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Everyone Called Him Mister Pip: *Great Expectations* and Postcolonialism in Lloyd Jones's *Mister Pip*

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Abstract

Even though Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* was published roughly 150 years ago, it still has a great impact in literature today. An example of this is the 2006 novel *Mister Pip* by Lloyd Jones. The novel uses *Great Expectations* in a unique way. Children on the island of Bougainville read Charles Dickens's work in school, and the novel starts to play a very large role in the small community, which is being torn apart by a brutal civil war. To answer the question how author Lloyd Jones uses *Great Expectations* to reflect on postcolonial issues in his novel *Mister Pip*, it is important to look at several recurring themes that fall under the umbrella term postcolonialism. This thesis will focus on the subjects of mimicry, intertextuality, oral storytelling, rewriting history, and migrating characters. The characters in the novel *Mister Pip* will be the main focus in the discussion of all of these themes. This thesis uses these elements to answer the previously mentioned research question.

Keywords; Mister Pip; Great Expectations; Lloyd Jones; Charles Dickens; Bougainville; postcolonialism; intertextuality; mimicry; migrating characters

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Introduction

I took the opportunity of being alone in the court-yard, to look at my coarse hands and my common boots. My opinion of those accessories was not favourable. They had never troubled me before, but they troubled me now, as vulgar appendages. I determined to ask Joe why he had ever taught me to call those picture-cards, Jacks, which ought to be known as knaves. I wished Joe had been rather more genteelly brought up, and then I should have been so too (Dickens 71)

After Pip visits Miss Havisham and Estella in Charles Dickens's novel *Great Expectations*, he becomes aware for the first time that he is a commoner, from a family where no one has had any proper education. After the beautiful Estella makes fun of him for being so common, everything changes in Pip's mind. Before, he had never paid attention to the way he looked or the way he spoke. However, when Estella pointed it out, he became insecure. The only thing that could lift him out of his commoner status, that could turn him into a gentleman, was education (and a sum of money, of course). *Great Expectations* is all about Pip becoming this gentleman.

The popular nineteenth-century Charles Dickens novel plays a crucial role in the contemporary novel *Mister Pip* by Lloyd Jones from 2006. In *Mister Pip*, children in a small classroom on the island of Bougainville read *Great Expectations* with their teacher from New Zealand and the story is reinvented within this community. The novel starts to play an especially large role in the life of the main character, Matilda. She sees Pip as a friend and escapes into *Great Expectations* when she feels like real life becomes too hard to handle. Even though *Great Expectations* itself does not have a strong postcolonial subplot, it is still very effective in showing issues that come with postcolonialism.

Ever since the novel *Mister Pip* came out in 2006, and was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, many researchers have written articles on the interesting piece of literature. Many tend to focus on the relationship between the elements inspired by the Victorian era, and a postcolonial reading of the novel itself. Some researchers stay within the realm of a theoretical analysis, such as Beverly Taylor who chose *Mister Pip* as an example for her article on Victorian legacies in postcolonial worlds, and Regina Gagnier who used *Mister Pip* as a case study to explore the global circulation

of Charles Dickens novels. She argues that Dickens is a Victorian author whose novels lend themselves particularly well to a postcolonial context, for they focus on the large issue of class, which is a prominent issue in postcolonial studies as well. The colonizers see themselves as a higher class than the native population, resulting in opportunities of excellent comparisons.

There are also researchers who provide an in depth reading and analysis of only *Mister Pip* or an analysis and comparison of both *Mister Pip* and *Great Expectations*. Examples of these analyses are articles such as that of Nil Korkut-Nayki, which focuses on literature and rewriting as performance, or the article by Zoë Norridge on the argument that *Mister Pip* is not so much a story about a small village in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, but rather a story about storytelling. Ankhi Mukherjee has a chapter describing the case of the rewriting of an important British novel in *Mister Pip*. The majority of the research previously done in the field is of this particular nature: an analysis of the novel.

While many of these articles relate *Mister Pip* and *Great Expectations* to postcolonialism, they tend to focus on references to the plot of *Great Expectations* and how that is relevant to portraying postcolonial issues. What this thesis does, on the other hand, is not only show ways in which the plot of *Great Expectations* is important in *Mister Pip*, but also how the physical copy of *Great Expectations* is relevant for showing postcolonial issues in *Mister Pip*. This element is especially prominent relating to education on the island, since that is where *Great Expectations* is mostly used.

Keeping this gap in the current research in mind, this thesis will make an attempt to answer the question: how does author Lloyd Jones use *Great Expectations* to reflect on postcolonial issues in his novel *Mister Pip*?

The current hypothesis of this research question is that *Great Expectations* will prove to be most important in the theme of education in a postcolonial setting. The first instance where the children, and most importantly the main character Matilda, are introduced to *Great Expectations* is in the classroom by their teacher. It is the focus of all their lessons, since everything they learn is somehow related to the novel. This proposal expects to find that Lloyd Jones uses *Great Expectations* as a base for showing the way British elements are used to “educate the colonies” of New Zealand, and how that education drops down by a New Zealand immigrant teacher in Bougainville. It will also not only show how the colonies eventually make this history

their own, but also how it influences the lives of the native inhabitants who come into contact with this example of British culture.

The historical background of the research starts in the Victorian era. Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* is one of the primary texts examined in this research. This means the history of the use of Victorian novels in postcolonial worlds has to be mentioned. The thesis will pay further attention to this element in the first chapter on methodology, which will also provide the context in which the reader of this thesis should look at the literature. For the Victorian text this means that the background of Dickens's use of class struggles in his novels can be compared to the struggles of native inhabitants of postcolonial areas, and how they are still faced with the history their former colonizer(s) have left behind.

Another important aspect, which is part of the cultural background, is the war in Papua New Guinea. The Bougainville war happened between 1988 and 1998. It was a war between the army of Papua New Guinea and the Bougainville Revolutionary Army, which strived for independence for the island of Bougainville after conflicts regarding the profitable copper mine. The mine resulted in the migration of many Papua New Guineans and Australians to Bougainville, which made it an issue about race as well, since Bougainvilleans identified as black, and called Papua New Guineans "red skins" and Australians "white skins". The war ended in 1998 with the Bougainville Peace Agreement. Since the novel *Mister Pip* is set during the civil war of Bougainville and features the effects of the war, it is important to know some of the background in regards to the novel. This will also feature in the first chapter of the thesis.

This thesis consists of three chapters. The first chapter discusses the methodology and the theoretical framework used to analyse *Mister Pip*. Postcolonialism knows many definitions, variations, and interpretations. That is why it is necessary to provide a context in which postcolonialism will be discussed in this research. The thesis will use various articles on postcolonialism.

Charles Dickens's novels have had a great impact all over the world. This is not surprising since his novels focus on differences regarding class. A postcolonial audience would very much be able to identify with the separation Dickens writes about. There are many parallels between the poor working class in his novels, and the native population of a postcolonial area; both are treated badly by the upper class. Dickens's novels provide the postcolonial reader with hope, for the characters in his

novels almost always find their way into wealth and ultimately a happy life, even though they are going through a lot of hard times. In *Great Expectations* this can be seen as well. Pip grows up as a poor, orphaned, mistreated young boy who happens to fall into a lot of wealth. He is able to work himself up on the social ladder. Even though he faces a lot of hard times, in the end he realizes what is important and he ultimately lives a happy, honest life. This tale of luck, overcoming boundaries, and hard work is something that a postcolonial audience would be able to identify with. This is, however, a personal interpretation of *Great Expectations*, and another reader might disagree. No matter how Pip's story is interpreted, the issues raised in this thesis would still be recognised.

The second chapter focuses on the ideas of storytelling, mimicry, and rewriting history in the postcolonial context of *Mister Pip*. The children from Mr Watts's class are interpreting *Great Expectations* in a very special way. For main character and narrator Matilda this becomes especially clear. She uses Charles Dickens's Victorian England to escape to and she makes a friend out of Pip. He is no longer just a character from the novel, but he becomes a real friend to her. She also interprets the world around her by taking elements from *Great Expectations* and looking how they are represented in real life. By receiving the education from Mr Watts, she hopes to be elevated from her commoner status, just like Pip, and she hopes to become a gentleman-like figure herself. She mimics the Victorian ideals represented in *Great Expectations* and applies them to her own life. Not only Matilda and the other children start to mimic the world of *Great Expectations*, Mr Watts, who comes from the British colony New Zealand, starts to behave the way a Victorian gentleman would as well. He starts wearing a suit and tries to embody everything that makes Pip a gentleman. He is searching for his own identity, just like the children are. Another important aspect in the novel is that of rewriting history, which is a concrete way in which mimicry is applied in *Mister Pip*. The children are encouraged to rewrite *Great Expectations*. This unavoidably leads to the real story being entangled with the lives of the children themselves. They are rewriting a piece of Victorian history to be relevant in their postcolonial setting.

Finally, chapter three explores the idea of personification of characters from *Great Expectations* in *Mister Pip*. With the quote 'characters migrate' from Umberto Eco as the epigraph, Lloyd Jones encourages the reader of the novel to think about the way characters from *Great Expectations* are transported to this new setting. Chapter

three will focus on the characters Matilda, Mr Watts, Matilda's mother Dolores, and the log Matilda clings to when she is stuck in the river. Each of these characters (and in the case of the log, objects) has been assigned a character from *Great Expectations*, which they most resemble. While Matilda actively assigns these roles to Mr Watts, Dolores, and the log, the comparison of Matilda and Pip is a little less explicit, yet still very much relevant in the novel. Pip's materialisation as Matilda's friend is also discussed in this chapter.

1. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

There are many definitions and theories related to postcolonialism. That is why, when dealing with the subject and specific themes, it is important to give a definition that is used throughout the thesis, since there are many conflicting ideas when it comes to postcolonial theories. In this chapter, definitions will be given for the most prominent ideas regarding postcolonial theory in the rest of the thesis. This will start with a general idea of postcolonialism, and will then focus on postcolonialism and the Victorian era. Ideas such as “the Other”, mimicry, and the stages of three step process known as adopt, adapt, and adept. When discussing Victorian postcolonialism, there will be a big focus on the works of Charles Dickens, since his work is used in *Mister Pip*. Finally, there will be a summary of the events that happened during the Bougainville Civil War, which is the conflict during which *Mister Pip* is set.

1.1 Postcolonialism

A lot of recurring themes in *Mister Pip* can be related to an overlapping theory of postcolonialism. One of the most important and generally accepted ideas within postcolonial theory is that of “the Other”. This idea of Otherness, or “dividing people”, especially as a means of applying a label to them, is “a dated convention” (Kim 261). It is easier to a community or an individual to form an identity by comparing what makes them different from others. This necessarily alienates the Other who is the subject of comparison. A lot of postcolonial theory focuses on how a certain culture sees another as the Other, or how this alienated culture deals with being regarded as the Other by its colonizer. Literature helps readers realise in what ways the identification as the Other effects the alienated culture, as well as how this culture deals with this. “The study of world literature might be the study of the way in which cultures recognize themselves through their projections of ‘otherness’” (Bhabha 12).

Of course this idea of postcolonial theory as the relationship between the West and the Other is very much a simplified image. There are founding figures of postcolonial theory such as Frantz Fanon who do not regard this to be the case at all.

Fanon regards as deeply problematic any characterization of colonialism in terms of a binary opposition of colonizer and colonized. Instead, he insists that colonialism may only be understood as a complicated network of complicities

and internal power imbalances between groups within the broader categories of colonizer and colonized. Fanon thus challenges the fixed ideas of settlement identity and culturally authored definitions located within the traditions of western rationality (Rizvi et al. 251)

Fanon's argument becomes clear when the effects on both colonizer and colonized are studied. The two cultures do not exist separately, but they start to change each other. The colonized cannot have such a strong influence within a different culture without being changed somehow. "Nations could not return to their settled and independent life again without noticing that they had learned many foreign ideas and ways, which they had unconsciously adopted, and come to feel here and there previously unrecognized and spiritual needs" (Goethe qtd. in Bhabha 11).

The impact colonialism had on the society being colonized is arguably even larger. The process of incorporating the culture of the colonizer has often been described as happening in three steps, especially when it comes to literature. The first step of the process is adopt, where the colonized culture tries to imitate its colonizer (Barry 189). This is a form of mimicry, a popular concept in postcolonial theory in which the colonized group takes over practices and ideas from the colonizer in order to be more like them, and to be more accepted. In a lot of literature we see that the colonizer tries to make the colonized society feel less cultured and more like savages. As history has often proven they were able to succeed in many instances. When the colonized believes this mentality it is no surprise that they adopt ideas from the colonizer and try to be just like them. This results into a form of mimicry (mimesis when represented in art forms such as literature), where the colonized tries to be the exact same as the colonizer (Roque 201). Of course they do not succeed, because they will always be savages in the eyes of the colonizer. The second phase in the three step process of incorporating culture is the adapt phase (Barry 189). The colonized culture tries to use the elements they copied from the colonizer and make them work in their own society. This is also a form of mimicry as it is described by Bhabha who explains it as "becoming a 'reformed, recognisable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite'" (qtd. in Low 255). In other words, the colonized strives towards being more like the colonizer, while still being recognised as a separate society because they make elements they copied from the colonisers relevant for their own society and culture. An important part in this is that they still want to be recognised as their own culture, but also as something comparable and equal to the

culture of the colonizer, which is still respected. The final phase is the adept phase (Barry 189). Here the colonized culture recognises their own culture as completely different even though they have incorporated elements of the colonizer. They reject the idea that their culture is the same as the colonizer's and develop a national or cultural pride. They strive towards "absolute independence" (Kalpana 14).

An important aspect, especially during the second adapt phase is that of rewriting history. The history from the colonizer is taken by the colonized and rewritten to make sense in the culture of the colonized. Since "cultural memory is very much based on practicing and creating stories" (Erll 165), it is no wonder that the stories that are being told in a certain culture, no matter if they are true or false, become part of that culture's history. In many colonies oral story telling played a huge role. These stories would lose part of their messages once they were recorded in one way or another, for example by writing them down. The performance is part of the message. These "messages from the past exist, are real, and yet are not continuously accessible to the senses. Oral traditions make an appearance only when they are told. [...] the utterance is transitory, but the memories are not (Vansina xi). The written stories of the colonizers, however, had a certain validity to them that the oral stories were missing. The fact that they were written down made that they were regarded as true, especially by the younger generations, since the older generations tended to stick to the stories they grew up with.

1.2 Victorian Literature and Postcolonialism

Since the height of the British imperial century was somewhere around the 19th century, it is no surprise that Victorian literature had a large impact even in the British colonies. The effect of colonisation was a popular subject and can be seen in many novels. Usually, the indigenous people were portrayed in a negative way, working against the white hero. "The noncivilized world was often treated as a domain in which the primitive might overwhelm the white heroes, causing them to go native, or as the source of threatened invasions of the metropole by the barbarians, as in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*" (Brantlinger 46). However there were also positive views on imperialism in Victorian novels, for they also saw the colonies as "a place of renewal" (Brantlinger 46) in which the British could start fresh, although they generally did not regard the native population as an equal in these instances. Either way, "taking pride in the British empire was a major aspect of Victorian patriotism", and authors such as Charles Dickens often "rewarded" their characters in many novels

by making them immigrate to the colonies and leaving English social conditions such as poverty, unemployment, and famine behind (Brantlinger 2).

Charles Dickens's novels have been immensely popular all over the world. They are especially popular in (former) colonies. Considering the themes Dickens wrote about in many of his novels, it is not so strange that he is and was very popular in (former) colonies. "When we consider the role of Dickens in cultural translation and transculturation he has "meant" both migration and settlement, class warfare, revolution, critique of capitalism, socialism, gender and domestic relations, sociology and psychology of crime and deprivation, Christian solutions to social divisions and suffering, dialect, and the vernaculars of the street" (Gagnier). His novels have had such a large effect on culture and society, that many phenomena can now be described as being "Dickensian", like "'Dickensian" novels, "Dickensian" characters, "Dickensian" affect, "Dickensian" institutions and so forth showing that comparable conditions give rise to formal resemblances" (Gagnier). One of the important elements that both Dickens's novels as well as colonial societies could relate to is the fact that they often find themselves in a state between "traditional cultures and the forces of modernisation" (Gagnier). Especially the new settlers in New Zealand valued the literature of Charles Dickens very highly. A group of young men between 21 and 45 years old started the Pickwick Club. They "used Dickens's fiction as they settled to confirm their identity in a land new to them" (Gagnier). They tried to find their identity, what makes an Englishman, by philosophizing about Dickens's novels, and they even went further than that: "they tried to materialize Dickens's world in New Zealand society reconstructing his physical habitats, environments, and forms of social life" (Gagnier). Because New Zealand did not have the reputation and history of convict deportation, they were able to use Dickens to make their new country feel more like home, as a fictional Britain they admired. Dickens himself was very interested in Australia. He published over 100 articles on the country from 1850-1859 (Gagnier). Dickens was also very popular in China, where his novels were translated and simultaneously rewritten in order to represent Chinese values and ideas. The translation of *Great Expectations*, for example, made it so that none of the women had any bad connotations (Miss Havisham did not exist, Estella is a weak and fragile girl, and Biddy gets a more important role) and Pip's desire is not to become a gentleman, but the story is about the desire of the town for Pip to become a doctor so he can help his people (Gagnier).

The original *Great Expectations* also has a major plot that involves colonialism. Magwitch, the secret benefactor of Pip, is a convict who has been sent to Australia after committing a crime. Here we see a glimpse of Dickens's interest in Australia. Magwitch takes on various jobs in the colony and eventually becomes rich. He sends this money to Pip so he can be made a gentleman. When Magwitch returns to London to finally reunite with Pip, he is not welcome. He reappears illegally in London and Pip and his friend Herbert have to hide him from being discovered by the authorities. Former convicts who had been deported to Australia "could succeed, but they could hardly, in a real sense, return. They could expiate their crimes in a technical, legal sense, but what they suffered there warped them into permanent outsiders" (Said xv). They would never truly be welcomed back into British society. When Magwitch is in London, Pip, who has to hide him, resents him. However, he eventually accepts him as a father figure. Later in his life Pip himself also travels to colonies, but he does so as a businessman.

1.3 Intertextuality

In *Mister Pip* the process of mimicry is described with the help of intertextuality. Intertextuality can be found in every work of literature. Every reader takes his or her own experiences in life with them while reading a text. The author himself will also entwine works he has previously read into his own writing. Intertextuality is very closely related to the idea of the Death of the Author by Roland Barthes. It is arguably one of the most well-known works of theory in the field of intertextuality (Allen 70). Barthes argues that there are "no emotions before the textual description of emotions, no thoughts before the textual representation of thoughts, no significant actions which do not signify outside of already textualized and encoded actions" (Allen 72). This means that Barthes argues that the context in which a text was written, for example, is not important. The only thing that is important is the words that are written down and how the reader interprets these words. The author is completely unimportant.

Besides the idea of the Death of the Author, intertextuality can also simply refer to the use of other texts in a particular work. Intertextuality is a much-used practise in postcolonial writing, especially when it comes to the colony writing back. Writing back is a process that exists in the earlier mentioned adept phase. The native writer of the colonies uses, for example, English language and works, to write back to

the colonizer and raise issues that exist in his or her own country, often caused by colonialism.

Mister Pip uses intertextuality to place the novel *Great Expectations* in a setting that the reader would not expect. *Mister Pip* is set in a small village on the island of Bougainville, which is part of Papua New Guinea, during the island's civil war. This civil war, also known as the Bougainville conflict, started when a large amount of copper was found on the island, and an Australian company announced it wanted to build a mine on the island. The struggles began even before the mine was built. The traditional ways of Bougainville society made it so that land was passed on from women to their daughters (O'Callaghan 8). Several women owned the piece of land on which the Australian administration wanted to build the mine, but the administration did not keep this in mind. Often times "a claim was pegged out before the owners of the land even know what this meant" (O'Callaghan 8). The way the Australians wanted to "civilise" the Bougainville people went against everything the society believed in, so it was no surprise that they found heavy resistance for the building of the mine. The Nasioi, the native population of Bougainville who were the owners of the land on which the mine would be built, would not be paid for their land "but would have to be content with the standard paltry compensation for lost properties such as houses and coconut palms" (O'Callaghan 8).

Matters did not get better after the mine was eventually built. The Australian government had reasoned that it would be a huge influx of money for Papua New Guinea, which would result in a more technically advanced country. Although they were not wrong about money coming in, especially for the island of Bougainville, the resistance of the native population grew. Protests against the mine were going on "throughout the mine's life" (Lasslet 35). Race began to play a role when more and more workers from Papua New Guinea and Australia came to the island to work in the mine. The Bougainvilleans, who identified themselves as "black skins", distrusted the Australian "white skins" and the Papua New Guinean "red skins". According to native writer Francis Ona, the mine used a "dual wage structure" which meant local employees were paid considerably less (O'Callaghan 9). He also noticed that "hazardous chemicals" were used on site, increasing the feeling of the local population that their land was being invaded (O'Callaghan 9). Eventually the distrust and discontent grew into violence and the Papua New Guinea government sent in police riot squads, which only angered local citizens more. They accused the

government of abusing the civil rights of Bougainvilleans and eventually they rallied against the national government (O’Callaghan 9). The Bougainvilleans united under the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA), which strove towards independence from Papua New Guinea. The mine was eventually shut down in 1989 but the violence did not stop. The Papua New Guinean national army was sent to Bougainville and “was given a freehand to try and quell the rebellion” (O’Callaghan 9). The BRA gained the upper hand in the combats and the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) blockaded the island, meaning all transport to and from the island was halted (Lasslett 36). “As medical supplies dried up and emergency evacuations became impossible, the blockade became responsible for the deaths of thousands of civilians – many more than died as a result of the fighting” (O’Callaghan 12). On 17 May 1990, the Independent Republic of Bougainville was declared and Francis Ono, who had gone from writer to most influential activist, declared himself president. The new government, however, was unable to keep the people of the island under control. Many crimes such as murder, rape, and robbery were committed by people who justified their actions as acting on the behest of the BRA (Lasslett 36). “Resistance forces armed by the PNGDF began to spring up as the more vigorous communities attempted to protect themselves from BRA attack” (O’Callaghan 12), although most people fled into the bush. This is the setting of the novel *Mister Pip*. The novel clearly displays the results of the blockade on the “regular” citizens of Bougainville who are just trying to live their lives, and the crimes committed by both the BRA and the PNGDF.

The postcolonial theories described in this chapter are the major theories that will be represented in the thesis. There will also be some minor themes, but they will all fall under an umbrella of the theories already explained. Chapter two of this thesis will deal with the way the children and Mr Watts interpret *Great Expectations* and mimicry, which also includes rewriting history, and chapter three will mostly focus on elements related to intertextuality. The postcolonial elements in Charles Dickens novels and other Victorian works is important for creating the context in which the use of *Great Expectations* in *Mister Pip* should be viewed, and since the Bougainville conflict plays a major role in *Mister Pip*, it is also important to understand this context in order to understand and analyse the novel.

2. Storytelling in *Mister Pip*

Three important elements of postcolonial theory that are prominent in *Mister Pip* are those of Mr Watts and the children interpreting the Victorian text *Great Expectations* and making it their own, mimicry, and rewriting history. There are many examples of storytelling in the novel. The discussion of *Great Expectations* in the classroom is just one of them, but it is a very important one. Matilda uses *Great Expectations* to explain the context of the village, both to herself as well as to the reader, for in the end it is revealed that she is the one who wrote the novel.

This chapter will focus on different ways in which *Great Expectations* is interpreted on the island. An important tool that is used to show Matilda's development, especially her education, is that of mimicry. Matilda goes through the adopt, adapt, adept phases, which begins with adopting the new culture. Secondly, she is adapting it, adding her own experiences and culture. Finally, she is adepting the British Victorian history. She becomes a Dickens scholar and does not see the author or the novel the same way as she did when she was a child. She eventually goes against the novel by returning to her village. Finally, there is the case of rewriting history. There are a lot of examples of rewriting history throughout the novel. Oral and written history eventually get mixed in a very unique way when *Great Expectations* stops being read from a novel, and starts becoming a story that is told aloud from memory.

2.1 Interpreting *Great Expectations*

Mister Pip by Lloyd Jones is a novel about a young girl named Matilda who lives on the island of Bougainville during the conflict previously described. The novel is set during the time in which the Papua New Guinea army blocked off the island and many non-natives fled, including Matilda's father and all of the teachers of the little school in the village. Only one man from New Zealand, Mr Watts, stayed on the island. He decides to become the teacher, but since he does not really know how to teach he only reads the children *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens and teaches them lessons from there. At various times in the novel the little village is visited by either redskin soldiers or members of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army, called the Rambos in the novel. When the soldiers first come to the village, they demand to

know who Pip is, since Matilda wrote his name in the sand on the beach and the soldiers think he is a fugitive. When the villagers cannot say, the soldiers burn all of the people's belongings. After that the Rambos come into the village. They can be distracted with stories told by Mr Watts, who identifies himself as "Mister Pip", and one day they disappear. Finally, the redskin soldiers come into the village again. They have a Rambo prisoner who identifies Mr Watts as Pip. Mr Watts is shot, and Matilda's mother Dolores is raped and killed by the soldiers in order to protect her daughter. Matilda becomes disoriented and depressed and some time after the soldiers come into the village, she falls into a river and is rescued by a group of people escaping the island. Matilda is reunited with her father in Australia and she becomes a Dickens scholar, although she never sees Dickens the way other people see him. She visits Mr Watts's ex wife who tells her stories of his life that provide Matilda with more context into who he really was. Eventually, she writes the novel *Mister Pip* and it is implied she returns to the village in Bougainville, contrary to Pip in *Great Expectations* who could not return to his home with Joe in the end.

The children in Mr Watts's classroom start to interpret the story of *Great Expectations* as something they can identify with in their own lives from the moment Mr Watts starts reading them the novel. While the reader of *Mister Pip* experiences this mostly through main character Matilda, since she is the narrator, it also becomes clear when the other children are retelling the story from memory later on in the novel that *Great Expectations* played a very large role in their lives as well. Matilda notices this when others come up with a lot of excerpts from the book. She says, "it was clear that Victoria, Gilbert, Mabel, and even Daniel thought about *Great Expectations* as much as I did" (Jones 119).

When reading *Great Expectations* it is not just Matilda and the other children who become conflicted about their identity, either as a member of the Bougainville society, or as something outside of that which can only be identified as a reader of Victorian literature, which in Pip's world would be constituted as a "gentleman". Mr Watts himself also struggles with his identity. This shows itself in various ways. First off is the high regard in which he holds *Great Expectations*. The "excessive embrace of his Victorian cultural heritage, symbolized by his preaching of *Great Expectations* as "an enlightened gospel", gives him intellectual

ascendancy over the Indigenous villagers” (Wilson 225). Mr Watts is not from England, he is from Wellington, New Zealand, but he clearly identifies as a descendant of the Victorians who produced *Great Expectations*. Mr Watts is at the start of the novel immediately described as the only white man left in the village, and he “over-invests in whiteness. He dresses as a “gentleman” in a white linen suit, an old white shirt and he wears a tie” (Wilson 225). His identity becomes that of his White English forefathers. However, just like the children, Mr Watts does not see England such as it is now in reality, but he imagines himself to be of the England from Dickens’s novels: a Victorian England. This also shows itself at the very start, during the first lesson he gives the children, by telling them he is going to introduce them to Mr Dickens. He creates the illusion that Dickens is still around and a person the children can interact with. Matilda even tells her mother “tomorrow we meet Mr Dickens” (Jones 16) after Mr Watts said this in class. It becomes clear that that is the way Mr Watts sees it, for he is convinced they can get to know Dickens through his novel. By using *Great Expectations*, Jones here creates an image of the Other in a very explicit way, namely by mentioning Mr Dickens who the children do not know.

Great Expectations is not the only medium through which both the children and Mr Watts experience lessons. Mr Watts also invites the children’s relatives into the classroom to teach them about the things these natives know a lot about. There is a stark contrast between the lessons by Mr Watts and the lessons by the parents, siblings, grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins of the children. By the reactions of the children, and especially the narrator Matilda, the differences between how serious they take the lessons of Mr Watts compared to the lessons of their fellow natives becomes very clear. The children become embarrassed when their relatives walk in. When the first boy’s mother, Mrs Masoi, comes to talk about a pig recipe, he acts very ashamed. When Mr Watts asks him to introduce his mother, Gilbert

wincing. He bit the insides of his cheeks. Slowly he gathered himself up. He managed to stand up, but with his chin attached to his chest, his eyes trying to poke through the top of his eyelids. We heard him mutter, ‘This is Mum’ (Jones 32)

When his mother is done talking, Matilda says “poor Gilbert. He was wincing and shuffling his big behind in the desk in front of me” (Jones 32).

Matilda herself feels embarrassed after her mother comes to tell her story as well. She has strikingly opposite views than Mr Watts and does not agree with his teaching, because Matilda is more interested in Pip than in the bible and in her family heritage. As she becomes closer to the fictional Pip she pushes Dolores away. Therefore, when she comes into class for the second time, Dolores gives Mr Watts a “hostile look” and when she catches sight of the novel, Matilda thought “she might try and grab it off him” (Jones 67). Even though *Great Expectations* seems to have a bigger impact on the children, they wanted their family members to keep returning to tell stories. “We didn’t want them scared to come to class,” (Jones 55) Matilda says after Mrs Harpia comes to talk about lychee.

Before there was writing, orality was “the means by which societies of varying complexity regulated themselves, organized their presents and their pasts, made formal spaces for philosophical reflections, pronounced on power, questioned and in some cases contested power, and generally paid homage to “the word”” (Gunner 1). In other words, oral storytelling was the way in which a society handled itself. It is therefore understandable that in a society like the village in Bougainville, where only the Bible and *Great Expectations* are available, there is still a strong oral tradition. By having native Bougainvilleans come to class and tell their stories, Lloyd Jones indicates from the beginning of the novel that oral history and storytelling are still highly valued elements in the society.

One of the most notable differences between the stories the natives tell and the story Mr Watts teaches is that the stories of the family members all somehow relate to their own lives within society. They are practical stories, whether it is about a fruit or the colour blue. They cannot use the stories to escape. Therefore they are interesting, but they do not have the same impact as *Great Expectations* does. However this does not count for Dolores’s Bible. Even though this is a book containing written stories about other people, Matilda does not become attached to it, and even pushes it away. This can be explained by investigating the reason why *Great Expectations* is so important to her. When she is thinking about that novel, the world in which Pip lives and his adventures, she does not have to worry about her own troubles. She can escape into this world of Victorian London and be safe, and even have a friend. Her mother, on the other hand, shows her a whole new way of suffering. The Bible mostly tells stories about punishment and Hell. Unlike some of the women in the village, Matilda does not find solace in knowing she will go to Heaven if she behaves well,

she only sees a whole new way of misery. The Bible is not a place she can escape to and relax, but rather something that creates new problems.

2.2 Mimicry

Mr Watts does not read *Great Expectations* in class the way Charles Dickens wrote it; rather he makes changes and leaves out certain elements in the story. By doing this he makes it easier for the children to identify with *Great Expectations* and for Matilda, this is where the adopt, adapt, adept process begins. Although this process is usually reserved for an analysis of the thought process of postcolonial writers, it is also possible to use it as a way to describe Matilda's progress of growing up in the novel. Education plays a very large role in both novels, and this is an example of where the adopt, adapt, adept process can be identified. At first Matilda is introduced to the story of *Great Expectations*. She starts to adopt the story of "Mister Pip". In the case of education, she sees that Pip is in the process of becoming educated and she realises that that is what Mr Watts is doing to her as well. As is expressed not only by Matilda but also by other children in the class, they all want to become a gentleman-like figure (that is, not a commoner) the same way Pip does.

Secondly, she starts to incorporate the story into her own life, thus initiating the adapt stage. Instead of trying to imagine what Victorian England and Pip's life would be like, she starts to visualise Pip as a friend of hers on the island. She incorporates him in her family tree and she identifies different people in her life as characters from *Great Expectations*. She is striving towards incorporating British elements of being sophisticated into her own life on the island. This stage could also be described as mimicry, although this has a more negative connotation. Colonial mimicry is seen as

the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference (Bhabha 86)

This means that the image that comes with mimicry is the colonizer's ideal that is attached to a colony, namely the natives imitating the colonizer's way of life and culture, but it has to be different enough so that it can still be interpreted as the Other.

This can also be seen in *Mister Pip*, except there is no colonizer present to either force these rules or see the effect. Mr Watts, the only white influence on the

island, is the one colonized by the British, and he is trying to show the children how they can also incorporate these elements into their lives, namely by copying the education Pip received. Pip's main goal in *Great Expectations* was becoming a gentleman, and commoners were always looked down upon throughout the novel. Examples of this are Estella looking down on Pip, and later Pip looks down on Joe because he represents Pip's commoner past. He is not educated and therefore Pip feels embarrassed by him. As Pip is learning and becoming more of a gentleman, Matilda feels like she is becoming less of a commoner as well. She is trying to escape into the world of Victorian Britain, but she will always remain the Other because she is in a completely different context.

The final stage of the three-step process, the adept phase, happens towards the end of the novel. When Matilda goes to live with her father in Australia she experiences a new way of schooling that is totally different from that of Mr Watts. Instead of interpreting the novel she is learning entirely different things, namely more standard school courses such as history and maths. When Matilda finds *Great Expectations* in the library and reads it for the first time she is very disappointed. She realises how much Mr Watts changed about the novel while reading it to the children. Matilda becomes frustrated with the fact that it is so different; there is more hardship and struggle (the absence of which in Mr Watts version made her turn towards *Great Expectations* instead of her mother's Bible) and there are characters that Mr Watts completely left out (Jones 194). She also finds the novel very difficult to get through. As she learns and grows up, Pip plays less and less a role in her life, and her focus moves from Pip to Dickens the author. One could argue that the adept stage is not fully represented in the novel for, even though she is not happy with how the novel turned out to be in reality, she is still fascinated by it and she becomes a Dickens scholar.

Through her studies Matilda is once again disappointed by the view the world, and especially the British have of Dickens. When she visits a Dickens museum she sees a figure of him sitting at his desk and she realises that, once again, this is completely different from what she had imagined on the island (Jones 219). Through her studies, however, she starts to appreciate the island on which she grew up more. She says that she will not make the same mistake Pip made by not returning home to Joe, but she will realise how important Bougainville is to her, for the novel closes with Matilda saying "I would try where Pip had failed. I would try to return home"

(Jones 219). This is again a sign of the adept stage. She rejects the way she experienced the novel before receiving a proper education, and instead of accepting what happened in the novel she realises she does not want the same thing to happen to her and she starts to accept Bougainville as her home. While she identified most with Pip in her younger years, she sees more parallels between herself and Dickens when she becomes older. Like him she also becomes an author and eventually writes the novel *Mister Pip* itself. What is interesting about *Mister Pip* is that it is not responding to Victorian literature in a negative way. Usually the practice of writing back to the coloniser comes from a form of critique, but this does not seem to be the main goal of author Lloyd Jones (or Matilda, who is in the end revealed to be the author). Instead, “rather than generate dynamic textual resistance to its Victorian precursor, *Mister Pip* celebrates the power of storytelling and reading, and revalues *Great Expectations* as vital cultural capital for the subaltern subject who suffers in the traumatic present moment” (Wilson 221). Instead of using and reflecting on *Great Expectations* to put it in the negative light as “a work from the coloniser”, the children (especially Matilda) find a way to use the novel to escape from the hardships they are going through. By representing Matilda growing up using the three phases adopt, adapt, adept, Lloyd Jones once again entwines storytelling and postcolonial theory. The three phases are most commonly used to refer to the process which literature written by an author from a (formerly) colonised nation would go through. Authors would copy the culture, edit it to fit into their own societies, and finally take a critical look and rebel against it (Barry 189). Matilda does the same except British culture is represented by *Great Expectations*.

2.3 Rewriting History in *Mister Pip*

A well-known phenomenon in (post)colonial societies is that of rewriting history. Rewriting history means that (post)colonial societies come into contact with British works of literature and start to incorporate it on their own culture, as described in the first two phases of adopt, adapt, adept. However, they do not stick to the original work of literature, but rather rewrite it in order to fit their own history and experiences. Rewriting is often “not simply clever imitation but marks the canny deployment of a serviceable form and style to give expression to a subjugated collective imagination attempting national self-definition” (Mukherjee 113). In other words, authors from the colonies use works that have been brought to their country by the colonizers, and with which the natives of the colonies have been familiarised, to

create their own identity. They take aspects the natives recognise but change them to make them more relevant to their own lives. Mukherjee here describes the adapt phase of literature. First the natives became familiar with the work (adopt), after which they use and change it to make it relevant for their own society (adapt). There are many such “creative and critical acts of rewriting that lead to the formation of an alternative canon for a postcolonial, global age (Mukherjee 113). Not only is *Mister Pip* an example of one of these rewritings, but in the novel the process is also explained.

Mister Pip is not just a novel about a small village in Bougainville during the island’s civil war, nor is it just the story of a young girl processing everything that is going on around her. *Mister Pip* is a novel about storytelling. The novel “is as much about reading Dickens as it is about creative misreading, anachronistic interpretation, and the valorization of a viral textuality that not merely collapses author and reader functions but also the critical distance between living and reading” (Mukherjee 141). The first instance of storytelling is the book itself, although that is only explained at the very end of the novel. It becomes clear from the beginning that Matilda is the narrator of the story, however at the very end the reader discovers that she is in fact the one who wrote the physical copy of the novel *Mister Pip* (not in reality of course, for the real author is Lloyd Jones, but she is actually described as sitting down and writing the first line of the novel). Another instance of storytelling is quite obvious: Mr Watts reads the children the story of *Great Expectations*. At the beginning it is thought that he reads exactly what the book says, but later on Matilda finds out he has changed a lot in order to make it more relevant to the children.

Mr Watts retelling the story of *Great Expectations* during his lessons is only one of the many examples of performativity in *Mister Pip*. The performative element in language was first introduced by J.L. Austin, who “drew attention to how utterances in language may not just describe or state but may perform at the same time” (Korkut-Nayki 44). He made the difference between “constative” utterances in language, which simply state, describe or report, and “performative” utterances, whereby saying is the same as doing, i.e. performing an act” (Korkut-Nayki 44). The most clear and well-known example of performative utterance is that of the “I do” in marriage. When a man or woman

says “I do”, they are not just stating that they are marrying, “while saying this the person enters the institution of marriage, performs the act of marrying” (Korkut-Nayki 44). In *Mister Pip* there are many examples of performative language, and rewriting plays a very large role in it. There are two ways to look at a work of literature from a perspective that uses this speech-act theory, but they both come down to, as literary theorist Angela Esterhammer put it, “treating “the text itself as a speech act” and as exploring the “speech acts *in* a literary text”” (qtd. in Korkut-Nayki 46). Since this thesis focuses on what is being said in the text, it will only analyse *Mister Pip* from the second point of view.

One of the major acts of performing speech in *Mister Pip* is that of *Great Expectations* itself. The children are deeply affected by the story. For the main character Matilda this means that *Great Expectations* changes the way she “perceives her life and her surroundings, allows her to draw parallels between Pip and herself, and provides her with another world to which she can escape” (Korkut-Nayki 47). *Great Expectations* becomes entwined with Matilda’s real life. It ““performs” in Lloyd Jones’ novel by creating a new world and shaping the characters’ perceptions” (Korkut-Nayki 47). The first sign that this is happening is the first time Mr Watts reads *Great Expectations*. Matilda says

There had been no warning from Mr Watts. He just began to read. My desk was in the second row from the back. Gilbert Masoi sat in front, and I couldn’t see past his fat shoulders and big woolly head. So when I heard Mr Watts speak I thought he was talking to himself. That he was Pip. It was only when he began to walk between our desks that I saw the book in his hand (Jones 18)

Throughout the novel there are more instances of Matilda being so invested in *Great Expectations* that the fictional and the real world entwine. Near the end of the novel, it is *Great Expectations* that eventually encourages her to become a Dickens scholar herself, and to write down her own life story.

Another form of storytelling is that of the natives who come into the classroom and talk about the things they know. These are oral stories with a large variety of subjects. They seem to be the closest to what would be expected of the oral history of natives. All of these stories fall under performative language as well, for they encourage the listener to do something. An example of this is

when Matilda's mother talks about the crabs. After Dolores had told the story about how you can predict the weather by looking at crabs, the children "went down to the beach to look for crabs, to see if what my [Matilda's] mum had said was true" (Jones 39). When the novel *Great Expectations* goes missing, another example of storytelling starts, namely that of the children recollecting the novel and piecing it back together. By writing everything they remember in his notebook, Mr Watts is rewriting the canon.

Mr Watts [also] offers an exemplary instance of creative recounting when he recites *Great Expectations* to the rambos, enthraling them with story each night to avert the night's inevitable business of death . . . The rebels, who listen on "with their mouths and ears open to catch every word, their weapons resting on the ground in front of their bare feet like useless relics", fall for Mr. Watts's lie that he is Pip, and it is his story (Mukherjee 142).

When he starts telling the story to the rebels *Great Expectations* is no longer a novel written by Charles Dickens, but it becomes the history of Mr Watts, who is called Pip for the occasion. The fact that Mr Watts identifies himself as Pip is a very important element, for he gives an example of "saying becomes doing, and adopting a name means growing into the identity required by that name" (Korkut-Nayki 50). Where it originally seemed like the novel put an emphasis on written history as being more valuable, it becomes clear that the most important story in the novel is an oral one, the physical copy of *Great Expectations* only provides a base on which an elaborate oral culture and history can be build. Jones uses so much performative language and he blurs the lines between reality and stories throughout the novel, so that it is not unexpected that the line between the novel *Great Expectations* and British culture blurs as well.

From the moment Mr Watts starts telling the story of *Great Expectations* it becomes clear that the children have never come into contact with this kind of literature before. The novel supports the research that Charles Dickens's stories are universal and that people, in this case children, will be able to incorporate them in their own lives. It seems like *Mister Pip* is an exact example of how Victorian literature is embraced by colonial natives. The theory that Charles Dickens novels are very popular in New Zealand is also enforced by the fact that

Mr Watts, who is from New Zealand, is highly influenced by the novel in the way he behaves. While Matilda goes through the three stages of adopt adapt adept in her education using *Great Expectations* also supports the idea of the novel using *Great Expectations* to show a postcolonial process. Finally, the act of rewriting history is executed by combining oral and written stories, and making a performance act out of *Great Expectations*. The one element which unifies the theory recognised in *Mister Pip* is that of storytelling. All outcomes of postcolonial analyses in this chapter relate to this element.

3. Migrating Characters from *Great Expectations* to *Mister Pip*

The epigraph of *Mister Pip* by Lloyd Jones states ‘characters migrate’ – Umberto Eco. This is a very fitting caption, which also plays a very big role in the postcolonial aspect of *Mister Pip*. The migration of characters, according to Umberto Eco, means that some characters “leave the text in which they were “born” to migrate to a space in a universe which is very difficult to delineate” (Parey 2). Well-known characters such as Sherlock Holmes are so ingrained in the collective memory that “even those who have never read the archetypal score can claim to make true statements about them” (qtd. in Parey 2). This is a very obvious example of character migration such as Eco meant it; the character exists outside of its text. Victorian text especially have a quality to them which makes them suitable for migrating characters, namely “the sense that the characters in Victorian novels have, in some way, an existence beyond the confines of the novel [which] spurs the desire for adaptation and sequels of classic Victorian texts” (qtd. in Parey 3). This is also what Lloyd Jones does in *Mister Pip*. Characters such as Pip, Miss Havisham, and Mr Jaggers are taken out of the context in which they are originally written in the Charles Dickens novel *Great Expectations*, and they are transported to another world, namely the Bougainville from *Mister Pip*. This chapter looks into the various examples in which this migration happens by projecting characters from *Great Expectations* onto *Mister Pip* characters. The chapter will show that Victorian characters are not only able to migrate into other Western works, but that they are also able to exist outside of Western society. Jones once again blurs the lines of storytelling by showing that Western characters can blur into a significantly different context. There will be a focus on the characters of Matilda, Mr Watts, Matilda’s mother Dolores, and the log Matilda clings to when she is in the river.

3.1 Matilda

The biggest and most obvious parallel between *Great Expectations* and *Mister Pip* is realized through the main characters of the both novels, namely Pip and Matilda respectively. In both the novels the narrators are homodiegetic. The stories also follow the lives of the main characters as they grow up, so they are both a Bildungsroman. *Great Expectations* is the story of main character Pip, who is the protagonist and the narrator of the story, and the same goes for Matilda in

Mister Pip. The reader of both novels sees everything through their eyes, which makes the stories unreliable as they are only told from one perspective. What also stands out is that both novels told by the narrator when he or she is older, Pip and Matilda are looking back on their lives, especially their childhoods. The theme of losing parents is something that comes back to the lives of Matilda and Pip both. Where Pip has lost his parents before the start of *Great Expectations*, and he will never see his father again, Matilda experiences losing her mother and is eventually reunited with her father.

This does not mean that the parallel is not there, for Matilda finds solace in the fact that Pip did not know his father either at the beginning of *Mister Pip*. She adopts Pip's strategy when dealing with the fact that she does not know her father: "encouraged by Pip's example I tried to build a picture of my own dad" (Jones 22). Pip creates this picture of his father by looking at his tombstone, and deducing from the lettering that "he was a square, stout, dark man, with curly black hair" (Dickens 3). Matilda also uses lettering to paint a picture of her father, namely his own handwriting, although she is less successful in recreating her father than Pip was, not knowing how to interpret his handwriting for "he wrote in small capital letters. What did that say about him? He wanted to be noticed, but not too noticeable?" Matilda gives up on creating her own image of her father and decides to ask her mother. She wants to use Pip's language to get to know her father so she asks her mother – Dolores – if "she thought he was a 'stout man.'" (Jones 22). Her mother, however, does not understand this sort of language and is unable to answer Matilda's question. Matilda's question about her father's stoutness is an example of her continuous search for parallels between her world and that of Pip.

Trying to fit her mother into the world of *Great Expectations* is another such example. When Matilda learns about Pip's sister she is immediately reminded of her mother: "I knew the orphaned white kid and that small, fragile place he squeezed into between his awful sister and loveable Joe Gargery because the same space existed between Mr Watts and my mum" (Jones 40). However, later on Matilda says "I changed my mind about my mum being like Pip's sister. She had more in common with Miss Havisham – Miss Havisham who cannot move on from the day of her greatest disappointment" (Jones 49). What is

interesting in the narrative of *Mister Pip* is that Matilda has so much in common with Pip, yet she is never compared to Pip in the novel itself, even though other people in the Bougainville village are very often compared to *Great Expectations* characters.

The role of Pip, however, is assigned to Mr Watts. Matilda is not the one who assigns this role; rather this is done by the redskins and the revolutionaries. Matilda sees Pip as a completely different person. Someone she got to know through the reading of *Great Expectations*. Even though there are quite a few hints throughout the novel that even Matilda starts to see Mr Watts as Pip – when he starts reading Matilda cannot see the book and she thinks Mr Watts is telling his own story (18), and when Mr Watts tells the story Matilda says she “felt like I had been spoken to by this boy Pip” (20). Matilda never explicitly identifies Mr Watts as Pip until he does so himself. Pip is not represented in Matilda or Mr Watts, but he is a completely separate person that exists in Matilda’s world. Pip has become Matilda’s friend. Matilda immediately notices this, for she says “by the time Mr Watts reached the end of chapter one I felt like I had been spoken to by this boy Pip . . . I had found a new friend” (Jones 20). When Matilda first writes Pip’s name in the sand, she also talks to him, even though she knows he cannot hear her. She tells him about her mother, but realises that “whatever I might say about my mum to Pip I knew he wouldn’t hear me” (Jones 39). Pip exists in a strange in-between world. He is real enough for Matilda to be friends with him, but she is aware that he only exists in the story and that he cannot talk back to her. The peculiar position of this fictional character is strengthened when Dolores passes on her knowledge of her family tree to Matilda. Just like Pip, the people Dolores talks about cannot talk back when they are talked to, but unlike Pip, these people actually existed. Therefore it is curious when Matilda says “the names went in one ear and out the other” (Jones 41).

3.2 Mr Watts

Mr Watts is one of the most interesting, but also one of the most complicated characters of the novel. He plays several roles that not only are assigned by different people, but he also plays roles he has assigned to himself. Since it is outside its scope, this thesis will only give a brief introduction on the

roles Mr Watts assigns to himself, and will analyse the roles from *Great Expectations* that are given to him more thoroughly.

When it comes to Mr Watts, Matilda does not doubt that he is never truly himself. After visiting his wife in New Zealand she says

[Mr Watts] was whatever he needed to be, what we asked him to be.

Perhaps there are lives like that – they pour into whatever space we made ready for them to fill. We needed a teacher, Mr Watts became that teacher. We needed a magician to conjure up other worlds, and Mr Watts had become that magician. When we needed a saviour, Mr Watts had filled that role. When the redskins required a life, Mr Watts had given himself (Jones 210)

At this point, Matilda has found out Mr Watts used to be an actor and she declares “the fact he enjoyed acting gnaws away with its questions of sincerity . . . Was this Mr Watts, or an actor playing Mr Watts the school-teacher” (Jones 210). It becomes clear that Tom Christian Watts has played roles all his life, not just when he was on stage. When he moved to Bougainville, he became Mr Watts. When he put on his red clown’s nose and pulled his wife in a cart, he was Pop Eye. When all the teachers left the island, he put on a suit and a tie and turned into a teacher himself. When the redskins needed someone to identify as Charles Dickens, Mr Watts became Mr Dickens, and finally when they needed to find Pip, he became Mr Pip.

The first role related to *Great Expectations* Mr Watts gets assigned is that of Charles Dickens. When the soldiers come to their village, they ask for Pip. One of the little boys from Matilda’s class, Daniel, blurts out that “Pip belongs to Dickens” (Jones 84). The soldiers then want to know who Dickens is and when Daniel points to the school building and Mr Watts is fetched by the soldiers, he has to take on the identity of Dickens. ““You are Mister Dickens”” the officer tells Mr Watts. Even though he could have explained the situation, Mr Watts replies with ““Yes, I am that man”” (Jones 86). When Mr Watts is then ordered to go fetch Pip he tries to explain that Pip is merely a character in a book, but the book is lost so he cannot prove it. The redskins think Mr Watts is hiding Pip the refugee and they burn all their possessions and threaten to burn the houses as well if the people do not give them Pip the next time they show up. Mr Watts pretended to

be Dickens to protect Daniel, who would have gotten in trouble if the redskin soldiers had thought he was lying about Charles Dickens, but without knowing he has only made it worse. Later on in Matilda's life, when she goes to visit the house of Charles Dickens that has been turned into a museum, she realises that she never stopped imagining Charles Dickens as Mr Watts. When she sees a wax figure of Dickens she whispers to herself

'I have met Dickens and this is not him' . . . The Mr Dickens I had known also had a beard and a lean face and eyes that wanted to leap from his face. But my Mr Dickens used to go about barefoot and in a buttonless shirt. Apart from special occasions such as when he taught, and then he wore a suit (Jones 219)

Charles Dickens for her will always look like Mr Watts, because he was the one who eventually wrote their version of *Great Expectations*, the one he created from the memories they collected. This is not strange, since Matilda indicates to have "fallen out of love with the characters" (Jones 217) of *Great Expectations* once she has read the original story.

The second character of *Great Expectations* that Mr Watts portrays is that of Pip. When the Rambos come into their village and they find Mr Watts. They see the white man as a sort of price. When a drunk rebel starts saying obscene things to Mr Watts he tells them to sit down. They are intrigued and intimidated by Mr Watts. When they ask his name he answers "My name is Pip" and from that moment on he becomes known as "Mister Pip" to the Rambos (Jones 139). He starts to tell the story of Pip as if it were his own, changing elements of the story so the islanders could relate to it better. The example given in *Mister Pip* is that,

Mr Watts' Pip grew up in a brick depot on a copper mine road without any memory of his parents. His father had disappeared without a trace, 'lost at sea'. His mum got drunk on jungle juice and fell off a tree inside the house (Jones 143)

Throughout the next six nights, Mr Watts distracts the rebels by telling his life story and mixing it in with that of Pip. Because Mr Watts is such a mysterious person to the people from the village, it is easy for him to blur his life story with that of someone else. No one knows the truth about him anyways. He also ties in stories from the other islanders that have come up in the classroom. Mr Watts is

able to distract the Rambos for long enough, and they leave without a problem. When the redskins come back into the village they have a Rambo prisoner with them who identifies Mr Watts as Pip. He is killed by the soldiers and fed to the pigs. Mr Watts has now saved the village three times. First when they wanted an explanation for Pip's name and he declares to be the writer Charles Dickens, second when he slips into the role of Pip and entertains the rebels and other villagers with stories so there will not be any trouble, and lastly when the redskins come back for Pip.

Finally, there is one last character from *Great Expectations* with whom Mr Watts can be compared, namely Magwitch. This does not appear much in *Mister Pip* and therefore this thesis will only mention it briefly. However, because it is the only character in *Great Expectations* that is related to the colonies, it is important to mention the comparison. Like Magwitch, Mr Watts has gone abroad because he had to pay for something he had done. Magwitch was a criminal, who was sent to the Australian colonies by the government, and Mr Watts cheated on his wife and lost his child, so he felt the need to go back to the home of his wife Grace, the island of Bougainville (Jones 204). Neither of the characters actually wanted to go away from home. It can also be argued that both characters were the benefactors of the main characters. Magwitch was the person who eventually made sure Pip got the opportunity to become a gentleman, and Mr Watts was the one who introduced Matilda to *Great Expectations* and eventually set her up for the rest of her life, since she goes on to study Charles Dickens.

3.3 The Log and Matilda's Mother

Even though the log only plays a small role in the story of Matilda, it is still one of the most prominent examples of Matilda assigning the role of one of the characters of *Great Expectations* to someone, or in this case something, from the surroundings she lives in. When she is drowning in the river in which she fell, she clings to a log, which ultimately saves her life. Matilda notices that the log saved her life just like Mr Jaggers saved Pip's life by bringing him to London. While she is terrified, the log is the only thing she can cling to, not only physically but also mentally. She is, at this point, still severely damaged from what she has seen happening to the people in her village, especially Mr Watts and her mother. Matilda is careless walking along the river. She knows it is dangerous to walk

there while a storm is coming, but she does not care (Jones 184). It is not until she is in actual danger and might drown that she says “an hour earlier I couldn’t have cared what happened to me. Now I felt a responsibility to live” (Jones 185). Matilda is still in the water and is clinging to the log, terrified. She wants someone to talk to, but she cannot talk to a log. That is when she decides

it was natural for me to name my saviour, this log, after the man who had saved Pip’s life. Better to cling to the worldliness of Mr Jagers than the slimy skin of a water-soaked log. I couldn’t talk to a log. But I could talk to Mr Jagers (Jones 186)

This is when it becomes clear as well that Mr Watts had not told the full, or the true story of *Great Expectations*, for Mr Jagers was not truly the saviour of Pip, but Magwitch was. Matilda did not know that though, so she names the log Mr Jagers.

Another instance earlier mentioned in which Matilda very clearly names someone from her life and identifies her as a character from *Great Expectations* is in the case of her mother, Dolores. At the very start, when Matilda is giving a quick background of her life so far, she explains how she is living with only her mother because her father went to Australia and the blockade prevented them from going after him, or him coming back for them. She explains how her mother knew vague facts about the world such as some large capitals and that man had been on the moon, but she “was inclined not to believe such stories” (Jones 6). Therefore Matilda feels like she was kept in ignorance of the things that happened in the world. She hints that the relationship with her mother was a bit closer after the island got cut off from the rest of the world and the teachers had left the island, for she mentions “Us kids hung around with our mums. We helped in the gardens” (Jones 8), but when Mr Watts starts teaching, mother and daughter drift apart. Matilda understands that Dolores does not like hearing about Pip and *Great Expectations* because “she worried she would lose her Matilda to Victorian England” and in a way, she was right. Matilda prefers to live with the characters of *Great Expectations*, replacing the people in her life by identifying them as characters.

At first Matilda decides to compare her mother to Pip’s sister. Matilda does this because there are many similarities between her life and that of Pip,

including living with a woman who takes care of them but whom they do not get along with. However, Matilda quickly realises this comparison does not do her mother justice because, unlike Pip's sister, Dolores cares very much about her daughter. She is not mean to Matilda because she is a bad person, but because she herself is hurt as well; by the surroundings of the war, but mostly by the fact that she cannot be with the man she loves, Matilda's father. Dolores's love for her daughter is finally shown in the ultimate sacrifice, when she offers her life so the redskin soldiers will not rape Matilda;

[The soldier] spoke quietly, as a man might who is in control of himself.

'You beg me, and for what? What will you give me to save your daughter?'

... 'My life,' replied my mum. 'I will give you my life' (Jones 177)

Matilda almost immediately gave up the idea of her mother being like Pip's sister.

As soon as Matilda learns about Miss Havisham, she decides that she is the character who most resembles her mother. The biggest comparison between Dolores and Miss Havisham is the fact that they are both stuck in time, grieving for the man who left them. Miss Havisham was left on her wedding day because her fiancé was only after her money and property, and Dolores was left by her husband, Matilda's father, because he had to go to work in Australia and they are unable to follow him because of the blockade. Both women are stuck in time, Miss Havisham quite literally by stopping all the clocks, sitting in a room decorated for the wedding and wearing her wedding dress, while Dolores is stuck mentally, always expecting her husband to just walk out of the woods towards them and for everything to return back to normal. Matilda realises this as soon as Mr Watts tells the children about Miss Havisham, she says

Miss Havisham remains in her wedding gown for an event that has been and gone. I had an idea my mum was stuck in a similar moment. Only it had to do with an argument with my dad (Jones 49)

Matilda does not see her mother as an evil woman like Pip's sister, but simply as someone who has been hurt and cannot let go of the past.

Umberto Eco's theory of migrating characters is clearly represented in *Mister Pip*. Pip has migrated from *Great Expectations* in various forms, as Matilda, Mr Watts, and Matilda's friend. The characters of Mr Jaggers, Miss Havisham, and

Pip's sister are all also represented in *Great Expectations*. The characters each represented a postcolonial context because they are put in a colony. They are taken out of their original story and migrated into the island, just like Eco explained a lot of characters do. Whereas a lot of research done on this theory tends to focus on characters staying in the Western collective culture (for example how everyone seems to know who Sherlock Holmes is) *Mister Pip* shows the migrating characters from a postcolonial point of view: the characters do not know Charles Dickens, yet the characters are able to migrate there. It also amplifies the importance of Dickens in the culture of New Zealand, for Lloyd Jones is from New Zealand and decided to write a novel on *Great Expectations*.

Conclusion

By keeping the elements discussed in this thesis in mind, the research question ‘how does author Lloyd Jones use *Great Expectations* to reflect on postcolonial issues in his novel *Mister Pip*?’ can be partially answered. The reason why this thesis cannot provide a full answer is because there are so many instances of the use of *Great Expectations* to illustrate postcolonialism. The scope of this thesis is simply not large enough. That is why there are still various themes from *Mister Pip* which can be looked at in more depth in further research. The answer this thesis is able to give is related to the practice of storytelling, the adaptation of British literature by colonial natives, and the migration of characters. In *Mister Pip*, the way the story of *Great Expectations* is told is a very important aspect of the novel. It shows how a colony incorporates Victorian literature into their own lives, and entwines oral and written history to rewrite colonial literature and make it their own. Author Lloyd Jones uses *Great Expectations* to represent the British coloniser and shows various postcolonial theories through the act of storytelling in his novel *Mister Pip*.

The postcolonial practice of mimicry is also heavily represented in *Mister Pip*, especially when it comes to Matilda’s education. The three stages of the adopt, adapt, adept process are represented in the way Matilda experiences learning about *Great Expectations*. By using the novel, Lloyd Jones shows the reader how the stages of this theoretical concept can be represented in a particular situation. Matilda first adopts *Great Expectations* by being intrigued by it and thinking about the novel, secondly she adapts to it by applying the novel to her own life, and finally she adepts to it by finding out what the novel really says, studying it, and eventually doing what Pip could not do, namely return to her home. In Pip’s case this would be returning to Joe and his forge, and for Matilda it means returning to Bougainville.

Finally, an important process in *Mister Pip* is that of migrating characters. Even the epigraph is dedicated to Umberto Eco’s theory. Characters migrate means that characters (from certain novels) do not only exist in their own text, but also have a life outside. They go beyond the text itself and return in different situations. In the case of *Mister Pip* this means that characters from *Great Expectations* exist outside of the novel and return in different instances in *Mister Pip*. Most prominently, they are represented by people from Matilda’s life, but they also come to life as her friend (Pip), and Mr Watts takes on Pip’s identity. Even Charles Dickens becomes a

character, namely “writer of *Great Expectations*” instead of a real person and he is represented by Mr Watts as well.

Mister Pip is a novel that touches upon many different postcolonial issues, and this thesis did not have the scope to focus on all issues which could be discussed. Suggestions for further research are therefore all related to elements in the novel which also invite a postcolonial reading. The role of Dolores’s bible in the community could be looked at further. This thesis already mentioned it briefly, but Biblical education in colonies played a very large role. R.S. Sugirtharajah wrote a book about the use of the Bible in the colonies titled *The Bible and Empire: Postcolonial Explorations*, which could be used as a base for this research. Further research could also focus on Bhabha’s idea of the “Third Space” (Bhabha 36) which is heavily represented in *Mister Pip* in the form of the room Mr Watts and Grace made for their daughter. This is a space in which two cultures come together and form a separate identity, much like Bhabha describes in his theory. While this thesis focused on the migration of characters and how people in *Mister Pip* were assigned characters from *Great Expectations*, this could be broadened to the role of names in both *Mister Pip* and *Great Expectations*, since names play a significant part in both novels.

Even though the answer to the research question ‘how does author Lloyd Jones use *Great Expectations* to reflect on postcolonial issues in his novel *Mister Pip*?’ could still encompass more factors that fall outside the scope of this thesis, it can still be partially answered by the close reading of the themes discussed. The most important factor is that *Mister Pip* is a novel about storytelling. *Great Expectations* hereby represents the British coloniser and the novel is an account of how the main character reacts to its influence in her life. The three phases adopt, adapt, and adept provide an analysis for the thought process related this influence. Lloyd Jones is constantly blurring the lines between story and reality within the novel. By mixing oral and written stories, he is able to create a situation that represents the mixing of cultures in a unique way. This is again reflected by the fact that characters from *Great Expectations* migrate into *Mister Pip*. In conclusion, the various ways of storytelling in *Mister Pip* flow together in such a unique way, that it is able to tell the story of a small Bougainville village while always keeping in mind a large Victorian history.

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