emerged on social media sites around books and bookish lifestyles cannot adequately be described by simply regarding them as a new kind of book reviewing. Rather, we want to ask in what ways the bookternet facilitates and encourages different practices of reading as social behavior, embedded in concrete social and medial contexts.

1. Adaptation of Book Culture in the Guardian Reading Group

The reading club site in the digital edition of *The Guardian* has been evolving over the last 15 years, and its permutations offer an intriguing case study for the ways in which book and reading culture have been adapted to digital environments.

The publication context in which it is embedded, *The Guardian*, is a traditional newspaper that has been at the forefront of exploring how ‘old’ news media can embrace new digital possibilities, while at the same time championing the merits of established newspaper journalism. *Theguardian.com* is one of few online editions of major international newspapers that makes all content freely available without a paywall (though users are asked for voluntary donations).¹⁸ As part of its engagement with new technological possibilities, *The Guardian* reports regularly and extensively on topics connected with digitalization (including one 2014 article that mentions but does not really engage with BookTube),¹⁹ and the online edition has a strong focus on reader feedback and participation. Blogging and community features are updated regularly, and in 2016, *The Guardian* ordered

¹⁸ The site was launched in 1999 as guardian.co.uk; since 2013 it has been repositioned as theguardian.com to signal global investment. In 2012, it became the world's third most read online newspaper, according to the media measurement company comScore (Sarah Radwanick. “Most Read Online Newspapers in the World. *Mail Online*, *New York Times* and *The Guardian*.” *comScore*. <<https://www.comscore.com/Insights/Infographics/Most-Read-Online-Newspapers-in-the-World-Mail-Online-New-York-Times-and-The-Guardian>>. Last accessed 27 May 2018.) In late May 2018, the webtraffic analyst Alexa put the site on rank 142 in global popularity and number 103 in the U.S. (“*theguardian.com* Traffic Statistics.” *Alexa*. <<https://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/theguardian.com>>. Last accessed 27 May 2018.)

¹⁹ Anna Baddeley. “TV’s a Closed Book so Bring Over the ‘BookTube’ Critics. Over to you...” *The Guardian* 16 Feb 2014. < <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/feb/16/book-break-online-video-book-reviews>>. Last accessed 28 May 2018.

and published an extensive study into online comments and moderation.²⁰ The report testifies both to the desire to foster reader participation and to the awareness of possible drawbacks, focusing in particular on the role of those comments that are classified as “crude, bigoted or just vile.”²¹ The finding that those articles attracting the most abuse are those written by women and people of color is taken as an indicator of the need for close monitoring of comment threads and for swift blocking. ‘Conversation’ between readers and journalists is, on the whole, presented as a central asset of digitalized media, but also as a process that needs constant optimization and can go awry.

The set-up of the *Guardian Reading Group* exemplifies this open, but also quite nuanced and critical attitude towards the possibilities of digitalization. The history of the site testifies to a shift towards a more user-centered approach. It evolved from the *Guardian Book Club*, launched on the site in June 2002, which was hosted by John Mullan, professor of English Literature at University College London. Originally, the *Book Club*’s orientation towards the *Guardian*’s middle-class oriented profile and a concomitantly fairly intellectualized approach to book culture was closely modeled on traditional book review practices, as they have always been part of the paper’s arts section. Centered on an expert from the academy and addressed to an educated audience well-versed in reading, the tone of the columns is reminiscent of an academic course directed at the general public. At the same time, the site also emphasizes a contemporary and popular appeal over a more traditionalist focus on canonical or ‘difficult’ texts: as the tag line explains, it focuses on a “notable novel available in paperback”²², thus prioritizing easy access, and early choices included not only J.M. Coetzee’s Booker-prize winning *Disgrace* (1999), but also more popular titles such as Ruth Rendell’s historical crime thriller *Adam and Eve and Pinch Me* (2001) and Nick Hornby’s *How to Be Good* (2001).

Title and tag line (“As a service to reading groups, John Mullan deconstructs a notable novel...”) ²³ explicitly associate the column not with the established newspaper genre of the literary review, but with the reemerging phenomenon of the book club.²⁴ Digital media have opened a new range of possibilities for book

²⁰ Results of the study are presented here: Becky Gardiner et al. “The Dark Side of Guardian Comments.” *The Guardian* 12 April 2016. <<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/apr/12/the-dark-side-of-guardian-comments>>. Last Accessed 10 May 2018. There is also a background piece on the methodology informing the research: Mahana Mansfield. “How We Analysed 70m Comments on the Guardian Website.” *The Guardian* 12 April 2016. <<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/apr/12/how-we-analysed-70m-comments-guardian-website>>. Last accessed 10 May 2018.

²¹ Becky Gardiner et al. “The Dark Side of Guardian Comments.”

²² John Mullan. “The Virtues of Imprisonment.” *The Guardian* 29 June 2002. <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2002/jun/29/featuresreviews.guardianreview29>>. Last accessed 27 May 2018.

²³ For example: John Mullan. “The Attitude Problem.” *The Guardian* 17 August 2002. <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2002/aug/17/featuresreviews.guardianreview28>>. Last accessed 27 May 2018.

²⁴ Since the 1990s, private book clubs and reading groups had seen a revival. First in the US, then also in the UK, they were popularized by book-centered segments in popular TV shows, most notably *Oprah’s Book Club* (US, 1996-2011) and the *Richard & Judy Book Club* (2004-2009).

clubs to adapt to an evolving medial environment, by allowing them to combine the public reach of television book club formats with the interactive character of private book clubs. But, as the evolution of the *Guardian Book Club* shows, there was no ready-made template for how to do this, and the *Guardian* took some years to figure out in what direction to take the new format in unison with media-technological developments.

With the shift from the *Book Club* to the *Reading Group* – which was originally introduced as an addition to the *Book Club* in 2011 and today remains the main reading community on the site after the *Book Club* was discontinued in 2016 – the *Guardian*'s digital adaptation of book culture shows two general tendencies: it increasingly privileges interactivity and works towards what Jim Collins has described as “empowering amateur readers,”²⁵ minimizing the role of literary scholars and professional reviewers. These tendencies become apparent through a series of changes that the *Book Club* site has undergone since 2002. Soon after its inception, the tagline was changed from “John Mullan deconstructs a notable novel” to “John Mullan analyses a notable novel,”²⁶ which presumably was thought to sound less markedly scholarly and reminiscent of lofty French theory.

While at first, the ‘social’ aspect of the columns was mainly restricted to the notion that Mullan’s contributions could be a “service to reading groups,” readers were invited to real-life discussions with Mullan and the authors from September 2005 onwards.²⁷ This focus on the authors’ voices in itself already constitutes a turn away from a strictly academic type of literary appreciation with its tendency to give relatively little weight to an author’s own interpretation.²⁸ More strikingly, this was the first in a series of modifications designed to enable reader

Fictional book clubs also became a central topic in TV shows as well as films and novels (e.g. *The Jane Austen Book Club*; *Bob and Margaret*; see DeNel Rehberg Sedo. “An Introduction to Reading Communities. Processes and Formations.” In: DeNel Rehberg Sedo (ed.): *Reading Communities from Salons to Cyberspace*. New York 2011, pp. 1-24, here pp. 6; 7). Collins analyses *Oprah’s Book Club* as an integral part of a “popularization of literary reading,” which provided “new contexts for passionate readers to talk about literary books and form reading communities that didn’t feel intimidated by the traditional discourses of literary appreciation” (Jim Collins. *Bring on the Books for Everybody*, pp. 19, 20).

²⁵ Jim Collins. *Bring on the Books for Everybody*, p. 18.

²⁶ The first instance of this is on March 8, 2003: John Mullan. “Between the Lines.” *The Guardian* 8 March 2003. <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2003/mar/08/ianmcewan>>. Last accessed 27 May 2018.

²⁷ “In the past, I have guessed at novels that might be favoured by reading groups. Readers wrote in to quarrel with or supplement my pieces, or, most usefully and mortifyingly, to correct me on matters of fact. Now readers will be invited to a regular Book Club event where, when possible, the author too will be present. The last column of the four on each book will survey the comments of readers, both at the event and online.” (John Mullan. “Taking Wing.” *The Guardian* 17 Sept 2005. <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2005/sep/17/julianbarnes.gustaveflaubert>>. Last accessed 27 May 2018.)

²⁸ This shift is foregrounded in the tagline for the column about a readers’ evening with the novelist and professional critic John Lanchester: “John Lanchester maintains that authorial intentions are irrelevant, but that didn’t stop readers at the Guardian book club from questioning them, says John Mullan.” (John Mullan. “Called to Account.” *The Guardian* 14 Oct 2006. <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2006/oct/14/featuresreviews.guardianreview5>> Last accessed 27 May 2018.)

participation. At the same time, one of the four weekly columns dedicated to each of the books discussed was given over to the readers' opinions, albeit selected and commented upon by Mullan.²⁹ While the column from the beginning had included an invitation to "have your say about [the book] on the Guardian talkboards or write to [postal address],"³⁰ it was only from November 2006 onwards that these appeals to participate online were foregrounded in entries with the tag 'book blog' and the possibility of posting comments directly under the article rather than on a separate board.³¹ In June 2009, this type of entry was further developed: the tag 'book blog' was now attached to a companion column by a second writer, Sam Jordison, as a "new online appendage to the *Guardian's* monthly book club, where I'm hoping to foster debate, gauge opinion and encourage you – the reader! – to wax eloquent in whatever terms you wish about the books John Mullan discusses every month."³²

By engaging Jordison, a younger freelance writer involved in various indie publishing and editing projects,³³ in the role of a moderator, the *Guardian* associated the book club with a more hands-on, alternative take on literary culture. As the quotation makes explicit, his main mission was to make the site more 'social' – a goal also reflected in the more informal, tongue-in-cheek style used by Jordison, and by the controversial questions about literary taste and evaluation that were raised about the author of the month, A.S. Byatt, whom "most critics seem to adore, but many readers love to hate."³⁴

Aligning himself with the down-to-earth Byatt-sceptic and foregrounding the contrast to "most critics," Jordison evokes a distinction that has been around since the establishment of literary criticism as a cultural field. The idea of a "common reader," "uncorrupted with literary prejudices" and "the dogmatism of learning,"³⁵ was proposed by Samuel Johnson and later developed by Virginia Woolf. Woolf made the common reader a pivotal figure in her essays, epitomizing enthusiasm as well as autonomous thinking, and contrasted her against a privileged academic

²⁹ Per book discussed, there were now usually two columns by Mullan on selected topics, one with a commentary by the author, one podcast with a discussion between Mullan and the author (first podcast in January 2006, a discussion with Hilary Mantel about her novel *Beyond Black*), and the reader opinion round-up.

³⁰ "Present and Correct." *The Guardian* 1 June 2002. <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2002/jun/01/featuresreviews.guardianreview31>>. Last accessed 27 May 2018.

³¹ Those comments are archived and still accessible on the website, while the "talkboard" entries are not.

³² Sam Jordison. "Guardian book club. Possession by AS Byatt." *The Guardian* 19 June 2009. <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2009/jun/18/book-club-possession-as-byatt>>. Last accessed 27 May 2018.

³³ Jordison has been doing work for the *Guardian* for more than 10 years now. He is co-editor of the controversial book series *Crap Towns*, and since 2012 co-founder and director of the small, but rather successful indie publishing company Galley Beggar Press, which encourages direct submissions from un-published writers.

³⁴ Sam Jordison. "Guardian book club. Possession by AS Byatt."

³⁵ Samuel Johnson. "Gray." In: *The Lives of the English Poets*, Vol. 2, Oxford 1912 [1781], pp. 474-485, here p. 485.

establishment.³⁶ The title of Jordison's own column *Reading Group* (launched two years after his first appearance in the *Book Club*), advertises a similar ethos. The shift in direction is programmatically announced in the first post, summoning users to "[j]oin the reading club revolution":

Comrades! We desire a different kind of book club – one more in keeping with the interests of the people, more democratic. The revolutionary workers and soldiers of the internet have overthrown the old hegemony of the journalist, and cleaned out all the critics from the ivory towers. The commentariat of the world looks with pride and hope to the revolutionary workers and soldiers of *Comment is free* as the vanguard of the world's liberating army of the commenting class.³⁷

Bronwen Thomas and Julia Round (the only scholars who, to our knowledge, have looked at the *Guardian* reading club, in an article on moderators' roles on book-related sites) argue that "the group's very existence arises from a sense of opposition to existing cultural mediators and arbiters of taste."³⁸ This is surely an important factor, but the implications of Jordison's introduction are both more complex and of a wider resonance. For one thing, the evocation of an old-world socialist rhetoric is so overblown that it is clearly tongue-in-cheek, and the tacit assumption that educated readers will recognize and appreciate the parody already signals something that Round and Thomas also acknowledge, namely that many of "the values and practices familiar from scholarly settings" are actually to some extent retained.³⁹ Secondly, the themes of 'revolution' and 'democracy' also invoke broader discourses on contemporary digital and literary culture. In particular, they are linked with the controversial idea that the internet fosters democracy. But they also evoke the contrary notion that in the digital age, literary reading and an appreciation for print culture can be counted as quasi-revolutionary acts of nonconformism.⁴⁰

³⁶ For a more sustained discussion of the figure of the 'common reader' in Woolf, and its adaptation to a contemporary medial environment in Alan Bennett's novella *The Uncommon Reader* (2008), see Dorothee Birke. *Writing the Reader: Configurations of a Cultural Practice in the English Novel*. Berlin/Boston 2016, pp. 208-213.

³⁷ Sam Jordison. "Join the Reading Revolution." *The Guardian* 8 August 2011. <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/aug/08/reading-group-guardian-books>>. Last Accessed 27 May 2018. See also: "'Comment is free' is a part of the Guardian website, now simply entitled 'Opinion', which was created in March 2006 as the first collective comment blog by a British newspaper website. It will incorporate all the regular Guardian and Observer main commentators, many blogging for the first time, who will be joined by a host of outside contributors [...]." (Georgina Henry. "Welcome to Comment is Free." *The Guardian* 14 March 2006. *I put it in because* <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2006/mar/14/welcometocommentisfree>>. Last Accessed 27 May 2018.)

³⁸ Bronwen Thomas and Julia Round. "Moderating Readers and Reading Online." *Language and Literature* 25.3 (2016), pp. 239-253, here p. 248.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Inspired by Collins' analysis of the popularity of Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* as exemplifying "the sanctification of this community of book lovers under siege, this ideology of the faithful remnant struggling to survive" (Jim Collins. *Bring on the Books for Everybody*, p. 264), Birke, in her reading of Bennett's *The Uncommon Reader*, shows how reading is represented as subversive (in a positive sense), but somewhat paradoxically also recreates the sense of cozy community feelings Collins identifies (Dorothee Birke, *Writing the Reader*, p 173).

A feature of the *Reading Group* site that encapsulates its new orientation is its approach to book selection, an aspect that, as Round and Thomas rightly remind us, “can bring to light the power dynamics existing within a group.”⁴¹ Where Mullan “guessed” at the works that might interest other readers, Jordison in his first column only proposes a theme – revolution! – and encourages the community to make concrete suggestions for the book to be read in the club (this prompted 437 comments). In the next piece, the participation-oriented approach continues: Jordison poses the question of how to choose between the suggestions, makes several proposals based on readers’ ideas, and again asks for feedback (105 comments). In the subsequent week, following the suggestion of several readers, he finally lets chance decide and pulls the winning title – Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* – out of a hat. There is a *YouTube* video embedded in the article that documents the process, with Jordison laboriously cutting up print-outs of the comments, stuffing the pieces of paper into a hat, pulling one out, and holding it into the camera.⁴²

The aesthetics and implications of this short *YouTube* video present in a nutshell how the new *Reading Group* blog approaches the relation between digital and book culture in general, and the issue of reader participation in particular. The fact that there is a *YouTube* video at all already constitutes a departure from the medial approach of the *Book Club*, which incorporated podcasts and discussion boards, but stayed clear of those features of the internet more expressly associated with social media and youth culture. While the medium of the embedded video itself signals a closer affinity to the environment and practices of the ‘digital natives,’ the content shown, in particular the cluttered bookshelves in the background (a feature we also find throughout *BookTube*) and the anachronistic act of handling print-outs of comments (thus emphasizing the materiality of the printed page), conspicuously evokes book culture.

But the video does not only evoke both media cultures – it also bridges the apparent gap between them. What can be called the video’s ‘aesthetics of imperfection’ – the handheld camera with the webcam angle, the poor lighting and image quality, Jordison’s goofiness, the intimacy of the setting (presumably his living room or home office, not in a particularly tidy state) – can for one thing be associated with the idea of book culture as being uninterested in self-presentation, i.e. one of the central notions also conveyed in Delevingne’s *Instagram* post. At the same time, precisely these features link the video to the amateurish videos typical of a certain segment of (early) *YouTube*, signaling the unrehearsed, personal character of the communication and giving its producer the stamp of authenticity.⁴³ And there is another detail by which the video positions Jordison at the

⁴¹ Bronwen Thomas and Julia Round. “Moderating Readers and Reading Online.”, p. 248.

⁴² Sam Jordison. “Reading group: *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury.” *The Guardian* 22 Aug 2011. <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/aug/22/reading-group-fahrenheit-451-ray-bradbury>>. Last accessed May 27 2018.

⁴³ On the relation between ‘realist’ aesthetics and authenticity claims in film, see Heike Schäfer. “The Parodic Play with Realist Aesthetics and Authenticity Claims in Cheryl Dunye’s *Black Queer Mockumentary The Watermelon Woman*.” In: Dorothee Birke and Stella Butter (eds.). *Realisms in Contemporary Culture: Theories, Politics and Medial Configurations*. Berlin, Boston 2013, pp. 195-

intersection of book and popular culture: his T-shirt, which proclaims “I would prefer not to,” a quotation from Herman Melville’s story “Bartleby, the Scrivener” (1853).⁴⁴ The slogan, which was made popular by Slavoj Žižek as encapsulating a form of resistance to a capitalist politics, has since become a meme on social media.⁴⁵ In the context of the Reading Group’s launch, the Bartleby-T-Shirt signals a (slightly irreverent) affinity to book culture as well as sympathy for an emerging type of political activism (or ‘slacktivism’),⁴⁶ which in turn is tied to the idea that social media enable grassroots movements.

At the same time, as already suggested, the *Reading Group* remains indebted to values associated with academic approaches to literature as well as traditional journalistic practices. For one thing, the retirement of John Mullan did not mean that literary scholars vanished completely from the site – experts from the academy, along with the authors, are regularly featured in webchats. (However, the new format of the webchat means that the communication is no longer dominated solely by the book club’s host. He now acts as a facilitator of a conversation between literary experts, practitioners, and readers.) Another typical feature of the *Guardian*’s particular approach is the rather high involvement of the moderator in steering the discussions. Thomas and Round highlight how Jordison balances the role of a guide to discussions with that of a companion and participant. He maintains a visible, but not overbearing presence in the discussions and alternates between being provocative, funny, encouraging and once in a while disapproving, in comments that appear as tailored to stimulate the conversation as to regulate it.⁴⁷ In this endeavor, he is frequently joined by other *Guardian* moderators, who add their opinion and react to reader comments. This is in line with the overall *Guardian* approach to comments, which attempts to strike a balance between eliciting reader participation and maintaining some control over direction and quality of the conversations conducted in the forums. This balance is also visible in the selection of topics, which – even if they move away from Mullan’s ‘sage on the stage’ approach in form – are not that different in content, retaining

213. On YouTube as a site for cultivating amateurishness see Michael Strangelove. *Watching Youtube: Extraordinary Videos by Ordinary People*. Toronto 2010.

⁴⁴ Herman Melville. *Bartleby, the Scrivener*. Hoboken, NJ 2004.

⁴⁵ See Slavoj Žižek. *The Parallax View*. Cambridge, MA 2006. Today, the slogan is most famous for having been claimed by the Occupy movement – however, Jordison’s YouTube video dates from shortly before Occupy’s inception in September 2011.

⁴⁶ Cf. Nina Martyris, who calls Bartleby “America’s first slacktivist.” Nina Martyris. “A Patron Saint for Wall Street.” *The New Republic* 15 Oct 2011. <<https://newrepublic.com/article/96276/nina-martyris-ows-and-bartleby-the-scrivener>>. Last accessed 27 May 2018.

⁴⁷ To look at a random example, in the discussion of the characters in Marilynne Robinson’s *Gilead* on Jan 23, 2018, 4 of the 79 comments were Jordison’s – one approving of a point made by another commentator (“True!”), two validating topics of conversation and weighing in with his own opinions (“Thanks - that’s really interesting. And entirely valid... But! For me it felt like we were being invited to judge him, because he judges himself so much and so often wonders ‘aloud’ if he’s doing the right thing”) and one calling out a commentator for being ill informed (“Have you read the book?”). Sam Jordison. “Reckoning with Gilead’s Moral Vision.” *The Guardian* 23 Jan 2018. <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2018/jan/23/reckoning-with-gileads-moral-vision>>. Last accessed 28 May 2018.

their roots in literary culture while occasionally branching out into middlebrow or pop-culture territory.

Overall, then, the evolving design of the Guardian's *Reading Group* site bears witness to an adaptation of book culture to a digital environment which fosters the 'popularization' of literary culture (*sensu* Collins). The site does so by harnessing the opportunities provided by new media to amplify participatory aspects of reading. At the same time, however, it retains a close affinity to traditional practices of literary criticism, as well as more generally practices of 'quality journalism.' It thus, like the *Guardian* as a whole, reflects a progressive, on the whole intellectual-friendly and self-reflexive cultural politics, bridging rather than widening the perceived gap between amateur appreciation and the academy that Collins sees in the American context.⁴⁸ The ideal of a community of book lovers as creating a utopian and democratic space, as envisioned by Virginia Woolf, also finds expression in the calibration of the site as a conversation with the readers – while at the same time, the strong emphasis on moderation attests to an awareness that attention and work are needed to maintain this space and make it 'safe.' All in all, the practice of book culture as it is facilitated by the Guardian Reading Group site with its balance between amateur and academic reading gives book lovers the opportunity to feel simultaneously like members of a privileged cultural elite and like rebels against cultural snobbism.

2. Enter the Millennials: BookTube and the Bookternet

While on the *Guardian* website, the production of 'the reader' as a social persona remains an implicit benefit, the sites we turn to in our second case study quite blatantly revolve around the identificatory potential of book culture. The subjects of this study are a group of "digital natives" (those who came of age with computers and the internet always around) who create videos about book- and reading-related subjects under the hashtag "booktube" on YouTube.⁴⁹

A phenomenon of the 2010s, BookTube is centered around a professed shared love of reading and books (most in the young adult [YA] market). It brings together a group of mostly female, mostly millennial vloggers between their teenage years and their mid-to-late 20s, who exchange ideas and opinions about book-related subjects. While not as big as the YouTube sub-communities around beauty or gaming, some BookTubers have become well-established within their growing community. Although most channels "do not usually exceed 1000 to 1500 subscribers," according to Karen Sorensen and Andrew Mara,⁵⁰ some of the most

⁴⁸ Jim Collins. *Bring on the Books for Everybody*, pp. 18-28.

⁴⁹ Whereas YouTube is their main arena, content creators and participants are usually also active on other sites, such as Instagram, Goodreads, Facebook, and Twitter; some blog about books or meet offline at book conventions, but for the most active and popular BookTubers, YouTube is their main medium of expression and exchange and we will thus limit ourself to YouTube in our examination, even if it is part of a larger network of interlinked social media sites.

⁵⁰ Karen Sorensen and Andrew Mara. "BookTubers as a Networked Knowledge Community." In: Marohang Limbu and Binod Gurung (eds.). *Emerging Pedagogies in the Networked Knowledge*

popular BookTubers have well over 100,000 subscribers. The most subscribed, PolandbananasBOOKS (run by Christine Riccio) has 386,526 sub-scribers and over 60 million total views for her over 700 videos, while Sasha Alsberg's channel ABookUtopia has 367,361 subscribers and almost 38 million views. Several other English-language BookTubers, such as JessetheReader (Jesse George), Katytastic (Kat O'Keeffe), and Peruse Project (Regan Perusse) each have over 200,000 subscribers.⁵¹

While we do not have empirical data on the social background of BookTubers overall, there are enough markers to place those most prominent in the English-speaking community into mostly white, seemingly comfortable middle-class backgrounds. The amounts of books owned and purchased, the disposable time necessary to film, edit and post weekly updates of a high quality, as well as to devote time to reading (particularly in challenges), the environments and backgrounds gleaned in these videos, the language used, and the fact that many pursue or hold a higher degree all place them within a bourgeois environment. If we thus juxtapose them to the kind of bourgeois reading culture we see as an historical backdrop as well as manifested in the *Guardian* Reading Group's practice, the difference is largely one of age, not of class position—and it is a difference that only goes so far, as we will elaborate in the conclusion.

In their videos, BookTubers post about book-related topics in various ways. Recurring subjects and forms constitute a sort of generic roster for the community. They review books, of course, but individual reviews are not the majority of videos in the most popular BookTube channels, nor are they the most viewed videos on these YouTubers' sites. Often reviews and recommendations are instead part of a larger frame, e.g. monthly wrap ups, best of or favorite videos around a topic or theme, videos about book series or other topical videos that include short opinions and reviews about books that are mentioned. Some BookTubers also share their opinion about TV and movie adaptations of books or book series and do comparison videos, and more popular and well-connected BookTubers like JessetheReader and others do occasional interviews (aka Q&A videos) with writers in the Young Adult genre.⁵²

Society: Practices Integrating Social Media and Globalization. Hershey, PA 2014 pp. 87-99; here p. 91.

⁵¹ These numbers were taken from the YouTubers' respective pages on April 24 2018. A second look on May 07 2018 shows that numbers are still going up. There is also a major Spanish language BookTube community with at least two channels above 300,000 subscribers.

While these numbers are impressive, they are dwarfed by the most popular personal YouTube channels, run by PewDiePie which has over 62.4 million subscribers and Ryan ToysReviews, which with almost 13.7 million subscribers has 21.4 billion views. Within the beauty community Yuya has 21.2 million subscribers and YouTuber Zoella has over 12 million subscribers in her main channel and almost 5 million in a second channel.

⁵² The access to authors for interviews, the invitation to talk at trade conventions, sending of advanced reader copies to BookTubers, as well as the transition of some BookTubers into writing or publishing (the most conspicuous example being the collection *Because You Love to Hate Me* published by Bloomsbury in 2017, which brings together YA authors and some of the most popular BookTubers) suggest that BookTube is becoming an increasingly important and recognized part of book marketing, particularly in the YA sector. There also exists a back and forth between authors, YouTubers, and publishers. These trends are so recent, however, that they have

The most consistently popular video format on BookTube is the BookHaul. Here BookTubers showcase the books they have recently bought (or, in the case of more popular YouTubers, received from publishers as complimentary or advanced copies) and discuss them briefly regarding their theme and plot. While the hosts have occasionally read a book in the past or started reading it, allowing them to briefly outline what they liked and didn't like about a book, more frequently the focus is on what they expect from a novel they have not yet read. The TBR (to be read) is a variation of this video, sharing similar features focusing on the BookTuber's hopes, expectations, and excitement about engaging with a new book. The Bookshelf Tour, another popular format, gives an impression of the BookTubers' collection, usually as a long series of shots of books standing in front of their shelf with the BookTuber reading out their title and author and commenting only on special features (e.g. an illustrated copy or a collectors edition) or on the fact that they own multiple editions of this book, but withholding comments or recommendations, since these videos tend to be quite long already.

The prominent role of formats such as the BookHaul, the TBR and the Bookshelf Tour suggests that a large part of the appeal of BookTube is not so much the reviewing of specific books in a traditional sense (for which the blog, podcast, or even a Goodreads review offer seemingly more 'natural' fora), but presenting and performing bookishness, a term by which we mean the performative demonstrations of one's love of and deep involvement with books and book-related culture and objects, as a lifestyle. In the following, we want to take a closer look at two main features that stand out in these formats, but also in many other BookTube practices: the use of book culture for identity construction, and the fetishization of the book as a material object. Both these tendencies could be read as signs of cultural decline, fitting in with the above-cited comment by Sarah Fay about the superficiality and the consumerist orientation of the new book culture. However, as we will argue in the following, this is a simplistic way of understanding booktubernet practices, and one that also rests on a limited understanding of traditional book culture and its alleged disinterestedness.

3. Identity Construction through BookTube

The idea of expressing one's individuality through the kinds of books one reads is neither new nor extravagant: many readers will have glanced at others' book shelves to assess their reading taste and, by extension, their level of culture, and perhaps even hoped to gain an insight into their character. Following Pierre Bourdieu's conception of society as made up of different fields, i.e. semi-separate spheres in which individuals are positioned in relation to each other and in which certain forms of 'capital' are worth more than others, this makes perfect sense. Books as what Bourdieu calls objectified cultural capital at least suggest an

thus far been examined only in a number of unpublished master theses and seminar papers, e.g. Katharina Albrecht. "Positioning BookTube in the Publishing World: An Examination of Online Book Reviewing through the Field Theory." Master Thesis. Leiden University, 2017 and Priscilla Kind. "The Effect of Online Influencers on Young Adult Literature and its Audience: The Negative Response to Veronica Roth's *Carve the Mark*." Master Thesis. Utrecht University, 2017.

incorporated cultural capital and thus hint at a certain *habitus*, a set of dispositions (including tastes, views, goals, and capital) agents develop in response to the environments they grew up in, and which in turn makes them more or less well-adapted to a field. Investing capital in an attempt to distinguish themselves from others, who do not possess this specific capital in the same amount, be this the cultural capital of book culture, scientific learning or football fandom, social, or economic capital, positions these agents in the field and, by extension, in society more general.⁵³

The aspect of book culture as an expression of one's *habitus* and cultural capital is writ large on BookTube. While one may not have the opportunity to scrutinize the book shelf of one's opposite in day-to-day interactions, BookTube offers more than enough material for the bookish voyeur. From TBRs to BookHauls to Bookshelf Tours or videos of vloggers rearranging their bookshelves, there are plenty of formats operating with the understanding that the videos not only say something about the book, but also about the community, including both the individual content creator and the viewer. Within the community, they are often viewed as a marker of the "reading character" of a poster, as Ariel Bissett, a Canadian Book Tuber who frequently posts meta-videos about various aspects of BookTube and its codes and practices, explains. According to Bissett, book hauls are not only a chance for the BookTuber to express their excitement over recently acquired but yet unread books (excitement and passion, which are with Bourdieu expressions of a certain *habitus*, being continuously identified as key quality of good BookTubers), but also offer the viewer "a sample of [the poster's] personality without any prerequisites", such as having to have read a certain book or even caring about the genre or theme of the books acquired.⁵⁴ Bissett likens watching a BookHaul to spending time with someone who is also excited about books.

Furthermore, BookHauls according to Bissett, "reveal a lot about the reader" in giving the viewer an impression of the kinds of books the poster purchased or was sent by publishers and their initial reaction to them, despite the fact that the vlogger may never actually read any of the books. As Bissett continues: BookHauls "celebrate books. Maybe I haven't read it yet, but that doesn't mean you're [sic] not excited about it. It doesn't mean that you're not sharing *books*. I'm still spreading literacy [sic!], I'm still spreading just a deep love of literature and it doesn't matter if I haven't read them yet, you know, you're still learning about new books." The excitement about the matter expressed in every aspect of Bissett's highly agitated discussion (ranging from her intonation to her gesticulation and the jump cut editing typical of most vlog-style YouTube videos that heightens the pace and emotion carried over to the viewer) is as typical of BookTube as it is of other YouTube review and vlogging communities.

⁵³ On Bourdieu's theory of capitals see Pierre Bourdieu. "Ökonomisches Kapital, kulturelles Kapital, soziales Kapital." In: Reinhardt Kreckel (Ed.) *Soziale Ungleichheit*. Göttingen 1983, pp. 183-198; here pp. 189-190. On the larger interplay between field, *habitus* and capital see e.g. Pierre Bourdieu. *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London 1986.

⁵⁴ Ariel Bissett "Why Do BookTubers Make Book Hauls?" *Youtube* 17 May 2017. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HW6Uskb2cas>>. Last access May 17 2018.

In the development of an idiom that foregrounds excitement and personal engagement as a way of discussing literature, BookTube amplifies tendencies that already distinguished the popularization of reading formats of the 1990s, such as Oprah Winfrey's Book Club, from more traditional ways of discussing literature. Whereas in the traditional review format, critics and facilitators of literature (the occasional Marcel Reich-Ranicki notwithstanding) tend to step back behind the work, typically attempting to speak with the authority of received culture and taste acquired through training, BookTubing is a highly personality-driven format. While on the *Guardian* website, the desired attitude seems to be a balance of personal reading experience and more 'academic' discussion, BookTubers stress time and again that their reviews and videos reflect only their personal taste and opinion. They are very careful not to make any universalizing claims about a book's quality, often following this disclaimer with an apology should they disregard a book the viewer likes – an apology sometimes repeated several times when they feel they disagree with a popular trend or taste on BookTube. In contrast to *The Guardian*'s Sam Jordison's restraint and his minimal interaction with the camera in those videos he does share, BookTubers go in the opposite direction: some of the most popular videos include conscious dramatic overacting, humor, over-the-top props and costuming, or other forms of quirkiness and goofiness. Videos by Christine Riccio (PolandbananaBOOKS) and Sasha Alsberg (A Book Utopia), for instance, periodically include little dance sequences with music that are edited into their uploads or segments in which the YouTuber is having a laughing fit, is stumbling over her own words, and other 'screw ups' that are only half edited out in a willfully amateurish bow to YouTube's non-professional aesthetic or – in a more Hollywoodish manner provided as separate blooper videos.

All of these aspects make the presenters seem more at home in an online world than in one of high culture or professional journalism, and this – in fact – is exactly the point of many posters and viewers who see BookTube not as a space for academic discussions, but rather as a place to share their enthusiasm. The performative enthusiasm which distinguishes BookTube from more sedate sites like the Guardian Reading Group is a crucial characteristic of the most successful BookTubers, who, through their posts, build a persona not merely (and possibly not even primarily) by the books they read, but by how they present them – and by extension themselves – to the community. It is true that, as Bissett remarks,⁵⁵ viewers neither have to know the books discussed in a Haul, nor even care about their genre in order to engage with a video, precisely because they are watching primarily an affective, often minimally scripted identity performance revolving around books rather than a long, thought-out review of any particular novel.

While the various BookTubers' identity performances in front of the camera and in comments differ, a common denominator of their videos is the emphasis on the central role of reading for self-cultivation. In the words of Christine Riccio (PolandbananaBOOKS):

Booktube makes you read books and books make you smarter is what it comes down to basically. I mean books open you up to new experiences, they make you more

⁵⁵ Ariel Bissett "Why do BookTubers Make BookHauls?"

compassionate, it makes you a better writer, it makes you a better thinker. There are so many benefits that come with reading and the traditional education systems tends to make reading seem like a giant chore. If it's a giant chore, it's not something that you wanna go out and do on your own and when you come to BookTube you kind of learn to love reading. And that is something very, very valuable. You know if you love reading then you're going to go out and pursue more books and you're gonna just keep learning and evolving and broadening your horizon as a human being.⁵⁶

Riccio's attitude towards books exemplifies a larger cultural trend. While the idea of reading as an important form of self-education has a long tradition, not least playing a central role in the thinking of Enlightenment philosophers such as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, there is a more current tendency to valorize the practice of reading (in particular novel reading) as such, almost regardless of content.⁵⁷ Jim Collins has examined the way in which the belief in book reading as an act of self-improvement is reflected in contemporary novels, for example in the description of a character in Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*: "[S]he is in search of self-cultivation hoping to improve her mind, and her reading allows her to separate herself from mind-numbing quotidian concerns even while immersed in them at the supermarket." However, while it is still important for Cunningham's character that "she is not a genre reader,"⁵⁸ BookTubers have gone further in disregarding canonical ideas of 'valuable' literature. Genre reading is by and large the most popular category on BookTube, and many BookTubers even celebrate their deviation from received ideas of 'literariness' as a strength or an alternative knowledge culture, while at the same time ascribing the same positive values to their reading that traditionally have been withheld by those in positions of cultural authority from readers of popular genres. Choosing words strongly resonating with neo-liberal identity politics, BookTuber Marisa (littlespider9), furthermore, positions BookTube in direct opposition to formal literary education and describes it as "a safe space for reading enthusiasm" that results in more diverse reading and a "healthier reading community."⁵⁹

Marisa's comment moreover points to another crucial aspect of the identity politics of book culture according to BookTube, and a desire to a lesser extent also implicit in the development of the Guardian Reading Group: to integrate one's individual reading into a communal practice. This is also reflected in a self-description formulated by Riccio, who stresses that meeting other readers in high school "was so rare" and that now that she has found BookTube, "I have that on an everyday basis in my internet community and it's amazing." Going on with her characteristic enthusiasm, Riccio adds: "I've never had a real book club until the internet. And they became my book family. And I guess not just a book club, and it's made my life so much more fun."⁶⁰ The sentiment seems widely popular among BookTubers and captures the essence of how many of them would classify their

⁵⁶ Ariel Bissett. "Is Booktube Educational?" *Youtube* 25 April 2018. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kB7o10Z2xC4>>. Last accessed 18 May 2018.

⁵⁷ For a more extended analysis see Dorothee Birke. *Writing the Reader*, especially pp. 169-171.

⁵⁸ Jim Collins. *Bring on the Books*, p. 41.

⁵⁹ Ariel Bissett. "Is Booktube Educational?"

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

relations with the real world and their online community. As one cruises BookTube or other online self-descriptions of BookTubers and book bloggers, this is perhaps the most-cited reason for why they are involved in online book communities and a central aspect for why they remain engaged. They understand BookTube not only as a source for learning about new books or for getting recommendations, but as a community: a network of people with shared values and practices organized around a mutual object of interest.

This is also where the issues of identity construction and community participation intersect. BookTube offers users a community that allows for the “intersection of identity production and knowledge exchange,” in the words of Sorensen and Mara, and it is the shared object of interest that marks part of the appeal of the community.⁶¹ Many activities, meanwhile, are not about the exchange of knowledge *per se*, but about an expression of identity directed at a community. When BookTubers document their reading experiences and progress in reading challenges in longer, often more personal clips consisting of an introduction establishing a connection to a reading challenge going on in the community or by formulating goals, followed by short clips edited together in which the YouTuber records her experience, thoughts and progress during the Read-a-thon, but at the same time provides glimpses into her private life, viewers are granted access that goes beyond the object of interest.⁶² It is in such videos and in videos that are largely un-book-related (such as life updates or certain tag formats, e.g. the boyfriend tag) that BookTubers express themselves not merely as a ‘reading personality’ but as private individuals (and members of a certain generation). The interaction between these kinds of private vlogs and more clearly book-centered videos expresses most clearly what is also true for YouTube as a whole, namely that expressions of identity become only truly meaningful when they are acknowledged by a community that bestows recognition on the BookTuber as a fellow reader and community member. At the same time, the addresses and inclusions into a participatory virtual community of self-identified readers which

⁶¹ Karen Sorensen and Andrew Mara. “BookTubers as a Networked Knowledge Community.”; p. 89.

⁶² In such videos Australian BookTuber Little Book Owl (Catriona Feeney), for instance, shows herself driving or walking to work, in hotel rooms while traveling for work, in bed sick and without makeup, or interacting with her boyfriend in various places of the home as she comments on her days and progress during a Read-a-Thons. This way of sharing of glimpses into a private life is so common in the community that it has produced parodies (e.g. PolandBananaBOOKS. „READING FOR 24 HOURS | READATHON VLOG“ *YouTube* 06 Feb 2018. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5f5qStx5jcl>>. Last Access 30 May 2018. in which Riccio complains about others not ‘taking seriously’ the idea of reading for 24 hours straight because they take breaks and shows herself reading *Twilight* while taking a shower, meeting a Tinder date, and ‘comforting’ a friend whose dog just died). The dynamic between vlogger and audience has also led to some BookTubers expressing the ‘need’ to update their followers on events that have taken place in their lives that do not pertain to reading at all. Reagan Perusse (Peruse Project), for instance, is has produced a number of videos in which she gives the viewer e.g. a virtual tour of her apartment or talks about her boyfriend moving out because he took a job in New York “to prevent speculation” when he does not feature in her online life as much anymore (Peruse Project “Life Update: My Boyfriend is Moving Out + Leaving Chicago.” *YouTube* 12 May 2018. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCTClqSFOcw>>. Last Accessed 30 May 2018.).

such videos engage in create the BookTube community, making identity formation and community building reciprocal and mutually dependent performative acts.

Like any community, BookTube depends on participation, but the forms are distinct, as are the ways in which BookTubers invite their followers to participate. Apart from the typical YouTube call to 'action': 'comment, like, subscribe' and the direction of viewers to the BookTuber's other social media channels, there are certain forms that are particular to collaborative action on BookTube. We have already discussed Read-a-thons, but there are other forms which at least implicitly encourage communal activity: among these are reading challenges, during which BookTubers and viewer are encouraged to move beyond their usual reading habits (e.g. by reading in a different genre or by reading minority writers), "tag" videos, or collaborative videos which create direct connections between certain BookTubers. Read-alongs more explicitly encourage reader interaction about a specific book. Here viewers read a certain book at the same time with a BookTuber and can then watch and react to a video about this book or during a Hangout discussion between several BookTubers.

Lastly, "how to" videos, ranging from thematic suggestions such as "how to get over a reading slump" (i.e. a period during which you do not read as much as you would like to) or how to prepare for a Read-a-thon to suggestions for setting up your own BookTube channel, contribute to establishing a sense of a community that shares similar challenges (e.g. not finding enough time to read), helps others, and is open to participation from all, since its entry level is relatively low. You do not need technical expertise, expensive equipment or a degree in literature, these videos tell their viewers. All you need is enthusiasm and a love of books.

Understanding BookTube as a community also throws into sharp relief the role of book culture as a means to acquire symbolic capital, in Bourdieu's sense (i.e. recognition within the community bestowed on the basis of a perceived authenticity, trust in a BookTubers honesty, taste and knowledge of her chosen genre [her cultural capital], or a particularly engaging persona in her videos). BookTubers share in, but also add their own twist to values about literature and its relation to and effect on the individual that have been carried over and transformed from their 19th century bourgeois origins. Building on notions of "taste" and "sensibility," which, as Raymond Williams explains "were essentially unifying concepts, in class terms, and could be applied over a very wide range from public and private behaviour to (as Wordsworth complained) either wine or poetry," these "subjective definitions of apparently objective criteria" mask, in both the Marxist and the Bourdieusian understanding, historically grown, but to an extent arbitrary parameters as objective criteria that can then serve to at once justify and mystify real class distinctions on the cultural level.⁶³ The community of taste that has developed on BookTube around the idea of a "safe space for reading enthusiasm" of Young Adult fiction goes against the traditionally dominant knowledge cultures in both its material and its emotion-, content-, and character-focused endorsements of these books by disregarding both what and how one 'should' read, while maintaining the traditional idea of self-cultivation and self-

⁶³ Raymond Williams. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford, 1977; pp. 48-49. Cf. also Pierre Bourdieu. *Distinction*.

improvement.⁶⁴ In this way, BookTube (like other online cultures) is perhaps best understood as a semi-independent field in which success and hierarchies are afforded through symbolic recognition (or capital) that is most objectively measurable through views and followers, but whose terms are distinct, ranging from notions of perceived authenticity and trust to wide reading and a sparkling on-screen persona, all notions that are centered on the individual rather than on external factors like the institutionalized cultural capital of university degrees.

A final aspect of reading as a means for self-cultivation that is conspicuous on BookTube is the obsession with highlighting and measuring reading in quantitative terms, e.g. by the numbers of books or pages read in a month, a year, or during a Read-a-thon. This is a practice that is encouraged by the medial affordances of sites such as Goodreads, which make reading immediately measurable in unprecedented ways, but also by the mainstream notions of self-improvement and -refinement now associated with reading culture. If reading has been transformed “into a heroic fetish” (in the words of Tom Leitch),⁶⁵ then reading more is more heroic (as implied, for instance, by Oprah’s repeated insistence of the number of pages of the more massive books she chooses).⁶⁶

Added to this personal imperative, reading a lot and staying on top of what is popular on BookTube also becomes a necessity if we regard BookTube as a field or marketplace (again, following Bourdieu) in which many individual posters strive (knowingly or not) to maximize their following and their symbolic standing within that community. The medium-level BookTuber Joce (squibblesreads) is one of many who argue that some individuals, particularly content creators, see BookTube not merely as a non-committal place for sharing opinions about books and reading, but feel pressured to read more or particular trending books, resulting in what she terms “reading fatigue.”⁶⁷ Individuals on BookTube, in this way, are caught between awareness and rejections of bourgeois categories of taste formation. They also have to negotiate between finding a space where they can give public expression for a love of reading that is voluntary (as opposed to the required reading in schools and colleges to which many contrast it) and neo-liberal pressures for self-optimization. The latter oscillates between encouragement to engage in a cherished activity and pushing readers to read larger amounts than

⁶⁴ We are aware that this is a universalizing statement that does not adequately reflect all the nuances of what is in effect a much more diverse community. There are BookTubers who hold literature degrees (Bissett being one of them) and who use ‘legitimate’ knowledge, including literary and cultural criticism, to analyze the novels they discuss as well as BookTube itself, and there are those who focus on or at least include the ‘classics’ that are also studied in schools and universities. The dominant trend of BookTube, however, is a different one, as described in this article.

⁶⁵ Thomas Leitch. “Strange Bedfellows: The Post-Literary Novel, the Devoutly-Literary Novel, and the Media Revolution That Was Supposed to Kill Them but Gave Them Life Instead.” Review of Jim Collins. *Bring on the Books for Everybody. Adaptation* 5, no.1 (2011): pp.119-123, p. 119. Collins. *Bring on*, pp. 221-266.

⁶⁶ E.g. Oprah’s promotion of Ken Follett’s *The Pillars of the Earth*. Ken Follett. “The Pillars of the Earth - Oprah Loves the Book.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2j5wCSyrg18>. Last accessed 20 May 2018.

⁶⁷ Squibblesreads. “I am Frustrated with Booktube.” *Youtube* 30 Nov 2017. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybL8ofOir7A>>. Last accessed 20 May 2018.

they might wish for, did they not feel under the gaze of others, or to read popular books in order to gain followers and symbolic standing in the community.

4. BookTube, Materiality, and the Commodification of Reading

If the reader as a person plays a central role on BookTube, the same can be said of the book as a material object. Videos in which acquired but (as yet) often unread books are publicly displayed in ways not seen since Jay Gatsby's library of uncut books may scream consumerism and commodification to the outside viewer.⁶⁸ A closer analysis can show, however, that BookTubers' interest in the conspicuous consumption of books cannot simply be dismissed as a sign of shallowness or a superficial understanding of book culture and the learning it signifies. Rather, it is a complex and central feature of their more openly identity-driven approach to reading. It is worth noting, as well, that BookTube highlights aspects that are rarely entirely absent from bourgeois reading and book buying as cultural practices. Instead, millennial book lovers' expressions of their involvement in literary culture connect to earlier modes of practicing book culture, even if they do not show the disavowal of the money economy that the more established agents in the field of cultural production and consumption deem appropriate.⁶⁹

If we look at the form of (re)presentation of the book as a material object, the quality of the book as a printed object is central to the special medial aesthetics of the video log. Following similar codes as other product review and haul videos on YouTube, in which the object discussed is likewise repeatedly displayed to the viewer, most BookTubers hold the book they discuss in their hand and show it to the camera repeatedly. It seems a logical conclusion that a nicely designed cover and sleeve are more presentable and impressive than the same e-reader being shown week after week, and book shelves make seemingly natural backdrops for a discussion of literature, but this is not all. The book as a material object also fulfils an older symbolic function that has not (yet) been fully transferred to other forms of literature such as e- or audiobooks. Little Book Owl (Catriona Feeney) in her comparison of e-books and physical books makes several of the points most frequently brought up in the community that reveal the special symbolic significance assigned to material books, especially hardcovers. Lovingly caressing and interacting with a printed book, she highlights "the physicality", its appearance, feel, smell, and states that "seeing a shelf full of books brings me so much joy." While Feeney, like many other BookTubers (e.g. PolandBanasBOOKS or Jesse the Reader) admits the greater practicality of e-readers, particularly when traveling, her last words are a declaration of love to the book as material object: "I will never stop loving the physical book. No matter what. No ... matter ... what! Because the funny thing is if I get a book on my Kindle for really cheap, I read it and I enjoy it, I'll most likely go and pick up a physical copy of that book."⁷⁰

⁶⁸ F. Scott Fitzgerald. *The Great Gatsby*. London, 1994, pp. 51-52.

⁶⁹ This argument again builds on Pierre Bourdieu. *The Field of Cultural Production*, e.g. pp. 74-76.

⁷⁰ Little Book Owl. "EBOOK vs PHYSICAL BOOK." *YouTube* 8 Oct 2014. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tlqZYGPUik>>. Last accessed 30 June 2018.

Holding and possessing the printed (especially hardcover) book as an expression of love of the object as object thus identifies the BookTuber as a bibliophile. The book is employed (knowingly or not) to bestow symbolic capital and show distinction in a way that the digital object (still) cannot call forth. The countless discussions of organization of shelf space, acquiring new (physical) books in book hauls, unboxings of books and book-related paraphernalia, as well as discussions of getting rid of old books as a way of high-grading one's collection, plus frequent references to books lying around everywhere, are all employed in part as a celebration of one's bookishness and immersion into all literature-related things.

Although this is usually not the primary intention, presenting a book on BookTube at least in part entails promoting the book as a commodity (hence the willingness of publishers to send free books to popular BookTubers or even pay them for the creation of content).⁷¹ BookTube thus becomes tightly integrated into capitalist circles of conspicuous consumption and promotion that are typical of (and thus in part normalized by) other YouTube communities that likewise do hauls, e.g. the beauty community. On BookTube, as Albrecht writes, content providers "practice, celebrate and normalize the frequent purchasing of books," whereas non-commercial alternatives, such as borrowing books from friends or the library are "not nearly as prominently addressed,"⁷² a fact that has led some within the community to address the economic pressures and unspoken privilege of BookTube.⁷³ In fact, even those video formats that are about *not* buying books, such as un hauls (a challenge to sort out unread or unloved books – usually at least implicitly to buy more books) or book buying bans (periods in which BookTubers promise not to purchase any new books) reinforce, if anything, the normality of buying books. Book buying and owning is part of one's identity as a reader, these videos suggest, a lifestyle choice rather than an economic transfer that needs to be sustained through earning an income. It is addictive, but it is an addiction that one can be proud of, since reading, after all, is good for you.

⁷¹ For an anecdotal account of the money economy's involvement in BookTube from a content providers' side, see Emmabooks. "How BookTubers Make Money." *Youtube* 19 Nov 2016. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYa8bJkad-w>>. Last Accessed 20 May 2018.

⁷² Albrecht. "Positioning BookTube," p. 32.

⁷³ This is a debate that resurfaces periodically. A few years ago Ariell Bissett found herself at the center of a controversy after she uploaded a video (later deleted) in which she talked about why she preferred buying books to using the libraries, which spawned a number of angry comments and response videos in which people either said why they loved libraries or called Bissett and other BookTubers out on their privilege. Part of this debate was a video by BookTuber richardthebookfreak, who made a video entitled "I can't afford BookTube," which itself spawned a number of response videos, e.g. by South African BookTuber Sir Rainbow Skychild. Richardthebookfreak "I can't afford BookTube." *Youtube* 27 July 2015. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQp0ImB8o14>>. Last accessed May 19 2018. Sir Rainbow Skychild. "On Libraries – An (Angry) Response to Ariel Bissett [sic]." *Youtube* 26 Aug 2015. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjA7MYgQCS4>>. Last Accessed May 19 2018. Bissett later returned to the discussion by apologizing, admitting her privilege, and at the same time pointing out that "the internet does not let you change your opinion." Ariel Bissett. "So You've Been Publicly Shamed & Libraries on BookTube." *Youtube* 12 Nov 2016. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXsYRwU-12A>>. Last accessed 19 May 2018.

For the BookTubers themselves, the symbolic aspect of the book as an object that represents culture, individuation, and self-improvement through reading does not stand in contrast to its existence as a material commodified object. As noted above, BookTube is a community in which identity formation is expressed largely through the acquisition and ownership of books (the shared objects that bind the community together) or the discussion of books owned—ideally in the more expensive, more bibliophile hard back formats. Books thus become fetishes in the Marxian sense: their materiality and availability in the marketplace transforms them, seemingly by magic, into commodities that transcend their creators and whose social existence and signification depends on, but at the same time goes beyond, their mere material existence.

On top of the highly visible, direct promotion of individual books on BookTube and the lingering sense that you need to buy and to own books to be a truly contributing, book-loving member of that community, the platform contains another aspect of capital generation. For one thing, the videos often include links to online book sellers, such as the popular Book Repository, whose platforms are most easily integrated in the video descriptions, thus encouraging viewers to take the next step to become a consumer. What is more, viewers, commenters, and content providers contribute their data, as well as their free labor, to YouTube and other sites, which is mined for profit in a number of ways. As Lisa Nakamura points out in her discussion of *Goodreads*, social media sites use metadata and algorithmic analysis towards a new, optimized business model in which “consumption is premised on the transformation of the consumer from subject to object of capitalist accumulation.”⁷⁴ Often owned by giants like Amazon [Goodreads], Google [YouTube], or Facebook [Facebook, Instagram], the social media sites that provide the platforms for a fundamental part of the booknet are part of a transformation of the medial marketplace, by virtue of their extraction of data as “raw material”.⁷⁵ If we take this into account, millennial book culture on the internet is embedded in and partakes of larger social processes of capitalist restructuring in ways which exceed that of more old-fashioned arenas like the *Guardian* Reading Club.

5. Conclusion

Although evocations about the future of reading, from the Delevingne Instagram post to Birkert’s monograph, often involve a play on the oppositions between “old” book and “new” media culture, a closer inspection has revealed a more complex interplay between media more in line with Jenkins’ idea of a “convergence culture.” This culture can be adequately described neither by a media conservatism, in which new media equal loss of (supposedly objective, transhistorical) ‘quality,’ nor by a new media enthusiasm, in which old media stand for a hierarchical system that should be overcome by new media’s (supposedly) greater democratic potential. As we have shown, such a juxtaposition of media cultures is wide off the mark of actual medial practices, and often rests on myths about ‘book culture,’ e.g.

⁷⁴ Lisa Nakamura. “‘Words with Friends.’ Socially Networked Reading on *Goodreads*.” *PMLA* 128.1 (2013): 238-243; here p. 241.

⁷⁵ Cf. Nick Srnicek. *Platform Capitalism*. Cambridge 2017, pp. 39, 40.

that it is non-commercial and not tied in with practices of self-representation. In fact, as our examination of the *Guardian* reading group and BookTube suggests, digital culture is adapting book culture in many ways.

Many of the emerging practices we have outlined are new in form, but point to continuities rather than ruptures in the development of media culture(s). In line with the multi-directional transformation of 'source' and 'adaptation' insisted on in post-structuralist adaptation theory, new media adaptations of old media reading practices can thus serve to throw into relief aspects of reading culture that are still often buried in everyday discussions. As N. Katherine Hayles remarks, digital media can foster a new awareness of the materiality of print:

[D]igital media have given us an opportunity we have not had for the last several hundred years: the chance to see print with new eyes, and with it, the possibility of understanding how deeply literary theory and criticism have been imbued with assumptions specific to print. As we work towards critical practices and theories appropriate for electronic literature, we may come to renewed appreciation for the specificity of print.⁷⁶

New media discourse about reading, books, and literature can likewise lead us to reevaluate old practices of reading, particularly when we approach them through a contextual, historical lens. This reevaluation acknowledges the central (and ambivalent) role of commercialization in book publishing, promotion, and consumption that becomes much more apparent in the context of BookTube when millennials unabashedly engage in and post about book buying sprees (but which is also visible in the *Guardian* Reading Group through give aways or the presence of the *Guardian* book shop). But it goes beyond this aspect to e.g. the close link between media use and practices of social distinction, self-presentation, and identity formation and the codes according to which these function in different contexts.

The comparison of the different formats of BookTube and the *Guardian* Reading Group has shown that, while both adapt a type of reading and discussion that would once have taken place in face-to-face interaction of book clubs to a digital environment, they do so in radically different ways. This difference, however, is one of age and social context rather than mere mediality. Each in its own way utilizes the possibilities of digital media to present content and facilitate exchange about it, but the people who shape and use these sites approach book culture from two different social positions. The *Guardian* Reading Group is part of the digitalization strategy of a traditional newspaper and appears on a website which overall is addressed to an audience that is still quite at home in print culture and, perhaps even more importantly, certain received ways of speaking about this culture and the values it connotes. Conversely, BookTube is facilitated largely by and for digital natives.

This means that we are dealing with two different groups who choose to express their reading cultures in two fora with vastly divergent cultural and medial contexts and ecologies. The *Guardian* Reading Group remains relatively close to the bourgeois reading culture we as academics are most familiar with. The bookish

⁷⁶ N. Katherine Hayles. *Writing Machines*. Cambridge, MA 2002, p. 33.

subcommunities on the internet, from Tumblr via Instagram to YouTube, on the other hand, are connected not only to books and bookishness, but also to each other, due to their users' mobility across social media sites. More importantly, these communities do not constitute a closed network of the bookternet, but are also connected to the respective (social media) sites on which they exist, forming subcommunities of e.g. Youtube or Instagram. This is important, since they in many ways adhere to the codes and medial affordances of these platform. As a result, BookTubers need to be studied not only as millennials doing book culture online (rejecting some notions of book culture while embracing others), but also as a distinctive community within YouTube that is at once part of the larger community of content providers on that site and a distinct subcommunity in its own right.⁷⁷

Looked at within a YouTube context, some of the formats are unique to books and BookTube, e.g. Read-a-thons, read alongs, and TBRs, while others, such as Hauls, UnBoxings, and Tags, are shared with other communities, e.g. the beauty community. At the same time, looked at from the perspective of analogue book culture and book clubs, the notion of reading together with a group, exchanging ideas and discussing themes, characters, and plot is very familiar indeed. Interestingly, reviews, whether individual videos or parts of a wrap-up, sit on the fence, being both a feature of traditional book culture and in the particular form they take on BookTube very much akin to other product reviews on YouTube. The book as material object, for instance, is foregrounded by being held up to the camera or by discussion of its cover, print, smell etc., meaning that a level of attention is devoted to these paratextual features that would be highly unusual for a traditional review, except in the case of the most materially experimental novel.

Let us now, as a final step, widen our perspective even further to include society more fully. As we have shown, the *Guardian* Reading Groups' set-up attests to a belief in the integral place of book culture in an evolving medial environment. On the one hand, the site utilizes book culture's eminent adaptability to participatory practices often identified with a tendency towards popularization. On the other, it also retains affinities to traditional hierarchies of taste and professionalized book reviewing. Many BookTubers, in contrast, vocally reject formal discussions of books, opting instead for more affect-centered discussions of titles that often fall outside the classical canon of 'serious' literature, even if there are also a number of channels that include classics or, like Ariel Bissett, attempt to bring together academic learning and BookTube culture. Nevertheless, the distinction between high, middlebrow, and popular culture is not a major issue for most BookTubers in their choice or reading, for in this subcommunity a kind of book that is still largely marginal in academic culture, YA genre fiction, guarantees the highest return of investment in the form of symbolic recognition in the form of followers, views, likes, comments, links, response videos and recognition be it as followers. Moreover, as we have shown, reading in itself acquires the type of consecration that, in more traditional circles, is reserved only for *certain kinds* of reading.

⁷⁷ After a cursory look into these sites' book communities, we expect that the same goes for Booklr, Bookstagram, etc.

As we have suggested, it thus makes sense to examine BookTube as a subfield within the larger field of cultural production and consumption that develops its own twists on practices and principles of consecration and evaluation. This subfield, however, like all (sub)fields, does not exist in isolation, but is embedded within the larger field of cultural production and consumption, and stands in relation to what Bourdieu calls “the field of power,” i.e. the social and political power relations in a given society.⁷⁸ Viewed within the larger field of cultural production and consumption and the field of power, participating in the *Guardian* Reading Group equips one better with regard to the kind of book-specific capital acquired, since it is much closer to the type of capital guarded and sanctioned by those in positions of cultural and societal power.⁷⁹ Book culture online transforms reading, to be sure, and this transformation might in the long run affect the field as a whole, but this change is slow and up against the resilience of a field in which the established agents have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. Moreover, as we have hinted at in the beginning, many of the most successful BookTube ‘challengers’ to traditional reading culture, in fact, come from very similar class positions as those of an older, established, generation and share many of their values, e.g. that reading is important. It would thus not be surprising if, with age and education, they ‘came around’ to more established cultural norms and values through the ‘magic’ of cultural and societal reproduction.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Pierre Bourdieu. *The Field of Cultural Production*, pp. 37-40; 161-175.

⁷⁹ It should be noted, however, that those who post on BookTube acquire other types of cultural capital that may be convertible in some markets, such as the ability to create and edit videos a hand for online communication. In rare cases even the social and symbolic capital of followers on BookTube is convertible into other kinds of capital, as in the case of Catriona Feeney (Little Book Owl), who managed to transition professionally into digital marketing for Bloomsbury Publishing, presumably in part by her experience on BookTube and involvement in the YA community. It should be noted, however, that this experience does not stand by itself but is backed up by internships, a B.A. degree in English etc.

⁸⁰ We would like to thank Rosa Schwenger for serving as our expert on BookTube and for her comments on an earlier version of this article.