

The Repositioning of the Other in Michael Morpurgo's *Kensuke's Kingdom* (1999)

إعادة تموضع الآخر في رواية مملكة كنسوكي لمايكل موربورغو

Zohra LAMECHE

Faculté des Lettres et des langues, Mouloud Mammeri University/Tizi-Ouzou

z.lameche@univ-boumerdes.dz

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Abstract:

Throughout history, the relationship between the West and the Rest has been characterized by Western claims of predominance and authority. Recently, this dynamic has been questioned; the marginalized Other is achieving a revised position in relation to the dominant Self. This paper, through its examination of Michael Morpurgo's *Kensuke's Kingdom* (1999), explores how modern authors and intellectuals conceptualize the relationship between the Self and the Other. Drawing on Karl Mannheim's the sociology of knowledge as explained in his *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (1929), I assert that the portrayal of the Self and the Other has undergone a significant transformation by the twenty-first century. My aim is to demonstrate that this novel can be interpreted within the framework of early twenty-first century prevailing ideology, which promotes tolerance and acceptance of the Other.

Keywords: The Sociology of Knowledge, The West, The Rest, The Self, The Other.

ملخص:

على مر التاريخ، اتسمت العلاقة بين الغرب وما تبقى من العالم بادعاءات غربية للهيمنة والسلطة. مؤخراً، تم التشكيك في هذه الديناميكية؛ حيث يحقق "الآخر" المهمش مكانة معدلة فيما يتعلق "بالذات" المهيمنة. تستكشف هذه الورقة، من خلال دراسة رواية مايكل موربورغو مملكة كنسوكي (1999)، كيف يتصور المؤلفون والمفكرون المعاصرون العلاقة بين الذات والآخر. واستناداً إلى نظرية كارل مانهايم في علم اجتماع المعرفة (1929)، أزعّم أن تصوير الذات والآخر قد خضع لتحول كبير بحلول القرن الحادي والعشرين. هدفي هو إثبات أن هذه الرواية يمكن تفسيرها ضمن إطار الأيديولوجية السائدة في بداية القرن الحادي والعشرين، والتي تعزز التسامح وقبول الآخر.

كلمات مفتاحية: علم اجتماع المعرفة، الغرب، الباقي، الذات، الآخر

Corresponding author: Zohra LAMECHE, A post-graduate student at Mouloud Mammeri University, Tizi-Ouezou.

1. Introduction

Recently, a transformation has occurred in the power dynamics between the Self and the Other. These two concepts have taken on new interpretations at the dawn of the new

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millennium. Indigenous peoples now possess the same rights and liberties as Europeans; a circumstance that compels the 'Self' to adapt to new conditions in which Western individuals no longer maintain ultimate authority. The argument advanced in this paper is that the indigenous character in Michael Morpurgo's *Kensuke's Kingdom* (1999) is depicted in line with current cultural studies that present the 'Other' as virtuous and honorable. This novel manifests how a cultural reassessment of the 'civilized Self' has taken place in Western society. *Kensuke's Kingdom*, in fact, announces a transformation in the prevailing modern discourse.

2. Review of literature

Since its publication in 1999, Michael Morpurgo's *Kensuke's Kingdom* has received limited scholarly attention. Among the few critical works examining the novel are Demon Wise's 'Kensuke's Kingdom Review: Michael Morpurgo's Novel Becomes: A Timeless Castaway Fantasy' (2023), Maggie Ferguson's *Michael Morpurgo: War Child to War Horse* (2013), and Clare Morpurgo and Mark Morpurgo's *Such Stuff: A Story Maker's Inspiration* (2016). In her biography of Michael Morpurgo, Ferguson notes that *Kensuke's Kingdom* has been considered as the author's most significant work. Additionally, in *Such Stuff: A Story Maker's Inspiration* (2016), Morpurgo himself acknowledges that Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954) served as key inspirational sources for *Kensuke's Kingdom*. Morpurgo reveals that these novels and their island settings captivated him. Furthermore, Wise's review portrays Kensuke in the following manner: "The other human on the island is Kensuke who furtively greets Michael with bowls of water and fruit before making his appearance. He is an elderly Japanese man who speaks no English, but his exquisite watercolor paintings help him to communicate." This description suggests that Wise believes Morpurgo presents Kensuke not as an Other, but rather with positive attributes.

Although these critics illuminate many aspects of the novel, analyzing it from Karl Mannheim's perspective remains unexplored in the current scholarship. This paper explores the novel's celebration of modern intercultural relationships. It relies on the premise that Morpurgo's choice of protagonists corresponds to contemporary literary discourse's focus on Self/Other relationships. I aim to demonstrate how Morpurgo consistently undermines traditional racial paradigms that positioned the Self in a higher status than that of the "Other". Drawing on Karl Mannheim's theory of the sociology of knowledge as explained in his *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (1929), this paper offers a new perspective from which Michael Morpurgo's *Kensuke's Kingdom* can be analysed. The primary aim is to highlight Morpurgo's dismantling of traditional racial hierarchies and

stereotypes. After presenting the novel's historical context, I will first examine how Morpurgo reimagines the traditional portrayal of the Other, which typically positions Western individuals as superior and the Other as inferior, and second, how Kensuke's and Michael's language is used as a tool of mutual communication rather than imposition.

3. Theory

This paper relies essentially but not exclusively on the theory of the sociology of knowledge as explained by Karl Mannheim in his *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*. Indeed, the principal thesis of the sociology of knowledge is that thoughts cannot be effectively understood without placing them within their context; meanwhile, the activity of thinking is truly carried by the individual. The latter communicates via the language of his group and think in the manner in which his group thinks. Thus, for Mannheim, "it is not men in general who think, or even isolated individuals who do the thinking, but men in certain groups who have developed a particular style of thought in an endless series of responses to certain typical situations characterizing their common position" (Mannheim, 1929, p. 03). The single individual cannot think alone; rather, he participates in articulating what other men of his group have thought before him. Therefore, the individual inherits from his/her environment patterns of thought to further elaborate on his/her responses towards specific situations.

Individuals, in diversely organized groups, act with and against one another, and while doing so they think with and against one another. These persons struggle in accordance with the character and position of the group to which they belong to change the surrounding world of nature and society or attempt to maintain it. Thinking is a collective, contextual process where individuals build upon, challenge, and transform inherited thought patterns through social interactions. According to Mannheim, events in a historical period are explained in terms of their meanings, and that those meanings always refer to other meanings. This interdependent system of meanings varies both in its parts and in its totality from one historical period to another.

In light of such an explanation, I argue that Morpurgo's *Kensuke's Kingdom* focuses on how people from different racial backgrounds interact and cooperate by giving emphasis to the importance of social bonds and the complexities of human relationships. *Kensuke's Kingdom* reflects contemporary beliefs about cross-cultural understanding, environmental conservation, family relationships and the impact of the Second World War on individuals. Moreover, the novel challenges traditional assumptions about civilized versus primitive ways of living. It values different forms of knowledge which create an understanding about intergenerational relationships and cultural exchange. In the twenty-first century, the norms of tolerance and acceptance of others became common sense. Non-white characters are given voices to articulate their identity and history. This foreshadows the optimistic context in which

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this novel was produced; a context that gives hope to humanity to regain its lost paradise and thus create a utopian state. In this novel, Michael and Kensuke's relationship develops through shared human experiences. This paper aims to highlight the fact that Kensuke's isolation has not completely disconnected him from collective human thinking. The first section deals with the correction of the misguided image of the indigenous Other. the second one reveals how religious fervour for converting "the Other" has diminished, giving way to a more detached tourist mentality. Finally, the third section looks at how language interchange emphasizes the characters' mutual exchange because, in this novel, communication transcends individual limitations.

4. The Retrieval of the Image of the Indigenous Other

Morpurgo's first strategy of subverting the Western dominant discourse, which I will discuss in this section, is to construct a corrected image of the Other. Early in the novel, the protagonist declares that his story is going to be told with the intention of giving an authentic vision of the Orient: "Kensuke was a great man, a good man, and he was my friend. I want the world to know him as I knew him" (Morpurgo, 1999, p. 06). In this quotation, the expression 'I want the world to know him as I knew him' is of great significance. It indicates that the image that Morpurgo is transmitting is not based on intuition but on real contact with the Other. Edward Said in his *Orientalism* (1978) claims that the Western dominant discourse, in its representation of the Other, was based on an already accumulative archive. He states: "In a sense Orientalism was a library or archive of information commonly ... held." (Said, 1978, pp. 41-2). Pushing the discussion a step forward, Stuart Hall argues that this archive on which the discourse of the West and the Rest was based has four main sources – all of which are intuitive –: classical knowledge, religious and biblical sources, mythology and travellers' tales (Hall, 2019, pp. 206-207). For example, Daniel Defoe has never voyaged abroad or visited exotic places. His *Robinson Crusoe* (1617), the prototype of the desert island tradition, has been based on the story of the Scottish mariner, Alexander Selkirk, a voyager who survived alone for more than four years on a pacific island.

However, unlike Daniel Defoe, instead of relying on narrated stories, Morpurgo himself was raised in an environment that encouraged tolerance. He went through several experiences that helped him become more open-minded toward the "Other". First, Morpurgo, as he manifests in his *Such Stuff: A Story Maker's Inspiration*, inspired his *Kensuke's Kingdom* from real facts that he himself experienced: he encountered the exotic other, lived on an isolated island and read a real story of a Japanese man who survived for a long time on an isolated island. Concerning his encounter with the Other, in 1960, he moved to Sandhurst School to train as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery. There, he got the top scholarship of the

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year; as a reward of this success, he was invited to accompany the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh on a three-week tour of India, as guests of the Indian government, marking the thirteenth Republic Day celebrations. Morpurgo, as he narrates, was moved by the spirit of the Indian people: "They are a people living with a hope," he wrote. "A hope of making India a great, happy and prosperous nation." As he was driven through the shanty towns on the outskirts of Bombay, an Indian Army major assured him that "soon there would be no more poverty of this sort" (Fergusson, 2013, p. 74). Morpurgo was also delighted by the exotic places and persons.

Second, Morpurgo is an eyewitness of how life on wild exotic islands is. When he was grown-up, about thirty, he would go every summer to the isles of Scilly for his holidays. He stayed on Bryher, the smallest of the five inhabited islands, at Rushy Bay. He became acquainted with the people of that island in all weathers. This gave him a clear idea of how life on isolated islands could be: "The more I got to know the Scillies, the more I became aware of the effect of isolation on how islanders feel ... I immersed myself in the place. So it was hardly surprising that in the end, I sat down and wrote my own stories about Scilly, on Bryher mostly" (Ibid, p. 62).

Third, Morpurgo's story is inspired from a real experience of a Japanese man who lived for a long time on an isolated island. "Morpurgo had chanced on a newspaper article about a Japanese soldier, Private Yokoi, who had chosen to remain hidden on a Pacific island, Guam, at the end of the Second World War" (Ibid, p. 205). In fact, Morpurgo's positive representation of the Other goes hand in hand with the call to correct the old image of the Other that has been raised by English coloured writers by the late twentieth century. For example, in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000), Samad Iqbal urges Jones not to believe everything he hears about the East: "'if ever you hear anyone speak of the East,' and here his voice plummeted a register, and the tone was full and sad, 'hold your judgement. If you are told "they are all this" or "they do this" or "their opinions are these", withhold your judgement until all the facts are upon you."' (Smith, 2000, p. 101) Thus, relying on facts rather than intuitive archive, Morpurgo carries his correction of the old misguided image by giving a positive representation of the Other.

In *Kensuke's Kingdom*, Kensuke is depicted as a well-educated person. He is a doctor who studies medicine in Japan and then in England. This level of education distances Kensuke from his ignorant predecessors (Caliban and Friday) and places him within the same rank of Robinson Crusoe who was a lawyer. Intellectually, then, Kensuke is a self-reliant, hard-working person. In this, he shares much with Robinson Crusoe the qualities of the type of the hard worker; a quality which enables them (Crusoe and Kensuke) to live contentedly during their isolation. Like Defoe's Kensuke's cave is full of different utensils which step him a path far from the primitive life of the cave man. His cave contains metal pots, tins, jars of different sizes and shapes in addition to brunches of dried herbs and flowers. (Morpurgo, 1999, p. 56).

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As far as his physical appearance is concerned, Kensuke's extended period of solitude does not result in an intimidating presence; he was described as a short elderly individual with a hairless head (Ibid., 40). This description contrasts with Crusoe's fearful appearance because Kensuke manages to maintain a well-dressed character. This illustrates how Kensuke preserves his sense of civilization and proper self-care, even while facing the challenges of his isolated environment.

Another sign of civilization with which Morpurgo arms Kensuke is the tools and utensils Kensuke uses to live on the island. Unlike his predecessors Caliban and Friday who are not inventive, Kensuke resembles Robinson Crusoe in his ability to invent and thus becomes 'master of all arts': "The evidence that he was a considerable craftsman was all around me" (Ibid., p. 61). This is exactly what Stuart Hall speaks about when he states that, "the second strategy for contesting the racialized regime of representation is the attempt to substitute a range of 'positive' images of black people, black life and culture for the negative imagery which continues to dominate popular representation" (Hall, 2019, p. 272). Accordingly, Kensuke is positively portrayed. His physical appearance, his attitude towards the Other and his daily habits reflect a character of a civilized man who successfully generates a utopian microcosm society.

5. Tourism as Neo-Colonial Pilgrimage: The Secularization of the Civilizing Mission

The foregoing analysis presented the view that Morpurgo has put into question the superiority of the Western cultural model by highlighting the mindedness of the Other. It has established that the modern dominant discourse has changed *vis à vis* the Other whose image has shifted through time towards a positive representation. The following section investigates how this discourse has also changed *a propos* the innate goodness of the 'Self' whose God-like image is subverted.

The reliance on religious verdicts of Christianity, which advocated its mission to civilize the heathen, resulted in belittling and dismissing the religious beliefs of non-Christians. The Westerners were imposing civilization by force in the name of converting the disbelievers. For their part, the heathen resisted the missionaries' teachings which resulted in violent conflicts. Michael Morpurgo, in his *Kensuke's Kingdom*, shows that rigid religious mentality to civilize the Other has been replaced by the mentality of the tourist which engenders seeking peace and pleasure; a mentality that helps the acceptance of the Other's beliefs. Therefore, this section tends to show that the rigid religious drive to civilize the Other has given way to the tourist's mind-set; a mind-set that values peace and pleasure, fostering acceptance of other cultures and beliefs.

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In fact, thinkers have ceaselessly devoted considerable parts of their works to the discussion of religion. Morpurgo, on the contrary, rarely commented on religion in his *Kensuke's Kingdom*, with the exception of one or two references to the Christian baptism. Michael's shipwreck, for instance, happens on his birthday. His resurrection is reinforced by washing himself in the sea: "I came out clean and refreshed and invigorated, a new person." (Morpurgo, 1999, p. 37)

In reality, Morpurgo's own religious beliefs remain uncertain: "'I am still seeking,' he says, 'and I think I always will be'" (Fergusson, 2013, p. 250). Sometimes, he is convinced that religion can be a force for great good because it binds communities together. However, this binding may slide into exclusivity, 'shutting people out and judging them, and that's dangerous'. Morpurgo has always been suspicious about the dictates of the church. He declares: "if Jesus Christ was about anything at all he was about forgiveness of sins. It worries me so much that, rather than follow what Jesus Christ said and did, the Church just follows the dictates of the institution it has made itself" (Ibid., p. 249).

These doubts are explicitly reflected in his *Kensuke's Kingdom*. Belittling the importance of religion in bringing happiness to the inhabitants of the island, Morpurgo subverts the Western tradition which relied, for a long time, on religion – and pilgrims in particular – for keeping order within society. Morpurgo is not the first to notice the irrelevance of religion in guaranteeing happiness in modern society. For instance, in his utopian work *3001: The Final Odyssey*, Arthur C. Clarke presents a future society in which "all the old religions have been discredited" (Clarke, 1997, p. 34). Poole, the protagonist, notices that 'God' seems to be a dirty word in this culture (Ibid., p. 27). Moreover, Zygmunt Bauman, a modern social theorist, declares that puritanism was rife during "the post-Reformation city of modernity" as opposed to tourism of the postmodern times. For the pilgrim, the desert is the prototype of 'the raw, bare, primal and bottom-line freedom that is but the absence of bounds' (Bauman, 1992, p. 20). Bauman adds: "The hermits were the first to live through the experience of 'disembedded', 'un encumbered' selves. They were god-like, because whatever they did they did *ab nihilo*. Their pilgrimage to God was an exercise in self-construction" (Ibid., p. 21).

This spirit seems strange for contemporary readers. Contemporary liquid modernity, as Bauman argues, is inhospitable to pilgrims. Tourism has taken much place in the beginning of the twenty first century. Morpurgo in his *Kensuke's Kingdom* underscores this mentality of the tourist. In fact, as he reveals in *Such Stuff: A Story Maker's Inspiration*, he inspires his novel from a real story of a family (a man, his wife and their little child) who spent five years voyaging around the world. Likewise, Michael's father, after losing his job, buys a ship, the *Peggy Sue*, and decides to set a voyage around the world: "All right, then. Here's what I thought. What is it that we all love doing most? Sailing, right? ... we could sail around the world. Africa. South America. Australia. The Pacific. We could see places we've only dreamed of" (Morpurgo, 1999, pp. 10-11). Both Michael and his mother are delighted and

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pleasantly accept the idea. His mother 'take[s] it pretty well. She didn't shout at him. She just went very quiet'. Michael was rather excited: ' "Ex...cell...ent," I breathed, and that was exactly what I thought.' (Ibid). "The tourist", according to Bauman, who "used once to inhabit the margins ... has now moved to its centre" (Bauman, 1992, p. 29). The tourist's purpose from his voyage, because the joys of the familiar cease to appeal, is to find a new different experience. As tourists, Michael and his family aimed at seeking pleasure: "we were doing what people do in fairy tales. We were going off to seek adventure" (Morpurgo, 1999, p. 12). indeed, pleasure becomes a leitmotiv in the late twentieth century. Many writers declare that they write to please others. For instance, in his introduction to his collection of short stories entitled *Einstein's Monsters* (1987), Martin Amis states that the stories "were written with the usual purpose in mind: that is to say, with no purpose at all – except, I suppose, to give pleasure, various kinds of complicated pleasure" (Amis, 1987 p. 06). In a similar vein, in Arthur C. Clarke's *3001: The Final Odyssey* (1997), seeking pleasure is given much importance. Indira, a doctor, urges the protagonist to put his technical questions aside and asks him politely to enjoy his time: "But for goodness' sake, Frank - forget you're an engineer, and simply enjoy the view" (Ibid., p. 38). Accordingly, in the late twentieth century, pleasure emerges as a recurring theme, with many writers openly declaring their intention to entertain rather than enlighten their readers.

The rigid beliefs of the pilgrim, thus, are replaced by the systematic seeking of diversity, pleasure and novelty of the tourist. In *Kensuke's Kingdom*, discovering new territories provides Michael and his parents with an unbelievable sense of happiness and joy: "... When they told me, they were like a couple of kids, all laughing and happy. They were never like this at home. These days they really smile at each other". (Morpurgo, 1999, p. 24) In the tourist's world, the strange is tamed, domesticated, and is no longer frightening; shocks come in a package deal with safety: "when we sight land we always get so excited. When we saw Australia for the first time we hugged each other and jumped up and down. It's like we're the first sailors to discover it" (Ibid., p. 24). Moreover, Michael is not horrified by the wild nature of the island. He is rather excited by the island's beauty: "Strangely, perhaps comforted somehow by the extraordinary beauty of the place, I was not at all downhearted. On the contrary – I felt strangely elated. I was alive. Stella Artois was alive. We had survived" (Ibid, p. 30-32). The word 'strangely' indicates that Morpurgo is aware of the fears and horror of the stranded characters when they discover their isolation. For instance, in *Robinson Crusoe*, the island at first is a fearful place. Crusoe is surrounded with danger such as hunger and the fear of wild beasts. He has no weapon to hunt or defend himself with. In this state of despair and vulnerability he describes the island as a 'horrid place,' (Defoe, 1994, p. 66)

Michael's discovery that he is on an uninhabited island is not as frightening as that of Robinson Crusoe. He joyfully expresses his happiness to be safe and estimates to find himself

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in a perfect place surrounded by friendly persons. This makes the world appear endlessly accommodating, responding to Michael's desires as a tourist, with one goal: to be excited, pleased, and entertained. In addition to the place which is friendly, the Other also does not engender fear: "Once I had finished I stood up and scanned the forest. My benefactor, whoever he or she was, had to be somewhere close by. I was sure I had nothing to fear" (Morpurgo, 1999, p. 36). Michael is happy to discover the existence of other inhabitants on the island, whoever they are. His calm response stems from Kensuke's complete lack of fear. The first action he is introduced through in the novel is to provide Michael with food. In *Robinson Crusoe*, the exotic Other is first introduced through cannibalism when the barbarians eat each other on the beach leaving after them scenes of horror of human bones. This is why Robinson Crusoe has always been happy with his loneliness and solitude and afraid of encountering strangers. He takes many measures to save himself. On the contrary, in *Kensuke's Kingdom*, there is no fear of the Other. Kensuke would lift Michael "to pour fruit juice or warm soup down [his] throat. He would sponge [him] down with cooling water, and when the pain was so bad that [he] cried out, he would hold [him] and sing [him] softly back to sleep" (Ibid., pp. 55-56).

Morpurgo reinforces his view of the kindness of the Other through the reaction of the animal. Stella, Michael's dog, betrayed Michael and befriended Kensuke. Although she dislikes strangers, she does not consider Kensuke as such. "Stella, who, strangely, had not barked at [Kensuke] at all, suddenly left my side and went bounding off towards him. I felt disappointed in her, a bit betrayed, even" (Ibid., p. 40). Thus, with the mentality of the tourist and in the absence of clear beliefs, the Western man changes his exclusivist attitude to convert the nonbelievers and prefers tolerance instead. Morpurgo's upbringing, as I mentioned above, led the foundation for his tolerance toward others. He declares that he sticks to a piece of advice given to him by his godmother, Mary Niven: "She sometimes says to me, 'Michael, never forget that people matter, everyone matters.' She means, I think, that whatever someone has done, they are God's creatures. They matter in His eyes, and they should matter in ours. It's all about not judging people. I think of it often" (Ferguson, 2013, p. 252).

Therefore, in *Kensuke's Kingdom*, tourism has substituted rigid Christian religion. On the one hand, the characters seek pleasure and are excited at discovering new places and, on the other hand, they are not bothered by the burden of converting the heathen. Hence, religious conflict with the Other has been avoided and it is tolerance which prevails.

6. Transcending the Image of the Silenced Other

Stuart Hall argues that persons in a society must share the same cultural codes which help them to think and feel about their surroundings, and thus to interpret it in the same ways.

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This means that thinking and feeling are also ‘systems of representation’. Therefore, in order to effectively communicate with other people, the participants to any meaningful exchange must also be able to use the same linguistic codes’, i.e. they must speak the same language. Hall further explains that speaking the same language “does not mean that they must all, literally, speak German or French or Chinese” (Hall, 2019, p. 4) Instead, for Hall, language refers to the wider sense where partners are able to speak enough to help the listener understand the speaker and vice versa. In addition, partners should make use of other ways of communication such as visual images, body knowledge and facial expressions. They should also be able to translate the feelings and ideas of the partner.

For Hall, meaning is dialogue. This means that body language and facial expressions are as important as the linguistic words in communicating meaning. In their first encounter, and though they are completely strangers, Michael and Kensuke are able to understand each other by using these means of communication described by Stuart Hall. Though Michael does not understand the meaning of the word ‘Dameda’, Kensuke’s body language clearly reveals to him that the latter prevents him from setting fire. In addition to body language, Kensuke uses drawings to communicate with Michael: “Instead he began to rake through the sand at my feet with his stick. He was drawing the outline of something, jabbering incomprehensibly all the time” (Morpurgo, 1999, p. 41). Moreover, unlike Friday who was silenced by Robinson Crusoe, Kensuke voluntarily refuses to speak: “I felt he was quite happy with our silence, that he preferred it somehow. He seemed a very private person, and content to be that way” (Ibid., pp. 57-58). Morpurgo’s portrayal of Kensuke as a willingly silent man might have been inspired from a real story of a Vietnamese schoolboy named Ho. This extraordinary story – a kind of miracle – happened when Ho and his colleagues went into a visit to Morpurgo’s farm in Devon. The events witnessed by Morpurgo himself have been narrated by the boy’s teacher. Ho was seven when he joined St Francis School. In the three years he had been there, his teacher explains, he had never uttered a word. Though he excellently reads and writes English, he never spoke it. He never answers or asks questions. He just writes it down. The educational psychologist “wasn’t sure whether Ho was choosing not to speak, or whether he simply couldn’t.” (Fergusson, 2013, p. 157) One night, during his visit to Morpurgo’s Farm, Ho suddenly spoke to a horse; first in Vietnamese and then in English: ‘It’s no good if I speak to you in Vietnamese, Hebe, is it? Because you are English. Well, I know really you are from Austria, that’s what Michael told us, but everyone speaks to you in English’ (Ibid, p. 160).

Similarly, Kensuke first speaks to Michael in Japanese. Shortly after discovering that Michael is English, Kensuke addresses him via the language he understands “though it seemed a struggle for him to get the words out” (Morpurgo, 1999, p.29). In fact, Kensuke has never abandoned his mother tongue. He casually and proudly uses Japanese expressions such

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as “*Oyasumi masai, Dameda, Abunai, Gomenasai*”. In order to facilitate communication and after a long chosen silence, Kensuke willingly proposes to Michael to teach him the English language. The latter enables both characters to effectively communicate with each other; the barrier that hindered their friendship is overthrown.

7. Conclusion

To conclude, I stated in the introduction to this paper that the aim of the current study is to investigate the modern representation of the discourse between the West and the Rest. I have highlighted the different strategies Morpurgo uses to shed a new light on this discourse. I began my discussion by looking at the ways in which Morpurgo has corrected the old misguided image of the Other. The vision presented in the novel repudiates the widely accepted and long standing assumption among Western scholars that the Other lacked mindedness. The paper, then, reveals how Morpurgo subverts the conventional Western religious narrative that positions pilgrims - with their fervent religious beliefs - as bearers of civilization. Instead, he adopts the more secular perspective of tourism, marking a departure from traditional colonial discourse. Lastly, through the study of language, I concluded that Morpurgo has not silenced the Other. In *Kensuke's Kingdom*, the Other is given a voice to narrate his own story.

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