Second Language Learning and Teaching
Issues in Literature and Culture

Jacek Mydla
Małgorzata Poks
Leszek Drong *Editors*

Multiculturalism, Multilingualism and the Self: Literature and Culture Studies

Springer

Second Language Learning and Teaching

Issues in Literature and Culture

Series editor

Mirosław Pawlak, Kalisz, Poland

More information about this series at http://www.springer.com/series/13879

Jacek Mydla · Małgorzata Poks
Leszek Drong
Editors

Multiculturalism, Multilingualism and the Self: Literature and Culture Studies

Springer

Editors
Jacek Mydla
University of Silesia in Katowice
Sosnowiec
Poland

Leszek Drong
University of Silesia in Katowice
Sosnowiec
Poland

Małgorzata Poks
University of Silesia in Katowice
Sosnowiec
Poland

ISSN 2193-7648 ISSN 2193-7656 (electronic)
Second Language Learning and Teaching
ISSN 2365-967X ISSN 2365-9688 (electronic)
Issues in Literature and Culture
ISBN 978-3-319-61048-1 ISBN 978-3-319-61049-8 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-61049-8

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017944296

Printed on acid-free paper

This Springer imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Contents

Editors and Contributors

About the Editors

Jacek Mydla is Assistant Professor at the Institute of English Cultures and Literatures, University of Silesia, Poland. He holds an MA in philosophy (the Catholic University of Lublin) and in English (the University of Silesia), as well as a Ph.D and a postdoctoral degree in literary studies. He conducts research and lectures in the history of British literature, specifically Gothic fiction and drama, and theory of narrative. His book-length publications are as follows: *The Dramatic Potential of Time in Shakespeare* (2002), *Spectres of Shakespeare* (2009; a study of appropriations of Shakespeare's drama by early English Gothic authors and playwrights), and *The Shakespearean Tide* (2012; a study of representations of human time in Shakespeare's plays). Forthcoming is a book on the ghost stories of M. R. James. In his recent articles, in Polish and English, Mydla has been concerned with romantic drama, British empiricism in the eighteenth century, and the uncanny and supernatural in fiction.

Małgorzata Poks, PhD, is Assistant Professor in the Institute of English Cultures and Literatures, University of Silesia, Poland. Her main interests concern spirituality, civil disobedience, Christian anarchism, contemporary US literature, US–Mexican border writing, and animal and environmental studies. She is a recipient of several international fellowships and has published widely in Poland and abroad. Her monograph *Thomas Merton and Latin America: A Consonance of Voices* was awarded "the Louie" by the International Thomas Merton Society.

Leszek Drong is Associate Professor in the Institute of English Cultures and Literatures at the University of Silesia, Poland. He is head of the Department of Rhetoric in Culture and the Media and director of the Centre for the Study of Minor Cultures. His major publications include *Disciplining the New Pragmatism: Theory, Rhetoric and the Ends of Literary Study* (Peter Lang Verlag 2006) and *Masks and Icons: Subjectivity in Post-Nietzschean Autobiography* (Peter Lang Verlag 2001) as well as numerous chapters concerned with autobiography, rhetoric, New Pragmatism (particularly Richard Rorty and Stanley Fish), and Irish fiction (James Joyce, Flann O'Brien, Sebastian Barry, Robert McLiam Wilson).

Contributors

Anthony David Barker University of Aveiro, Aveiro, Portugal

Kornelia Boczkowska Wydział Anglistyki UAM, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland

Joanna Bukowska The Faculty of Pedagogy and Fine Arts, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland

Urszula Gołębiowska University of Zielona Góra, Zielona Góra, Poland

Agnieszka Kliś-Brodowska Institute of English Cultures and Literatures, University of Silesia, Sosnowiec, Poland

Ewa Kębłowska-Ławniczak English Literature and Comparative Studies Section, Institute of English Studies, University of Wrocław, Wrocław, Poland

Ewa Klęczaj-Siara Casimir Pulaski University of Technology and Humanities in Radom, Radom, Poland

Agnieszka Łowczanin Department of British Literature and Culture, University of Łódź, Łódź, Poland; Instytut Filologii Angielskiej, University of Łódź, Łódź, Poland

Dorota Malina Chair of Translation and Intercultural Communication, Philological Department, Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland

Małgorzata Poks Department of American and Canadian Studies, Institute of English Cultures and Literatures, University of Silesia, Sosnowiec, Poland

Barbara Poważa-Kurko Witold Pilecki State School of Higher Education, Oświęcim, Poland

Jadwiga Uchman University of Łódź, Łódź, Poland

Andrzej Wicher University of Łódź, Łódź, Poland

Edyta Wood Institute of Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics, Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz, Bydgoszcz, Poland

Introduction

It is a tired cliché to insist that multiculturalism is an important social and political phenomenon. Multiculturalism has been with us for so long that in most developed societies, we have grown disenchanted with its original appeal and promise. It has, *ad nauseam*, been studied, discussed, condemned, vindicated, and finally proved unfeasible (or has it?). Still, illusory as it may seem, the multicultural project has produced tangible consequences. These include an abundance of cultural productions which attest to the vibrancy of the multicultural utopia. What our book seeks to reflect is the richness of those productions and the potential of this utopia to inspire writers and other creators. *Multiculturalism, Multilingualism and the Self: Literature and Culture Studies* is a tribute to how the very idea of multiculturalism affects not only the fictional characters analyzed by the authors of the chapters in this volume but also individual selves who contribute to cultures and their variety.

Multiculturalism, Multilingualism and the Self: Literature and Culture Studies is the second of two volumes of chapters concerned with the effect of multiculturalism and multilingualism on the self.[1] In our book, the primary focus is on the notion of multiculturalism itself and its cultural representations. We deliberately seek to remove this notion from its most sensitive social and ethnic contexts in order to see how it has been transformed by creative imaginations of various cultural agents. The first part of the book ("Selves, Identities and Cultural Differences—Literary Perspectives") considers strictly literary representations of multiculturalism in the context of the self, while the second ("Multiculturalism and the Self—Cultural Perspectives") is concerned with culture at large (including such themes as the film industry and game studies).

This book does not take sides in any debate on multiculturalism. We are not interested in addressing specific political issues. But, of course, they are there at the back of each contributor's mind: The notion of multiculturalism has been

[1]The first volume, published by Springer and edited by Danuta Gabrys-Barker, Adam Wojtaszek, Dagmara Galajda, and Pawel Zakrajewski, is: *Multiculturalism, Multilingualism and the Self: Studies in Linguistics and Language Learning.*

implicated in heated controversies and variously qualified to amplify its impasses and imperfections. For example, Stanley Fish, in one of the most spectacular chapters on multiculturalism to date, distinguishes between "strong" multiculturalism and "boutique" multiculturalism. What he finds crucial about strong multiculturalism is the notion of difference: "The politics of difference is what I mean by strong multiculturalism. It is strong because it values difference in and for itself rather than as a manifestation of something more basically constitutive."[2] For a strong multiculturalist tolerance is the name of the game, this principled position seems so entrenched that Fish is inclined to describe it as *uniculturalist* in the final analysis.[3] Boutique multiculturalism, in turn, is in Fish's view an untenable position because, even though "boutique multiculturalists admire or appreciate or enjoy or sympathize or (at the very least) 'recognize the legitimacy of' the traditions of cultures other than their own," they "will always stop short of approving other cultures at a point where some value at their center generates an act that offends against the canons of civilized decency as they have been either declared or assumed."[4] Fish's conclusion makes our task clear: We need to make a sharp distinction between multiculturalism as a philosophical problem and multiculturalism as a demographic fact.[5] Beyond that, our book aims to explore some of the cultural consequences of this demographic fact.

In Part I of *Multiculturalism, Multilingualism and the Self: Literature and Culture Studies*, most of the chapters revolve around the issues of identity, integrity, and diversity. Ewa Kębłowska-Ławniczak's chapter discusses these in the context of Ivan Vladislavić's novel *The Restless Supermarket*, which also problematizes the effect of a multilingual environment on the self. Next, a Western traveler's encounter with North Africa is explored in "The Self Between 'Two Incongruous and Incompatible Cultures' in Paul Bowles's *The Sheltering Sky*" by Urszula Gołębiowska. What Gołębiowska pays particular attention to is the consequences of the intercultural encounter: the incompatibility of the Western self with African space and culture; an expulsion of the white characters from the desert in the form of death and mental disintegration. In another chapter, "Kazuo Ishiguro's *Buried Giant* as a Contemporary Revision of Medieval Tropes" by Joanna Bukowska, multicultural issues are approached from a temporal angle, and the operative words in Bukowska's discussion of Ishiguro's novel are memory and forgetfulness.

American multiculturalism seems to be a case apart. The USA, a country that prides itself on its multicultural identity yet continues to oppress its minority groups through political, economic, and symbolic violence, is the backdrop to Ana Castillo's *So Far From God,* which Małgorzata Poks discusses from a feminist perspective. Poks concentrates on the critical representations of both

[2]Stanley Fish, "Boutique Multiculturalism" in: *The Trouble with Principle* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 60.

[3]Fish, p. 62.

[4]Fish, p. 56.

[5]See Fish, p. 63.

multiculturalism and Christian patriarchy in Castillo's novel. In another Anglophone country, the UK, Polish immigrants face serious dilemmas which are directly concerned with multicultural issues. Those dilemmas are explored in "Literary Presentations of Polish Immigrants in England: *Where the Devil Can't Go* by Anya Lipska and *Madame Mephisto* by A.M. Bakalar," by Barbara Poważa-Kurko. Jadwiga Uchman, in turn, in her chapter "'Convergence of Different Threads': Tom Stoppard's *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth*," is concerned with Stoppard's intertextual strategies which invite multilingual and, by extension, multicultural readings of his plays. In the last chapter in Part I, what comes to the fore in Andrzej Wicher's discussion of *The Canterbury Tales* by Chaucer as a multicultural work is the theme of cosmopolitanism seen in the character of the Shipman.

Part II of the volume, which places multiculturalism and the self in cultural perspectives, opens with Anthony D. Barker's wide-angled take on Hollywood representations of the world at large and the challenges posed by the arrival of sound to representing diverse language communities as well as marketing multilingual/multicultural films to foreign audiences. IMAX films, in turn, are the primary focus of Kornelia Boczkowska's contribution, which foregrounds the transnational and multicultural aspects of spaceflight in *Hail Columbia* (1982), *The Dream Is Alive* (1985), and *Destiny in Space* (1994). A relatively new arrival on the research scene, the interactive video game, may also be studied from the perspective of multiculturalism, as argued by Agnieszka Kliś-Brodowska. In her article, she develops an inquiry into the current state of research and outlines perspectives for further study.

Dorota Malina looks into the challenges posed by intercultural translations in her chapter "An Haughty Sniff versus a Spoonful of Sugar, or Who Is Mary Poppins?" Comparing the original book series with its Polish literary and American cinematic renditions, the author discusses the strategies employed by the respective translators and adapters and examines the resultant shifts in the main character's identity. The two final chapters in this volume shine a revealing light on the problematic character of US multiculturalism. While Ewa Klęczaj-Siara reads ethnic American children's literature in the perspective of ethnic authenticity, Edyta Wood is concerned with indigenous lives caught in between cultures as presented in the self-narratives of Sherman Alexie and Joy Harjo. All in all, both literary and cultural perspectives on the nexus of multiculturalism and the self yield a dazzling multiplicity: a kaleidoscope of options, visions, and positions. In all these contexts, multiculturalism expresses limitless potential for new patterns and narratives of identity.

Part I
Selves, Identities and Cultural Differences—Literary Perspectives

Fear of Multilingualism and the Uses of Nostalgia in Ivan Vladislavić's *The Restless Supermarket*

Ewa Kębłowska-Ławniczak

Abstract The article concentrates on the growing multilingual and multicultural diversity which Ivan Vladislavić's protagonist reads as impinging chaos. The fear of intelligibility enhances his efforts to defend the ordering standards associated with the English language. Indicating the conventional and arbitrary nature of standards indispensable for the protagonist's understanding of the world, the article traces their cultural limits. Further, it points to the fact that the protagonist must transcend his predilection for closure in order to respond to the multilingual environ. Finally, the article argues that, paradoxically, the discernible nostalgic undercurrent pervading South African literature and culture may facilitate the acceptance of a necessary disruptive, self-reflexive epistemology. Dwelling on the ambivalences of longing and belonging, travelling between the individual and the collective, between the present and the prospective future—the article proposes—nostalgia may become a screening device, a mediator that performs a comforting function.

Keywords Vladislavić · Multilingualism · Romanticism · Nostalgia

1 Introduction

Aubrey Tearle, a former proofreader and the protagonist of Ivan Vladislavić's novel, entitled *The Restless Supermarket*, aligns himself with the arbitrary and conventional system of standards he struggles to protect considering their correctness and transparency indispensable not only for his but also for a general

E. Kębłowska-Ławniczak (✉)
English Literature and Comparative Studies Section, Institute of English Studies, University of Wrocław, ul. Kuźnicza 22, 50-138 Wrocław, Poland
e-mail: ewa.keblowska-lawniczak@uwr.edu.pl

J. Mydla et al. (eds.), *Multiculturalism, Multilingualism and the Self: Literature and Culture Studies*, Issues in Literature and Culture,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-61049-8_1

understanding of the world.[1] The proofreader's efforts to oppose what is called the devolution of the English language[2] are futile and alienating. Moreover, Vladislavić seems to be pointing to their cultural limits. The growing disparity between Aubrey Tearle's belief in linguistic purity and the tangible materiality of language sign, including the materiality of the very texts submitted to the protagonist as a proofreader, facilitate the discovery of the limits. Tearle, whose professional obsession extends due to his hermeneutic sensibility, proofreads not only texts but also the city of Johannesburg and its inhabitants. His task is supposed to keep "the grey matter supple" the same way physical exercise should keep the body fit (RS,[3] p. 64). Textualising the body of the increasingly alien conurbation, Tearle infects the precious language standards. The more and more formless urban materiality—an aurally, visually and haptically experienced detritus—endangers the proofreader's sense of order. Some names become "tawty" (p. 20), a word Tearle is unable to find in any reference work, while others are reduced to monosyllabic chunks or "unfeeling stump[s] like Gav or Ern or Gord" (p. 20). In order to respond to the alienating otherness of the multilingual environ the protagonist must make an effort to transcend his predilection for closure. The article argues then that the pervasive sense of loss (including the loss of standards) and disappointment sustain a distinct and complex nostalgic undercurrent. Dwelling on the ambivalence of longing for what has been lost and the dilemma of belonging, travelling between the individual and the collective, between the present and the past, the present and the prospective future, nostalgia may become a screening device, a useful mediator that performs a paradoxically comforting function.

2 Multilingualism in South Africa

Ivan Vladislavić's *The Restless Supermarket* addresses a culturally and linguistically complex situation in post-apartheid South Africa where multilingualism poses a many-faceted dilemma. In 1953 The Bantu Education Act instituted mother tongue education in African languages but with a separatist and discriminatory purpose. Introduced in agreement with what is called Herderian or Romantic ideology of European nation-states (Woolard, 1998, p. 16), instruction in indigenous languages prevented the speakers from mixing rather than recognized the

[1]Tearle's approach is mediated by codes and conventions and therefore his reading, Marais writes, is neither direct nor immediate (p. 102).

[2]Helgesson refers to a spectrum of figurative meanings the term conveys. The *minoritisation* of English in (post)Apartheid South Africa is essential (p. 778). However, devolution refers also to the process of handing over and delegating powers of decision concerning, for instance correctness and propriety, to the new "owners" of the language. Towards the end of the discussion, I refer to this passing of ownership in regard to memory.

[3]All in-text references to *The Restless Supermarket* by Ivan Vladislavić use the following abbreviation: RS.

uniqueness of their cultural heritage. This policy led to an exclusion of young speakers from the mainstream of social life by imprisoning them in their culturally distinct, essential ethnic identities and linguistically "pure" communities, "nation-states" or Bantustans. A more empowering solution would have been offered to the young South African pupils, the users of more than nine languages (now 12 are recognized as official) had the learners been given an opportunity to choose between the indigenous languages and English as medium of education. The multilingual policy implemented in South Africa, as Weber writes, "was fuelled by an ideology of white supremacy and fear of linguistic and cultural heterogeneity" (p. 128). Under these circumstances, somewhat ironically, the multicultural policy forced the speakers of indigenous languages into marginalisation. On the other hand, an exclusive use of the English language, instead of the indigenous, would reduce, though in a different way, the important heritage of the native languages and threaten to impose a uniformity and neutrality articulated by cosmopolitan liberalism, a policy which disregards cultural and linguistic variety. For the white inhabitants, this difference-blind policy could serve as a weapon against bewilderingly rapid change and an increasing sense of insecurity.

The changes Vladislavić documents in his writing affected many spheres of life resulting in urban and linguistic forms of hybridity reflected, for instance, in yet another group of languages, i.e. in the multicultural and multilingual phenomenon of street lingo or urban vernaculars.[4] In *The Restless Supermarket* Vladislavić often refers to the vernacular, a language which has emerged along with urban alterations and which addresses the related social and cultural transformations in post-apartheid South Africa. What is called urban vernaculars consists in a mixture of languages that have emerged from the multilingual background. Their defining feature, according to Beck, is that their speakers "may not necessarily be able to develop full competence in each of the languages that make up the amalgam" (p. 25). Mixing lexicon and risking the loss of cultural integrity, the users of urban vernaculars show a general disrespect for rules. Like in the game of eponyms and their progenitors, played by Spilkin and Merle in Vladislavić's novel, rules are replaced by amusing combinations which bring together "Wellington" and "Plimsoll" (RS, pp. 91–92). The speakers are criticised by Aubrey Tearle, the character of a language purist, for their bad speech manners.

The thriving multilingual and multicultural diversity, which the embittered protagonist reads as impinging chaos, enhances his efforts to defend the ordering norms and, in that way, to save both the world, rapidly receding from grasp, and himself

[4]The terms are not precise. Kruger explains that street lingo, e.g. Flaaitaaal which combines Afrikaans morphology with lexical elements from Bantu is spoken by Black males (p. xx) and therefore emphasis is put on the black versus white. Mesthrie, whose study focuses on geographically specific communities, points to the fact that the component of Africaans is characteristic of Coloured communities rather than Black (p. 97), which involves much greater diversity. Urban vernaculars are used by young people. The sense of confusion and difficulty in classifying the eruptions of linguistic activity is reflected in Vladislavić's writing. In *The Restless Supermarket* he classifies as a lingo-user someone who speaks "isi-Sotho or whatever" (RS, p. 29).

from the danger of "being swept away" (RS, p. 74). The chaos he compares to *Sacco di Roma* (RS, p. 121) affects not only the universe of discourse but also the cityscape which, in its palimpsest, reveals bodies left unburied among "rusted pipes," "a reef of disorder" and a civilization that had gone to ruin (RS, pp. 12, 189). Soliloquizing on his own death in the area of Abel Road, he sees it as the ultimate loss of standards (RS, p. 239), "as a precipitate efflux of vocabulary and idiom… the whole adulterated brew spilt on the dirty macadam of an unmemorable corner of a lawless conurbation" (RS, p. 30). The potential dissolution of cultural and linguistic norms and the inevitable minoritisation of Standard English terrify the protagonist. The catastrophic visions strengthen his belief in the necessity of challenging the decline of standards in general by becoming a writer, i.e. a public intellectual. A former proofreader of telephone directories, he focuses on writing a book whose title advertises a local language competition: The Proofreader's Derby. A notebook for the time being, the manuscript contains a "System of Records," a collection of errors compiled by the conservative proofreader who decides to devote his retirement to the task of classifying and collating the *corrigenda* collected during the thirty years of his professional career (RS, p. 64). Spilkin, a retired optician and Aubrey's colleague from the Café Europa, originally a "club" (RS, p. 40), believes the book to be the true story of Aubrey Tearle's life, a peculiar form of life-writing in the form of index cards and, potentially, his intellectual autobiography (RS, p. 63). A perfect proofreader leaves no visible trace. Hence Aubrey hopes the book to become a visible and tangible memorial or heritage "through which [he] hope[s] to make a little mark, something of lasting value to which [his] name might be attached" (RS, p. 30), a monument to standards which need to be defended.

3 Sources of Linguistic Diversity

In *The Restless Supermarket*, the proliferation of non-standard linguistic diversity poses a threat to what the English language and literature have traditionally meant in South Africa, i.e. the romantic expression of inner truth. This disruptive diversity is enhanced by several factors, including the appearance of indigenous languages in public space, the arrival of the newcomers with their non-standard English (some from Yugoslavia and Poland), and by Americanisms spreading through popular media and global commerce. Aubrey Tearle classifies indigenous speech as inarticulate, animal-like "roaring and cursing," or "multilingual sobbing" (RS, p. 12), and thus an intrusion of the materiality of noise into the purity of the public realm. To him a streetwalker, who speaks in isi-Sotho, "cracks" and "tee-hees" (RS, p. 29). The deteriorating social standards and language manners affect also the protagonist, whom better words begin to fail. Even the proofreader "stoops" to such Wesselisms as "skop, skiet and donner" and their corollaries "snot and trane" (RS, p. 11), words originating in Africaans. The inflow of new vocabulary stimulates his linguistic investigations. Still, the origin of many words is disputable, for example "china" meaning "friend" (RS, p. 163) sounds either like Cockney English or evokes a

well-known pun from William Wycherley's comedy of manners but, as it turns out, can be derived from Bantu *umshana*. The newcomers, i.e. the immigrants, tellingly called Bogeymen, Bohemians or vagabonds (RS, pp. 129, 138), speak in varieties of sub-standard English littered with malapropisms and barbarisms (RS, p. 139). As Tearle discovers, the newcomers are unable to tell the difference between "boff," "buff" and "boffin" (RS, p. 139). On top of that linguistic mishmash, Americanisms multiply, for example the "spin-off" often used by the migrants. And so are other imports like the "chow-chow" used by Wessels on departure and borrowed from pidgin Chinese (RS, p. 139). The narrator notices the fashion for products with labels on the outside and their popularity among the newcomers who turn themselves into unsalaried sandwich-men. The fashion brings new commercial vocabulary into the public sphere, e.g. leatherama, cupboard-a-rama, veg-a-rama, and Glarebusters. In a restaurant serving more cosmopolitan food and conforming to global standards Tearle learns that "English not so good" (RS, p. 86), which may apply to both language and food. Insisting on the need to have standards of correctness, the conservative proofreader declares that when it comes to current usage he is "with Dr. Johnson" (RS, p. 236). However, he fails to notice the contemporary context within which "Magic Johnson" refers to the American basketball star rather than to the author of the famous dictionary. The purity of standards Tearle advocates is negatively revised by current usage. Moreover, it hinders rather than assists good communication.

4 Apartheid Discourse

Tearle's fear of miscegenation concerns more than language and in this respect echoes the demand for purity inherent in apartheid discourse while his efforts to preserve the correctness of a language severed from social and political reality reveal a nostalgic attachment to the romantic legacy. To a considerable extent, the fear of heterogeneity evokes comments on blood-mixing and bastardization J.M. Coetzee discusses in "Apartheid Thinking" (p. 173). Quoting from Geoffrey Cronjé, Coetzee points to the Apartheid conviction that mixed areas become dying-places for the whites, while "living-higgeldy-piggeldy," like the "mishmash-society," are conditions of social disorder denoting a lack of distinctions and mental confusion (p. 172). In *The Restless Supermarket*, the once elitist Café Europe admits an increasing mixture of guests speaking non-standard English: indigents in balaclava, the "new blood" (p. 149), Continentals, Slavs, and mustafinas (p. 273). The essential dichotomies collapse: inside versus outside (p. 254), private versus public (p. 152), and intuition versus reason. Emotions are no longer conceptualised so that the semantic boundaries between them obliterate—tears and laughter melt. Merouv Bonsma, a hybrid of a typist and a pianist, appears to be a repository "filled" with a "jumble of music that had been poured into her, like leftovers into an olla podrida," an "indiscriminate broth" (RS, p. 75). Instead of proper dining hours and "square meals" the restaurants serve "brunch," a "bastardized" form of dining (RS, p. 157).

Compared to a terrorist attack on a Heidelberg tavern, the final party brings Café Europe, the "philosophers" club, to an end (RS, p. 281). Even Tearle emerges from the experience of the bash curiously contaminated, looking like "a badly printed half-tone" (RS, p. 280), a tramp or a scavenger.

5 Romantic Legacy and the Dictionary

Though evoking romantic concepts, Vladislavić is not just a romantic writer. Neither is he a ruthless deconstructor of the romantic tradition.[5] The romantic legacy is signalled on the outskirts of the novel in its epigraphs, i.e. in the threshold zone of the paratextual surround, only to be interrogated by the implied reader. *The Restless Supermarket* is divided into three parts: "The Café Europa," "The Proofreader's Derby (Corrected)," and "The Goodbye Bash." The opening part converges around the disappearing institution of a social club (RS, p. 13) whose meetings used to cultivate the art of conversation and which deteriorates into "a family" meeting formula (p. 40). Part Two turns out to introduce a utopian city of the mind Tearle calls a "generous elsewhere," not a "home" but a place where he roams in his imagination (p. 24).The utopian project called Alibia promptly shows symptoms of infection. The closing part is devoted to a carnivalesque party which conflates the idea of the titular "bash" with that of a reunion. The novel as a whole and its subsequent parts are preceded by epigraphs. As Genette observes, "[t]he presence or absence of an epigraph in itself marks the period, the genre, or the tenor of the piece of writing" (p. 160). The romantic period, as opposed to realism, indulges in epigraphic excess in an effort to "integrate" the novel "into a cultural tradition" (p. 160). The epigraph, Genette observes, is a "password of intellectuality" (p. 160). Hence epigraphic excess in *The Restless Supermarket* seems to foreground a pedantic intellectuality and anchorage in tradition (including the romantic tradition), whose loss Tearle mourns writing up the monument of his intellectual autobiography he calls "The Proofreader's Derby." "I long therefore I am" is the romantic motto (Boym 2001, p. 13) the protagonist does not articulate directly but implements in his writing. Considering the desire for tradition that Tearle declares, it must be noticed that the opening epigraph is autographic as it is signed by Aubrey Tearle, the fictional author. Autographic epigraphs tend to function as preface. Genette suggests that apart from a lack of modesty they reveal disguised authorship attributed to a character. Indeed, the opening epigraph of *The Restless Supermarket* is not a quotation but a prefatory comment on the standards of purity and correctness whose guardian is the dictionary. Hence a dictionary utopia becomes the bedrock and the source of the "inner truth"—a dwarfed version of the

[5]Helgesson refers to Coetzee as a writer "operating in the twilight of the romantic era" (p. 781) and its deconstructor. Vladislavić bypasses such projects and instead of focusing on the expression "of the inner self" (p. 782), he focuses on the materiality of the sign.

romantic legacy. The effect is mildly ironic. "Where can we always find happiness?" asks the epigrapher and the epigraphed in one. "In the dictionary," is the answer Aubrey Tearle provides. In that way the tradition the proofreader invokes is anchored in language as it is codified in *The Pocket Oxford Dictionary*, "the incomparable fourth edition, revised and reprinted with corrections in 1957, henceforth referred to as 'the *Pocket*'" (RS, p. 20). Interestingly, the tendency to consider dictionary codifications as norms or ideal models is American rather than British. In "The Goodbye Bash" the *Pocket* saves the proofreader's life when the bootboy's knife blade goes straight into "the heart" of the dictionary (RS, p. 271), rather than Aubrey Tearle's chest, making the protagonist feel immortal (p. 272). Indeed, his immortality depends on the dictionary. Recollecting earlier language codifications, Tearle remembers nostalgically the *Concise* (2nd edition, 1929) revised by Henry W. Fowler, where the contributions of an amateur, Major Byron F. Caws, were diligently acknowledged (RS, p. 286). Boasting expertise in etymology, Tearle identifies with the amateur lexicographer. Although "the *Pocket*" claims control over current English, when exposed to the vernacular, the dictionary turns out to be a mausoleum, a heritage incapable of telling the difference between "huge" and "Eug," the latter derived from "Eugene" (RS p. 248). The gap between pure voice and "material" sign is foregrounded. It is Eug, a user of the urban vernacular and a travesty of authority who corrects the retired proofreader, questions his sanity and restores communication between Tearle and the semantically unstable environment. Proofreading fails as a form of communication, communication analysis and supervision of cultural interactions. Thus the amateur lexicographer and etymologist discovers the limits of his standards.

The two epigraphs that follow are allographic and derive from Hazlitt's essays, "On the Conversation of Authors" and "On Pedantry," while the third comes from the Gospel of St Matthew 23:24. The last holds a line directed against pedantry understood as excessive attachment to useless knowledge and inspires a change of perspective. Nostalgically embedded in Hazlitt's essays, "Café Europa" and "The Proofreader's Derby" share in the complexity of discussions in and around the essays as well as in the concept of communication the institution of conversation cultivates. There are ample intertextual relations between Hazlitt's essays and Vladislavić's writing. However, immediately relevant to the present discussion seems to be the figure of a scholar, an unyielding radical whose world is reduced to the materiality of books rather than text and who reminds us of Vladislavić's proofreader. Hazlitt's scholar "hangs like a film and cobweb upon letters… like the dust upon the outside of knowledge" and "browses on the husk and leaves of books, as the young fawn browses on the bark and leaves of trees" (Hazlitt, 1913, p. 315). Though expressing critical opinion, both authors (Hazlitt and Vladislavić) remain mildly sympathetic (showing understanding) towards their subject. Hazlitt for example, finds the bookish scholar honest, simple-hearted, faithful and affectionate (p. 315). Pedantry is not only ostentatious display of erudition but, as Simon P. Barry claims, "a distinct affect that makes the pleasures… of professional life possible" (2012, p. 47). The South African writer points out the proofreader's pedantry but is not seriously interested in stigmatizing Aubrey Tearle for his