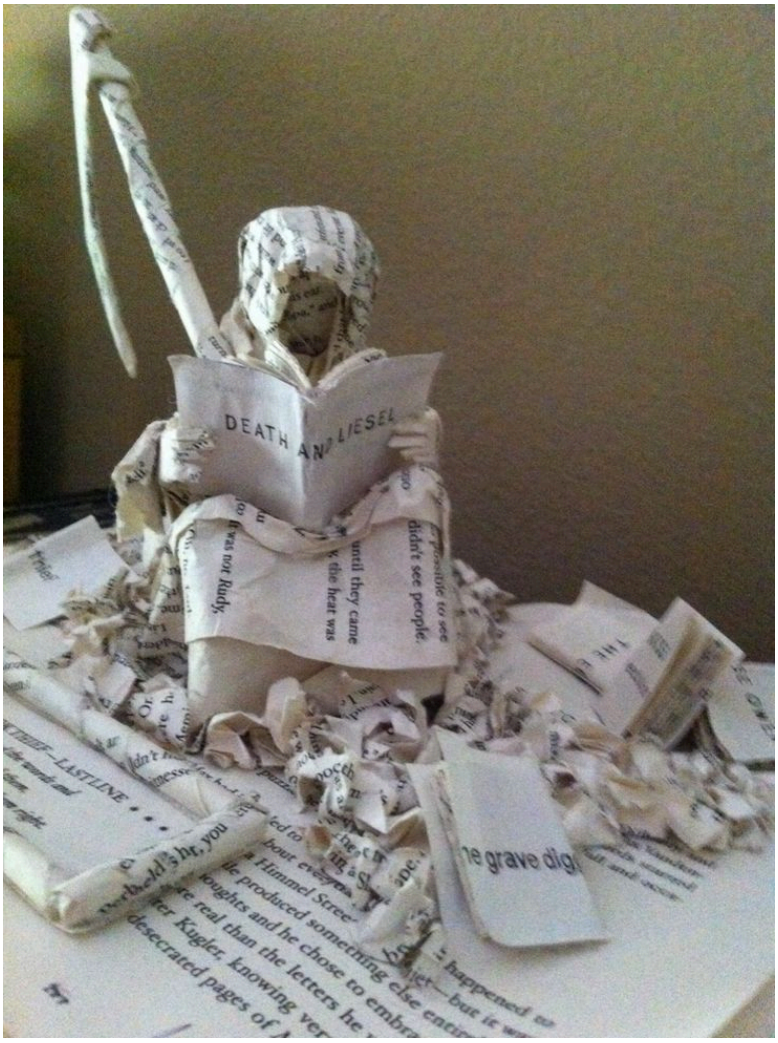
Capturing the Ungraspable in Words:

An Analysis of the Effectiveness of Postmodern Elements from Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief* as Translated in the Dutch Prose Translation, the Novel's Screen Adaptation, and the Dutch Subtitles Thereof



MA-Thesis

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INTRODUCTION

I have hated the words and
I have loved them, and I
hope I have made them right.

—Liesel Meminger, *The Book Thief*

Set in Nazi Germany and told from the perspective of Death, *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak tells the story of a young German girl named Liesel who stubbornly tries to read books despite the forces in her life trying to keep her from doing so. On page 147, Death aptly observes how fitting it is that a young girl is "discovering the power of words" in a time of book-burnings and strict censure. Death calls her a book thief because she lays claim to fourteen books throughout the novel by rescuing them from snow or bonfires, receiving them, or by actively stealing them from other people, such as the mayor. Liesel catches Death's attention when he comes to retrieve her dead brother's soul, and he drops in on her occasionally from that moment onward, following her as she moves in with German foster parents in Munich (her communist mother hoping to give her a chance at a safe childhood), and describing Liesel's relationships with her foster parents, her friend Rudy, who lives next door, and a Jew named Max, who hides in their basement for a while. From the start, Death alludes to past and future events, occasionally giving away characters' fates, but the narrative generally proceeds in a chronological order. The book's title refers to Liesel as a character as well as the title of the story Liesel ends up writing. The Dutch translation of *The Book Thief* by Annemarie Lodewijk, titled *De Boekendief*, was released in 2009.

In 2013, Sunswept Entertainment released a film adaptation of the novel, directed by Brian Percival. The American-German film has a 46 per cent rating on film review aggregator *Rotten Tomatoes*, the critics' consensus being that the film is "a bit too safe in its handling of its Nazi Germany settings", but that the film "counters its constraints with a respectful tone and strong performances". In this context, the word "constraints" refers to the film's supposedly tentative depiction of Nazi Germany, but the word "constraints" might also be applied in a different fashion. There are those who would apply it to the medium of cinema itself; after all, is the general consensus among fans not usually that the book was better than the film adaptation? Rather than weighing in on whether *The Book Thief* is "better" as a

book than as a film, this thesis instead attempts to analyse whether the film adaptation is effective in conveying postmodern elements, and whether the Dutch subtitles are effective.

The Book Thief has been classified as postmodern – and, more specifically, magic realist – holocaust fiction by Jenni Adams, who notes that magic realist techniques are used increasingly to convey Holocaust narratives in order to challenge the school of historical realism (1), which presents history as a linear series of facts rather than a random or careful selection of perspectives offered and presented by subjective parties. Chapter one will delve into the reasons for this phenomenon, placing the novel in a broader postmodern context. In doing so, it examines historiographic metafiction, as coined by Linda Hutcheon in 1988 (5), and magic realism, linking these postmodern concepts to *The Book Thief*, and showing instances of postmodern narrative techniques. Additionally, it introduces key concepts in translation studies, provides an overview of the different types of translation, and looks at the translation strategies that are deemed most suitable for the translation of magic realist texts. Shannin Schroeder, for one, claims that magic realist fiction lends itself well to translation because it is the imagery the text invokes, and not necessarily its morphological features, that must be conveyed to the reader (15-6). If conveying imagery is indeed the translator's aim, how do they go about invoking it across languages and cultures?

Chapter two introduces a number of relevant translations in *De Boekendief*. As will become evident, various techniques are employed in the source text to convey the novel's postmodern themes. These are not just narrative techniques, related to the structure of the narrative or the language and tone used by the narrator, but visual ones as well — for visuals do not just appear on screen; they are included in printed texts too. As Carol O'Sullivan points out, translation is "usually thought of as being about the printed word, but . . . words may interact with still and moving images, diagrams, music, typography, or page layout" (2). In fact, Yves Gambier argues that the very notion of text in Translation Studies should be reconsidered in light of audiovisual translation (AVT) discourse: texts on screen are multimodal, but "is this not true of *any* text? Tourist brochures, press articles, art books, children's books, instruction leaflets, exhibition catalogues, illustrated books and advertisements all combine writing and illustrations (photos, drawings), with considerable scope for variety in the way printing, punctuation and the arrangement of space on the page are used" (3). *The Book Thief* contains captioned illustrations and can be seen as being

multimodal for that reason alone, but it contains more visual elements besides: as chapter two will demonstrate, its mise-en-page arguably contributes to its postmodern nature.

Instead of treating the literary translation as a translation of verbal text alone, then, the postmodern features of the English source text and the Dutch translations thereof that chapter two examines will include verbal ones (such as morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics) *and* nonverbal ones — both in terms of narrative structure and formatting. One could argue that the second category does not pose a problem to a translator, for why should the structure of a narrative or the formatting of the text have any bearing on the translated text? Why would copying these non-verbal elements require any creativity on the translator's end? Yet, copying the author's techniques might not always have the intended effect across cultures. Does one effectively convey erraticism through putting line breaks in the same places or applying the same typography? How can one keep a sentence short and abstract if the target language requires a more complicated sentence structure to express a similar expression? Moreover, as mentioned previously, images — and the *position* of the captions thereof — might invoke different associations depending on the audience. These are just some examples of the importance of non-verbal elements to literary translators, to whom form and content are entangled concepts rather than isolated ones.

The matter of multimodality will be explored further in chapter three, which looks at the film adaptation of *The Book Thief*. Determining what the Dutch subtitles are a translation of is key to understanding whether the translation is successful. After all, could one not speak of the film adaptation of *The Book Thief* as a translation in itself — an intersemiotic translation from paper to screen? As pointed out by Francesca Bartrina, it is not always clear to the subtitler whether the source text is the novel, the translated novel, an early or late version of the screenplay, the film itself, or a combination of any or all of these (160). Earlier, O'Sullivan was cited as speaking of words interacting with images and music (2). Subtitles interact with the words spoken by the actors, the non-verbal sounds such as the score and inanimate objects that make noise, and the visuals one sees on screen. What the translator must be concerned with is not merely that the meaning of the words in the spoken dialogue is conveyed, but also that the meaning added to the spoken dialogue by the visuals is retained in the target product. An analysis of the Dutch subtitles of the DVD release should not just take translation procedures into account, but also the notion that the translated words go together with visuals and acoustics. For the sake of comparison, therefore, the

effectiveness of postmodern translations will be based on that which can be seen and heard on screen as well as the text of the transcript. The notion that a subtitle of two lines can only take up eighty characters demands succinctness on the subtitler's end, but does this automatically lead to the loss of meaning, or can this issue be circumvented creatively?

Overall, then, this thesis looks at the subtitler's choices and the effectiveness thereof with regard to the conveyance of postmodern elements, but also at the film as an adaptation — or intersemiotic translation — of the novel. Can film be used to convey literary themes? In what areas is it forced to make sacrifices, and how does it compensate for that which it cannot include? On the whole, however, the effectiveness of the subtitles will primarily be based on how well they capture that which can be inferred from the film itself, for if the film's dialogue differs from lines in the novel, it makes sense for the respective translations to differ too. Moreover, the conclusion's analysis will focus on the conveyance of postmodern elements, and not the quality of the subtitles in general. Subtitles certainly serve to make the plot understandable to the audience, but Remael (2003) and Gottlieb (1998) would say they can also serve to enhance the cinematic experience. Can they be used to preserve and even enhance elements that are inherent to the postmodern genre? As will be further discussed in chapter one, vivid imagery is one of the key characteristics of magic realism: it is not the words themselves but the ideas they convey and the images they invoke in the reader's mind that tell a magic realist story. This thesis aims to analyse whether the written words present in the film — the subtitles — can indeed let Death's postmodern narrative play out in the reader's mind successfully.

Chapter 1

TRANSLATION THEORY REGARDING POSTMODERNISM AND MAGIC REALISM

1. Introduction

Translation studies is a relatively new academic discipline that studies the theory and practice of translation. According to Jeremy Munday, the field is "multilingual and also interdisciplinary, encompassing languages, linguistics, communication studies, philosophy and a range of types of cultural studies" (1). There are different types of translation. The nature of a translation influences how it is translated and which academic disciplines are relevant to the translation process. Roman Jakobson identifies three types of translation: intralingual translation, interlingual translation, and intersemiotic translation (233). Intralingual translation takes place when text is rephrased within the same language. This type of translation may be motivated by the need to communicate something more aptly, clearly, or beautifully. Interlingual translation is the interpretation of text from one language (the source language) by means of another language (the target language). When translating between languages, the translator does not just need to take linguistic variations between the source language and the target language into consideration, but variations in cultural practices as well. Do words have the same connotations across languages? Is the target audience familiar with the cultural context in which the source text was produced? Chapter two, which focuses on the Dutch prose translation of *The Book Thief*, provides examples of this traditional type of translation. Intersemiotic translation, finally, involves the translation of a text into a "non-verbal sign system" (Jakobson 233) — such as the translation of a novel into a film. Chapter three, which looks at the film adaptation of *The Book Thief*, therefore draws on film studies and subtitling theory in addition to translation theory. Translation does not happen in a vacuum. Before delving into the interlingual and intersemiotic translations of *The Book Thief*, then, the source text will be placed in its cultural context, for its genre should — and does — influence the novel's Dutch prose translation and film adaptation.

The Book Thief is set during World War II, and, as such, deals with heavy themes, grief, death, and war being among them. As Joanne Pettitt notes, Holocaust literature for children is expected to send an "emphatic didactic message" while at the same time

ensuring that the reader is not confronted too closely with the horrors of the past (n.pag.). As a result, writers find themselves looking for creative ways to address these issues: "texts of this kind frequently consign the most brutal aspects of the story to the periphery of the narrative as a lack and the true horror of the Holocaust is reified in more conceptual forms. In other words, that which *is* said may be explained by that which is *not* said" (n.pag). If the reader has a basic knowledge of World War II, they can likely fill in most of the gaps where Death does not elaborate on historic events. If they do not, they share in Liesel's uncertainty and growing sense of dread as she is forced to adapt to the many changes in her life wrought by the war. Either way, the horrors of World War II are conveyed without explicitly showing them: the effects they have on a young girl and the people in her life speak for themselves. Death being the narrator, the theme of death is central to the novel. Against expectations, however — except perhaps for those who have encountered the amiable figure of Death in Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* novels — Death's role as a narrator does not serve to make death seem like a terrifying concept. Death's matter-of-fact tone when he collects souls conveys not that he is ruthless or uncaring but rather that he views death as inescapable — a fact of life. Even Death has his limits, however. Instead of being bombarded with numbers, the reader is confronted with the near-exhausted figure of Death, who cannot escape his duties for even a moment during the war and longs for a holiday.

Beyond softening the blow, so to speak, *The Book Thief* does not dwell on facts and figures simply because it does not depend on a realistic account of the number of victims or perpetrators during World War II, at its heart being a story about what it means to be human during a time of war. It is not just for the sake of the reader that the book does not linger on or graphically describe the events one can find in any history book; the war is the background against which a young girl learns to read and cope with loss. As Death says in the prologue, presenting the reader with an itemized list, the story is about "a girl, some words, an accordionist, some fanatical Germans, a Jewish fist-fighter, and quite a lot of thievery" (15). This perhaps feels like an understatement, in that more things happen to and around Liesel in the novel (which is over 500 pages long), but the understatement is telling in itself: the Nazis are just another item on the list of elements that characterize Liesel's story. It is not war itself Death is concerned with: he has been faced with many of them over the years. It is Liesel who captures his attention by stealing a book when she does not even know how to read yet; it is Liesel who makes the story worth telling. This concern with humans and

their humanity in times of war comes back in the script of Brian Percival's film adaptation of the novel: when Liesel's stepfather (the accordionist mentioned earlier) wonders at the purpose of having helped out a man in need if he is just going to end up dead or caught anyway, Liesel tells him that they "were just being people. That's what people do". This line illustrates what motivates Death to narrate Liesel's story, even though she is one among many whose death is inevitable. He refers to Liesel's story as "an attempt — an immense leap of an attempt — to prove to me that you, and your human existence, are worth it" (24). There is no point in dwelling on what being alive means in the grander scheme of things: it is what people do during their everyday lives that matters to Death.

2. Postmodernism

As Hutcheon points out in *A Poetics of Postmodern*, the term "postmodernism" is rather broad (or at least applied in a broad manner), to the point where no one is quite sure what is meant with it exactly (3). The notion that the term is used to refer both to an era — of which no one is quite sure when it began, opinions of when modernity ended ranging from the late twentieth century to the end of World War II — and a set of beliefs across the arts does not help to narrow down its meaning precisely. With regard to *The Book Thief*, what is most relevant is the latter designation, particularly how the concept of postmodernism relates to literature. Hutcheon establishes that the term is generally applied when established concepts are countered by the text, as indicated by negative prefixes attached to features it supposedly aims to achieve or distinguish, such as "discontinuity, disruption, dislocation, decentring, indeterminacy, and antitotalization" (3). Recognizing that, regardless of who writes about postmodernism for whatever purposes, the major focus across fields is generally *narrative*, Hutcheon coined the term "historiographic metafiction" to refer to novels that are, in theory, self-aware of "history and fiction as human constructs" (5). These novels tend to counter established Western narrative features in particular, suggesting that narratives cannot be objective or well structured from an objective standpoint by introducing disruptive influences into them. Instead of a chronological, coherent account, history is presented as a narrative that is continually revisited and rewritten by people with different experiences, perspectives, and political agendas.

The Book Thief, told from the perspective of Death, is nothing if not concerned with narrative: Death tells a story in fragments, narrating what he deems important at that exact moment, but not always making sure the fragment is an understandable part of a coherent, overarching narrative. Characteristics that are usually associated with an engaging story — such as suspense or build-up — are of no concern to him; he does not care about giving away plot points or entertaining his readers. Death admits to this in part five of the novel:

> "Of course, I'm being rude. I'm spoiling the ending, not only of the entire book, but of this particular piece of it. I have given you two events in advance, because I don't have much interest in building mystery. Mystery bores me. It chores me. I know what happens and so do you. It's the machinations that wheel us there that aggravate, perplex, interest, and astound me." (253)

Thus, linearity, often associated with Western narratives, is not something he adheres to. The matter of Death's objectivity is not really touched upon, but his narrative style draws attention to what the novel is *not*: a chronological story told from an impersonal, detached, objective third person perspective. Frederic Jameson says that it is "safest to grasp the concept of the postmodern as an attempt to think the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically in the first place" (introduction). Indeed, Death does not think in terms of historicity; he sees history in colours and humans (13). It is up to Death to decide which events are noteworthy out of a series of past events. In the prologue, he says "Of course, an introduction. A beginning. Where are my manners?" (14). These lines draw the reader's attention to the concept of a narrative's beginning; the notion that out of a series of historical events, one can be chosen as a beginning, even though events occurred before it. In terms of narrative, the beginning is very much a human construction.

As an inhuman entity, Death does not need to mould Liesel's experiences into a manageable, clear-cut series of linear events to make sense of her life story. Historical accounts usually consist of factual events, but Death admits to relying on his senses in remembering Liesel: "when I recollect her, I see a long list of colours" (24) As mentioned previously, the only reason the prologue is there at all is because Death is relating his tale to a human audience. Still, despite compromising to some extent for the sake of his audience, Death does not let the concepts of beginnings, middles, and endings appear chronologically. Before the first chapter begins, he has already described the span of the story he is about to

tell, thus including the middle and end in his opening pages: “first up is something white. Of the blinding kind” (16); “next is a signature black, to show the poles of my versatility, if you like. It was the darkest moment before the dawn” (19); “the last time I saw her was red” (22). Although these colours are objectively present in the scenes he mentions (in the form of snow, smoke, and fire), their inclusion is subjective in the sense that he ascribes them to moments of Liesel’s life simply because of personal association. This balance between objectivity and subjectivity, between fact and imagination, illustrates from the very beginning that Death’s narrative is coloured by his own understanding of humans.

3. Magic Realism

As is the case with postmodernism, there is no clear consensus among critics about the precise boundaries of magic realism — which is hardly surprising since the genre aims to break through various existing boundaries, common conceptions about narrative and traditional realism being among them. Lori Chamberlain defines magic realism as “that fiction propelled by the tension between realistic elements and fabulous, magical, or fantastic elements. [It] integrates both an attention to the real and to the power of the imagination to construct that reality.” (7). In this, magic realism is different from supernatural genres such as Gothic novels, where the supernatural intrudes into a world which can otherwise be seen as realistic in nature. By contrast, magic realism presents a world in which “nothing is supernatural or paranormal without being at the same time real, and vice-versa” (Stephen Hart qtd. in *Rediscovering Magical Realism in the Americas* 6). In *The Book Thief*, Death does not exist as a talking entity to the characters so much as he does to the reader. Were it not for Death’s narration, the novel would be classified as historical fiction, or war fiction — the events in the narrated story do not straddle the line between the real and the not real. However, magic realist framing takes place in that Death is the one to relate the story. In stylistics, Death’s presence would be called a “discourse deviation”, for he disturbs the reader’s perception of the fictional universe in which the story takes place (Leech and Short 128). The notion that Death should not realistically be able to communicate with them is a continuous reminder to the reader that they are not reading a historical account but rather a fantastic, fictional version of a historical account.

The blurred lines between what is real and what is not real are not the only characteristic of magic realism. According to Hancock, magic realism relies heavily on narrative innovation: "levels of language, layers of format and informal diction, doubles, transformations, stories within stories, a blurring of that border between fiction and reality, are all contained within a formally presented and shaped book" (qtd. in Schroeder 14-15). *The Book Thief* can be viewed as a story within a story, or a frame narrative, in that Death acts as a mediator between the story and the reader: he relates someone else's story to the audience. This adds a narrative layer, and blurs not just the line between fiction and reality but also of narrative and history. Even if Liesel's story had really happened, that does not necessarily mean that that which Death relates did. It is from Death's point of view that the reader hears of what happened. Can they be sure that he represents the events correctly, that he knows what was happening in Liesel's mind? Moreover, Death is not just concerned with what happens with Liesel but also with his own reaction to what happens to Liesel. He litters the narrative with sudden realizations and dictionary definitions and colours he associates with what is happening. Transformation continually takes place because the narration style shifts from page to page: one moment Death zooms in on what is happening, the next he is philosophizing about what it means to be human. The formally presented book can be read from cover to cover, from beginning to end, and suggests a linearity, a sense of oneness to the story — but the narrative itself defies our expectations of how a book is read through narrative surprises.

If critics cannot quite define what magic realism is and when the term should be applied to novels, it is not difficult to imagine writers being in a similar position. As Jeanne Delbaere points out, "writers do not as a rule think of themselves as magic realists or write exclusively magic realist works; if the label fits some of their novels or stories it is usually because what they had to say in them required that particular form of expression" (98). As Peter Munz says, magic realist features give authors the chance to present a version of history, that, "if … not true … ought to be" (7). If Death did not actually gather the souls of the dead in his arms and gently helped them move along, then that is something we like to believe actually happened. In "Magic or Realism", Geoff Hancock points out that "with the exaggeration of magic realism, writers are not limited by linear perceptions of time, the cause and effect of plot, or the accuracy of fact" (44). The word "limited" here does not suggest that writers do away with these elements out of laziness; rather, it suggests that

storytelling need not be limited by convention. Perhaps Zusak did not structure his story in a non-linear fashion to make a statement; perhaps the story he wanted to tell simply required this form. Regardless of Zusak's intentions, however, Death's disregard of conventional forms of narration can be read as a suggestion that the events of World War II cannot be captured neatly in history books, and that they defy the margins of traditional storytelling.

4. The Translation of Magic Realism

When critics and authors cannot agree on which texts are magic realist and which texts are not, one cannot expect translators to successfully make the distinction either. Ideally, however, the translator *is* aware of the narrative techniques of the text that lead to the potential classification of magic realism. Capturing the meaning of a text requires an understanding of said source text that equals — or comes close to — that of the author, so that the translation equals — or comes close to — that which the author set out to tell their audience. Yet how does a translator go about crafting an exact translation, even if they believe they have a proper understanding of the source text? Cicero (first century BC) and St Jerome (fourth century AD) already made a distinction between "word for word" and "sense for sense" translation, the former being seen as "literal" and the latter being perceived as "free". Cicero argued in favour of the latter, believing a translation should be a pleasing text above all, and Jerome agreed, having found that a word-for-word approach produced an "absurd translation" that did not convey but hinder the source text's message (Munday 20). Although the history of translation is not quite so clear-cut as to be split into these two approaches, the divide between them does lie at the heart of other terms proposed since then. "Faithfulness", for example, means staying true to the author's message, yet opinions differ on whether this can be achieved through literal or free translation. In 1964, Eugene Nida introduced the concept of an "equivalent response" to a text, meant to make the approach to translation more scientific in nature. However, analysing a translation and its effects remains a subjective endeavour, for how does one measure the audience's response to a text, and how can two people have the exact same response to what they read?

Gregory Rabassa believes that there is no such thing as equality between words of different languages. Instead of using the word "equals", then, he prefers to use the term "approaches" to refer to that which is achieved by a translation, the quality of which should

be judged based on how close it comes to capturing the original meaning (1). Rabassa is not just sceptical towards the act of translation but to the act of clear communication *an sich*: even an un-translated word is "nothing but a metaphor for an object, or, in some cases, for another word", and though words for objects might refer to the same concept across languages, the connotation will vary depending on the cultural context of the listeners (1). An example of this is the word people use to refer to "cheese", the concept of which is known across cultures. The French word for cheese is less likely to bring to mind *Gouda* cheese than the Dutch word, which, in turn, is not commonly associated with *Brie*. Moreover, a Dutch person who does not like the taste of cheese probably has different connotations with the word than someone who is prone to ordering cheese plates for dessert. Even more significant than "personal and cultural nuances" in terms of conveying "exact" meaning is the *sound* of a word, which can be as telling as the meaning attributed to it, and which might have lead the author to pick that particular word instead of a synonym (Rabassa 2). Making a selection of words that make up a language is inevitably done based on a *sense* of what sounds right to a certain person in a certain place at a certain time.

What Rabassa stresses is that "words and phrases . . . are not just descriptions of the objects or circumstances entailed, but more often than not denote the spirit involved" (3). With regard to fiction, this is true to the extent that words carry symbolic meaning. The corruptive influence of the ring in *The Lord of The Rings* comes across because of the ring's function within the story, but to a culture that is unfamiliar with rings as vessels of power worn by kings, the notion that *power* corrupts might be enforced more effectively if the ring is replaced with an item worn by rulers they are familiar with in translation. In capturing the meaning of a text, then, the translator must not just consider the concepts to which the words on the page refer, but also the arrangements and connotations of the specific words that were chosen to make up the source text. Analysing the author's choices is only the first step in the process of translation: the translator's choices are made "in a different language and on a different level" (5). Sometimes the translator recognises the ambiguity in a word that has various meanings, but must pick one of these meanings for their translation because the target text does not have the same synonym. Sacrifices are not always made through unawareness but precisely through the awareness that the target language does not offer the same set of meanings as the source language. Rabassa claims that "translation is essentially the closest reading one can possibly give a text. The translator cannot ignore

'lesser' words, but must consider every jot and tittle" (6). In sum, Rabassa notes that translation is not the process of producing an exact replica of the original but rather "a form of adaptation" (2) — a term which is fittingly used to refer to the transition of text from page to screen as well. The question is, however, whether this is a negative aspect of translation. Even if the translator has no choice but to sacrifice specific units of meaning in some places, can they not enhance meaning in places where the target language offers a richer variety of meaning than the source text? Is adaptation not *desirable* in magic realist texts, which challenge conventions and the notion of one straightforward narrative?

Shannin Schroeder does not believe that the translated text is inherently a watered down version of the original, or that it conveys themes less clearly. She states that students often read magic realist texts in translation, the way most readers of literature read translations of the works they study (15-6). Roberto González Echevarría actually ascribes an active role to the bilingual reader: he sees it as his task to transfer "a text from one code to another to sift out in that process what holds it together" (*The Voice of the Masters* 6). To him, at least, magic realism transcends language, or at the very least the linguistics of a particular language: the essence of the text can be found scattered among translations, and not just in the source text. As mentioned in the introduction, Schroeder believes magic realism lends itself well to translation. Hancock, too, believes "the experience of magic realism is the vitality of language expressed in images" (Hancock qtd. in Schroeder 16). What translators should therefore be concerned with is how, exactly, the author conjures up imagery. Do they rely on morphology and lexis alone, letting figurative language do the telling for them, or do they also make use of less obvious narrative techniques, such as playing around with the syntax, to invoke certain types of imagery?

Rabassa suggests that authors who are intimately aware of their own language's many possibilities can either prove a tremendous challenge to the translator or produce easily translatable works: the translator may have a hard time finding equivalences for powerful or inventive metaphors that are unique to the source language and culture, but if the author is exact in their choice of words, making it clear exactly what they want to say, finding equivalents in other languages is not altogether hard to do (8). With regard to capturing the meaning of the source text, then, a good adaptation, based on the translator's interpretation of the source text, might just be more successful than a translation that copies the exact imagery, even if that imagery can be understood without difficulty in the

target language. Author Jorge Luis Borges once asked the person translating his work “not to write what he said but what he wanted to say” (Rabassa 6). In requesting this, he did not imply that the target language would not be able to closely capture some of the expressions of his native language; rather, he suggested that the target language would without a doubt be able to capture that which he wanted to say — perhaps even more aptly than the words he had had at his disposal — even if it meant the translator had to opt for a free translation to convey the meaning of the source material.

5. Conclusion

With regard to the translation of postmodern themes, capturing the magic realist elements of *The Book Thief* – which are primarily related to Death’s narration – does not require a faithful translation per se, but a translation that conveys what Death’s presence and narration style mean in the source text. Rather than literal translation or word-for-word translation, Schroeder, Hancock, and Borges suggest that faithful translation and sense-for-sense translation are more suitable procedures with regard to the translation of magic realist texts. The innovative narrative features should be preserved if at all possible, but translators need not stick to the source text’s syntax or punctuation to achieve this: their task is to create similar disruptiveness in the target language, using their knowledge of the target language to wreck havoc in the rules they learnt. To rid a magic realist text of its “mistakes” results in ridding it of its postmodern, magic realist features. The next chapter takes a closer look at these unique elements of Death’s narrative style, in addition to more general postmodern elements that can be found in the novel.

Chapter 2

THE ENGLISH NOVEL AND THE DUTCH TRANSLATION THEREOF

1. Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the literary context of *The Book Thief*, and proposed faithful translation and sense-for-sense translation as suitable translation strategies to convey postmodern themes. However, a literary translator can be faced with more choices than which words to use, because it is not just the meaning of the words but also the way in which they are presented that carries meaning. As mentioned in the introduction, Gambier says that the various ways in which the mise-en-page can be designed leads him to question whether it is appropriate to "continue speaking of verbal units" with regard to literary text (3). He does not just refer to the aesthetic of the text. In conveying a novel's content, a translator must pay attention to nonverbal elements such as punctuation, capitalization, and formatting as well as verbal elements. Even the form of the book can contribute to its content, for the story cannot physically be separated from the pages. At least with regard to printed books, form and content are entwined with one another. Digital texts, which are not bound to one carrier and can thus be read on various devices in various file formats, do not possess the unchangeable form that printed texts have (Hillesund n.pag.). Although it would be interesting to research whether translations are received differently depending on the technology with which the reader reads them, this chapter focuses on the literary Dutch translation of *The Book Thief* as a stable, unchangeable text within a printed book. How might changing nonverbal elements affect their interplay with verbal elements, and what does a shift therein mean for the content of the story?

Naturally, the translator might not be singly responsible for making all the decisions relating to form: the font and cover image are likely to be picked by other parties. Even the act of centring, bolding, and italicizing words is usually carried out by the editor or typesetter. However, typography affects the text's meaning: it might make the difference between a character shouting or whispering; might shift the reader's attention to or away from certain words. Therefore, the translator should make clear to these parties that formatting needs to be used creatively in order to create particular *meaningful* effects. In

"Multimodal Forms" (2016), Amy Bright refers to *The Book Thief* as "a multimodal YA novel" (39). She largely focuses on the images in Zusak's novel, for included within Death's narrative, *The Book Thief* contains yet another few stories: tales written and illustrated by one of the characters. These tales make for stories within a story within a story, and they are set apart from Death's "usual" narrative through a handwritten font and illustrations. However, Bright also deems it worth mentioning that "Zusak makes some changes to font and text placement throughout the novel in order to individualize certain characters, settings, and scenes" (39). If the translator does not devise a strategy to convey these nonverbal elements, distinguishing between narrative layers might be needlessly hard for the reader of the translated text, and certain characterizations might get lost in translation.

In sum, both verbal and nonverbal elements carry meaning, and both should be considered in translation. Chapter one mentioned unconventional elements of Death's narration style — such as discontinuity, disruption, and dislocation — that give *The Book Thief* a postmodern, magic realist character. In this chapter, the prose translation of Death's narrative techniques will be analysed to see if the effect is successfully conveyed across cultures. The novel and translation will first be analysed in terms of the effect of their nonverbal elements — ironically touching upon syntax-related elements, given the fragmented nature the short, basic sentences give to the book's mise-en-page. After this, attention will be paid to the translation of stylistic elements, including semantics, morphology, and lexis. The verbal and non-verbal cannot always be separated, since form and content are so interwoven with one another. Therefore, stylistics will inevitably make an appearance in analyses of the mise-en-page, and vice versa. The interplay between verbal and non-verbal elements is addressed in the final section, which analyses the Dutch translation of the captioned, illustrated tale given to Liesel by Max, the Jew who hides in the basement of her foster family's house for a significant part of the novel.

2. Translation Procedures

Chapter one introduced translation strategies to translation, which are approaches to the text as a whole. This chapter discusses specific examples of translation within the text, and, as such, looks at translation procedures. In 1958, Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet wrote *Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais*, analyzing their observations of translations

between English and French in a "systematic and mostly linguistic-oriented" manner (Munday 9). They proposed seven translation procedures, creating the classical translation shift model. An English translation of this work by Juan C. Sager and M. J. Hamel was produced in 1995. Relevant to the translated passages in the Dutch prose translation discussed in this chapter are the following procedures: "transposition" (indicating a change in grammar), "modulation" (indicating variation through a shift in perspective, such as replacing a cause with an effect, or exchanging a positive with a double negative), and "equivalence" (indicating the substitution of a set phrase for an expression that accounts for the same situation). These terms are applied to procedures in this chapter because they are relevant to the lexicon, syntactic structures, and the message (or utterance) of the text. Over time, other scholars have commented on and added to this list of translation procedures. Peter Newmark introduced the term "transference" in 1988, which refers to the act of transferring a word from the source text into the target text without translating it. This procedure is referenced in this chapter because words are transferred from German in the English source text and the Dutch target text alike. The remaining terms are taken from *Translation Terminology* (Delisle et all, 1999): "explicitation" (putting clarifying details in the target text), "expansion" (introducing new elements in the target text), "recasting" (modifying the word order to conform to the target text's syntax), and "amplification" (using more words to reinforce the source text's message). Although these terms are taken out of context, and have been criticized or commented on by other scholars, it is not this thesis's aim to challenge or reinforce their place in translation theory, but to shed light on linguistic changes happening between English and Dutch in the translation of *The Book Thief*, and to draw attention to both successful renderings of the source text's meanings as well as instances where these meanings are — partially — lost or enhanced in translation.

3. Narrative Techniques Related to Form and Typography

The prologue of *The Book Thief* is short and rather vague, certainly to readers who do not yet know who the narrator is. All that the prologue really tells the reader about the narrator is that he is male — and even that pronoun is misleading, for is Death gendered? Or is this a case of free translation on Death's end because English does not have a proper reflexive pronoun to refer to him? In any case, the narrator is not a man; the narrator is Death itself.

The notion that Death is not human and does not use commonly used storytelling conventions is foreshadowed from the very beginning:

PROLOGUE

A MOUNTAIN RANGE
OF RUBBLE

in which our narrator introduces:

himself — the colours
— and the book thief

(n.pag.)

What is missing from this excerpt is proper punctuation and capitalization. Words are either written in capital letters or in lowercase. Thus, Death does not abide by human rules of textual communication. He communicates, but not wholly on human terms. Moreover, the words are centred and the lines are kept short. The last two lines could have easily fit into one, but they are separated by a line break, made to look like a block of text rather than a string of text. Lodewijk translates the prologue as follows:

PROLOOG

EEN BERGKETEN
VAN PUIN

waarin de verteller ons laat kennismaken met

hemzelf — de kleuren

— en de boekendief

(n.pag)

Lodewijk copies the lack of punctuation and capitalization, and maintains the line break, picking up on the notion that something more than aesthetic may be at play here: the form actually tells the reader something about the narrator and his disregard of writing conventions. What is markedly different in the translation of the prologue is that the symbol used beneath the word "PROLOGUE" is not the same. Both forms are organic, but where the symbol in the source text is singular and asymmetrical, the one in the translated text gives off a sense of balance because the two feathery leaves mirror each other. The changed symbols between the two editions discussed in this thesis are a recurring theme, so to speak. More examples will be given over the course of this section.

Not related to form so much as narrative is that transposition (Vinay and Darbelnet) takes place in that the transitive verb "introduces" is merely followed by an object in the source text, but that a direct and indirect object appear in the translation. The verb "introduces" is replaced with the phrase "ons laat kennismaken met", indicating a shift in perspective, or modulation, as defined by Vinay and Darbelnet. This has the effect of explicitation (Delisle): in the original, Death may or may not be doing the talking himself — the transitive verb leaves this up for interpretation. However, in the translation, there is definitely another mediator: the word "us" implies that someone who belongs to the group of reader describes what Death is going to do in the prologue. Lodewijk's choice not to use the more literal translation "introduceert", likely brought about by the changed word order this choice would have demanded ("waarin de verteller . . . introduceert") and not a desire to create ambiguity, thus ends up adding another layer to the frame narrative.

The fragmented style of the prologue comes back in the novel's many introductionary sections: the novel is divided into ten parts, a prologue, and an epilogue. All of these parts are introduced by pages with formatting similar to the prologue. The pages lack capitalization and punctuation, and sketch a rather vague picture of the events to come. Death seems to think in concepts: he mentions separate nouns and pronouns and adjectives, but does not string them together — it is up to the reader to make something of the presented pieces. This style (telling a story in pieces; letting the reader fill in the many gaps,

which the reader is always prone to doing, regardless of whether gaps are intentional or not) is postmodern in nature: it draws attention to the narrative in places where readers would normally not actively concern themselves with what or how much they are being told exactly, and what it is they are meant to do with the information presented.

The chapters themselves do contain punctuation and capitalization; Zusak draws the line at telling the whole story in words separated by dashes and line breaks. However, fragments and peculiar formatting occur throughout the novel, not just on the introductionary pages. Sentences may be short and separated by unexpected line breaks, for instance, as is the case not just in dialogue sequences or at the beginning or endings of chapters, where one might expect introspection, but in the middle of bodies of text too. This somewhat abrupt narration style prevents the reader from being wholly submerged in the story: Death's tale does not flow without interruption and does not allow the reader to get lost in or carried along the flow of the story; instead, they are constantly jerked out of it and reminded of its narrative features and fictional nature. Below is an example of Death's abrupt narration style amidst paragraphs that do not contain line breaks:

> I wanted to stop. To crouch down.
> I wanted to say.
> "I'm sorry child."
> But that is not allowed.
> I did not crouch down. I did not speak. (23)

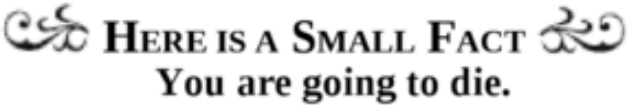
Lodewijk keeps the translations of these lines brief and abstract as well:

> Ik wilde blijven staan. Op mijn hurken gaan zitten.
> Ik wilde zeggen:
> "Het spijt me zo, kindje."
> Maar dat mag niet.
> Ik hurkte niet bij haar neer. Ik zei niets. (19)

What is interesting to note is that Lodewijk makes a concession here. She abides by the placement of the sentences on separate lines, but she does add a colon before the speech

part, even though there is no colon in the source text. Since the fragment of speech is on a different line, the fragmented quality is preserved, but the colon gives the translated lines a sense of continuity that the source text does not have. The full stop gives the impression that Death is briefly at a loss for words, and that the imaginary words come out haltingly. No words could possibly offer comfort in the face of grief such as this, the text seems to suggest. However, in the translation, this aspect is lost, for the colon is an anticipatory mark — a sign that Death is indeed about to speak up — and not a sign for pause.

Fragments that stand out even more are the bolded addendums, set apart from the body of the text through centralization and symbols on both sides:



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Capitalized headers introduce these additions every time: “REACTION TO THE AFOREMENTIONED FACT” (13), “A SMALL THEORY” (14), “A REASSURING ANNOUNCEMENT” (16), “SOME OTHER SMALL FACTS” (19), et cetera. The translations of these examples are: “ZIEHIER EEN KLEIN FEIT” (9), “REACTIE OP HET EERDER GENOEMDE FEIT” (9), “EEN KLEINE THEORIE” (10), and “EEN GERUSTSTELLENDE MEDEDELING” (12). Lodewijk keeps the bolded, capitalized headers and merely bolds the text that follows, following the source text’s example. In terms of form, then, these interruptions by Death have the same effect in the target text: they catch the reader’s attention, and shift their perspective: in the middle of an event, an interjected definition takes the reader momentarily out of the story and makes them reflect on it. How is the definition or fact relevant to what is being told? Thus, attention is again drawn to narrativity. By not sacrificing these formatting aspects of the story, which contribute to the content by making the reader reflect on and approach the story from various perspectives, Lodewijk keeps the fractured, postmodern sense of the

source text intact. The symbols on both sides, which mirror each other, look different again in the translation, where they appear to be more organic in nature than the symbols in the source text. The design of the Dutch symbols seems more delicate as well, which adds to the juxtaposition between the ominous statement and the flowery ornamentation accompanying it. Moreover, the English symbols move inwards, towards the text, whereas the Dutch ones are oriented outwards, away from the text.

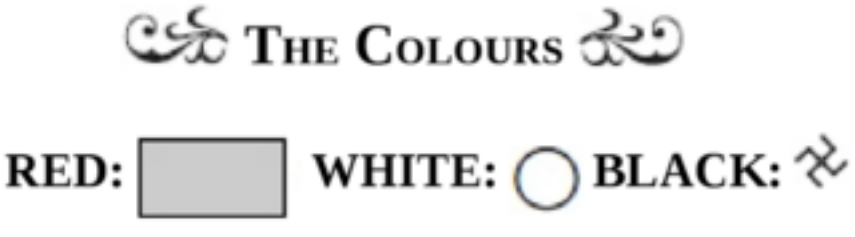
There is one instance where Death's addendum is accompanied by an illustration: a depiction of Liesel, drawn by her stepfather. It is a stick figure without eyes, which Liesel points out to him. Death notes: "A TYPICAL HANS HUBERMANN ARTWORK" (73). Instead of telling the reader what Hans' drawing style looks like by describing it in detail, then, Death gives the reader an inkling with one iconic doodle and effectively leaves them to imagine what his other pieces look like. Illustrator Trudy White drew the illustration. The doodle looks like anyone could have drawn it, but ironically, a professional illustrator was hired to make it look like a simplistic drawing. What makes the drawing unique is that it does not visualise what is happening in the story in terms of events; its very existence illustrates a stepfather's love for his stepdaughter. It is not what it displays but the notion that it displays at all that contributes to the narrative. In this sense, Hans' feelings are conveyed both through form and content. The drawing is transferred in translation (Newmark), Death's comment having been translated into: "EEN TYPISCH HANS HUBERMANN KUNSTWERK" (72). The translation of this phrase preserves the word order and does not attempt to turn Death's comment into more than it is, which is a noun phrase — a fragment.

Adding to the fragmented feel of the novel is the use of many paragraph breaks. Paragraphs range from one to three to many lines, but they are often short, and nine separate ones may be seen on two pages. Visually, this contributes to the sense that the story is being told in little parts: that there is not a straightforward narrative that runs chronologically without gaps, but rather that Death jumps back and forth, remarking only on what he deems worth telling. Much like the basic sentence structures, the shortness of these paragraphs is maintained in the translation. In terms of syntax, then, the translation *visually* attempts to represent the abrupt tone that is present in the source text — even if that means changing the word order or sentence structure of the source text.

In part five of the novel, Death compares choosing to hide a Jew in your basement to the act of gambling. In the chapter "The Gamblers (a Seven-sided Dice)", the first seven

paragraph beginnings are given headings accompanied by the image of a dice-side, starting with the side showing one dot and ending with a side showing seven. The seventh image looks like the six-side of a dice with a dot in the middle, so that the series of dots shape an 'H'. The paragraphs describe events in Liesel's life during the period in which Max the Jew hides in the basement of her house, and the changing numbers enhance the sense of Liesel's growing anxiety. In the translation, the images look exactly the same, counting down, or rather up, until the moment Liesel's mother is fired by the mayor, losing a significant source of income. "You roll and watch it coming, realising completely that this is no regular dice", Death comments on this unfortunate event, "the Jew was sticking out of your pocket from the outset. He's smeared to your lapel, and the moment you roll, you know it's a seven" (267). The mayor's decision ultimately has nothing to do with Max, but the short paragraphs, bound together by images of dice sides, give off the impression that events in Liesel's life are coming to a head, that everything she experiences is leading up to one big finale. This impression, enhanced by the novel's subsequent paragraphs detailing different events and the accompanying dice sides, is present in both the source text and the translation.

Finally, the novel's colour motif, which was already mentioned in chapter one, manifests itself in a nonverbal as well as a verbal manner. In the prologue, Death mentions that he associates Liesel with white, black, and red. He shows these colours to the reader as follows, choosing three different shapes to illustrate his impressions:



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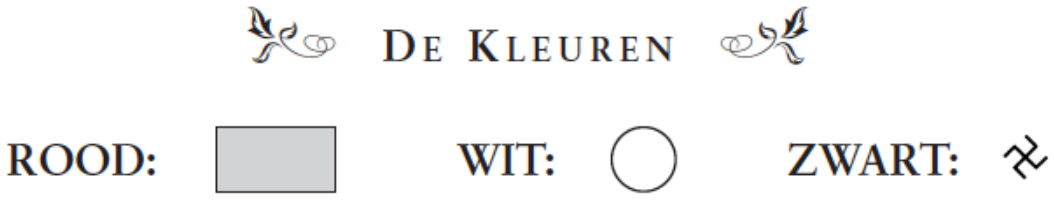

(20)

Both the source text and the translated edition are printed in black and white, so the reader does not actually see the colour red, but they get an impression of the colour: the picture above shows a black and white translation of what red looks like in grey tones. In addition, although the background of this thesis is white, the pages of the book are not, and the colour within the circle that is said to be white is thus not actually white but an approximation of the colour too. Black is the only colour that could be conveyed in a black and white printed book without trouble, but in this case, the colour is overshadowed by the symbol Death associates it with: the swastika. The other colours' shapes were arguably picked to make this shape stand out more. The translation transfers the source text's translation of colours from actual ones to printed ones, thus preserving the bleakness that is present in the text, the black and white tones one associates with the Second World War because of the photographs from that era, and Death's non-human perspective.

4. Narrative Techniques Related to Content

The following section discusses the novel's postmodern themes that are primarily conveyed through verbal content, and, as such, will contain an analysis of the novel's stylistics: "the study of language as used in literary texts, with the aim of relating it to its artistic functions" (Leech and Short 13). Even though the postmodern features are varied and at times hard to define or group together, they will be divided into the following categories: semantics, narrative framing, lexis, and morphology. Narrative framing refers to the language employed by Death as a narrator, which in affects how the reader perceives the novel's content.

Semantics

The aforementioned colour motif is one way in which Death abstracts the horrors of war and makes them easier to grasp and understand. It could be seen as his way of dealing with trauma. He says that he "deliberately seek[s] out the colours to keep [his] mind off" the people he has to leave behind because they have not died yet (15). When he recollects Liesel, he sees "a long list of colours, but it's the three in which [he] saw her in the flesh that resonate the most" (24), these colours being white, black, and red. Death observes both physical and non-physical concepts in terms of colour: "The last time I saw her was red" (22). The translation of this line is: "De laatste keer dat ik haar zag was rood" (18). Apart from a

slight modulation in terms of word order with regard to the verb, this is a word-for-word translation of the source language concepts. The nonsensical notion that a moment can have a colour is preserved. Death also turns this technique the other way around, describing colours by naming the concepts they remind him of: “The day was grey, the colour of Europe” (34), or, “For me, the sky was the colour of Jews” (357). Lodewijk translates this last line with, “Voor mij had de hemel de kleur van joden” (360). Lodewijk opts for “hemel” instead of “lucht”, perhaps to make a distinction between the air that surrounds us (which “lucht” can also be used for), and the sky above our heads (“hemel”). In the target text, the sky has a colour; in English, it *is* a colour. It is possible to use the source text construction in Dutch (“de hemel was de kleur van joden”), but it is the sub-clause that comes before the main clause that makes it near impossible to maintain the source text construction in Dutch: a verb is required right after “voor mij”, and “voor mij was de hemel de kleur van joden” makes it seem less as though the colour appears that way to Death and more as though the sky has taken on that colour specifically for him. Overall, however, the notion that Death perceives the sky as Jews-coloured is maintained in the translation.

Death’s perception of humans and colours is postmodern in that it puts his senses — and not indisputable facts — right at the heart of the narrative. In the prologue, he says the following: “Sometimes, I manage to float far above those three moments. I hang suspended, until a septic truth bleeds towards clarity” (24). This sentence is paradoxical because it implies that Death achieves an objective distance from the events he witnessed by floating far above them and attaining clarity about them in this manner — only to come to associate them with colours, the assignment of which is arguably subjective. What this indicates is that it may not be possible to distance oneself far enough from the past to be able to give a clear, objective account of what occurred. Death’s subjectivity as a narrator comes back in the notion that, by common agreement, white is not even a colour. He is aware of this and addresses the matter but does not give a convincing argument to back up his case: “White is without a question a colour, and personally, I don’t think you want to argue” (16). This somewhat ominous statement is followed by a bolded interjection:

A REASSURING ANNOUNCEMENT

Please, be calm, despite that previous threat. I am all bluster —

I am not violent. I am not malicious.

I am a result. (16)

Death shows an awareness of how his tone might come across, and aims to put the reader's mind at rest. The notion that he is "all bluster" is meant to reassure . . . but what is reassuring about a narrator who confesses to saying things he does not mean? He adapts his tale to how he imagines the listener is perceiving him. This, postmodernism suggests, is what the narration of history comes down to. A historical account is an adaptation: a translation of the actual events, adapted by the person relating it based on their personal beliefs and intent. The fact that the reassuring announcement is followed by the line "yes, it was white" (16) stresses that Death does not want to leave room for other interpretations: the past happened the way he says it did, and exactly in that manner. This is a rather troubling view on history, for there are usually several parties involved, with conflicting interests and perspectives, and to drown out all perspectives but one can be seen as censorship.

The translation of Death's argument with regard to the status of white as a colour is: "Wit is zonder meer een kleur en persoonlijk lijkt het me beter voor je dat je daar niets tegen inbrengt" (12). This translation maintains the somewhat threatening tone of the source text, explicitating (Delisle 1999) why the reader should not wish to argue with Death on this subject: it is for their own sake. The reassuring announcement that follows is:

EEN GERUSTSTELLENDE
MEDEDELING
Blijf alsjeblieft rustig, ondanks het eerdere dreigement.
Ik ben één en al grote mond —
ik ben niet gewelddadig. Ik ben niet boosaardig.
Ik ben een resultaat. (12)

This translation looks somewhat different in form: it is four rather than three lines long. Since the first line is longer in Dutch, enjambment does not take place: the second sentence only starts on the second line. The Dutch expression "Ik ben één en al grote mond" is an equivalence for the expression "I am all bluster" (Vinay and Darbelnet), indicating that Death wishes to come across as non-threatening despite the threatening tone he employed in the

previous section. The announcement is followed by Death's final verdict: "Ja, het was wit" (12). The translation leaves no room for argument either.

The translation of Death's claim to clarity in the prologue ("Sometimes, I manage to float far above those three moments. I hang suspended, until a septic truth bleeds towards clarity") is: "Soms lukt het me om ver boven die drie momenten te zweven. Dan hang ik daar, net zolang tot een etterende waarheid door een poel van bloed boven komt drijven" (20). Rather than describing himself figuratively (e.g. when Marcus Aurelius says "Death hangs over you" in *The Mediations*, he does not mean that Death is literally hanging over someone's head), Death tries to make the reader envision him actually hovering over moments. The translation conveys the sense that Death is not speaking metaphorically, but expands (Delisle) on the reality of the imagery in the second sentence, where the language is rather more colloquial than in the source text. The wording of "dan hang ik daar" (instead of a more literal translation of the simple present tense, e.g. "ik hang daar") implies that Death is so caught up in what happens to him during these moments that he is living through one such moment right now. However, it is the second part of the second sentence where the translation truly expands on the imagery evocated by the source text, in particular the — unwitting — associations readers have with the word "bleeds" — which, while not related to human blood in this instance, is still likely to conjure up images related to sanguine fluid.

Research had been done into what happens in the brain when it encounters a word with multiple meanings. According to Maryanne Wolf, the brain actives every single one of these meanings before quickly "settl[ing] down with the most sensible one for the particular context" (27). This process is the reason readers are entertained by linguistic jokes: "Our brain beats us to the punch line every time" (Wolf 27). While not referring to gore in the source text, the word "bleeds", used in relation to the experiences of Death, might unwittingly lead the reader to think of blood. The ominous sense this verb evokes is expanded upon in the translation: " … net zolang tot een etterende waarheid door een poel van bloed boven komt drijven". Death frames the passage this line belongs to with the colour yet, and so expanding on the imagery of blood in the translation seems to be a deliberate choice. In this instance, Lodewijk enhances what can be perceived as subtle metaphoric language in the source text quite freely. However, rather than viewing this as interjecting something new into the text, it could also be seen as taking a characteristic

feature of the source text and enhancing it, for Death's narrative contains quite a few descriptions that should not be taken literally but rather proverbially or metaphorically.

For instance, when Liesel has just moved in with her foster parents, Death says: "Liesel, naturally, was bathed in anxiety. There was no way she was getting into any bath" (39). The translation is: "Natuurlijk baadde Liesel in angst. Ze was absoluut niet van plan in wat voor bad dan ook te stappen" (38). In Dutch, the verb is translated literally, although transposition (Vinay and Darbelnet) takes place in that it is changed into the past simple instead of the perfect tense, presumably in order to resemble the Dutch proverb "baden in het zweet" (bathing in sweat), which is associated with anxiety too. The language remains figurative, and even becomes proverbial, in translation. After suffering nightmares, Death says Liesel "would wake up swimming in her bed, screaming, and drowning in the flood of sheets" (43). This is translated as: "Dan werd ze zwemmend en gillend in haar bed wakker, verdrinkend in de zee van lakens" (42). Recasting (Delisle) takes place here, because the order of units is changed in order to make the sentence flow more naturally in Dutch. The words to do with swimming and drowning are translates literally, preserving the figurative element in this instance too, with a proverbial addition in that "een zee van" is a description for a rather large quantity in Dutch (e.g. "een zee van tijd", which means "a lot of time").

The above are just some among numerous instances of figurative language. Another technique employed by Zusak is that of embodiment. Non-human elements are given human features. One example of this is: "The world was sagging now, under the weight of all that snow" (17). Lodewijk maintains the sense that the world itself is suffering, translating the line as: "De wereld kreunde inmiddels onder het gewicht van zoveel sneeuw" — arguably taking the personification of the world even further by opting for "kreunde", which is a sound associated with living creatures. Another instance of personification is: "The plane was still coughing. Smoke was leaking from both its lungs" (19). The translation of this line is: "Het vliegtuig sputterde nog. De rook lekte uit zijn beide longen" (15). The Dutch possessive pronoun "zijn" amplifies (Delisle) the effect of personification, for it is male where the English pronoun is gender-neutral. Amplification (Delisle) again takes place when Lodewijk translates "When it crashed, three deep gashes were made in the earth" (19) as "Toen het neerstortte, scheurde het drie diepe wonden in de aarde" (15). In the Merriam-Webster, "gash" is defined as a deep narrow depression or cut (e.g. "a gash in the hull"), whereas a Dutch "wond" is solely reserved for living creatures. These instances of amplification

compensate for moments where personification can be transferred less successfully into Dutch. For example, “The limbs of trees were scattered in the dark” (493) is translated with: “Overal in de duisternis lagen boomtakken” (495), sacrificing the imagery of trees losing body parts the same way soldiers lose theirs. Overall, Lodewijk successfully preserves most instances of personification, which contribute to the novel’s magic realist nature. After expressing sadness at a character’s looming demise, Death says: “You see? Even Death has a heart” (252), the translation of which is: “Zie je nu wel? Zelfs de dood heeft een hart” (254). This line explicitly states what Death’s overall narrative reveals to the reader: that he sees death as inescapable but that he is not unaffected by humans’ suffering. Although “de dood” is not capitalized in the Dutch translation, it is still said to have a heart, which attributes a human quality to it, albeit in a lesser extent than in the source text. Personification does not just take place *within* the story; the novel itself is the embodiment of Death.

Narrative Framing

Death’s framing is essential to the narrative, and one of the novel’s key postmodern features. As mentioned in chapter one, it is through his doing that the tale is not always linear or chronological. His jumping back and forth in space is an example of this. One instance of Death being aware of his role as a framer is the following:

> Now for a change of scenery.
> We’ve both had it too easy till now, my friend, don’t you think? How about we forget Molching for a minute or two?
> It will do us some good.
> Also, it’s important to the story. (145)

This jump to the story of Max the Jew is translated as follows:

> Even een verandering van omgeving.
> Tot nu toe hebben we het allebei te makkelijk gehad, vriend, vind je ook niet? Zullen we Molching dan maar heel even vergeten?
> Dat zal ons goeddoen.
> En het is belangrijk voor het verhaal. (147)

Death explicitly mentions that the next paragraphs are going to involve a different character and a different setting. He does so casually — a tone that is mimicked in the translation by the short, colloquial language. Rather than translating "now" with "nu", Lodewijk opts for the notion that Death will return to Liesel's story shortly ("after a minute or two"). The same sense of briefness is conveyed by "dan maar heel even" in the second line, which could easily have been translated more literally as "voor een minuutje of twee" — and that translation would not have been wrong, but Dutch people are prone to adding words such as "al", "zo", "maar" and "even" to sentences when they are speaking casually, lending a natural feel to the translation. On the whole, this segment conveys that Death is jumping through space because it is necessary for the story he wants to tell, but his commentary also reminds the reader that they are at his mercy: they do not get to let their guard down. He can take them away from Liesel's story the moment he feels it is necessary.

Apart from leaping through time and space, Death also foreshadows future events at times even when he is not actually narrating them. Part one of the novel opens with the question: "How does a book thief end up kneeling and howling and flanked by a man-made heap of ridiculous, greasy, cooked-up rubble?" (27), immediately letting the reader in on what is to come later on. The translation is: "Hoe komt een boekendief daar terecht, knielend en huilend en omringd door een door mensenhanden gemaakte berg belachelijk, smerig, haastig op elkaar gesmeten puin?" (25). Although recasting takes place in that the word order is changed to conform to the syntactic constraints of the Dutch language (Delisle), with equivalence (Vinay and Darbelnet) happening through the addition of the place where Liesel ends up crying, the message is clear in the translation: before the novel is over, Liesel will be crying desperately next to a pile of rubble. This imagery does not involve events the reader can look forward to — but then, as mentioned in chapter one, Death is not concerned with telling an engaging tale using western storytelling conventions. After Liesel has stolen her first book, Death says that he "should hasten to admit, however, that there was a considerable hiatus between the first stolen book and the second" (37), at once making it clear to the reader that they should not expect another instant of thievery anytime soon. He then adds that Liesel will end up owning fourteen books in total and describes how she is going to come by the most prominent ones, admittedly without going into too much detail, but still laying out plot points of the novel that are still to come.

By giving readers hints as to what is to come, Death simultaneously detracts from and adds suspense to the novel. While the reader is given information about plot points on the one hand, this information is seldom exclusive, and often rather ominous. Death ends a section about Liesel's stepfather Hans in only the third part of the novel with the following words:

> For now, though, let's let him enjoy it.
> We'll give him seven months.
> Then we come for him.
> And, oh, how we come. (135)

> Voorlopig laten we hem er maar even van genieten.
> Laten we hem zeven maanden geven.
> Daarna komen we hem halen.
> Reken maar dat we hem komen halen. (137)

This sinister statement leaves no doubt as to Hans' looming fate. Hans' compassion and kindness cannot shield him from death. It is difficult to measure whether a reader processes the story differently depending on the information they receive about the characters' fates, for they cannot un-know what they have learnt. The closest one could come to comparing reading experiences with regard to such knowledge is by comparing the experiences of readers who were spoiled before they started reading a book to those of readers who were not. In any case, *The Book Thief* does not allow any reader to hold out hope for some of the characters' survival. The reader knows early on what will happen but they do not know *exactly* what will happen, and they must read on in order to find out how the characters die. This style, non-chronological though it may be, echoes the style of historical accounts, where lines such as "three years before the fall of the Berlin Wall" occur regularly. In a historical account, there is no such thing as being "spoiled" about future events; the reader is presumably aware of the bigger picture and fits smaller events into this bigger frame at all times. When Death adheres to this almost clinical style of narration, it seems rather unsettling, for he is describing people's lives — but then again, this is what history also does.

Death's tone in the above passage hints at complicity: "we" refers to both Death and the reader. The reader is not just forewarned about Hans' death; they are told that Death and the reader will be there when it happens. Death's suggestion that he and the reader give Hans seven months implies agency on his and the reader's end that may or may not exist: "we'll give him seven months" could either mean that that is how much time they grant him, or that seven months is the estimated amount of time he will live. The translation preserves this sense of ambiguity: "laten we hem zeven maanden geven" expresses intent and estimation too, depending on one's interpretation. On the whole, the translated passage maintains the ominous tone and the sense of the reader's complicity in Hans' demise: "reken maar dat we hem komen halen" can be seen as equivalence (Vinay and Darbelnet) in that it captures the heavy, grim-like sense of inescapability from the source text.

Death's narrative is not the only element framing Liesel's story: the various books and tales that are included within the narrative do so too. Postmodernism explores the idea of history being a collective of truths and perspectives rather than one singular narrative. By taking up reading, Liesel is able to educate herself and read texts the government does not want her to read. She can regain agency through opening her mind to a collective of truths rather than the government's singular narrative. More specifically, the books she reads shape her life as related in the novel — her first find being the gravedigger's handbook that is tied to her brother's death, and the following books inevitably being bound to significant moments in her life as well, such as her first book burning and her breaking into the national-socialist mayor's house. At some point, a Jewish character named Max writes and illustrates a story for Liesel. He does so using a copy of *Mein Kampf*, the pages of which he paints white before letting them tell his own narrative. This empowering act enhances the notion that this is not a story about Hitler but the people he does not wish to give a voice: a Jew and the daughter of a Communist. In erasing his words and handing over his own to the next generation, Max re-writes the narrative Hitler wants to present to the world. The upcoming section addressing Max's illustrated story will analyse the translation of his tale.

Lexis

The Book Thief is set in Germany, but the story is told in English. The target language, Dutch, is not the language spoken in Germany, and so the target audience knows that they are on the receiving end of an interlingual translation. However, the source text can be seen as an

interlingual translation too, for it is Death who makes the characters speak English; the characters' native tongue is German. The notion that history is a series of accounts (not necessarily related by witnesses to historical events) is postmodern in nature. The reader is reminded of the characters' nationality throughout the novel: Zusak makes use of transference (Newmark), borrowing occasional words from German. Among these words, colloquial language is common: slurs (e.g. "Dummkopf" and "Saukerl"), exclamations ("Polizei!"), and other language that might slip out unexpectedly. Although the characters do not speak English to begin with, they could be seen as characters that speak a language that is not natural to them most of the time, only reverting to their native tongue during emotional moments, when they have no immediate control over what they say. This tendency can also be associated with trauma: the resurfacing of past events despite a person's conscious wishes. On the whole, these German words do not just remind the audience of the setting of the story and the nationalities of the characters: they also present a fractured narrative, which involves more than one perspective, reminding the reader of the narrator's distance from the characters. The occasional linguistic slip-up implies that the story wants to break free from the narrator's carefully controlled narrative. All such transferences are italicized in the novel. In the Dutch translation, these words are transferred as well: they remain German and are italicized. In both texts, then, the narrativity of Death's account is preserved through occasional reminders to the reader that the characters' source language is not English. The context makes clear the meaning of the words in both text, but ironically, the similarities between Dutch and German might make some words more easily understandable to the target audience than to the source audience.

Morphology

Another instance of language contributing to the novel's postmodern nature is Death applying linguistic rules to words that do not usually take those forms: "I shiver when I remember, as I try to de-realise it" (357). "De-realise" is not a word, but the reader understands what is meant with it because they know what the affix "de-" generally does: it negates concepts. This either demonstrates ignorance of the language (in the way a child that has learnt a linguistic rule might apply it to words that require irregular inflections), or, more likely, awareness of linguistic rules to the extent that they can be bent and re-shaped to explore the possibilities of language and make it suit the narrator's needs. Moreover,

Death says, “Every night, Liesel would nightmare” (43) about Liesel’s first nights spent at her new home. The noun nightmare is treated as a verb here. This line is translated into: “Liesel nachtmerriede elke nacht” (42). Transposition (Vinay and Darbelnet) takes place because the noun does not just serve as a verb but is given the inflection of one — that of the regular past tense — in Dutch. In applying the verbal inflection for the regular past tense to a noun in Dutch, Lodewijk makes it known to the Dutch audience that this sentence is not supposed to be grammatical. Death also utilises grammatical expressions that make the reader pause because they are unconventional or unexpected. The line “but nothing cared” (539) subverts the expected remark “no one cares” by implying that non-human entities can care too — which is true in the universe of the novel, for Death is not a human entity. Moreover, when describing Max’s stay in the basement, Death says, “Just basement. Just Jew” (265). The lack of an article suggests that the noun Jew is not countable, which is obviously not the case. However, these two short lines enhance the sense that Max’s existence has all but narrowed down to these two concepts, for he has been stuck in a dark basement for some time. The abstraction of his existence is preserved in the translation: “Niets dan kelder. Niets dan jood” (267). Lodewijk is well attuned to the instances where the source text does not adhere strictly to linguistic rules, finding equivalences that flow naturally in Dutch.

5. Illustrated Stories

Captioned images occur multiple times in *The Book Thief*. Where the images discussed before serve to indicate structure and to set certain sections apart (e.g. the organic symbols and the dice sides), these images are very much a part of the story Death relates. Max, the Jew hiding in Liesel’s basement, writes and illustrates tales, both for Liesel and for himself. He does so using a copy of *Mein Kampf*, the pages of which he has painted white. The non-verbal aspects of the illustrations are all copied to the Dutch translation without change, but the images’ verbal elements are translated into Dutch. All the illustrations mentioned in the following paragraphs were drawn by Trudy White and take up the whole of their respective pages, leaving no room for text in the novel’s standard font. Any text that appears on these pages looks as though it was written by hand. The notion that White drew pictures made by Hans Hubermann and Max respectively signifies that a variety of unique voices can be relayed by a single person in the process of writing down history. With regard to the

illustrated stories Max created, either for Liesel or for his own sake, Bright says that "Zusak seems to suggest that there are some topics image is better at communicating than text, and he gracefully makes way for White's illustrations when necessary" (42). Given the nature of the drawings, this statement suggests that a combination of imagery and text can transmit war-related themes more adequately than words alone. By this logic, film is a suitable medium for the conveyance of these elements of the novel. It is remarkable, then, that the illustrated stories do not make an appearance in the film: the copy of *Mein Kampf* Max hands Liesel in the film adaptation is empty, meant to be filled with her writing. Since the illustrated stories do not appear in the film and a comparison cannot be drawn on a textual level, the translation of the text will not be addressed in much detail below. However, the way in which the stories — and their form — contribute to the narrative will be.

Max's first illustrated tale, bound together into a new booklet and no longer a part of the whitewashed copy of *Mein Kampf*, is a birthday present for Liesel. The story is titled *The Standover Man* (233-45), and it describes Max's life story up until the moment he crafts the story, depicting him as a bird because Liesel finds his hair feathery. The story describes all the men who have stood over Max throughout his life, and ends on the note that Liesel is his favourite out of all of them, even though she is not a man but a girl. The text is not always a part of the image: most of the time it appears above or beneath the drawing. However, it is occasionally placed over the drawing, appearing on the darkly inked floor of a room, for example. Some illustrations show the basement wall on which Liesel and her stepfather write down words for her to practice. In these drawings, the text is no longer a caption but a part of the visuals of the drawing. It is not just text but a depiction of text. What is also worth noting about the verbal elements of this illustrated tale is that the printed text of *Mein Kampf* is at times visible beneath the white paint, illustrations, and handwritten text: "Max's past and present [are] buried beneath the simple story he shares with Liesel" (Bright 40). These words do not contribute to the novel textually but visually: they represent the regime Hitler stands for and the shadow this regime has cast and still casts over Max's life. Within a single illustrated story, then, the textual element has various dimensions already: both textually and visually, it can be used to frame or be a part of the narrative.

Later on in the novel, Liesel takes a look at Max's copy of *Mein Kampf* while he is sleeping and discovers two drawings that were not meant for her eyes and are of a more unsettling nature than the story he gifted to her. The first depicts Hitler as a conductor,

directing a crowd's actions. A speech balloon is used to frame musical notation vocalised by Hitler; the image's textual element appears beneath the image, as a caption, which reads: "Not the Führer — the conductor!" in the source text (289), and: "Niet de Führer — de dirigent!" in the Dutch translation (290). The second illustration shows two children standing on top of a pile of dead bodies beneath a sun with a swastika in the centre, the girl's text balloon proclaiming: "Isn't it a lovely day…" (290). In the Dutch edition, the text is: "Is het geen heerlijke dag…" (291). In both illustrations, the translation of the verbal elements is more or less word-for-word, describing what is being depicted by Max in the first image, and conveying a drawn figure's dialogue in the second one. The text of *Mein Kampf* can no longer be made out beneath these images. Bright says they "could best be compared to political balloons, blending truth and irony through image and caption" (40). Liesel is taken aback by the images, exclaiming: "You scared me, Max" (291) when Max wakes up and speaks to her. She repeats these words in her head as she goes back upstairs, indicating that it is not Max's words that scared her but the illustrated drawings he produced (Bright 41). Liesel's shock at a tale that is not tailored to a girl of her age at all mirrors her transition from being relatively ignorant of to becoming increasingly aware of the horrors of war.

The last series of illustrations presents another section of Max's copy of *Mein Kampf*, meant for Liesel's eyes this time. Max's journal contains other thoughts, pictures, and sketches, but these are merely described as such. What is included in *The Book Thief* in its entirety is an illustrated story called *The Word Shaker*, which Max wrote specifically for Liesel (451-6). The drawing style of this story is different from the first story Max gave to Liesel: his script and images "are much cleaner" (Bright 42). Several smaller images appear on one page, and the accompanying script is smaller than in previous drawings. Although the script is clear and precise, it runs on until the very edge of each page, suggesting that the pages cannot contain all the information Max wants to convey to Liesel. Liesel reads the story after Max has left their household in an attempt to make their lives less dangerous. Bright says that "the use of both text and image in Max's story is reminiscent of a children's story, shifting readers temporarily from the precise context of World War II, and rewinding, creating an almost timeless, geography-less place" (41). This similarity to a children's tale harkens back to the first tale Max gave to Liesel, but the heavy themes of the second set of drawings, which Liesel found so shocking at the time, are more clearly embedded in this tale than in the first. Liesel has matured considerably, and so has her understanding of the war.

The Word Shaker shows Hitler deciding to "make words and symbols [in a certain] way to carefully change how people think" (Bright 41). It teaches Liesel to critically analyse the information that is given to her, and urges her to base her opinions not just on views freely shared with her, but also on views which others may not wish her to encounter. Moreover, the tale "represents words and ideas as trees, growing from the seeds that Hitler plants all over Germany" (Bright 41). Max tells Liesel that her words have power too and that she, too, can change the world, underlining the novel's focus on the mouldability of history. This message is retained in the film adaptation, which will be discussed in chapter three.

6. Conclusion

This chapter discussed a selection of postmodern elements in the novel and translations thereof, and demonstrated that both form and content contribute to the novel's postmodern nature. Although Lodewijk makes a few concessions with regard to form (e.g. normalizing the punctuations somewhat in places, and lengthening a few lines), her translation demonstrates an awareness of the source text's typography. With regard to the content of the novel, there are some instances where Lodewijk could not preserve a metaphor (when she writes the sky had rather than was the colour of Jews, for instance), but on the whole, she applies various procedures to capture the novel's vivid imagery, conveying figurative language and even enhancing it in places. This chapter's analyses of Lodewijk's translation of various manifestations of *The Book Thief*'s postmodern themes show that, by and large, they convey the novel's postmodern nature effectively.

CHAPTER 3

THE FILM ADAPTATION AND THE DUTCH SUBTITLES THEREOF

1. Introduction

Audiovisual translation (AVT) research encompasses various approaches to the material, inheriting discourse from Translation Studies as well as Film Studies (Bartrina 157). The term "audiovisual" means that the product is received via two separate channels, "the visual and the acoustic" (Bartrina 157). However, the visual is not always non-verbal and the acoustic not always verbal, for text that is not spoken out loud by any characters might appear on the screen as well (in the form of location titles, for example, or in the form of posters or advertisements or any form of text that is visible to the viewer), and music scores do not necessarily contain lyrics. Where, then, does the verbal end and the non-verbal begin? As is the case with literary translation, it is the "synchrony between verbal and non-verbal messages" that is key to our understanding of that which is being presented (Bartrina 157). A character's spoken explanation may be accompanied by visuals, and the score, which may or may not include lyrics, could serve to enhance the characters' dramatic performance, or hint at things to come. The intertwinement of these elements leads Francesca Bartrina to pose the question whether it is desirable "for audiovisual translators to have knowledge of types of screenplays, the writing of dialogues and visual languages" (159). She also notes that they would be well equipped with knowledge of the contexts and procedures of film making, if only to get a better grasp of what it is they wish to translate exactly (160). Is it the screenplay, the script, or, in the case of *The Book Thief*, the novel the film is based on? Ideally, the translator has a chance to study the final script and the film material before starting on the subtitles — which is not always a given in television because of time pressure, but more likely to happen with regard to the subtitles of DVDs.

Even if the translator is provided with accurate, complete scripts and the audiovisual product, their task remains far from straightforward. According to Josélia Neves, "the constraints involved [in the process of subtitling] are numerous" (Neves 134). Hatim and Mason have identified four such constraints:

1. The shift in mode from speech to writing.
2. Factors which govern the medium or channel in which meaning is to be conveyed. These are physical constraints of available space (generally up to 33, or in some cases 40 keyboard spaces per line; no more than two lines on screen) and the pace of the soundtrack dialogue (titles may remain on screen for a minimum of two and a maximum of seven seconds).
3. The reduction of the source text as a consequence of (2) above.
4. The requirement of matching the visual image. (430-1)

As Neves points out, suppressing the urge to "cut" is one of the chief concerns in subtitling (134), for the constraints related to time and space may lead subtitlers to omit details they deem least necessary to the target audience's understanding of the source text. Moreover, even in producing a translation in another language, subtitlers find themselves editing the source text, and it may be tempting to produce grammatically correct sentences instead of fragmented speech, thus leading to a new message altogether (Neves 134). This chapter will delve into more detail with regard to the "condensation" of the source material later on, when specific subtitles as translations of the film's dialogue are discussed. For now, it suffices to say that the practice of subtitling comes with time and space related constraints inherent to the audiovisual medium. The fourth constraint proposed by Hatim and Mason challenges the subtitler not just to translate what is happening on screen, but also to ensure they do not contradict what is happening on screen in doing so.

Luis Pérez-Gonzalez lists subtitling as a "traditional" form of AVT, and says that, as such, it "remain[s] primarily anchored to discourses on correspondence or equivalence between source and target texts" (141). However, Bartrina, for one, argues that the rapid succession of on-screen images "requires a specific theory that discards the general models for the field outlined within the theory of translation" (157). This cry for revisitation echoes Gambier's claim that "certain concepts in Translation Studies should arguably be revised, extended, and rethought when they are applied to AVT" (3). With regard to all types of text, Gambier notes that "the traditional concept of linear and verbal text cannot account for the full range of multi-semiotic textual phenomena" (3). As indicated by Hatim and Mason's fourth constraint, however, the multimodality of subtitles in particular is such that it presents the target text to the audience while the medium makes it so that the source text can still be perceived. The notion that subtitling theory is largely concerned with finding equivalences between the source and the target text, and therefore traditional, becomes

problematic once one considers that translated subtitles do not just serve to replace or convey the source material but to accompany it. The audience listen to the source text *as* they read the target translation — while watching the visuals that back up the characters' speech acts in both languages (Neves 134). Subtitlers' translation procedures therefore require consideration of *all* narrative features of the medium that communicate a message.

The analyses in this chapter will be two-fold. On the one hand, the film will be treated as an adaptation — or intralingual, intersemiotic translation (Jakobson 233) — of the novel written by Markus Zusak. Given that printed books and films are two different mediums, the effectiveness of the translation of postmodern elements in the film will be determined in terms of the presumed effect the translated subtitles have on the audience. After all, some postmodern elements may not take the same form in the film (e.g. Death's perspective, and the illustrated drawings), but the adapted form of these elements may still convey postmodern ideas to the audience. Rather than automatically treating the film as a weak imitation because it does not contain the novel's word count or literary features, attention will be paid to how the film, as an adaptation, compensates for literary elements that, for whatever technical reason, cannot be transferred onto the big screen. On the other hand, this chapter analyses the effectiveness of the Dutch subtitles as interlingual (Jakobson 233) entities that accompany the film's visuals and acoustics but not the literary novel on which it is based, which is not visible to the audience as they watch the film. In treating the subtitles both as adaptations of aspects of the literary novel as well as key elements of the English-spoken film for a Dutch audience, this chapter aims to present an analysis that acknowledges that the source text of the translated subtitles is manifold, thus taking the subtitles' complexity into consideration.

2. The Film and Subtitles as Adaptations of the Novel

Death's Narrative

One of the main characteristics of *The Book Thief* is Death's role as a narrator. He does not address any of the characters in the book; from the very beginning, he informs the reader that he is addressing them, and that he is shaping the narrative for their sake. According to Francis Vanoye, film dialogue operates on two levels: it is "horizontal" when it takes place between characters on screen, and "vertical" when it takes place between the film and the

viewers (116). The interaction that takes place between the film and the audience, then, is the kind of storytelling that also takes place when Death addresses the reader directly. Of course, one could argue, dialogue between fictional characters exists for the audience's sake too. But although both dialogue types serve a narrative purpose, the characters addressing each other are now shown to be aware of this purpose. Alan Bell states that "audience design" determines the type of communication between the speaker and the receiver. He "distinguishes four types of receivers: *addressees*, who are known to the speaker and directly addressed; *auditors*, who are known to the speaker but not directly addressed; *overhearers*, who are not confirmed participants and *eavesdroppers*, who are not known to the speaker" (159). Bartrina remarks that, whereas speakers in real life tend to address types one and two, fictional characters tend to speak for the sake of types three and four, for the audience is not a part of the narrative. She says that "the role of the translator involves maintaining the coherence of the communication between the addressees on the screen, while at the same time seeking to transmit the coherence of the discourse that the communicator towards the audience en masse" (161). In *The Book Thief* and its film adaptation, however, Death treats the audience as addressees: he addresses them rather than other characters. How does the film convey Death's role as a narrator, what function does his narrative serve, and how do the subtitles maintain the coherence of communication between Death and his addressees (the audience) on the one hand, and the other characters and their fictional addressees on the other?

As the following paragraphs will demonstrate, the film adaptation conveys Death's role as a narrator both acoustically and visually. Death's role as the film's narrator is first hinted at through his having a voice but not being shown as a character on screen. The film opens with an aerial shot above the clouds. The camera glides through the air as Death's first words are spoken: "One small fact. You are going to die". He speaks about the inevitability of death for a little while before the camera descends to reveal a moving train. Death says that he makes it a policy to avoid the living, but that he sometimes becomes interested in humans anyway. The visuals shift to Liesel and her mother, who are aboard the moving train. Having noticed that her little brother has died, Liesel interrupts Death's first monologue shortly before it ends by calling for her mother's attention. This interruption highlights Death's role as a narrator, for Liesel speaks up visually as well as acoustically, and although Death reacts to what is happening to Liesel, his speech even overlapping with hers,

they do not communicate. Liesel gives no indication that she is aware of Death's presence; he is shown to be an eavesdropper early on. A diegetic sound has a source who is visible on screen and who is a part of the film's actions. A non-diegetic sound comes from a source who is not visible on screen, and who does not seem to exist within the story space. Death's presence could be seen as non-diegetic (as opposed to Liesel's diegetic presence, for she appears on screen and exists logically within the narrative) — yet Death's presence is treated as logical by the film, and he does cross paths with Liesel within the film's narrative, even if she is not aware of it. This ambiguity about Death's place both in and outside the narrative of Liesel's life makes his presence in the film magic realist.

Thomas Luckmann views film dialogue as multimodal because "verbal signs are always combined with body-posture, gestures and facial expressions, especially in narrative forms" (54). In other words, the acoustic dialogue is supported by the speaker's visual behaviour. Given the lack of Death's on-screen body language, his dialogue could be perceived as monomodal. However, while his words may not be combined with his own body language, they are still accompanied by the visuals on the screen. Jörg Bergmann refers to cinema's connection between verbal and visual elements as "local sensitivity" (206). This connection stands for the "structural tendency built into every topic talk to 'turn to local matters', whereby local refers to extra-conversational features, i.e. the environment and situational events" (Remael 233). Even though Death does not always comment on what is happening on screen, philosophizing and addressing the audience with more general statements occasionally, he comments on what he observes for the better part of his scenes, and there is interplay between the visuals and the acoustics because of this. Thus, Death's dialogue can still be perceived as multimodal, for it communicates to the audience what is happening, and, now and then, what is about to happen.

Building on the notion that all dialogue in fiction contributes to the narrative, Remael distinguishes three dialogue types: "structuring dialogue, narrative-informative dialogue, and interactional dialogue" (223). She likewise distinguishes two scene types: "scenes of transition and core scenes" (223). Of these, structuring dialogue refers to the type of dialogue that "is most subservient to broader narrative needs and is a means of providing textual cohesion" (223). Such dialogue turns "regularly interact with the visuals rather than with other dialogue turns. [It] fulfils a function that is comparable to that of transitional scenes but on a different textual level. Transitional scenes in fact contain mostly structuring

dialogue" (223). Death's lack of communication with other characters does not place his dialogue outside of the narrative; besides commenting on what is happening during scenes, it is also used to structure the narrative by linking separate core scenes together. Given his role as the narrator, it is not a coincidence that his voice is primarily heard during transitional scenes, in which Liesel's life is about to change. Thus, Death's voiceovers do not exist outside the narrative; they can be seen as structuring dialogue.

Death does not narrate the entirety of the film; he shows up at irregular intervals to comment on the film's proceedings. He delivers a monologue eight times in total, although his monologues are interrupted by other characters' dialogue near the end of the film, making this number a subjective estimation. Death's monologues take place at shorter intervals during the last half hour, but sometimes disappear for twenty minutes earlier on. The lack of voiceovers during the majority of scenes makes Death's presence less obvious than it is in the novel, which he narrates in its entirety, but aerial shots at the beginning of multiple scenes arguably contribute to the sense that the viewer is not the only audience of the film's events. The aerial shot above the clouds with which the film begins can be seen as an establishing shot for the entire film, since Death is a voyeuristic presence, even if he does not always narrate the film's events. Death's eighth and final monologue starts with the camera situated above the clouds again. The scenery mirrors that of the beginning of the film and helps indicate that Death is wrapping up the tale he started telling at the beginning of the film. Both aerial shots are bookends: they frame Death's narrative. The film's various visual and acoustic ways of compensating for the loss of Death's continuous narrative will be discussed in more detail later on, under the header 'narrative framing'.

The Dutch subtitles highlight Death's unique role as a narrator in that they are italicized when he speaks, as opposed to the subtitles translating the dialogue of the characters who appear visually on screen. Death's body language may not be a modality, but in the Dutch subtitled version, the formatting conveying his speech acts *is* — as is the case in the novel. Although the opening lines of the novel differ from that of the film (the novel's being: "First the colours. Then, the humans. It's usually how I see things. Or at least, how I try" [13]), they are immediately followed by one of Death's bolded and centred announcements, on which the film's opening lines are based: "Here is a small fact. You are going to die" (13). In both the film with Dutch subtitles and the novel, then, Death's narration is characterized by formatting that differs from the text spoken by the other

characters. It must be noted that this formatting distinction is not necessarily present in the film, for the audience can choose whether they wish to view a film with subtitles or not, be they Dutch or English or any other language. Moreover, it is not unusual for subtitles to be italicized when the speaker is not visible on screen. However, the fact remains that it is not just the content of the subtitles that can be used to convey Death's postmodern characterization but the form of the subtitles as well.

With regard to the content of the subtitles, the following paragraphs analyse a selection of Death's comments that are central to the narrative. As mentioned above, the film's opening lines are based on Death's first announcement, which appears five lines into the novel. The novel introduces the announcement succinctly but in full sentences: "Here is a small fact. You are going to die" (13). The film dialogue opens in a more abrupt manner: "One small fact. You are going to die". In addition to lacking Death's explanation on how he sees the world (in colours and humans), the film's introduction to Death is more fragmented than that of the novel. Given Death's abrupt, matter-of-fact narration style in the novel, this dialogue successfully conveys his bluntness to the audience. However, leaving out Death's explanation on how he perceives the world and letting him inform the audience they are going to die makes him appear somewhat harsher than the novel version. The subtitles of these opening lines are as follows, shown subsequently instead of at the same time: 1) *Klein feitje*. 2) *Je gaat dood*. The first line is a fragment as well, and the second announces the audience's inevitable demise as curtly as possible. The subtitles capture the tone of the dialogue, preserving Death's almost casual bluntness. The same can be said for most of his opening monologue, there being only one sentence that runs on in the subsequent subtitle.

The novel's final sentence is one of Death's bolded announcements: "A LAST NOTE FROM YOUR NARRATOR: I am haunted by humans" (554). Death's final words in the film are: "The only truth I truly know, is that I am haunted by humans". The film and the novel thus end on the same note. Worth noting is that the literary translation of Death's announcement ("Ik word gekweld door mensen" [556]) differs from the subtitle translation: "Ik word achtervolgd door mensen". Although an argument can be made for the literary translation in the sense that suffering can be associated with being haunted, it does lack the reversal of roles that is implied in the source texts and the subtitles. Rather than depicting Death as the haunting figure, the novel and the Dutch subtitles portray humans as such from Death's point of view. By making the notion that Death is being made to suffer because of humans

the punch line, the literary translation implies that it is Death who usually inflicts suffering upon humans — which is a trope the novel tries to invert, for people inflict suffering on each other, at times resulting in death. Arguably, then, the Dutch subtitles capture Death's character more effectively in this instance.

Finally, both the novel and the film refer to Death's last statement as "the only truth [Death] know[s]" (554). Death has been an eyewitness of many historical events, certainly where death is concerned, yet he does not base truths on what he has witnessed. The belief that his personal interpretation of events does not equal truth is postmodern in nature, and so the novel and its adaptation remind the audience of the subjectivity of historical accounts until the very last word. The film ends with a close-up of a black and white photograph of Liesel in her *The Book Thief* years. Liesel's eyes gazing straight into the camera as Death says his final words makes the audience experience Death's sensation of being haunted.

Marked Subtitle Formatting

Besides Death's role as a narrator, there are other speech acts that are marked by unique subtitle formatting. One of these is the nationalist song that Liesel and her classmates sing as members of the Hitlerjugend. The language of the song is German. There is no English translation present on screen for the source audience; to those who do not understand German, the visuals alone convey the unpleasantness of young children perpetuating national social ideals. The subtitles do offer a Dutch translation of the song. The punctuation and capitalisation are missing, indicating that the children have been singing for some time already when the scene begins; that more lyrics are to come; and that the text differs from the dialogue-like text in the film. This difference is further indicated by the italicization of the subtitles. The shot of the singing children changes into a scene showing the Kristallnacht in Stuttgart in 1938. The lyrics are no longer subtitled once the visuals have changed, indicating that knowledge of the exact content of the song is not necessary for it to set up and accompany the Kristallnacht shots.

Voiceovers by characters besides Death are italicized as well. Liesel writes a letter to her mother at some point, the visuals alternating between showing scenes she describes and showing her writing the letter even as her voice can be heard reading the words on the page out loud. Hans, her stepfather, interrupts her when she is nearly finished, and the subtitles are non-italicized for the duration of their conversation, after which they become italicized

again. Some of the subtitles appear near the top of the screen so that the letter is more clearly visible, showing the audience the date, for example, and the standard format of a letter. When Liesel starts writing down her own story in the book Max has given her, the camera shows the people she writes about, and the subtitles of her voiceovers are italicized. At some point, the camera pans to her dictionary on the wall, where the word "WRITE" is written in chalk. The subtitles of this word are not italicised but capitalised and without punctuation, mimicking the film's visuals. The previous chapter discussed the inclusion of the words Liesel and Hans write on the basement wall in Max's drawings, referring to the text in the illustration as not just text but a depiction of text. The subtitles' focus on both the meaning and the visuals of the word indicates that Liesel and Hans' dictionary is treated as a depiction of text in this medium too.

Worth noting is that the occasional German words the characters use are included in the subtitles but that they are not italicized, the way they are in the novel. In the novel, these words are set apart from Death's standard narrative and draw attention to the disconnect between the characters' language and the language Death, the narrator, speaks. In the film, the German words still stand out acoustically in the English dialogue, but the subtitles do not mark them as different from the other speech parts. This does not necessarily disrupt the film's postmodern message, for the notion that the bigger narrative absorbs the characters' distinctive language can still be perceived as a critique of western storytelling and the way it sometimes appropriates elements of other cultures without acknowledgement. However, given that the film is meant to be Death's narrative, and taking Death's acknowledgement of the foreign words in the novel into consideration, italicizing these words would have conveyed Death's interference in Liesel's narrative more accurately, lest his narrative becomes similar to the narratives the novel inverts.

Narrative Framing

There are several layers of narration within the novel. The main one is that Liesel's story is framed by Death: he is the one who relays her story to the audience. Although Death's voiceovers are not always present in the film, his presence can be detected in non-auditory ways as well. In the novel, Death jumps through time and space, telling the reader about Liesel one paragraph and moving on to Max the next, or foreshadowing dramatic future events in the midst of a domestic scene. In the film, the story is chronological in that there

are no flashbacks or flash-forwards, but it still jumps through time and space, for in terms of both, most scenes' openings are not set where the last scene ended. It is clear that the characters continue living their everyday lives outside of the few moments the audience has a chance to observe. The selection of scenes that are shown is deemed relevant to the narrative — Death's narrative. Naturally, a film being a series of key narrative scenes succeeding each other is not unique in and of itself; few films will detail every single moment a character lives through during the time the film spans. However, *The Book Thief* also employs some audiovisual techniques to invoke the sense that the narrator can be everywhere at once.

One of these techniques is the merging of scenes: letting scenes not just succeed each other but bleed into each other. When Max falls ill, Liesel reads to him from *The Invisible Man* by H. G. Wells. Shots of Liesel reading to Max morph into shots of the pages she reads from and into close-ups of Max's sweaty face, only to fade into a shot of her dictionary on the wall (showing the word "DEAR"), before slowly morphing into Liesel's reading figure again, sitting in a different position this time. Her voiceovers do not tell a whole story: they consist of fragments that change every time the visuals change. The music that plays during this sequence follows her into the next scene, in which she steals a book from the mayor's library. After that, the visuals start morphing into each other again, showing Liesel stealing more books, Rosa feeding Max, and the changing dictionary on the wall, while Liesel reads on. The montage ends with Liesel being halfway through the book, reading: "…and the sudden realization that this would all be for nothing". In a rapid succession of shots, combined with overarching music and the sound of Liesel's voice, the audience witnesses a significant part of Max's illness period, and is made aware that life goes on for the other characters while the focal point continues to be Max. Such voiceovers let the audience move through time and space the same way Death does, for the acoustics anchor them to places or moments in time while the visuals might show contrasting settings. These instances break up the film's chronology, adding to the sense that a story is never quite as straightforward as one might believe. Even though the film's events occur in chronological order, then, narrative framing can still break the boundaries of time and space for the audience's sake.

The above paragraph demonstrates how acoustics can be used to frame a series of sequences in terms of time and space, but they can also be used to frame the film's motifs,

to carry one scene's theme into another. Earlier, the example of the German children singing a nationalist song as the visuals fade into shots of the Kristallnacht in Stuttgart was given. The singing continues during the attack on Jewish stores, making the audience aware of two settings at once: the German school children spreading Nazi propaganda, and the Jews suffering as a result of anti-Semitic promulgation. Death can be in several places at once, but so can the audience. Through a combination of images and sound, the Kristallnacht is framed by Nazi indoctrination. Another example of a thematic interplay between visuals and acoustics is the running contest, in which Liesel's friend Rudy participates, which is heralded by a gunshot. The previous scene shows German children being excited over England declaring war on Germany, with Death commenting on man's misplaced excitement for war. Although neither scene includes war-related imagery, both of them taking place in Munich, where Liesel lives, the connection to war is drawn during Rudy's running context because of the gunshot, Death's previous commentary on war, and because of the larger context, for Rudy is about to draw the attention of officials who require him to go to a training camp so that he can join the German forces. Rudy's scene thus builds on the former, carrying Death's view on the pointless destructiveness of war onwards without necessarily requiring for his commentary to keep going.

Similarly, the characters' dialogue takes up the function of Death's omniscient presence at times. While Death is not able to foreshadow characters' deaths as blatantly as he does it in the novel, subtle foreshadowing still takes place throughout the film. Rudy runs away from home once he learns that the Germans want him to fight for them, saying he does not want to die, and repeating in the scene that follows that he wants to grow up before he dies — which he will not be able to do. At some point, Rudy also tells a boy who is continually pestering him and Liesel to "drop dead", and indeed the boy does before the end of the film, dying of the same bombs that kill Rudy. Moreover, Hans asks Liesel to promise him to bury him right if he dies anytime soon, and tells her not to skip chapter six. This is a reference to the gravedigger's book they used to teach Liesel how to read. Ironically, then, the very first book she steals contains information she can use to give her stepfather, who dies shortly before the end of the film, a proper burial.

Although Max's illustrated tales are not included in the film, the motion picture does employ the characters' storytelling as a framing device the same way the novel does. The letter Liesel writes to her mother lets her take control of the narrative: the visuals show a

montage of the various people and events she is describing to her mother even as her voice reads the content of the letter out loud. After Max has left them, Liesel takes the blank booklet he gave her for Christmas and starts filling it with her own words. Max previously told her he would live on in her words, and indeed, he is mentioned in her tale. As Liesel writes, using the figurative language Max asked her to use, a montage of her life appears, and her voiceover can be heard telling her own story. In this moment, Liesel takes control of her own narrative, briefly taking it from Death's hands before he steps in again, narrating the bombing of Himmel Street that will kill Liesel's loved ones.

3. The Subtitles as Interlingual Translations

So far, this chapter has largely focused on the film as an intralingual, intersemiotic translation of the novel, but the dialogue that calls for interlingual translation has not yet been looked at in great detail. After expanding on the constraints introduced in the introduction, and considering the subtitler's influential, editorial role as a translator, this section focuses on the translation of postmodern lines, and analyses whether the verbal network of postmodernism is maintained in the Dutch subtitles.

The Influence of Subtitles

According to Aline Remael, the main concern of subtitling is "to render different types of speech in two lines of concise and intelligible writing with a minimal loss of informative content" (226). She claims that clarity seems to have become the chief concern of subtitling in Europe — but she believes that the prioritization of clarity does not always lead to an optimal utilisation of what subtitles can do. Moving beyond Henrik Gottlieb's belief that condensation might in fact enhance the film's message (227), she says that the teleological nature of mainstream cinema narrative is one of its quintessential elements, and that subtitling actually enhances "this fundamental feature of commercial narrative cinema" (225). Moreover, it could also help streamline an inherently fast-paced film (Remael 225). Thus, Gottlieb and Remael believe that subtitling is not just about finding an appropriate equivalence of the source text's intended message, but that subtitles, if done well, can enhance the narrative rather than merely clarify it for the target audience.

With regard to time and space constraints, Remael notes that translation textbooks (of which she lists Ivarsson and Carroll [1998] as an example) tend to urge subtitlers to "intervene actively in their renderings of the source text whenever technical constraints rule out full translation" (226). Apparently, they "are instructed to respect syntactic and semantic units when segmenting and distributing text, simplify both syntax and vocabulary, and eliminate whatever is irrelevant for a good understanding of the message" (226). She notes that the compromises subtitlers find themselves making in order to achieve perfect clarity, regardless of the genre of the source material, has consequences for the translation. "Interpersonal dimensions of speech" in particular may not be conveyed: "the interactional features of conversation are part of a carefully constructed narrative that also relies on other sign systems to communicate with the viewer" (226). If such features are left out, characterization might suffer for it. The following paragraph demonstrates how condensing characters' speech can lead to mischaracterization.

When Max is about to leave his mother's house in order to go into hiding, Death says: "When I finally caught up with Max Vanderberg's soul, it was this moment that haunted him the most. For leaving his mother. For feeling that awful light-headed relief that he would live". The subtitles of this dialogue are the following: 1) *Toen ik eindelijk de ziel / van Max Vandenberg ontmoette…* 2) *…was het dit moment / dat hem achtervolgde.* 3) *Dat hij zijn moeder verliet.* 4) *En dat vreselijke gevoel…* 5) *…dat hij het zou overleven*. This translation is misleading in two ways. In the source text, "finally caught up with" refers to the act of Death coming for Max's soul at the end of his life. The translation of this phrase ("eindelijk … ontmoette") may as well refer to this very scene, since it *introduces* Max to the audience. The translation does not give the impression that this moment haunts Max more than Death does; it is rather more neutral in tone. Moreover, "that awful light-headed relief" has been translated as "dat vreselijke gevoel", erasing the notion that Max feels awful because he experiences relief while leaving his mother to die. The Dutch audience is unlikely to experience confusion reading both translations, for they make sense in this context as well. However, in these instances, the subtitles do not clarify or summarise what is present in the source text by condensing it: they omit details that could have been included had the subtitles been phrased differently, and give a different impression of both Death's and Max's character as a result.

Naturally, condensation does not necessarily lead to mischaracterization, for if dialogue is summarized well, or the key sentence of repetitive lines is conveyed clearly, the subtitles need not necessarily leave out vital bits of information. However, absolute clarity may not actually be the aim of the source text. In trauma narratives, for example, repetition can serve a purpose, namely to mimic a character's reliving of traumatic events (Cameron and Belau 229). While it might seem prudent to iron out all seemingly redundant elements in the subtitles, the source text may have been structured in a messy manner for a reason. As is the case with postmodern literature, themes to do with human perception can be conveyed through innovative narrativity in film (Cameron and Belau 229). For a translator to clarify elements that appear unconventional might result in the loss of narrative irregularities that were included purposely.

Giorgio Curti conceptualised "living subtitles" (201) as a response to the "emerging narrative forms . . . [that] problematize traditional assumptions that there is only 'one' reality to be captured and mirrored in films" (Pérez-Gonzalez 143). With his conceptualization of living subtitles, Curti draws attention to "the unexplored scope available for film creators and translators to experiment with multimodal semiotics during the production and reception of audiovisual texts", and delivers "a sophisticated critique of the role that subtitles can play in that process of experimentation" — because they should strive to be more than "a faithful representation of the original speech through static written representations in the bottom regions of the frame" (Pérez-Gonzalez 146). Whether the viewer desires an active role in the attribution of meaning to a film (rather than a passive one in which they let the subtitles provide them a straightforward interpretation of what the translator believes is being said) likely depends on the viewer and genre. Given *The Book Thief*'s postmodern genre, questioning the notion of one truth does seem fitting — but it might be difficult to distinguish between subtitles that are open to interpretation and subtitles that contradict the assemblage of visuals and text in such a way that the audience ends up being confused unproductively rather than enlightened by a carefully constructed depiction of a confusing narrative.

For example, there is one translation in Death's opening monologue that interprets the source text's meaning in an unexpected manner. With regard to his tendency to avoid the living, Death says: "Once, in a very long time, I— I can't help myself. I get invested". The subtitles of this dialogue are: 1) *Heel lang geleden*… 2) *Ik kan het niet helpen*. 3) *Ik raak*

geïnteresseerd. These subtitles suggest that Liesel caught Death's interest a very long time ago, whereas the source text implies that Death gets invested very rarely in general. Whether WWII counts as a very long time ago for the figure of Death is debatable, and might therefore give the audience pause. In addition, where Death's final line is a continuation of the first, despite being interrupted by the concession that he cannot always help himself, the third subtitle does not correspond to the first one, both because of the mismatched word order and the clashing tenses. The present tense in the third subtitle makes the suggestion that Liesel caught Death's interest a long time ago even more confusing. This misinterpretation does not make the subtitled dialogue less curt and it does not sabotage Death's magic realist presence, but it could briefly take the audience out of the story, and although this is admittedly the result of Death's narration style in various places, it would seem to serve no purpose in this instance.

In general, however, the notion that the subtitles can enhance the viewer's watching experience in addition to presenting the spoken dialogue in the target language is relevant to answering the question whether subtitles' conveyance of postmodern elements can be effective. Magic realism is associated with vivid imagery. Does subtitling a magic realist film with the aim of clarity in mind automatically lead to the loss of vivid imagery by condensing it? The following section looks at the subtitles of particularly postmodern lines of dialogue.

Postmodern Features

The novel's figurative language comes back in the scripted dialogue, particularly in the dialogue given to Liesel. "My new mama is like a thunderstorm. Always rumbling" is how she describes Rosa. The subtitles preserve the simile: 1) *Mijn nieuwe mama is net / een storm. Altijd onweer*. Nominalization (Delisle) takes place in the second line, but the comparison to a thunderstorm is preserved. After Liesel tells Max that she memorises the mayor's wife's books, Max quotes Aristotle to Liesel, saying: "Memory is the scribe of the soul". This metaphor is subtitled word-for-word and preserved in Dutch: 1) *Het geheugen is de pen / van de ziel*. The conversation that follows contains many instances of figurative language, for Max asks Liesel to describe the outside world to him using her own words. He says: "Make the words yours. If your eyes could speak… what would they say"? The subtitles are: 1) *In jouw woorden.* 2) *Als je ogen konden praten…* 3) *…wat zouden ze dan zeggen?* Nominalization (Delisle) takes place again in the first subtitle, but the notion that Liesel

should use her own words — guided by her senses and not just by the clichés of language — to describe her day to him is maintained. The words Liesel uses after he has asked her to let her eyes speak are the following:

Liesel: It's a… pale day?	1) Het is een fletse dag.
Max: Pale. Good. Go on.	2) Flets. Mooi. Ga door.
Liesel: Everything's stuck behind a cloud. And the sun… doesn't look like the sun.	3) Alles zit achter een wolk. 4) En de zon… 5) …lijkt niet op de zon.
Max: What does it look like?	6) Waar lijkt ie dan op?
Liesel: Like… a silver oyster?	7) Op een zilveren oester?
Max: Thank you. I saw that.	8) Dank je wel. / Ik heb het gezien.

Worth noting about the subtitles is that they do not seem to be consistent in conveying Liesel's tone in this scene. Her uncertainty is not indicated by a question mark in the first subtitle, but in the seventh one, a question mark is used for this exact purpose. Liesel's hesitation in answering is conveyed by an ellipsis in the fourth and fifth subtitles, but not in the first or seventh ones. However, the focus of this particular analysis is not the conveyance of the speakers' tone but their figurative speech. The translation is practically word-for-word, with the exception of the loss of the source text word "stuck" in the third subtitle, and the occurrence of transposition (Vinay and Darbelnet) in the final subtitle, where the past simple has turned into the present perfect — a form more commonly used in Dutch to speak about past events. As these examples indicate, the character limit does not prevent the subtitles from translating figurative language.

The novel's theme about marginalised figures taking the writing of history into their own hands because the prominent narrative will not include them is not represented by Max's storytelling in the film, for his illustrated tales are not included. However, Liesel's writing as a girl, born to a communist, is one way in which the film represents this theme. Rudy's hero-worship of the Black American Olympic gold medallist Jesse Owens is included in the film too, and can be seen as another way in which marginalised figures wrestle back the narrative. One scene that shows Rudy sprinting on the local track field contains insert shots of Jesse Owens sprinting at the Olympics in Berlin in 1936, their sprinting legs seemingly becoming as one, while the German commentator's commentary runs in the background of both their shots without interruption. They finish at the same time, and Rudy

yells: “He’s done it. He’s made history”. The subtitles of this exclamation are: 1) *Hij doet ‘t.* / *Hij schrijft geschiedenis.* The Dutch expression is an equivalent (Vinay and Darbelnet) of the English one. In the Dutch translation of Owens “making history”, it is implied that Owens writes history himself through his achievements, assigning him not just a creator’s but a writer’s role in his own story of fame. This translation preserves the postmodern concept of humans creating and contributing to history rather than just documenting it.

The novel also draws attention to the emancipation that takes place through education, and the film preserves the notion that, in educating herself, Liesel gives herself a voice. When Hans first shows Liesel the words on the basement wall, he says: “It’s a dictionary. Some of the words we’ve learned. Add as many as you like. It’s yours”. The dictionary is the embodiment of Liesel’s learning progress: with chalk, she adds words from censored books and other books she came by illegally to her sum of knowledge. The subtitles of this dialogue are: 1) *Een woordenboek.* 2) *Woorden die we hebben geleerd.* 3) *Je kunt toevoegen / wat je wilt.* 4) *Het is van jou.* The word “some” is dropped in translation — and in that sense reduction (Newmark) has taken place, but the words Hans talks about are modified by “die we hebben geleerd”, making it clear that he is only referring to some words. Overall, the translation of this dialogue conveys the sense that Liesel is giving shape to her knowledge through reading and writing, and preserves the agency Liesel has in choosing what she wishes to contribute to her own knowledge. This agency is one of the film’s leitmotifs, for Liesel comes by most of her books through theft. One day, Max observes Liesel adding words to the dictionary, and asks: “Tell me, where do you get these words?” to which Liesel replies: “It’s a secret”. The subtitles are: 1) *How kom je aan al die woorden?* 2) *Dat is geheim*. Both in the source text and the target text, words are portrayed as units of knowledge that can be collected.

Once Max has come to live with their family, Hans asks Liesel to promise him not to tell anyone about Max’s hiding in their house. He says: “A person is only as good as their word, Liesel. Do I have yours”? The subtitles of these lines are: 1) *En aan je woord / moet je je houden, Liesel.* 2) *Krijg ik je woord?* The Dutch translation is an equivalent (Vinay and Darbelnet) of the English expression, and modulation (Vinay and Darbelnet) takes place because Max’s abstract statement in the source text becomes concrete in the target text, where he addresses Liesel personally from the first sentence onwards. The power assigned to a person’s word comes through in this translation, once more maintaining the film’s motif

about the power of the written word and text in general. Hans believes that Liesel will do as he tells her after she has given him her word; he believes in the effect the word "yes" will have on Liesel's future actions. Later on in the film, Liesel's stepmother tells Liesel: "Not a word", which is subtitled as: 1) *Geen woord*. Paradoxically, it is not the existence but the absence of words that causes safety in this instance. When Liesel's expresses fear of losing Max, he tells her: "I'm not lost to you, Liesel. You'll always be able to find me in your words. That's where I'll live on". The subtitles are: 1) *–Je verliest me niet.* 2) *Je kunt me altijd vinden / in je woorden.* 3*) Daarin leef ik voort*. Regardless of the translation procedures taking place here, the sense that words are not just powerful because they can convince other people of ideas, but that they can also be used for the preservation of ideas and memories is conveyed here: the subtitles capture the notion that people live on in words, that text — including history books — can immortalize people, and bring them back to life in other people's minds.

There are two themes from the novel that do not seem to be present in the film. For one, Death's experimental application of morphological rules is not present in his dialogue, perhaps because reading an ungrammatical word gives the recipient more time to absorb its meaning and purpose than listening to one. Either way, the film loses some of the inventive narration techniques that are inherent to Death's narrative in ironing out grammatical inconsistencies. Moreover, colours do not seem to play a significant part in Death's perception of the world, and the framing of his narrative. He does not mention colours with regard to scenery. What the acoustics lack can be compensated for by the visuals, of course. While the film's somewhat subdued colour scheme could be based on the printed novel's colours (black and white), red is another colour mentioned explicitly, particularly with regard to the last time he saw Liesel — and the film does not end on a red note. A few fires can be seen as the bombs drop on Himmel Street, and some fires burn among the rubble the morning afterwards, but the scenery is dark at night, and grey — almost blue-ish — when Liesel finds her loved ones' bodies. Of course, the colour red is depicted as a grey box in the novel, and so the film's colour scheme might be drawing on this, but since the colour is not mentioned in the dialogue, its significance is not conveyed. With regard to the colour theme, then, the film does not particularly seem to focus on the way white, black, and red frame Liesel's story in the novel. This analysis therefore cannot focus on the subtitles' conveyance of these themes.

4. Conclusion

The previous chapter considered *The Book Thief* and its translation as multimodal entities, discussing them in terms of both form and content. This chapter looked at the multimodal film adaptation of *The Book Thief*, analysing it in terms of form and content as well: the relationship between visuals and acoustics was addressed, as was interlingual translation with regard to the Dutch subtitles. Death's narrative was given a lot of attention, relatively, because it is his narrative that gives the novel its postmodern nature, and its "loss" in the film that could affect the genre. Some of Death's innovative narrative feature (e.g. experimental morphology) are left out entirely, and he does not narrative the entirety of the film but mere parts of it. As the section discussing the film as an adaptation of the novel illustrates, there are various ways in which the film maintains Death's narrative: through voiceovers; camera angles; marked subtitling; and framing by letting him have the first and the last word, with regular acoustic appearances in-between. Death's irregular framing tendencies in the novel are conveyed through blending and the creation of narrative layers by means of the interplay between visuals and acoustics. Other characters' narratives are given a place as well. Max's illustrated story does not appear, but he does leave Liesel a booklet filled with blank pages for her to write on. This preserves the sense that anyone can rewrite history to their liking, and that marginalized voices should have their voices heard. Liesel's letter and personal story contribute to the storytelling theme as well, as does the repeated depiction of text.

Clarity was introduced as a dominant aim for subtitlers. Although condensation takes place, the previous section has demonstrated that the Dutch subtitles of *The Book Thief* include multiple instances of equivalents (Vinay and Darbelnet), suggesting that the subtitles seek to convey the film's dialogue not just by translating literally or summarizing key points, but by attempting to capture the figurative language that is present in the source text as well. However, not all instances where the subtitles attempt to summarize or condense the scripted dialogue are effective, since they sometimes communicate a different message to the audience than the scripted dialogue. More research might have to be done into the concept of "living subtitles" with regard to postmodern themes in mainstream movies such as *The Book Thief*, for misleading subtitles are unlikely to serve a desired purpose when the

audience is not expecting experimental narrative forms. With regard to *The Book Thief*, at least, subtitles that convey narrative irregularities when they are present in the script but do not add them in places where they do not seem to capture the film's themes and characterization most effectively. There are instances where scripted dialogue that potentially serves a postmodern purpose is not conveyed in the subtitles. Repetition of words, for one, hardly appears in the Dutch translation. As mentioned previously, this could help streamline an inherently fast-paced film, but it potentially does so at the cost of narrativity or characterization. However, repetition still manifests itself through the framing of the film's various motifs and themes, and losing some words in a series of repeated exclamations is unlikely to hinder the film's postmodern nature. On the whole, then — despite a few unfortunate missteps — the subtitles do not fail to convey the film's postmodern scripted dialogue or overall postmodern theme, certainly given the character limit subtitlers have to take into consideration.

CONCLUSION

Analysing postmodernism and magic realism in chapter one, the Dutch translation of *The Book Thief* in chapter two, and the Dutch subtitles of the film adaptation thereof, as well as the film as an intersemiotic translation of the novel itself, in chapter three, this thesis has attempted to establish whether the Dutch subtitles of the DVD release can be as effective as the Dutch translation of the novel with regard to the conveyance of postmodern elements. The literary translation was found apt in conveying postmodern elements, relaying the source text's unique form and content, transferring the illustrated tales, and preserving themes of signification. Since Death's narration makes the novel so distinctive, the loss of his continuous narrative in the film could lead one to believe the narrative's postmodern features might be lost in the film as well. Indeed, it is clear that some postmodern features from the book did not make their way across mediums. However, despite losing the majority of Death's commentary, and some of the inventive narrative techniques he employs as a result, the film frames Liesel's story by letting Death's voiceovers introduce changes in Liesel's life to the audience, or letting him comment on the themes the novel addresses: war, reading, and death. Various plot lines are left out, but these core themes are preserved, not just through Death's voiceovers, but also through the scripted dialogue, the visuals, and the acoustics. As chapter three indicates, the subtitles' character limit does not seem to limit the dialogue's postmodern features. Yes, the subtitles cannot capture every facet of Death's character, for the script is not given the same scope as the novel's fife hundred fifty-four pages, but they do capture the postmodern features that are present in the script. One thing the subtitles could have done to preserve the sense of Death's continuous mediation in the telling of Liesel's story was to italicize the dialogue that is also italicized in the novel — but the subtitles do let form distinguish different types of register by italicizing the film's voiceovers and the German lyrics of a nationalist song Liesel and her classmates perform.

Rather than viewing the film's inability to capture every element of the novel as a shortcoming of the medium, one can also look at the ways in which the film enhances the novel's postmodern features. Instead of merely detracting from the novel's narrative by having a shorter textual scope, the film also contributes to the narrative with features that are unique to the medium. For instance, the film compensates for the loss of Death's continuous narrative by using aerial shots and unexpected camera angles that imply that an

omnipresent spectator is watching the events along with the audience. Moreover, as mentioned in chapter three, Death's disruptive, irregular narrative can be conveyed by the interplay between visuals and acoustics. Text in a novel is inherently linear in that sections must follow after one another, and in that words must necessarily follow after other words. To print words on top of each other is of course a possibility, but the form would be more telling than the content, which would be hard to discern. Audiovisual products allow for a type of overlap (e.g. the sound of bullets being fired bleeding into the next scene) in a way that is difficult for a writer of a literary text to accomplish. It can be done, but the author of literature has to resort to narrative techniques (such as onomatopoeic words that sound like bullets) that might not be discerned by the reader. This is not to say that the film is superior to the novel, but relevant to the conveyance of an irregular narrative is certainly that film allows for new possibilities in narrative experimentation.

The research in this thesis is not conclusive because it does not analyse every single translatable, postmodern element from the novel and the film respectively, picking a selection of examples in the discussion of overarching themes or perhaps not discussing certain postmodern occurrences at all. Then there is the notion that the reception of audiovisual productions is a concept "on which there is nothing like consensus" because one cannot objectively analyse "reaction on the cognitive level, responses in behavioural terms, and repercussions of a cultural order" (Gambier 4). The same can of course be said for readers' perception of a novel. Inevitably, analyses of both make assumptions about the wider public's understanding of the narrative. However, chapters two and three hopefully list enough examples to give an indication of the — overall effective — conveyance of postmodern elements in both the literary translation and the Dutch DVD release of *The Book Thief*. The scope of this project does not allow for more extensive research, and more research can certainly be done into the translation of postmodern narrative features specifically and film adaptation as a form of translation. Building on the the idea of "living subtitles" proposed by Curti, there remains much to explore about subtitles' innovative possibilities with regard to the conveyance of literary postmodern themes as well. What has been demonstrated by this thesis, however, is that, while postmodernism has never been confined to one medium or language, it can also be translated successfully across mediums and languages. The same goes for magic realism, the narrative ambiguity of which could be preserved in the film adaptation of *The Book Thief* despite the narrator's reduced presence.

Vivid imagery was listed as one of the key characteristics of magic realism in chapter one. In the novel, Death ends the prologue with the words: “If you feel like it, come with me. I will tell you a story. I will show you something” (24), and says, “Come with me and I’ll tell you a story. I’ll show you something” (548) in the epilogue. His usage of the word “show” rather than “tell” implicates that his story is not bound to the written word — that his narrative will play out in the reader’s minds. Indeed, there is no reason why Death’s postmodern, magic realist narrative should not play out on the big screen effectively, even if it means swapping his experimental literary narration techniques for cinematic ones.

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