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GOLDSCHMIED Z, Anita, ZUMPALOV, Luka Georgiev and HOLYOAKE, Dean-David

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Two psychiatrists, three boat builders and a million gap hunters: the choices we make in literature reviews

Dr Anita Z Goldschmied, Luka Georgiev Zumpalov, Dr Dean-David Holyoake

University of Wolverhampton

A.Z.Goldschmied@wlv.ac.uk, D.Holyoake@wlv.ac.uk

We were the first to translate the works of Gannushkin and Suhareva from Russian into English and the only gap we found was that in our heads....
Goldschmied AZ (2021 personal correspondence)

Among [the autistic] we can find people occupying positions at the tops of the realm of ideas, in the thin air which is difficult to breathe for an ordinary man: this includes the aesthetic artists whose work is mostly formal, the profound metaphysicist and finally the talented schematic scientists and brilliant revolutionaries in science...
Gannushkin (1933) (trans. Goldschmied AZ & Zumpalov LG 2017)

Introduction

Throughout our education and beyond, we keep on hearing how literature reviews are an essential and, as such inevitable part of academia. So far, we agree. Literature reviews fulfil many pragmatic roles in science, research and teaching. In addition, many academics go as far as to say that searching literature has the purpose of finding a gap in knowledge. This is where we take a different view on the role of literature reviews, the nature of knowledge and their presentation in the 21st Century. This article aims to rethink what we researchers understand by the ubiquitous term 'gap' when reviewing the literature. It introduces the unchartered works of two psychiatrists (Pyotr Borisovich Gannushkin 1875-1933 and Grunya Efimovna Suhareva 1891-1981) who primarily published in Russian and therefore remained hidden from the English-speaking literature and as such demonstrate how the notion of 'the gap' is not all it appears to be. Principally, if the 'gap' is a question of presence and absence of evidence, as is the view of the gap-hunter then, we offer the metaphor of the boat builder and the activity of noticing literature. We will summarise in 10 points (see Table 1 and the 10 description cards) how our boat building as a genealogical model shares many similarities to translating texts from Russian, we learnt from Gannushkin's and Suhareva's work in autism.

Genealogy & Translation as Alternative Method to Locating 'Best Fits'

Thanks to literature, the history of autism, like most others in medicine, is well-known in scientific circles. In 1943 Kanner published his article *"Autistic disturbances of affective contact"*, describing for the first time autistic presentations which were revolutionary but destined to be superseded by Asperger Syndrome in 1981 in English. This symbolises the manner of gap hunting in which literature is seen to chronologically stand on the shoulders of a few noted scientists by following the logic of deduction and progression and also with what it means to generate knowledge[1].

[1] (translated into English by Uta Frith in 1981, Asperger in 1944 published his article ("Die 'Autistischen Psychopathen' im Kindersalter" - "Autistic Psychopathy in childhood"). Numerous articles and books were written about these two professionals (fathers of autism) in the past 30 years, some even investigating the near identical discovery (Silberman 2015; Robison 2016). Silberman claims: "Long before the internet or email, the transmission of scientific ideas could nevertheless flow from one lab to another through a doctor working in both". Silberman's investigation is one of the few accounts that notices a few more actors that assemble the (hi)story of autism (scientists, articles, histories, laboratories, ranks, language, politics) than average literature reviews do.

... just like translations, boats come in all shapes and sizes...

But for those who do not speak German or prefer to build boats, the process of translating is a literary form which reveal that words on a page do not act like the data they serve to communicate. Far from providing the certainty demanded of consistent results, systematic ordering and quantifiable symbolism, the literature review in the eyes of boat building translators is at best about 'best fits' because every translation is about choices, moods and any number of very human qualities. Or better still, the boat builder who has no choice but to build his ship at sea remaining adaptable and flexible rather than deciding in advance what ship will suit best.

This abductive (rather than deductive or inductive[2]) admission is at loggerheads with the scientific tradition of attempting to be objective and gap hunting in literature. Boat builders recognise how communities of truths generate alternative methods of value, use, historical context and textual ordering. So, from a story of how two of the authors (AZG & LGZ) laboured for months translating original text from Russian to Bulgarian to Hungarian and eventually to English, we now introduce you to how their genealogical method of deciding on the best semantic fit was aided very little by 'finding gaps' but helped along the way by building their ship at sea.

Such workmanship requires hours of tedious scholarliness pawing over paragraphs, sentence by sentence not too dissimilar to researchers combing literature. This systematic assembly of manipulating language points up what the authors will go onto discuss in terms of their 10 points because in rough seas words are always semantically slippery. That is, all translations, be they between languages, literal claims or squiggles of math on a page, are arbitrary, mediated and therefore open to many different interpretations. Not only is translation just as much an art as it is a science (you could give 100 translators the same article to decipher and expect 100 different returns), but so is the response of the intended audience. Translating shows how literature and our relationship with it are more than one of truth, correspondence and objectivity (the so-called high values of deductive and inductive science). It is also one of abduction, best fits and the art of justification.

Thus, when building boats, especially at sea, it can become nautically disorientating to rely on singular truth or voice in finding, translating or reading literature. Every choice now offers multiple possibilities that Captains need to notice in the form of translations, semantics and generally other opinions. We may not appreciate this range of choice and attempt to plug holes, wind in sails and tug ropes to make their research appear more certain and conclusive. But boat builders know that building your boat at sea is anything but certain. In particular, no matter how many deductively induced writing courses the average researcher attends in an effort to make each corresponding paragraph appear 'a thing' (reliable, credible, trustworthy, independent, systematic, objective), it is 'not a thing' but that: one choice and description of many truths, literal appearances, necessitated mediation and as such compromise which, even the most steadfast language of math must also contend. In terms of translating, our genealogical connecting found that instead of 'the gap', we can never avoid making choices. For every corresponding gap, there are more than enough leaks to surmise. Such is the methodological nature of literature reviews. It demands attention to detail and noticing the way things connect chronologically. It is through that process of being active in the interpretation that translators generate crazy observations and best fits.

...translating assembles knowledge rather than finds it...

For example, Suhareva's paper is never included in the story of autism because it was not translated into English until 1996[3] . In 2015 Silberman

[2] Most scientific research (fixed and flexible designs) is carried out by the inductive method to explain what is seen in the data to accumulate evidence so science can arrive at a believable or adequate certainty confirmed finally by deduction. Abductive reasoning, on the other hand, establishes the likely case based on a premiss and a performance. Abduction requires no complete observations, can be creative, intuitive, and even revolutionary in finding the most likely case as they are not limited by apparent objective and universal structures, facts and gaps.

[3] In 1996, Wolf translated G.E. Suhareva "Die Schizoiden Psychopathien im Kindersalter" article published in 1926 in German. Incidentally, Suhareva published the original paper in 1925 in Russian, which is still not accessible in English (as far as the authors can tell). The authors (AZG LGZ) translated Suhareva's book chapter on autism [2nd edition in press 2022]. Manoluenko and Bejerot published a further article: "Sukhareva — Prior to Asperger and Kanner" (2015). They compare Suhareva original descriptions with the DSM-5 (American diagnostic manual of mental health conditions), showing the brilliance of her observations and a clear picture of autism.

noticed the work but then decided to follow other choices and, as such, rendered a right to sail a preferred course. One that is about active roles in translation, of presence, absence and noticing, which does not only affect the writing of the text but the reading of it. An example being that although the German translation of Suhareva's paper was available in English since 1996 and her brilliant and foreseen observations on autism available to 'fill gaps', countless articles have still been written under the pretence that no gap actually existed because Kanner and Asperger are the 'fathers' of autism (Corbier 2004, Fellows 2005, Lyons and Fitzgerald 2007, Schopler and Mesibov 2013). So, the notion of 'the gap' is no doubt attractive, especially when the existence of it is either pragmatically or theoretically celebrated, but the debate does offer up a new type of map and compass with which to sail and nautically orientate.

Suhareva and Gannushkin: what they teach us about gaps and best fit knowledges

As far as the authors can tell, only a few sources reference the name and work of Suhareva or Gannushkin into their literature. In traditional terms, this would suggest 'a gap', not necessarily in the literature, but rather the authors' personal knowledge. To put this bluntly, our experience of translating these two works taught us that gap hunting is only as good as the relationship forged by the gap hunter. We also learnt at least another 10 things about literature reviews as a result of our fumbling with compass and sails. Table 1 summarises, compares and contrasts boat builders (on the sea) and gap hunters (in the library) views on literature. Whilst such simplification always causes controversy and needs to be handled with a degree of scepticism, it offers our contribution to how literature reviews built at sea are carved in a manner similar to translators making sense of meaning.

Table 1. 10 points of boat builders and gap hunters

	10 points of boat builders	10 points of gap hunters
1	**ASSEMBLED** – Literature reviews translate many forms, shapes and sources.	**SYSTEMATIC** – Literature reviews must follow evidence-based frameworks.
2	**EXPERIMENTAL** – Literature reviews coordinate knowledge creatively.	**FACTUAL** – Literature reviews are like the proofs of knowledge and experiments.
3	**CURIOUS** – Literature reviews are like expeditions exploring the terrain.	**STANDARDISED** – Literature reviews must follow reliable and credible trails of the terrain.
4	**ADAPTIVE** – Literature reviews are a temporary compromise of connectivity and translation.	**INDEPENDENT** – Literature reviews are reflections of true knowledge out there.
5	**EMERGENT** – Literature reviews are emergent effects of the making and the reading.	**OBJECTIVE** – Literature reviews convey an objective picture to the reader.
6	**ACTIVE** – Literature reviews are not things but abductive best fits.	**DETACHED** – Literature reviews are the result of deductive and inductive reasoning.
7	**PRAGMATIC** – Literature reviews employ goals to explore and describe the terrain.	**SCIENTIFIC** – Literature reviews find and define the gap in the terrain.
8	**INVENTIVE** – Literature reviews offer multiple possibilities.	**DISCOVERED** – Literature reviews lead to one gap to be filled.
9	**CO-AUTHORED** – Literature reviews are collaborations of scientific communities.	**AUTHORED** – Literature reviews are the result of the actual authors.
10	**IMPERFECT** – Literature reviews show the process of assembling and not only the effects.	**UNBIASED** – Literature reviews hide the acts and processes of translation.

Our 10 points for aspiring boat builders on how literature reviews act emerged when we started translating Suhareva's book chapter. To our surprise, we learnt that actors like terminologies produced assemblages about autism[4]. We started to surmise how Suhareva's and Gannushkin's work challenged notions of progress and chronology and wondered how many others are still hidden

[4] Commonly used terminologies and their effect of translation: 'eccentrics', 'schizoid', 'schizophrenic constitution', 'group schizoid', pathologically closed', 'autistic'. The 'milder' form of autism and the term Asperger Syndrome was absent in the English-speaking world until the late 20th Century.

on shelves, on the cloud and easily accessible for a willing reviewer? These potential omissions kick-started our theorising about boat building and gap hunting and promoted us to do an experiment in the spirit of the live method.

We put up our ores and instead did what every researcher does and typed 'gap in literature' into google.co.uk and got "723,000,000 results (0.57 seconds) 14 Sept 2021 12:55." Reading through the first few dozen hits, we were smacked in our sea weather-beaten faces with the typical definition: Gap in literature means *Missing pieces or insufficient information in the research literature.* The most popular stance proposed that *Research is a tool to fill the knowledge gaps in a particular field* or *Otherwise, it is not novel research and is therefore not contributing to the overall goals of science*. Thus, the sentiments of the gap hunter firmly exonerated in that it would take 200 years to read the first 50 words of each hit and still not find a source denying the existence of 'the gap'. Such is the potency of scientific discourse that the relevance of building one's ship at sea, like the work of Suhareva and Gannushkin, is largely absent. So, it was here that the authors allowed the translating process to emerge a list of 10 alternatives (not to refute gap hunting *per se*) but rather, to help us describe what usually happens in our experience of reviewing and boat building. Translating assembles knowledge rather than finds it.

10 points Suhareva and Gannushkin taught us about literatures, reviews and knowledges

For the authors, the idea of communities of knowledge rather than stand-alone literature has become a way of negotiating gaps. Instead of being things-in-themselves that come into existence by the authority of the authors, we acknowledge through our translating of Suhareva and Gannushkin how the ideas inform one another. Our models consider how literature mediates, connects and mixes in the raging seas that metaphorically go to make up what it means to review topical literature. We did not discover but instead assembled our knowledge, our new relationship with autism and negotiated all 10 of the points that now symbolise our boat building rather than gap hunting approach. We remain steadfast that both are useful whilst in awe that our creativity and, as such, enthusiasm for inventing links, surmising connection and even reinventing

1. Assembled

Literature reviews translate many forms, shapes and sources. Gap hunters believe that knowledge is stable, additive and progressive, so the job is to systematically find the next gap and fill it. The boat builder believes the whole seven seas are assembled and that there are many inherent dangers such as overreliance on a certain type of information, privileging sources, selecting a limited range, disregarding and excluding ideas prematurely like Suhareva's and Gannushkin's works. *It is just as fruitful to examine connections and assemblage as it is the want of a gap.*

2. Experimental

Literature reviews coordinate knowledge creatively. They can be treated like experiments and new questions asked of them. Gap hunters believe that everything made its way to the literature, thus gaps exist and can be filled. Maybe. Maybe the gap is not a gap after all. It is a crack. It is a tunnel. It is a retailer. What if the gap does not need filling? Or was filled but not very successfully? What would happen if we tried a different filling in an already filled gap? What if these gaps and their fillings co-exist or non-exist? *Translation is not correspondence truth, but an experimental justification of it.*

3. Curious

Literature reviews are expeditions by which it is the terrain rather than the map which is privileged. Gap hunters use science to a standardised gap finding through any number of systematic tools. But every now and then, different research questions are better suited with some simple curiosity. Translating has taught us that inquisitive minds can enhance meaning. *How was Paul's voice heard at the Best Interest Meeting? How does your local advocacy group organise health events? How did Jack, a young autistic man, change my (AZG) practice and poster competition during my PhD?*

4. Adaptive

Literature reviews are a temporary compromise of connectivity and translation. For gap hunters, they are independent and correspondingly true hence can be filled with selected literature. We argue that they are mediated by many actors like language, translators, editors, algorithms and readers. Manoluenko and Bejerot translation is 'pathological avoidant'. Ours is 'pathologically closed'. *One Russian word, one apparent meaning, two English translations composing two assemblages and knowledge of autism. Literature is in a constant state of adaption rather than independence.*

5. Emergent

Boat building literature reviews emerge meaning making, whereas gap hunters actively search objectivity. Our translating showed just how precarious the range of truth and meddlesome behaviours of researchers could be. There was no objective way to choose the best English word. The person translating from Russian had no training in psychiatry. He chose the best fits as they emerged. The co-author's role was to aid the process reflexively. *Questions like, "Uhm, would you say avoidant?" The answer was, "Well, avoidant can be ok, but not in this sentence. No, I would say closed."*

knowledge is an exciting alternative to finding it. Besides, translation demands such bravery because any number of versions can be more correct, rhetorical, pragmatic or simply get the message across better. Not too dissimilar to the poetics of a heart-warming play or the claims of statistical analysis, the translator, like an audience, is Captain of their boat who at times has to make analytical decisions, defend choices and be prepared to revise, reinvent and review.

Discussion on the role of contemporary literature reviews

The first thing we noticed was that this article could not be the result of finding a gap in knowledge, specifically in the literature on autism. Neither could it be an attempt to fill gaps in autism with our two 'newly discovered' Russian psychiatrists. As a result of our translating, we are more pragmatic and realist. We hoped to reassemble autism and tell another (hi)story with the works of Gannushkin and Suhareva (Goldschmied ZA & Zumpalov LG, 2017). We started to conclude that there could be no gaps *per se* in autism but rather, terrains to be explored and ships to be built so that absence, presence and the role of the mediating effect of translation could be rethought. Our translating stoked our curiosity to explore unchartered terrains to reassemble, tell and retell further (hi)stories and knowledges of autism. Reviews are assemblages, the effect of noticing to offer multiple possibilities. No matter what methodology we choose, which database we access, how systematic we are, at the end of the day, our literature review will be just an experiment of many possibilities. Students, scientists and academics need to do good enough work (see 10 points of boat builders) as a means to negotiate, compromise, and make judgements about their choices as they sail along the sea to inform policies and practices. For there is no doubt that sooner or later, the next translations change the terrain and reassemble what we think we know.

Traditional gap hunters like Silberman question Kanner's authenticity, whilst Manoluenko, Bejerot and Wolf inquire whether Asperger or Kanner knew about each other or the work of Suhareva. Others try to figure out who was really the first who made the ground-breaking discovery (Chown 2012, Chown and Hughes 2016). None of them goes as far as to notice the presence of others. Translating taught us that sometimes new actors enter the

6. Active

Literature reviews are not things-in-themselves. For us, boatbuilders, they are active best fits. Gap hunters assume books, articles and knowledge are detached and passive actors at their disposal. We argue that all objects are active actors, dynamically and dimensionally making new connections with others like translations, editors, researchers and readers. *Suhareva's and Gannushkin's works are active makers of this piece and our next literature review, including the assemblage of autism. They act and were made to act through translation(s).*

7. Pragmatic

Literature reviews employ goals to explore and describe the terrain. Gap hunters insist on literature reviews being scientific. For the boat builder, reviewing must be fit for purpose. It has defined goals, e.g., to translate into English. In terms of pragmatism, truth is what works and is justifiable. In short and at any one time, the best fit! For example, Kraepelin created dementia praecox, in 1887. It was soon renamed schizophrenia and autism were coined by Bleuler. *Kraepelin, Bleuer Suhareva, Gannushkin, Asperger and Kanner reassembled information.*

8. Inventive

For the boat builder, literature reviews represent multiple possibilities. Gap hunters believe their processes will result in ground-breaking discoveries. Translating taught us that knowledge is invented by many heroes who assemble and re-assemble many active actors and their living connections. They carry out abductive experimentation, work with surprising and exciting uncertainties leading to innovation and change. Only such inventions can notice the presence of Suhareva's and Gannushkin's work and make it part of their literature and ship.

9. Co-authored

Literature reviews are the collaboration of scientists commanded by the authors. Gap hunters claim that as authors, they can find all relevant literature, analyse them, critique them, translate them, there is only one way to do all these activities and they are the only ones who can now finally fill that gap. The pieces of Gannushkin's and Suhareva's works will not fill gaps in the (hi)story of autism. *Instead, their newly translated works can give us more details that, in connection with other actors, allow us to reassemble a number of stories.*

10. Imperfect

Literature reviews need to show the processes of noticing and assembling and not only the effects. Gap hunters aim for an unbiased and, as such, apparent perfection of knowledge. We have learnt that no knowledge and literature exist in isolation. Transparency and openness of the process emerge choices and multiple possibilities. Suhareva and Gannushkin might be missing from the habitual (hi)story of autism, but *they have always been collaborators of Kanner, Asperger and the rest of the scientific community as imperfect, as this may seem to some.*

... be prepared to reinvent, revise and review ...

scene like Gannushkin's and Suhareva's book chapter.

Researchers constantly de-assemble and re-assemble prior theories and knowledge, like our articles. None of this happens overnight and certainly not as the result of one single person as the literature so often implies. Furthermore, the role and dominance of particular languages in the scientific world cannot be overlooked. Naturally, the history and relationship of Europe, Russia and the United States of America need to be added to the assemblage. Moreover, with the digital, it is not only our local interactions (books, education, family, papers) that provide us with information but also the virtual translating of faraway actors. Mostly freely. Mostly instantly. Something that was unimaginable just 20 years ago. We can reassemble our knowledge within seconds at the touch of a button.

Conclusion

Boatbuilders put into practice ideas of genealogies aiming to re-assemble knowledge rather than providing the reader with one objective account. Therefore, we summarise what we learnt through a genealogical method of literary scholarship - something necessary when translating the semantic nuances of one language to another. First, knowledge, including literature reviews, does not exist in and by itself. They are assembled. Second, literature reviews are composed by the noticing of many actors, their connections and translations, the dynamics they emerge: observations, written papers, clinics, computers, algorithms, search engines, languages, lights, dictionaries, qualifications, caffeine level and the audience like supervisors, editors, translators, publishers, readers and other gatekeepers. Third, literature reviews are pragmatic endeavours to meet various goals, experiment, map the terrain and build a ship on the sea. Fourth, literature reviews show the processes openly and transparently with all their imperfections. It is no longer good enough to stick a passive and detached paragraph named limitations to the end of an article covering a few of those surprises and uncertainties we have uncovered and sail over in this article. Fifth, and possibly the main point we would like to get across, is that literature reviews should inspire curious minds, offering many possibilities and not one objective truth.

This article also aimed to inspire others to reach out to materials other than the usual scientific narratives. Every time we present our literature, we need to show how it is only one of many realities and descriptions. By sticking to the language of gap finding and filling, it is usually the people in need of support who will suffer at the expense of aspiring researchers' career progress and similar activities. In this case, people like the authors, who are often misunderstood and misinterpreted.

... we can reassemble our knowledge within seconds at the touch of a button ...

Autism did not start with Kanner and Asperger and will not end with Suhareva and Gannushkin. We started this article by noticing how literature and traditional gap hunters tend to name two people as fathers of autism. We finish with arguing that boat builders and explorers trace a whole community of knowledge mothers like Grunya Efimovna Suhareva, grandfathers like Pyotr Borisovich Gannushkin and many more that we hope future articles will include by translating those works that have never been accessible in English. They could be an invaluable addition to our understanding of not autism *per se* but everyday affairs like knowledge, joy and hope.

Transparency

Luka Georgiev Zumpalov is related to Dr Anita Z Goldschmied. The works were translated from Russian to English between 2016-2017. Luka, aka Bebo, is not a linguist, medically trained professional or licensed translator. He is a mathematician who also studied engineering at the Azerbaijan State University of Oil and Industry. He has years of experience translating from Russian and working with academics, including his wife (Dr Maria Kenessey), a Turkologist. The use of a non-medically trained translator and someone

[4] Turkology is a complex of humanities sciences studying languages, history, literature, folklore, culture, and ethnology of people speaking Turkic languages and Turkic peoples in chronological and comparative context (Wikipedia 2021).

related was purposeful and convenient. Such a decision provided a layperson and common-sense approach to the topic through an informal relationship held together by those very human qualities like love, trust and hope instead of financial or other career induced remunerations. Such arrangement, however, bring on sacrifices such as the specialist knowledge of early 20th Century Russian psychiatry and Russian medical language. Dr Anita Z Goldschmied is a dually trained nurse and social worker who provided the autism-specific aspects. Hungarian (Anita's mother tongue) and Bulgarian (Bebo's mother tongue) link the original Russian text and English. Dr Dean-David Holyoake (mother tongue caustic street-slang Brummie) added to the assemblage of translation and writing by being a specialist in both the topic and the English language. Luka Georgiev Zumpalov, Bebo, could not see the published version of the works as he passed away unexpectedly in 2019 October. This article pays tribute to his contribution and the nameless majority of our scientific communities who made us reflexively re-assemble our teaching and practices of literature and their reviews.

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