

Other Neo-Victorians: Neo-Victorianism, Translation and Global Literature

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Abstract:

This article seeks to expand the field of inquiry in neo-Victorian studies by focusing on the role of translation in the global dissemination of Victoriana. By analysing *Pustolovine Glorije Scott (The Adventures of Gloria Scott)*, a collection of short stories written in Croatian by Mima Simić (2005) and its adaptations (the eponymous comic strips by Ivana Armanini [2005] and an animated TV series designed by Matija Pisačić, currently in production), alongside selected Soviet and Russian adaptations of Sherlock Holmes (1979, 1986, 2013), this article questions the assumptions that the production and cross-cultural dissemination of neo-Victorianism is inevitably an Anglophone affair. Simić's collection and its adaptations, like a number of recent Russian adaptations of Doyle's stories, meet all of the requirements of Heilmann and Llewellyn's definition of neo-Victorianism as "texts (literary, filmic, audio/visual) [which] must in some respect be *self-consciously engaged with the act of (re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision concerning the Victorians*" (Heilmann and Llewellyn 2010: 4, original emphasis); however, the language in which they were produced is not English. In this light, the article aims to unsettle received notions about the production of neo-Victorianism as a phenomenon linguistically, geographically and ideologically delimited by the maps of the British Empire.

Key words: adaptation, appropriation, dissemination, Arthur Conan Doyle, global literature, neo-Victorianism, Sherlock Holmes, translation, transnational, world literature.

Let us, for a moment, step outside the sphere of neo-Victorian literary and screen texts. Instead, let us consider the provocative series of art pieces entitled *An Artist Who Cannot Speak English Is No Artist*, first exhibited by the conceptual Croatian artist Mladen Stilinović in 1994 and later showcased at *The Global Contemporary: Art Worlds after 1989* exhibition in 2012 at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Karlsruhe, Germany. Consisting of a pink banner with the eponymous inscription in black capital letters and intentionally made as a provocation, this artwork by Stilinović draws the viewer's attention to a number of issues relevant for the production, reception and consumption of art in the globalised world. The

matter-of-fact statement on the banner is visually subverted by the use of red colour for the “NO”, thereby unsettling the exclusiveness of the assertion. As it was pointed out in the catalogue to *The Global Contemporary* exhibition:¹

Since the 1960s, Stilinović has been working in Croatia at the center of an art scene which was no less active or relevant – no less “artistic” – than that of West Europe. The question as to a world language of art thus remains unsolved: prior to 1989, *English was the language of the capitalist part of the world which laid claim to the “grand narrative” of art* and thus to the definition of who may be considered an artist; in the present age, *English enables worldwide exchange*. Does this mean that those who are unable or do not wish to use this language are not contemporary artists? (Birken, 2011: 73, added emphasis)

In other words, Stilinović’s art piece suggests that, if the artist’s mother tongue is other than English, the ability to employ English becomes an absolute must if one is to register on the radar of the ‘global art world’. Moreover, with English as the tacitly accepted language of the international world of art and its spectacular *biennales* and *documentas*, from Basel to Miami, from Venice to Sao Paolo via Hong Kong, artists that use a language other than English do not merely sentence themselves to invisibility. He or she may have (had) local or even regional relevance, as is the case with Stilinović’s art from the 1960s through the 1980s, but in *today’s* globalised world, Stilinović’s banner daringly (and critically) suggests, no language other than English can qualify you as an artist.

1. The Other (Neo)Victorians

What light can the message of Stilinović’s work throw on the study of neo-Victorianism? The first and foremost one would be to challenge the tacit assumption, shared with the contemporary art world, that the relevant production and cross-cultural dissemination of neo-Victorianism is conducted mostly or exclusively in the English language. The second would be to challenge the supposition that re-visionings and re-writings of Victorian literature and culture are taking place merely within the cultural

and administrative reach of the former British Empire. I believe these notions to be in need of an emendation primarily because they ignore the crucial role that translation plays in the process. They disregard the fact that, thanks both to translation and to the current global dominance of English, Anglophone cultural products – especially literary and screen texts – are disseminated widely across the globe, with impact beyond the borders of the former British Empire. Their distribution has disparate, often unpredictable, results and receptions. The most commonly explored aspects of *global* neo-Victorianism so far have been those of non-Anglophone, mostly Japanese, Steampunk (see Jones in this issue), or postcolonial re-writings of the colonial experience, with Elizabeth Ho’s recent monograph as an exciting example (Ho 2012). However, none of the available studies of non-Anglophone neo-Victorianisms have so far focused on the role played by *translation*, or examined translations of Victorian or, for that matter, of neo-Victorian texts and their role in the global production of neo-Victorianism.²

What I would like to draw attention to here, then, is the much overlooked consequence of the global dominance of English outside and beyond the context of the British Empire when it comes to neo-Victorian studies: on the one hand, the presence, primarily through translation, of literature written originally in English as part of the educational curricula *and* popular culture outside the Anglophone cultural sphere, and on the other, its presence globally in the shape of textual cross-pollinations and intertextual links with literatures in other languages. This stems from the fact that, thanks to translation, a great number of texts throughout the world are not perceived only as classics of English literature, but also as classics of *world literature* understood in its broadest workable meaning. I would therefore suggest that a widening of the perspective to include translations is essential when studying global neo-Victorianism, alongside an acknowledgement of various perspectives *on* neo-Victorian phenomena. The experience and consumption of neo-Victorianism, even though it is global and ever more progressively homogenised thanks to the internet and the global dominance of English as a *lingua franca*, is always necessarily fragmented, localised, and informed by different cultural contexts as well as different understandings of what ‘British’, ‘Victorian’, or ‘classics’ may mean.

The recent new wave of global Sherlock Holmes mania³ aptly illustrates this blind spot in neo-Victorian studies as well as in Anglophone

adaptation studies. While the popularity of US and UK produced adaptations throughout the world has been noted and accepted as a given, their relationship to translations of adapted texts as well as the very existence of adaptations and appropriations produced in other languages has barely registered in the Anglophone media or in scholarly articles and monographs.⁴

I shall here focus on one particular appropriation of the Sherlock Holmes canon in the Croatian language: its playful re-visioning by Mima Simić in her 2005 short story collection *Pustolovine Glorije Scott* (*The Adventures of Gloria Scott*). This collection can be viewed as a fairly local (or at best, for linguistic reasons and thanks to a radio-adaptation in Serbian,⁵ a regional) neo-Victorian phenomenon due to the fact that up until now only a single short story from the collection has been translated into a language from outside the ex-Yugoslav region, namely into German.⁶ Indeed, this special issue introduces the first translation into English of a different short story from the collection, ‘The Suicide Quartet’ (Kvartet samoubojica). Similarly, the collection’s adaptations – the radio play, the comic strips by Ivana Armanini (2005) and an animated TV series designed by Matija Pisačić, currently in production – have not had a broad circulation. However, Simić’s short stories are part of a long interest in Sherlockiana at the turn of the century in Croatia, thanks to the exceedingly popular and broadly available translations (the earliest preserved one listed in the Croatian National Library catalogue dates back to 1907). Through translations of Doyle’s stories – which were, initially, translations of German translations published in Berlin – Sherlock Holmes entered the imaginary of popular literature and culture in Croatia, where it became a household name and thus fair game for Simić’s re-visioning in 2005. The other non-Anglophone Sherlock I shall be briefly looking at shares this trajectory of entrance into the popular culture and literature of its host country. The many Soviet and Russian adaptations and appropriations owe their existence not only to the popularity of Sherlock Holmes stories in Russian translation, the earliest of which were mostly hastily churned out at the end of the nineteenth century from German translations (see Piliev 2011), but also to the craze for detective stories in pre-Revolutionary Russia (in translation as well as “cheap knock-offs”) featuring Sherlock Holmes, Nick Carter and Nat Pinkerton and referred to derisively as “*Pinkertonovshchina*” (Dralyuk 2011b: 159-160). It owes a debt as well to a

whole new genre featuring “red Pinkertons” created during the Bolshevik era under Bukharin as a regime-approved genre, which appropriated and re-revisioned the bourgeois detective stories in an attempt to wean the post-Revolutionary youth off the ideologically suspect western influence (see Dralyuk 2011a).

Analyses of these ‘other neo-Victorians’, I would argue, confirm and expand Elizabeth Ho’s argument that “the further neo-Victorianism moves from Britain, the more capable it becomes in addressing new sites of production with differently charged and equally fraught positions toward the West” (Ho 2012: 170). It is by studying translations and adaptations of the Victorians produced outside the “Anglosphere” (Vučetić 2011: 2; Beecroft 2015: 25)⁷ that we can find new and often unexpected uses of neo-Victorian engagements with the notions of ‘Britishness’ and ‘Victorian literature’. Therefore, in what follows I shall be addressing two key questions. What happens when one looks at Victorian texts as examples of world literature that hybridise contemporary literatures and cultures globally? And what new understandings of the neo-Victorian phenomenon can be deduced from studying intertextual links across languages and literary cultures?

2. English Language, Translation and World Literature

If we look at the emerging academic field of ‘World Literature’, the dominance of English is twofold. An author ‘makes it’ globally when he or she publishes in English, or is ‘discovered’ and absorbed, thanks to the work of a translator, into the English language. Whereas translations of fiction as well as non-fiction written in English dominate the bestselling lists globally, translations from other, especially ‘minor’ and non-European, languages can rarely be found in the bookshops of English-speaking countries, especially in the USA. Here we can immediately perceive a cultural as well as economic inequality in translation within the European and North-American contexts, one that has been linked to the translator’s invisibility by the leading translation studies scholar Lawrence Venuti:

Behind the translator’s invisibility is a trade imbalance that underwrites this domination, but also decreases the cultural capital of foreign values in English by limiting the number of foreign texts translated and submitting them to domestic revision. The translator’s invisibility is symptomatic of a

complacency in British and American relations with cultural others, a complacency that can be described – without too much exaggeration – as imperialistic abroad and xenophobic at home. (Venuti 2008: n.p.)

This imbalance has been discussed in a different context by Pascale Casanova as “the problem of literary domination” (Casanova 2004: 254), and was rather dramatically interpreted by Emily Apter as a result of “language wars” (Apter 2006: 139). An interest in literatures in translation in the UK, the USA and Canada is mostly limited to the university/campus and specialist bookshops, thanks mostly to world literature curricula or Nobel Prize announcements.⁸ Since the global media relies increasingly on transmitting information in English, more often than not generated in English-speaking countries, the situation seems to echo Stilinović’s artwork: adopt English and survive, at least in translation, or perish before you are even recognised as existing.

The latter fact has been highlighted by the critics of ‘world literature’ as it is understood, developed, and taught in Anglo-American academia. They see its use of translations as an extension of the monolingual Anglo-American cultural studies that demonstrates the “institutional power of Anglo-American scholarship and the threat of monolingualism and planetary English”, the kind that domesticates difference(s) for the sake of readability (Simon 2009: 210).⁹ The consequences of such an approach are summed up by Harish Trivedi in the following words: “and then those of us who are still bilingual, and who are still untranslated from our own native ground to an alien shore, will nevertheless have been translated against our own will and against our grain” (Trivedi 2007: 286). Trivedi’s summation, perhaps somewhat poignantly but nonetheless accurately, brings us back to the heart of the problem of studying world literature: the near-inevitability of dealing with translations into English. Translations appear unavoidable whether one approaches the study of global literature from the more Eurocentric, philological perspective of comparative literature traditionally understood in terms of Goethe’s *Weltliteratur*; or from a more politically engaged “post-European” perspective that attempts to de-centre the role of European literatures as the starting point for the work of comparative literature (Chow 2004: 299). Either way, when looking at global literary production as an

interconnected system of ‘world literature’, one inevitably must turn to translations, and more often than not, translations into English. For, one may ask echoing Stilinović again, what happens when English translations are not available?

3. Victorian Literature as World Literature

Putting his faith in translation, David Damrosch in *What is World Literature?* offers the following definition of ‘world literature’: it encompasses “all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language”, which have “an *effective* life as world literature whenever, and wherever, [they are] actively present within a literary system beyond that of [their] original culture” (Damrosch 2003: 4, original emphasis). A text enters “into world literature by a double process: first, by being read *as* literature; second, by circulating out into a broader world beyond its linguistic and cultural point of origin” (Damrosch 2003: 6). Works of literature can fall in and out of world literature, and these oscillations do not depend on or “reflect the unfolding of some internal logic of the work in itself but come about through often complex dynamics of cultural change and contestation.” (Damrosch 2003: 6) Damrosch’s approach relies heavily not only on translation and close reading but also on the notion of literatures’ translatability, and has, because of it, been critiqued by postcolonial critics such as Huggan and comparatists such as Apter who show a marked suspicion towards the assumption of translatability.¹⁰

As an alternative approach, Franco Moretti’s model of ‘distant reading’ shifts the focus from close reading of specific texts and instead spotlights the development and global dissemination of particular genres. Relying on a marriage of literary studies and digital humanities and depending on an application of computer science to the study of texts, the project of Moretti’s Stanford Literary Lab is to map the novel’s evolution across languages and cultures within the wider context of capitalism’s global progress, identifying the many cultural variations along the way. By studying texts *about* literature (produced by specialists in national literatures) rather than texts themselves, Moretti’s model offers a way of looking at the rise and fall of the novel and its different genres. The focus is on graphs, maps and trees that point to the ways that the “cultures of the core” affect the “destiny of cultures of the periphery” (Moretti 2000a: 56). Moretti’s model is not exempt from its own generic, diachronic, and

ideological pitfalls: firstly, it is based on a Eurocentric view of literature in terms of centre and periphery. Secondly, its reliance on the division of labour by which the field work and data gathering is done by relevant national literature experts, most often native informants of the periphery – while the sophisticated analysis is carried out in the technologically advanced First World university ‘literature lab’ centres – uncannily mimics imperialist anthropological practices.

A way out of this conundrum, proposed by Alexander Beecroft, would be to replace the “division of labour in which national-literature specialists produce raw data for processing by world-literature scholars” with an exchange of “useful theoretical and practical insights” across different specialist fields (Beecroft 2008: 100).¹¹ Such an emendation would offer an apt approach to the study of the global reach of neo-Victorianism. By applying Moretti’s practical rationale of collaborative work on the creation of maps and graphs that trace particular Victorian authors’ and their works’ translations, reception and adaptation abroad, one could then create neo-Victorian “trees” which would describe the evolution of the said text outside its own language and culture of origin (for more on the concept of trees, see Moretti 2007: 67-93). Further insights could be gained by close readings of the said neo-Victorian trees’ branches that reach out into other languages and cultures through translation and adaptation.

Looked at from this perspective, British classics – as well as popular literature – that have had a history of reception and influence outside the Anglosphere, surface as examples of world literature as defined by Damrosch. For similar reasons, back in 1964, Shakespeare was claimed by Jan Kott, a Polish critic, as everyone’s contemporary and part of world cultural heritage, to the annoyance of traditionalists and nationalists.¹² Works such as William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (1603) or Lord Byron’s *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* (1812) function as world literature in that their intertextual influence travels across cultures, languages and literary periods: think of Alexander Pushkin’s appropriation of the Byronic hero in *Evgeniy Onegin* (1833) or Ivo Brešan’s questioning of the communist system’s nominal championing of Enlightenment narratives of betterment in his play *Acting Hamlet in the Village of Mrduša Donja* (1971).¹³ That works of literature have an influence beyond their culture of origin is not a new insight, but it is a fact much overlooked and under-researched in the current

approaches to neo-Victorianism which stay wedded to the borders of the former British Empire.¹⁴

However, which aspect of Victorian literature and culture may influence a particular – for the sake of argument and for lack of a better word here – ‘national’ non-English speaking literature can never be predicted. The most common source is translation, and translation is never an innocent procedure (see Lefevere 1993: 159). Moreover, translation patterns are notoriously difficult to identify, not only in terms of particular authors or works, but also in terms of genres and cultural elements. What can be noticed is that the texts that get translated the most (besides those recognised as timeless classics) are those belonging to popular genres (D’haen 2012: 132).¹⁵ This brings us back to the globally popular late-Victorian author, Arthur Conan Doyle, and his Sherlock Holmes stories. So far, Franco Moretti has tested his theories on the evolution of genres on Doyle’s detective stories, as part of his examination of the spread of detective fiction (see Moretti 2000b and 2007: 70-75). Much has also been written on the stories’ many English-language literary, stage, TV and film adaptations, including their neo-Victorian afterlives, with their global popularity acknowledged – and taken for granted.¹⁶ However, what has been missing and follows here is something completely different: an examination of selected afterlives of Sherlock Holmes in contemporary non-Anglophone “global literatures” (Beecroft 2008: 98) and their relationship to neo-Victorianism.

4. What Queer Things...

The collection of short stories *Pustolovine Glorije Scott (The Adventures of Gloria Scott)* by Mima Simić was first published in 2005 in Croatia. The stories possess a stylistic quaintness because they adopt many archaic expressions no longer used in standard Croatian, consequently making the text at the same time humorous and queer. The language echoes that of the early translations of A.C. Doyle’s stories published in Croatian, testifying to the long record of engagement with Doyle’s work which goes back to *fin de siècle* translations and early twentieth-century comic strip adaptations.¹⁷ This linguistic exercise is related to what the text (and the subsequent animation adaptation by Matija Pisačić) does on the level of content: it is a self-conscious engagement with turn-of-the-twentieth-century English literature that subversively re-writes the globally recognised Sherlock

Holmes canon, and offers a new, re-imagined figure of the detective gendered female and implicitly queer.¹⁸ All the requirements of Heilmann and Llewellyn's much quoted definition of neo-Victorianism are here: it is a text that is "*self-consciously engaged with the act of (re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision concerning the Victorians*" (Heilmann and Llewellyn 2010: 4, original emphasis). However, something is at odds with neo-Victorianism as it has been conceptualised so far: the language – and cultural context – in which these texts were produced.

In the stories originally written in Croatian, the author Mima Simić turns the Sherlock Holmes canon on its head. The hint is in the very title: the name of a ship from the very first Holmes's case in the short story 'The Adventure of the *Gloria Scott*' from Doyle's *Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (1893) here becomes the name of Sherlock Holmes's female counterpart, the 'famous detective Gloria Scott'. Like Holmes, Gloria is an addict, but instead of Holmes's predilection for cocaine she prefers heroin. She is also emotionally reserved, lacking in empathy, and in possession of gaunt, aquiline features. However, that is where their similarities end. Unlike Holmes, she is always broke and prone to banal, theatrically delivered observations that lead nowhere; she is also invariably incorrect in her pseudo-deductions which she mostly carries out in her office in Butcher (rather than Baker) street. Even though several stories are clearly set in the late nineteenth century (and the promotional trailer dates the animated adaptation specifically to 1896), the view of London is topsy-turvy and very much in the vein of revisionist counter-historical depictions of Victorian England, such as William Gibson and Bruce Sterling's novel *The Difference Engine* (1990). Due to this, they could be said to offer a surreal retro-futuristic take on the space-time continuum: in one moment the detective and her companion are in a hansom cab ('Slučaj lude starice'/'The Case of the Old Woman') or dreaming of getting away from the bustle of London and its horse-drawn trams ('Crvena Odaja'/'The Red Room'); in another they discuss James Joyce's *recently* published novel "that will certainly defy translation" while watching television ('Božićni poklon'/'A Christmas Present', 2005: 27, own translation). The stories contain a plethora of parodic intertextual references to various elements of English literature and popular culture.

These are taken to another level in the teaser for the animated series under production, made specifically for the promotion of the project at

animation festivals abroad and thus containing English, rather than Croatian, captions and titles. The trailer introduces Gloria Scott not as a detective who *solves* crimes, but rather as the one who *stops* them. This goes hand in hand with the narrative's proposed counter-history: it hints at Gloria's enabling of a successful assassination of Queen Victoria whereby "Great Britain wouldn't be as great" (Rašpolić and Pisačić 2012: 00:45-00:50), her role in the successful spread of communism, and her prevention of pollution by carbon emissions through her destruction of Karl Benz and his motorised inventions.¹⁹ The element of knowingness is crucial for the effect of the stories and the animated short, the (dis)pleasure and the humour deriving from the discrepancies between the historical data, adapted texts and characters, on the one hand, and their uses by Simić on the other.

The subjective point of view of the stories' narrator, Mary Lambert, Gloria Scott's close female companion, adds to the text's playful rewriting of gender roles and genre expectations. In the story 'Kvartet samoubojica' ('The Suicide Quartet', included in this special issue in Filip Krenus's translation), Mary is exposed as an utterly unreliable narrator and a clueless assistant: asked to take notes during a two-hour interview with a couple of clients, she comes up with a worthless list that reads as follows:

- gas has gone up by 3.5%;
 - the mother of Miss Binoche has peptic ulcer (which is more than evident from her bloody stool);
 - Mr Fleming broke a precious vase this morning, a cherished memento;
 - young master Fleming, the son of Mr Fleming, has fallen in with a bad crowd, and at a recent party managed to get a young lady, a certain Miranda Richardson, into trouble.
- (Simić, this volume: 161-162, trans. by F. Krenus)

The quote not only serves to prove the unreliability of the narrator herself, but also to further illustrate the playfulness of the text, which takes real-life people's names (in this example, those of the actresses Juliette Binoche and Miranda Richardson) and inserts them into this parallel-universe world of Victoriana.

Furthermore, Simić's text brims with images of Mary and Gloria gorging themselves on obscene amounts of food and drink.²⁰ The imagery

reflects the intense cannibalisation of the Holmes canon, as well as a number of – primarily Anglophone – canonical works. D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) appears in 'Krvavo Platno' ('Blood-stained Canvas'), T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) in the screenplay for the animated series. James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, Dr. Samuel Johnson and Philip Larkin are all mentioned as the detective's acquaintances, and further real-life figures from popular film and culture are introduced, such as Madame Tussauds in the animation, and Loni Anderson, Christopher Reeve and Bill Clinton in the text. All of these contribute to a thorough rewriting of received ideas about London in the 1890s that is always playful, sometimes parodic and often grotesque.

Moreover, this setting, and the related instability of time-space references, also hints at the fact that despite the constant proclamations of Scott's genius and uncanny talent of detection – in lieu of Watson's continuous flow of praise and admiration for Holmes in Doyle's stories – she actually never solves a single case. Scott gets the wrong people arrested, tried and executed without batting an eyelid. She is quite trigger-happy and literally shoots before asking questions, if she does not like the look of a character (in 'Krvavo platno'/'Blood-stained Canvas'). Moreover, her self-assured yet incorrect pronouncements can lead to multiple suicides (in 'The Suicide Quartet'). This, however, never stops Lambert from praising Scott's remarkable detective skills and talent in criminology, which sound all the more absurd at the end of each story after yet another investigative debacle. However, only Lambert – and the reader – knows about these, because Inspector Jennings of Scotland Yard accepts any solution Scott offers in order to close the case in question.

The element of the absurd is further underlined by Ivana Armanini's grotesque comic strip adaptations, published jointly with the collection.²¹ Set outside identifiable time and place, Armanini's strips reduce the detective plots to their bare bones – or more correctly, basic shapes: Scott is most often represented by a conical shape with facial features on hairy legs in high heels, while Lambert's avatar is heart-shaped. In her drawings and captions, Armanini pares down Simić's already parodic and absurd narrative take on Sherlock Holmes to black-and-white abstractions and stunted dialogue, creating a punk version of the tales. Unlike Simić's stories, some of the comic strips feature dialogue and captions (if not titles) in a rather basic English translation. The strips – published at the end of the collection

and read by turning the book upside down – gesture towards a wider audience through translation.

While the strips reach out to an international comic book reading public keen on the bizarre and the unexpected (having been made available online by the artist on her website),²² the collection appropriates the Sherlock Holmes canon, queers it, and makes it a part of Croatian literature. The appropriation of the globally popular British stories and their transformation into a domestic local idiom is made complete in the piece that closes the collection entitled ‘Gloria Scott i poludjeli transvestit’ (‘Gloria Scott and the Mad Transvestite’). Written in the form of *epski deseterac* – the folk poetic form in decasyllabic meter, characteristic of the traditional oral epic in Balkan folk literature – the closing piece quite literally domesticates the Victorian detective genre as it progresses through lines that switch from heroic couplets to lines of interlocking rhyming patterns. Simić subverts received ideas about the all-knowing, London-based Victorian detective, makes fun of the rather po-faced tone of detective fiction in general, and turns the tropes of Balkan folk heroic epic on their head by ridiculing its staple phrases and stock characters (such as the male, knight-like hero and his faithful steed; the formidable, usually foreign, opponent; historical settings). Simić spares no literary tradition in her parodic levelling, and the result is a mock-heroic epic – and, ultimately, collection – that parodies both the appropriated literature and the one serving as its unwitting host.

What Simić’s stories and their subsequent adaptations testify to, above all else, is that their appropriation of Victorianism and elements of the Anglophone canon reflect the omnipresence of Anglophone literature in the contemporary world through translation, and not only because they involve an act of irreverent re-writing of a recognised popular classic and perform an instance of cultural cross-pollination. But what makes them practically invisible outside of Croatia – and almost as good as never having been written, to paraphrase Stilinović’s artwork – is the fact that they were written in Croatian, and that (up until this special issue) there has been no English translation of them. In this the collection shares the destiny of another gender-bending non-Anglophone appropriation of the Holmes canon: the Soviet era musical comedy entitled *Мой нежно любимый детектив* (*My Dearly Beloved Detective*, 1986), directed by Alexei Simonov. In it Sherlock Holmes becomes Shirley Holmes and John H.

Watson is transformed into Jane Watson; the pair successfully solves cases but also cross-dresses and even spends an evening in a gentlemen-only club. The Soviet appropriation, however, had only really been possible precisely because Sherlock Holmes had been a part and parcel of Russian and Soviet popular culture – through translation.

5. History and the Politics of Global Neo-Victorian Adaptation

Russia has had a long love affair with Doyle's detective (Piliev 2011). Not only were the translations made available soon after the originals were published in Britain, but, as Boris Dralyuk points out, they were also immensely popular, running through numerous re-prints and resulting in a number of early twentieth-century imitations, knock-offs and mash-ups (Dralyuk 2011a and 2011b). Despite the earlier mentioned attempts by the Soviet regime to curb detective fiction's appeal in the early twentieth century, its popularity did not wane – quite the contrary. Some of the most notable screen adaptations of Sherlock Holmes in the Russian language were made in the Soviet Union, such as *Sherlok Kholmes i doktor Vatson* (1979) and *Priklyucheniya Sherloka Kholmsa i doktora Vatsona* (1980-1986), both mini-series directed by Igor Maslennikov.²³ Most recently, Andrey Kavun directed the eight-part TV series adaptation *Шерлок Холмс* (*Sherlok Kholmes*, 2013), the continuation of which was stopped due to the untimely death of Andrey Panin, the actor who played Watson. However, even though all these adaptations were immensely popular and well-known to the sizeable portion of the Russian-speaking world, they have barely registered in the Anglosphere. And yet, they offer an important insight into the uses to which Doyle's detective stories have been put globally.

If we compare *Pustolovine Glorije Scott*, an example of a parodic queering of the Holmes canon composed in the Croatian language, to the currently popular UK-based Sherlock Holmes adaptations, namely BBC's *Sherlock* (2010–) and Guy Ritchie's film franchise, *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2011), the absence of one element in Simić's work throws an informative light on the British adaptations. Namely, the Croatian adaptation does not even mention the Afghan War.²⁴ This appears to confirm Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben's argument that neo-Victorianism can often point to the lingering traces of leftover traumas from the colonial past (Kohlke and Gutleben 2010). As Kohlke and Gutleben emphasise when writing about similar uses

of past trauma in the neo-Victorian novel, these juxtapositions of ‘now’ and ‘then’ can create “a superimposition of conflicting temporalities, in which consciousness operates simultaneously within multiple incompatible time-zones of being.” (Kohlke and Gutleben 2010: 3). Undoubtedly, the uncanny mirroring of the two Afghan wars, separated by about a hundred and fifty years, in BBC’s *Sherlock* and Guy Ritchie’s franchise also vividly illustrates Linda Hutcheon’s suggestion of the interpretive possibilities created by “a constant oscillation” of meaning between the adapted text and its adaptations (Hutcheon 2006: xv). The oscillation here vacillates between reminders of the imperialist role played by Britain in the Victorian period, and the attempts of Tony Blair’s government at reclaiming a comparably powerful global role. The latest Russian adaptation throws this largely ignored political element into relief.

In Kavun’s TV series adaptation from 2013, as in the British-based adaptations, the Afghan war plays a prominent part for the characterisation of Watson. At the heart of Kavun’s re-writing of *The Sign of the Four* in Episode Two of *Sherlok Kholmes* entitled ‘Rock, paper, scissors’, we find an engagement with the concepts of colonial exploitation, Afghan war trauma and the life of war veterans in the multicultural colonial centre. Major Thaddeus (rather than Doyle’s John) Sholto is here Watson’s former superior who organises the murder of an underage Indian prince on a peace mission to Britain, using as his pawns the (white) subaltern officers and soldiers who served under him in Afghanistan – all of whom are barely making a living as London cabbies. Sholto seeks to get hold of the treasure stolen from the prince and to eliminate his fellow soldier accomplices. The issue of race is crucial in this adaptation: unlike in Doyle’s novella, where Jonathan Small creates a pact with three Sikhs and is cheated in turn by the higher-ranking English Major John Sholto, in ‘Rock, paper, scissors’ there is no inter-racial friendship or even partnership in crime. Rather, all the officers are white and are juxtaposed to fanatical, almost cartoon-like, Muslim Afghans with hennaed beards. Moreover, in the climactic scene in the war veteran’s club (called simply *Colony*), where Watson confronts Sholto and dares him to a duel, Sholto raves against the metropolitan multicultural discourse of tolerance and equal rights to education and work:

Why did we fertilize the land of India with the bones of our fellow soldiers? So that they – *they!* – could come to

England? [...] They've filled up everything over here! They live in our houses, they trade in our markets, they slaughter their rams right on my street! [...] They even dance and pray in our squares! Is that called tolerance? Is that what we were fighting for, John? [...] Now the queen wants to be kind. She builds hospitals and schools for them, so they would be literate. Why does a savage need to be literate? He doesn't need it in the field. A literate savage crawls here to England, he wants to clean toilets here, wash floors and shine our shoes, and soon there will be more of them than us! In every family, you know, they have ten to twelve people, they spawn like rats, and we are against this tolerance and this fertility. The question is easy, John: either we get them, or they – us. (Kavun 2013: 01:14:50-01:16:01, own translation)

Furthermore, Kipling's 'White Man's Burden' is also used by Sholto as a rather anachronistic leitmotif in his speech. Throughout the episode, the writer's name recurs as shorthand for imperial values promoted in the colonies and back in the colonial centre, and also as a harbinger of outdated fashions – both in terms of thought and style. Watson's editor coolly ridicules and then rejects Watson's exoticist military poem of the East, comparing it to Kipling whom he describes as obsolete: "why do you want to be the second Kipling when the first one is already out of fashion?" (Kavun 2013: 33:21, own translation).²⁵

Kavun's adaptation deftly if obliquely appropriates Doyle's novella to hint at a number of parallels between British and Russian imperialist interventions in Afghanistan throughout history. In particular, the language of Sholto's lengthy speech echoes the racist supremacist discourse of anti-Islamic, hard-boiled imperialism, the kind used in the right-wing, hard-line Russian media on its country's military interventions in Afghanistan and, more recently, in Chechnya. In this it differs greatly from the Soviet adaptations directed by Igor Maslennikov, in which the very mention of Afghanistan was censored because of the USSR's concurrent military intervention there.²⁶ In Episode One, 'Znakomstvo' / Acquaintance (1979), for instance, Watson simply returns from the generic 'East'.

Read alongside each other, the recent Russian and British adaptations can be interpreted as parallel attempts at re-thinking and

remembering the imperial past that show a critical ambivalence about the meaning of this memory for the more recent war traumas. In turn, the Soviet regime's censorship rather bluntly proves the power of associative oscillations between the past and the present that adaptations possess, even when the text nominally belongs to another literary culture. Elena Prokhorova highlights the following important aspect of the Soviet adaptations of Holmes:

To Soviet audiences in the late 1970s, the Western canon of representing Holmes on screen was unknown, while the degree of authenticity of Victorian London in the series [dir. by Maslennikov] could only be surmised from earlier Soviet/screen adaptations of Victorian writers. Hence, the reason for the undeniable appeal of the production to Soviet audiences lies elsewhere: 'Our (Soviet) Holmes' was a perfect cultural product of its time: a faithful and safe adaptation of a classic *and* a remarkably accurate and ironic commentary on late Soviet Victorianism. (Prokhorova 2003: 207-208, original emphasis)

The much discussed instrumentalisation of Victorianism by Margaret Thatcher, it turns out, had its own – somewhat distorted – mirror image on the other side of the iron curtain. While Thatcher strove to uphold or reintroduce 'Victorian values', Soviet television was already perceived as 'Victorian' by its audiences due to its promotion of moralistic and prudish content which shunned politics, making the adaptations of the nineteenth-century detective a safe, if covert, critique of the system (Prokhorova 2003: 181). Prokhorova places the perceived Victorianism of Maslennikov's adaptation in the wider context of the detective genre uses in Soviet television in the 1970s and early 1980s:

The genre of the classical detective story, with its focus on the details of cultural but without any pronounced social significance or symbolism, perfectly fit the atmosphere of post-historical Soviet "victorianism." [...] What is common to most of late Thaw – early Stagnation "detective productions" is the exploitation of a "foreign" mass culture form to deal

with the perceived cultural gap of the new native heroes, models, and, ultimately, history. Like science fiction, the detective formula was valued not just for its engaging narratives but also for its “metaphorical potential”. (Prokhorova 2003: 183)

In a similar fashion, Kavun’s recent adaptation could be said to offer an indirect critique of Russian military interventionism and the repercussions of its (neo-)imperialist policies at home and abroad: one empire’s narrative mirroring the problems of another world power.

6. Conclusion: Toward a Translational Turn in Neo-Victorianism?

By spotlighting the Croatian and Russian uses of Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories I have sought to propose a more inclusive re-definition of neo-Victorianism, one that would contribute to a discussion about neo-Victorianism in a context beyond the borders of the one-time British Empire. The Croatian short story appropriation of the Holmes canon puts the focus on the translation-propelled afterlives of Doyle’s detective in other literatures. Except for its language and cultural context of production, it meets all the requirements that Heilmann and Llewellyn listed in their definition of neo-Victorianism, resulting in a gender-bending, subtly queer re-writing of Sherlock Holmes stories. The Russian and Soviet adaptations, on the other hand, draw attention to the ideological uses of Doyle’s stories for an implied social critique of another Empire: of (Russian) imperialism as well as neo-imperialism, and of perceived Soviet Victorianism. Their uses (or, in the case of Soviet adaptations, censorship) of Doyle’s mention of the Afghan War also echo Kohlke and Gutleben’s definition of neo-Victorianism as inextricably conjoined with nineteenth-century cultural traumas and their spectral afterlives (2010). Furthermore, they show that global neo-Victorian uses of trauma do not merely signify silenced colonial traumas, but that they can also be used for an (more or less) ambivalent critique of contemporary neo-imperial ventures. These examples show how global uses of the Victorians offer both uncannily familiar as well as unsettlingly unusual re-writings and re-visionings of nineteenth-century literature and culture, contributing to a further broadening of the ‘neo-Victorian’.

In that spirit, and ventriloquising the lines from Arthur Conan Doyle's 'A Case of Identity' (1891), I suggest that global neo-Victorianism should "peep in at the queer things which are going on, the strange coincidences, the plannings, the cross-purposes, the wonderful chains of events, working through generations, and leading to the most outré results" (Doyle 1994: 55). There is no doubt that, as the experiences of world literature and contemporary art show, the field's attempt to detect and engage with non-Anglophone literatures carries its own dangers. As has been discussed, the major risk would be to contribute to a one-directional re-colonisation of global literature by studying, mapping and acknowledging only those texts (fictional, screen, audio/visual) available in English or through English translations. However, a far greater loss is incurred if an examination of non-Anglophone cross-pollinations is not even attempted. In articulating his vision of a feasible approach to world literature, Damrosch offers at least a couple of cautious routes forward. As no one can hope to encompass all traditions, he urges the claims of collaborative work between scholars from different cultural backgrounds (Damrosch 2003: 286). Translations are also fundamental, but should always be employed in ways that take account the fact that "a translation *is* a translation" (Damrosch 2003: 295). In other words, if translations, like all other texts, "come to us mediated by existing frameworks of reception and interpretation" (Damrosch 2003: 295), the particular intercultural frameworks and interactions involved in translation need to be taken into consideration when dealing with these texts. Such a way of thinking about translation undoubtedly chimes with the re-interpretative thrust of neo-Victorian studies: is not every neo-Victorian (fictional/screen/audio/visual) text always already a translation into a new medium of the re-visioned past? Hence a global approach to neo-Victorian studies holds out the promise not just of uncovering examples of neo-Victorianism that have gone unnoted in the Anglosphere, but also of fostering dynamic transnational dialogues that can offer new and often surprising interpretations of existing and emerging neo-Victorianisms.

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Notes

1. *The Global Contemporary. Kunstwelten nach 1989* – ZKM /Museum für Neue Kunst, 17.09.2011-05.02.2012, <http://www.global-contemporary.de/en/artists/12-mladen-stilnovic> (accessed 21 March 2014).
2. For example, Maryse Condé's novel *Windward Heights* (1998) is often discussed in the context of postcolonial neo-Victorianism, but rarely do the analyses dwell on the translational aspect of this text that was originally written and published in French (1995) as *La Migration Des Coeurs*.
3. Besides the fact that recent US and UK adaptations of Sherlock Holmes stories have been received with much enthusiasm globally, there has also been a spate of non-Anglophone adaptations, including the manga adaptations discussed by Anna Maria Jones in this issue, as well as the Brazilian *O Xangô de Baker Street* (2001) directed by Miguel Faria Jr, the *Spanish Holmes & Watson. Madrid Days* (2012) directed by José Luis Garci, alongside the Soviet, Russian and Croatian adaptations discussed in this article.
4. For example, in his authoritative overview *Sherlock Holmes on Film: The Complete Film and TV History* (2011), Alan Barnes merely mentions the 1970 Soviet TV adaptation of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and goes on to analyse only the Soviet TV series adaptation *Priklyucheniya Sherloka Kholmsa i doktora Vatsona*, which he mistakenly dates as running between 1979-1986. (The series ran between 1980-1986, and was preceded by the two-part mini series *Sherlok Kholmes i doktor Vatson*, broadcast in 1979.) Barnes praises the TV series, yet the show's visual departures from the English landscapes and interiors are described as "the occasional cultural hiccup", and much pleasure is gained from the subtitling "errors" (Barnes 2011: 142, 141). For all his praise, Barnes's bias cannot be suppressed: when comparing Vitaliy Solomin's Watson to David Burke's, he describes "Solomin's fastidious, tidy, nattily-dressed Watson" as "a dead ringer for Burke's" – even though Granada Television's adaptation was made five years later (Barnes 2011:141).

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5. Ivan Velisavljević adapted the collection; the eponymous radio-play was directed by Staša Koprivica and broadcast on Radio Belgrade's Second Programme on the 4th of May 2009.
 6. See Simić 2008 (translation by Alida Bremer).
 7. In terms of international relations, Srdjan Vučetić defines the Anglosphere as "a distinctive international, transnational, civilizational, and imperial entity within the global society" that is constituted through the special relationships between the US and, respectively, Britain, Australia, Canada and New Zealand (Vučetić 2011: 2). In the context of his analysis of world literature as an ecosystem, Alexander Beecroft uses the term as a useful denominator for the dominant forms of literature produced in English (see Beecroft 2015).
 8. The reaction to the award of the 2014 Nobel Prize to the French author Patrick Modiano in the Anglo-American media is a case in point. In an informative *New Yorker* article on the subject titled, significantly, 'Do you have to win a Nobel Prize to be translated?' (and, I would add, 'into English'), Vauhini Vara pointed out the troubles with promoting translated literature in the US: "Last year, traditional publishers put out about sixty thousand print titles in fiction, poetry, or drama; only five hundred and twenty-four of those were translated books of fiction or poetry, according to the Three Percent Web site, run by the University of Rochester" (Vara 2014: n.p.). A majority of these translations' publishers are small publishing houses like the Dalkey Archive, which cannot afford to promote their publications widely, closing the vicious circle of translations' promotion and distribution.
 9. Furthermore, the assumption of translatability, challenged most vocally by Emily Apter in her monograph *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (2013), entails a number of burning issues regarding language and power. Apter's critique echoes Gayatri Spivak's much anthologised 1993 essay 'The Politics of Translation' – a challenging discussion of the role of the translator and the implications of bringing a text into English or "the language of the majority" (Spivak 1993: 182). In it Spivak speaks against the practice of obtaining or studying translations as parts of courses in Anglo-American academia merely for the purpose of representing a culture, with the writer understood as a native informant first and only in the second instance as an artist. What is lost in the process is a study of the text and its translation as an adequate transposition of a work of art into another language.
 10. See, especially, Apter 2012 and 2013. However, Damrosch argues that "world literature is not an infinite, ungraspable canon of works but rather a mode of

circulation and of reading, a mode that is as applicable to individual works as to bodies of material, available for reading established classics and new discoveries alike” (Damrosch 2003: 5). This is why his model relies on and foregrounds the translatability of texts. It is precisely this insistence on translatability that, according to Graham Huggan, exposes Damrosch’s project of “an applied transnational humanism” to criticism, because it “lessens the very cultural differences it insists upon by assimilating them into a loosely defined world system” (Huggan 2011: 414). However, it strikes me that, rather than demean or dismiss the use of translation *en general*, the task would be to foster high quality translations that set out to convey both the cultural *and* aesthetic qualities of the work.

11. However, Beecroft admits that Moretti’s division of labour, which he had criticised, ended up as the hidden principle at the heart of his own proposed project in *An Ecology of World Literature*, regardless of how much he sought to resist it while writing the book (Beecroft 2015: 32).
12. See Jan Kott’s classic polemic *Shakespeare, Our Contemporary* (1964).
13. Brešan’s play is available in the 1992 English translation by William E. Yuill as *The Performance of Hamlet in Central Dalmatia*. Notice how the translation’s title generalises the setting of the play specified in the original. Mrduša Donja, an invented backwater village, in Yuill’s translation becomes a wider area of an existing and, internationally speaking, slightly more recognisable geographical region. The change immediately erases the absurdity of the situation that is the point of this politically charged grotesque: the initiative by a communist party apparatchik to stage a world classic in and by a small insular community that has no interest either in sophisticated narratives or the communist ideals of enlightening the masses.
14. The focus on the transcultural spread of cultural elements may appear to echo Wolfgang Iser’s concept of transculturality (1999). However, I find it inadequate for my analysis here because of its limited focus on aesthetics.
15. Two fascinating examples of cultural translation’s unpredictability come from Germany. The first would be the many German TV adaptations of romance novels of Rosamunde Pilcher that have functioned as “*Ersatz*-heritage” of an idealised rural England to its German viewers (Voigts-Virchow 2007: 133). Eckart Voigts argues that the adoption of “Pilcherland” as surrogate, “trash heritage” was made possible because of a void in the representation of the past caused by the association of the German concept of *Heimat* (homeland) with the Nazi discourse (cf. Voigts-Virchow 2007: 132-134). Moreover, this move also offered “the predominantly feminine German target audience a

space to enact the great reconciliation with Britain, the former enemy” (Voigts-Virchow 2007: 135). The other example is the enduring popularity of German nineteenth-century adventure novels about the American frontier favouring the Native American perspective and featuring the characters of Winnetou and Old Shatterhand. Written by Karl May at the end of the nineteenth century and before May even had a chance to travel across the Big Pond, to generations and generations of Central Europeans – either through translation or in the original German – these dreamt-up versions of ‘Cowboys and Indians’ served as ‘the real thing’, working as a substitute for or complement to the Letherstocking Tales of James Fennimore Cooper or the Wild West novels written by Zane Grey. Such was their continued popularity that their film adaptations were made many times over, most famously in the 1960s, curiously enough, in Croatia (then Yugoslavia), starting a spin-off tourist trend for visiting the filming locations that ‘played’ the role of the Wild West. Austrian and German-based tour operators have recently restarted offering such holiday packages for the fans of Winnetou, reviving the economy of the north Dalmatian hinterland, an area in Croatia that was devastated by the war in the 1990s. Many thanks to Blažena Radas for drawing my attention to the phenomenon.

16. Other than the already mentioned Barnes 2011, see Stein and Busse 2012, Porter 2012, or Vanacker and Wynne 2013, to name but a few.
17. See, e.g., Andrija Maurović’s comic strip ‘Ubojica s dječjim licem’ (‘Baby-face Murderer’), advertised as “the most horrific experience of the famous detective Sherlock Holmes” (*Mickey Strip*, no. 16, 1938), or Zvonimir Furtinger’s *Herlock Sholmes* comic strip parody of Holmes, republished in *Cartoonists Profilens* (1973, reprinted in 2010).
18. Simić’s outspoken LGBT activism has had an halo effect on her prose, but she confirmed this reading of the characters’ relationship in her interview with Ivana Armanini (see Armanini 2006).
19. *Kinematograf.hr*, the producer’s website, offers more details on the current stage of production, with a selection of stills and the link to the trailer: <http://www.kinematograf.hr/en/projekti-3/in-development/gloria-scott>.
20. In the opening story, ‘Udruženje kljastih’ (‘The Association of the Maimed’), Scott and Lambert head to a restaurant where they end up eating “four portions of pork scratchings with bread crumbs, three mixed salads, a potato pie, lamb shanks in pastry etc. After that we returned to my apartment, had a bite to eat and went to sleep” (“gdje pojedosmo četiri porcije čvaraka s krušnim mrvicama, tri miješane salate, pitu krumpirušu, koljenicu u tijestu itd.

Potom se vratismo do mojega stana, nešto prezalogajismo pa podosmo na spavanje”) (Simić 2005: 10, own translation). In ‘Krvavo platno’ (‘Blood-stained Canvas’), Lambert has a nightmare in which Scott interrupts a feast organised for some forty thousand city poor, claiming the food had been poisoned, only to then proceed devouring it herself.

21. Some strips are available at the artist’s own web page: <http://ivanaarmanini.net/project/comics/>.
22. Besides on her own website, and on the webzine *Komikaze.hr* that she also runs as a platform for the promotion of independent international graphic artists, Armanini has also published her Gloria Scott strips in a number of national and international collections and magazines, most notably in the monograph *Ženski strip na Balkanu* (2010), translated and distributed in the US by Mark Batty Publisher as *Balkan Comics: Women on the Fringe* (2012).
23. Recognition in the English-speaking world arrived much later, thanks to the distribution of a DVD re-issue of the series (with English subtitles!) in the early 2000s (Barnes 2011: 140). The role earned Vasiliy Livanov, who played Holmes, an OBE in 2006 (Shelokhonov n.d.).
24. Croatian military presence in Afghanistan only started in 2003 as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), about the time the author got the manuscript sent to the publisher. The country joined the NATO in 2009.
25. However, interestingly, in their face-off at the officer’s club, Watson changes his initial reason for a duel with Sholto (the murder of the Indian boy) after Sholto’s racist rant, without trying to counter Sholto’s arguments. Instead, he dismisses his speech as that of hatred, accusing Sholto of the murder of his own fellow officers. It is this appeal to honour and camaraderie that tips the balance in the club in Watson’s favour. Sholto is shot off-screen, and upon Lestrade’s and Holmes’s arrival all the officers side with Watson and falsely testify to Sholto’s suicide. Ultimately, Watson preserves Sholto’s honour – and the honour of the army (and inadvertently also covers up the tracks that connect Moriarty to the case).
26. See Fedina 2013, or “В СССР Шерлок Холмс попал под цензуру” at <http://www.ntv.ru/novosti/36649/>.

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