PHYSICS AND METAPHYSICS OF FICTION REFLECTED IN FILM: A CASE OF DECRYPTION

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Summary

The article deals with religious, materialistic, and mixed interpretations of the thing and the personality as generic entities in the story «Oh, whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad» by M. R. James and its screen versions. The differences found in the versions concern petty and significant deviations from the original story, which influence the initial message. The method used to achieve the results represented in the article combines the ideas of Philosophical Hermeneutics and those of the medieval exegetical method of allegorese applied to deal with obscure passages in sacred texts. The original story treated within the Protestant ideological paradigm gives way to materialistic views that are subject to refutation, reconsideration, and combination with philosophical issues in the screen versions – transponents. The thing as an inanimate object is endowed with personal qualities of a living being; on the contrary, an individual is viewed as a thing with no mind.

Key words: episode, medium, retranslation, symbol, transponent.

1. Introduction

The aim of the article is to show the ways of interpreting the thing and the personality as generic entities from religious, materialistic, or combined perspectives in M. R. James' story «Oh, whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad» (James, 2015: 76-94) and its screen versions entitled «Whistle and I'll Come to You» (1968, 2010). The *first task* ensuing from the aim concerns dividing the original story and its screen versions into blocks of episodes that reveal the message of the story. The *second task* presupposes finding possible symbolic interpretations of all episodes separately with the abovementioned generic entities included. The article explores ways of treating the same ideas in the original story dating back to 1904 and its later screen versions. The subject of the paper concerns separate symbols analyzed from different perspectives.

The story «Oh, whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad» is a ghost tale for Christmas, still popular since its first publication in 1904 in the collection «Ghost Stories of an Antiquary». The title is a quotation from the poem of the same name by Robert Burns. In the poem, the lyrical character, presumably, a girl, asks her admirer to come secretly, like a ghost, «up the back-stile, and let nobody see» (Burns, 1994: 349).

The story appeared on screen twice, and both adaptations got a shorter title «Whistle and I'll Come to You» (1968, 2010). The original story by M. R. James explores *the metaphysical* from the stance of Protestantism with its disbelief in ghosts and a moderately expressed indirect scorn for «papists, of whom you never knew what they might not have been up to» (James, 2015: 88). The screen versions suggest other approaches to reading the initial message, one of them radically changing it.

While being transferred into another (cinematic) medium, any story undergoes either minor or significant modifications because of fundamental differences between media. A medium, or medial territory *(Englund, 2010: 70)*, is «a kind of representation» *(Wolf, 2002: 36)* used to tell a story with other reasons for telling it (Ryan, 2014: 25). Any adaptation «takes possession of another's story and filters it» (Hutcheon, O'Flynn, 2006: 18) by retranslation. The term *retranslation* metaphorises media as other languages with additional semiotic capacities and presumes *the original* and *transponents* – interpretations in other media. All interpretations constitute *the story's matrix (Ihina, 2018: 87)*. In the word *transponent*, the element *trans-* indicates other media being involved; the element *-ponent*, meaning «put» *(Klein, 1966: 325, 564, 1088)*, makes the result of retranslation an exponent (of the original story in another medium), an opponent (different from the original), and a component (a part of the matrix). Therefore, the story «Oh, whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad» by M. R. James is the original that makes up the story's matrix with two more transponents, both known under the title «Whistle and I'll Come to You».

The original and its transponents correlate via the system of episodes within the plot. Thus, an episode in the original corresponds to its visual equivalent in a screen version (Verstraten, 2009: 50). Minor modifications concern *transforming* the original (affecting its form); significant modifications deal with *transmuting* the content. In transformations, names or places of action, etc. may change; in transmutations, the plot and the message are subject to thorough reconsideration.

To trace even minor differences in all three variants of the same story and to try various ideological readings in getting to a possible core of the story's message, each episode is to be seen as an integrity of equivalents, either textual or visual.

Methods and data

The author suggests the term *decryption* to name the method employed to achieve the aim of the article. Prefix *dē-* denotes separation and absence, *crypticus* is for «hidden, covert, concealed» *(Klein, 1966: 379, 404)*. The method presumes detecting implicit information, which needs commentary and interpretation, in the chosen fragments of the original story and its transponents. An operational term to refer to these fragments is *loci suspensi* – the places of suspense, where *suspense* is a feeling of something «alarming but oddly consoling» *(Ackroyd, 2011: 4)* that accompanies the episodes and endows them with the adventurous air of a mysterious conundrum having a tragic or perilous supernatural tint.

The method of decryption combines hermeneutics with allegorese. Philosophical Hermeneutics presumes that «a text yields understanding only when what is said in the text begins to find expression in the interpreter's own language» *(Gadamer, 2008: 57, 209)*, i.e. the emergent meaning is co-created by the source of information and the interpreter. Allegorese is a medieval exegetical method used to deal with clarifying unclear loci – obscure passages *(Augustin, 2009: 41; Reuling, 2006: 82; Thiselton, 1992: 159)* in sacred texts. It consisted in discovering their (the texts') «inner voices via which individual parts found their totality» *(Strauch, 2001: 92-93)*. Therefore, decryption facilitates eliciting the message by explaining hidden information in a story.

The methodology of the article also relies upon the theory of medial territories (see above), for the material the author works with is the original story «Oh, whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad» and its screen versions, both known as «Whistle, and I'll Come to You». The quotations from the screen versions are supplied with the exact time codes in brackets, such as, for example, 00:16:24, where the first item (00) is for the hour, the second one (16) – for the minutes, the third one – for the seconds. Therefore, the quotation may be easily found in the corresponding source.

2. Results and discussion

The original story «Oh, whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad» by M. R. James has two screen versions, both known as «Whistle, and I'll Come to You». The literary story relies on the main and additional blocks of episodes, while the transponents have only the main block.

The main block of episodes

The place of action (locale) in M. R. James' story is «The Globe Inn» in a fictitious town named *Bumstow*. The main character is Dr. Parkins, a young, neat, and precise professor of Ontography who plans to practice playing golf during the dead season and to have a look at the site of the Templars' preceptory not far from «The Globe Inn».

In both transponents (hereinafter Transponent-1968 and Transponent-2010), the character's name is Parkin. In Transponent-1968, Parkin-1 is a bachelor and a professor engaged in some indefinite science, in Transponent-2010, Parkin-2 is a retired astronomer whose wife suffers from some form of dementia and undergoes treatment in a home far from Bumstow. In contrast to the original, both Parkins are elderly men. Parkin-1 is on vacation, Parkin-2 comes to «The Globe Inn» to refresh his old memories about a holiday with his now cataleptic wife.

In Episode 1, among the remnants of the Templars' altar, Parkins finds an ancient, though quite plain metal cylindrical object (its description in the ***original*** is boldfaced below). Later, the object is going to show itself as an enchanted thing used to call forth a supernatural entity.

*He […] found himself in […] the base of an altar […] a patch of the turf was gone removed by some boy or other creature ferae naturae. […] now followed another little discovery […] a small cavity […] it must be an artificial hole in masonry […] his hand met with **a cylindrical object** lying on the floor of the hole […] he picked it up […] **a metal tube about four inches long**, and evidently **of some considerable age** […] **of some slight value** at least* (James, 2015: 80).

In ***Transponent-1968***, Parkin-1 finds a bone object near an abandoned grave, wonders what it may be, and recalls two idioms aloud: «*Give a dog a bone. Finders keepers*» (00:16:24-00:16:26).

The first idiom – *give a dog a bone* – in the context of the story may relate either to Parkin-1 or to somebody else (who is to get the bone), both subject to canine metaphorization. By taking away the bone, Parkin-1 either invites somebody to chase him or presumes that the bone is given to him because somebody (e.g. some spirit bound to the grave) wants to get rid of him like of a stray dog. It may also be a biblical allusion to dogs as impure beasts or spirits that will rend *(boldfaced below in the quotes from Matthew, 7:6, Philippians, 3:2, and Proverbs, 26:11)*:

*Do not give what is holy to **the dogs** […] lest they […] turn […] and tear you in pieces (NKJV, 1982: 852).*

*Beware of **dogs** (NKJV, 1982: 1032).*

*As **a dog** returns to its vomit, so a fool repeats his folly (NKJV, 1982: 577).*

The last quotation hints at Parkin-1 who makes a folly by taking the bone object.

Still, the symbolism here is not limited to the Bible but also relates to pre-Christian beliefs of the dog as a transcendent of ordinary reality, a visitant of cemeteries, psychopomp, and a guardian of the gates to the other world *(Werness, 2006: 136-138)*.

The second idiom (*finders keepers*, the first part of *finders keepers, losers weepers*) is a very old saying of dishonesty dating back to Plautus (Siefring, 2004: 106). In the context, it also may be a warning: the one, who has lost the object, is to come after it; it is the principle of Christian ethics, for an «object seeks its owner» *(Hardon, 1981: 390)*.

In ***Transponent-2010***, Parkin-2 finds a ring while walking along the coastline. He is full of memories about his wife and takes the find automatically.

Therefore, the objects in the original and the transponents are different. In the original, it is a metal tube. In Transponent-1968, the tube is made of bone (with corresponding canine allusions). In Transponent-2010, the thing is not a tube, but a ring looking like a wedding one.

Episode 2 in the original and both transponents is rather short and practically uninformative. In ***the original***, on his way from the Templars' preceptory, Parkins takes a notice of «a rather indistinct personage making efforts to catch up with him» (James, 2015: 81). In Transponent-1968, a dark blurred anthropomorphic figure, barely distinguishable against the dim coastline, appears behind Parkin-1. In Transponent-2010, Parkin-2 also sees a vague white figure. Both visual equivalents are silent.

In Episode 3, in the *original*, Parkins observes his find to see that it is a bronze whistle carved on both sides. The carvings seem so obscure to him that he compares them to the words on the wall of Belshazzar's palace. One of the inscriptions is *fur fla fle bis*, the other one is preceded and followed by swastikas and reads as *quis est iste qui venit*, or, in English, *who is this, who is coming?* (James, 2015: 83).

Light-heartedly, Parkins blows the whistle at once to find out *who is coming*. A strange sound elicited from the thing evokes obscure impressions about a quality of infinite distance in it, visions of a wide, dark expanse at night with a fresh wind blowing, and a lonely figure *(James, 2015: 83)*. Throughout the story, the image of wind accompanies the whistle and the figure bound to it.

In Transponent-1968, Parkin-1 also finds the same Latin inscription, translates it, and decides to try the whistle straightaway:

Quis est iste qui venit. Who is this who is coming (00:17:56-00:19:19).

We shall blow it and see (00:19:23-00:19:27).

In Transponent-2010, Parkin-2 says to the ring as to a living being: «*You're alone waiting for someone to find you*» (00:15:15-00:15:20). Then he reads the same inscription: «*Quis est iste qui venit. Who is this who is coming*» (00:15:41-00:16:00).

The whistles in the original and Transponent-1968 are made of bronze (in the book) and bone (in the film); the material of the ring in Transponent-2010 is not specified, but Parkin-2 treats the thing with respect and even speaks to it. The ring, if it is a wedding one, is there to symbolize marriage and to refer to Parkin's demented wife who is always present in his mind. Parkin-2 seems a more serious and profound personality than Parkins or Parkin-1, both being arrogant and complacent.

The material of the whistle in the original may also have some meaningful implications. On the one hand, it associates with the Templars in whose possession the thing might have been, on the other hand, bronze is a physical alloy of copper (brass) and tin with individual qualities.

At the beginning of the 14th century, the then political situation made the Templars (a military Catholic order formed to defend the Holy Land) confront the accusations of treason, desecration, sodomy, and Satanism. The trial subsequently lead to fagoting *(Pernoud, 2009: 8-9)*. In the context of the story, the Templars' bad name is an indication of deviltry; therefore, any object once owned by them is very suspicious and may represent whatever blasphemous sorcery.

One of the inscriptions, found only in the original, is a number of monosyllabic words *fur fla fle bis*. The name of Belshazzar hints at the symbols on the wall of the notorious king's palace, mentioned in *Daniel, 5:5–29 (NKJV, 1982: 781)*, which were read by Prophet Daniel «one way by taking the words as nouns and interpreted another way by taking the words as

verbs» *(Seow, 2003: 80)*. Thus, mixed up, the words may acquire different meanings: *fur flabis flebis* translates as «thief, you will blow, you will weep»; *furbis flabis flebis* – as «you will blow, you will weep, and you will go mad» *(Jones, 2015: 436)*. From this stance, Parkins appears a thief who is to suffer if he blows the stolen whistle.

The swastikas embracing the other inscription (Quis est iste qui venit) do not have any Nazi connotations, for the story's publication dates back to 1904, but may be ancient apotropaic signs *(Quinn, 1994: 5)* denoting, once again, a warning in the context of the story. Thus, protective magical symbols restrain the one who is coming. The sentence per se – *Who is this who is coming?* – is an allusion to him who comes from Edom *(in Isaiah, 63:1)*: «*Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?*» *(NKJV, 1982: 654)*.

Edom with its main city of Bozrah stands for a place that signifies all the God's foes and a horror for everyone who passes by it, a desolate wilderness *(Kosanke & Manhardt, 2011: 195; Irudayaraj, 2017: 79)*. In the context of the story, the indication of somebody coming from the realm of horror is enough to show that because of his haughty carelessness, Parkins is doomed to a dreadful supernatural curse. Some punishing force is after him.

The Templars were a medieval order, and their choice of bronze for a magical object may have a consistent explanation within *the iconology of material*, an area of research on medieval art that studies the symbolic significance of the material of an object. Bronze is, on the one hand, an alloy, composite and open to transformations; on the other hand, it has specific *sounding* capacities and is a vessel for sin echoing with faith, for it resonates, according to the laws of *similia*, with the evil and thus secures from it. This way the bell, the same as all other similar apotropaic objects, battles the hellish forces in winds and storms *(Weinryb, 2016: 55-56, 75, 135)*.

Although bronze is an alloy, it was often likened to brass. The modern meaning of the word *bronze* stems from Persian *birinj* (brass and bronze) and Greek *όρυζα* because brass shines like polished rice *(Cannon & Kaye, 2001: 71; Forbes, 1971: 285; Klein, 1966: 203; Steingass, 2005: 179)*. In different English translations of *The Book of Judges*, the Philistines took Samson, put out his eyes, and bound him with fetters of either brass or bronze *(NHPB, 2012: 588)*. Bronze in «Oh, whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad» may likewise allude to this fact, and thus, the material long used for making chains looks appropriate for shackling even a metaphysical entity and fastening it forever to the whistle.

The material in Transponent-1968, together with the whistle's direct relation to winds, is distantly relevant to raising up the dead in *The Book of Ezekiel*, 37:5-10, for Parkin-1 finds the whistle near a forlorn grave and thus has something to do with disturbing a spirit attached to it. He calls forth a metaphysical presence by blowing the dry bone whistle:

Thus says the Lord God to these bones: «Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. [...] there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over» [...] Also says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, o, breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.» [...] and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet (NKJV, 1982: 762).

In **Episode 4,** the wind becomes gusty, opens the window, and Parkins tries to shut it (underlined in the quotation below). In ***the original***, the wind seems to acquire corporeality (boldfaced) as Parkins pushes this strange entity out of his room as if it were a sturdy burglar.

The sound of the whistle had so fascinated him that he could not help trying it once more [...] But what is this? Goodness! <u>What force the wind can get</u> up in a few minutes! <u>What</u>

a tremendous gust! […] to get the window shut […] Parkins was struggling with the casement, and felt **as if he were pushing back a sturdy burglar** (James, 2015: 83).

In Transponent-1968, the equivalent has no commentary, just the action of pushing a vague figure out, but the upper allusion to the bones risen by the wind in *Ezekiel, 37:5-10* gets its logical development here, for the dry bones, coming to life, get sinews, flesh, and skin that cover them, i.e. corporeality.

Transponent-2010 has no equivalent.

In **Episode 5**, Parkins tries to go to sleep and sees imaginary pictures with figures. In ***the original***, there are two of them – *a bobbing black object* and *a figure in pale, fluttering draperies, ill-defined (James, 2015: 85)*. The black object is a man running from the pale one.

In *Transponent-1968*, the equivalent is visualized in detail. In *Transponent-2010,* the pale figure is a plaster female bust, corporeal as well. Something about its menacing features disturbs Parkin-2. Besides, it seems to have turned around on its own since the previous night, so he puts it on a stand to face the window. Then he is trying to go to sleep but fails because of some indistinct sounds and supposes it may be a rat trapped in a wall or under the floorboards (00:26:12-00:26:14).

In **Episode 6**, a chambermaid tells Parkins that somebody has had a bad night in the other bed in his room; all the things are crumpled, bundled up and twisted (James, 2015: 86, 90).

In *Transponent-1968*, Parkin-1 talks to several hotel cleaners who complain that he must have slept in both beds as they are both rumpled. He agrees to admit that the strange situation is a phenomenon (00:33:13-00:34:21). In *Transponent-2010*, somebody tries to break in from the corridor. Then Parkin-2 sees a fearful dream filled with a number of key images that he recalls afterwards: a white figure far away against the blurred coastline, his wife pretending to have a baby in her arms, a boy in a wingchair, a crow, and a porcelain doll's head splitting into pieces abruptly and loudly to waken Parkin-2. The episode rather concerns his psychic state than metaphysical matters, and the images may relate to his previous family life, perhaps, the early loss of his kid – the boy whose childhood broke up like a doll's head before its due time. The raven may be present there as an ill omen of near death or a messenger from the beyond *(Werness, 2006: 106)* as in *The Book of Kings,* 17:2-4: «*I have commanded the ravens to feed you there*» *(NKJV, 1982: 316)*.

In **Episode 7**, in ***the original***, Parkins tells his neighbor that the laws of winds are not evident and presumes the night storm came in answer to his call when he blew the whistle *(James, 20015: 87)*. In *Transponent-1968*, Parkin-1 speaks about metaphysics as well, but not of calling winds, but of death and ghosts. He muses on the meanings of death as the end of physical existence (boldfaced below) and ghosts as the spirits of the dead. The word *death* referring to metaphysical existence is underlined.

Do you believe in ghosts Professor? – I'm not quite certain what you mean […] I mean there's no broad consensus about what a ghost is […] The spirits of the dead. The survival of the human personality […] it has the grammatical appearance of a real question but I wonder does it really mean anything either? […] We say for the sake of argument that the human personality survives ***death*** *[…] Would we say the same way […] that someone survived a train crash? […] We wouldn't want to say he survived* <u>*death*</u> *and was very badly injured by it […] No, no, no, well clearly here we have a logical difference of usage in that* <u>*death*</u> *[…] I mean one doesn't talk about anyone being very badly hurt by* ***death***, *except possibly the relatives of the deceased, but never the victim himself* (00:20:46-00:24:21).

Later, he adds a «scientific» definition of ghosts: intelligence disconnected from material body and still alive though not seen (00:36:03-00:36:08).

In ***Transponent-2010***, Parkin-2 talks about ghosts with the owner of the hotel to find out who may have tried to break into his room. He is irritated when she supposes a ghost. He discards the definition of ghosts as personalities who have survived physical death (bold-faced below). For Parkin-2, a more fearful ghost type is a body that has survived a personality (underlined). He means his wife who suffers from dementia. Somewhat indirectly, he alludes to the Carthusian duality of body and mind as heterogeneous substances, the body representing the matter, and the mind being something ideal. Therefore, they are fundamentally different. The body is divisible and subject to disintegration (matter rots); the mind is, accordingly, indivisible (Descartes, 2008: 10-11).

Who was knocking at my door? [...] Perhaps, it was a ghost? – A ghost? **The human personality that has survived bodily death***? – One of those, yes, if you like. – I have to admit I've never seen a ghost; empirical evidence is zero but what I have seen is* the opposite – a body that has outlasted the existence of the personality *and that is far, far more horrifying than any spook or ghoul you could have a hope to glimpse, believe me. There is nothing inside us,* **no ghosts in these machines***. Man is matter, and matter rots* (00:37:03-00:37:54).

The remark about ghosts in machines (boldfaced underlined italics above) refers to a theory polemic to the Cartesian one, which treats the body as a necessary ground for the mind. The latter is not a ghost in the machine; it is fundamentally wrong *(Ryle, 2009: 5)*, for bodies and minds exist in symbiosis: there are mental reasons for bodily actions, and bodily, mechanical reasons for mental actions. The human organism is a complex integrity; therefore, the mind is also a complex integrity, but structurally different *(Ryle, 2009: 8)*. People are not ghost-ridden machines, they are people, and it is a tautology worth remembering (Ryle, 2009: 67).

In both transponents, the ***original*** conversation about a mysterious nature of winds transforms into theorizing on the nature (physics or metaphysics) of ghosts by searching for a logical correlate that may serve a starting point in finding a definition what ghosts are. This correlate appears to be *death* and ways of understanding it. In ***Transponent-1968***, a ghost is intelligence disconnected from material body though Parkin-1 doubts what death may be in this context. In ***Transponent-2010***, the opposition *physical vs mental* is introduced where a ghost is not only intelligence without a body, but also vice versa, in accord with the principle of dualism, a body without intelligence.

In **Episode 8**, in ***the original***, Parkins confronts something inexplicable. First, he hears rustling and shaking sounds in the opposite empty bed, then he sees a personage with a horrible face of crumpled linen and arms outspread as if it were blind, finally, when the personage leaps towards him, the neighbor bursts into the room to see the scene (James, 20015: 91-92). In ***Transponent-1968***, the visual equivalent is rendered in detail. In ***Transponent-2010***, Parkin-2 witnesses something trying to break into his room, then the light goes out, and the ghost of his wife appears in front of him shouting loudly: «*I am still here, I am still here, I am here!*» (00:49:33-00:49:50).

Probably, Parkin-2 is wrong to have decided that his wife's body is a ghost without mind. If there is a living body, then the personality is alive since body and mind are indivisible. To think that a living person is a ghost is immoral. Reducing men to the role of machines is as wrong as denying their being ghosts in machines. G. Ryle ironically suggested a «more hazardous leap to the hypothesis that perhaps a man is a man» (Ryle, 2009: 301).

In the original and both transponents, Parkins, as well as Parkin-1 and Parkin-2 confront the unknown and incomprehensible, and the confrontation transforms all three characters. Parkins and Parkin-1 are traumatized neither physically nor mentally (only frightened a little), but

Parkin-2 has a strong shock and dies, perhaps, of guilt. The sound of scratching he heard earlier is a projection of auditory perception from his future when he, unconsciously, in death agony, scratches the floorboards. Thus, the dream-raven seems a true evil omen, the death messenger.

The additional block of episodes

Additional **original** episodes missing in the transponents concern cleaning procedures after the night event. In **the first additional episode**, Parkins meets his friends, Wilson and Rogers, tells them about the event, and Wilson casts the whistle «as far into the sea» *(James, 2015: 93)*. In **the second additional episode**, the smoke ascends from the back premises of *The Globe Inn* (James 93) to suggest that the bedclothes that frightened Parkins are being burnt at the time. In **the third additional episode**, the metaphysical entity is identified as the creature that came in answer to the whistle, had nothing material about it save a body of the bedclothes, and whose only function was to frighten *(James, 2015: 93)*. In Protestantism, seeing ghosts is not encouraged because of rejecting the purgatory. Accordingly, they are counterfeit demonic apparitions made by Satan *(Walsham, 1999: 28; Lotz-Heumann, 2007: 695)*. Thus, stating the unimportant *function* of the creature made of bedclothes (for it came to frighten and nothing more) agrees with the Protestant explanations of ghosts as something fabricated.

The content in Transponent-1968 has separate details partially differing from the original: the protagonist's name (Parkins vs Parkin), the material of the whistle (bronze vs bone), the place of the find (the Templars' preceptory vs a cemetery), and the field of research Parkin/s is engaged in. Parkins is a professor of something called Ontography, and this detail may be important for interpretation.

In contemporary philosophical studies, Ontography is a Heideggerian school of object-oriented ontology questioning the supremacy of Kantian anthropocentrism over inanimate objects and non-humans. It claims to study limited dynamic interobjectivity (connections between objects) expressed via certain concrete contexts (Bogost, 2012: 36-38). The objects are tool-beings with their own silent background, subterranean otherworld, and withdrawn reality other to that of human reality. They reveal themselves to people only once they no longer immerse in their withdrawn reality and occur in social practice (Harman, 2002: 4-5).

With reference to this study, the story «Oh, whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad» is about such a tool-being that emerges from its withdrawn reality and reveals itself to Parkins. Without his interference, it would have stayed hidden within itself. Besides, a tool-being unknowingly realized in social practice may have unpredictable results, for its use is not clear. Thus, a seemingly trivial action of blowing may be a metaphysical exploit of endeavoring spirit.

The content in Transponent-2010 is transformed as well as transmuted. Transformations refer to the place of the find (a cemetery vs the beach), the protagonist's name and his occupation. The transmuted content concerns additional characters (the demented wife), the find (a ring), and the finale of the story when Parkin-2 dies.

3. Conclusions

Since the aim of the article was to show the ways of interpreting the thing and the personality from religious, materialistic, or combined perspectives in M. R. James' story «Oh, whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad» and its screen versions, the method had to rely on exploring the actual lines of interpretation. A special atmosphere of mysteriousness in the story allows for its symbolic reading via decrypting plot-relevant generic elements, i.e. the personality and the thing, viewed as physical and metaphysical entities. The term *decryption* here stands for

revealing a hidden mystery by way of explaining, decoding loci suspensi (the places of suspense) – certain symbolic data implemented in the original story and its transponents that correlate via the system of episodes within the plot.

Transponents are interpretations of the original in other media, ultimate products of retranslation with surplus semiotic capacities and essential modifications, if any. Minor modifications deal with transforming the original by changing names or places of action, significant modifications transmute the content by reconsidering the plot and the message.

The minor differences found in all three variants relate to the place of action (the Templars' preceptory, an abandoned cemetery, the beach), the name, age, and occupation of the main character (Parkins / Parkin, a young professor of Ontography, an elderly professor of some indefinite science, a retired astronomer). The major differences concern the end of the story and some important details that shift the symbolic load of the initial message onto different matters connected with treating the thing and personality from religious, materialistic, or mixed perspectives. The original story interpreted within the Protestant ideology gives way to materialistic views rejected or reconsidered as well as combined with philosophical issues in transponents; besides, the ideas of Ontography are employed to revise the role of the thing as an inanimate object in the original story and its transponents.

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