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DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

Depiction of Japanese culture in *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* by Richard Flanagan

Zobrazení japonské kultury v románu *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* od Richarda Flanagana

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ABSTRAKT

Cílem této diplomové práce je popsat a zhodnotit způsob, jakým Richard Flanagan zachytil vybrané aspekty japonské kultury ve svém románu z roku 2013, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*. Jelikož je hlavním motivem románu život australského válečného vězně, což je téma významné pro tvorbu australské národní identity, je dílo nejdříve nahlédnuto z hlediska jeho pozice v širším kontextu australské literatury. Richard Flanagan ovšem čtenářům nabídl komplexní dílo, které danou tematiku zpracovává z perspektivy nejen australských vězňů, ale i jejich převážně japonských věznitelů. Zahrnutí pohledu Japonců román zařazuje mezi obdobná současná zpracování dané tématiky poskytující ucelenější vhled do událostí druhé světové války. Z toho důvodu se nabízí otázka zhodnotit, jakým způsobem jsou vybrané a zpracované jednotlivé stránky japonské kultury a zdali je zobrazení této kultury komplexní a věrné, či je možné vysledovat v románu schematizované pojetí a tedy i projevy tzv. "orientalismu," jak jej popsal Edward Said. Diplomová práce si dále klade za cíl prozkoumat, zdali a do jaké míry se Flanaganův román liší od ostatních příkladů australské literatury pojednávající o událostech druhé světové války a o Japonsku. V rámci analýzy je věnována pozornost třem vybraným oblastem: zápisu japonského jazyka, popisu japonské kultury skrze jednotlivé postavy a využití odkazů na japonskou literaturu. Provedená analýza ukázala, že ačkoli Flanagan prokázal snahu pojmout japonskou kulturu autenticky a rovnocenně, ve všech třech výše zmíněných oblastech se objevují místa, kde lze nalézt tendenci k zjednodušování a stereotypnímu zobrazení.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

australská válečná literatura, japonská kultura, japonská literatura, Richard Flanagan, orientalismus

ABSTRACT

The aim of this MA thesis is to describe and evaluate the manner in which Richard Flanagan captured Japanese culture in his 2013 novel, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*. Since the main motif of the work is the life of an Australian prisoner of war, a topic that has been significant in the creation of Australian national identity, the novel is firstly analysed from its position in the wider context of Australian literature. Richard Flanagan provided the readers with a complex work, which presents the given motif not only from the perspective of the Australian prisoners-of-war, but also from the perspective of their predominantly Japanese captors. The inclusion of the points of view of the Japanese ranks the novel among the contemporary adaptations that provide a more comprehensive view on the events of World War II. For that reason, the novel is assessed as to the complexity and accuracy of the selected and incorporated areas of Japanese culture, whether there is a tendency for schematization in the depiction, and therefore a display of the so-called "Orientalism", as described by Edward Said. This MA thesis aims to analyse whether, and to what degree Flanagan's novel differs from other works of the Australian literature that deal with the events of World War II and Japan. The analysis focuses on three chosen areas: the transcription of the Japanese language, the description of the Japanese culture through the points of view of the individual characters, and the use of allusions to Japanese literature. The analysis proved that although Flanagan demonstrated an effort to depict Japanese culture authentically and in a balanced manner, there is a tendency towards reductionism and stereotypical portrayal in the above mentioned areas.

KEYWORDS

Australian war literature, Japanese culture, Japanese literature, Richard Flanagan, Orientalism

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Introduction

"The two great themes from the origin of literature are love and war. Written in prose of extraordinary elegance and force, [*The Narrow Road to the Deep North*] bridges East and West, past and present, with a story of guilt and heroism," were the words of GP Grayling on the occasion of presenting the 2014 Man Booker Prize to Richard Flanagan[1] for his novel *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* and indeed his words ring true. The novel depicts the life of Dorrigo Evans, a Tasmanian surgeon and a former prisoner of war at the construction site of the notorious Thai-Burma Railway. As a celebrated war hero in the winter of his life he is tasked with writing an introduction to a collection of illustrations made in the POW camp by one of his mates. Tortured by the demise of one of them, Dorrigo recollects episodes from his time in the camp as well as the love of life that kept him going. Through his story, Flanagan indeed offers the reader both war and love just as Grayling noted in his speech, both themes handled through the thoughtful perspective of Dorrigo.

As Grayling recognized in his speech, the novel manages to combine many opposing ideas. Besides bridging the two concepts of love and war, the nature of the setting also requires touching on the relationship between Australians and the Japanese. Flanagan does not keep only to Dorrigo Evans, but he lets the reader see the events unfold from the point of view of various characters from both sides of "the Line," as he gives a voice to many of his mates among the prisoners, and also to several of the POW camp guards. Moreover, he adds complexity to the novel by using allusions to both Western and Japanese literature that he presents organically through the voice of the characters, as well as to introduce respective parts of the novel.

In my previous studies I have focused particularly on the relationship between the Japanese and the West, both culturally and politically. From the way the Japanese perceived Western culture that entered their world, to the manner in which the Westerners portrayed Japanese culture to their people through art and exhibitions, I have been always fascinated by the intercultural contact and the subsequent cultural exchange. After reading Yasue Arimitsu's 2017 paper, *Richard Flanagan's The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Matsuo Basho's Oku No Hosomichi,* that discusses the novel from the point of view of

[1] Born in 1961 in Tasmania, Richard Flanagan became the third Australian author to accept this prestigious award.

postcolonialism, I have taken interest in the manner in which Flanagan dealt with this topic. Arimitsu claims that Edward Said's notoriously used definition of "the colonizer" as Western culture and "the colonized" as Eastern culture is actually reversed in this novel, and thus inapplicable. According to her, Flanagan's novel represents a fusion of two opposing forces - Western and Eastern - and "brings a harmony to them". She therefore views Flanagan as an author that surpasses postcolonial literature to become an author of a "globalizing age" (Arimitsu 6).

However, as is not uncommon in literature dealing with Japan, the presentation of the country and its culture is often rather simplified and draws on stereotypes. In his review of the novel for the Japan Times from 9 November, 2013, Roger Pulvers, a renowned playwright and a translator of Japanese literature, commented on the way Flanagan captured Japanese characters and he pointed out that they "do not rise far above the caricature of fanatic Emperor worship". Aside from the comment that the Japanese characters are written rather one-dimensionally, he also expresses disapproval with the use of the *haiku* poems in the novel as he mentioned that some are "badly mistranslated". Expressing regret about the shallow depiction of the Japanese, Pulvers raises the question of how accurately Flanagan depicted the Japanese and to what degree he was influenced by the manner in which the Japanese culture is presented in the West.

In light of the fact that Flanagan decided to include allusions to Japanese culture even in the title of the novel, and opted to include the point of view of the Japanese guards, I decided to direct the focus of this thesis to the aspects of Japanese culture presented in the novel. Based on a careful study of the individual aspects of Japanese culture which are used in the novel, the thesis will try to decipher whether the depiction of Japanese culture might be regarded as an objective attempt to capture its aspects or whether and to which degree its depiction might be coloured by a stereotypical understanding of the topic. This aim of the study therefore follows Flanagan`s own intention to provide the readers with the point of view of both the Australian POWs and their Japanese captors, achieving a balanced and unbiased account of both cultures.

The theoretical section provides the background for the subsequent analysis. It provides a concise overview of the historical context based on the sixth volume of the 1989 *The Cambridge History of Japan* by Peter Duus and also on *The Heritage of War* edited by Martin Gegner and Bart Ziino, published in 2012. Two additional sources were used to

elucidate the treatment by the Japanese state towards the prisoners of war, namely *Allied POWs, Japanese Captors and the Geneva Convention* by Charles G. Roland published in 1991 and *Japanese Treatment of Allied Prisoners During the Second World War: Evaluating the Death Toll* by Michael Sturma published in 2019.

Since the historical narrative of POWs is ubiquitous in Australian society even today, as mentioned by Joan Beaumont in *The Heritage of War* (22), *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* will be contrasted with other examples in this genre as to the differences in the manner of capturing the experience of the POWs, and the space their authors allow for the point of view and the culture of the captors. This section will present the findings of Catriona Ross in her 2009 paper called *Paranoid Projections: Australian Novels of Asian Invasion*, and a Japanese author Megumi Kato, as she presents them in 1998 *Fear of Japan: The Formation of Japanese Invasion Novels in Australian Literature* and 2017 *Testimony of War: Australian Memoirs and Fiction of the Pacific War.*

Having provided the general background, some attention will be given to Flanagan's own reasoning for choosing this particular theme, as he shed light on his motivations in two interviews, a video of an interview with Ramona Koval recorded on 9 September 2014 for the Wheeler Centre in Melbourne, and a short interview with Frances Gertler for the Foyles bookstore published in 2014 on their webpage. In these interviews, Flanagan explains his own motivation for writing this novel, as well as his decisions regarding his methods for including the points of view of both Australians and the Japanese.

As this thesis focuses on the manner in which the Japanese are depicted, one part of the theoretical section will introduce specific areas of Japanese culture which Flanagan chose to include in his novel. To analyse the way Flanagan addresses Japanese culture as an author of fiction, some attention will be given to the way he uses the Japanese language. Considering the fact that inconsistency in the transcription might impede a more detailed research of the given terms, particularly of note will be the type of romanization he opted for to represent proper nouns and additional phrases and expressions. The theoretical background will be provided using Daniel Jones's *The Romanization of Japanese* from 1949 and the 2011 *Modified Hepburn Romanization System in Japanese Language Cataloging* by Yoko Kudo. The aim of the subsequent analysis will be to try to determine how consistent Flanagan is in his romanization of Japanese, and what effect his choice might have on the reader regarding the perpetuation of Japan as an impenetrable culture.

As Flanagan includes characters of both the prisoners and the captors, the depiction of Japanese culture is as varied as the selection of perspectives he offers to the reader. The language Flanagan uses to capture the characters and their thoughts will be analysed with regards to any mentions of Japanese culture. In addition to analysis of non-Japanese characters and their perception of their captors, the authenticity of Flanagan's Japanese characters will be evaluated as well, with a comparison of information about the specific values and characteristics of the Japanese people as presented by Anna Wierzbicka's 1991 article called *Japanese Key Words and Core Cultural Values*. Some attention will also be given to the way they perceive Westerners, which is often manifested in their behaviour or inner monologues.

Since Flanagan chose to include not only the voices of Japanese people, but also to introduce some pieces of Japanese poetry in the novel, an overview of Japanese literature as in Donald Keene's 1960 *Anthology of Japanese Literature from the Earliest Era to the Mid-Nineteenth Century* with respect to the literary works Flanagan used as sources will be presented in the last part of the theoretical section of the diploma thesis. The manner in which Flanagan uses Japanese literature will be addressed; namely the use of poems in between the individual parts of the novel, poetry recited by the characters and other allusions to Japanese culture, such as his usage of the title of Bashō's travel sketch and his references to the 1915 short story *Rashōmon* by Ryūnosuke Akutagawa. Attention will be given to the selection of poems and their context-based interpretation.

With Pulvers' review and Arimitsu's paper in mind, in the practical section, selected features of the novel will be subjected to analysis to determine whether Flanagan's depiction of Japanese culture may be seen as influenced by the reductionist view pervading from the way the East is regarded by Westerners. From the way Flanagan treats Japanese language and literature, to the manner in which he reflects on the Japanese culture through the eyes of his characters, the analysis of the above-mentioned areas will provide an overview of Flanagan's depiction of Japanese culture, and to what degree he might use simplifications or stereotypes to do so.

Theoretical part

The main motif of the novel

Historical overview

In order to determine how the novel *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* fits into the wider context of Australian literature, the following section will provide an outline of the historical background of the main motif of the novel. The construction of the Thai-Burma railway line had a significant influence on the subsequent creation of an Australian national identity, since the fate of more than 22, 000 Australian servicemen that were captured in South East Asia in early 1942 has become a fundamental part of the creation of Australian war narrative and its national memory, as stated in *The Heritage of War* by Gegner and Ziino (1). Furthermore, it also stimulated the publication of various memoirs and novels on the topic, which garnered immense popularity.

The *Cambridge History of Japan* explains the Japanese presence in the Indochinese territory as the direct result of having been cut off from the source of petroleum necessary to supply the military after the embargo declared by the United States. A decision was made that Japan should expand to French Indochina to get access to its natural resources (Duus 484). In the following six months, Japanese Imperial forces conquered an area spanning from Burma, Thailand, through the Malay Peninsula, Singapore to the islands of Sumatra, Java, Borneo, the Celebes and the Solomon Islands. The reason for the construction of the Thai-Burma Railway, stretching 415 kilometres from Bampong to Thanbyuzayat, was to create an alternative supply line for the forces to the sea lines between Singapore and Rangoon that were at the time vulnerable to attack by the Allied forces. The labour force tasked with the construction consisted of both local Asian labourers as well as Allied prisoners of war. With regards to the conditions the prisoners of war were faced with, in his 1991 paper, Allied POWs, *Japanese Captors and the Geneva Convention*, Charles Roland notes that although the *Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War in Geneva, 27 July 1929* was signed by representatives of the Japanese state, the Japanese parliament ratified the Convention only on the treatment of the sick and wounded (84). As the 1941 Japanese Army's Field Code forbade the troops to be taken alive by the enemy, they viewed the POWs and the resources necessary for fully adhering to the Convention as an additional economic burden (Sturma 11). The conditions of construction were harsh, especially as it entered the

mountainous areas of the jungle where deep cuts into the rocky terrain were necessary. Despite the demanding terrain, the methods used were basically "pre-industrial," as the cuttings were made using inadequate tools (Gegner and Ziino 21). Excessive working hours[2] combined with the inhumane conditions the workers were exposed to on a daily basis affected them greatly: they were ill-equipped and lacking adequate accommodation that would shield them from the elements, they suffered from malnutrition, physical and mental exhaustion, insufficient medical care, and mistreatment and torture by the captors. All of these aspects combined to create an immense death toll. According to the data of *The International Military Tribunal for the Far East*, of the 46,000 Western Allied POWs working on the railway, 16,000 died during an eighteen-month period from May 1942 to October 1943.

Even though Australians represented only a minority of Allied POWs, the fact that Hellfire Pass Memorial Museum on the site of the Thai-Burma railway was conceived and developed by Australian veterans and government officials could be interpreted as proof of how significant the event had become for the nation as it was transformed into an important part of their collective national memory, and as a tool strengthening national identity. Several factors have influenced the degree to which Australians felt the need to preserve the site along with the memories. The stories became ubiquitous in the Australian society mainly due to the fact, as Beaumont puts it, that a relatively "large number of Australian families were affected by the loss of life in captivity" (Gegner and Ziino 22). What also contributed to the familiarity of this topic was the commercial success of publications released after the war in various forms of memoirs or fiction.

War as a theme in Australian literature

The Narrow Road in the Deep North captures the time span both pre- and post-war and a major romantic plot. War, however, and the fates of the Australian POWs still remain the backbone of its complex story. As a genre, war fiction is relatively common in Australian literature. In her *Testimony of War*, Megumi Kato explains that the war experiences captured in the form of memoirs and pieces of fiction, serving as a 'literature of testimony' (476), were perpetuated and retold through the following generations, and consequently have

[2] Up to 18 hours of hard labour a day were the shifts during the so-called "Speedo," a period in mid-1943.

become significant in the creation of national myth and collective memories. Kato mentions that Julian Barnes coined the term "psycho-biography of a nation" for narratives such as these, where the stories and experiences of individuals are generalized and inherited by the next generation as a collective memory strengthening the national identity (476). Flanagan's novel is definitely a product of this portion of the Australian culture, as it draws on the experience of the real prisoners of war, be it Flanagan's father or other stories captured in memoirs. Furthermore, the novel serves to preserve the history of that society, because it helps to generate national memories and keep them alive.

Due to the fact that Flanagan's *The Narrow Road to the Deep Road* deals with this topic as well, it is prudent to look at the development of Australian fiction addressing the World War II, and Asia in general. A large portion of fiction written and published since the end of World War II until the 1990s was based on personal experience. In her *Testimony of War,* Kato divides the authors of the pre-1990s period into the following two categories based on their attitude towards the Japanese enemy (476). Some of the writers, like John Dower in his 1986 novel, *War Without Mercy*, offered their unabashed condemnation of the acts committed by the Japanese, capturing the emotions of hate and regret, adhering to the feeling of the pre-war tradition of the so-called "propaganda" novels. Others, however, adopted a less biased attitude and their stories were accepted as a more authentic accounts by both literary critics and the general readership, which enabled them to gain their place in canon; Stan Arneil's 1982 novel, *One Man's War*, Hugh Clarke's 1971 novel, *The Tub,* and the many works of T.A.G. Hungerford to name a few. The main difference between the first and the second category of authors is the change of attitude towards the enemy: capturing their "human side," no longer depicting them only as "an object of hatred and fear" (Kato, "Testimony of War" 477).

As Kato explains, the twenty-first century has witnessed a wave of renewed interest in Australian war literature. In comparison with the previous generation, new subthemes are included, such as homosexuality, issues of race and the lasting impact of war and mainly its absurdity, which had often been self-censored before. The authors also tend to depict their characters in a more complex manner, not shying away from showing their worse side as well as the good, softly blurring the line between the protagonist and the antagonist. The enemies are often given space in these new stories to provide their point of view, and thus they are depicted not only as the villains committing atrocities, but as the victims of the

circumstances as well, providing a more complex and balanced view on the topic of a war conflict (Kato, "Testimony of War" 479).

Richard Flanagan's novel fits the pattern of the war novel of the latter category. His main character, Dorrigo, is indeed depicted in a complex manner. Flanagan endowed him with a mix of personality features, presenting him altogether with his strengths and weaknesses, so that some readers might regard him as a coward and others as a hero. As for the minor characters, the degree of complexity is debatable, especially when looking at the characters of the Japanese and Korean guards. Nevertheless, by including the point of view of the enemy, Flanagan offers a plurality of points of view that corresponds to the genre of the war novel as it has developed in the twenty-first century.

The *Narrow Road to the Deep North* within the context of Richard Flanagan`s work

In this section, attention will be turned to what analysis the author himself had to offer about the novel, as he shared a lot of information about his motivations, attitude to the main motif and his reasoning for including the point of view of the Japanese and its culture, especially literature. Most of the information below comes from two interviews, both accessible online - an interview with Frances Gertler for Foyles on their web page published in 2014, and a video interview with Ramona Koval recorded in September 2014, published on the Youtube page of the Wheeler Centre in Melbourne.

As for his motivations, in his interview for Foyles, Flanagan clearly explains that the main reason for writing his novel was because he considers himself 'a child of the Death Railway,' as he spent his childhood raised by a father who had laboured as a POW on the Thai-Burma Railway. Flanagan dedicated his novel to his father, prisoner number 335, and in the interview with Koval he stated that the fact his father was getting frail had made him finish it (20:00). He said that his father was glad that there was a novel being written on the topic of POWs because he was afraid that it might be forgotten. Flanagan confessed that he felt a great responsibility because he did not want anyone who lived through it to feel that the novel demeaned them. At the same time, he did not wish to compromise his family by giving all the sensitive details of what happened (Koval 48:00).

As for the story itself, Flanagan stated that in order for him to feel free to write the novel, the main character, Dorrigo Evans, had to be a very different character from his father.

(Koval 37:30). He admits that he was influenced by some of his stories he grew up hearing with his siblings, for instance an episode about the deaths of two mates of his father (Koval 54:00). Koval noted that she saw Dorrigo as an amalgam of all the stories they had been hearing about the POW camps (6:25). When asked about reconciling the novel with all that had been written before on the topic, including the memoirs, Flanagan claimed that he used elements of some stories, but that he mostly invented the story on his own (Koval 50:00).

Since the main focus of this thesis is the way Richard Flanagan chose to depict the Japanese, his attitude towards research should be of interest. In his interviews, Flanagan said he had spent a lot of time interviewing his father about very basic things connected with his experience as a POW and also about more abstract concepts related to the experience such as love and death (Koval 25:00). He went to the site of the Railway with his brother and he admits that he did not make notes there to avoid denying himself the capacity to absorb the surroundings as much as he could (Koval 26:00). At the time when he was already finishing the novel, Flanagan went to Japan to meet some men that worked as guards on the Railway, and while there he even had a chance to speak to one of the men his father had known. This experience offered him an opportunity to listen to his story and attempt to understand the way he perceives past actions he was ordered to commit, in other words, "how societies teach people that goodness and lack of empathy are the same thing" (Koval 17:20). However, when asked about the actual research on the novel, Flanagan jokingly played down its importance saying that he drew inspiration from his own life experiences, that he mainly "lived" (Koval 21:00). Looking at the characters in the novel and their story, Flanagan clearly combined both what he had learned from the people who lived through the events, as well as what he had experienced himself.

Examining the complexity of the characters, it becomes clear that Flanagan specifically chose to portray Dorrigo as a person with both strengths and weaknesses. When asked about him by Koval, Flanagan quoted Chekhov, saying that the writer's job is to report on what the character does, thinks and says, but the judgement is for God and the reader (7:20). Thus, he leaves the choice to the readers to either consider Dorrigo a hero, able to deal with the Devil to save as many of his mates as possible, or a coward and a womanizer who spends his whole life in a comfortable lie. The same could be said of the characters of the Japanese captors, as Flanagan does not explicitly uncover the invisible forces that influence their decisions, and allows the readers to make up their own minds, based on the

claim that “ a novel has to represent that truth of life, that essential chaos and uncertainty” (Koval 35:00). This attitude might be observed also in the development of the characters, as they choose various different ways to behave in the face of extreme conditions. From Darky Gardiner to Rooster MacNeice, Dorrigo’s mates behave and act as complex people, obviously struggling with their lot in life.

When asked by Gertler about writing from the point of view of the captors, Flanagan noted that reading the 1896 short story, *An Outpost of Progress,* by Joseph Conrad was of vital importance to him. What he saw reflected in Conrad’s characters, were similar characters to those which appeared in his own novel *Wanting,* i.e. the English colonists hunting Tasmanian Aborigines, and even himself, as a complex human. He claims that a character without contradictions is a caricature and the fact that some readers call the protagonist a hero while others see him as a bastard shows him that he succeeded in creating a character who is ultimately human. Considering Flanagan’s claims, he strives for complex characters, life-like, with strengths and weaknesses, and the main character of Dorrigo Evans clearly meets this description. The main question already raised by Pulvers is whether the characters from the other side of the line possess the same level of complexity as the Australian characters, and with what degree of authenticity he was able to capture them.

Some degree of attention in this paper will be paid to the manner in which Flanagan uses Japanese literature to embellish his novel. As for the reasoning behind the inclusion of Japanese poetry and referring to it through the novel’s title, which is *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, Flanagan stated that he had chosen it simply because it was the title of one of the most famous works of Japanese literature (Koval 2:00). This homage to Bashō might not be obvious to a reader not familiar with Japanese literature; however, to those that are, it conveys a message that Flanagan does care to capture the culture of the Japanese people in a more complex manner than reducing them to the enemy. In the interview, he further explained his motivation by saying that the experience of his father and his mates was one of the low points of Japanese civilization, so he wanted to use some of the forms, techniques, and ideas of the high points of the culture in order to balance it out and provide a more complex picture to the readers. At the same time Flanagan admitted that he was not “so bravely ambitious” as to actually get a more profound insight into Japanese poetry and truly learn how it was able to exist parallel to the atrocities of the Second World War. However, he once again touched upon the universal features of the humans, as he stated that:

> …within every human breast exists the universe and contained within each of us is infinite love and the most murderous impulses. And the Japanese, the Germans, us, we are all the same. We contain the beauty of Basho and the horror of the Death Railway. Surely that's the point, that we're capable of both things. (Koval 11:40)

In the interview with Koval, Flanagan claimed that "a novel, like life, is inconsistent" (35:40) and that is why each character has a different view on art as people in real life do. What we may conclude, both from the reasoning he expressed in the two interviews, as well as from the way he employs poetry in his novel, is that Flanagan uses poetry as a means which might help people confront reality and communicate. The employment of Japanese literature, its choice and interpretation will be further elaborated on in the practical part of this thesis.

Selected features of Japanese culture as seen presented in *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*

This section will contain an overview of features of specific Japanese culture selected to enable the analysis of Flanagan's novel. As was already mentioned in the introduction, some attention will be turned to the way Flanagan treats the Japanese language. An overview of the various systems of romanization, the method of transcribing the writing system of Japanese into the Latin alphabet, will be provided below, along with a brief comment on the manner in which authors of fiction typically transcribe Japanese. The following chapter will introduce selected values of Japanese society as defined by Anna Wierzbinski, which will later be used as a measure of the complexity and authenticity of Flanagan's Japanese. The last part of this section contains information about selected works of Japanese literature which Flanagan included in the novel directly, or used as a source for allusions to enrich the story.

Romanization of Japanese language

Every author that decides to choose another culture as the subject of their work is faced with the choice of how to transcribe its language, especially so if it operates with a

different writing system. In the case of the Japanese language, there are currently several romanizations available that are all used both on the internet and in print. The fact that the same sound might be written in several different ways, or that different sounds are transcribed in the same way, may surely confuse a person that is trying to research a topic of their interest, further wrapping Japanese culture in mystery. It is not uncommon for Western writers to use several types of romanization in one work, which perpetuates the mentioned confusion. In the following paragraphs a brief overview of the different kinds of romanization will be provided, with the goal of providing a basis on which the analysis of the manner in which Flanagan treats Japanese language in his novel can be accomplished.

One of the first internationally used romanization systems was conceived in J.C. Hepburn's *A Japanese and English Dictionary with an English and Japanese Index* (和英語林集成) from 1867. Hepburn opted for a combination of vowels transcribed by the letters a, e, i, o, u, and the consonants "by what he as an Englishman judged to be the most appropriate letters according to English usage" (Jones 68). This system became popular among other Western nationals, but it was also used by the Japanese themselves. Eventually, the Japanese began to feel it inappropriate to use a system originating in the English language, so a new system was developed on the principle of 'one letter per phoneme.' This system was called *Nipponsiki Rômazi,* however, following a long dispute between users of both systems, a commission was appointed by the Japanese government to recommend further changes. The result of this was the *Kokutei* "official" *Rōmazi*. Another system of romanization was created by the non-governmental International Organization for Standardization, ISO, in 1989 using the Japanese systems Kunrei and Nippon. ISO romanization, however, failed to spread as an international standard, while Hepburn romanization has maintained its popularity.

In her 2011 article, *Modified Hepburn Romanization System in Japanese Language Cataloging: Where to Look, What to Follow*, Yoko Kudo further details the development of the The Hepburn system, or Hebon-shiki (ヘボン式), since from its conception it has been subjected to several alterations and modifications under the Society for Roman Letters and its successors until the development of its official form named Dai Nihon Hyōjunshiki (大日本標準式), Japan standard system (99). A modified Hepburn system as found in the Kenkyusha's New Japanese-English Dictionary (研究社新和英大辞典; from the third

edition onwards) in combination with the romanization tables of the American National Standard System for the Romanization of Japanese (ANSI Z39.11-1972) has become the norm in American catalogues of literature (Kudo 101). Gradually, the Hepburn romanization system became the de-facto international standard, considering the fact that it is used by Japanese government in communication.

Looking at the whole system of romanization of Japanese, it is apparent that the fact that there has not been any final decision that would be universally applied internationally, has not helped Japanese culture to become more transparent and to lose its "mystery", a quality typically associated with Asian nations. A layman, uneducated on the matters of Japanese language, when reading anything about Japanese culture would then possibly encounter problems with looking up further information, especially where proper nouns are concerned - whether they be places or personal names. For instance, if one researched the name Yoko Ono, two different people appear in the search engine – both the Japanese artist and wife of the late John Lennon, Yōko Ono (小野　洋子), as well as the 31 year-old jūdō fighter Yōko Ōno (大野　陽子). The variations of the characters used for both phonetic versions are many, but disregarding vowel length makes their orientation in society even more difficult, as even Japanese people themselves often chose the reduced romanization of their own names.

Fiction is no exception. Japanese words and phrases are often used to provide authenticity with one type of romanization used, while e.g. names are transcribed in the form that is common for the English language. One common example would be the place name of the capital of Japan, which could either be spelled 'Tokyo', which is the norm in English dictionaries with its English pronunciation, as for example in the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus*, or 'Tōkyō' which would capture the vowel lengths as they appear in the original Japanese version of the name. The question stands as to what effect this duplicity of transcription has on the readers, whether it might not perplex them and what influence it has on their perception of Japan. The answers to this question should be addressed, but as this particular issue is not the goal of this thesis, attention in this paper will be mostly given to the analysis of how Flanagan uses romanization to ascertain his attitude towards Japanese language.

Japanese values

When describing characters who come from another culture, the author should always consider the culturally-conditioned difference in mentality and behaviour. In this section five concepts native to Japanese culture will be presented to offer a brief overview of the specific mentality and behaviour of Japanese people relevant to the contents of Flanagan's novel, as to have a baseline against which character complexity can be measured. The source of the information presented in this section will be *Japanese Key Words and Core Cultural Values,* published in 1991 in Language in Society, and written by Anna Wierzbicka. In her paper, she aimed to explain unique concepts of Japanese culture using conceptual universals in the form of the natural semantic metalanguage instead of concepts specific to a different culture. Each concept will be presented with its common translation provided by Cambridge, which can be found on the web page of Cambridge University Press.

The first concept that will be introduced is the concept of *enryo* (遠慮). Instead of the common translations in English, such as "restraint" or "discretion", which do not appropriately cover the whole meaning of the concept, Wierzbicka's formula draws from the various examples of *enryo* described in literature that is focused on Japanese culture. Behaving with *enryo* in mind, Japanese people would typically practice self-restraint and avoid giving opinions, in order to maintain conformity and evade judgement. As Reischauer explains, the lack of *enryo* in the behaviour of the Westerners is perceived as 'immature' by the Japanese (Wierzbicka 346).

The next concept presented in this section is *wa* (和)*,* considered a key Japanese value. In Japanese-English dictionaries it is typically glossed over as referring to "harmony." The origins of the concept go back to the seventh century.[3] The concept of *wa* is contrasted with the Western value of individualism, in that it is felt as a different concept than co-operation, compromise, or even self-sacrifice, but rather it is viewed as something larger and fundamental to the society. As Honna and Hoffer put it, if given the choice, Japanese people would rather refrain from standing up for themselves, since a person that does not conform and deviates from the group risks being excluded (Wierzbicka 354).

Obligation is another central concept in Japanese culture, and, in connection to that value, Wierzbicka contrasts Kawashima's two types of societies - those preoccupied with

[3] A statement from the first article of Prince Shōtoku's constitution: "Above all else esteem concord."

rights, as those in the West, and "obligation-oriented" societies, an example of which is the type of society found in Japan (359).

The third Japanese value to be introduced is *on* (恩), commonly translated as "debt of gratitude/to make someone feel obliged," as found in the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus,* which clearly shows the complexity of the concept. The source of *on* can be traced to samurai ethics, closely interconnected with the bestowal of a fief and then repaying it through military service. The relationship between the two parties is therefore hierarchical. Additionally, a significant element of this obligation is the feeling of gratitude on the part of the benefactee (Wierzbicka 359).

There is another concept connected to obligation in Japanese culture, called *giri* (義理). It is viewed as one of the forces that enable the stability of Japanese society. Translation of this word, as in the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus*, often include "a debt of gratitude", "obligation", or "duty." In order to get at the core meaning of this value, Wierzbicka cites Ruth Benedict as follows: "No Japanese can talk about motivations or good repute or the dilemmas which confront men and women in his home country without constantly speaking of giri" (366). The primary difference between *giri* and *on* is the target of the obligation. In the case of *on*, the target would be "one's ancestors, a faraway inaccessible emperor, one's country, and so on." The target of *giri* is another member of the society, and it is an obligation based on face-to-face interaction. In the context of the military, one would strive to elevate their service to the nation, or an Emperor, rather than their personal obligations - *giri*.

The last concept that will be presented in this section is *seishin* (精神). Its translation '"spirit", and its derivations, are one of the most ubiquitous concepts included in literature about Japanese culture and its various areas, even in contexts such as military, sport, or business. Here, Wierzbicka refers to Rohlen, who pointed out that this term has been used as "a rallying cry for those wishing to preserve or reassert Japanese traditional ways" (377). The wider meaning would include personal characteristics such as loyalty, discipline, single-mindedness of purpose and strong will, as opposed to the materialism and easy-going self-gratification that are commonly associated with modernization. Relevant to this particular thesis is another use of this concept which she also mentions, previously used in military and right-wing propaganda during the 1930s and 1940s. In the setting of World War II, *seishin*

was presented as a uniquely Japanese quality that would enable soldiers to persevere and to best the Western enemy, regardless of their numbers and technology.

In view of these unique characteristics inherent to Japanese people and culture, Japanese characters in Flanagan's novel can be analysed with regards to their embrace of these canonical qualities, and thus the degree of their portrayal's authenticity can be measured. In the practical section of this thesis, attention will be brought mainly to the Japanese characters' behaviour and inner monologues with a focus on the values presented above.

Japanese literature

Flanagan stated in the interviews mentioned above that he felt the need to show not only the low point of Japanese history - all the violence and mistreatment his father and other POWs were subjected to, but also its high points. From this point of view, literature and poetry as they are presented in the novel stand in opposition to all of the violence and gore of the story.

The title of the novel, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, is a direct translation of the title of a travel sketch by one of the most appreciated and popular poets of Japanese literature, Matsuo Bashō (芭蕉蜂, 1644-1694) - *Oku no Hosomichi* (奥の細道). In the *Anthology of Japanese Literature from the Earliest Era to the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, Donald Keene described Bashō's style of poetry, mostly in the form of *haiku*, as a combination of feelings of loneliness and sorrow, as well as lightness and humour (374). In his introduction to the Penguin translation to *the The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Other Travel Sketches,* Yuasa offers background information on Bashō's sketch. Firstly, the sketch was compiled on the occasion of his third journey across Japan. Bashō departed from Edo and spent more than two and a half years on the road choosing *Tōkaidō*, the long north-ward route along the ocean into a territory mostly considered unexplored and mysterious. His poems contain both variety, capturing the *genius loci* of the places he travels through, but unity as well, touching upon the topic of eternity and death as Bashō considered this journey to be his final one (Yuasa 40). Flanagan never discussed the reason why he chose this title, other than saying that he considered Bashō one of the highlights of Japanese culture. Nevertheless, there is a parallel between Bashō and Flanagan's novel, as both Bashō's

journey and the Thai-Burma railway both lead northwards through a landscape considered wild and mysterious, as well as the fact, that both works reflect the feelings of a man looking back on his life and the places he had struggled in.

The title of the novel is not the only allusion to Bashō's work, and by extension to Japanese literature in general, as Flanagan uses translations of several other poems throughout the text. Each of the five parts of the novel is introduced by a *haiku* poem. As for the reason for Flanagan's choice of a particular poet, or the poem itself, that is up to speculation because he does not provide the reader with any commentary. Regarding his sources, he lists the following books: a 1995 collection *The Sound of Water: Haiku by Bashō, Buson, Issa, and Other Poets* translated by Sam Hamill, *The Essential Haiku* edited and translated by Robert Hass published in 1994, and *The British Museum Haiku* translated by David Cobb published in 2002. In the introduction to the collection *The Sound of Water*, the translator gives some information about the form of haiku and presents the lives and work of the three poets[4] in the title. However, in the collection itself, divided into parts according to the authors, no more information is provided to the reader as to its original Japanese version, which collection it originated in, the date, and with a few exceptions, the reader is not even given the context. As Flanagan used this collection to choose the poems included in the novel, it is not clear whether he compared translations or just included them without any further knowledge about their meaning and the allusions they might provoke in a reader who is educated in the field of Japanese poetry. In the practical section of this thesis, the poems will be analysed in further detail.

Another work that Flanagan took inspiration from is a compilation of *Japanese Death Poems Written by Zen Monks and Haiku Poets on the Verge of Death* collected by Yoel Hoffman. This book is not only the source of several poems to be found in the story, but it is also indirectly mentioned by the main character. One poem from this collection, a death poem by a Zen monk by the name of Shisui (之水) written in the year 1769, appears in the novel two times, once at the beginning and again at the very end, tying the whole story together. His poem is captivating in its simplicity – and is an example of the so-called ensō (円相), an imperfect circle drawn in one brush stroke, which is a significant symbol of void

[4] Matsuo Bashō (芭蕉蜂, 1644-1694); Buson Yosa (与謝蕪村, 1716-1784); Issa Kobayashi (小林一茶, 1763-1827)

and enlightenment in Zen Buddhism. In the practical section of this thesis, attention will be brought to the use of this poem and the context in which Flanagan used it, including whether he did some additional research or whether he used it in his own interpretation.

Another poem is mentioned by the characters of Colonel Kota and Major Nakamura in the form of a song. Umi Yukaba (海行かば) is a modern song based on a traditional poem by Ōtomo no Yakamochi (大伴家持, c. 718–785) from the eight-century anthology of Japanese poetry called Man'yōshū (万葉集) (Campbell and Wiggins 100). The song was published in 1937 by the national broadcasting agency NHK and became very popular at the times of WWII when it was used for military propaganda combining the brutal content of the lyrics with military fanfare (Flanagan 320).

The last work of Japanese literature alluded to in the novel that will be mentioned is Rashomōn, a short story by Ryūnosuke Akutagawa (芥川龍之介, 1892 –1927), taking place at the gate in Kyōto of the same name. The gate itself, a two-storied structure and the largest gate in the whole city, fell into disrepair with the fall of West Kyōto and became a hideout for various illicit characters, as well as a dumping ground for the unclaimed dead. Akutagawa used the menacing atmosphere of the place in his story and Flanagan seemed to be familiar with it, as some parallels can be drawn between the short story and an episode in Flanagan's novel.

Looking at all of the above-mentioned examples of Japanese literature, Flanagan clearly proves that he must have done some research and that he has some degree of knowledge of Japanese literature. Both by the inclusion of Japanese poetry and the allusions to other works of Japanese, the novel attained a new level that upgraded it from a mere account of the horrors of the POW camp, to literature which also offers an introduction to aspects of Japanese culture that the readers otherwise might not have encountered.

Perception of Japan in Australian society

In order to understand the way Flanagan depicts the Japanese in his novel, the relationship between Australia and Japan should also be briefly described, in addition to the way Japan has been perceived in Australian society and presented in the media. The sources of this section are the 2009 thesis, *Floating between the Orient and the Occident: Japan,*

Australia and Their Inferiority Complex, by Yoko Harada and the 2012 study, *Images of Japan and Its People in Australian Media,* by Adam Windsor. Both studies point towards the fact that at least some part of Australian identity was built upon a biased attitude towards Asian nations, Japan included. This thesis does not make it its goal to offer an exhaustive survey about the perceptions of Japan in Australia. However, since the various discourses in a society interact with each other, and literature is one them, the following question arises. As an Australian author, Flanagan might reflect the tendencies to perceive Japan in a reductive way, or he might go against it.

The concept of Australian identity has been closely interwoven with Asia since the emergence of the Australian nation, when the colonies on the Australian continent started the integration process at the end of the nineteenth century. Searching for their own independent identity, the settler society reacted to the rising number of Asian migrants and began to establish a division between "them" and "us", creating a national identity built on the concept of a white, British "Australia". In her paper, Harada describes the development of what she brands as an "inferiority complex" in relation to the West, which lies within Japan's and Australia's national identity (26). When both of the newly formed nations of Australia and Japan entered international politics in the second half of the nineteenth century, the scene was already dominated by Western powers, and therefore on both sides a feeling of subordination in relation to those established powers has been integrated into the "collective minds" of their population through various discourses (Harada 26). In the world based on an East versus West dichotomy, both nations were obsessed with finding their place in its hierarchy, and creating an inferior "Other" had become a way for them to balance their national identity. Being regarded as an "outpost of the Empire", Australia strived to find its place by positioning itself as superior to Asia (Harada 27).

As Adam Windsor claims in his 2012 study, the first contact between Australia and Japan in the latter part of the nineteenth century[5] was maintained in a similar manner as was common with the other Western powers - Asian people were viewed and presented as the ones to be led and instructed, not as equals in the international arena, and the media of that time reflected this. Differences were depicted as deficiencies that could be improved by importing the Western culture. As for the relatively small numbers of Japanese immigrants,

[5] The first wider contact of Australia with Japan can be traced back to the end of the nineteenth century with the beginning of Japanese migration to Australia and the first Australian investors and traders coming to Japan.

they were being presented as a novelty, the descriptions often embellished to sound exotic and mysterious (Windsor 89). The same dichotomy also appeared during the rise of Australian prose fiction, at the brink of the twentieth century, where some authors opted to focus their attention on Asia. Many of them had a tendency to take liberty with the material and showed Japan primarily as an exotic, mysterious place where "extraordinary" and "miraculous" events happen, simplifying the subject to a romanticized Oriental paradise (Kato, "Fear of Japan" 191).

Catriona Ross, the author of the 2009 article*, Paranoid Projections: Australian Novels of Asian Invasion*, mentions that during this time a new category of novels began gaining popularity that drew on the fears "white Australia" felt towards their northern Asian neighbours with regards to a possible invasion threatening its culture. With the rise of Japan as an industrial and military power at the beginning of the twentieth century the concept of the "yellow menace" started turning from China to Japan (Ross 13). The British-Japanese alliance formed in 1902 then further fuelled such feelings, as there were voices claiming that this alliance could provide an advantage for the Japanese, were they to invade Australia (Kato, "Fear of Japan" 191).

With these attitudes combined, Japan and its people were often perceived as both exotically romantic and hostile. In fiction, the Japanese were seldom captured as full-fledged individuals. They were more likely to be depicted as cunning and cheating subordinate characters, further perpetuating the stereotypes that suited the ideal of the "utopia for whites only" that was being propagated by both the politicians and the media at the time. This approach towards members of other races, officially coded in the Immigration Restriction Bill of 1901-1902, was justified by the impossibility of other races blending with Australians (Kato, "Fear of Japan" 192). In spite of the tradition of invasion novels, until the Sino-Japanese war in 1937 and the Nanking Massacre, the Australian public saw the Japanese threat more in the form of unwanted immigration (Windsor 93).

The fears of a Japanese invasion did not abate even after the end of World War II. In the 1950s, this idea was still projected on the politics of immigration, protecting Australianness by denying "entry to those regarded as inferior, especially people from Asia", further influencing the attitudes of the general population of Australia towards Asia. With Japan's economic success in the 1960s, the purveyors of this political strategy changed their focus from capitalizing on fears of a military threat to an economic one. Since the 1960s,

many Australians have started to doubt this inherent superiority of British heritage and some are going so far as to reject the 'myth of inferior races' altogether (Singh 603). However, in the 1980s, growing Japanese investment in Australia gave rise to an anti-Japanese movement, as Windsor notes in his paper, visible in the reactions to the unsuccessful project of "Multi-function Polis", in which the media did not hold back in their allusions to the Japanese role in the Pacific War, in many cases containing "gross distortions and errors of fact" (95). Since Australian identity was seen by some as being at a crisis point, it became a major focus of efforts to revive the racist view that "two Asians could never make a white Australian" and that Asian cultural differences were "incompatible with, and undesirable in Australia" (Singh, 603).

In today's Australia, the portrayal of Japan has not evolved much since the beginning of contact between the two countries. The image of Japan as an exotic and mysterious place has remained a staple in Australian television programmes as well as in fiction even in the twenty-first century. Even though the public's fear of an Asian invasion has turned to refugees in the refugee crisis of the past decade, Japan has not fully lost its "threatening" representation in media either, this being visible in the manner in which the media continue to remind the public of the past by using allusions to Japan's part in the Second World War through headlines such as "Whale War II" (Windsor 97). Taking that fact into consideration, the representation of Japan in the Australian media corresponds to the concept of Orientalism as presented in Said.

It is clear that the ambivalent attitude towards Japanese culture, depicting it as both exotic and hostile, has persevered in some parts of the Australian society even until today. This reductionist attitude to some aspects of Japanese culture brings up the question of whether its portrayal may not be seen as an example of the concept of Orientalism, as defined by Edward Said.

Orientalism

In his seminal work on postcolonial theory, Edward Said describes Orientalism as "a distribution of geopolitical awareness" into texts of various areas of the society. This distribution, as he puts it, does involve different kinds of "interests" that are created and maintained by the means of academic studies in the fields such as philology, psychology and

sociology. Its goal is to provide an understanding, and a means to control or even manipulate a foreign culture in a way that is inherently uneven and indirect, as is constituted in exchange with the different types of power in the society. (12)

Said points out that he views the value of Orientalism more as "a sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient" than "as a veridic discourse about the Orient" and he emphasizes the durability of its system that has been perpetuated almost unchanged through the different channels of society (6). He mentions Gramsci, and this concept of cultural hegemony that stands behind the durability of Orientalism, where certain cultural forms flowing through the channels of various institutions of the civil society predominate over the others not through domination, but by consent. Said also elaborates on the idea of collective European identity, as coined by Denys Hay, and states that Orientalism depends on "a flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without him ever losing the relative upper hand" (7). The differences between the cultures and languages of the West and the East are felt to be "so fundamental as to be incommensurable," disregarding any common human features (Singh 606). The complex system of Orientalism then provides rationalization and justification for colonialism in both 'scholarly works and imaginative literature. The core of the differences between the East and the West stem from the fact that Orientalism pits the modernism of Europe against Eastern traditions, overlooking any modern development in Asia or regarding it with condescension, as any deviations from the Western model were seen as unnatural, valuing the "perfection" of its classic culture (Singh 606).

As Said puts it, each author and their work are a part of the wider discourse of the society. As mentioned above in the introduction, in her 2017 article *Richard Flanagan's The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Matsuo Basho's Oku No Hosomichi*, Yasue Arimitsu analysed the novel using Said's concept of postcolonialism and Orientalism. She claims that the postcolonial point of view is inapplicable in this case. According to her, Flanagan is an author of the new global age, since he manages to bind together the two opposing forces of the West and East. Despite the fact that as an author, Richard Flanagan stresses common human qualities and develops his characters to be judged as real people, and the fact that the roles of the characters do not follow the typical concept of the Westerner as the "colonizer" and the Easterner as the "colonized", Flanagan's portrayal of the Japanese culture may still be seen as reductive regardless of his attempts to achieve the very opposite.

In light of Edward Said's theory of Orientalism, a question arises as to which degree Flanagan, as an Australian author, depicted the Japanese in a way that could be classified as stereotypical. The aim would be to determine whether Flanagan deviates from the common way Japan has been captured in literature or media in Australia, and if it can be argued that he had deviated, to what degree and in which way. Methodologically, the thesis will embrace Said's framework (21) which he devised in order to decipher the way a culture is represented in writing, namely, assessing the style, figures of speech, narrative devices, and the use of intertextuality with regards to the representation of Japanese culture. The question this paper strives to answer is whether Flanagan treats Japanese culture in its complexity, or whether he offers an oversimplified portrayal, focusing rather on its exotic, or even hostile qualities.

Practical part

Japanese language in Richard Flanagan's *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*

Since this thesis deals with the way Flanagan captures Japanese culture in his novel, it seems reasonable to include a commentary on the manner in which he employs the Japanese language. As stated before in the theoretical part, romanization of the Japanese language is a very complex matter, because there is not only one official method used internationally. The fact that there are more ways to transcribe the language does not make it easy for a layman without the knowledge of Japanese to learn more about Japanese culture in general. One example of the problems that might occur with variant transcription methods could be right at the beginning of their research, navigating names in a catalogue or a search engine. When looking up a person with the surname 大野, there are several versions possible: three marking the vowel length of the first morpheme (Ōno, Ohno and Oono), and one version that disregards it (Ono). The last version could be a source of even more confusion, since there also exists a surname with a short vowel length in the first morpheme: 小野 (Ono).

Generally, when writing about Japanese culture, the authors are faced with a choice of how accurately they want to capture the language they want to include in their work.[6]

[6] Below, a brief overview of the different attitudes to romanization is included through three examples of literature dealing with Japanese culture, namely *The War Diaries of Weary Dunlop* by Edward E. Dunlop, a memoir of one of the most famous Australian POWs published in 1986, *The Railway Man* by Eric Lomax, an autobiographical novel dealing with the topic of the Death Railway published in 1995, and the English translation of the original works of Bashō in the collection called *The Narrow Road to the Deep North and other sketches,* translated by Nobuyuki Yuasa first published in 1966.

A very unique attitude towards transcribing the Japanese language can be found in memoirs by Edward E. Dunlop called *The War Diaries of Weary Dunlop*. Because Dunlop wrote these during his captivity in the POW camp, having only rudimentary knowledge of the language, most of the phrases he uses are romanized in a rather liberal manner. As for consonants, he uses a style of romanization similar to the Hepburn system. In the case of vowels, he does not mark their lengths, as can be observed in the transcription of the phrase "*arigatō*," written as "*arigato*." Instead, he marks the stress. For instance, he transcribes an order, "*Ki wo tsuke!*", phonologically as "*kiotské.*" It must be taken into consideration that his diaries were primarily written as private notes, not meant to be shared with the public. Therefore, this unconventional transcription is itself valuable as a testimony of the past. However, for a reader that would be interested in investigating the phrases in more detail, such romanization would make it practically impossible to get to the original language.

In the case of the autobiographical novel *The Railway Man*, Eric Lomax uses a systematic attitude towards the language. He opted for the common Hepburn romanization method, without the marks of the vowel length. Macrons are not used to transcribe proper nouns, not even when Lomax presents a whole sentence, as in: "*Ohayo gozaimasu. Nagase san, ogenki desu ka?*" (Lomax 304), where the phrase *ohayō* originally contains

Looking at the novel *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, Flanagan opted to use not only Japanese personal names, as he deals with Japanese characters, but also examples of common Japanese phrases and words. As for his romanization, Flanagan combines several ways to transcribe the Japanese language. Proper nouns are transcribed in Hepburn without macrons, therefore all vowel lengths that are pronounced are disregarded. This system is can found in the romanization of the cities of Kyōto and Kōbe, the island of Kyūshū, and all of the personal names in the story. Thus Bashō becomes Basho, and Naitō becomes Naito. This type of transcription is used quite often in literature intended for the speakers of English. What could cause confusion, however, is mixing these systems, as is observable in the transcription of the name of Ootomo. The double "o" in the surname would be a deviation from the Hepburn system, as officially the romanization would be either Otomo or Ōtomo, since the "ō" vowel stands for one morpheme. Uninformed readers, however, might not even notice the deviation from the usual, and consequently might find themselves unable to look the person up based on incorrect romanization.

Similarly, Flanagan captures loan words of Japanese origin that have already been naturalized to the English language. Therefore, for instance, words denoting food items like "gyoza dumplings" are also presented in a form without macrons. Some less ubiquitous words of Japanese origin are to be found throughout the novel in italics. In the dedication of the novel to his father, "*For prisoner san byaku san jū go (335)*", Flanagan uses the modified transcription with macrons denoting the vowel length. He treats any numbers he uses in the story similarly. For example, when Dorrigo haggles with Nakamura about the number of prisoners to be sent away, Flanagan does not translate Nakamura, but rather leaves the Japanese in. "*Yon hyaku kyū jū go*, Nakamura said" (Flanagan 193). The fact that Flanagan chose to include these phrases indicates his intention to capture Japanese culture in its

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a lengthened vowel. That is not surprising, due to the fact the novel is intended for English-speaking readership, considering that vowel length is not marked in the written English language. By omitting the macrons, the author makes it easier for himself as well as for the common reader to focus on the story.

The most accurate system to transcribe Japanese to English is the modified Hepburn system, which uses macrons to denote vowel lengths. This romanization system is usually used in academic texts, but it can be found in fiction as well. For instance, in the translation of the collection of Bashō's works called *The Narrow Road to the Deep North and other sketches*, the translator opted to use macrons both in the translation of the text, and also in his introduction for proper nouns and literary terms as well. While this approach to romanization might prove more challenging for an English speaking reader to get used to, it shows respect for the original culture, as it preserves its language in a more faithful manner.

authentic form, and by marking the vowel-lengths using macrons, he manages to offer the reader the most accurate transcription possible.

However, considering the Japanese phrases written in italics, the use of macrons to signify vowel length is inconsistent. There are two examples that disregard the length even though they are introduced in italics. The first one is the term used by the Japanese to denote labourers on the construction of the railway, 労務者. If the length were to be marked, the transcription would be *rōmusha*, as the first morpheme consists of a long vowel "o". However, Flanagan opted to use the term *romusha*. Similarly, the length of the vowel is disregarded in the word *bushidō,* 武士道. Because the term is internationally known and widely used in the form "bushido", it does not come as a surprise a non-native speaker would not notice the difference. Even so, as this book won a prestigious international award, it is more than possible that it will reach the Japanese audience as well, and, from their perspective, the research Flanagan put into his work might be considered careless and a little disrespectful.

It could be argued that including a foreign language provides the novel with additional richness, complexity and mostly authenticity, since it stimulates the reader to learn more about the culture. Throughout the novel, Flanagan managed to offer his readership a thrilling story, while also providing a lot of background information about a historical event that deserves the attention of the public. Incorporating phrases and vocabulary from the original language gives the readers an opportunity to investigate matters further, but the inconsistency in how this is done makes this further research more difficult, and, consequently, more confusing, due to the fact that Flanagan opted to capture the unique quality of the language in some phrases, and chose to simplify others. The reasons behind the choice of transcription in the novel are known only to the author. However, it can be assumed that he was influenced by his peers and the unsystematic attitude to the Japanese language which is common internationally, and prefers to capture reality in a manner that is less detailed and authentic, but much more accessible to the non-natives, whether it may be the writers, correctors, printers, or readers, who, as a result, do not need to concern themselves with foreign diacritical markings.

The selective romanization employed in the novel seems to favour the convenience of the writer/reader over the authenticity of the original language. In his novel, Flanagan

definitely showed an interest in portraying Japanese culture and the language in more depth, however, his inconsistency undermines the credibility of his contribution.

The Japanese through the eyes of the characters of *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*

In order to analyse the manner in which Flanagan captured Japanese culture in his novel, it is necessary to closely analyse the individual characters and their attitude towards the Japanese. In the first chapter, the point of view of the Australian characters will be studied to find both explicit and implicit expressions of attitude towards the culture of Japan and its people. In the next chapter, the analysis of the characters of the guards will follow to determine the way they present the Japanese culture to the readers.

POWs and their perception of Japan

In his novel, Flanagan included several points of view of people of various backgrounds and, naturally, each one of them has their own way of perceiving the people and the events they encounter. Since the aim of this thesis is to analyse Flanagan's depiction of Japanese culture, the goal of this section is to inspect his Australian characters and their attitude toward Japan. Most attention will be given to the main character, Dorrigo Evans, since he, as the protagonist, provides the readers with the deepest insight into his life and thoughts. However, in the latter part, some focus will be turned to minor characters as well.

Dorrigo Evans, as the main character, does not only reveal a lot about himself, but offers the most detailed example of attitudes towards the Japanese. Flanagan presents Dorrigo as a complex personality, a hard-working and thoughtful man that came from humble origins with a great appreciation for literature, especially poetry. Throughout his life, as he tells his story, Dorrigo seems to struggle with doubt and guilt about his role, and what is expected of him versus what he wishes to do. His perception of the culture of his captors is influenced by his contemplative personality. Dorrigo's thoughtfulness enables Flanagan to re-examine the typical post-war perception of the Japanese as one-dimensional villains, as was common in pre-1990 Australian fiction. For instance, when questioned about the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Dorrigo remembers calling all Japanese people monsters; upon further questioning of the severity of his statement, he admits to being at a loss and hiding behind weak arguments, claiming that the bombing of Hiroshima was

deserved and that it would not affect future generations (Flanagan 19). Dorrigo's ability to revisit and re-assess his former attitude shows that he is able to open his mind and regard the Japanese in a more complex manner.

Through Dorrigo's memories, Flanagan manages to provide the readers with some more information about the railway and its background, but, even in this case, Dorrigo seems to be capable of, or at least willing to understand the events in a more general context. As he tries to make sense of the atrocities committed by the Japanese guards and their command, Dorrigo ultimately places the blame on the Japanese High Command, its unrealistic plans, and their dire consequences. When he talks about the railway construction, he describes it as: "[…] a fabled railway that was the issue of desperation and fanaticism, made as much of myth and unreality as it was to be of wood and iron and the thousands upon thousands of lives that were to be laid down over the next year to build it" (Flanagan 21). This sentence clearly shows the tendency to perceive the construction as an irrational enterprise. The focus is not on the ambitions and decisions of the people behind the construction. Rather, Dorrigo leans towards the use of expressions such as "myth and unreality." As his character generally tends to perceive the world around him poetically, it is not surprising he would opt to use such attributes in his own memories. Simultaneously, this choice of words reminds one of the ways in which the eastern nations are generally depicted from the point of view of Orientalism.

Dorrigo adopts a similar attitude to focus on the mystical background of Japanese behaviour in his introduction to the sketchbook of his mate. When summarizing the historical context that led to the construction of the railway, he mostly avoids mentioning people, presenting Japan as one homogenous empire, one entity. "Yet by 1943, Japan, overstretched, under-resourced, is losing, and its need for this railway becomes pronounced" (Flanagan 23). Disregarding any heterogeneity of discourse inside Japan, he takes away its individual voices. As he wrote the introduction long after the end of the war, he could have mentioned the figures behind the respective decisions that led to all the events of World War II, but instead he focuses on the less rational, more mystical features of Japanese culture such as the concept of Japanese spirit. "The spirit that the West does not have, that spirit it calls and understands as the Emperor's will; [...] spirit that it believes will prevail until its final victory" (Flanagan 23). His summary of the events seems less a consequence of the decisions of individuals,

their ambitions and desperation, and more as the result of some movement of fanaticism, as he never looks past the propaganda with which the Japanese regime indoctrinated its people.

This depiction of mystical Japan is then further strengthened when he talks about the meaning of the Yasukuni shrine (靖国神社) as an unofficial national war memorial, where the sins of the perpetrators are absolved when written in the "Book of Souls" (Flanagan 24). Here, Flanagan introduces one of the most controversial issues of the aftermath of World War II and the way Japan dealt with its past. Official visits to the shrine by members of the government are in fact a never-ending source of political tension with the countries that suffered under the Japanese rule. The shrine was originally built to commemorate all those who fell in the civil war following the 1868 Meiji restoration and to help to establish a new identity of a modern Japanese nation. In 1879 it became a shrine officially supported by the government and the Emperor. By including fallen soldiers from both sides of the conflict, the shrine was meant to unify the people. As a shrine, the whole process of its construction as well as its significance draws on the religious ritual of Shintō. According to this tradition, any deceased relatives that are enshrined become the guardians of the land and the respective family. In the same manner, all enshrined soldiers become *kami,* protecting all of Japan, and so the shrine became a place to pray for the safety of the country. With each subsequent military conflict, the symbolic value of the shrine rose, as it became a tool of propaganda offering the fallen soldiers not only a dignified memorial, but also a way to protect the country even after their death. This "Spirit of Yasukuni" or "Yasukuni no Seishin", as coined by Takagami Kakushō, had a mobilizing effect on the general population as well (Pletnia 258). The enshrinement of the soldiers convicted in the post-war war crime trials did not begin until after the end of the Allied occupation and ended with the enshrinement of the Class A war criminals in 1978. Consequently, at the end of the 1970s, any visit by Japanese officials to the shrine became controversial as it was interpreted as a "symbolic form of forgiving those war criminals for their actions, and as a clear nationalistic turn in Japanese domestic policy" (Pletnia 261). Pletnia mentions that the meaning of the shrine is in Japan viewed as "a place for mourning the dead," which played an important role in constructing the collective memory of the Pacific War as "a memory concentrating on the suffering of Japanese people" (267). In his novel, Flanagan presents the assumption that the enshrinement is an act of absolution as a fact. Moreover, he uses the term "Book of Souls" which, being connected to a whole religious context, creates an additional feeling of mystery.

The fact that Dorrigo decided to include the information about the Yasukuni shrine might tell the reader that he feels strongly about it, and that he is possibly offended by the honour their torturers received. Flanagan uses this reaction to inform the reader about this controversial issue, however biased Dorrigo's point of view might be.

Besides highlighting the mystical nature of the shrine, Dorrigo also draws a parallel between the Japanese Empire and ancient Egypt - one of the archetypes of an Oriental country. He does so by calling the POWs "those who slaved on that Pharaonic project". The analogy is used for dramatic effect, so the readers can imagine the scale of the horror of the construction of the railway with an event that is internationally known, such as the construction of the Egyptian pyramids. To what degree the parallel is correct is debatable. The use of such an analogy, connecting an event from the relatively recent past with a thousand-year-old project, in combination with the choice to use the name "the Death railway" helps to draw a similar veil of mystery around the construction of the railway and the entire regime of Imperial Japan. Although conceived on a model of Western colonial powers, the resulting Japanese Empire ended up being compared to an ancient archetype of the Orient. This parallel is repeated once again later, when Dorrigo considers the meaning of Rabbit Hendrick's sketchbook and whether or not to save it. At the time he is rather emotional, so he lets his feelings towards the Japanese be heard. He indignantly questions the way people see the monuments of Egypt or ancient Rome as a wonder while disregarding the many deaths of their slaves that were necessary to build them. "Maybe that's how they'll remember the Japs. Maybe that's all his pictures would end up being used for—to justify the magnificence of these monsters" (Flanagan 218). When Dorrigo remembers the earlier times of captivity, he mostly focuses on the suffering of the POWs using the symbol of slaves along the way. Dorrigo seems to avoid mentioning the Japanese themselves, as the main enemy seems to be the Line, a personification of the horror they were faced with and its source. This reveals Dorrigo as a person that is able to look past the evil that was done by the respective guards, as he manages to identify that the real source of their behaviour was greater and more abstract – the regime that issued the orders, personified here by the Line.

The portrayal of Japan becomes more concrete when Dorrigo turns his memories towards the individual people and their actions. Dorrigo gives a lot of thought to the behaviour of the Japanese guards, the mistreatment and torture they inflicted on the prisoners. The trigger of this is also the central point of the novel, the beating of Darky Gardiner. He

ponders over the way the Japanese guards must have felt while beating him, and he draws a parallel between the tedious, repetitive labour of the POWs and the way the guards felt about the beatings. He does not go as far as to try to rationalize their behaviour with respect to its motivation. He solely focuses on the process itself and how they appeared to be emotionless, and he talks about them in the same manner. “I think they were bored with it, with the bashing” (Flanagan 51). Here, Flanagan does not use any of the mystery and religious tradition to explain the actions of the Japanese guards. Although it must feel unfathomable, he still depicts it as unmistakably human behaviour.

As for the individual guards, the reader learns about them both through the memories of Dorrigo, but also through their own voices. The manner in which he remembers the Japanese is naturally influenced by his emotional state. For instance, when Dorrigo remembers the time he tried to persuade Major Nakamura to let the POWs rest, he treats him with respect. In this scene, he also shows his familiarity with Japanese manners and is able to use this knowledge. He is clearly aware the concept of *enryo*, that the Japanese would view anyone who would verbalize dissatisfaction as immature and weak, since he expects Nakamura to react with anger. Even when dismissed, Dorrigo manages to maintain his composure. It is in emotionally tense situations, such as this, that the reader learns the most about Dorrigo’s negative feelings towards his captors. When Fukuhara rather insensitively suggests to him that, to fight the cholera epidemic, the POWs should bathe every day as the Japanese people do (Flanagan 192) while he frantically haggles for the lives of his co-prisoners, he still manages to keep his anger at bay. However, probably the most emotionally charged moment is then the scene of amputation. In unhygienic, underequipped conditions, Dorrigo tackles the already hopeless case of his mate, Jack Rainbow, whose leg had already been sawed off once. “Clamps, Dorrigo Evans said. Nothing I can do about it at the moment. Fucking yellow bastards. Clamps? Bastards. Clamps!” (Flanagan 245). The stress and horror of the surgery that is impossible from the start draws from Dorrigo feelings of powerlessness, confusion, and fear. At this moment, he is cornered when he realizes he has no chance of doing his job as a doctor and as an officer successfully, and that finally makes him lose composure.

At this point, the characters of Nakamura and Fukuhara are the main POW camp guards Dorrigo interacts with, so they have the biggest influence on his perception of the Japanese people. Although they differ in their personalities, Nakamura being described as a

dishevelled drug addict while Fukuhara is always parade-ready, they both seem to follow orders without adding any opinions of their own on the matter. In his speech to the POWs, Nakamura stresses the honour the prisoners lost by getting captured and that they can redeem it by serving the Emperor. In a subsequent dialogue with Dorrigo, Nakamura says that he is just doing his part on this project, and claims that any progress is not possible without spirit. He further elaborates on this when he discusses the concepts of freedom and progress, and the difference between the Japanese and Western views on them. Where Dorrigo sees non-freedom and cruelty, the Japanese see spirit. And since progress can do without freedom, but cannot do without the spirit, Nakamura sees the project as destiny and the future (Flanagan 67). Judging from his speech and the dialogue, Nakamura appears to be the typical fanatical follower of the regime of Imperial Japan.

The moment where Dorrigo comes closest to understanding Nakamura and the reasons behind his behaviour is during the scene of Darky's beating. Following their dialogue, he expresses a kind of admiration he has for Nakamura's determination, for a will that Dorrigo himself lacks, because he feels himself unable to go on sacrificing people (Flanagan 260). Here, Flanagan clearly touches upon what might be identified as *seishin*, the spirit. Even though it is not explicitly named, it is possible that this spirit would be what Dorrigo is pointing out. Flanagan bases the character of Nakamura and his behaviour upon this "inexplicable" and almost "mystical" concept and lets Dorrigo react to it, be confused by it and eventually come to understand it. At the moment, the character of Nakamura lets himself be consumed by the spirit and gives in to the system he was taught to follow. It is almost as if Dorrigo no longer blames Nakamura, the officer he haggled with for the lives of his mates, but instead he turns the blame to "the terrifying force that takes hold of individuals, groups, nations, and bends and warps them against their natures, against their judgements, and destroys all before it with a careless fatalism" (Flanagan 261). Nakamura is depicted to be manipulated by this "mysterious" force, making him seem as if he had no choice in the matter. The change in Dorrigo's perception of Nakamura is observable in the way he describes him. At first, he sees him as "strange, but human" and "harsh, but pragmatic". When he begins to notice the motivation behind Nakamura's behaviour, he points out the "inhuman" force taking hold of the masses that drives him.

Dorrigo's capacity to see the enemies as humans and not as the Other is exemplified upon the passing unit of the Imperial Japanese Army. As Dorrigo points out, they "looked

as much the wretched of war as the POWs themselves, broken, bedraggled, exhausted" (Flanagan 388). When Dorrigo sees the state of the soldiers, he notes the similarity with the POWs themselves. "It was clear to Dorrigo Evans that this soldier no more understood his beating or purpose than the POWs did their miserable fate" (Flanagan 390). As he has a contemplative personality, Dorrigo tends to look at the world with an open mind. Through him, Flanagan is able to show parallels other characters would not be able to notice. Dorrigo, with his sensitive personality, manages to look past the uniforms and see the people underneath, including how they suffer the consequences of the decisions of the people high above them, manipulated by propaganda and kept in line by their officers. He sees them as humans that might be on the other side of the line, but that are not unlike him and his mates, as they are left without any choice. This scene where Flanagan presents the Japanese as equals, certainly stands as a proof of him as an author of the global age.

What Flanagan shows the reader is that Dorrigo justifies his inability to grasp the motivations of the Japanese with this "mysterious" force and blames it, rather than individuals, whose humanity he does not fail to recognize, for the suffering inflicted on the POWs. From the point of view of postcolonial studies, and namely in light of Edward Said's theory of "orientalism", this is similar treatment to what Eastern nations have received from the Westerners for centuries. At the same time, it is justifiable, since from his position, there is no way for Dorrigo to learn that concepts like *seishin* were used by the Imperial Japanese government to manipulate the masses, and that in spite of how it may have seemed, there were humans with their own ambitions and goals, at the top giving the orders. What Flanagan captures in his story are only the lower levels of the officers, people indoctrinated to a different degree, and the perspective of their victims, people as unacquainted with Japanese culture and the machinations behind its politics, as are the readers of the novel. It is only his contemplative and perceptive nature that enables Dorrigo's character to look closer at the actions and statements of Nakamura to see the force, whether or not he realizes that he is seeing a product of indoctrination by propaganda.

When analysing the attitudes of the rest of the Australian POWs towards their captors, there is much less depth to be found. Their perception will be discussed in the paragraphs below, as Flanagan provides the reader with a selection of different personalities and, therefore, different stances towards their fate and the captors.

On one end of the spectrum, we could place the character of Rooster MacNeice. He is portrayed as a racist, a xenophobe and a generally hateful person that never avoids using some kind of racist slur or vulgarity since, as he puts it himself, "he hated wogs, wops, gyppos and dagos. He hated chinks, nips and slopes, and, being a fair-minded man, he also hated poms and yanks" (Flanagan 173). As for his hatred, he does not focus it entirely on the guards, as he shows it in his conflict with Darky Gardiner, his co-prisoner of partly aboriginal heritage. Ever the opportunist, Rooster also has no problem risking the lives of the other POWs in order to skip work and hide. He justifies it as making a stand against the war effort of the Japanese.

A different kind of resistance against the Japanese is shown by the prisoner called Tiny Middleton. While most prisoners try to save as much energy as they can, he becomes the one prisoner that strives to get back at the captors by showing them his strength and resilience, in order to "show them little yellow bastards what a white man is, he would say" (Flanagan 163). As he prides himself on finishing the quota faster than anyone else, he disregards the fact that he basically makes the lives of all his mates worse. However, he eventually falls prey to the same chimera as the guards do, when his physical state deteriorates.

In comparison to the previous two prisoners, the character of Darky Gardiner shows a more pragmatic attitude towards the guards. He mentions several times that he would barter with them, and even when he talks about the Goanna, the notoriously violent guard, he only quotes the other POWs and does not add much of his own opinions. He is portrayed as an exceptionally perceptive and careful person, very aware of the rules, and thoughtful about his actions. That is to be seen in the scene where he recounts the morning routine of making the bed that shows the meticulousness and perfectionism the Japanese required not only from their own soldiers, but from the prisoner's as well. Similarly to the case of Tiny, there comes a time when his thoroughness fails him, and his punishment then becomes the central motif of the third part of the novel. The whole time, while his health is gradually failing him before and after the final beating, rather than blame the Japanese, he mostly describes them unemotionally, more as a hurdle in his struggle for survival.

A completely different perspective on the Japanese people in World War II is offered in a story told by Sheephead Morton, about the fate of Lizard Brancussi. Although it might seem rather over the top, it provides the reader with more information about the events that

followed after finishing the construction of the railway, when Lizard was transferred to work in Japan, where he managed to survive the explosion of the atomic bomb. Through Morton's vivid story, the reader learns about the tragedy that Lizard encountered there: the victims of the explosion floating in the river, the carbonated remains, people fleeing "with skin falling away in long ribbons like seaweed," all of them "in agony in that roiling hell of blue fire and black rain, who, like the POWs he remembered, called for their mother as they were dying" (Flanagan 292). The picture Flanagan paints here strongly parallels the horror and gore he offered in the stories from the POW camp. Clearly, his goal was to find the common ground between people, and display how they are connected by the suffering caused by war, regardless of which side they are on.

To sum up, from the perspective of the Australian characters Flanagan offers a Japan that meets the expectations based on the historical evidence known from the survivors and their memoirs. Since the individual characters of the Australian prisoners of war are products of the society that raised them, the slurs and the emphasis on racial differences reflect their anger and frustration, as well as some of the contemporary conventions. With few exceptions the captors are depicted as strict and harsh, following their orders to the letter, as they adhere to the Code by which they have been trained. In Flanagan's story, the Imperial propaganda, the unwavering belief in the basic values personified in the Emperor, presides over the events. Dorrigo, gifted with sensitivity and a contemplative nature, is able to recognize it, and so he offers the reader a much more complex picture in which the Japanese people, be it the guards of the POW camp, the foot soldiers, or the civilians, all appear to be as much the victims of the whole machinery of war led by the invisible force as the prisoners themselves.

The characters of the captors

The fact that Flanagan added the point of view of the Japanese endows his novel with complexity, which is rarely achieved by one-sided accounts of POWs. By giving the characters of the captors a voice, Flanagan provides the reader with attitudes and motivations they could not learn by hearing from just one side of the conflict. However, the question that arises when one writes from the point of view of a character from a completely different culture is to what degree the author managed to correctly capture the culture the characters represent. In this section, the characters of the guards, their behaviour and inner thoughts will be analysed with respect to their authenticity using the above-mentioned concepts as

defined by Wierzbicka, and whether their depiction perpetuates Orientalism as described by Said.

Major Tenji Nakamura

From the memories of Dorrigo, the reader learns about one of the main characters from the other side, a Japanese Major named Tenji Nakamura. Dorrigo describes him as a rather dishevelled man and harsh, but pragmatic officer that respects hierarchy more than anything else. Nakamura seems to be the typical indoctrinated member of the Imperial Japanese Army a reader could expect. This impression seems to be challenged only by the fact that he shows his love for poetry when he makes Fukuhara translate a poem for Dorrigo, which eventually generates some common ground between them.

However, as Nakamura becomes one of the more significant characters, he reveals more about his attitude to his surroundings and the people around him in his inner monologues. Since the whole concept of Japanese conquest on the continent was led under the reasoning that they were colonizing the regions and bringing civilization, it is more than likely that a Japanese person would feel superior and view the locals with a mix of pity and contempt. It is possible that they would take a similar stance towards the POWs who not only belonged to the enemy, but who would also be considered crude and weak as they do not follow the same values Japanese did. Differing not only on a psychological level, but also physically, considering the fact the average Japanese man of the time would be of a smaller stature than an average Westerner, it is probable that Nakamura would feel inadequate and threatened enough to use a slur such as “a troop of huge, hairy, threatening apes” (Flanagan 79).

In light of this information, the character of Nakamura still belongs to the category of a stereotypical member of the Imperial Japanese Army. His inner thoughts about his role in the construction of the railway line, however, allow the reader to learn more about his motivations, and the struggles he has to face in order to follow his orders. He shares the feeling of excitement about the fact he could participate in this great enterprise, as “his pride in joining his life with a national and imperial destiny, was immense” (Flanagan 82). That he felt such pride to be part of a project considered to be impossible by the Westerners seems to echo the preoccupation of Japan at the time, as it was relatively new in the international

political arena and was prone to suffering from an inferiority complex, and as Yoko Harada points out in her thesis, for which it needed to compensate. Since the beginning of the new Japanese state, the main goal was to catch up with the West, and the whole nation was unified under this motto through the newly centralised education system and media. Nakamura feels this optimism and is filled with the motivation to work hard, as he observes the values of duty and the propaganda of *seishin*. At the same time, his thoughts offer a glimpse into his inner life, which is filled with doubt and confusion, as is to be expected with regards to the reality in which he finds himself. This belief in the state, the Emperor, who is supposed to simulate a parent who loves and cares for the people, is discrepant with the way Nakamura is constantly being faced with new and more impossible orders with no reward in return, except the promise of honour and glory. By showing this inner struggle, Flanagan gives the Japanese much more complex characters than would be possible by depicting only their behaviour, as he paints them not only as mindless perpetrators of violence, but allows the reader to gain considerable insight into the inner world of some.

The Japanese members of the military perceived their culture as a source of many commonly held stances. It provided a connection between them, a means of escape and a morale boost, as well as the psychological support the soldiers needed. In one of the chapters, Nakamura mentions a necessary physical boost as well, as the reader learns that he is strongly addicted to Philopon, an army issued methamphetamine, colloquially named *shabu*. When Nakamura calls it the expression of the Japanese spirit (Flanagan 85), he verbalizes how much of his willpower rests upon the concept of *seishin* and Japanese propaganda. He mentions the importance of *seishin,* duty and honour, once more when he is making a speech to the POWs at the parade grounds in reaction to the matter of rising health issues in the camp. As he puts it, the main reason for the problem is the "absence of Japanese belief: health follows will!" and he explains to the prisoners that the same is expected from the Japanese troops as well. "Nippon prepared to work, Major Nakamura say, Australian must work. Nippon eat less, Australian eat less. Nippon very sorry, Major Nakamura say. Many men must die." (Flanagan 194) When Nakamura tells the POWs that they should be prepared to starve and die for the railway, he projects only what he was taught as a Japanese soldier. As they are soldiers as well, they should adhere to the same rules. Through Nakamura's speech, Flanagan reveals another parallel between the prisoners and the Japanese, that

behind that cruel mistreatment of the POW, there is a truth that the Japanese people are expected to suffer for the same cause.

He uses similar arguments with his subordinates. To motivate an engineer, he adopts a metaphor to help him deal with the POWs without emotions, as he recommends him to see them as mere machines. Flanagan depicts Nakamura as a man that would do anything to complete the mission and would command his subordinates to do the same. He dismisses his subordinate's requests, because to ask for something goes against the basic concepts of *enryo* and *seishin,* and he acts as he feels it is right, as he is following the values of the society he was raised and trained in.

However, Nakamura is not depicted as an utterly ignorant officer as he is aware of the unrealistic conditions in which he is supposed to work. For that reason, he often finds himself in a situation where he faces the choice of adhering to one duty while dismissing another. Although Nakamura holds the hierarchy of the IJA and its values as a vital part of his role, he is aware of the fact that the request to receive support in the form of equipment submitted by his subordinate is justified. His discussion with Colonel Shiro Kota is the proof of this, since he basically repeats the same request, and goes against the principle of *enryo* himself. As mentioned above, to ask for something is deemed immature. By asking his commander for equipment, he breaches this unwritten rule, and so he expects to be chastised or mocked by his superordinate. He views Kota as his superior and treats him as such. Flanagan lets the reader into Nakamura's mind to see the struggle he constantly faces while he tries to continue with his duties.

Due to Nakamura's strong belief in the Japanese spirit, Kota eventually dispels any of his doubts. In their dialogue, he stresses the differences of the non-Japanese, and blames the difficulties faced during construction on the lack of work discipline in the labourers. Both local *rōmusha* and the POWs are often referred as incompetent and lazy, as compared to the expectations they would have for the Japanese. Considering Japanese military training and the expectations the Japanese society of that time placed on its members, such attitude towards English and Australians is to be anticipated. Kota also describes the Allies in a disdainful manner when he recounts his experiences on the Pacific front. On the one hand, he admits their technological power, but on the other hand, he claims that with respect to morale, the Japanese "spirit will endure when theirs crumbles" (Flanagan 103). In this way, Flanagan once more builds the confidence and willpower of Nakamura on the mystical

concept of spirit, in contrast with the material strength of the West resting in technology and resources.

Besides the focus on technology, both Japanese officers discuss the differences between the cultures with respect to basic concepts upon which the societies are built, as well. Their dialogue touches upon the concept of freedom when Nakamura retells Kota his conversation with Dorrigo. The concept of freedom, one of the key foundations of Western culture since the Enlightenment, was as foreign to the Japanese as the concept of individualism. Moreover, the Japanese were aware of the fact that the Western powers did not hold to their own values and built their wealth on the backs of their colonies. Therefore, it is not unimaginable that it would seem to them rather hypocritical and perhaps comical to hear a Westerner talking about freedom. When Nakamura tries to explain to Dorrigo the motto "The Whole World Under One Roof" and its goal of "liberating Asia from European colonisation" (Flanagan 104), Flanagan presents the idea of The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (大東亜共栄圏), the concept that stood over the Japanese expansion. As mentioned by Peattie in the fifth chapter of the sixth volume of *Cambridge History of Japan*, even if the aim was to break colonial influence in the region and to establish a unified new order in East Asia, the official Japanese ambition was not that different from that of the Western powers, as it overtly professed Japanese superiority and racism, as shown by the behaviour of the officers (244).

Nakamura never expresses any pleasure in any of the atrocities he takes part in while working on the project of the Railway. However, he has no problem adopting the common Japanese phrase "it cannot be helped" when he justifies his decisions. It is another rather apt example of the Japanese attitude towards adversity and challenge, and it fits the context of the impossible tasks Nakamura is being given. He is clearly willing to use any means necessary to reach the goal he was assigned. The reason for this attitude is verbalized in his inner monologue, where he reminisces about the value of the life of a prisoner of war. The strongest argument for Nakamura's attitude towards the prisoners is the fact, that were he to become one, he would be executed upon his return to Japan. As mentioned in the theoretical section, the Code of the Japanese military forbade the soldiers to be captured by the enemy, since it was considered an honour to fall on the battlefield for their country and the Emperor. Flanagan uses the character of Nakamura to offer this information to the reader, to explain the attitude towards the POWs in the novel. However, as Nakamura is mostly the archetype

of the fanatical Japanese officer, there is to be observed a certain lack of plurality of perspective on the matter.

As pointed out by the character of Colonel Kota, the construction of the railway was considered a part of the war effort and any victims were deemed a necessary evil. In the grand scheme of things, they paved the way for progress, placing Japan at the top of the world powers. Nakamura thus considers the punishment of Darky Gardiner an inevitable event, and shows no hesitation in letting his beating continue long after it supposed to have ended. He also justifies this punishment with the concept of honour, because Darky was responsible for the men that left the construction, and by letting them skip work, he shamed the guards and the Emperor's will. Thinking about honour brings Nakamura to share more background information about both his past and the way the members of IJA were trained. As he considers his desperate situation, having been ordered to build a railway without proper equipment, Flanagan makes him verbalize the way he has been cornered by the Imperial regime. Nakamura is very much aware of the fact that "if he failed to complete his section of the railway on time, he would have no choice but to kill himself out of shame. He did not want to kill himself, but he could not return to the Home Islands having failed the Emperor. He was a better man than that" (Flanagan 257). The whole range of the meaning of honour as the Japanese understood it is thus revealed to the readers. Through confessions like this, this novel truly shows its quality, as it unveils the dilemma the members of the IJA faced and the manner in which they were treated by their own command with respect to the value of their life.

In light of the above, the wartime Major Nakamura is depicted as a man with a deep faith in the basic principles of his culture; on the one hand a strict officer, and on the other a drug addict, both of the parts of his personality held together by his devotion to Japanese values. The only feature of his character that deviates from the stereotypical depiction of a POW camp guard is his love of *haiku*. As noted above, Flanagan uses poetry to create a connection between the characters, and the love of poetry serves to create a bond between him and Colonel Kota, as well as a sense of understanding with Dorrigo at the crucial scene of Darky Gardiner's beating. In both cases, he stands as a faithful servant of his Emperor with an uncritical belief in the values he has been taught.

As Nakamura becomes one of the main characters of the novel, a certain degree of character development might be expected. In the fourth and the fifth part of the novel,

Flanagan offers a look into the lives of the characters in the post-war period, so even Nakamura gets an opportunity to reflect upon his life and decisions. Right after the end of the war, Flanagan puts him in Shinjuku, a city quarter in the capital of Tōkyō destroyed in the Allied bombardment, in an area he calls Rashomon. When Nakamura finds himself to be extremely poor and desperate, Flanagan portrays the universal desperation of the population of Japan through his eyes, as Nakamura describes poverty, and the widespread addiction to a cheap alcoholic drink called *kasutori* and the salvaged remains of the military-grade *shabu*. He expresses bitterness about Japan losing the war, and disgust with the way women called "pan pan girls" sell their bodies to the Westerners in order to survive (Flanagan 274).

Nakamura's attitude toward his past actions changes very slowly. At the beginning, when he first learns about the warrant on his name as a Class B war criminal, he gets angry, and instead of blaming himself, he blames the Americans. Flanagan paints him as a man who in no way admits the horrors he has been part of, but instead still holds on to the concept of honour. Cornered by the circumstances, Nakamura weighs two options, whether to run, or kill himself, because being executed would mean losing his honour. While to a Westerner this choice would not make sense, since it would be a choice between saving himself and death, to a Japanese soldier, the latter was the more honourable choice (Flanagan 276). Due to an intervention of fate, Nakamura eventually chooses to run. The following train of events depicts how desperate Nakamura has become, when he kills and steals to get away from the capital to the city of Kōbe. He never stops following the trials on the news, and he expresses his outrage by the way the crimes are defined as he recounts the typical training in the IJA, where slapping and other forms of physical punishment were used as a means to teach discipline for the smallest transgressions. He still clings to the idea of him being a good officer, and according to some of his peers, even too mild (Flanagan 282).

His attitude towards his actions and the events he was part of does not change even in Kōbe. Through his friendship with an eccentric doctor by the name of Sato, Flanagan manages to offer the reader more detail about the atrocities the Japanese committed during the war, namely the vivisections on the American troops. The doctor himself is described as a humble and a quiet person, until he divulges his secret. Sato explains to Nakamura that at the time, this research was considered a great service to the Empire and its military, and that the central figures behind the research survived and thrive today because Americans are interested in the results of their work. The connection of these actions with the Emperor is

still enough for Nakamura to understand it and he draws a parallel to his own life, as he still bases his pride upon his honour and devotion to the nation. While Sato seems to feel regret for his part in the research, as proven by the fact he refuses to wear his white coat, Nakamura feels like a victim, so they end up growing apart. As a consequence, most likely in order to preserve his idea of pride in himself, Nakamura decides to find other people that do not feel ashamed of their past. Eventually, he decides to work for the company Sato told him about, where he meets Colonel Kato again. At this point in time, Nakamura still holds to the values he did in the war. He still behaves as if by admitting any regret towards his past actions and decision he would lose himself, and his identity. The character of Nakamura that Flanagan presents to the readers is still the same fanatic, set on following the dream of the all-powerful Japanese spirit that justifies anything to achieve greatness.

It is the character of Nakamura's wife, Ikuko, who becomes the main trigger for his character development. While he initially expresses appreciation mostly for the fact that she does not wish to discuss the war, gradually he begins to feel how her goodness brings out much good in him as well, especially when he sees how she cares for him during his disease. Nakamura finds himself helping others, doing charity work, and becoming a better man in the process (Flanagan 336). At this point, Nakamura might have changed his behaviour; however, its motivation still stems from the notion that it is the same force, the Japanese spirit, that stands behind this goodness and drives it. He sees his wife caring for him while sacrificing her own time and strength as parallel to his own service to the Emperor.

The moment of change arrives when he goes to visit his old colleague from the POW camp, Tomokawa. There, he is reminded of the prisoners of war, and this memory shakes him to the core. He begins to feel an inconsistency between the idealized idea of Japan in which he believed and his memories from the POW camp, triggering an emotion he cannot place. As Tomokawa continues to tell Nakamura how he considered the war crime trials a joke and recounts the atrocities he had been part of in the war in Manchuria, the stress of the memory, combined with the effects of his medication, puts Nakamura in a living nightmare. However, as he begins to remember the difficulties they had been through and the impossible task they were faced with, he once again looks back on the project with a feeling of pride in the unique Japanese spirit that enabled the achievement in spite of its adversities, and the many deaths of his colleagues both in the war and after.

Thinking about the hard work they gave to the Emperor at the Line, Nakamura begins to compare it with the goodness of his wife. The individual sacrifice of themselves seems to him the same, however, at the same time, "through his service of this cosmic goodness, he had discovered he was not one man but many, that he could do the most terrible things he might otherwise have thought were evil if he had not known that they were in the service of the ultimate goodness" (Flanagan 348). Here, Nakamura reveals how much he was deceiving himself in that he was able to commit all the atrocities he did while he hid behind the concept of the Japanese spirit and the service to his Emperor. Once again, Flanagan uses Nakamura's love for poetry when he calls the Emperor a one-word poem, "a poem that encompassed the universe and transcended all morality and all suffering", (Flanagan 348) a poem that was beyond good and evil. This moment becomes a turning point in Nakamura's character development, because for the first time, he looks at the things he has done in the Emperor's name in a different light. The poem becomes "horror, monsters and corpses" (Flanagan 348) as he realizes it had made him stifle any pity, and enjoy cruelty, since a human life was worth nothing in comparison to it. At that point, Nakamura wonders: "what if this had all been a mask for the most terrible evil?" (Flanagan 348). Upon this realization, Nakamura for the first time admits that the greater good he was suffering so much for might have been only a guise for some nefarious goal. Gradually, Nakamura begins to view his past with different eyes, as he begins to remember the reality, and a feeling of despair envelops him. The gap between both ex-officers widens when Tomokawa chooses to disregard all the torture and horror of the POW camp.

Looking back at everything written about Nakamura, we can surely say his character is complex, due to the fact that he eventually develops. By including his point of view, Flanagan enriches his novel by giving it a much wider perspective on the events that transpired. Nakamura did not get as much space as the character of Dorrigo, but his narration offered much background information than would be possible to present otherwise. His inner conflict and his journey to understand the concept of goodness make him less of one of the many stereotypical officers of Imperial Japanese Army, and more of an actual human being, whose struggle with indoctrination equals a heroic battle.

Colonel Shiro Kota

The same cannot be said about the next character from the ranks of the Imperial Japanese Army, Colonel Shiro Kota. In the character of Kota, Flanagan offers the more stereotypical depiction of the IJA, recounting the cruel and violent actions of fanatical mad men. While in the case of Nakamura Flanagan offers some complexity by showing the reader his doubts and struggles, Kota is presented rather one-dimensionally. In the several dialogues he has in the novel, Kota introduces the regime of the Imperial Japanese Army, and the atrocities they were committing on the local populace of continental Asia and in the Pacific. As he tells his story, he is depicted as a ruthless man that has no doubts about his actions, and instead disturbingly revels in the aesthetics of violence.

The reader learns about Kota's peculiar personality when he explains to Nakamura the special "training" he was subjected to that involved beheading the tortured prisoners. The disturbing nature of his personality is then only deepened by the way he shows his more human emotions, such as shame, at absolutely inappropriate times. Kota mentions feeling shame and fear of failure stemming from the high expectations he perceives from his superiors. This would be nothing unusual for Japanese person to feel, considering the concept of seniority and duty, if it was not presented in such an extreme context, such as while in the act of decapitating people. Later in the novel, Flanagan shows more of Kota's military past, and another probable reason for his mental instability. Through his dialogue and his own inner monologue, Flanagan introduces to the readers the occurrence of cannibalism among Japanese soldiers during the Pacific war. Kota appears truly tortured by this experience, unable to share it with others. Although this backstory might offer some explanation of his depravity, it does not add anything that would deepen his character and overcome his one-dimensionality. The real source of his personality issues is never revealed, as he never shares his past further than the above-mentioned episodes. He might be even more indoctrinated than Major Nakamura, or something earlier in his life could have caused a mental disorder that he is sublimating by committing the acts of cruelty. Whatever the reason might be, in the way Flanagan portrays him, he is a disturbed person. Since the reader has no way to learn about his background, his character seems more of a caricature. While it is true that among the thousands of men in the Japanese Army many must have fit this psychological profile, as is documented by the many atrocities that were committed during the war, in this novel, Kota's representation falls short of the complex and, fully-fledged

character of Nakamura, and thus does not dig deeply enough into this aspect of the Japanese soldier's psyche.

The psychotic personality of Kota is only enhanced by his love for poetry and his tendency to recite it at the most disturbing moments. As they share the affinity for *haiku*, Kota and Nakamura bond over the poetry of Bashō, and this is enough for Nakamura to consider the Colonel a good and a kind man, even though just before this moment he had learned about Kota's passion for beheading people. This magical effect of the poetry takes away some of the complexity of Nakamura's character, as it takes away from his doubts. Kota reveals himself as a damaged, egotistical man, longing to share his poetic and, broken soul, but otherwise feeling nothing towards his victims.

In his post-war chapters, the reader learns that Kota managed to use his position as an officer to avoid being convicted for war crimes as many of his subordinates were. It is probable that even after the war he remains the same manipulative, disturbed person as he was during the war. Not even his epilogue, which is presented in the form of a short narration, offers anything about him regretting, or even reflecting on his actions. As the character of a nationalist journalist, Taro Ootomo, strives to "rectify the many misunderstandings that had grown about Japan's role in the Greater East Asia War," he decides to interview Kota. From his daughter, Ootomo learns that Kota was trying to become a living Buddha. He manages to find him long dead of old age in his apartment, mummified in his bed with a copy of Bashō's travel sketch, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*. This epilogue only proves that Kota never did reflect on his past critically, and until the very end of his life, he most likely prided himself on his actions enough to feel worthy of becoming a holy man.

When regarding the character of Colonel Kota, there is clearly much less space given to his background to offer some kind of explanation for his motivations and behaviour. Flanagan paints him simply as a mad man. Kota is not as dependent on the values of duty and spirit as Nakamura is, but he follows them. While his motivations are not stated explicitly, it seems that the only interest he has is in torturing people around him. The combination of the account of the atrocities that transpired during the war and the portrayal of a violent psychopath that enjoys poetry which Flanagan presents to the reader seems to be rather grotesque and excessive, and for that reason the character of Kota verges on a caricature.

The Goanna

Another character whose perspective enhances the complexity of the novel is a Korean guard known among the POWs for his erratic and violent behaviour, called the Goanna, or “the lizard”. Although he is notorious for his aggressive conduct, compared to Kota, he proves to be more of a pragmatic person. He shows this, when he professes his dislike of beating Darky, whom he considered useful to barter with (Flanagan 252). His story as a Korean member of the Imperial Japanese Army is also enriching, as it provides a closer look at the hierarchy of the IJA, and the treatment the people of Japanese “colonies” were faced with on a daily basis. Several times both Kota and Nakamura admit their dislike for Koreans and other continental Asians, as they consider them uncivilized and lazy.

The issue of discrimination is further developed in later parts of the novel that introduce the war-crime trials. The readers have a chance to learn more about the Goanna, Choi Sang-Min, as he narrates his story while waiting to be judged in the Changi Prison. Although he is Korean by birth, he is being treated by the Allies as a Japanese citizen. Here, Flanagan captures the way the Allies had a tendency for a reductionist perspective on the enemy. They disregarded the fact that Korea and the island of Formosa (today’s Taiwan) were already under the rule of the Japanese Empire at the time, and treated all subjects of the Emperor as Japanese. Therefore, in the story, the Goanna’s trial proceedings are in English, and the verdict itself is translated only to Japanese for him. Furthermore, Choi feels a great injustice in the fact that he is being tried for ordering the death of a prisoner even though according to the IJA hierarchy he had no right to do so. He mentions that Kota used the situation for his own benefit by blaming the guards of the colonial origin, Koreans and Formosans. The fact that mere collaboration with the Americans and a noble origin would award freedom makes the Goanna feel like a scapegoat and a victim. Through his voice Flanagan verbalises the conundrum of the post-war trials:

> In private they asked a simple question. If they and all their actions were simply expressions of the Emperor’s will, why then was the Emperor still free? Why did the Americans support the Emperor but hang them, who had only ever been the Emperor’s tools? (Flanagan 285)

What makes his character more complex than the Kota's, is the fact that we are offered insight into his past experiences and motivations by means of his inner monologue. His story paints him as a victim of circumstances, as he recounts his tragic childhood being a servant to a Japanese family where he was treated worse than a dog, and the way he was looked down upon his whole life for being Korean in the Japanese military. His sole reason for enlisting, suffering through the violent training, and the motivation behind all of his actions, reveals itself to be the fact he knew he could not come back to his family empty handed.

As Flanagan depicts him, he is but a shadow of a person who never knew any other way of life than to torture or be tortured, to kill or be killed. He even admits that since he never had a chance to feel like a real human, he felt good when he learnt that the POWs feared him and called him a monster. As he puts it "he felt he was somebody while he was beating the Australian soldiers who were so much larger than him" (Flanagan 287). The only emotion he shares about his actions in the POW camp is rage, as he feels he is not guilty for the events. He blames his fate, and through the end of his life he feels that he did only what he was told to do.

His last moments before his execution he is still unable to shake the feeling of injustice. He describes how he was offered a Japanese style last meal and a Buddhist monk for a priest, despite him being a Korean and a Chongdoist. Feeling angry, he refuses to admit he is going to die (Flanagan 306). He admits he admires the pride and assurance of some Japanese officers and the Australians which they drew from their belief in their country, as he always considered himself just "a man from a colony" (Flanagan 308).

If Nakamura appears to be a victim of indoctrination, the Goanna is then a victim of the society he grew up in. The character of the Goanna widens the picture of the IJA the most, as he offers the readers more information about the heterogeneity within it, which stemmed from the fact it included people recruited from the "colonies". His story is a definitely a tragic one, more so because he comes out of it as a person pushed to the edge by circumstances. However, although all three above mentioned characters come from different backgrounds, and are moved by different impulses, in the end, they display a similar attitude to their duty in that they all comply and fulfil their role.

Kenji Mogami

The only example that offers a radically different point of view of the IJA is the character of Kenji Mogami, an older guard mentioned twice in the novel. The POWs meet him when they arrive at the construction site and Dorrigo describes him as a pleasant older man, smiling and helpful, when he teaches the prisoners how to build the huts. What distinguishes him from all three of the above-mentioned characters is also his familiarity with Western popular culture, as he is shown singing *Accentuate the Positive* by Bing Crosby in broken English (Flanagan 40).

His character is, however, of minor importance, so he disappears from view. The second time he is mentioned in the novel, he is on Death Row along with Goanna. Mogami is described as one of the guards who never hurt anyone, although that did not help him, as he was sentenced to death anyway. By including this apparently contrasting personality, Flanagan's world achieves a degree of complexity that sets the novel apart among modern war fiction, as he captured the plurality of the events from various points of view.

By including the perspective of the guards, Flanagan gained an opportunity to share more with the readers about the context of the events than the one-sided point of view of the prisoners would allow. It may be concluded that due to this, Flanagan achieved a certain plurality. He chose to compare and contrast the approaches of three individuals, serving their country without hesitation. Even though their personalities and backgrounds differ, in the end, none of them truly deviates from the stereotypical POW camp guard. The Japan which Flanagan captures by means of these characters is full of contrasts: it is strict and prone to violence, and at the same time it is ambitious and poetic. Since Flanagan chose to focus mostly on the high and low points of the Japanese history and culture, what seems to be missing is the middle of the spectrum. As Pulvers mentioned in his review, there are many materials, in the form of correspondence and personal diaries, written by the members of the Imperial Japanese Army that prove that not everyone was as indoctrinated as Nakamura, as deranged as Kota, or as tortured as the Goanna. Flanagan did an admirable job of trying to describe the events that influenced the whole lives of his father and his family in a wider context, however he neglected some voices, and their story is yet to be heard.

It is through the Japanese characters that Flanagan provides much information about Japan and the events that happened during and in the aftermath of World War II. He includes some accounts of the atrocities committed by the Japanese troops: the massacres of the local population in Manchuria, the cases of cannibalism in the Pacific, and the vivisections of captured American soldiers. However, Flanagan always reminds the reader that the victims of the war are on both sides, so he tells the story of the suffering of the native population of Japan as well, as he recounts the horrors of the atom bomb in Hiroshima and the subsequent desperation of the inhabitants of the ruined capital. All of these events are well documented and by mentioning them in the novel, Flanagan keeps their memory alive.

With regards to the question of Orientalism, by including the perspective of the Japanese, Flanagan surely belongs amongst the authors endeavouring to capture the plurality of the global world Arimitsu noted in her paper. However, as the whole novel revolves around the contrast of the low and the high, with the violence and gore on the one hand, and poetry and lyricism on the other while overlooking anything in between, it can be seen as bearing resemblance to the typical depiction of the Orient. Hostile and unapproachable, a place of mystery and strange rituals, with a beautiful traditional culture are among commonly portrayed characteristics that the novel reflects and falls back on. In light of this, Flanagan's work could definitely profit from including more of the voices of less stereotypical members of IJA, as that approach could do more to fight some of the stereotypes typically associated with the Japanese culture.

Allusions to Japanese literature in Richard Flanagan's *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*

In the following section, the use of Japanese literature in the novel will be analysed with respect to the context of its use, its role in the story and the manner in which it presents the Japanese culture to the readership. In the interviews mentioned in the chapter "*The Narrow Road to the Deep North* within the context of Richard Flannagan's work," Flanagan expressed deep love for literature and poetry in general. He also stated that poetry was extremely important to his father as well. As he claimed in the interview with Koval, his motivation for including allusions to mainly Japanese literature in the novel stemmed from his attempt to capture not only the low points, but also the high points of Japanese culture.

As he dedicated this novel to his father, it reflects his penchant for poems and his love of literature.

As noted already in the theoretical part of this thesis, the title of the novel, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, pays homage to one of the most famous poets of the Genroku era (1688–1704), Matsuo Bashō, and his famous travel sketch. Although Flanagan uses an actual allusion to the original *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* only once throughout the story, he also includes several of Bashō's *haiku* from collections mentioned in the chapter above called "Selected features of Japanese culture as seen presented *in The Narrow Road to the Deep North"*. Apart from Bashō, Flanagan introduces poems by other masters of the genre, like Issa Kobayashi and Kikusha Tagami. Since three major characters express a deep interest in poetry, Flanagan seized the opportunity and decided to include a number of poems and incorporate them into the text as the characters recite them. In addition to that, each part of the novel is introduced by a selected *haiku* poem. Some attention is also given to a special subgenre of Japanese poetry, the so-called "death poems", which are typically composed by poets in preparation for their own demise, as explained in the introduction to the collection edited by Yoel Hoffman.

Looking closely at the poetry selected to create divisions between the individual parts of the novel, Flanagan chose to use one *haiku* by Matsuo Bashō, and four others by Issa Kobayashi, only in their translations. Since he does not provide any commentary, the reason why he chose each particular poem is up for speculation. However, we can say that Flanagan draws on the aptness of the brief word play *haiku* poetry is based on. In each case, he uses his interpretation of the poem to foreshadow the feeling of that respective part of the novel. For instance, the nostalgic atmosphere permeating the whole first part of the novel, which presents the main character, Dorrigo Evans, to the readers, matches with the regret of Bashō's bee leaving the flower. Dorrigo, already an old man filled with regret and nostalgia, looks back on his childhood and his earliest memories of the war and his internment in the POW camp. The second introductory *haiku* then foreshadows the atmosphere of longing, developed by the introduction of the romantic part of the plot dedicated to Dorrigo's love affair with Amy. Just as the woman of Kobayashi's poem stands on the beach veiled in the mists of the dusk, Amy remains an unattainable vision both in Dorrigo's real life and his memories, while he suffers in the POW camp. The next two poems, also composed by Issa Kobayashi, both develop the metaphor of dew, a symbol of ephemerality and sadness. As

the third part of the novel is also the most violent, since it centres around the fate of Darky Gardiner and other horrors of life Dorrigo and his mates were faced with in the POW camp, the *haiku* which Flanagan chose reflects and foreshadows the violence, sadness, and fleetingness of life. We could say the same about the fourth and the fifth parts, which introduce the ruins of the post-war world where the characters struggle with its consequences and try to find some happiness in the world. These later introductory poems are some of the most elusive in their meaning, and yet they capture the atmosphere of the aftermath of World War II rather fittingly, as they allude to the flicker of beauty in the sadness of the world.

As mentioned above, since there are three characters to be found in the novel with a deep affection for poetry, there are several places in the story where poems appear in the dialogues as they share them. The first such use of Japanese poetry is in the dialogue between Major Nakamura and Colonel Kota. As these two characters discuss problems with the construction of the railway, such as the lack of machinery and the state of their labourers, they bond over the one thing that connects all deployed soldiers everywhere - their culture. As he learns about Nakamura's appreciation of classical Japanese poetry, Colonel Kota uses this knowledge to reach an understanding with him and to convince Nakamura about the need to follow the orders they were given by the state. Kota recites one of Bashō's *haiku* that captures the spirit of nostalgia.

Even in Kyoto

when I hear the cuckoo

I long for Kyoto. (Flanagan 112)

The poem here bridges the gap between the two men and creates a connection so strong that it even overcomes the fact that Kota had shared his past experiences filled with the abuse and torture of Chinese prisoners with Nakamura just minutes before. Nakamura might be a drug addict, driven by his almost fanatical devotion to the values of honour and the Japanese spirit he was taught, but he never appears to actually view the violence and mistreatment as something to be proud of. The way he is depicted by Flanagan, his pride originates from the uniqueness of the Japanese will that enables its people to achieve the unachievable. Throughout the horrifying story about beheading the prisoners, Nakamura

silently achieves an understanding that there was no other way to fulfil the Emperor's orders. Despite the atrocities he just shared, all Kota needed to do to win Nakamura's sympathy and allegiance was to recite a poem.

Flanagan does not just include the translation, as he even lets Kota create his own version of the Bashō's *haiku* to reflect his emotions and experience. The poem he recites goes as follows:

Even in Manchukuo

when I see a neck

I long for Manchukuo. (Flanagan 114)

This poem becomes one of the points in the novel where the character of Kota reveals his depravity in combining his psychotic fondness for beheading people with his love for art. A question arises as to what effect such use of classical poetry has on the reader with respect to the representation of Japanese culture. There is definitely some shock value in combining such striking contrasts as the atrocities Japanese soldiers committed on the civilian population of the continental Asia during their expansion with the beauty of classical poetry. Moreover, through the use of the poem Flanagan draws attention to these events, preserves the memory of the horrors, and introduces it to the wider public.

The scene when Kota and the Goanna find Darky in the jungle reveals how vital the poems are to the Colonel. While preparing to behead Darky, Kota recites a *haiku* poem, but he finds himself struggling to focus. When he realizes he is losing his control of the construction site because of the poor health of the workers, he sublimates in the only way he knows, by beheading people. However, in his stressed state he struggles to recite the poem. For him, the poems serve as a tool for concentration, and as he realizes that he is unable to hold on to the poem, he panics and flees.

Only the moon

and I, on our meeting-bridge,

alone, growing cold. (Flanagan 230)

In this scene, Flanagan decided to use a poem by Kikusha Tagami, a nun and a talented representative of *haiku*. This poem is a love poem, capturing the feeling of sadness when the two lovers are separated. Although the context in which Kota recites it is different, it reflects the loneliness and separation Kota feels in his deprived state, unable to share his experiences.

In the post-war part of the novel, there is a scene where Kota and Nakamura meet again. Before he shows himself, Kota recites a part of a popular *gunka* (軍歌), a military song that was called the second anthem of the war-time Imperial Japan, *Umi Yukaba*. In reaction to recognizing him, Nakamura recites two more verses to complete the code.

Across the sea, corpses in the water,

Across the mountains, corpses upon the grass [. . .]

We die by the side of our Emperor,

We never look back. (Flanagan 320)

Since this particular song was used to incite courage in the Japanese Army by celebrating the honourable death of soldiers, Kota uses it to remind Nakamura of their mutual past and their sacrifice during the war. He once again plays on Nakamura's fanatical belief in the values of duty and spirit. In this scene, Nakamura still feels pride about his part in the project of the Railway, so he appears touched by the memory and the spirit of kinship it revives as he accepts Kato's offer to join him in a medical company.

There is yet another point in the story when a poem connects two characters, this time with Nakamura and Dorrigo, in which the poem appears quite unexpectedly during Darky's beating. In an argument where Dorrigo tries to convince Nakamura to end the punishment, Nakamura repeatedly dismisses him. Finally, he murmurs a *haiku* and orders Fukuhara to translate it to Dorrigo. Even though it is said in the novel that it is a haiku by

Bashō, it appears to be a poem compiled by Issa Kobayashi. The translation used by Flanagan goes as shown below:

A world of pain—

if the cherry blossoms,

it blossoms. (Flanagan 260)

In the story, this poem makes Dorrigo look at Nakamura in a different light. He begins to see him for what he is, a man that would do anything for his country and would do anything to obey its orders. Hearing this *haiku* enables Dorrigo to realize the extent of Nakamura's belief in the values of his regime, as he puts it "the terrifying force" (Flanagan 261) of the mythos that takes hold of the Japanese people.

Besides the *haiku* poems written by the masters, Flanagan also introduces the readers to the Japanese tradition of death poem composition. As the novel deals with the entire life of the main character, combined with a topic where death stalks on every corner, the choice of the genre seems quite fitting. Flanagan worked with the collection called *Japanese Death Poems Written by Zen Monks and Haiku Poets on the Verge of Death* compiled by Yoel Hoffman and published in 1986. Two of the death poems appear in the novel, and one in particular is of interest: the death poem of Shisui. His poem is captivating in its simplicity - it is an example of the so-called ensō (円相), an imperfect circle drawn in one brush stroke, a significant symbol of void and enlightenment in the Zen Buddhism. This specific poem stands out as the one that frames the whole novel, as it is mentioned at the beginning and also at the very end of Dorrigo's story and life. Flanagan paraphrases the story contained in Hoffman's collection, but he lets the character of Dorrigo interpret it in his own way as well. When he talks about it, he mentions the void, which is the actual meaning of the circle in the Zen tradition, as well as an endless mystery. He views it as an antithesis to a line, or rather to The Line, the concept of a road of life leading to hell. The Japanese culture as depicted here is painted with a focus on the exotic, mysterious, and inexplicable.

The second death poem presented in the novel appears in the epilogue of Major Nakamura. As the reader learns, Nakamura had strived to write his own poem but when he

found himself unable to do so, he chose one written by master Hyakka. From the content of the poem Nakamura chose, we could interpret that he either felt no regrets for his past actions, or he was trying to persuade himself that he does not feel remorse:

> Winter ice
>
> melts into clean water—
>
> clear is my heart. (Flanagan 351)

The fourth part of the novel shows the consequences of the war on the fates of the characters. The character of Tenji Nakamura is found in Shinjuku, a quarter in the destroyed capital, in a place the locals call Rashomon, as an allusion to the short story of the same name by Ryūnosuke Akutagawa. As explained earlier, the original story took place in the then devastated capital of Kyōto, at a great city gate known by the name Rashōmon. In the short story, the dilapidated building of the gate serves as a hideout for criminals, as well as a dumping ground for unnamed corpses. The main theme of the story is the moral ambiguity of survival. The main character, a recently dismissed servant, notices an old woman collecting hair from the dead to sell them to make wigs. First, he judges her, but after she explains that she has no choice unless she starves, he attacks her and steals her clothes. Flanagan's post-war Tōkyō exudes a similar feeling of despair and misery, and as a parallel to Akutagawa's servant, Nakamura finds himself sheltering from rain in an archway made from the debris and ruined buildings, extremely poor, and desperate to find a way to survive the aftermath of war. As was noted earlier, Nakamura weighs his options, but similarly to Akutagawa's servant, he is interrupted by a sound coming from the "Rashomon". The story of Nakamura diverges a little when he enters, but the end of the story and its moral remain similar to the original. What Nakamura witnesses there is a freshly killed American soldier, a young Japanese man who killed him, and a young "pan pan girl". In an attempt to get their food and money, Nakamura kills the boy and steals the possessions of the girl, including her clothes, in the same way that Akutagawa's servant did, showing the desperation and will to survive that enables people to temporarily suspend any emotions and moral behaviour. Flanagan skilfully alludes to Akutagawa's story to evoke the atmosphere of despair in the post-war capital. Whoever reads the short story would surely notice the similarities adding

further depth to the novel. Moreover, by mentioning the name of Rashōmon, he pays homage to the author and provides the readers of the novel with a chance to discover the master of Japanese short story that Akutagawa is.

Flanagan aimed to capture the high points of Japanese culture in his novel, and he indeed succeeded in that. Looking at all of the above-mentioned examples of Japanese literature, he clearly proves that he must have done research and that he has some degree of knowledge about Japanese literature. He managed to use the allusions to create a relatively rich tapestry of Japanese culture and was able to provide a contrast to the horror of the main motif. The *haiku* used to introduce the individual parts of the novel work as a poetic interlude foreshadowing the atmosphere of the plot, while adding the name of the author serves to introduce the masters of *haiku* poetry to the wider public. The poems shared by the characters are naturally incorporated within the story itself, so their interpretation and the impression they make on the readers might be influenced by the context Flanagan uses them in. This is especially noticeable in the case of Colonel Kota, who presents poetry in rather disturbing situations, as he tends to link poetry with gory scenes of beheadings. Such a combination is shocking and definitely draws attention to itself. However, especially in the previously mentioned case, this representation does not do much to help Japanese culture to shake the stereotype of an irrational Oriental country. The Japan which Flanagan captures through these scenes is on the one hand a hostile place, where mad men such as Kota can be successful, and on the other hand a place of great mystery and indescribable beauty as shown in the form of its classic literature. Even the allusion to Akutagawa's story somehow fuses these two opposing forces, as it portrays the desperation, ruin and suffering of today in combination with the nostalgic reminders of the perfect past.

Conclusion

During his interview, Richard Flanagan told Ramona Koval that he had spent twelve years to write *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* and that it was a book he felt he had to create in order to move on with his writing (19:50). He described the process as "trying", as he attempted five times to capture what he wanted, before he was satisfied. Firstly, he wrote a novel of linked *haiku*, then a travel sketch, then a nature journal in prose interspersed with *haiku* poems, at one point he found himself writing a war epic, later he added also a layer of a family epic. He claims to have finished and subsequently abandoned each of them because he felt they did not work (Koval 20:20). As a lover of literature, and Japanese literature in particular, he felt that he should include the "high points of Japanese culture" to balance to its "low points" of the horrors his father and his mates suffered in the POW camp. The result of his effort is a complex novel, which offers a unique perspective on the events through the inclusion of the points of view of the captors, allusions to literature and inserted phrases in Japanese.

Much has been written about *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* since its publication in 2013, and it has received even more attention after it won the Booker Prize in 2014. As mentioned before, due to the plurality of points of view it offers, the novel has been deservedly labelled as a work of the new "globalizing age" (Arimitsu 6). At the same time, Flanagan's focus on the extremes – "the low" and "the high" of Japanese culture, might lead to overlooking "the middle". Thus, as Roger Pulvers noted in his review, the novel could gain a lot more complexity by including an even wider range of perspectives. In light of what has been written about the novel, I have decided to analyse Flanagan's *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* to determine exactly which parts of Japanese culture Flanagan chose to capture, the manner in which he did so, and to what degree he might have resorted to reductions, simplifications or stereotypes in the process.

The first aspect examined in the practical section was the manner in which the author included the Japanese language in his novel by using romanized phrases to enhance the authenticity of his narrative. The terms and phrases in Japanese offer more than embellishment. As he presents them in context, a unique opportunity for the readers arises, as they can choose to look them up and learn more if they were so inclined. The fact that he was not consistent, however, shows that his research might not have been as detailed as it could have been, and that fact somewhat degrades the work he spent more than a decade

creating. A native speaker of Japanese or someone familiar with the language will inevitably notice the inconsistencies, costing the author some credibility. Intermixing of the more and less simplified romanization systems is a widespread tendency that proves that the comfort of the writers and of the foreign audience ever wins over the accuracy of the original language. It may, therefore, be said that in this area he did not contribute to clarifying the common misconceptions about Japanese, but on the contrary, he joined the ranks of authors that perpetuate them.

When we examine the characters and the story itself, we may say that *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* belongs to the cannon of contemporary Australian fiction revolving around the events of World War II, and at the same time it brings a new perspective to it. The contemplative personality of the main character, Dorrigo, enables him to look past the behaviour of his captors and notice the way they have been influenced by the regime of Imperial Japan. Through his unique perspective, the readers gain a much more complex insight into the great force that manipulated the masses, be it the guards, the soldiers, or the general population on the main islands of Japan, the oppressive influence of which meant that they may also be perceived as victims. Furthermore, by giving a voice to the Japanese guards, Flanagan managed to include a less known point of view and to introduce background information about the respective events as well as the culture of the enemy. In that regard, he definitely succeeded in providing a more complex picture than other works of this genre. However, as the analysis performed in this thesis revealed, the choice of the Japanese characters as well as their depiction cannot be considered as varied. As Flanagan opted to include only three main characters of the guards, all very similar in that they followed their orders, even if they had different reasons for it, he omitted the voices of many members of the IJA who might not have felt the same. The guards Flanagan portrays are either fanatic, deranged, or simply victims of their society, and it seems a missed opportunity to include only two scenes with a guard that might have had a different attitude towards the prisoners. Flanagan captures "the low points of the Japanese civilization", by means of these characters and the events they participate in. Therefore, the Japanese characters he depicted in the novel still fall into the category of stereotypes and do not really challenge the standard portrayal of strict and violent fanatics.

As far as the use of Japanese literature is concerned, Flanagan included it to provide the "high point of Japanese culture" contrasting with the atrocities, or the so-called "low points".

Looking at the novel as a whole, he definitely proved his familiarity with Japanese literature as he succeeded at creating a complex piece of fiction that showcases some of its best works. From the introductory *haiku* to the various allusions in the text itself, the individual examples of Japanese literature used in the novel are as a general rule organically interwoven with the story. The introductory poems are used to foreshadow the general feeling of the following part of the novel, but also as an introduction of the genre to the readers, due to the fact that the name of the author is included as well. As for the poems recited by the characters, they are integrated into the story and their effect is dependent on the context they are presented in. Generally, the characters present the poems to create a connection between each other, or to express the emotion they are feeling at the moment. Through these *haiku*, readers are able to appreciate the beauty and aptness of the genre.

With regards to the individual characters and their attitude to literature, three of the major characters display a deep affection for poetry. In addition to the main protagonist, Dorrigo Evans, who enjoys the works of Sir Alfred Tennyson as well as the genre of Japanese death poems, two of the antagonists, Major Nakamura and Colonel Kota, both share an interest in classic Japanese poetry that stands in the novel generally as "the high point" of their culture. However, in case of the character of Colonel Kota and his disturbed habit of reciting the classics while committing some of the worst atrocities of the war pushes the use of the opposite forces of "the high" and "the low" to the edge of believability and verges on caricature. Therefore, the whole concept of fusion of the extremes as Flanagan captured it in his novel in some cases further perpetuates the stereotype of a Japanese culture that is inexplicable, enigmatic and bizarre.

Flanagan undoubtedly strived to include the voices from both sides of the line in order to offer a more complex and unbiased picture of the events that had such a significant impact on him and the whole Australian society. In all of the above-mentioned areas, Flanagan appeared to try to offer a wider and more balanced portrayal of the events, to provide more information about the culture of Japan, and to stress the way war makes people suffer on both sides. The manner in which he depicted Japanese culture, however, could have been even more varied and accurate. At the same time, the novel in itself is, as Arimitsu puts it, a work of the new global world, since it includes voices that had not been previously heard. The readers of *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* receive a unique opportunity to enjoy a complex story that organically fuses together a thrilling love plot, a thorough portrayal of

the horrific events of the construction of the Thai-Burma railway, rarely before shown perspective of Japanese culture, and a plethora of allusions to the best pieces of its literature.

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