

Translating the Truest Voice
Irony and Unreliable Narrators in Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things*



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Contents

Abstract	2
Introduction	3
1. The Truth in <i>Poor Things</i>	5
1.1 The Novel and its Author	5
1.2 <i>Poor Things</i> as Historiographic Metafiction	8
2. Irony in <i>Poor Things</i>	12
2.1 Identifying Irony	12
2.2 Translating Irony	15
2.3 Identifying and Translating Irony in <i>Poor Things</i>	18
2.3.1 Straightforward warnings in the author's own voice	18
2.3.2 Known error proclaimed	21
2.3.3 Conflicts of fact within the work	23
2.3.4 Clashes of Style	24
2.3.5 Conflicts of belief	25
2.4 The Translator and Irony in <i>Poor Things</i>	27
3. Unreliability in <i>Poor Things</i>	29
3.1 Translating Unreliability	29
3.1.1 Discourse Situation	29
3.1.2 Unreliability in fiction	30
3.1.3 Translation Problems of Unreliability	33
3.2 Identifying and Translating Unreliability in <i>Poor Things</i>	35
3.2.1 Archibald McCandless	35
3.2.2 Editor Gray	41
3.2.3 Bella Baxter	46
3.3 The Translator and Unreliability in <i>Poor Things</i>	52
4. Conclusion	54
5. Annotated Translation	57
5.1 Archibald McCandless	57
5.2 Editor Gray	60
5.2.1 Introductie	60
5.2.2 Kritische en historische annotaties	63
5.3 Bella Baxter	64
5.3.1 Bella Baxters Brief: Een geweten creëren	64
5.3.2 Een brief van Victoria McCandless M.D.	67
6. Bibliography	70
7. Appendix	72
7.1 Figures	72
7.2 Source text	73
7.2.1 Archibald McCandless	73
7.2.2 Editor Gray	75
7.2.2.1 Introduction	75
7.2.2.2 Notes Critical and Historical	77
7.2.3 Bella Baxter	78
7.2.3.1 Bella Baxter's Letter: Making a Conscience	78
7.2.3.2 A letter from Victoria McCandless M.D.	80

Abstract

This investigation is an exploration of translation problems unique to the translation of irony and unreliability in literature, using Alasdair Gray's novel *Poor Things* as a case study and a source text for a translation of relevant excerpts. One of the novel's themes is the perception and concept of truth, non-fiction and history-writing. The reader is presented with several narrators who are all unreliable in some form. Unreliability in fiction functions as a form of irony, deliberately planted by the implied author. Gray uses humour to achieve his subversion of truth and to explore how easily that subversion goes unquestioned by the reader; his use of irony creates a distance between the reader and the unreliable narrators. Much research has been done into the interrelated concepts of irony and unreliability in literature, but the unique translation problems these well-known literary devices entail are largely undiscussed. This investigation expands on these mostly macro-structural problems and the micro-structural elements on which they are built, before translating and annotating part of *Poor Things* to explore these translation problems in practice.

Introduction

“The point is not to tell the ‘truth’ from the ‘fantasy’ but to enjoy the weird, totally phantasmagoric result of their being pitted against each other in a story that clamours in various ways for the supremely elusive, ironical notion of ‘reality’, a problem which indeed is *not* to be solved.”

– Marie Odile Pittin

The word “truth” is often used without hesitation. It is a word so imbedded within everyday language use that it has become almost unremarkable. Alasdair Gray’s *Poor Things* has its readers stop in their tracks at the notion of truth, reconsider it, and question the plain words on the page and the reliability of the narrators. *Poor Things* opens with an introduction by an “editor” named Alasdair Gray, who claims he has come across a manuscript of an autobiography describing the life and love of one Archibald McCandless (Gray IX). He claims to believe this to be a work of non-fiction. Already the reader may be disoriented; in picking up what appears to be and is presented on the outside as a novel by Gray, the reader is confronted with something which looks like an autobiography with an introduction. Of course, this autobiography as well as Gray’s act as the editor are fictional, but they never stop claiming to be the absolute truth; the reader is encouraged to see both Gray in his role as an editor and Archibald McCandless, supposed author of the autobiography, as reliable narrators, despite the absurdity of the story. Then, after the conclusion of the autobiographical part of *Poor Things*, the reader is confronted with a letter by McCandless’ wife, who, posthumously, tells the world that the entire autobiography is a lie, contradicting both the editor and her husband. *Poor Things* then concludes with “Notes Critical and

Historical”, which comments on the autobiography and letter and provides what the editor calls evidence of the contents of the autobiography.

This thesis explores and analyses the translation problems which arise due to the subtle use of literary irony and the multitude of voices and intentions the novel contains. It examines how micro-structural choices of style and tone, register, cultural specific elements and form generate several narratives resulting in a manipulation and subversion of truth, historical writing, and fact. The translator needs to grasp exactly which choices on a micro-structural level construct the irony and the different unreliable voices which enable the macro-structural construct of the subversion of truth, and the questions this work of “historiographic metafiction” (Böhnke 262) poses concerning fact and fiction, history writing, and truth, in order to solve any translation problems in the most desirable way.

Firstly, attention is given to the specific ways in which Gray plays with the concept of truth in his work, before further delving into the concept of irony in *Poor Things*. Unreliability as a concept as well as the reliability of the three main narrators is discussed and translation problems as well as possible strategies and solutions are explored. An annotated translation will be used to exemplify what is theorised.

Ultimately this thesis will provide an answer to the following research question: In *Poor Things*, the author provides the reader with at least three unreliable narrators in an ironic narrative concerned with the search for truth; which translation problems are generated by this use of irony and multiple unreliable narrative voices, which translation strategies are possible, and which strategies are the most desirable in order for those problems to be solved ?

1. The Truth in *Poor Things*

1.1 The novel and its author

Poor Things contains a multitude of genres and unconventionalities: the autobiography, the epistolary elements, the presence of the editor who is in fact the author, the graphic images employed, and the absurdity of the story itself. The entire book, not just the text and the artwork within, was put together by Alasdair Gray. From this point onward, a distinction will be made between Gray (the individual, the real person), Author Gray (implied author in the text), and Editor Gray (the narrator of the introduction and historical notes).

Gray selected images from *Gray's Anatomy*¹ which he included in the novel, drew his own character portraits and cover art, selected the fonts and typefaces, and wrote the blurbs on the cover himself. Gray is famous as a visual artist as well. Born in Glasgow in 1934, his personal history and identification as a Glaswegian are important in most of his works, as is the case in *Poor Things* (hereafter *PT*). For example, Editor Gray gives a lot of attention to the city's history in his "Notes Critical and Historical". Like his characters, Gray has a fascination with medicine and anatomy, which may have motivated him in his writing:

Gray himself, as his biographer tells us, through his life has been subject to the Glasgow medical profession, with a body scarred by eczema and racked by asthma (Glass). Illnesses that show the body at its point of dissolution, at the boundary of skin and in the necessity of breath, have perhaps allied Gray with

¹ A well-known handbook of anatomy for medical students and professionals. First published in 1858, it was written by Henry Gray and illustrated by Henry Vandyke Carter.

the victims of science. Furthermore, Gray has studied and worked in the shadow of anatomy. (McCracken-Flesher 185)

The main part of *PT* is “Episodes from the Early Life of Archibald McCandless M.D., Scottish Public Health Officer”, a purported autobiography of Archibald McCandless. At medical school Archibald meets his friend Godwin Bysshe Baxter, a malformed man who has several bizarre diseases. Godwin invites him to his home and introduces him to Bella Baxter. He has been telling people Bella is his niece, who has lost her memory and her parents in a tragic accident in South-America, but in fact she is the result of a successful experiment. In the body of a woman who had committed suicide, he has implanted the brain of the child with which she was pregnant. A scar encircling her head and her childish behaviour convince Archibald of Godwin’s story. Bella struggles with etiquette and language since her brain is still a child’s. Archibald falls in love with her and asks her to marry him. To Godwin’s astonishment – he lets out a scream which pierces eardrums and can be heard for miles – Bella accepts, and they plan to get married. However, she elopes to Europe with lawyer Duncan Wedderburn, in order to kill time and have fun until the wedding. Archibald presents the reader with two long letters from Duncan and Bella respectively. Duncan’s letter depicts his descent into madness due to Bella’s never-ending energy, unsatisfiable sexual appetites, and refusal to marry him. Bella sends him back to Glasgow and continues her travels alone. Her account of her travels details people she met, places she visited, and situations she faced from which she had been shielded until now. Bella returns from her travels more aware of the dark reality of the world and determined to become a doctor. The wedding is interrupted by two men, Bella’s first husband and her father. As the discussion of Bella’s true identity becomes more heated, Godwin starts to explain, but before he can

finish the situation escalates. Bella refuses to return to her former husband and marries Archibald. She becomes a celebrated doctor and scientist while Archibald is content to be less famous.

The autobiography is followed by a letter by Victoria McCandless, the name Bella started using after her marriage (in order to prevent any confusion, this character will hereafter consistently be referred to as Bella), which was added to the autobiography by Editor Gray. In the letter, Bella tells the reader Archibald's version of the story is a lie and tells her life story, which includes an abusive father and an unloving husband. She meets Godwin, who is kind to her, and she runs away from her former life to his house. Bella is desperately in love with him, but he denies her and eventually persuades her to marry the complying Archibald, who will be able to make her wish to become a doctor come true by simply existing and adoring her. On nearly every occasion, Bella disagrees with and even feels shame for the autobiography. She explains she never truly loved anyone but Godwin, but Archibald was a very convenient husband.

Finally, Editor Gray provides commentary. In the introduction he explains how local historian Michael Donnelly found the autobiography and accompanying letter. Donnelly regarded the autobiography as fiction, while Editor Gray thinks it is true. He concludes his introduction with a short list of evidence of the contents of the autobiography, including reports of an unusual sound which could be heard on the exact date Archibald describes Godwin screaming, accounts of the state of medical experimentation in Glasgow of the time, and the reported lunacy of Duncan Wedderburn (Gray XII). *PT* concludes with "Notes Critical and Historical", in which Editor Gray comments on several sentences from the autobiography, clarifying the

medical history and the history of Glasgow. In these notes, he also provides several images which are meant to reinforce the story as told by Archibald, such as a drawing of the church where Archibald and Bella were married, and a street plan of the area in which Godwin and later Archibald and Bella lived (Gray 293).

1.2 *PT* as historiographic metafiction

The concept of truth in *PT* is complicated in several different ways as the “[m]ultiple narratives that contradict and sometimes exclude each other” described above play tricks on the reader’s perception of the true events of the story – within the reader’s willing suspension of disbelief, of course, as the publisher and the novel itself have made it clear to the readers perception that the entirety is a fiction (Böhnke 263).

However, Author Gray also invites the reader to trust his work before undoing this, by telling the reader his story through several genres which have a certain connotation of factuality. All the genres Author Gray chose to use are generally considered to be non-fiction. The effect of this is that, while the reader quickly gathers or even already knows they are reading fiction, it will have them pause for thought at several points in the story.

The introduction, with its air of authority and its almost pleading delivery of evidence is rather convincing at first glance, especially since much of the facts about Editor Gray are also true for Gray himself. Whilst there are blatant lies (none of the illustrations are indeed by the artist William Strang, for example) there are certain elements within the introduction and notes that are factual (for example the representation of the Landsdowne United Presbyterian Church in Glasgow, Gray 296). Usually such introductions and notes by the editor of a work are considered trustworthy

non-fiction, as it is presented without the borders of the story it accompanies. They often accompany historical documents, classics, or memoirs and autobiographies.

This is of course only reinforced by Editor Gray also being the one who provides the concluding words to *PT*. The notes are also the culmination of feigned factuality. It reflects back on the autobiography, seriously considering and reacting to statements by both Archibald and Bella. Of course, depending on whom of these two, if any, the reader chooses to trust these reflections are utter fiction, but they are interlaced with actual fact. Furthermore, the title of the segment is worth consideration: “Notes Critical and Historical”. However ironic this may come across to the reader, Editor Gray is absolutely serious, as is established in both the introduction and the notes themselves. He calls them critical and historical explicitly, terms which, especially in combination with such notes, usually denote factuality, while in this case they also underline his convictions. The word order has also been carefully considered to sound somewhat old-fashioned and as if they were written with academic authority; here Author Gray plays with people’s implicit assumption that history writing is objective because it has been written in the past. Even though the title sounds somewhat Victorian and intellectual, the actual notes are, of course, untrue or truths which do not prove anything.

It is no coincidence, then, that the format chosen by Author Gray for the main part of his story is an autobiography, a usually non-fictional genre. It could be argued it more closely resembles a memoir because a specific part of Archibalds life has been chosen; the line between memoir and autobiography is often somewhat vague. However, “Episodes from the Early Life of Archibald McCandless M.D., Scottish Public Health Officer” will be considered an autobiography, because it is concerned with a large and certainly the most influential part of his life, and it is told

chronologically. Archibald believes or appears to believe that what he tells the reader is the truth, although this is refuted by Bella in her reactionary letter. This format encourages the reader to believe the narrator, since this is an autobiography and there is an unspoken agreement between author and reader that what is presented is the truth of the life of the subject. Due to the use of a genre which is specified as non-fiction, the reader is inclined to trust its author and subject, albeit only when she starts reading.

The last genre used frequently in *PT* which is usually deemed non-fiction is the letter. Of course, letters are often used in fiction and thus considered fictional themselves, but the letters in *PT* are not presented as such. The context of the entire work is an act of factuality, which ensures that the letters, too, are introduced as non-fiction. Several letters are embedded in the autobiography, and the narrator ensures his readers that these have been reported in all honesty, to whatever effect and believability. The reader is to believe that Archibald received these letters as they are recorded in truth, even though Archibald admits he has only heard the second letter read aloud by Baxter. The letter which follows the autobiography is presented as a reaction to it and as a separate entity from it, something that is enhanced by the letter's context. It was written after Archibald's death, had an addressee, is given a date, etcetera. The genre as well as the context result, again, in a rather believable and trustworthy element of the novel, in theory. The contents of the letter are also much more believable than those of the autobiography, which adds to its trustworthiness.

These genres as discussed above are not chosen lightly, as Lynne Diamond-Nigh emphasises: "(...) [T]he documentary genres (...) infuse this novel with its pseudo air of truth (...). History, biography, archive, *Gray's Anatomy*, science, medicine, religion, encyclopedia, all purveyors of truth, linguistically encoded, are found to be ultimately

subjective” (180). In using the textual forms it does, *PT* pretends to be a historical document, which are generally considered factual. The reader knows better, as the absurdity, Gray’s repertoire, and the irony in the text suggest. However, this does not mean that *PT*’s slightly see-through pretences carry no significance. The rather believable but utterly fictional texts generate this “pseudo air of truth”, as Diamond-Nigh calls it, in order to make the reader question the very foundations of truth, historical writing, fact, and the role of fiction, while satirising in an ironic manner the very genres themselves.

PT, then, can be considered historical metafiction. Dietmar Böhnke cites Linda Hutcheon in order to define this concept as follows: “[H]istoriographic metafiction asks us to recall that history and fiction are themselves historical terms and that their definitions and interrelations are historically determined and vary with time” (262). Alison Lee and Frederick D. King also emphasise that it is a work of historiographic² metafiction; they argue that *PT* challenges the generally accepted view of the writing and truth of history by posing as a historical document before disputing its own authority, thereby questioning the authority of history writing in general (220). Since the work is fiction, however, it can be argued that it can be of more value since the reader’s emotional response to the fictional story that unfolds is very real. Diamond-Nigh provides an insight in the outlook *PT* has on the relationship between fiction and fact:

² Of, relating to, or of the nature of historiography (the writing of history or the study of the writing of history) or historiographers (Oxford English Dictionary).

Poor Things (...) suggests the poverty of the real over the imaginary in more than one way. Set in Glasgow over the course of a century, it is a vitriolic satire of urban conditions, social class structure, prejudice against women, the medical and legal establishments, religion and various other institutionalized systems, and (...) our continual vain quest for the attainment of truth. (178)

Hence, *PT* as a work of historiographic metafiction has a certain metafictional effect on its reader. It encourages the reader to reflect on fiction and art and its relationship with fact, history and truth.

2. Irony in *PT*

The portrayal and subversion of truth in *PT* largely stems from narrative voice and narrator (un)reliability. Unreliability is a key element of this investigation as it is a key element in Author Gray's play on truth. In order to investigate the difficulties of translating unreliability on a micro-structural level, the concept of the unreliable narrator itself needs to be explored. However, since unreliability is described by Wayne Booth as an element of irony (*Fiction* 304), irony can also be considered one of Author Gray's means to achieve a certain macro-structural effect and it can be considered one of the building blocks on which his novel rests. The genres discussed above are applied ironically, the imagery is ironic, the tone of his narrators is often influenced by his ironic intentions as the implied author. This chapter discusses irony and its function in *PT*. It explores irony in literature as a concept, the problems of translating irony in literature, how and where it can be found in *PT*, and which translation strategies can be considered the most desirable when dealing with irony.

2.1 Identifying Irony

Irony is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “[t]he expression of one’s meaning by using language that normally signifies the opposite, typically for humorous or emphatic effect”. This humorous aspect is significant: first and foremost, irony is a form of humour. More specifically, in *Recreation and Style*, Brigid Maher describes irony as humour which “function[s] as an expression of superiority” (3). On a more detailed level, the concept of irony depends greatly on the entities of the implied author and the implied reader. Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short elaborate on this in their definition of irony in fictional literature, based on the views of Wayne Booth:

For fictional purposes irony can be defined as a double significance which arises from the contrast in values associated with two different points of view. (...) The most usual kind is that which involves a contrast between a point of view stated or implied in some part of the fiction, and the assumed point of view of the author, and hence of the reader. (223)

They suggest a correspondence between the points of view of the author and of the reader. However, this is not correspondence between the individual who wrote the book and the person who is physically reading it: Booth coined the concepts of implied author and implied reader, the entities in between the actual author and reader and the text. Booth argues that the implied author is installed in between the author and the fictional text in order to avoid overly biographical readings. This implied author resides within the text rather than without it, and one author can thus have several different “second selves” in different works (*Fiction* 71, Olsen 94). The implied reader can simply be said to be the reader the implied author addresses; not a specific, physical reader, but rather the implied author’s construct of the reader: “The author creates, in short, an image of himself and another image of his reader; he makes his reader, as he makes [the implied author], and the most successful reading is one in which the created selves, author and reader, can find complete agreement” (*Fiction* 138).

Irony is generated when these two entities are part of something from which another party is excluded, such as the characters or narrator. This form of irony is actively planted by the implied author for the implied reader to find, which this paragraph elaborates on later. It is referred to as “stable irony” and is a “form of complex verbal reconstruction” according to Booth, whereby the reader reconstructs a meaning from words which on the surface denotes something else (*Irony* 9). The

reconstruction of ironic meaning is achieved when the reader rejects the literal meaning of the words she is presented with, then considers several different meanings or interpretations, decides on the beliefs and knowledge of the implied author and whether these correspond with those of the reader and lastly determines which of the considered meanings is correct (*Irony* 10). Since Booth describes stable irony as intended and planted by the implied author, the discovery and intuitive completion of the reconstruction connects implied author and implied reader. Olson adds that since this is the case, many what she calls “sophisticated readers” agree upon which meaning is most likely. This research focuses on this type of stable, or intended, irony, which will hereafter simply be referred to as irony.

As mentioned above, most often, when the reader and author are connected in this way, another party is victimised. These victims vary from characters to readers who simply do not catch the irony. This is essential to the three elements of irony as defined in Marta Mateo’s article: firstly, there is a “two-storey phenomenon” in which the victim only receives the message as it is presented while the ironist and the receiver of the irony see the deeper interpretation, which makes irony humorous. Secondly, when these two levels oppose each other, there is an incongruity. The last element is the victim’s unawareness of the existence of the deeper level (Mateo 172).

Mateo, Booth and Olson emphasise the intentionality of irony. It is meant to be found by the receiver or implied reader and was planted there by the sender or the implied author (Mateo 172, *Irony* 11, Olson 98). Hence, irony can be found in the text by textual markers, since it greatly depends on context (Mateo 172). It is defined by the text in which it is embedded, as no words are intrinsically ironical. Its existence and its noticeability are dependent on the “relationships of a word, expression or action with

the whole text or situation” (Mateo 172). Textual context is relevant to irony, but, as is the case with all humour, cultural context and function are also indispensable. Signals for irony can thus be found in the context in which it occurs, and Booth defines five markers of irony: straightforward warnings in the author’s own voice, proclamation of known error, conflicts of fact within the work, clashes of style, and conflicts of belief (*Irony* 53). This model will help the translator of *PT*: irony is key in Author Gray’s game of truth. His readers reconstruct irony and consider surface meaning as well as covert meaning, which often contradict each other. The translator must be able to identify and reconstruct cases of irony on a micro-structural level and must be familiar with the unique translation problems of irony translation.

2.2 Translating Irony

Translating irony amounts to translating humour, something which is considered notoriously difficult (Maher 5). Maher continually returns to the question of function: only when the precise function of an element of humour is understood, will the translator be able to identify it for what it is and deal with it. The function of irony – to derive pleasure from “forms we appreciate because we know not everyone can” (Maher 3) – has been discussed above, but in order for the translator to be able to translate the irony in a text desirably, she must not only be aware of its function on a macro-structural level, but also of the function of individual instances of irony on a micro- or meso-structural level.

Maher also elaborates on the importance of cultural context, language and history when discussing the translation of humour. If humour has need of these in order to work, then transferring an element of humour in literature to a language group with a

different culture and history presents a translation problem. She explains how “theorists of incongruity” have researched the way in which humour “exploits a contrast between two situations or frames of reference”, which is elemental in the workings of humour (Maher 8). These frames of reference are often different in the source culture and in the target culture, which complicates the transfer between languages, different cultures, and even different, distant periods of time (Maher 8). If humour is thus created by the breaking of these frames of reference, and as Umberto Eco states, “the broken frame must be *presupposed* but never *spelled out*” (as cited in Maher 8), the “common ground” for humour to work is lost and a translation strategy of explanation may get the content across but will result in a lack of humour (Mateo 172).

The task of the translator is then to stimulate a similar response in the target audience by choosing the frames of reference with which the audience is familiar. This does not necessarily entail that the text is naturalised; the translator must simply know the target audience’s knowledge and frames of reference. The translator’s work is made easier when the “‘comic paradigm[s]’, the world view[s] determining what is or is not generally considered comic in a given culture at a given time” (Tymoczko as paraphrased in Maher 9) do not differ too much between cultures, histories, time periods and languages. In other words, the translator needs to be aware of the factors which come in to play in the perception of irony:

(...) the Sender’s capacity for irony, the Receiver’s personal sensitivity to irony, the community rules relating to irony of both Sender and Receiver and the degree of coincidence between the two sets of rules, the Receiver’s knowledge of the Sender and of his ironical technique, the Receiver’s familiarity with the

rules of the Sender's speech community and, finally, the probability of ironic intention and of assumption of irony. (Mateo 172)

It is important to note that in the context of this chapter and this research, there is ample overlap between the implied author and implied reader and the Sender and Receiver respectively; the translator does not, for example, need to be aware of an individual Receiver's knowledge of a physical Sender, but rather of the relationship between the implied author and the implied reader built up in the text.

Mateo proposes a descriptive analysis by examining which strategies translators have chosen in dealing with translating irony. The strategies she discusses are listed below.

1. ST irony becomes TT irony with literal translation³.
2. ST irony becomes TT irony with "equivalent effect" translation⁴.
3. ST irony becomes TT irony through means different from those used in ST.
4. ST irony is enhanced in TT with some word/expression.
5. ST ironic innuendo becomes more restricted and explicit in TT.
6. ST irony becomes TT sarcasm (criticism is overt now, no feeling of contradiction at all).
7. The hidden meaning of ST irony comes to the surface in TT. No irony in TT therefore.

³ The term "literal translation" is of course rather contested within translation; however, for practical usage this term will be employed whenever the TT closely resembles the ST without sacrificing the surface meaning of the TT.

⁴ Mateo defines "equivalent effect translation" as "taking the idea or the intention of the original humorous message and adapting it to the target culture in order to provoke an equivalent response in the new reader" (174).

8. ST ironic ambiguity has only **one** of the two meanings translated in TT. No double entendre or ambiguity in TT therefore.
9. ST irony replaced by a “synonym” in TT with no two possible interpretations.
10. ST irony explained in footnote in TT.
11. ST irony has literal translation with no irony in TT.
12. Ironic ST completely deleted in TT.
13. No irony in ST becomes irony in TT. (Mateo 174-175)

Many of these translation strategies closely resemble those suggested by Andrew Chesterman in *Memes of Translation* (85), although they are more precisely focused on irony. These strategies will provide a frame of reference with which to verbalise further research and the motivations of choices made in the annotated translation.

2.3 Identifying and Translating Irony in *PT*

This paragraph discusses examples of irony from *PT* using Booth’s model and Mateo’s theory. It also discusses several examples and their possible and desirable translation strategies using her list of strategies and solutions.

2.3.1 Straightforward warnings in the author’s own voice

Straightforward warnings of irony can come in the form of titles, epigraphs or in other direct clues since these are the utterances in the author’s own voice. The title of *PT* directly poses a problem with this category, however; it was of course chosen by Author Gray, but the character of Editor Gray also claims to have been the one who choose this particular title. Editor Gray explains his reasons for the renaming of the edited work:

“*[t]hings* are often mentioned in the story and every single character (apart from Mrs. Dinwiddie and two of the General’s parasites) is called *poor* or call themselves that sometime or other” (Gray XI). His explanation is rather simplistic – ‘things’ is hardly a unique or noticeable word, even when used quite often and he does not clarify in which sense the word ‘poor’ is used. However, the vagueness of this, and its ambiguity, is exactly where Author Gray’s influence can be felt. This overlap adds to the title’s mystery. The title is vague and mysterious in multiple ways. The first question one might ask when presented with this book is “who are the poor things?” This is not answered in the novel directly, but the narrators disagree. There are also apparently multiple “poor things”, rather than just one of the characters. Bella pities the less fortunate, Archibald often pities himself and Bella and Godwin, Editor Gray can be said to pity those who do not believe Archibald’s account is true and the characters themselves for the tragedies that he believes befell them. The effect of this is that the reader considers who these poor things are, which is indirectly asking the reader to identify the victims in the text. Victimisation is a larger theme in the work, which is less relevant for this research, while the victims of irony are also called to attention whenever reference is made to the title.

Translating the title, the translator thus needs to consider the functions of the irony in this instance, acknowledging expressly the existence of victims in the text, while keeping in mind its relevance to the work as a whole. A translation strategy that seems at first glance attractive in this case because of the lack of actual syntactic and lexical context is “ST irony becomes TT irony with literal translation”, which would entail a translation along the lines of “Arme dingen”. However, upon closer inspection, it can be said that “poor thing(s)” is a common, idiomatic phrase, more so than “arme

dingen”. The translator might then consider a phrase such as “arme zielen”, which is far more idiomatic, but removes some of the ambiguity and covertness of the original title and is more along the lines of translation strategies four (ST irony is enhanced in TT with some word/expression) or nine (ST irony replaced by a “synonym” in TT with no two possible interpretations). This results in a version of the title which is less outwardly random than Editor Gray’s ST-title, but which captures the covert irony and effect of Author Gray’s title. Besides this, it introduces the concept of “zielen”, which is especially interesting in the case of *PT* because the book contains themes of divine creation and creation by mortals; do these creations get to have a soul of their own? Baxter also speaks of souls where a more common choice of words would be “mind”:
“(…) The soul who wrote this [Bella’s first letter] has soared as far beyond my own soul as my soul soars beyond—’ he checked himself, looked away from me then said, ‘—at least beyond Duncan Wedderburn” (Gray 99). Consciousness and the concept of the soul are vital themes in *PT*, and the Dutch language has a rich idiomatic phrase which allows the translator to include this in this title.

PT contains several dedications and epigraphs. The first of these, ‘For my wife Morag’, seems to be completely unironic since Morag was at that time indeed Alasdair Gray’s wife. However, it is interesting to note the typeface in which this dedication is presented is the typeface used exclusively by Editor Gray. This is what Frederick D. King and Alison Lee note about the sans serif typeface used by Editor Gray whenever he is directly addressing the reader:

The sans serif has been known at different times in history as “condensed, doric, gothic grotesque and monoline” (...); Not only does the change in typeface

create a visual marker, separating Gray's writing as editor from the content of the memoir, but also it suggests a linear division. (King and Lee 228)

Although this does not necessarily entail a translation problem since the translator does not always have a say in the format, and Mateo's first strategy can simply be employed, this distinction is striking. A solution in the target text that remains closely linked to the source text in its simplicity and shortness will result in the same subtly planted confusion, as long as the typeface remains unchanged; "Voor mijn vrouw, Morag". This further establishes Editor Gray and blurs the line between the true individual Alasdair Gray and the entity of Editor Gray. It stretches the implied reader's willing suspension of disbelief because Morag truly was his wife and begins the book's play on truth even before it has properly started.

The images used in *PT* are often employed ironically and are categorised under "other direct clues" in Booth's model. Two types of images are used in the text of the autobiography; illustrations from Gray's *Anatomy* and illustrations by Alasdair Gray which are presented as works from William Strang. The first type is often used to an ironic effect:

(...) the images originally served a utilitarian purpose for Henry Gray and Henry Vandyke Carter. Removed from that original bibliographic context, they serve a new narrative purpose as metaphors and humorous puns. The evidentiary role of these drawings in *Gray's Anatomy* works in *PT* in a manner similar to Gray's use of imagery in his critical notes: they lend the appearance of fact while ironically emphasizing the fictionality of the novel's events. (King and Lee 227)

The irony of the images does not seem to come from Archibald himself, since he uses the images to come across as more scientific, and, as Editor Gray explains, it was most

likely that Archibald added them to fill up empty space and because of his fondness for the textbook and what it taught him (Gray XIV). Therefore, the images were intended by the implied author to work together with the written words to create an ironic view of Archibald's autobiography, undermining his believability. Since the images cannot be altered, puns must be kept intact through textual means in translation. The translator therefore has to choose words which in some way, however subtle, connect the image on the page to that specific scene.

2.3.2 Known error proclaimed

Booth describes this category as follows: "If a speaker betrays ignorance or foolishness that is 'simply incredible,' the odds are comparatively high that the author, in contrast, knows what he is doing" (*Irony* 57). One of the ways in which to judge this is "conventional judgement", or the knowledge held by the reader (*Irony* 58). The most obvious example of known errors proclaimed in the text is the general absurdity presented in the autobiographical portion of *PT*. The reader knows that in the last century no scientific achievements of the kind Archibald describes Godwin doing were possible. Such unbelievable scenarios are usually intercepted by the reader's willing suspension of disbelief, but this part of the novel is presented as an autobiography, a genre that the reader usually considers non-fiction. There is thus a great contrast between the content and the portrayed genre. This does not directly entail micro-structural translation problems, it is merely important for the translator to have a perfect understanding of the characters as well as of the reader and the reader's knowledge. After all, in maintaining conflict and opposition irony in its intended function is maintained.

Booth also discusses the consequences of incorrectness of historical fact (*Irony* 58). Portrayal of historical fact is of course at the core of *PT*, and the most notable examples are the facts Editor Gray poses to back up Archibald's autobiography. Several of these are true, several are false, and they are presented in such numbers and with such angry conviction that they come across as frantic and desperate (Gray XIV). This also entails that they are less than beneficial to Archibald's account; although they are meant to strengthen it, the desperation drives the reader in the opposite direction. The importance of the history and the setting of Glasgow entails for the translator the necessity of extensive knowledge of both, since these culturally specific elements are a translation problem of their own and if done well, will add to a strong text world. The opposition of truth and fiction is what makes this part of *PT* ironical; the function of this irony, in turn, is to undermine the narrative voice of Editor Gray, which again opposes his authorial tone stemming from the presentation of his text and the fact that the editor is called Alasdair Gray. The 'mistakes' must then of course be maintained in translation, and the strategy that is to be used from the ones proposed by Mateo must result in irony in the target text. The presentation is also key in the translation. The sentence structure and register the translator employs must imitate those of concise and historical facts to further emphasise Editor Gray's desire to convince the reader of something.

2.3.3 Conflicts of fact within the work

PT as a whole relies on contradictions. The most obvious conflict of fact in *PT* are the narratives which explicitly contradict each other. One example sees one of the characters tell the reader without restraint of the blatant mistakes made by another narrator. At the end of the autobiography, Bella is shot in the foot: "The bullet had

luckily gone clean through into the carpet, puncturing the integument between the ulna and radius of the second and third metacarpals without even chipping a bone” (Gray 237). However, Bella says, in her letter: “He could easily have said ‘puncturing the tendon of the oblique head of adductor hallucis between the great and index proximal phalanges without chipping a bone’, because that was what happened” (Gray 274). For someone with no medical knowledge, this is a revelation, but the truth of it is, as is so often the case in this book, the least important.

For the translation, it can be argued that it does not matter who is correct, as long as both versions sound convincingly accurate to an average reader and as long as the two views remain very much at odds with each other; Bella explicitly calls Archibald out. Of course, this will not suffice in practice. Since the implied reader as an entity will be aware of everything, the translator must research which account is accurate, if there is one at all, and have the narrator who relates the incident correctly in the ST do the same in the TT. Strategies one and two by Mateo seem to be the most desirable options; literal translation ensures that both accounts are accurately wrong or correct. However, if the medical terms in the ST are more obvious and of a less high register than the rather high register in the TT, words must be chosen to portray the characters’ knowledge – or lack thereof – and their sometimes rather showy expertise. Therefore, any jargon with a similar effect can also provide a desirable solution.

2.3.4 Clashes of style

Some clashes of style in *PT* are rather obvious, such as the deviating styles between the narrators, but one of the more significant examples of this is the difference between Bella’s letter to Godwin which is recorded in the autobiographical part and the letter to

her descendants. In the first, her grammatical errors (which can be found on page 145 of *PT*) are removed, but a lot of her language is still childish and whimsical:

I will not write like Shakespeare any more. It slows me down, especially now I am trying to spell words in the long way most people do. Another warm Odessa day. The sky is a high sheet of perfectly smooth pale-grey cloud which does not even hide the horizon. I sit with my little writing case open on my knees on the topmost step of a huge flight of steps descending to the harbour front. (Gray 115)

Her language is an interesting hybrid of the sophistication remaining in her, her eagerness to learn, her young mental age, her wonder, and Godwin's influences. She sways between a high and a rather simple register, varies sentence length greatly and does not shy away from repetition. She even has some lyrical literariness about her style. Her later letter is more mature:

*You, dear reader, have now two accounts to choose between and there can be no doubt which is most probable. My second husband's story positively stinks of all that was morbid in that most morbid of centuries, the nineteenth. He has made a sufficiently strange story stranger still by stirring in it episodes and phrases to be found in Hogg's *Suicide's Grave* (...) (Gray 272)*

Bella's register has become more precise and although she still uses figures of speech, she has honed them into intentional and mature versions. The significance of these observations for Bella as a narrator are further explored later on.

The function of this ironical incongruity between the two accounts is founded in the fact that the first is reported by Archibald while the second is presented as coming directly from Bella. The differences in the styles the reader is presented with further

undermine either Archibald or Bella depending on who the reader has chosen to believe, although it can be argued that the victim in this case is Archibald. Bella not only explicitly calls out his lies and ignorance in her letter, the way in which she wrote it further discredits the caricature of her Archibald paints in the autobiography. Since this subject is closer to meso- or macro-level than anything else, it is important for the translator to be aware of the similarities and differences between the two voices with which Bella gets to speak in the novel, in order for her to convey the irony of the situation.

2.3.5 Conflicts of belief

The last category includes the instances where the readers “notice an unmistakable conflict between the beliefs expressed and the beliefs we hold *and suspect the author of holding*” (*Irony* 73). An example from *PT* is religion. Archibald and Godwin are atheists and Godwin is often the voice of reason in the novel, opposing Archibald’s drama and nervousness. The two argue on the story of Adam and Eve and Paradise:

“I read Genesis three years ago and could not understand God’s displeasure when Eve and Adam chose to know good and evil – chose to be Godlike. That should have been his proudest hour.”

“They deliberately disobeyed him!” I said, forgetting *The Origin of Species* and speaking with the voice of *The Shorter Catechism*. “He had given them life and everything they could enjoy, everything on earth, except two forbidden trees. Those were sacred mysteries whose fruit did harm. Nothing but perverse greed made them eat it.”

Baxter shook his head, “Only bad religions depend on mysteries, just as bad governments depend on secret police.” (Gray 99)

There are several reasons for the reader to assume here that the implied author, Author Gray, does not agree with Archibald. First and foremost is his treatment of the main narrator throughout *PT* as discussed above. It does not seem that the implied author ever sides with Archibald. Secondly, there is the argument of one of the themes in the novel, the treatment of women in history, the medical world, and in general. Bella asserts herself as disregarding society both in the autobiography and her letter and she deals with the unjust consequences thereof. Godwin reverses Adam and Eve’s names and this, along with his statement, is an indicator of where the implied author’s loyalties lie. Since Eve was the one who provided mankind with knowledge, she is the hero of the story in Godwin’s eyes. Archibald disagrees, and possibly he also gives away how he thinks Bella is to be treated; Godwin is often compared to God (his name and his role as the creator of life, or Bella). Archibald arguing that in gaining knowledge, Adam and Eve lost something, seems to imply that he, however benignly and unconsciously, believes Bella should remain ignorant as well. This is a view with which the implied author cannot be connected, considering the outcome of the autobiography – Bella as a successful doctor – and the outcome of *PT* as a whole – Bella fighting for women’s rights and agency over their own bodies.

The irony in this fragment in particular exists on a meso-level but there are micro-structural elements which form the foundations. The first is the handling of the names of Adam and Eve, as was discussed. Another element is intertextuality; Archibald goes out of his way to specifically mention *The Origin of Species* and *The Shorter Catechism*. This is of course not accidental, as Archibald uses the referencing of

such titles to re-establish his learnedness, and this also adds to his character's habit of wanting to outsmart others. It is therefore essential to this fragment for the translator to maintain this intertextuality. Catechisms vary greatly, and also the importance of Glasgow cannot be denied. The translator therefore could choose from Mateo's strategies one, two, four, nine, or ten. Others would include removing or making explicit the irony in the fragment. However, it can be argued that four and ten would be undesirable because they require some form of explanation which may undermine the humour as well as Archibald's arrogance. Simplest would be translating as "*Het korte catechismus*", since it is most important for the reader to recognise the word "catechismus". Other options would be on the one hand something general and simplified such as "de Bijbel" or replacing the written work with "de kerkdienst". Both options are extremes, and flatten the text undesirably since it is unlikely the character of Archibald, with his dramatic flair and boastfulness would use it, but they do get across the essence of the discussion: science versus religion.

2.4 The Translator and Irony in *PT*

The victims of irony in the case of *PT* are often the narrators themselves. Although they present the reader with the irony, they have not planted it. Since irony is always intended, as explained in the previous paragraph, and since the narrators themselves more often than not have not intended it, the Sender of the irony in the case of *PT* is the implied author, the textual entity referred to in this research as Author Gray. Of the narrators the reader is presented with, Archibald is arguably most often the victim of irony. Although Author Gray does not shy away from ridiculing all of his narrators and characters, and none are without fault, his views are most often least in alignment with

Archibald's, considering the absurdity of his story, his tone and mannerisms, the themes in the novel as opposed to Archibald's views, and the treatment of his words and character by other characters and narrators. He is only supported by the words of Editor Gray, who is often the victim of irony himself.

Author Gray employs irony to play with the reader's expectations of truth and fact by weakening not only his narrators, but also the genres *PT* uses to convey its message. Since Author Gray uses text to express something while in fact expecting the reader to interpret a different meaning, the written word itself cannot be trusted. This is a rather subtle means to a macro-structural end, which is, as has been discussed, questioning truth, historical writing and fiction. Irony in and of itself is hard to define, identify and translate. However, the translator of *PT* must be able to do all three. In the annotated translation, the strategies discussed above are employed on a microstructural level in order to ensure that the macro-structural irony of the work as a whole is maintained. This is essential not only to the unreliability of the narrators, but also to the portrayal and subversion of truth in *PT*. The translator needs to be aware of all instances of irony planted by the implied author and relay them in such a way that the TT-reader can find them. This is the base on which unreliability and a game with truth can be built in translation.

3. Unreliability in *PT*

One of the ways in which Author Gray plays with his readers' idea of truth is through narrator unreliability, a pillar of *PT*'s examination of truth and a literary element with its own unique translation problems. This chapter deals with the translation problems of translating unreliability; after an examination of unreliability and the difficulties of unreliability in translation, each of the three main narrators and their unique discourse is studied.

3.1 Translating Unreliability

3.1.1 Discourse Situation

Before exploring the concept of unreliability in narration, it is necessary to gain an overview of the narrators and addressees, which complicate the concept of unreliability, since on some levels the reliability of one narrator is dependent on the level of reliability of another. The major difference between *PT* and a more conventional narrative is the inclusion of three narratives presented as at least three separate but related texts – the novel contains several other narratives, such as a letter by Duncan Wedderburn, but he can be considered to be more of a side character. Both Archibald's and Bella's stories are included in a collection of sorts edited by someone unknown to them decades later. Likewise, Archibald never knew of Bella's letter to any living descendants and therefore the words and additions by Editor Gray and Bella meant nothing to him while he was telling his story. Two other addressers are Duncan and Bella in their letters to Godwin, which he shares with Archibald and with the reader. *PT* has a complicated narrative structure, in which narrators are also addressees and vice versa; although Editor Gray is at some point a narrator, he can also be considered an

addressee of the narratives by Archibald and Bella. The relationships between authors and readers and the mediating function of implied authors and readers are visualised in overviews of the discourse situation in the appendix.

The discourse structure is complicated even further in translation, since further actors are inserted into the narrative situation. In translating a text, a new entity is introduced: the implied translator. The translator is a reader of the source text before becoming or while acting as the implied translator of the translated narrative text (O'Sullivan 200). The implied translator is present in between the implied author and the narrator, therefore creating more distance (O'Sullivan 202). It is essential, then, that the translator aligns herself perfectly with the norms of the implied author in order to successfully convey to the target text reader the irony of the text as well as the unreliability of the narrator; if the translator's norms are not in alignment with those of the implied author but more so with those of the narrator, the discourse situation is drastically altered, and unreliability is lost in the translation, since the implied reader relates to the implied translator and her motives more than to the implied author. Therefore, in order for the stable irony to work and the intended unreliability to be noticed by the reader, the translator must be aware of the implied author's norms and motives and translate accordingly. This does not, however, necessarily entail translator invisibility, which is explored further in a later paragraph.

3.1.2 Unreliability in Fiction

An exploration of unreliability as a literary concept is useful in studying the inherent translation problems which accompany it. Greta Olson argues: “[Wayne C.] Booth understands narrator unreliability to be a function of irony. Irony provides the formal

means by which distance is created between the views, actions, and voice of the unreliable narrator and those of the implied author” (94). Olson explains that narrators can be considered unreliable when their intentions and values are not congruent with those of the implied author (Olson 94), and as was discussed above, those of the implied translator. This entails that the values and perceptions of the narrator also differ from those of the implied reader, as for irony to work the implied author and implied reader have to be in accordance. Since unreliability is a function of irony, if irony is not experienced by the reader, neither is unreliability. Irony excludes a victim, and in the case of unreliability the narrator is this victim: “The author and the reader are secretly in collusion, behind the speaker’s back, agreeing upon the standard in which he is found wanting” (*Fiction* 304). This unspoken communication with the implied author requires the reader to read “against the grain of the text”, or in other words, to read against what the text is telling the reader directly and find the hidden meaning beneath (Olson 94).

A distinction can be made between on the one hand “unreliable” and “untrustworthy” narrators, and “inconscience” and “fallible” narrators on the other. The untrustworthy narrator is the narrator who does not convey the same norms which are implicit in the text as the implied author and thus the implied reader. This narrator is untrustworthy or unreliable on a personal level and the reader cannot trust this narrator as an individual (*Fiction* 159). The inconscience and fallible narrator is slightly more complex and “believes himself to have qualities which the author denies him” (*Fiction* 159). This type of narrator is unconsciously providing the implied reader with untruths. Fallibility is difficult to measure, but the most important aspect of the narrator who makes mistakes is the fact that the way they perceive themselves, other characters, the fictional world and their addressees, is different from what the implied author and thus

the reader attribute to those things. For example, a narrator such as Archibald, although his case is slightly more complex as section 3.2.1 of this investigation explains, can tell the reader he is an excellent medical doctor (Gray 11), while the other characters or instances from the text imply or state the opposite, or at least nuance his statement (Gray 251). Olson adds that unreliability and fallibility should not be seen as the opposite of reliability and infallibility, but as existing on a spectrum, so the narrator's status as unreliable is not necessarily static (96).

Unreliability is also, like stable irony, intended and marked in the text by the implied author (Olson 95). The detection of unreliability occurs in the reader often unconsciously when she notices either a mistake or a diversion from the implied author's message or norms. The reader recognises the narrator either as fallible or as untrustworthy and can subsequently adhere to a different reading strategy. The reader must assess which norms the narrator holds and compare them to her own and the implied author's. In reaction to the untrustworthy narrator, the reader decides to amend her reading to "read against the grain" if untruths or incongruities are noticed in the narrator's text (Olson 103). In the case of a fallible narrator, "the reader must ask to what extent the narrator mistakes the information he has access to and the perceptions he has" (Olson 103).

Olson states that "[t]he reader judges the narrator's unreliability based on textual signals, and then moves beyond a literal reading of the text" (104). However, neither she nor Booth elaborates on the exact definition of textual markers in this context beyond either incongruities or mistakes. Further evidence of the narrator's unreliability can be found in her style and language usage. For this research, Angar Nünning's model of unreliability will be used. He has formulated further textual markers based on style,

characterisation and language usage (Olson 98) which will be taken into consideration along with Booth's and Olson's markers concerning mistakes and incongruities, since they allow for a more detailed translation relevant analysis on a micro- and macrostructural level:

(...) (3) divergences between the narrator's description of herself and other characters' descriptions of her; (4) contradictions between the narrator's explicit comments on other characters and her implicit characterization of herself or the narrator's involuntary exposure of herself; (...) (8) an accumulation of remarks relating to the self as well as linguistic signals denoting expressiveness and subjectivity; (9) an accumulation of direct addresses to the reader and conscious attempts to direct the reader's sympathy; (10) syntactic signals denoting the narrator's high level of emotional involvement, including exclamations, ellipses, repetitions, etc.; (...) (14) para- textual signals such as titles, subtitles, and prefaces. (Nünning as paraphrased by Olson 98)

Using a stylistic analysis established by Leech and Short (61) it is possible to study the style and characterisation of characters in such a way that their level of fallibility and trustworthiness is further revealed.

3.1.3 Translation Problems of Unreliability

One of the dangers of translating unreliability is interference by an added entity in the form of an implied translator undermining the narrator's unreliability. The implied translator is always present in the text but whether or not this presence is visible depends on the text. Carmen Millán-Varela explores the presence of the (implied) translator in the text as well as translator invisibility. She argues that it is noticed by the

audience when “the text’s orientation towards an implied reader and hence its ability to function as a medium of communication is directly at issue”, when “self-reflexiveness and self-referentiality involving the medium of communication itself” occur, and when “contextual overdetermination” occurs. She explains how these cases all include instances in which the cohesion or coherence of the text is affected, which results in what she calls “noise” (39). The translator’s presence can be visible, audible and invisible according to Millán-Varela. Visible translator presence can be a name on the title page, a commentary, or footnotes. Audible translator presence encompasses noise, for example in grammatical mistakes or heteroglossia. Invisible translator presence is either felt in the “foreignness” of the text, or its “textual strangeness” (Millán-Varela 44). These two categories are concerned with hybridity of language, intertextuality, and the treatments of cultural specific elements and closeness to the ST respectively. Millán-Varela argues that identifiable main voices are key in determining narrator reliability, while the implied translator’s presence results in a possibly disharmonious text (42). While the first half of this statement is valid, and a definable, recognisable voice is indeed important for a successful narrator, the latter half is debateable. The implied translator is always present and thus noticeable in the text, but the text only becomes disharmonious when the translator’s norms and motives visibly or audibly differ from those of the implied author. Complete translator invisibility is not necessarily desirable and certainly unavoidable; while noise in Millán-Varela’s definition must be avoided, as well as possibly foreignness, textual strangeness, and footnotes depending on the text, a believable unreliable narrator can easily be translated by an implied translator as long as she aligns herself with the norms of the implied author.

One of the dangers of translating unreliability and irony in *PT*, is the omission of certain elements or the flattening of the text in translation. This follows from the argument that in order for a text to contain a successful unreliable narrator, or any successful narrator, this narrator has to possess a unique and distinct tone, voice, and style (Millán-Varela 49). In texts so deeply rooted in cultural heritage and so quirky in language usage as *PT*, it is tempting to avoid direct references to very obscure or specific cultural details and long, complicated sentences with made-up words in the translation in order for the translator to reach out to the reader. However, this could distance the implied translator and the implied author from one another. In guiding the reader too much, characterisation is at risk of being undermined, since it would be harder to believe that a character so deeply embedded in the source culture and so particular in his or her language usage would likewise attend to the reader of the source culture. Characterisation is a key element of a fleshed-out narrator, which in turn is necessary in creating an unreliable narrator (Millán-Varela 42). It can also be argued that characterisation largely stems from the style and language usage of the narrator.

3.2 Identifying and Translating Unreliability in *PT*

Whether the reader can identify instances of unreliability in a text depends largely on the characterisation and style of the narrator as well as on certain mistakes or personal flaws. In the narrator's language usage and interaction with the fictional world, the reader can identify markers of irony and unreliability. Therefore, this section focuses on each of the narrator's specific incongruities or mistakes as well as their interaction with the other two narrators and their characterisation and style. This analysis based on the

theories by Booth, Olson, Nünning and Leech and Short will aid the translator both in the translation of style and in the transfer of instances of unreliability.

3.2.1 Archibald McCandless

The first of the mistakes and incongruities in Archibald's text is the discrepancy between how he describes himself and others versus how others view themselves and him. Archibald fancies himself the typical anti-hero, from humble beginnings, not particularly special or strong, achieving his dreams through will, determination, and intelligence. When, for example he, relates Bella first seeing him and the effect he has on her, he shows the reader her wonder and astonishment in detail:

Nobody had looked at me like that before (...) She gasped and a moment later slowly withdrew her hand and looked at it, rubbing the fingers gently with her thumb as if testing something my lips had left there. She also cast several astonished but happy little glances at my fascinated face, while Baxter beamed proudly on both of us (...) (Gray 29).

Not only does he imply Bella's complete enchantment by him, he also claims Godwin was a happy witness of the situation. This contrasts greatly with what he reports Godwin implying, namely how he is convinced that Bella's reaction was due to the fact that Archibald is the only person she has met outside Godwin and Mrs. Dinwiddie and that he is worried that it might grow into something more (Gray 36).

Another example of the discrepancy between Archibald's vision of himself and the way others view him is how he constantly reminds the reader that he and Bella are greatly in love, while Bella in both her narratives never does anything to confirm this other than showing a condescending kind of affection. An example of this is the tie pin

Archibald gives Bella as a token of his love. He describes it to the reader constantly as a promise of love and marriage, while Bella uses it to make sure he remains hers while she is about exploring the world, other men, and sex (Gray 62). She also states she will stay and marry Archibald largely because of convenience, because he “leaves [her] alone every day to get on with [her] work” and is no more than “pleasant company” (Gray 232). In the letter at the end of the autobiography, Bella claims Archibald was a husband of convenience, a weak and awkward creature, whose giving up his career she only partly saw as a good thing for their children, but mainly as laziness where he could have helped others (Gray 251, 254).

Of course, Archibald’s unreliability is most obvious when he is called out by the version of Bella the reader is presented with in the second letter. One example of this has already been amply discussed in the chapter on irony; Bella claims that Archibald’s description of a bullet passing through her foot is simply medically wrong, an unexplainable choice since he was well aware of human anatomy, unless he did it knowing that many readers would not take notice whilst also hinting to medically trained people that everything else was not true either. Bella also claims Archibald was in a rather strange mood when his book arrived, published and finished, before he died:

The bound volume at last arrived from the printers and gave him pleasure for many weeks. He slept with it under his pillow. He would lie on the sofa while the maid changed his sheets, turning pages forward or backward and chuckling over them. (Gray 255)

This passage suggests Archibald knew his words were fiction and he enjoyed his reconstruction of true events in a way that Bella calls a “*book that stinks of Victorianism*” (Gray 275). She explains that she thinks he chose to paint her as a

childlike creature and Godwin as a grotesque out of envy for their relationship and achievements (Gray 273).

It is therefore not easy to decide where on a spectrum of unreliability Archibald falls, further towards unreliable and untrustworthy or fallible and inconscient. From the mistakes he makes when describing himself and others in his own part of *PT* and the incongruities discussed above, it would seem he is closer to being fallible. However, Bella's statements (which are, as is discussed later, also questionable) in the accompanying letter suggest he was well aware of his reconstruction of the truth and was even being deliberately deceitful, which would of course put him on the spectrum of untrustworthiness. The translator needs to be aware of this paradox; it is important to create a fallible Archibald in the translation of the autobiography in order for the reader to be able to still empathise with him to some degree, even if the reader knows she is supposed to be laughing at him, the victim of irony. Only in the letter must the reader become aware of possible deceptiveness in the autobiography, enticing the reader to go back and re-evaluate once again, whilst also being aware of Bella's own unreliability.

The translator, aware of Archibald's fallibility, cannot communicate this macro-structural unreliability without a detailed grasp of Archibald's style and tone. The method devised by Leech and Short with which the narrator's style can be analysed is comprised of four categories (Leech and Short 61). The first two categories are lexical and grammatical. The most notable lexical element of Archibald's style is his rather high, archaic and medical register. In a single paragraph, he uses "prosper", "twit", "counterpoise", "matrimonial yacht", and the verb "contents" (Gray 240). Although these words are not necessarily entirely archaic, their rarity and density within such a small amount of text can be considered "*foregrounding*" (Leech and Short 23). He is

also fond of rather complex sentence structures, such as constructions using ‘for’:
“Happiness made Bell and I selfish, for we enjoyed our meals better (...)”, “(...) and I
my doctoring in the Royal Infirmary, for the careers we aimed at were still out of
reach”, “I sat down and wept uncontrollably, for I could not pretend to misunderstand”,
or the exaggerated use of interjections with commas and dashes (Gray 241).

The effect of this language usage is multilateral. On the one hand, it reminds the
reader of Victorianisms and places the reader firmly and believably in a late-Victorian
text world, aiding in their willing suspension of disbelief. His Victorian style presents a
translation problem since it is a trait typical of the English language at the time.

Imitating the Dutch language of the time in order to achieve a dramatic and archaic
feeling for the text is also undesirable, since the Dutch language has modernised much
more than English and this would strain the reader’s willing suspension of disbelief
unnecessarily. However, the translator should not shy away from longer, more complex
sentences and a high register. It is also important not to flatten the text; repetition or the
express avoidance of repetition (also called “*elegant variation*” in Fowler’s *The King’s
English*), for example, should not be overlooked as trivial. This realisation of the text
world contrasts with Archibald’s absurd story.

On the other hand, it is crucial to Archibald’s characterisation. The refusal to
explain medical terms such as “hypodermic syringe”, “subcutaneous injection” and
“alimentary canal” (Gray 243) along with his showing off of his literary prowess
suggests the pleasure he finds in presenting his expertise in both fields. He uses
complex sentences and words to boast of the achievements he finds grand and the
amazing wife he won for himself. This is of course at odds with how the other
characters see him, as has been established, and therefore perfectly fits Nünning’s

textual markers, “(...) (3) divergences between the narrator’s description of [him]self and other characters’ descriptions of [him]; (4) contradictions between the narrator’s explicit comments on other characters and [his] implicit characterization of [him]self or the narrator’s involuntary exposure of [him]self” (paraphrased by Olson 98).

Involuntarily, Archibald’s boastful words contradict the image of the humble hero, while they also greatly contrast with the feelings of other characters. This, again, makes him more fallible until the reader is presented with Bella’s second letter. Medical language should not be simplified, but the translator should check the validity of each medical statement, so the accurate statements can be translated accurately, while the others should be translated in equally convincing but incorrect Dutch medical terms.

Leech and Short use the category “figures of speech” to analyse tropes.

Archibald is fond of stylistic tropes and even comments on them: “She is the swelling sail, trim rigging and busy sunlit deck of our matrimonial yacht; I am the low hull with the invisible ballast and keel. This metaphor greatly contents me” (Gray 240). Again, his complementing of his own literary merit adds to his implicit, involuntary characterisation, but more importantly, it fits Nünning’s textual markers related to style: “(8) an accumulation of remarks relating to the self as well as linguistic signals denoting expressiveness and subjectivity; (10) syntactic signals denoting the narrator’s high level of emotional involvement, including exclamations, ellipses, repetitions, etc.”

(paraphrased by Olson 98). Archibald even admits he is emotionally affected by the mere thought of his marriage and lacks objectivity; he romanticises it unapologetically. Stylistic elements are easily flattened or overlooked, but the translator must maintain an air of pompousness to portray Archibald, whose view of himself and whose character do not match; his language and character must contrast.

An important part of what Leech and Short call “context” is the direct address of the reader. Archibald does this often enough, for example: “Reader, she married me and I have little more to tell” (Gray 240). This functions not only as an address, but also as a barely veiled intertextual reference to the famous “Reader, I married him” from *Jane Eyre* (517). Not only does this obvious intertextuality confirm Bella’s accusation of shameless copying and Victorianism (Gray 274), it also neatly fits into the last of Nünning’s markers: “(9) an accumulation of direct addresses to the reader and conscious attempts to direct the reader’s sympathy” (paraphrased by Olson 98). Such an appeal to the reader’s sympathy, as well as Bella’s accusation, could be the first hints to the reader, rather late in the novel, which suggest untrustworthiness over fallibility. In cases such as these, the intertextual reference as well as the address are characterisations of Archibald in his pompousness once again, and should the translator prove unable to transfer both in the exact location of the ST, she must consider other microstructural additions or methods to achieve such a characterisation. All the discussed microstructural measures will contribute to building a convincing narrator, whom the reader will at first likely interpret as an awkward, slightly obnoxious but sympathetic fool, before gradually coming to realise the envious nature of the text.

3.2.2 Editor Gray

More than the other two narrators, the line between fiction and non-fiction is blurry in Editor Gray’s introduction. In chapter two his epigraph was discussed, which showed that the woman the fictional editor addressed was actually Alasdair Gray’s wife; more such facts are used to convince the reader of the initial believability of the editor. The following is an excerpt from the introduction of *PT*:

I first met Michael Donnelly in 1977 when Elspeth King had employed me in the People's Palace as an artist-recorder, but when he contacted me in the autumn of 1990, I had become a self-employed writer who dealt with several publishers. (Gray X)

Both Elspeth King and Michael Donnelly indeed worked at the People's Palace and were acquainted with Alasdair Gray, who was also employed there. These kinds of facts about the life of Alasdair Gray are diversions for Editor Gray's later unreliability, facts which are not common knowledge to every single reader and more recognisable for the Scottish reader of the time, but which ring true upon further inspection on the reader's part.

The most notable argument for Editor Gray's unreliability is his allegiance with Archibald, the victim of irony, the unreliable narrator of the largest part of *PT*. Throughout his introduction he clearly states his feelings of compassion, pity, and trust for Archibald and he claims he believes everything in the autobiography is non-fiction. His argument for this is that he has read and published enough fiction to recognise history (Gray XI). Although his trust in an unreliable narrator does not necessarily make him unreliable as well, especially since the reader is presented with the introduction before the autobiography and therefore is inclined to sympathise with this man who presents himself as Alasdair Gray, several other elements of Editor Gray's unreliability have to be explored.

Desperation is a key aspect of what makes Editor Gray unreliable. He provides the reader with what he refers to as evidence, but the desperate note in his style and tone, which will be explored later, reduces this evidence to flimsy at best. The facts the reader is presented with are not all actual facts and some are barely relevant to the

autobiography. King and Lee comment on the effect of this rather dubious evidence and his defensive stance when met with argument:

In the novel's 'Notes Critical and Historical,' Gray gives the impression of verifiable evidence to support the authenticity of McCandless's memoir.

However, he prefaces his notes with the qualification that Michael Donnelly—who, according to Editor Gray, discovered the original manuscript—does not find his 'evidence . . . convincing' (xiii). As editor, Gray's response is, 'if my readers trust me I do not care what an "expert" thinks' (xiv). Gray signals, before we even see his notes, that they do not withstand the empirical scrutiny required of a scholarly text. (King and Lee 226)

In the case of Editor Gray, it is important for the translator to check which of the facts in the introduction and notes are true, in order to maintain the balance between fact and fiction as it is in the ST. This will ensure the reader's possible investigations yield the same results in the TT, even though the separation between the two upon first reading will be less obvious to the target audience than it is to the Scottish reader. It must be noted that the TT-reader may be more ready to believe everything Editor Gray presents her with, since she is less familiar with Scottish history and celebrities. This lack of background knowledge must not entail an exaggeration on the translator's part, however; *PT* relies heavily on the subtlety Author Gray wields when depositing instances of irony and unreliability in order to keep the lines blurry. The translator must therefore not diminish the number of true facts or make the fictional ones more obvious in order to accommodate the TT-reader with a smaller knowledge of Scottish culture and Alasdair Gray as an artist and public figure, for this may result in a caricature of

Editor Gray, making both him and Archibald ridiculous and in the process undermining this important theme of the novel.

An argument for unreliability that could be used for both Editor Gray and Archibald are the paratextual elements used throughout *PT*; the epigraphs and images. Both the epigraphs and the images by Alasdair Gray which are presented as works by Strang have already received ample discussion, but not the other images interesting to explore. These images included in the notes are part of the evidence Editor Gray provides, but they function as a placebo; the image on page 296 of a cab lends the text an air of authority and historical accuracy, while it hardly has anything to do with the story. This goes for most of the images from the notes, as they feed into the feeling of desperation. The pictures from *Gray's Anatomy* were added by Archibald in order to make himself seem more professional and knowledgeable, but they often enhance Archibald's status as the victim of irony. An example: "Archie's dying mother presents him with her life savings and tells him, 'Make something of yourself with it' (9). On the facing page is a drawing of a spine, from which it is possible to infer that Archie's mother is entreating him to develop a backbone" (King and Lee 227). The use of the spine indicates that Editor Gray is either fallible since he utters the utmost respect for Archibald but leaves him to be ridiculed by the ironic intent, or he is untrustworthy, does not believe Archibald, and amplifies Archibald's status as a victim by showing he is not even believable when his opinions are aided by an authorial figure such as an editor. Preferably, the translator takes into account the small textual puns where these images are concerned.

Based on the evidence above as well as the style and tone of Editor Gray, it is more likely he is a narrator located closer to fallibility on the spectrum of unreliability.

This is partly due to the desperate tone in his texts, indicating emotional attachment, as well as his efforts to maintain a very historical and serious style in the notes following the main part of *PT*. Both lexically and grammatically, according to the categories by Leech and Short, the notes by Editor Gray have a distinct historical style and seeming objectiveness. Take for example the first note:

CHAPTER I, page 9. *Like most farm workers in those days, my mother distrusted banks.*

This was not the superstition of an ignorant woman. Bank failures were frequent during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and poorer folk suffered most by them, as the prosperous were better informed as to which financial houses were unsound, or becoming so. In twentieth-century Britain such injustices only happen with pension funds. (Gray 279)

Words such as “frequent”, “unsound financial houses”, the mentioning of three different centuries, and “pension funds” are not only incredibly ironic in their dryness in this context, the density of such dry terms is reminiscent of text books or commentary – which is, of course, exactly how these notes are meant to be perceived. This is supported by the sentence structure; the sentences are to the point, objective and rather dry. In form, this contrasts with the introduction; however, the notes are still often unrelated and far-fetched, showing the desperation and thus the emotional attachment. This is an important stylistic element for the translator to note; she must emulate non-fiction history writing.

Editor Gray’s attempts to convince the reader of the truth of the autobiography are found mostly in the introduction. His very first sentence poses his opinion as a fact and excludes a group of readers as ignorant: “The doctor who wrote this account of his

early experiences died in 1911, and readers who know nothing about the daringly experimental history of Scottish medicine will perhaps mistake it for a grotesque fiction” (Gray VII). He also implies that the readers who dare to question the autobiography are “mistaken” and therefore amplifies his covert suggestion of their ignorance. His choice of words is fundamental in this suggestion, and therefore invaluable to the translator: “readers who know nothing”, “perhaps”, “mistake”, “grotesque”. His use of the past simple tense also leaves little to the imagination regarding what Editor Gray believes. His strong belief in Archibald and the resulting introduction he writes fit Nünning’s tenth marker: “(10) syntactic signals denoting the narrator’s high level of emotional involvement, including exclamations, ellipses, repetitions, etc.” (Olson 98). Consider for example the way in which he antagonises his former friend Michael Donnelly, who found the book and considered it Gothic fiction, simply because the latter reveals his evidence as lacking and asks for a reasonable addition: “Michael Donnelly has told me he would find the above evidence more convincing if I had obtained official copies of the marriage and death certificates and photocopies of the newspaper reports (...) I do not care what an ‘expert’ thinks. Mr. Donnelly is no longer as friendly as formerly” (Gray XIII). Editor Gray poses this demand as absurd through his sentence structure and use of punctuation, trying not very subtly to win over his readers.

Both his condescending tone and his attempts to be a convincing historian are the foundation of Editor Gray’s characterisation and the result of the motives in the text, and these should be the translator’s priority since his motives are polar opposites to those of the implied author; Author Gray reduces Archibald to the victim of his irony and his unreliability has been well-established, while Editor Gray’s most likely motives

are convincing the same implied reader to trust him and Archibald. This opposition is the clearest indicator for Editor Gray's unreliability. The translator must therefore familiarise herself with historical text, preferably from different text book sources, in order to provide convincing historical notes, while on the other hand keeping the Editor Gray of the introduction lively, emotionally involved, and petty in his language usage.

3.2.3 Bella Baxter

Bella is the most complicated narrator to explore. Every word she utters is in some way influenced by the other two authors, who, as has been established, both worked on the product with an agenda of their own. This complexity results not in the least from the fact that there are two versions of Bella, one of which is reported and absurd, while the other seems reasonable. Here, a danger immediately presents itself to the translator, as it may be easy to become biased in favour of the second Bella, which will compromise the ambiguity of the other narrators' sections. This is caused by several factors, the first of which is simply the order in which the book is presented. Editor Gray tells the reader that he has placed Bella's second letter at the end to avoid the reader becoming biased against Archibald, but the opposite happens. The letter placed at the end denies all the previous, increasingly unbelievable accounts. It gives to the reader an easy truth, one which is much easier to accept as the truth. This is enhanced by the reactionary nature of the letter; Bella tells a story of her own in reaction to a text which is so absurd that a reaction is expected. Besides this, it is easy for the reader and therefore for the translator to believe Bella's account because in her second letter she is seen to align herself with the motives and beliefs of Godwin. This is crucial, as Godwin as a character is most closely in tune with the motives and beliefs of the implied author, who tends to align his

sympathy and motives with those who have become the victims of science and of society (McCracken-Flesher 185). She states both she and Godwin saw Archibald as a rather silly but convenient part of their lives, something which can even be read in between the lines of Archibald's narrative. However, Godwin denies her in love in the end (Gray 265), which breaks their alignment and provides Bella with a motive which is entirely new.

For the translator to align her motives with Bella's instead of with those of the implied author is tempting, because Bella's motives and beliefs are far more obvious in the text. However, this is a dangerous path to take, as it removes objectivity and distance and may lead to microstructural choices which may discredit the other narrators more strongly than the implied author does. This can happen both in Bella's own text and in the texts of the other narrators by simple choice of words. Bella does not speak highly of her husband in her letter, but her disappointment and disinterest can easily be made vicious and spiteful. An example: "*'Do you want to know about it?' he asked one night, with a kind of mischievous vivacity which he clearly attributed to creative inspiration and I to a mild fever caused by disease*" (Gray 254). The feelings Bella portrays in this scene seem to be mild annoyance, disappointment and maybe a little amusement. Her letter is angry and annoyed, but throughout patches of slight warmth for her husband can be felt. Translating "mischievous vivacity" as "guitige levendigheid" or "ondeugende speelsheid" portrays these feelings well, but the translator, when aligning herself with Bella, may exaggerate this annoyance because the translator herself can become annoyed after feeling betrayed by Archibald. This is the result of sharing motivations with Bella rather than the implied author. It is fundamental that the translator does not lose sight of Bella's own unreliability, and in doing so

provides this narrator with the same level of nuance the others receive in order to maintain the implied author's distance to his characters. This is, as has been explored, a crucial part of maintain stable irony and unreliability since it allows the implied author and reader to exclude the narrators. Bella is indeed quite unreliable herself, in both of her narratives, instances of which are explored below.

Archibald presents Bella's first letter to the reader, stating it has been transcribed as it has been read to him. He does not say why he has not read the letter himself, or included a direct transcript, or even the letter himself, but what the reader finds in *PT* is secondary literature at best. An example of this is the erasure of Bella's supposed very childish spelling, since Godwin read it aloud and Archibald did not include the mistakes again, apart from a single instance (Gray 145). Editor Gray displays his agenda directly when he says:

I print the letter by the lady who calls herself "Victoria" McCandless as an epilogue to the book. Michael would prefer it as an introduction, but if read before the main text it will prejudice the readers against that. If read afterward we easily see it is the letter of a disturbed woman who wants to hide the truth about her start in life. (Gray XI)

It has already been discussed how this is counterproductive when the reader finishes the book, as in the end, this further undermines the reliability of the authors previously discussed, but initially the reader may indeed be prejudiced against Bella.

Her direct opposition of the other two narrators would seem to make her the reliable author in the whole of *PT* as she largely aligns herself with the implied author, but since reliability is not an either-or question, this is not necessarily the case. The reader is confronted with two very different, very opposing pieces of narration by Bella

– even though Archibald reports it, the ninety-page letter in the autobiography is still narrated by a version of Bella. This means she contradicts herself in a way.

Furthermore, the Bella from the concluding letter never mentions the inclusion of a supposed other letter to Godwin and Archibald. Her refusal to comment on what is presented as her own writing is conspicuous to say the least. Her letter has a tone which can be described as haughty, confident that the reader will be wise and believe her. In order for her to achieve this tone, she assumes a style which is business-like and intelligent. She says: “*You, dear reader, have now two accounts to choose between and there can be no doubt which is most probable*” (Gray 272). If she is not confident about the reader’s beliefs, she does not show it.

Of course, the shift in language is the biggest difference between the two letters. Her business-like tone perfectly fits her characterisation in the letter. Her tone is as mature and brisk as one might expect from a successful but controversial female doctor in that time; working as much as she does, she hardly has time for frivolities such as this autobiography by her husband, her text and tone seem to say. It is important for the translator to capture this aspect of her letter, as the contents, or rather, what she does not say, can imply untrustworthiness, albeit only to a certain degree since her text remains the more plausible version, while the style and tone perfectly befit her characterisation. Of course, this letter and hence her characterisation of herself does not conform to her characterisation of herself and by others in the autobiography and the letter included in it. This in itself makes her an unreliable narrator, even though she is not a victim of irony as obviously as Archibald is.

Her style in the first letter is almost the direct opposite of the second letter; it is playful and child-like, matures quickly, and changes often:

*While this was done poor Wedderburn got wooed
fawned on and flattered all he wished, though not
by me. I heard a cough and someone say,
“Madame: will you forgive J I intrude?”
and looking sideways **ding ding whoopee** God!
The dinner bell! I ’m feeling ravenous—
hungry parched famished and athirst for bortsch,
a splendid beetroot soup, but still have time
to finish of this entry with a rhyme.*

The onomatopoeia and use of synonyms are childlike indeed; she is exploring language and play on words, while the foundation of this excerpt, the rhyme and metre, are quite mature. Of course, this discrepancy is explained by Archibald saying she ages more quickly. More than any other narrator in *PT*, Bella contradicts herself directly, which would make her untrustworthy to a large degree, but the reader is also aware of the fact that the first letter, and indeed, the first version of Bella, is reported, first by Godwin to Archibald, and then by Archibald to the reader. Even direct opposition is a matter of perspective instead of a clear answer in Author Gray’s study of truth. The translator must capture her opposing style in this letter on a micro-structural level in order for the TT to remain as ambiguous as the ST, by exploring metre and onomatopoeia. If necessary, it can even be argued that these elements of the Shakespearean verse by Bella are more important than the content, although the plot must not be lost.

Another element which adds to Bella’s untrustworthiness is her hypocrisy, which is most prevalent in her second letter. She accuses Archibald of a level of intertextuality and literary name-dropping throughout his text, which disgusts her, mere

instances before she herself gives the reader an enumeration of literary titles, and she even briefly comments on the contents of one of the books as if to remind the reader that she has in fact knowledge of the literature:

He has made a sufficiently strange story stranger still by stirring into it episodes and phrases to be found in Hogg's Suicide's Grave with additional ghouleries from the works of Mary Shelley and Edgar Allan Poe. What morbid Victorian fantasy has he NOT filched from? I find traces of The Coming Race, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Dracula, Trilby, Rider Haggard's She, The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes and, alas, Alice Through the Looking Glass; a gloomier book than the sunlit Alice in Wonderland. He has even plagiarized work by two very dear friends: G.B. Shaw's Pygmalion and the scientific romances of Herbert George Wells. (Gray 273)

She accuses Archibald of not only using or naming texts such as these, but also of the pleasure he takes in knowing all of them to such an extent that he is able to incorporate them. However, she does the exact same thing. This is an example of Bella's adherence to one of textual markers of unreliability: "(4) contradictions between the narrator's explicit comments on other characters and her implicit characterization of herself or the narrator's involuntary exposure of herself" (Olson 98).

In translation, the distinction between the two Bella's is essential. For the reader, it must be possible to believe that her maturity in the second letter has grown since the age she was at the time of the second letter, so her affinity for repetition for example, as discussed in the previous chapter, has to be included in both narratives. However, the texts cannot become homogenised since they directly oppose each other. It would be easy for the translator to translate mostly from Bella's perspective, since she comes

across as the voice of reason, but this is a pitfall; her hypocrisy and emotional tone must not be underestimated. The translator can never forget that she, too, is to some extent unreliable and withholding information. Translating from the perspective of Bella would entail an increased dislike for the other two narrators, which can shift the balance between the narratives to an undesirable extent. Omission or flattening of her childlike style in order to deal with the many – often incorrectly used – figures of speech and wordplay would also be undesirable because it adds to the distinction of the Bella presented by Archibald and the one from the concluding letter.

3.3 The Translator and Unreliability in *PT*

Since the concept of unreliability is an overarching, macro-structural concept, which affects the outcome of the text as a whole and is influenced by many different micro- and meso-structural elements, it is difficult to provide a translation-oriented analysis which can be applied throughout the translation of *PT*. On a macro-structural level, the translator needs to be aware of the implied author's intentions and norms, while also being wary of favouring one of the unreliable narrators over the other. On a meso-structural level, the translator must find a balance between the implied reader's willing suspension of disbelief when it comes to the characterisation of the narrators and the text world, their knowledge of the source culture, and the implied author. Omission or flattening of the text is an example of failing to find this balance. The translator must also determine whether the narrator is leaning more towards being fallible or untrustworthy in order to see where their unreliability stems from and whether the character can be trusted as an individual. Micro-structurally, the translator benefits from a stylistic analysis of the individual unreliable narrators, since their styles are important,

if not essential parts of the narrators' unique voices. This in turn is key in creating a believable unreliable narrator.

4. Conclusion

Through its clever choices of genre, through its mixture of fact and fiction, and through irony and unreliability, *PT* has achieved its status as historical metafiction and constantly challenges the reader. The reader is not supposed to find out the truth; she is just to be made aware of its fickle nature and the human hands who shape it in writing fiction, non-fiction and history. As Marie Odile Pittin has stated: “The point is not to tell the ‘truth’ from the ‘fantasy’ but to enjoy the weird, totally phantasmagoric result of their being pitted against each other in a story that clamours in various ways for the supremely elusive, ironical notion of ‘reality’, a problem which indeed is *not* to be solved” (213). In a way, she is correct; in the end, it can be argued that it does not matter which of the narrators is telling the truth, since all of them are unreliable and, on a more metafictional level, most of what the reader is confronted with is fictional to begin with.

However, the translator cannot dismiss this problem so easily; unique translation problems arise when the translator deals with irony and unreliability. As argued in this thesis, the theme of truth and the balance between fiction and non-fiction is crucially important in the novel because it makes the reader question the nature of writing – both fictional and non-fictional – itself, and this very theme runs the risk of being overlooked if the translator fails to identify and successfully deal with the subtle ways in which Author Gray uses irony and its corollary, unreliability, to construct his subversion. The successful commentary of truth in the TT depends on the perceptions of the translator. As she takes on the role of mediator between the implied author and reader as implied translator in the novel’s discourse, her failure to recognise the implied author’s motives

and the irony inserted into the text both on a micro-structural and a macro-structural level, will result in the reader's failure to capture the essence.

Translating irony is a translation problem in and of itself; translating any form of humour is greatly dependent on the levels of similarity between the source culture and target culture's history, culture, and language. Especially between two western cultures, such as Scottish and Dutch culture, difference can be minute and easy to overlook. It is therefore down to the translator to identify and relate every micro-structural instance of humour and irony using a strategy that best befits it in order to make sure that the reader is able to find it. Moreover, every instance was planted by the implied author and is used to exclude a certain party. In the case of *PT*, the victims of exclusion are the three narrators at different points in the novel, while the implied author and ST-reader are in league together; their motives are aligned and oppose those of the narrator if the text is successful, which leads to an exclusion, a double significance to humorous effect. In order to resolve these translation problems specific to irony, the translator must be aware of the implied author's presence and intentions in every case, since she is positioned between the implied author and TT-reader; only the translator can assure that the understanding between the implied author and reader is maintained in the TT. On a more micro-structural level, several strategies can be employed to deal with irony, which vary from literal translation to explanation.

Irony is not the only pillar on which Gray's exploration of truth in writing rests; unreliability is the other, and arguably more obvious of the two, and it brings with it translation problems of its own. Unreliability is a function of irony; in *PT* the victims of the irony are the unreliable narrators, and the irony and their unreliability work together to create and enhance a distance between the narrators and the implied author and

reader. Distance is key as this entails an incongruity between the motives of the implied author, which the readers are encouraged to assume, and those of the narrators, who desperately want to convince the reader. The main challenge for the translator is recognising the motives of the implied author and assuming them herself. Through stylistic means, the implied author puts his narrators on a spectrum of unreliability, between untrustworthy and fallible. These stylistic elements must be recognised and related by the translator, in order for the reader to grasp the narrators' characterisations and read the text accordingly.

The alignment of implied author and implied translator is fundamental; if the translator were to align herself with one of the characters, for example, the focus would shift. This is one of the bigger problems the translator faces. Since all three narrators can be called unreliable, the subversion of truth throughout *PT* is maintained; however, it is easy for the translator to align herself with the character whose story is the most plausible and therefore the easiest to empathise with. In *PT*, this character would be Bella, since Bella's account in the letter is by far the most plausible. This would result in the reader focusing on solving the problem of who to trust, which is directly opposed to Pittin's statement. The translator must capture the essence of each character stylistically and ensure they remain as distinct as the implied author has made them. The narrators' style choices are the micro-structural hints in which the implied author has planted their macro-structural untrustworthiness or fallibility. In capturing the implied author's motives and the narrators' styles, the translator will be able to deal with unreliability in literature successfully.

5. Annotated Translation

5.1 Archibald McCandless

‘Zeker. Juist. Correct. Precies. Inderdaad⁵!’ riep hij uit in euforische instemming. Bars sprak ik: ‘Het ziet ernaar uit dat Bells gebruik van synoniemen aanstekelijk is. Staat haar brief er ook vol mee?’⁶

Hij glimlachte naar me, als een wijze grijze leermeester naar zijn favoriete student nadat die een moeilijk vraagstuk juist heeft beantwoord, en zei: ‘Vergeef me mijn enthousiasme, McCandless. U kunt er niet in delen, aangezien u⁷ zelf nooit kinderen heeft gehad, zelf nooit iets nieuws en uitzonderlijks heeft geproduceerd. Het is voor een schepper wonderbaarlijk om zijn creaties onafhankelijk te zien leven, voelen en handelen. Drie jaar geleden heb ik Genesis gelezen en ik begreep werkelijk niets van Gods ongenoegen toen Eva en Adam ervoor kozen het verschil tussen goed en kwaad te leren – ervoor kozen Goddelijk te zijn. Juist dat had hem trotser moeten maken dan ooit.’

‘Ze waren opzettelijk ongehoorzaam!’ zei ik. Ik vergat *Het ontstaan der soorten*⁸ en sprak met de stem van de Catechismus. ‘Hij schonk hen het leven en alles waar ze maar van konden dromen, alles op aarde, met uitzondering van twee verboden bomen. Die

⁵ “Yes” wegvvertaald om het ritme te behouden, aangezien “inderdaad” langer is dan “indeed”

⁶ Bell verliest iets van haar actieve houding in deze zin, maar dat is iets wat past bij Archibalds beeld van haar en bovendien benadrukt deze in het Nederlandse meer idiomatische constructie Archibalds ongeduld en sarcasme.

⁷ Het gebruik van deze beleefdheidsvorm komt voort uit de afstand die in de dialogen tussen de twee personages wordt gehanteerd, zoals het gebruik van achternamen bijvoorbeeld. Het zorgt voor de handhaving van de discrepantie tussen hoe Godwin Archibald lijkt te zien, niet echt een vriend (neem bijvoorbeeld de zin verderop in dit fragment, “...The soul who wrote this has soared as far beyond my own soul as my soul soars beyond–’ he checked himself, looked away from me then said, ‘–at least beyond Duncan Wedderburn.” Het lijkt alsof hij doelt op de geest van Archibald), en Archibalds aandringen op hun uitzonderlijke vriendschap. Bovendien past het bij Archibalds overdreven Victoriaanse stijl, en deze explicitering vangt eventuele verliezen op dat gebied op.

⁸ Archibald vergeet hier “On” in de titel *On the Origin of Species*. Of dit opzettelijk is omdat het zo vaak gezegd wordt of per ongeluk als blijk van zijn onwetendheid is niet helemaal duidelijk, en daarom heb ik in vertaling het lidwoord “het” weggelaten.

bomen zijn heilige mysteries waarvan de vruchten hen niets dan onheil zouden brengen. Het was slechts perverse hebzucht die hen hiertoe bewoog.’

Baxter schudde zijn hoofd en zei: ‘Alleen de slechtste religies zijn afhankelijk van mysteries, net zoals slechte overheden afhankelijk zijn van de geheime dienst.

Waarheid, schoonheid en goedheid zijn niet mysterieus, het zijn de meest alledaagse, duidelijkste, meest essentiële dingen des levens, zoals zonlicht, zuurstof en brood.

Alleen zij die in verwarring zijn geraakt door dure opleidingen zijn van mening dat waarheid, schoonheid, goedheid schaarse, particuliere eigendommen zijn. De natuur is vrijgevinger. Het universum houdt niets wat essentieel is voor ons achter, alles is een gegeven⁹, alles is een geschenk. God is universum plus geest. Zij die beweren dat God, of het universum, of de natuur geheimzinnig is, zijn als zij die deze dingen jaloers of boosaardig noemen. Zij kondigen slechts de armzalige staat aan waarin hun eenzame, verwarde geest verkeert.’

‘Je reinste nonsens, Baxter!’ riep ik uit. ‘Ons hele bestaan staat in het teken van een worsteling met mysteries. Mysteries bedreigen ons, onderhouden ons, verwoesten ons. Onze briljantste wetenschappers kunnen facetten van deze mysteries slechts ontrafelen door andere te vertroebelen. De tweede wet van de thermodynamica bewijst dat het universum zal eindigen door te veranderen in een kom afgekoelde haverhout, maar niemand weet hoe het universum ooit begonnen is, en of men wel van een begin mag spreken. Onze wetenschap is gebaseerd op Keplers ontdekking van de zwaartekracht, maar hoewel wij in staat zijn om te beschrijven hoe de meest onmetelijke sterrenstelsels en de meest tere gassen zich bewegen weten we niet wat zwaartekracht precies is of hoe

⁹ Deze woordspeling, ‘all is present, all is gift’, zou wegvallen in het Nederlands, maar een kleine verschuiving houdt de speelsheid intact zonder dat een betekenisverschil ontstaat dat de uitspraak van Godwin onwaar maakt.

het werkt. Kepler speculeerde dat het om een vorm van anorganische intelligentie ging. Hedendaagse fysici speculeren helemaal niet meer, maar verschuilen hun onwetendheid achter formules. We begrijpen de oorsprong van soorten maar zijn niet in staat de kleinste levende cel te scheppen. U verenigde het brein van een zuigeling en de schedel van een moeder. Erg ingenieus. Het maakt u nog geen alwetende god.’

‘Met uw woorden moet ik het oneens zijn, niet uw feiten McCandless,’ zei Baxter met weer een irritant genereus glimlachje. ‘Het mag duidelijk zijn dat geen enkele geest in staat is ook maar een fractie van al wat ooit leefde, leeft en zal leven te vatten. Maar wat u *mysterie* noemt, noem ik *onwetendheid*, en niets van wat wij niet weten (hoe we dat ook mogen noemen) is heiliger, volmakter en bewonderenswaardiger dan dat wat wij wel weten – dat wat wij zijn! De liefdadige meelevendheid van de mens is wat ons leven schenkt en onderhoudt, wat onze samenleving draaiende houdt, en wat maakt dat wij ons daarin vrijelijk kunnen voortbewegen.’

‘Lust, angst voor de hongerdood en de politie spelen ook hun rol. Lees Bells brief voor.’

‘Dat zal ik doen, maar sta mij eerst toe u versted te doen staan. Deze brief is een dagboek, bijgehouden gedurende drie maanden. Vergelijk de eerste bladzijde met de laatste.’

Hij reikte me twee pagina’s aan.

Ze deden me inderdaad versted staan, al stonden de eerste, zoals ik al had verwacht, slechts cryptische groepjes hoofdletters:

LV DG RDR HD K GN VRD M T SCHRJVN

N DRJVN WJ P DZ GRT BLW GLVN

De laatste bladzijde bestond uit veertig regels dicht opeenvolgend geschreven woorden, en mijn oog viel op een zin:

Zeg tegen mijn lieve Candle dat zijn trouwe Bell niet langer vindt dat hij almaar moet doen wat zij zegt.

‘Knap voor een driejarige?’ vroeg Baxter.

‘Ze is zich nog aan het ontwikkelen,’ zei ik toen ik hem de twee pagina’s weer overhandigde.

‘Zich nog aan het ontwikkelen! Nog wijsheid en handigheid voor het leven aan het vergaren terwijl ze zich een weg baant naar al wat daar goed aan is. Deze brief geeft mij gelijk, McCandless. Stelt u zich eens voor dat ik Shakespeares oude leermeester zou zijn, degene die hem heeft leren schrijven. Stelt u zich eens voor dat deze brief een geschenk was van mijn voormalige student, het manuscript van *Hamlet*, in zijn eigen handschrift. De geest die dit heeft geschreven streeft mijn eigen geest in alles voorbij, gelijk mijn geest voorbijstreeft aan...’

Hij slikte zijn woorden in en wendde zijn blik van mij af alvorens te zeggen:

‘...tenminste aan die van Duncan Wedderburn. Mijn Shakespeariaanse metafoor is niet al te vergezocht, McCandless. De precisie waarmee ze haar zinnen zin geeft, haar woordspelingen, zelfs haar ritme zijn waarlijk die van Shakespeare.’

‘Lees het dan voor.’

5.2 Editor Gray

5.2.1 Introductie

Het klopt dat het belangrijkste deel van dit boek een zo goed als exacte kopie is van het origineel van McCandless, inclusief de fotografisch gereproduceerde etsen van Strang

en andere illustraties. Ik heb echter de vrijheid genomen om de wat lange hoofdstuktitels te vervangen door wat pakkendere titels van eigen makelij. Hoofdstuk 3, oorspronkelijk getiteld: *Sir Colins ontdekking – een leven stilzetten – ‘Wat heeft het voor zin?’ – de vreemde konijnen – ‘Hoe heeft u het voor elkaar gekregen?’ – nutteloze slimmigheid en wat de Grieken wisten – ‘Tot ziens’ – Baxters bulldog – verschrikkelijke vingers*¹⁰: heet nu eenvoudigweg ‘De ruzie’. Ik stond er ook op het hele boek ARME ZIELEN¹¹ te dopen. Iedereen heeft immers een ziel en elk personage (met uitzondering van mevrouw Dinwiddie en twee van de profiteurs van de Generaal) wordt op een of ander moment ‘arm’ genoemd, of denkt dit over zichzelf. Ik druk de brief van de dame die zichzelf ‘Victoria’ McCandless noemt af als een epiloog. Michael zou graag zien dat ik deze als introductie zou afdrukken, maar als men dit leest vóór de autobiografie, zal de lezer daartegen bevooroordeeld raken. Als hij achteraf gelezen wordt, kunnen we duidelijk vaststellen dat het gaat om de brief van een verwarde vrouw die poogt de waarheid over haar afkomst te verbergen. Daarnaast heeft geen enkel boek twee introducties nodig, en ik schrijf deze al.

Ik vrees dat Michael Donnelly en ik het niet eens kunnen worden over dit boek. Hij is ervan overtuigd dat het gaat om een fictie vol zwarte humor, doorspekt met enkele waargebeurde incidenten en historische feitjes, een boek naar voorbeeld van Sir Walter Scott’s *Old Morality* en James Hogg’s *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*¹². Het

¹⁰ In de BT gaat het om Godwins hand, maar het behoud van de onsubtiele alliteratie is hier een betere illustratie van Archibalds persoonlijkheid. Bovendien gaat de betekenis niet verloren, omdat de beschrijvingen van Godwins handen vooral over zijn ‘cone-shaped fingers’ gaan.

¹¹ Omdat de typografie zo’n integraal onderdeel is van het boek, heb ik dit zo veel mogelijk aangehouden. Dit geldt voor alles, met uitzondering van de conventies voor het geven van nadruk: invoeging van dergelijke tekens, cursivering, gebruik van hoofdletters, het ontbreken van tabs enzovoorts.

¹² Deze instantie van intertekstualiteit is belangrijk voor de ironie, zoals al werd aangegeven, en moet daarom geprioriteerd worden. Echter, de boeken zijn niet vertaald of erg beroemd in de doeltaal en -cultuur. Om deze reden heb ik de namen van de auteurs volledig bijgevoegd, aangezien deze meer

doet mij meer denken aan James Boswells *Life of Samuel Johnson*,¹³ een liefhebbend portret van een buitengewoon goedaardige, stevige, intelligente, excentrieke figuur, vastgelegd door een vriend met een stalen geheugen voor gesprekken. Net als Boswell voegt de bescheiden McCandless een berg brieven van anderen toe, die het onderwerp van zijn studie beschrijven vanuit een ander perspectief, en sluit hij zijn werk af met de ontmaskering van een hele samenleving. Ik maakte Donnelly ook duidelijk dat ik in mijn tijd genoeg fictie had geschreven om geschiedenis te herkennen als ik het zie. Hij zei dat hij voldoende geschiedenis had geschreven om een fictie te herkennen. Er zat maar één ding op; ik moest historicus worden.

Dat heb ik gedaan. Ik ben er een. Na zes maanden onderzoek te hebben gedaan in de archieven van de Universiteit van Glasgow, de Mitchell Library Old Glasgow Room, de Nationale Bibliotheek van Schotland, Register House in Edinburgh, Somerset House in Londen en de Nationale Krantenarchieven van de British Library in Colindale¹⁴ heb ik voldoende bewijsstukken gevonden om aan te tonen dat McCandless' verhaal geen greintje fictie bevat. Een deel van deze bewijsstukken bevinden zich achterin het boek, maar het meeste vindt u hieronder. Lezers die niets liever willen dan een goedgeschreven, helder verhaal, verwijs ik door naar het deel van

herkenning in zich dragen, zonder dat de karakterisering van Editor Gray te ondermijnen. Het zwakt zijn uitsluiting van een deel van de lezers wellicht iets af, maar zijn openlijke blijk van kennis blijft.

¹³ Het is voor de onderzoekende lezer uitermate belangrijk juist deze titel erin te houden, omdat deze biografie door sommigen beschouwd wordt als een onmisbare schakel in de ontwikkeling van het genre, terwijl anderen er kritiek op leveren omdat de auteur zich nogal wat vrijheden en onwaarheden toestaat. Dit is natuurlijk juist in het geval van *PT* en Archibald McCandless en schoolvoorbeeld van Author Gray's gebruik van ironie.

¹⁴ Een lastig geval is deze reeks instituten: een aantal heeft een Nederlandse naam, een aantal niet. Ik heb dit als leidraad aangehouden, en dus vertaald wat hier in Nederland een eigen naam heeft en behouden (zonder uitleg) wat alleen in het Engels bestaat. Dit omdat de voornaamste functie van deze opsomming te maken heeft met de houding van Editor Gray. Hij is er niet op uit de bronnen helder te brengen, hij is erop uit met loze argumenten zijn kant van het verhaal te sterken en een indruk van legitimiteit te wekken. De veelheid aan namen is dus van groter belang dan een uitleg of naturalisering voor de lezer.

het boek waar het om draait. Beroepstwijfelaars zijn wellicht beter in staat dat deel te waarderen nadat ze onderstaande overzicht hebben doorgenomen.

20 AUGUSTUS 1879: Archibald McCandless schrijft zich in als student geneeskunde aan de Universiteit van Glasgow, waar Godwin Baxter (de zoon van de beroemde chirurg en zelf ook chirurg van beroep) werkzaam is als assistent op de afdeling anatomie.

18 FEBRUARI 1881: Het lichaam van een zwangere vrouw wordt gevonden in de rivier de Clyde¹⁵. De politiearts, Godwin Baxter (woonachtig in Park Circus 18), maakt de overlijdensakte op en beschrijft haar als ‘om en nabij 25 jaar oud, 1 meter 78 lang, donkerbruin, krullend haar, blauwe ogen, blanke huid en handen die geen hard werk gewoon zijn; goed gekleed.’ De vondst wordt publiekelijk kenbaar gemaakt maar het lichaam wordt niet opgehaald.

29 JUNI 1882: Bij zonsondergang hoorde men een buitengewoon geluid weergalmen rond Clyde Basin. Hoewel het door de lokale pers uitvoerig werd besproken gedurende de daaropvolgende weken, werd een verklaring nooit gevonden.

5.2.2 Kritische en historische annotaties

HOOFDSTUK 1, bladzijde 9¹⁶. *Mijn moeder vertrouwde banken voor geen cent, gelijk de meeste landarbeiders destijds.*

Het ging hier niet om het bijgeloof van een onnozele vrouw.

Bankfaillissementen kwamen veel voor gedurende de achttiende en negentiende eeuw

¹⁵ Een kleine toevoeging die een tegemoetkoming voor de Nederlandse lezer vormt, is hier niet storend; het past goed bij het register dat Editor Gray hier aanneemt, een register van feitelijkheid en autoriteit, dat van een geschiedschrijver (ondersteund door zijn eerdere uitspraken) en het heeft zelfs iets weg van een schoolboek.

¹⁶ Aangezien deze vertaling niet in een boek is bijgesloten en de noten niet terugverwijzen naar vertaalde tekst, wordt de paginanummering van de brontekst aangehouden.

en het waren de arme mensen die hieronder het meest te lijden hadden, aangezien de rijken beter op de hoogte waren van welke banken er het best voorstonden en met welke het minder ging. In het Groot-Brittannië van de twintigste eeuw¹⁷ komt dit alleen nog voor bij pensioenfondsen.

HOOFDSTUK 2, bladzijde 15. *Hij was de enige zoon van Colin Baxter, de eerste medicus die door Koningin Victoria geridderd werd.*

In zijn *The Royal Doctors* (uitgegeven door Macmillan in 1963) beschrijft Gervaise Thring Godwins verwekker, Sir Colin Baxter, uitvoerig. Over Godwin zegt hij: ‘Tussen 1864 en 1869 was zijn minder beroemde maar even getalenteerde zoon werkzaam als waarnemend adviseur tijdens de geboorte van drie prinses en een prinses, en hoogstwaarschijnlijk hij redde het leven van de hertog van Clarence. Hij trok zich terug, waarschijnlijk ten gevolge van zijn zwakke gezondheid, en overleed een aantal jaar later in de anonimiteit.’ Nergens in het Register House in Edinburgh is enige documentatie van zijn geboorte te vinden, en op zijn overlijdensakte, gedateerd 1884, blijven de stippellijntjes voor leeftijd en de meisjesnaam van de moeder oningevuld.

Bladzijde 17. *Arme Semmelweis werd krankzinnig van ze: hij pleegde zelfmoord in een poging de waarheid aan het licht te brengen.*

Semmelweis was een Hongaarse verloskundige. De torenhoge sterftecijfers van de Weense kraamkliniek waar hij werkte ontzetten hem ten zeerste en met inzet van antiseptica slaagde hij erin deze terug te brengen van 12 tot 1,25 procent. Zijn

¹⁷ Het laten staan van de tijdsbepaling maakt wellicht dat de roman minder relevant lijkt voor nu, maar de rest van het werk spreekt dit tegen, en bovendien zou het wegvertalen ervan met woorden als ‘hedendaags’ zorgen voor discrepanties in de twee teksten van Editor Gray; niet per definitie onwenselijk gezien de onbetrouwbare aard van zijn vertelstem, maar niet een fout die in de brontekst te vinden is.

meerderen keurden zijn bevindingen af en werkten hem weg. Hij liep met voorbedachten rade een bloedvergiftiging op in zijn vinger en hij overleed in 1865 in een psychiatrische inrichting aan dezelfde ziekte die hij zijn hele leven had bestreden.

5.3 Bella Baxter

5.3.1 Bella Baxters brief: Een geweten creëren

*Het geld gepakt, men vleide arme Wed,
Paaide en prees hem ook door hen maar niet
door mij. Ik hoorde keelgeschraap, een stem:
'Mevrouw, vergeeft u me dat ik u stoor?'
en keek opzij ding ding woehoe God!¹⁸
De bel van het avondmaal! Wat een trek –
een honger, dorst, ik heb zucht naar bortsch,
een soep van biet en kool, nu roept de plicht
maar sta me toe dat ik met rijm dit voor u dicht.*

* * * * *

Nu heb ik geen zin meer om net als Shakespeare te schrijven¹⁹. Het gaat zo langzaam, vooral nu ik zo mijn best doe om woorden te spellen op de lange manier zoals de meeste mensen het doen. Weer een warme dag in Odessa. De hemel is als een laken van

¹⁸ Bella houdt een vrij strikte jambische pentameter aan, afgezien van een enkele inversie, maar hier verliest ze het in haar enthousiasme

¹⁹ Dit klinkt erg kinderlijk en biedt een goede introductie op het personage nu ze voor het eerst voor zichzelf schrijft en ook Shakespeare loslaat.

gladgepolijste grijze²⁰ wolken die niet eens helemaal de horizon verbergt. Ik zit hier met mijn schrijfbakje op mijn schoot op de bovenste trede van een reusachtige trap die helemaal tot aan de monding van de haven loopt. Hij is ontzettend breed, je zou er een heel leger op kwijtkunnen²¹, en hij lijkt heel erg op de trap in West End Park, vlakbij ons huis, God. Er flaneren²² hier ook allerlei mensen, maar als ik zo zou zitten schrijven op de trap in Glasgow zouden een heleboel mensen mij boos of stomverbaasd aankijken, en als ik mijzelf niet keurig zou kleden zou de politie me daar weghalen. Van alle landen die ik heb bezocht passen de V.S. en Rusland het best bij mij. Daar lijken de mensen het minder vervelend te vinden om met onbekenden te praten en zijn ze niet zo stijfjes of afkeurend. Komt dit omdat zij, net als ik, zo 'n kort verleden hebben? Die vriend die ik ontmoet heb in het wedkantoor en met wie ik heb gepraat over roulette en vrijheid en de ziel is ook Russisch. Hij zei dat Rusland net zo jong is als de V.S. omdat een land niet ouder kan zijn dan zijn literatuur.

'Pushkin stond aan de wieg van onze literatuur. Hij was een tijdgenoot van die Walter Scott van jullie,' vertelde hij me. 'Vóór Pushkin kon Rusland zich niet een echte natie noemen, het was toen meer een stuk grond met een bestuur. Onze aristocraten²³ spraken

²⁰ De plotselinge veranderingen tussen Bella's registers in dit stuk zijn opvallend. Gladgepolijst is een moeilijk woord, maar vormt met grijs een speels binnenrijm en weerspiegelt Bella's interesse in taal. Deze moeiteloze taalbeheersing doorspekt met speelsheid wordt weerspiegeld in de hele brief en haar toon wisselt tussen verwonderd en zelfverzekerd.

²¹ Bella haalt hier de trap aan uit een wereldberoemde scène uit de film *Pantserkruiser Potemkin* aan, wat een interessant paradox oplevert; Bella was in Odessa jaren voordat de film in 1925 werd uitgebracht, maar *Poor Things* is juist weer decennia na de film uitgebracht. Dit maakt Bella's opmerking ironisch; de waargebeurde muiterij is nog niet gebeurt (1905), maar ook de film die de trappen überhaupt beroemd maakte is er nog niet. Haar luchtige opmerking ontgaat de moderne, oplettende lezer echter niet en zorgt voor een humoristisch contrast met de scène uit de film. Het is ook een moment waarop de geïmpliceerde auteur even uit de tekst stapt en zich kenbaar maakt aan de oplettende lezer.

²² Dit is een voor Bella typisch voorbeeld van het aan de ene kant goed maar aan de andere kant ongebruikelijke kiezen van een bepaald woord. Langs de zee in de grote stad flaneren mensen zeker, maar hier doelt ze eerder op de reacties van mensen die passeren. Dit is bewust vertaald met een vergelijkbaar ongebruikelijk woord in de context.

²³ Hoewel 'adel' hier een meer idiomatische keuze is, zijn het ritme van en de grammaticale overeenkomst tussen 'aristocraten' en 'bureaucraten' overwegingen om toch voor 'aristocraten' te kiezen.

Frans, onze bureaucraten waren Pruisisch en zij keken vol minachting neer op de enige échte Russen, de boeren. Maar toen leerde Pushkin de volksverhalen die zijn verzorgster, een vrouw van het volk, hem vertelde. Door zijn novelles en gedichten leerden we om trots te zijn op onze taal en wij werden ons bewust van onze tragische geschiedenis – ons wonderlijke heden – onze ondoorgrondelijke toekomst. Hij maakte van Rusland een staat van zijn²⁴ – hij maakte het tastbaar. Daarna kwam Gogol, die was minstens even goed als jullie Dickens, en Turgénief, die nog beter is dan jullie George Eliot, en Tolstoj, die even goed is als jullie Shakespeare. Maar jullie hadden Shakespeare al eeuwen voor Walter Scott.’

5.3.2 Een brief van Victoria McCandless M.D.

Het is betreurenswaardig dat mijn Archie zo jaloers was op de enige twee mensen van wie hij ooit heeft gehouden. Hij benijdde God om zijn beroemde vader en om zijn liefhebbende moeder. Hij verachtte mijn steenrijke vader, kloosteropleiding en beroemde eerste echtgenoot, verachtte mijn superieure sociale vaardigheden. Bovenal benijdde hij de warmte en zorg die God mij toedroeg en mijn onstuitbare liefde voor God en haatte hij het hoe wij hem niets meer konden bieden dan goedbedoelde welwillendheid, getemperd (althans, in mijn geval) door sensuele bevrediging. In zijn laatste maanden zocht hij dan ook troost in een zelfbedachte wereld waarin hij, God en ik in perfecte harmonie samenleefden. Omdat hij een jeugd heeft gehad die de welgestelden in de wereld geen jeugd zouden noemen, ontzegde hij God de zijne – alsof

²⁴ Ik heb hier niet met een woord als ‘gemoedstoestand’ vertaald, omdat de dubbele betekenis van het Engelse ‘state’ dan verloren gaat; Pushkin maakte van het land ook een land van denkers. ‘Zijn’ en ‘mind’ liggen wat verder van elkaar vandaan, maar de dubbele betekenis is hier belangrijk voor de karakterschets van de vriend van Bella, die haar in deze periode samen met enkele anderen vormt tot wie ze is als ze terugkeert.

God altijd al de man was geweest die Archie had gekend, omdat Sir Colin hem gecreëerd zou hebben volgens de Frankensteinse methode. Daarna besloot hij mijn jeugd en opleiding ook weg te nemen door te beweren dat ik mentaal gezien niet mezelf was toen we elkaar leerden kennen, maar mijn eigen dochtertje. Toen hij eenmaal een eendracht in gemis tussen ons drieën had gefabriceerd, kon hij gemakkelijk beschrijven hoe het liefde op het eerste gezicht was tussen hem en mij, en hoe jaloers Godwin op hem was! Maar Archie was natuurlijk niet gek. Hij wist wel dat zijn boek een sluwe leugen was. Wat hem zo amuseerde telkens als hij om zijn werk gniffelde in de laatste weken van zijn leven, was hoe ingenieus zijn fictie de werkelijkheid te slim af was. Tenminste, dat vermoed ik.

*Maar waarom heeft hij het dan niet overtuigender gemaakt? In het tweeëntwintigste hoofdstuk, waarin wordt beschreven hoe mijn eerste echtgenoot mij door de voet schoot, schrijft hij: ‘Gelukkig was de kogel dwars door de voet gegaan, en had hij slechts **HET INTEGUMENT TUSSEN DE ULNA EN DE RADIUS VAN DE TWEEDE EN DERDE OSSA METACARPII DOORBOORD**²⁵ zonder ook maar een beentje te schampen²⁶.’*

De woorden in hoofdletters zouden wellicht een onwetende lezer kunnen overtuigen van hun anatomische juistheid, maar het is reinste nonsens²⁷, kletspraat, onzin, gebazel,

²⁵ Een arts vertelde mij dat het in het Nederlands ongebruikelijker is om Latijnse termen of vergezochte woorden te gebruiken; een logischere keuze voor ‘radius’ is ‘sleutelbeen’, en de ‘ossa metacarpium’ zijn eenvoudigweg de middenhandsbeentjes. Echter, dit zou de lezer meteen herkennen als onmogelijk, omdat die woorden te begrijpelijk zijn. Daarom heb ik gepoogd een balans te vinden tussen moeilijke woorden waarvan Archibald zou genieten omdat hij in staat is ze te gebruiken, het aanhouden van de Engelse inhoud, en een overtuigend register.

²⁶ Moet klinken als Archibald

²⁷ Opvallend is hier de keuze voor het woord ‘blethers’ in de BT. Het is een opvallend en ongebruikelijk woord, en wordt (zoals te zien is in de vertaling ‘5.1 Archibald’) ook door Archibald gebruikt. De keuze om in beide gevallen hetzelfde te vertalen (‘reinste nonsens’) is bewust. Het feit dat beide personages een dusdanig ongebruikelijk woord gebruiken, ondermijnt een van beider verhalen. Ofwel Bella spreekt de waarheid en Archibald kopieert haar taalgebruik uit bewondering en jaloezie, ofwel Archibald spreekt de waarheid en is van grote invloed geweest op de woordenschat van de snel lerende Bella.

durewoordenkramerij²⁸, en aangezien Archie met geen mogelijkheid zijn medische opleiding volledig vergeten kon zijn, moet hij ervan op de hoogte zijn geweest. Hij had eenvoudigweg kunnen zeggen dat de kogel ‘de pees van de caput obliquum aan de adductor hallucis tussen de grote en index proximale falangen had doorboord zonder ook maar een beentje te schampen’, want dat is wat er is voorgevallen.²⁹ Maar ik heb de tijd niet om het hele boek door te spitten om feit van fictie te scheiden. Als u simpelweg de zaken die het gezonde verstand en deze brief tegenspreken negeert, zult u tot de conclusie komen dat dit boek een aantal gebeurtenissen beschrijft die daadwerkelijk plaats hebben gevonden in dit troosteloze tijdperk. Ik heb het al eerder gezegd en ik zeg het nog eens, dit boek riekt ronduit naar al wat Victoriaans is.

²⁸ Het is belangrijk deze reeks synoniemen te bewaren, aangezien hieruit blijkt dat Archibalds karakterisering van Bella weldegelijk ergens op gebaseerd is: haar ‘synoniemenwoede’ is ook duidelijk in haar taalgebruik als anderen haar geen woorden in de mond leggen.

²⁹ Bella bevestigt hier nogmaals een deel van het narratief van Archibald.

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7. Appendix

7.1 Figures

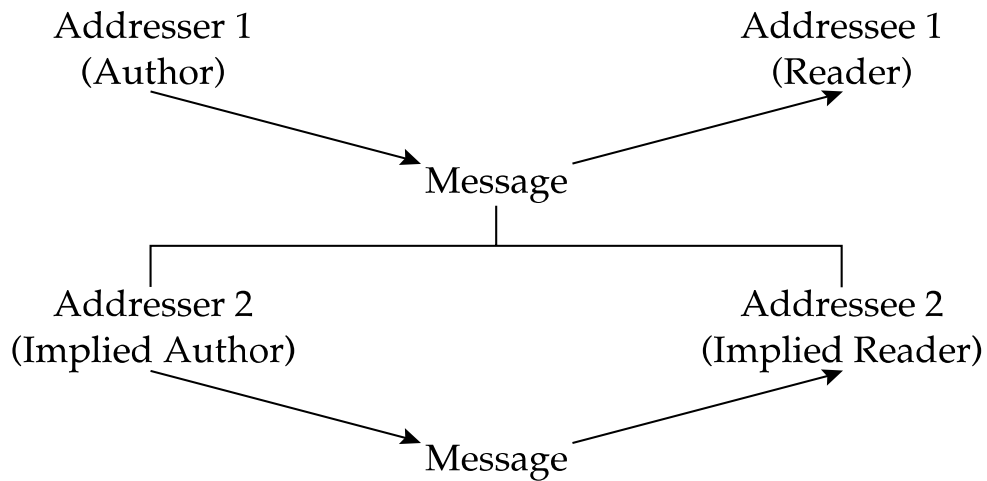


Figure 1: Discourse situation (Leech and Short 210)

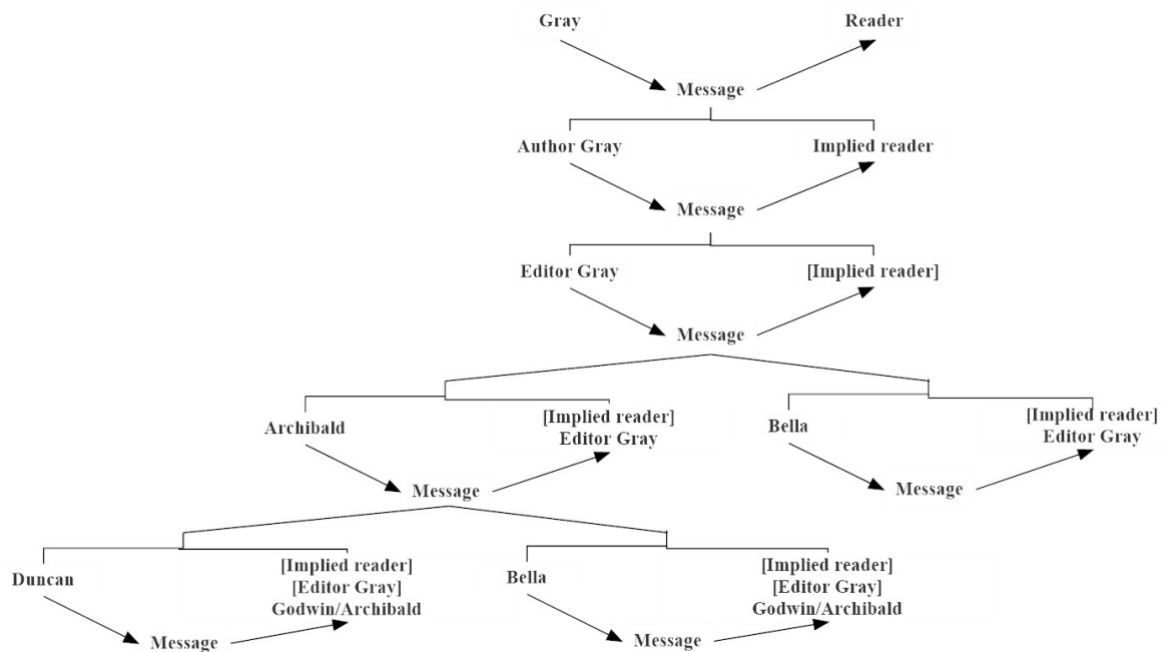


Figure 2: Discourse situation in *PT*

7.2 Source Text

7.2.1 Archibald McCandless

“True. Right. Correct. Exactly. Yes indeed!” cried he in an ecstasy of agreement. I said grimly, “Bell's use of synonyms seems infectious. Has she many in that letter?”

He smiled at me like a wise old teacher whose favourite pupil has answered a difficult question and said, “Forgive my excitement, McCandless. You cannot share it because you have never been a parent, have never made something new and splendid. It is wonderful for a creator to see the offspring live, feel and act independently. I read Genesis three years ago and could not understand God's displeasure when Eve and Adam chose to know good and evil – chose to be Godlike. That should have been his proudest hour.”

“They deliberately disobeyed him!” I said, forgetting *The Origin of Species* and speaking with the voice of *The Shorter Catechism*. “He had given them life and everything they could enjoy, everything on earth, except two forbidden trees. Those were sacred mysteries whose fruit did harm. Nothing but perverse greed made them eat it.”

Baxter shook his head and said, “Only bad religions depend on mysteries, just as bad governments depend on secret police. Truth, beauty and goodness are not mysterious, they are the commonest, most obvious, most essential facts of life, like sunlight, air and bread. Only folk whose heads are muddled by expensive educations think truth, beauty, goodness are rare private properties. Nature is more liberal. The universe keeps nothing essential from us it is all present, all gift. God is the universe plus mind. Those who say

God, or the universe, or nature is mysterious, are like those who call these things jealous or angry. They are announcing the state of their lonely, muddled minds.”

“Utter blethers, Baxter!” I cried. “Our whole lives are a struggle with mysteries.

Mysteries endanger us, support us, destroy us. Our great scientists have cleared away these mysteries in some directions by deepening them in others. The second law of thermo-dynamics proves the universe will end by turning into cold porridge, but nobody knows how it began, or if it began. Our science stems from Kepler's discovery of gravitation, but though we can describe how the vastest galaxies and flimsiest gases gravitate we don't know what gravity is or how it works. Kepler speculated that it was a form of inorganic intelligence. Modern physicists do not even speculate, but hide their ignorance under formulae. We know how species began but cannot create the smallest living cell. You grafted a baby's brain into a mother's skull. Very clever. It does not make you an all-knowing god.”

“I disagree with your language, not your facts, McCandless,” said Baxter with another annoyingly generous smile. “Of course no single mind can know more than a fraction of past, present and future existence. But what you call *mysteries* I call *ignorances*, and nothing we do not know (whatever we call it) is more holy, sacred and wonderful than the things we know – the things we are! The loving kindness of people is what creates and supports us, keeps our society running and lets us move freely in it.”

“Lust, fear of hunger and the police also play a part. Read me Bell's letter.”

“I will, but let me start by astonishing you. This letter is a diary written over a period of three months. Compare the first page with the last.”

He handed me two pages.

They did astonish me, though the first, as I expected, was covered with big capital letters cryptically grouped:

DR GD I HD N PC T WRT BFR

W R FLT PN THS BL BL S

The last page contained forty lines of closely written words, of which a sentence caught my eye:

Tell my dear Candle that his wedding Bell no longer thinks he must do all she bids.

“Good for a three-year-old?” asked Baxter.

“She is still learning,” I said, returning the two pages.

“Still learning! Still gaining wisdom and aptitude for life while struggling toward what is good in it. This letter justifies me, McCandless. Imagine I am Shakespeare's old schoolteacher, one who taught him to write. Imagine this letter is a present from my former pupil, the original manuscript of *Hamlet* in his own hand. The soul who wrote this has soared as far beyond my own soul as my soul soars beyond—”

He checked himself, looked away from me then said, “—at least beyond Duncan Wedderburn. My Shakespearean analogy is not far-fetched, McCandless. The close-packed sense within her sentences, her puns, her very cadences are Shakespeare's.”

“Then read it to me.”

7.2.2 Editor Gray

7.2.2.1 Introduction

Indeed, the main part of this book is as near to a facsimile of the McCandless original as possible, with the Strang etchings and other illustrative devices reproduced photographically. However, I have replaced the lengthy chapter headings with snappier

titles of my own. Chapter 3, originally headed: *Sir Colin's discovery — arresting a life — “What use is it?” — the queer rabbits — “How did you do it?” — useless cleverness and what the Greeks knew — “Good-bye” — Baxter’s bulldog — a horrible hand*: is now simply called “The Quarrel”. I have also insisted on renaming the whole book POOR THINGS. Things are often mentioned in the story and every single character (apart from Mrs. Dinwiddie and two of the General’s parasites) is called poor or call themselves that sometime or other. I print the letter by the lady who calls herself “Victoria” McCandless as an epilogue to the book. Michael would prefer it as an introduction, but if read before the main text it will prejudice readers against that. If read afterward we easily see it is the letter of a disturbed woman who wants to hide the truth about her start in life. ‘Furthermore, no book needs two introductions and I am writing this one.

I fear Michael Donnelly and I disagree about this book. He thinks it a blackly humorous fiction into which some real experiences and historical facts have been cunningly woven, a book like Scott’s *Old Morality* and Hogg’s *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. I think it like Boswell’s *Life of Samuel Johnson*; a loving portrait of an astonishingly good, stout, intelligent, eccentric man recorded by a friend with a memory for dialogue. Like Boswell, the self-effacing McCandless makes his narrative a host to letters by others who show his subject from a different angle, and ends by revealing a whole society. I also told Donnelly that I had written enough fiction to know history when I read it. He said he had written enough history to recognize fiction. To this there was only one reply – I had to become a historian.

I did so. I am one. After six months of research among the archives of Glasgow University, the Mitchell Library's Old Glasgow Room, the Scottish National Library, Register House in Edinburgh, Somerset House in London and the National Newspaper Archive of the British Library at Colindale I have collected enough material evidence to prove the McCandless story a complete tissue of facts. I give some of this evidence at the end of the book but most of it here and now. Readers who want nothing but a good story plainly told should go at once to the main part of the book. Professional doubters may enjoy it more after first scanning this table of events.

29 AUGUST, 1879: Archibald McCandless enrolls as a medical student in Glasgow University, where Godwin Baxter (son of the famous surgeon and himself a practising surgeon) is an assistant in the anatomy department.

18 FEBRUARY, 1881: The body of a pregnant woman is recovered from the Clyde. The police surgeon, Godwin Baxter (whose home is 18 Park Circus) certifies death by drowning, and describes her as "about 25 years old, 5 feet 10 3/4 inches tall, dark brown curling hair, blue eyes, fair complexion and hands unused to rough work; well dressed." The body is advertised but not claimed.

29 JUNE, 1882: At sunset an extraordinary noise was heard throughout most of the Clyde basin, and though widely discussed in the local press during the following fortnight, no satisfactory explanation was ever found for it.

7.2.2.2 Notes Critical and Historical

CHAPTER I, page 9. *Like most farm workers in those days, my mother distrusted banks.*

This was not the superstition of an ignorant woman. Bank failures were frequent during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and poorer folk suffered most by them, as the prosperous were better informed as to which financial houses were unsound, or becoming so. In twentieth-century Britain such injustices only happen with pension funds.

CHAPTER 2, page 15. *This was the only son of Colin Baxter, the first medical man to be knighted by Queen Victoria.*

In his history *The Royal Doctors* (published by Macmillan, 1963) Gervaise Thring gives most space to Godwin's progenitor, Sir Colin Baxter, but says: "Between 1864 and 1869 his less well-known yet equally gifted son was attendant consultant during the delivery of three princes and a princess royal, and probably saved the life of the Duke of Clarence. For reasons perhaps connected with his precarious health Godwin Baxter withdrew into private life and died in obscurity a few years later." In Register House, Edinburgh, there is no record of his birth, and on the death certificate of 1884 there are blanks in the spaces reserved for age and mother's name.

Page 17. *They drove poor Semmelweis mad: he committed suicide through trying to broadcast the truth.*

Semmelweis was a Hungarian obstetrician. Appalled by the high death rate in the Viennese maternity hospital where he worked, he used antiseptics and cut the death rate from 12 to 1 ¼ per cent. His superiors refused to accept his conclusions and forced him out. He deliberately contracted septicaemia in a finger and in 1865 died in a mental hospital of the disease he had spent his life combating.

7.2.3 Bella Baxter

7.2.3.1 Bella Baxter's Letter: Making a Conscience

*While this was done poor Wedderburn got wooed
fawned on and flattered all he wished, though not
by me. I heard a cough and someone say,
“Madame: will you forgive J I intrude?”
and looking sideways ding ding whoopee God!
The dinner bell! I ’m feeling ravenous—
hungry parched famished and athirst for bortsch,
a splendid beetroot soup, but still have time
to finish off this entry with a rhyme.*

* * * * *

I will not write like Shakespeare any more. It slows me down, especially now I am trying to spell words in the long way most people do. Another warm Odessa day. The sky is a high sheet of perfectly smooth pale-grey cloud which does not even hide the horizon. I sit with my little writing-case open on my knees on the topmost step of a huge flight of steps descending to the harbourfront. It is wide enough to march an army down, and very like the steps down to the West End Park near our house, God. All kinds of people promenade here too, but if I sat writing a letter on the Glasgow steps many would give me angry or astonished looks, and if I was poorly dressed the police would move me on. The Russians ignore me completely or smile in a friendly way. Of all the

nations I have visited the U.S.A. and Russia suit me best. The people seem more ready to talk to strangers without being formal or disapproving. Is this because, like me, they have very little past? The friend I made in the betting-shop who talked to me about roulette and freedom and the soul is Russian. He said Russia is as young a country as the U.S.A. because a nation is only as old as its literature.

“Our literature began with Pushkin, a contemporary of your Walter Scott,” he told me. “Before Pushkin Russia was not a true nation, it was an administered region. Our aristocracy spoke French, our bureaucracy was Prussian, and the only true Russians – the peasants – were despised by rulers and bureaucracy alike. Then Pushkin learned the folk-tales from his nursemaid, a woman of the people. His novellas and poems made us proud of our language and aware of our tragic past – our peculiar present – our enigmatic future. He made Russia a state of mind – made it real. Since then we have had Gogol who was as great as your Dickens and Turgénief who is greater than your George Eliot and Tolstoï who is as great as your Shakespeare. But you had Shakespeare centuries before Walter Scott.”

7.2.3.2 A letter from Victoria McCandless M.D.

Unluckily my Archie envied the only two people he loved, the only two who could tolerate him. He envied God for having a famous father and tender, loving mother. He resented my wealthy father, convent education and famous first husband, resented my superior social graces. Most of all her envied the care and company God gave me and the strength of my love for God, and hated the fact that the most we felt for him was friendly goodwill tempered (on my side) with sensual indulgence. So in his last months he soothed himself by imagining a world where he and God and I existed in perfect

equality. Having had a childhood which privileged people would have thought “no childhood” he wrote a book suggesting that God had none either – that God had always been as Archie knew him, because Sir Colin had manufactured God by the Frankenstein method. Then he deprived me of childhood and schooling by suggesting I was not mentally me when I first met him, but my baby daughter. Having invented this equality of deprivation for all of us he could then easily describe how I loved him at first sight, and how Godwin envied him! But of course, Archie was no lunatic. He knew his book was a cunning lie. When chuckling over it during his last few weeks what amused him was how cleverly his fiction outwitted the truth. Or so I believe.

Yet why did he not make it more convincing? In the twenty-second chapter, describing how my first husband shot me through the foot, he says “The bullet had luckily gone clean through into the carpet, PUNCTURING THE INTEGUMENT BETWEEN THE ULNA AND RADIUS OF THE SECOND AND THIRD METACARPALS without even chipping a bone.” The capitalized words might just convince someone who knows nothing of anatomy but they are blethers, havers, claptrap, gibberish, gobbledygook, and since Archie cannot have forgotten his medical training to that extent he must have known it. He could easily have said “puncturing the tendon of the oblique head of adductor hallucis between the great and index proximal phalanges without chipping a bone”, because that was what happened. But I have no time to go through every page separating fact from fiction. If you ignore what contradicts common sense and this letter you will find that this book records some actual events during a dismal era. As I said before, to my nostrils the book stinks of Victorianism.

