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# The Grove

## Working Papers on English Studies

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## FOREWORD

Dear reader:

As you probably know, *The Grove. Working Papers on English Studies*, since it firstly appeared within the field of English studies in Spain (twenty years ago now), has consistently been trying to improve the quality of the research published as well as its reach, impact and international visibility. Today we can proudly announce that, as of this year, we will be simultaneously publishing our journal online, with the advantages that an electronic version offers to readers and contributors. We hope this will decidedly improve the journal's accessibility and impact, once we have already finished the process of complying with all institutional and academic requirements in terms of editorial policy and academic rigour. Hopefully, we will shortly be evaluated and will be given the chance to prove that we can be ranked with the top periodical publications in our field, not only nationally but internationally also. In the meantime, we continue being actively indexed by MLA, Latindex, IEDCYT-CSIC, and DICE, and appear in various bibliographical repertoires.

As can be easily perceived, this year's issue focuses mostly on literary and critical studies, presenting a rich variety of topics and works, from a diversity of literary traditions, and –interestingly- with a strong emphasis on women's writing and women's creativity. Thus, this issue includes works on nineteenth century Chicana novelist Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton and the myth of La Malinche, analyses of works by Aphra Behn and Maria Edgeworth, Kate Atkinson, Toni Morrison and Daphne du Maurier, and an essay on women, art, and space. Also, we include a work on Salman Rushdie and polyphony, a comparative study of Priestley and Cervantes, and a study on three short stories by Herman Melville, Saul Bellow and the Indian-born American writer Bharati Mukherjee, together with our only non-literary contribution,

a study of cross-curricular education in ELT; finally, three reviews of recent works on cultural studies and one translation.

Following a tradition that we are aware that our readers appreciate, we do not fail to include some poetry in English in our back cover: for this issue, we offer a poem by young Romanian poet Adriana Carolina Bulz. In this respect, there is one further announcement to make: after twenty years of poetry of *The Grove*, the editors of the journal have decided to publish a special issue, to appear in 2014, containing an anthology of all the poetry from these past twenty years, together with some new texts by the poets that so kindly published with us.

Finally, and as always, our gratitude goes to our scientific and advisory boards, contributors, editorial assistants, the Universidad de Jaén Research Group HUM 0271 and the Caja Rural (institution that co-sponsors the journal), for their invaluable help.

Jesús López-Peláez  
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# **LITERARY STUDIES AND CRITICISM**



## J.B. PRIESTLEY, A CERVANTIST IN THE MAKING

**Esther Bautista Naranjo**  
*University of Castilla-La Mancha*

### Abstract

J.B. Priestley, a prolific intellectual and man of letters, carried out an interesting labour of literary criticism which nowadays still remains highly unknown. In *Literature and Western Man* (1960) he stands for a global understanding of culture and humanism. This standpoint leads him to undertake a very personal history of Western literature which features a thorough analysis of Cervantes in general, and *Don Quixote*, in particular. In this article I will explore Priestley's critical approach to the Spanish writer's seminal work, and I will place it in the midst of the controversy of Cervantean criticism of the 1960s. In the end, I will assess it from an actual perspective.

**Key words:** J.B. Priestley, Cervantes, literary criticism, humanism, controversy.

### Resumen

J.B. Priestley, prolífico intelectual y hombre de letras, llevó a cabo una interesante labor de crítica literaria que, a día de hoy, resulta prácticamente desconocida. En *Literature and Western Man* (1960) aboga por una consideración integral del humanismo y la cultura para realizar una personalísima historia de la literatura occidental en la que Cervantes, en general, y *Don Quijote*, en particular, reciben una especial atención. En este trabajo estudiaremos el tipo de aproximación crítica que Priestley realiza de la obra capital del escritor alcalaíno, y la ubicaremos dentro de la controversia del cervantismo contemporáneo en la década de los años sesenta. Finalmente, valoraremos esta contribución a la crítica cervantista desde el panorama actual.

**Palabras clave:** J.B. Priestley, Cervantes, crítica literaria, humanismo, controversia.

*Don Quixote* is the first modern novel [...] and in many respects it still remains the best.  
(Priestley 1960: 45)

If there is one adjective alone which may describe John Boynton Priestley and his enormous production, it would be that of a *prolific* intellectual and man of letters who cultivated almost all the main literary genres with the sole exception of poetry. Apart from being the author of novels, theatre plays, autobiographies, essays, children stories, short stories and articles on history and politics, Priestley undertook an interesting labour of literary criticism which even nowadays remains widely unknown. This last facet is perhaps outshined by the everlasting fame of his theatre plays and the general recognition towards his novels, as well as by his vigorous political opinions engaged with a strong leftist ideology. His two only works of literary criticism, *The English Comic Characters* (1925) and *Literature and Western Man* (1960) stand at the beginning and in the middle of his overall literary creation, which makes up a whole-life career consecrated to a liberal humanism.

The humanism practised by Priestley is indeed of the most fundamental kind since it stands on the idea that man and culture constitute an indivisible unity, and cannot, therefore, be understood individually. This is clearly noticeable in his inspiring *Literature and Western Man*, a compilation of the main literary milestones from the fifteenth century until his current time which includes the most acclaimed Spanish author together with other writers from different places and times. Priestley deals with the life and works of Cervantes with a deep insight and an extensive knowledge and he presents it in a plain style, thus making it both accessible to a wide public and significant to Cervantean experts. His attempt to offer a broad view of the literary art could be regarded as a precedent to Harold Bloom's works on literary criticism from the 1990s.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>I am referring specifically to Bloom's major works on this topic: *Miguel de Cervantes* (1986) and *The Western Canon: The Books and Schools of the Ages* (1994).

Priestley's collection of essays was published in a critical context marked by the division and fragmentation within the Cervantist circles over the questioning of which was the most accurate interpretation of *Don Quixote*. There were two clearly opposite answers that would frequently give rise to harsh debates: on one side stood the validity of the Romantic or symbolic approach, the *soft* branch of Cervantism; on the other side, *hard-winged* critics claimed the need to return towards a classical, comical reading.<sup>2</sup> Although Priestley is not intrinsically a Cervantist, his vision offers Cervantean scholars some crucial stances which, under an insightful exploration, could shed light on this controversy over which a consensus has not yet been reached. By looking back at the pages that Priestley consecrated to the Spanish author in his main essay on literary criticism, I aim to determine his position in this critical debate. Most of this article will deal with this problem, and I will finish with some considerations on its contemporary relevance. All these factors will lead me to an objective evaluation of Priestley's contribution to Cervantism.

Both in form and content, *Literature and Western Man* appears as a comprehensive history of Western literature. The idea seems to follow H. G. Wells' example, according to Manheim (1960: 183). The English writer, widely known for his science-fiction works, made a start in the field of popular historiography in *The Outline of History* (1920), *A Short History of the World*, (1922), *The Science of Life* (1930) and *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind* (1930), which were, all of them, highly debated and sometimes parodied. For his vast production of a wide variety of literary works, Priestley seems to be, however, more entitled to attempt to write a history of literature, claims Manheim (1960: 183). In fact, contrarily to the comical reaction to Well's history books, Priestley's work has gained a consensual positive reputation<sup>3</sup> in spite of dealing with highly controversial concepts: on the one hand, a summary of the history of literature, which implies the question of choice and the most possibly negative discrimination of authors and

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<sup>2</sup> I will deal with them more in detail further on. On the critical debate around the nature of Cervantes' works I recommend José Montero Reguera's book (1997).

<sup>3</sup> Some of the sources which have endowed Priestley's works about literary criticism with positive reputation are: Atkins (1981), who called him "the last of the sages", and Gale, who praised his "success and popularity" and referred to *Literature and Western Man* as "an extraordinary achievement" (2008: 16). A review of Priestley's overall legacy and fame can be found in his website: <http://www.jbpriestley.co.uk/JBP/Legacy.html>.



works; on the other hand, the notion of “Western”, which, as it happens with the American scholar Harold Bloom (1994), might sound somehow exclusive or elitist.

Priestley seems to be aware of the implications of this sort of work. That is why he states his viewpoint in a brief introduction. The author applies the term “Western” in two different senses: first, it stands as a synonym of “modern”. This denotes that the literary works analysed here start with the invention of printing in the fifteenth century, so Priestley obviates all the oral and medieval tradition. However, he includes the main literary genres within each chosen period. Second, since the essay was published in 1960, with the background of the Iron Curtain and the Cold War, the question of space remains also controversial. Geographically, he applies the notion of “Western” in the old sense, including Russia and America, and excluding Asia. This integrating perspective is distinctive of Priestley’s literary worldview, since he claims that his book “[...] is not a work of scholarship [...] not a literary history” (x), that he has avoided “[...] any discussion of criticism and critics” (xi) and that he aims to offer the Western reader “[...] a volume devoted to his literature [...] in an age of supreme crisis [which] might help us to understand ourselves” (x).<sup>4</sup>

Priestley’s study of Cervantes is placed in the initial chapter, significantly entitled “The Golden Globe”. The Spanish author comes straight after Rabelais, Montaigne and Shakespeare and stands at the closure of the section devoted to the Renaissance literature and poetics. Priestley places him in a brief but accurate context marked by the height of the Spanish imperial wealth, the rise of realistic novels, (popularly referred to as the “epics of hunger” [42]), religious mixtures and the claim of Jewish ancestry, the official establishment of Castilian as a national language, and the key importance of drama as the main Renaissance genre. Lope and Calderón, in Spain, and Camoëns, in the nearby Portugal, make up, together with Cervantes, the chief writers of the Golden Age Period according to Priestley.

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<sup>4</sup> Evidently, Priestley’s moderate ideas do not exclude a partial view of the whole literature comprised in these centuries. This is why he defends his own opinion: “[...] I am the Western Man I know best” (xi). According to him, he has only included works that he has read thoroughly and that could be found in his own personal library, which featured more than ten thousand books.

What follows next is a closer look at the life and works of Cervantes and, especially, at the brilliant synthesis of the picaresque, the pastoral and the knightly epic which compose *Don Quixote*. It is a book which remains, to Priestley, “[...] one of the unquestioned masterpieces of Western literature” (1960: 45) and “[...] the best novel in the world” (50). Priestley regards *Don Quixote* as the product of a man suffering from a full decline of life and hope. Written in a jail, the former soldier expresses through the Knight of the Rueful Countenance —“a wily, ripe, deep old character” (46)— his disillusionment at the loss of those ideals he fought for under the command of Diego de Urbina and Juan de Austria, which even cost him an arm at the battle of Lepanto. This is why Priestley believes that “of all our greatest novelists he is the youngest, because he is the first, and the oldest, because his tale of the mad knight is an old man’s tale. He is also the wisest” (50). The claim that *Don Quixote* was the first modern novel (also found in Bloom *Western*) marks a first coincidence with the Romantic approach. For example, German critic Heinrich Heine argued that “Cervantes created the modern novel by introducing into his romance of knighthood a faithful description of the lower classes, by intermingling with it phases of folk-life” (254; see also Shelley 181-182).

Priestley’s praise of Cervantes and his *Don Quixote* coexists happily with some objective remarks on the novel’s faults. He observes that Part One is full of subsidiary stories which interrupt the main narrative, something which, from his viewpoint, is due to a lack of confidence on the side of the author. He also considers that Part Two is “more carefully constructed and less episodic and rough in its humour” (45) despite the fact that it was completed hurriedly after Avellaneda’s spurious continuation. Priestley adds that this second half is richer in self-conscious devices to the extent that the characters become aware of their own fictionalizing in Part One and are also critics of the unauthorized sequel. This huge difference leads Priestley to conclude that the two halves should be considered “two different novels about the same people” (46). The Romantics had previously noticed a different orientation of the two parts of the novel, whose publications were separated by a ten years’ time gap:

In Part I the ideal is treated only in a natural-realistic way as the hero’s idealism collides with the ordinary world, whereas in Part II matters are presented symbolically and the world

with which the hero becomes into conflict is no longer ordinary but ideal (Schelling 421-422) (the translation is mine).

But, beyond his applause and criticism of specific techniques, which are not uncommon in Cervantean criticism (since most of his critics tend to be, regardless of their approach, his foremost readers and admirers), Priestley infers that the life of the author and the assumptions he may have disseminated in his work should not be taken into account for the critical analysis since they are part of the fictional universe. This is especially relevant in the case of Cervantes, since many of his traditional critics —those who deny the symbolic interpretation—, generally identify the author with the narrator of don Quixote's adventures, who (always from the domain of fiction) offers his story by editing the writings of different chroniclers having before confessed his doubts over this work to a friend in the Prologue to the First Part. The confusion between the real Cervantes and one of the fictional voices he has created also tends to happen with the main chronicler, the arab Cide Hamete Benengeli, who claims at the end of his manuscript (the one that the first narrator has edited) that his intention is to satirize the romances of chivalry. In none of these cases should the real writer be identified with the representatives of his metafiction. To Priestley, this would be “a monstrous notion”, an instance of “the most superficial criticism [which implies] that we must not discover in a work of art anything outside the limits of the artist's conscious intention. [...] this is nonsense” (46).

Priestley takes an open-minded position when he claims that the author's intention, apart from the impossibility of being objectively ascertained, is not relevant to the interpretation of his productions: “He is creating something that begins to have a life of its own, and this life, like any other, may be regarded, appreciated, interrelated in many different ways, on many different levels” (46). This is another relevant instance of his progressive Cervantist frame of mind. Through all these statements, Priestley is deliberately making a step forward in the direction of the progressive criticism of Cervantes, whose grounds were laid by the works of the English and German writers from the Romantic period, such as Mary Shelley (1837), Lord Byron (1858), Friedrich Schelling (1999) and Friedrich Schlegel (1818, 1968). In the sections devoted to the German and English Romanticism, Priestley quotes and praises most of these authors. More specifically, he acknowledges

Schelling and the Jena circle as the centre of the Romantic temperament (126) and dubs Byron the ultimate English Romantic hero (145).

Even though their opinions about Cervantes were scattered across isolated essays, conferences, and fictional works, their ideas were so influential that they conformed the *soft* approach in opposition to the Baroque and Neo-classical *hard* interpretations. In the two centuries that followed Cervantes' life and works, *Don Quixote* was read as an eminently comical and satirical book aimed at making laugh or at mocking the Spanish customs and vices. Nonetheless, for the Romantics, who privileged the motivations and struggles of the main character, the book became highly symbolic and carried out a universal message.

One of their common premises was that Cervantes's satire on chivalry was deceitful,<sup>5</sup> since they shared the view of the lonely knight who, having been enlightened by books, undertook a courageous fight for a series of noble and heroic ideals against a depraved and decadent society and even in his time of dying his heart proved to be nobler and worthier than that of his enemies (Schelling 422). This struggle turned his story into a portrait of life itself rather than a regional or local social satire. The argument between both trends was still a burning issue in Priestley's times, when traditional or conservative critics (such as Alexander Parker or Peter Russell) supported the adverse reaction of a logical society to the wanderings and the delirium of a madman whose final downfall meant the triumph of reason over fantasy. The decade of the 1960s would see the rise of more conciliatory approaches, such as John Jay Allen's and the purely progressive interpretation of Harry Levin.

Later on, Priestley claims that Cervantes' masterpiece "[...] has given us the term 'quixotic'" (45), (a term which has evolved through the years as well as the interpretation of the novel), and "two immortal characters in the Don and his squire, Sancho Panza" (45) (this stands at the core of the mythical interpretation, which implies that the characters

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<sup>5</sup> Priestley gives three reasons for the refusal of the parody strategies as a basis for criticism: "First, Cervantes may have been merely playing safe, as many old writers did, by limiting himself publicly to some such social-didactic purpose. He may have knowingly intended much else, but preferred not to say anything about it. Secondly, he may have begun with some such simple plan and then consciously enlarged and enriched it. Thirdly, in the act of creation, what he consciously intended may have been swept along by the flood of scenes, incidents, talk, rising from the unconscious" (46).

have gained an independent existence from the book [see also Ayala]. Priestley's assumes here the mythical interpretation also ascribed to the Romantics<sup>6</sup> with whom he was well acquainted. Don Quixote's consideration as a myth could be justified through its "universal popularity", which allows it to be "known without being really read as a novel" (45). This would be completely impossible if his two novels were just a mere burlesque on romances of chivalry or a satire of the Spanish character, as it was claimed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, respectively. Furthermore, the multiplicity of values that could be ascribed to the protagonist explains the novel's everlasting fame and influence on later authors from very different perspectives, as Priestley states, again in accordance with the Romantics' views (see also Schelling 421):

He reached far forward to inspire all the novelists who set their characters wandering, and gave godspeed to Gil Blas, Tom Jones and Wilhelm Meister, and Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller. And as the magical ironist of the relativity of reality, of truth at war with illusion, he might be said to have pointed further still, beyond where his faith and hope could reach, towards Ibsen, Unamuno, Proust, Pirandello, Mann and Joyce (50).

As I have said before, the Romantics privileged the individual struggle of The Knight of the Rueful Countenance who possessed all Christian virtues and was paradoxically rejected and treated like a madman by his friends and acquaintances. Priestley also takes part for the hero by claiming that his virtues are confronted with an adverse environment and that society is ultimately responsible for his downfall because it "[...] replies by laughing at him, kicking and cudgelling him, humiliating and beating him" (47). He adds that "there is anger in its laughter" (48), which is representative of a world where the essential human values defended by don Quixote (platonic love, freedom, loyalty, honour and universal justice) have undergone a profound crisis. This would prove that the *hidalgo* is not totally mad because he is just trying to escape from the cruel reality that surrounds him by building up an illusory world of his own.

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<sup>6</sup>The European Romantics, and Schelling specifically, saw don Quixote as a mythical character. For this reason, the literary myth of don Quixote has been included in the main fields of myth criticism, with seminal works published by Francisco Ayala and Jean Canavaggio.

Priestley's acute considerations on the protagonist's madness also point at the Romantic interpretation, whose main exponents saw that the knight's distortion did not hamper his verbal defence of liberty, love and honour in memorable speeches. He observes that, after the first defeats, don Quixote grows aware that the nature of illusion is fragile. This is why he sometimes chooses not to put his experience (both physical and mental) to a test. The critic recalls the example of the pasteboard beaver (*la celada de cartón*) which, being broken at the first rubbings of his sword, deconstructs the nature of illusion. Once he gets it fixed, don Quixote thinks of it as the strongest beaver. There are many other instances of the discretion that the Don acquires throughout his adventures on the fragility of his worldview, such as the imaginary events narrated after his descent into the Cave of Montesinos, and probably the most representative one: his conscious negation of the real Aldonza, which he chooses to see as the beautiful princess Dulcinea: "I am content to imagine that what I say is so and that she is neither more nor less than I picture her and would have her be, in comeliness and in high estate" (Cervantes: 271).

For all these reasons, Priestley urges his readers to interpret Cervantes' novel as a false-bottom text. On the surface, there is the grotesque and ridiculous adventures of a madman who believed that the works of knightly fiction were genuine. But this undeniable humour hides a profound wisdom which is just understandable to shrewd and nonconformist readers. This is why he calls for a "deeper interpretation" (49), since the merely laughable fancies of an old man turn out to be a "regressive tragi-comedy of illusion and truth, appearance and reality" (48). At first sight, most of the knight's acts seem to correspond to a growing madness, but, "on the level below, all this seems tragic" (48) to Priestley. Apart from that, the ingenious knight finally regains his lucidity and recognizes his mistakes, which means that the fight between truth and illusion is not only external, as represented by Quixote and Sancho, but that this debate is implicit within the mental schemes of the *hidalgo* who read too much. The transcendental meaning of his adventures and the quest for idealism which underlies his anecdotal defeats and logical incongruences was emphasized by the Romantic critics, such as Hegel (196).

At the same time as he ascertains the mythical nature of the Cervantean hero, Priestley points out at an essential paradox which,

to my understanding, was not observed by previous critics. He observes that “the mythological element is in the first part” (46). This means that even though the deeper symbolism lies on the Second Part of his wanderings, the episodes that linger in the popular memory (those which have contributed to a visual and iconographic representation of the main character) come mostly from the 1605 *Don Quixote*. Canavaggio, a supporter of the Romantic thesis, also complains that, in spite of the universal transcendence accorded to the *hidalgo*, the most widely remembered episodes are those from the First Part, whose adventures have a more customary character. Probably the best known adventure is the fight against the windmills, where don Quixote mistakes reality for his bookish illusion and proves to be more insane than in any other chapter. Priestley finds a reason for this paradox in the simplified editions for children.

Although Priestley assumes many of the Romantics’ statements on Cervantes’ novel, he also assesses their mistakes and evolves towards a more objective reading. This can be noticed in his study of the squire’s character. The ideologists of the Romantic interpretation claimed that the master and his servant represented two poles of the epistemological worldview: the Don standing for idealism and Sancho as an incarnation of realism. This implied that they represented the ancient comical prototype of the bizarre couple, and that their sincere friendship results in an allegorical combination of contraries: imagination and pragmatism, Romanticism and materialism, passion and reason, the heart and the brain, dream and reality, folly and lucidity, irrationality and logics, etc. As Coleridge put it,

Don Quixote grows at length to be a man out of his wits; his understanding is deranged; and hence without the least deviation from the truth of nature, without losing the least trait of personal individuality, he becomes a substantial living allegory, or personification of the reason and the modal sense, divested of the judgment and the understanding. Sancho is the converse. He is the common sense without reason or imagination; and Cervantes not only shows the excellence and power of reason in Don Quixote, but in both him and Sancho the mischiefs resulting from a severance of the two main constituents of sound intellectual and moral action. Put him and his master together, and they form a perfect intellect; but they are separated and without cement; and hence each



having a need of the other for its own completeness. Each at times has a mastery over the other (120).

By reacting against this naïve and incomplete Romantic observation, Priestley follows Salvador de Madariaga's remark that both Quixote and Sancho evolve and complement each other throughout their adventures in common, so that this alliance of contraries is gradually reversed — this is not merely a coincidence since Priestley alludes to the Spanish scholar (49), and proves to be familiar with his critical opinion. As a consequence of this evolution, Don Quixote's constant failures move him towards the final *desengaño* and his condemnation of knightly romances. Sancho, for his part, is doubtful of his master's potential triumphs in the beginning, but ends up taking on the government of the *ínsula Barataria*. Furthermore, in the moment of Alonso Quijano's eventual recovery of sanity, Sancho reminds him of his old promise to become shepherds, which, in practise, would mean assuming a different ideal as an alternative to the unfruitful romances of chivalry.

Priestley not only agrees with Madariaga's view on the complementation between the two main characters, but he digs in still deeper. Sancho looks as a down-to-earth character, whose mind is just alert to money, food and sleep. He expresses his wisdom, extracted from real life and tangible experience, through popular proverbs, and he thus opposes the academic culture of his master, inspired by books. However, he leaves his family behind and follows the picturesque knight —whom he has previously known as one of his neighbours, the *hidalgo* Quijano— into a completely illogical set of adventures because he has been promised to gain the government of an island.

Therefore the squire is as mad as his master, whose aspirations of eternal glory equal Sancho's human wish for power and social respect. His delusion at the end of the rule of Barataria, where he offers frequent instances of his serene sagacity, acts therefore as a foil to his master's eventual defeat and return to the *aldea*. While don Quixote finally loses his faith in knighthood, Sancho "[...] talks eagerly, in the end, of enchanters, to explain why illusion and fact cannot be reconciled" (49). This progress proves, in words of Priestley, that the dichotomy seen by the Romantics on the two main characters is only valid in the beginning of the novel, and, in consequence, "common sense cannot hold out against imagination, nor flesh entirely resist spirit" (47). In order



to make this evolution understandable to the general readers and valid to real life, Priestley compares the brute squire with the electorate who is won over by a dominant ideology —name it Church, State, Finance, Party, Press, etc. (49).

As the above analysis has shown, Priestley's analysis of the nature of don Quixote largely corresponds to the progressive or Romantic interpretation of this character. This is in keeping with Manheim's claim that the English writer is "by predilection if not in doctrine, a Romantic in his own writings" (183). However, he also addresses the chief problematic stances of this approach through his factual knowledge of Madariaga's Cervantean writings. Overall, his assumption of the progressive reading of *Don Quixote* seems even more valuable since it is presented as a chapter of his history of western literature, a sort of encyclopaedic work where statements are generally regarded as objective and irrefutable.

His insightful analysis could eventually contribute to a necessary revision of the progressive interpretation, to a mythical analysis of don Quixote and to a conciliatory approach to the novel, which, in our present context, when the anniversary of the Second Part is approaching, is yet to come. Even though in the quadricentennial celebrations of the publication of the First Part in 2005 and the years after the critical attention focused on narratology and fictional devices, the debate on the "soft" and "hard" criticism still calls for attention. Priestley's contribution could be regarded as a reinforcement of the symbolic and mythical approach of the Romantics that current critics, such as Pardo García (*Siglo, Quijano*), Lázaro Lafuente and Martínez Mata (*Sentido, Cambio*) in Spain, Ardila and Mancing in the English-speaking sphere, maintain. For all these reasons, Priestley, who also tried to imitate Cervantes' style in some of his novels (an issue that I am addressing somewhere else), already gives enough reasons in his *Literature and Western Man* to be considered a Cervantist in the making as well as an enthusiastic reader who coped with Lord Byron's categorical observation on *Don Quixote*: "Of all tales, 't is the saddest —and more sad, / Because it makes us smile" (407).

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# **MUJER, ARTE Y ESPACIO EN LA NARRATIVA ANGLOSAJONA FINISECULAR: ANTICIPANDO A *ROOM OF ONE'S OWN* DE VIRGINIA WOOLF**

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## **Abstract**

Four decades before the publication of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, some late nineteenth century female writers had already reflected on the lack of physical and economic resources of the woman artist and, in order to denounce this situation, they introduced in their fiction a great deal of female artist characters.

The cases studied in this article mainly correspond to the artist protagonists created by "the new woman" writers Kate Chopin (1850-1904), Olive Schreiner (1806-1920), Mona Caird (1854-1932) and Sarah Grand (1854-1943). With them these authoresses portrayed the constraints that the woman artist had to suffer and the importance that the conquest of space, private and public, and the economic independence had in the development of their artistic talent and professional career.

**Key words:** Space, woman artist, female character, economic independence, artistic world.

# **MUJER, ARTE Y ESPACIO EN LA NARRATIVA ANGLOSAJONA FINISECULAR: ANTICIPANDO A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN DE VIRGINIA WOOLF**

## **Resumen**

Cuatro décadas antes de la publicación de *A Room of One's Own* de Virginia Woolf, algunas escritoras finiseculares ya habían reflexionado

sobre la falta de recursos físicos y económicos de la mujer artista y, para denunciar esta situación, introdujeron en su obra narrativa un gran número de personajes femeninos artistas.

Los casos estudiados en este artículo corresponden principalmente a las protagonistas artistas creadas por las escritoras “new woman” Kate Chopin (1850-1904), Olive Schreiner (1806-1920), Mona Caird (1854-1932) y Sarah Grand (1854-1943). Con ellas estas autoras denunciaron las vicisitudes a las que la mujer artista debía enfrentarse y la importancia que la conquista del espacio, privado y público, y la independencia económica tenía en el desarrollo de su talento artístico y de su carrera profesional.

**Palabras clave:** Espacio, mujer artista, personaje femenino, independencia económica, mundo artístico.

En 1929 la escritora británica Virginia Woolf publicó un ensayo titulado *A Room of One's Own* cuyo argumento central gira en torno a la necesidad que la mujer artista tiene de encontrar un espacio propio así como de independencia económica para poder desarrollar su creatividad.<sup>1</sup> Para Woolf, el genio de un escritor (o escritora) no sólo dependía de su talento individual sino de las circunstancias históricas y de las condiciones materiales de que disponía, ya que éstas afectan de modo crucial al proceso creativo, y así lo expresó en su ensayo: “These webs are not spun in mid-air by incorporeal creatures, but are the work of suffering human beings, and attached to grossly material things, like health and money and the houses we live in” (Woolf 38). La escritora británica argumentó, de este modo, cómo la falta de formación, de solvencia económica y de un espacio propio habían sido elementos comunes en la vida de la mayoría de las artistas hasta su época, y que estos eran los motivos principales por los que el número de escritores en la historia de la literatura multiplicaba al de sus compañeras de profesión.

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<sup>1</sup> El ensayo está basado en una serie de conferencias que la escritora pronunció en Newnham College y Girton College en 1928 y que luego publicó en Hogarth Press, la editorial que fundó junto a su marido. Woolf se refiere específicamente a la mujer escritora, aunque en algunas partes de su ensayo generalice y hable de la mujer artista.

Woolf fue, sin duda, una de las primeras intelectuales que en el siglo XX denunció las carencias educativas, sociales e institucionales de la mujer de la época y, por ello, su obra se convirtió en el germen de muchas de las teorías literarias, psicológicas y sociológicas desarrolladas posteriormente por los estudios de género. De hecho, no fue hasta las décadas de 1950 y 1960 cuando la crítica feminista comenzó a aunar en un movimiento teórico sistematizado las voces femeninas reivindicativas que, como la de Woolf, habían surgido hasta entonces de forma aislada y marginal. En este sentido, la obra de Simone de Beauvoir, *El Segundo Sexo*, publicada en 1949, fue clave en el desarrollo de los estudios feministas, al ser la primera que planteó desde un punto de vista filosófico conceptos como el de la identidad femenina y la diferencia sexual. Los estudios de Beauvoir fueron continuados por otras investigadoras pertenecientes a los que algunos críticos han venido a llamar “la escuela francesa”, como ese el caso de Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray y Julia Kristeva, que, en obras como *La Risa de la Medusa* (1978), *El Sexo que no es Uno* (1977) y *Poderes de la Perversión* (1980), respectivamente, incidieron sobre todo en la necesidad de buscar nuevos medios y canales de expresión de la realidad femenina. Durante las décadas de 1970 y 1980 se sucedieron, asimismo, los trabajos de teóricas británicas, como Kate Millet, que acometieron los estudios feministas desde un punto de vista sociocultural, al considerar que eran las estructuras políticas y sociales tradicionales las que habían limitado el desarrollo personal y profesional de la mujer históricamente.<sup>2</sup> Entre las investigadoras de estos años, pertenecientes a una segunda oleada de feminismo, hay que destacar también el notable trabajo realizado por las norteamericanas Elaine Showalter, Sandra M. Gilbert y Susan Gubar que, además de tratar la problemática femenina combinando supuestos teóricos y socioculturales, abordaron de forma específica las constricciones de la mujer artista en publicaciones como *A Literature of their Own* (1977) y *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) rescatando, así, el principal objeto de estudio planteado por Virginia Woolf en *A Room of One's Own*.

Showalter, Gilbert y Gubar hacen un interesante recorrido por la obra de las escritoras en lengua inglesa más reconocidas

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<sup>2</sup> El principal trabajo de Kate Millett a este respecto es *Sexual Politics* publicado en 1970.



universalmente, entre las que destacan las novelistas decimonónicas Jane Austen, George Eliot y las hermanas Brontë, analizando los principales aspectos que relacionan feminidad y creatividad. Para estas investigadoras, el elemento clave en la obra de estas autoras está en sus heroínas, que son personajes de gran capacidad intelectual y artística y que intentan por todos los medios canalizar su energía creativa en un mundo que, como a ellas mismas, no les ofrece oportunidades. Así lo afirman Gilbert y Gubar en *The Madwoman in the Attic*: “They project what seems to be the energy of their own despair into passionate and even melodramatic characters who act out the subversive impulses every woman inevitably feels when she contemplates the deep-rooted evils of patriarchy.” (Gilbert & Gubar 77)

Si analizamos con detenimiento la vida de estas escritoras, así como la progresión de algunas de sus protagonistas, concluiremos que la hipótesis es acertada, pues muchas de las heroínas de estas novelas no sólo ejemplifican la represión social, institucional y psicológica que sufría la mujer de la época, sino también su frustración al no poder desarrollar su capacidad creativa. El acercamiento de estos personajes al mundo artístico quedaba, por tanto, circunscrito al plano representativo y siempre dentro del ámbito privado: Emma y Jane Eyre realizan hermosos retratos de sus amigos, Dorothea Brooke es una gran intelectual que no trasciende los muros de su hogar y Lucy Snowe es una profesora de idiomas bajo la que se esconde una verdadera escritora.<sup>3</sup> Las dotes pictóricas, literarias o musicales de estos personajes, como las de las jóvenes de la época, se convertían, por tanto, en atributos meramente decorativos sin ninguna posibilidad de trascender.

La relación entre la mujer y el mundo del arte va a cambiar radicalmente durante las últimas décadas del siglo XIX. El desarrollo urbano trajo consigo la popularización de la cultura en términos generales. Asimismo, los avances educativos, legislativos, sociales y laborales alcanzados por la mujer durante estos años la convirtieron no sólo en partícipe sino en agente activo en este proceso de modernización y profesionalización del arte: escritoras, pintoras, escultoras y compositoras consiguieron, por primera vez en la historia, tener un

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<sup>3</sup> Emma, Dorothea Brooke, Jane Eyre y Lucy Snowe son las protagonistas de *Emma* de Austen, *Middlemarch* de George Eliot y *Jane Eyre* y *Villette* de Charlotte Brontë respectivamente.

mayor acceso a la formación así como a los medios de distribución y comercialización de sus obras. Por ello, entre otras razones, las escritoras de la época quisieron plasmar en su obra narrativa la imagen de esta nueva mujer artista.

Al abordar las novelas y los relatos publicados por mujeres durante las décadas de 1880 y 1890 nos percatamos de que, efectivamente, estas escritoras introdujeron un gran número de heroínas artistas en sus obras e inferimos que lo hicieron, en buena medida, para responder a sus demandas ideológicas. En primer lugar, porque estos personajes reclaman la necesidad de un espacio físico, íntimo y privado, como requisito previo al desarrollo creativo. Vemos, así, cómo varias décadas antes de la publicación del ensayo de Woolf, algunas autoras finiseculares ya habían reflexionado sobre la búsqueda de ese espacio propio para la artista. En segundo lugar, porque el mundo creativo ofrece a estas heroínas un espacio abierto a la evasión, a la imaginación y al genio. En tercer lugar, porque estos personajes encuentran en el arte una posible salida profesional para poder abandonar la esfera privada y conquistar la pública. Esta interpretación de que el arte se podía convertir en una fuente de ingresos económicos y, por tanto, en un medio de vida supone, pues, un salto cualitativo con respecto a la visión que ofrecían heroínas como Jane Eyre, Emma o Lucy Snowe.<sup>4</sup> Asimismo, las escritoras avanzadas de la época aprovecharon la creación de protagonistas artistas para denunciar las duras condiciones laborales a las que las autoras, pintoras o compositoras tenían que enfrentarse durante las últimas décadas del siglo XIX y primeras del XX y exigir, también en este aspecto, mayor justicia e igualdad.

En el presente artículo me dispongo a analizar algunos ejemplos de heroínas artistas que crearon escritoras finiseculares, como la norteamericana Kate Chopin (1850-1904), la sudafricana Olive Schreiner (1806-1920), la británica Mona Caird (1854-1932) y la anglo-

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<sup>4</sup> En este punto hay que señalar que, a pesar de que la mayoría de estas heroínas de generaciones anteriores no tienen una aproximación al arte desde un punto de vista profesional, sí que existen ejemplos en la literatura anglosajona, si bien muy marginales, de protagonistas femeninas decimonónicas que buscan en el arte un trampolín para su desarrollo personal y profesional. Entre estos infrecuentes casos destacan Helen Graham, la protagonista de la novela de Ann Brontë en *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1847), y Aurora Leigh, el personaje principal del poema novelado homónimo de Elizabeth Barrett Browning, publicado en 1856. Ambos personajes son una escritora y una pintora que consiguen la libertad personal y la autonomía económica gracias a su desarrollo como artistas.

irlandesa Sarah Grand (1854-1943). Estas autoras, catalogadas en su época como “nuevas mujeres” debido a su ideología feminista, acataron como uno de los principales objetivos de su labor literaria la denuncia del confinamiento social, educativo y económico que vivía la mujer de la época. Sus protagonistas suelen ser jóvenes inteligentes y valientes que se enfrentan a las limitaciones de su mundo y buscan un desarrollo personal y profesional con independencia del hombre. En el caso de las artistas esta lucha se centra, por un lado, en encontrar un espacio, tanto privado como público, para poder desarrollar y difundir su obra, y por otro, en tratar de alcanzar la autonomía económica.

Comenzaré este recorrido con Edna Pontellier, la protagonista de la novela cumbre de Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* (1899), que ejemplifica uno de esos casos de heroína atrapada que intenta buscar una salida a través del arte. Las causas y medios por los que se produce “el despertar” de Edna, una mujer de clase alta, casada y con hijos, que un verano decide romper con la complacencia de su mundo y buscar un desarrollo personal y profesional propio, han sido analizados por numerosos investigadores desde distintas perspectivas. De este modo, críticos de la corriente historicista como Margit Stange y Ross C. Muffin defienden la hipótesis de que son las limitaciones propias de la sociedad decimonónica las que incitan a la protagonista a rebelarse, convirtiéndose en un ejemplo literario que anticipa un nuevo modelo de mujer que no se hará visible en las sociedades occidentales hasta bien entrado el siglo XX. Los formalistas, sin embargo, consideran que son elementos propios al texto literario, como la simbología o el mito, los que conducen a Edna a romper con los convencionalismos de su entorno y luchar por una existencia propia. Por otro lado, la crítica desconstruccionista, entre cuyos teóricos se encuentran Patricia Yaeger y Paula A. Treichler, se aparta de los aspectos de carácter cultural y social y señala que es el lenguaje propio creado por la heroína a partir de la naturaleza y de la introspección el que la guía en su proceso de autoafirmación.

A pesar de la variedad de enfoques con los que se analizan las distintas formas y razones por las que se produce la evolución del personaje, existen, a mi juicio, pocos estudios que analicen la importancia que el arte y la búsqueda del espacio tienen en dicha evolución, aunque una aproximación a la novela desde esta perspectiva nos descubre que ambos adquieren una gran relevancia en el desarrollo

de la protagonista. Para empezar, el primer momento de revelación de Edna se produce cuando escucha en una fiesta a su amiga Mademoiselle Reisz interpretar a Chopin. En ese instante, la heroína vive una epifanía que va a ser clave en su proceso de evolución personal:

The very first chords which Mademoiselle Reisz struck upon the piano sent a keen tremor down Mrs. Pontellier's spinal column. It was not the first time she had heard an artist at the piano. Perhaps it was the first time she was ready, perhaps the first time her being was tempered to take an impress of the abiding truth (Chopin 44).

El impacto que la música produce en Edna hace que esa misma noche sienta una fuerza poderosa que le empuja a hacer cosas que nunca anteriormente había hecho y, a partir de ese momento, es cuando comienza a gestar su proyecto personal:

A thousand emotions have swept through me tonight. I don't comprehend half of them. Don't mind what I'm saying; I am just thinking aloud. I wonder if I shall ever be stirred again as Mademoiselle Reisz's playing moved me tonight. I wonder if any night on earth will ever again be like this one. (Chopin 49)

La importancia que el arte tiene en este proceso de liberación se confirma con el hecho de que Mademoiselle Reisz pasa a ser su nuevo referente. Frente a la docilidad de la mayoría de sus amigas casadas, la artista del grupo representa a la mujer temperamental, libre de cargas familiares y sociales, a la que desea parecerse Edna. Por todo ello la protagonista decide convertirse en pintora y así intentar conseguir tomar las riendas de su vida. El primer paso para ello es buscar un *atelier* situado en el ático de la casa, donde puede pintar en soledad.<sup>5</sup>

Sin embargo, a Edna el estudio le resulta pronto insuficiente para sus aspiraciones, ya que, si bien en el pequeño cuarto goza de gran intimidad, el resto de la casa siempre está repleto de visitas sociales, niños y sirvientes, como ella misma expresa: "I am tired looking after that big house. It never seemed like mine, anyway –like home. It's too much trouble. I have to keep too many servants. I am tired bothering with them" (Chopin 132). La casa de Edna, lujosa y grande, se convierte en símbolo de su falta de libertad y en un escollo en el proceso de

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<sup>5</sup> El retiro de la artista a la habitación del ático es un clásico en literatura y las heroínas de muchas de estas escritoras finiseculares siguen este patrón.

autoafirmación. Como afirma Charles Baudelaire en su libro *Pequeños Poemas en Prosa*: “en un palacio ya no hay rincones para la intimidad” (Baudelaire 82). Por ello, decide mudarse sola a un coqueto pisito al que, debido a sus escasas dimensiones, va a denominar “the pigeon house:”

The pigeon house pleased her. It at once assumed the intimate character of a home, while she herself invested it with a charm which it reflected like a warm glow. There was with her a feeling of having descended in the social scale, with a corresponding sense of having risen in the spiritual (Chopin 156).

La necesidad de un espacio privado, libre de interrupciones se presenta, como vemos, como un requisito indispensable para la artista. Así, Edna sólo puede desarrollar su creatividad en un ambiente de tranquilidad y soledad.

Otro ejemplo que ilustra esta hipótesis lo encontramos en Rebekah, la protagonista de la novela de Olive Schreiner *From Man to Man* (1922),<sup>6</sup> Rebekah es una mujer casada, madre de cinco hijos y con gran talento para la literatura, que reconoce que la falta de espacio en la casa familiar y las numerosas tareas domésticas dificultan su deseo de poder escribir historias, por eso decide alejarse de su dormitorio y refugiarse en un pequeño cuarto anexo. Las dimensiones de éste son tan escasas que la heroína apenas puede moverse:

The room was a small one, made by cutting of the end of the children's bedroom with a partition. She had had it before as a study for herself where she could always hear the children call if they needed her at night. It was hardly larger than a closet ... (Schreiner 145) she walked round and round because the room was not large enough to allow of walking up and down. (Schreiner 146)

La sensación claustrofóbica se acentúa con la descripción que se hace de la habitación como un lugar lleno de estanterías, con libros viejos, fósiles e insectos disecados. El cuarto de Rebekah, como el estudio de Edna, se convierte en lo que se define como “espacio paradójico,”<sup>7</sup> ya

<sup>6</sup> Olive Schreiner comenzó a escribir *From Man to Man* en 1884, cuando el debate social y literario sobre la nueva mujer estaba en pleno auge. Dedicó gran parte de su vida a completarla, aunque finalmente fue incapaz de terminarla. Fue publicada póstumamente en 1922 por su marido.

<sup>7</sup> “Espacio paradójico” es un término perteneciente al léxico geográfico social que alude a un “tercer espacio” que emerge cuando dos culturas interactúan, como es el caso

que éste es a la vez prisión y exilio, pues si bien gracias a él la heroína puede desarrollar su creatividad, el hecho de que éste forme parte de la casa familiar, dentro del dominio del marido, impide que ésta tenga la independencia necesaria para escapar de la vida doméstica.

La relación arte-espacio es un elemento clave en *From Man to Man* y, además, las constantes semánticas y simbólicas de la obra se asemejan a las que luego aparecen en *A Room of One's Own*. Un ejemplo de ello lo encontramos cuando Rebekah, al igual que hiciera Virginia Woolf, se pregunta cuántos genios literarios femeninos, cuántas “Shakespeares” se han perdido por falta de educación, tiempo y espacio. De este modo se expresaba la escritora sudafricana en su novela:

We have a Shakespeare; but what the possible Shakespeares we might have had who passed their life from youth upward brewing currant wine and making pastries for fat country squires to eat with no glimpse of the freedom of life and action, necessary even to poach on deer in the green forests, stifled out without one line written, simply because, being of the weaker sex, life gave no room for action and grasp on life? (Schreiner 195)

Y así lo hacía Virginia Woolf en su ensayo unos años más tarde:

Let me imagine ... what would have happened had Shakespeare had a wonderfully gifted sister, called Judith, let us say. Shakespeare himself went, very probably to the grammar school, where he may have learnt Latin and the elements of grammar and logic. He had, it seemed, a taste for the theatre ... Very soon he got work in the theatre, became a successful actor, and lived at the hub of the universe, meeting everybody, knowing everybody, practicing his art on the boards, exercising his wits in the streets and even getting access to the palace of the queen. Meanwhile his extraordinary gifted sister remained at home. She was as adventurous, as imaginative, as agog to see the world as he was. But she was not sent to school. She had no chance of learning grammar and logic ... She picked up a book now and then. But then her parents came in and told her to mend the stockings or mind the stew and not moon about with books and papers. (Woolf 42-3)

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del colonialismo. La crítica feminista lo aplica al espacio particular que interconecta geografía con género y cultura.

En estos dos pasajes observamos que subyace la misma idea: la necesidad de dotar a la mujer artista de los mismos recursos y oportunidades que al hombre para que pueda desarrollar su genio.

Otro ejemplo de este tipo de heroína lo encontramos en Hadria Fullerton, la protagonista de la novela de Mona Caird, *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894). Hadria es una chica con grandes dotes musicales que se ve obligada por la familia a casarse con un hombre al que no ama. Sin embargo, gracias a su talento artístico, Hadria encuentra la fuerza necesaria para huir de su pueblo y marcharse a París para seguir una carrera musical. Con esta heroína Caird creó a una artista moderna, pues su forma de interpretar es “offensive to orthodox” (Caird 321), y la vinculó a un espacio también moderno, el París del *fin de siècle*,<sup>8</sup> donde el personaje puede vivir experiencias apenas imaginables en su aldea natal, como ella misma afirma:

The more I see of life, the more hideous seems the position that women hold in relation to the social structure, and the more sickening the current nonsense that is talked about us and our “missions” and “spheres” (Caird 306).

Hadria, por tanto, no sólo busca un espacio privado donde poder interpretar y componer, sino uno público que le ofrezca oportunidades profesionales y que le proporcione las vivencias necesarias para forjarse como pianista. Así, sí, como muchas de las intelectuales de la época afirmaban, la conquista del espacio público resultaba imprescindible para el desarrollo personal y profesional de la nueva mujer, mucho más lo era para la artista cuya creatividad y talento debía labrarse a través de experiencias vitales interesantes y ricas.

Pero el proyecto liberalizador de la nueva mujer artista no sólo incluye la independencia espacial, dado que la verdadera emancipación consiste en alcanzar la libertad creativa y personal y, para ello, es necesario conseguir la autonomía económica, como también indicó Woolf en su ensayo: “Give her a room of her own and five hundred a year” (Woolf 85). Este es el motivo por el que Rebekah no logra escapar del confinamiento físico y psicológico en el que se encuentran atrapada,

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<sup>8</sup> *Fin de siècle* es un término de origen difuso que se popularizó entre las vanguardias artísticas europeas de las últimas décadas del siglo XIX para referirse a los años de profundo cambio que estaban viviendo. La crítica contemporánea ha adoptado el término para los trabajos de investigación, ya sean sociales o artísticos, que versan sobre estos años.



pues sólo cuenta con el poder de su imaginación. Sin embargo, Edna Pontellier intenta iniciar una nueva vida con el dinero heredado de su madre, el ganado en unas apuestas y el que cree que va a conseguir vendiendo sus cuadros. La relación económico-espacial se convierte también así en un binomio muy recurrente en las heroínas creadas por escritoras finiseculares.

El mejor ejemplo de heroína artista que ilustra esta relación es, probablemente, la protagonista de *The Beth Book*, novela publicada por Sarah Grand en 1897. Beth puede abandonar a su marido e iniciar un proceso de emancipación personal gracias a su don para la escritura y a la fortuna de encontrar un espacio en la casa donde ejercer dicha capacidad. Este hecho se produce un día cuando, cansada de aguantar los abusos de su marido y una vida miserable, descubre, por azar, una habitación secreta en el ático de su casa:

Everything about her was curiously familiar and her first impression was that she had been there before. On the other hand, she could hardly believe in the reality of what she saw, she thought she must be dreaming ... a secret spot, sacred to herself, where she would be safe from intrusion (Grand 347).

En el cuarto privado, Beth comienza a leer, después a coser y, finalmente, a escribir: “Now” she exclaimed, “I am at home, thank God! I shall be able to study, to read and write, think and pray at last, undisturbed” (Grand 348). Tras conseguir el espacio propio, la heroína inicia su proyecto de autorrealización ya que con la venta de sus artículos y sus confecciones consigue lo que nunca anteriormente había tenido: la independencia económica. El espacio privado se convierte, así, en un medio de salida al exterior ya que con el dinero ganado Beth puede huir del confinamiento de su hogar y acceder a la vida social. Sus nuevos escenarios, una vez que abandona su hogar conyugal, se convierten en símbolos de la libertad y seguridad conquistadas y así se refleja en la descripción que se hace de su nueva habitación:

Nothing could have eased Beth's mind of the effect of her late experiences, or strengthened it again more certainly, than the harmony, the quiet, and the convenience of everything about her –books on the shelves, needlework on the work-table, writing materials in abundance on the bureau ...; and above all, freedom from intrusion, the right to do as she like gladly conceded, the respect which adds to the dignity of self-respect,



and altogether the kind of independence that makes most for pleasure and peace. (Grand 452-53)

De este modo, frente a sus antiguas residencias, los nuevos espacios que Beth ocupa tras la separación de su marido se convierten en sinónimos de independencia, actividad y salud mental: “Once settled in the attic home, she returned to the healthy, regular habits which had helped her so much in the days when she had been at her best.” (Grand 490).

Sin embargo, la conquista de un espacio propio y de cierta independencia económica va resultar insuficiente tanto para Beth, como para Hadria y Edna, ya que ninguna de ellas consigue el éxito profesional ni personal: Beth termina arruinada y malviviendo en Londres, Hadria se ve obligada a volver a su pueblo junto a su familia tras su aventura parisina y Edna acaba suicidándose. En este punto deberíamos preguntarnos por qué Grand, Caird y Chopin terminaron condenando a sus heroínas artistas a pesar de haberlas dotado de inteligencia y determinación. La crítica contemporánea estudia las posibles causas por las que muchas de las escritoras de la época hicieron fracasar a este tipo de personajes con talento artístico. Elaine Showalter en *A Literature of their Own. From Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing* señala cómo muchas de estas autoras, en su interés por buscar un espacio para la artista, incidieron excesivamente en la importancia del cuarto propio. Para Showalter, la habitación en sí misma no concede la libertad necesaria al creador y, finalmente, se convierte en un “fantastic sanctuary” (Showalter 215). La investigadora coincide con otros estudiosos en apuntar que la prioridad de la época era realizar una ruptura radical con la ideología patriarcal que determinaba el pensamiento y, por ello, estas heroínas no logran completar su evolución. En palabras de Showalter, estos personajes “Given the freedom to explore their experience, they rejected it, or at last tried to deny it” (Showalter 215). Lyn Pykett en *The “Improper” Feminine: The Women’s Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* va más allá, y señala que el espacio conquistado por estos personajes es más utópico que real y que su fracaso radica en que estos siguen usando el discurso de lo femenino, un lenguaje androcéntrico y conservador que les impide reconocer y expresar una nueva realidad social y artística. En la misma línea, Ann Heilmann en *New Woman Strategies: Sarah Grand, Olive Schreiner and Mona Caird* reconoce que estas escritoras

se encontraron en medio de una encrucijada social y lingüística de la que no supieron salir. Talia Schaffer en *Literature and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* y Margaret Stetz en *England in the 1890s: Literary Publishing at the Bodley Head* adoptan un enfoque más sociocultural y hablan de la necesidad que estas autoras tenían de denunciar las enormes dificultades profesionales, sociales y económicas a las que la mujer artista de su época debía enfrentarse.

Efectivamente, las escritoras, pintoras y compositoras en estos años solían encontrarse con una opinión pública adversa ya que muchos intelectuales y ciudadanos consideraban que las mujeres tenían que estar fuera del ámbito artístico. El poeta Robert Southey (1774-1843) en una carta escrita a Charlotte Brontë le decía: "Literature is not the business of a woman's life and it cannot be,"<sup>9</sup> y la intelectual feminista norteamericana Margaret Fuller (1810-1850) también señaló en *Women in the Nineteenth Century* la repulsa que existía en la época hacia la mujer artista: "The world repels (the woman of genius) rudely" (Fuller 103). En este sentido, Gubar y Gilbert analizan en la primera parte de su trabajo *The Madwoman in the Attic* cómo hasta el siglo XIX el genio artístico se identificaba con el poder físico y sexual masculino y, por ello, la energía creativa en una mujer era vista como algo anómalo. A esta realidad se sumaban las dificultades económicas de aquellas que no pertenecían a familias acomodadas. Beth es un claro ejemplo de heroína artista asediada por las deudas y los problemas monetarios. Los capítulos que relatan su estancia en Londres son los que tienen un mayor carácter naturalista en toda la obra de Grand, pues en ellos se describe con bastante detalle las penurias por las que pasa la heroína.

El mundo del arte era, sin duda, un reino gobernado por hombres en el que las mujeres tenían un difícil acceso. Las dificultades de la mujer para hacerse un hueco en el terreno artístico y, más concretamente en el literario, también son el núcleo temático principal de algunas de las obras de autoría femenina de estos años. Un ejemplo lo encontramos en *The Story of a Modern Woman* (1894) de Ella Hepworth Dixon (1855-1932) cuya protagonista, Mary Erle, es una joven escritora que es constantemente despreciada por su gremio y, como prueba de ello, encontramos las palabras que su editor le dirige al principio de la

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<sup>9</sup> Citado en *Charlottë Brontë. The Evolution of Genius*. Ed. Winifred Gérin Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967, 110.

novela: “With practice, you may be able to write stories which other young ladies like to read” (Dixon 53). Más aún, la joven debe valerse del nombre de su padre, conocido en el mundo periodístico por sus artículos científicos, para conseguir publicar por primera vez. También la obra de Constance Fenimore Woolson (1840-1894) “Miss Grief” (1880) incide en esta idea. El relato cuenta la historia de un escritor reconocido que accede a leer la novela de una autora novel para corregirla y mejorarla. Ante su asombro, el protagonista descubre que la obra es tan buena que no es capaz de realizar ninguna aportación que pueda beneficiarle y, por ello, se dedica a empobrecerla eliminando su fuerza y originalidad. Mabel Wotton (1863-1927) creó, en la misma línea, un personaje masculino parecido con el protagonista de su relato “The Fifth Edition” (1896), un supuesto artista, explotador de escritoras, que usurpa el trabajo de éstas. La protagonista de la historia resulta, así, traicionada no sólo por su mentor sino por un mundo empresarial y editorial que por ser mujer desconoce y teme.

Como reflejan todas estas obras el desprecio y la falta de respeto con los que el mercado trataba la obra femenina fueron constantes a las que la mayoría de periodistas y escritoras tuvieron que enfrentarse. De hecho, existen algunas novelas y relatos escritos también por hombres que denunciaron tal situación.<sup>10</sup> Como afirma Margaret Diane Stetz en “New Grub Street and the Woman Writer of the 1890s:” “the Victorian middle class woman in a publishing market was an alien” (Stetz 34). Su desconocimiento de la industria, unido a la falta de escrúpulos de muchos editores, multiplicaron los abusos. Tal fue el grado de explotación de estas jóvenes profesionales que en 1898 el novelista británico Arnold Bennett (1867-1931) escribió una guía práctica para asesorar y advertir a periodistas y escritoras sobre dichos abusos denominada *Journalism for Women: A Practical Guide*.

Otras escritoras de la época quisieron representar el sufrimiento de la mujer artista desde la perspectiva opuesta y, por ello, situaron a personajes masculinos en el lugar de sus maltratadas heroínas. Así George Egerton (1859-1945) en “A Lost Masterpiece,” describe al

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<sup>10</sup> En este sentido es interesante señalar la novela de George Gissing (1857-1903) *New Grub Street* (1891) que realiza un crudo retrato de la industria periodística de la época que se debatía entre el compromiso y las ventas. En la novela se explicita en alguna ocasión cómo las exigencias del mercado eran mayores para las periodistas que para sus compañeros de profesión.

narrador de su relato como un soberbio escritor que autoproclama su genio artístico y desprecia a todas las mujeres con talento literario para esconder que lo que realmente siente es un enorme temor a perder su autoridad social y artística. En “Lady Tal” (1892) de Vernon Lee (1856-1935) se retrata a un escritor arrogante que, sin embargo, es engañado por su pupila, una rica e inteligente viuda. Del mismo modo, en “The Willing Muse” (1907) de Willa Cather (1873-1947) se relata la historia de un autor frustrado y torturado debido al éxito literario de su esposa.

Vemos cómo algunas escritoras finiseculares, con la representación en su obra de protagonistas con genio creativo, señalaron las numerosas y distintas causas que hacían que el desarrollo de la labor artística para una mujer fuera infinitamente más compleja que para sus compañeros de profesión. Todas estas dificultades llevaron a estas autoras a presentar a sus heroínas artistas más como mártires que como personajes de éxito. En mi opinión, sin embargo, el mensaje que difundieron no fue manifiestamente negativo, pues, a pesar del fracaso profesional y personal de sus protagonistas, casi siempre terminaban dejando una puerta abierta a la esperanza. Así, el suicidio de Edna y el abandono de la carrera artística de Beth, Rebekah y Hadria se pueden interpretar como un sacrificio para las próximas generaciones de mujeres y artistas. Existen varios ejemplos que pueden avalar esta hipótesis: Edna al lanzarse al mar no asume que va a morir sino, por el contrario, se siente una “new born creature” (Chopin 189), Rebekah consigue hacerse con las riendas de su hogar y educar a sus hijos con valores como la justicia y la solidaridad y Beth, al final, sueña con un árido desierto por el que camina sedienta y exhausta para divisar al fondo un oasis rodeado de palmeras. Asimismo, Hadria, a pesar de su fracaso, se muestra esperanzadora al cierre de la novela augurando un futuro mejor para las próximas generaciones de mujeres y, como prueba de que ello destacan sus últimas palabras: “I wish the moment of sisterhood is near ... Perhaps it is nearer than we can imagine. Women are quick learners, when they begin. But, oh, it is hard sometimes to make them begin!” (Caird 473)

Con la progresión de todas las heroínas analizadas en este artículo he querido constatar que muchas escritoras finiseculares vieron en el arte una vía para que sus personajes femeninos se desarrollaran personal y profesionalmente y también un medio para exigir una serie de demandas para las artistas de su sexo. Estas demandas consistían

en un conjunto de condiciones físicas y psicológicas que incluían un espacio propio, educación y medios económicos, pues sin ellos resultaba harto difícil, por mucho que fuera el talento de la artista, concebir una obra y, mucho menos, darla a conocer. Vemos, así, que estas escritoras, con la presentación de estas heroínas y de sus historias, ya habían adelantado la teoría que posteriormente Woolf plasmó de una forma magistral en *A Room of One's Own*.

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# **‘HER SISTER KINGDOM’: MARIA EDGEWORTH AND SCOTLAND<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

The presence of Scotland is a distinguishing trait in Maria Edgeworth’s *oeuvre*. As a child, she had contact with Scottish scientists and men of letters and later she was cherished by Scottish authors of the stature of Sir Walter Scott—who also cultivated the regional novel and paid homage to Edgeworth in *Waverley* (1814). An admirer of the Scottish landscape, the Anglo-Irish writer travelled to the Highlands and was acquainted with Scottish literature and the work of authoresses such as Susan Ferrier and Elizabeth Hamilton, with whom she corresponded at intervals. This paper attempts to offer an analysis of the importance of Scotland in Edgeworth’s life and fiction. For this purpose, we will revise criticism on this issue and examine the Edgeworths’ relationship with the Scottish Enlightenment and one of its main publications, *The Edinburgh Review*. The treatment Scottish characters deserve in Edgeworth’s stories will be taken into account as well.

**Key words:** cultural studies, Maria Edgeworth, Scotland, women’s literature, Anglo-Irish literature.

## **Resumen**

La presencia de Escocia es un rasgo característico en la obra de Maria Edgeworth. En su infancia, Edgeworth tuvo contacto con

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científicos y hombres de letras escoceses y después fue admirada por autores de la altura de Sir Walter Scott —quien también cultivó la novela regionalista y homenajeó a Edgeworth en *Waverley* (1814). Amante del paisaje escocés, la escritora angloirlandesa viajó a las “Highlands” y conocía la literatura y obra de autoras como Susan Ferrier y Elizabeth Hamilton, con la que mantuvo correspondencia. Este artículo pretende ofrecer un análisis de la importancia de Escocia en la vida y obra de Edgeworth. Con este propósito, se revisará la crítica anterior al respecto y se examinará la relación de los Edgeworth con la Ilustración Escocesa y una de sus principales publicaciones, *The Edinburgh Review*. El tratamiento que los personajes escoceses merecen en las historias de Edgeworth también se tendrá en cuenta.

**Palabras clave:** estudios culturales, Maria Edgeworth, Escocia, literatura de autoría femenina, literatura angloirlandesa.

## 1. Introduction: The Edgeworths and the Scottish Enlightenment

Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849) became a remarkable name in Anglo-Irish literature after the publication of *Castle Rackrent* (1800). Edgeworth had already collaborated with her father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, in educative volumes (*Practical Education* 1801), and had anonymously published *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1798). Apart from her prolific *oeuvre* for young people (*Moral Tales* 1801, *Popular Tales* 1804) and the success achieved with the two series of *Tales of Fashionable Life* (1809, 1812), the Anglo-Irish authoress cultivated other literary genres too: the domestic novel (*Belinda* 1801), the epistolary novel (*Leonora* 1805) or the theatre (*Comic Dramas in Three Acts* 1817).

One of the most debated topics in Edgeworth studies nowadays is the issue of national identity which usually overlaps with Edgeworth's views of woman and the nation (O'Gallchoir, *Rise, Women*) and concentrates on Edgeworth's Irish tales<sup>2</sup>. However, Edgeworth has to be seen in a broader context and researchers are lately considering surpassing the constructions of national identity as national character.

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2 The volumes edited by Kauffman and Fauske and Nash offer an excellent summary of Edgeworth Studies at present. For a reading of Edgeworth as a colonialist writer, see Dunne and Perera.

Thus, for Esther Wohlgenut, the Anglo-Irish authoress "proposes that national affinity exists within a larger, more universal understanding of belonging, one based in local attachment but guided by critical understanding" (5).

This paper is part of a larger project and embraces such an approach to study the relationship between Edgeworth and Scotland as more complex than it seems and far from being limited to her formative years or enlightened views. There are some reasons to turn our attention to Scotland. Marilyn Butler, one of Edgeworth's best-known scholars and the author of her biography, has repeatedly pointed out the links between Edgeworth and Scottish Enlightenment. Thus, in the "General Introduction" to Edgeworth's complete works, the authoress is related to Francis Hutcheson, David Hume and Tobias Smollet. For this reason, Butler regards Edgeworth as a participant in British culture: "She had so much in common intellectually with leading writers of the Scottish Enlightenment that she needs to be grouped with them as well as with the ungathered tradition of Irish writing after Swift" (VIII). For Butler, it is clear that the idea of hybrid culture sketched in *Essay on Irish Bulls* could have been taken from Scottish thinkers who devised strategies to preserve their cultural identity (170-1). Additionally, the Edgeworths reproduce the image of the Scots as good citizens and men of action, which is an invitation to join the British nation, and the device of the spectator or *deus absconditus* so frequent in Edgeworth's stories, was similarly taken from Scottish intellectuals (Butler xlv). Though the Edgeworths were not uniformly appreciated by Scottish periodicals, it is interesting to associate them with the defence of individual freedom characteristic of Scottish intellectuals and to highlight their strong attachment to Scottish men of letters to notice what is behind the image of the Scottish as they appear in Edgeworth's fiction.

## **2. Portraying Man As He Is: The Edgeworths and Sir Walter Scott.**

A Protestant family related to the whig ideology, the Edgeworths were especially attached to Scotland for different reasons. To begin with, Maria saw Scottish intellectuals were welcome in the family home in Longford. Besides, her father embraced the ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment, which refers to a cultural movement which took place

in the eighteenth century and was characterized by intense scientific creativity in Scotland. Fields like philosophy, political economy, engineering, architecture, medicine or geology flourished in Scottish universities; and the ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment spread around the world and contributed to the development of new countries, such as the United States. The already existing empiricist tradition became enriched with the insistence on human reason and the belief in positive change if human beings are guided by reason. According to the Scottish Enlightenment, the benefits of this policy would help society as a whole.<sup>3</sup>

Maria and her father are clearly indebted to Adam Smith and a group of Scottish writers including James Anderson, Lord Kames, William Ogilvie and Dugald Stewart whose political disquisitions inspired *Practical Education* (1796). Mitzi Myers has stressed that *Harry and Lucy Concluded* (1825) functioned as a bridge between adolescents and Thomas Reid's *Inquiry into the Human Mind, on the Principles of Common Sense* (1764) (116), and Fraser Easton maintains that, in her Irish tales, Edgeworth adapted Adam Smith's philosophy and believed in the amelioration of the country based in good economic management (10).

Edgeworth visited Edinburgh in 1823 with the Socialist thinker Robert Owen and they went to his school in Lanark. Dugald Stewart, who appears in "Forrester" (*Moral Tales* 1801) as Dr. Campbell, was Edgeworth's host in May 1823, and his wife regularly exchanged letters with Edgeworth. Other friends in Edinburgh were Dr. Gregory, the mathematician John Playfair, the preacher Archibald Alison and the editor John Gibson Lockhart. However, it was her friendship with Walter Scott that made her feel definitely attached to Scotland. Edgeworth spent some days with the Scotts in Abbotsford the year she met Francis Jeffrey, a visit the Scotts would return in 1825 (Butler 418). Scott mentions Edgeworth in the postface to *Waverley* (1814), where the author explained that his goal was to describe types:

... not by a caricatured and exaggerated use of the national dialect, but by their habits, manners and feelings; so as in some distant degree to emulate the admirable Irish portraits drawn

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<sup>3</sup> For further information, see Broadie's "Introduction" (1- 35), Berry (1-21) and Allan (3-22).

by Miss Edgeworth, so different from the Teagues and 'dear joys' who so long, with the most perfect family resemblance to each other, occupied the drama and the novel (qtd. Butler 1972: 394).

Ideologically, Edgeworth was a «whig » and defended enlightened principles while Scott was a « tory » who embraced Romanticism, but they admired each other. Therefore, one of the stories in *Tales of Fashionable Life* (1812), *The Absentee*, served as a model for Scott's *oeuvre*: "Scott follows Maria in making the community his central character [...] there is an almost pedantic interest in documentation for real life. A profusion of detail—facts about customs, dress, above all idioms of speech—gives an entire new richness to the portrait of society" (Butler, *Maria* 395-6). Both Scott and Edgeworth characterize the national novel in a similar way.<sup>4</sup> He had a conciliatory desire in mind, and Edgeworth referred to him:

Without being so presumptuous as to hope to emulate the rich humour, pathetic tenderness and admirable tact, which pervade the works of my accomplished friend, I felt that something might be attempted for my own country, of the same kind that which Miss Edgeworth so fortunately achieved for Ireland –something which might introduce her natives to those of her sister kingdom, in a more favourable light that they had been placed hitherto, and then to procure sympathy for their virtues, and indulgence for their foibles (qtd. in Butler, *Maria* 396).

According to Kit Kincade, Edgeworth made several contributions to Scott: the idiom, the separate narrator to tell a tale frame with the authorial voice, the use of dialect, the introduction of a glossary incorporating native folklore, and especially the fact that both novelists sought to establish their countries as distinctive cultural entities from England (257-267). Conversely, Scott had some influence on Edgeworth, who probably learnt from him to repress her cerebral comments and explicit didacticism (Butler, *Maria* 446). In 1834, Scott wanted Edgeworth to explain 'why Pat, who gets forward so well in other countries, is so miserable in *his* own' (qtd. in Butler, *Maria* 452-3;

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<sup>4</sup> For Butler, Edgeworth and Scott shared a sincere respect for society as the natural product of an evolutionary growth, and, for this reason, they employ a colourless hero who has a series of adventures and finds carefully distinguished people (1972: 486-7).

14 February 1834), which Edgeworth considered a difficult question. He was insisting on a point he had already hinted at in May 1827:

You have already shewn [sic] us the kindness talent and disinterested fidelity of the lower orders in Ireland. Do a little more and shew [sic] us how the evils which prevent them rising in the scale of society possessed as they are of so much that is amiable and excellent. Why is that the poor Irish should fill all the hard and laborious duties not only in England but now even in Scotland for within this ten years the Irish have occupied almost all the ballast-heaving hod-carrying canal-digging kind of work at which the inhabitants will not work so cheap because they must observe certain decencies of apparel and possess some comfort in their mode of living. Pat is so good a nag that I cannot help thinking *you* would be able to furnish some bridle [sic] which would suit him and admit his being ridden with a light hand with all deference to scientific researches into the philosophy of mechanical pursuits I think you could do so much for us in shewing [sic] us how to mend the worst part of our British machine (Butler and Butler 291).

Concerning Edgeworth, in July 1831, Maria commented that Fanny Wilson agreed with Scott: “that mixing with all shorts of society is most beneficial to a writer and that materials are often found where least expected” (Colvin: 565). In *Helen* (1834), Edgeworth’s last novel, she praises Scott again:

In his magic there is no dealing with unlawful means. To work his end, there is never aid from any one of the bad passions of our nature. In his writings there is no private scandal – no personal satire, no bribe to human frailty – no libel upon human nature. And among the lonely, the sad, and the suffering, how has the medicine to repose the disturbed mind, or elevated the dejected spirit! – perhaps fanned to a flame the unquenched spark, in souls not wholly lost to virtue. His morality is not in purple patches, ostentatiously obtrusive, but woven in through the very texture of the stuff. He paints man as he is, with all his faults, but with his redeeming virtues – the world as it goes, with all its compensating good and evil, yet making each man better contented with his lot. Without our well knowing how, the whole tone of our minds is raised – for, thinking nobly of our kind, he makes us think more nobly of ourselves (Edgeworth 156, vol. I).

If we compare her with other Scottish authors, Butler remarks that Edgeworth was hardly interested in the topics of Irish and Scottish

writers. It seems that Elizabeth Hamilton wrote to Edgeworth though their letters had not been preserved, and that the latter enjoyed Susan Ferrier's *Marriage* (1818) and *The Inheritance* (1824), but Edgeworth was particularly concerned with characters and feelings. The resemblance was sometimes so strong that Susan Ferrier has been called "Maria Edgeworth's Scottish version" because hers are novels of manners mixing Scottish subjects "with a didacticism which is however tinged by malicious humour and satire" (MacCarthy: 229). Edgeworth also admired works which tried to inculcate love for industry in the working classes. For instance, both Elizabeth Hamilton's *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800) and *The Cottagers of Glenburnie* (1808) imitated her stories (Butler, *Maria* 198-9) by portraying ignorance and rural misery and introducing Scottish vernacular.

### 3. Edgeworth in Scottish periodicals.

*The Edinburgh Review* (1802-1929), the most popular periodical of the age and rival to London-based *The Quarterly Review*, helped to expand the Edgeworths' first works. It was a specialized publication which included few articles and mainly dealt with science, moral philosophy, political economy, foreign affairs and travelling. With an academic tone and male-oriented tendency, *The Edinburgh Review* neither included nor reviewed classical literature, at the same time that mocked ancient and popular culture and appreciated Scottish and Utilitarian authors. Its first editors were Scotchmen: Francis Jeffrey and Henry Brougham (both lawyers) and Sydney Smith (clergyman), and contributions used to come from Scottish universities.

Marked by its religious scepticism and its defence of France, this journal practically reviewed Edgeworth's whole production. Francis Jeffrey was so surprised by the suffering of humble people in *The Dun* that he made no comment about it (Edgeworth, *Ennui* 383). For him, Lord Glenthorn was "a fine picture of *ennui*", and *Almeria* "an instructive representation of the miseries of fashion" (Edgeworth, *Ennui* 378). *Ennui* had a very positive reception in literary magazines and *The Edinburgh Review* considered it the most entertaining narrative in *Tales of Fashionable Life*:

... a story, more rich in character, incident and reflection, than any English narrative with which we are acquainted: — as

rapid and various as the best tales of Voltaire and as full of practical good sense and moral pathetic as any of the other tales of Maria Edgeworth. The Irish characters are imitable; —not the coarse caricatures of modern playwrights— but drawn with a spirit, a delicacy, and a precision, to which we do not know if there be any parallel among national delineations (Jeffrey, *First* 380).<sup>5</sup>

Jeffrey did not consider Edgeworth an Irish novelist “but seems to us more qualified than most others to promote the knowledge and love of mankind” (*Second* 126). Not only did the main editor dismiss the vision of Edgeworth as pedantic and presumptuous and explained that she preferred to instruct (Jeffrey, *Second* 103), but he also understood that the errors of the high classes in her stories are the same as other classes and to expose them was correct (Jeffrey, *Second* 101). According to Jeffrey’s review, *Ormond* aimed “to show how a kind temper, and natural acuteness and honesty will carry a man through many difficulties, supply the want of many external advantages, and enable their possessor to derive instruction from all sorts of occurrences” (*Harrington* 404).

From *Patronage* onwards, this attitude changed. Plot details were criticized and it was even doubted that Edgeworth had composed the diplomatic subplot in the novel. Smith attacked the Anglo-Irish authoress for not condemning divorce and for having introduced a ball as provocative as waltz (434). Complaints continued when Maria had to finish alone *Memoirs of Richard Lovell Edgeworth* (1820). On the one hand, the information about Richard Lovell’s marriages, education and anecdotes in Oxford was considered superfluous (Jeffrey, *Memoirs* 122, 125-31), together with the Edgeworths’ life since they arrived in Ireland in the seventeenth century (123-4). On the other hand, Jeffrey attacked the family’s educational method for its impracticability and because it turned children “presumptuous, self-sufficient and pragmatical” (148). Surprisingly, one of the Edgeworth’s few supporters on that occasion was the Scottish playwright Joanna Baillie, who stated “I have taken a goodwill to him in spite of fashion, and maintain that if he would just

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<sup>5</sup> Butler comments that both Edgeworth’s and Scott’s works easily fit *The Edinburgh Review* and *The Quarterly Review: Ennui* (1809) and *The Absentee* (1812) “mirror the qualities and contents of higher journalism [...] they are composed in vividly accurately observed scenes that seem to invite selection as quotations [...] Both novelists echo the quarterlies commitment to social order and good government” (1993: 140).



speak one half of what he speaks he would be a very agreeable man" (qtd. in Butler: 230, note 3).

#### 4. "One experiment was not conclusive against a whole nation"

In Edgeworth's first production, the image of Scottish women is not very positive and contrasts with the Irish background. *Castle Rackrent*—which was the only work not supervised by Maria's father in his lifetime—focuses on the decay of a family saga through several generations, until the Rackrent estate is finally in Jason Quirk's hands. There is no conjugal happiness in any of the Rackrent unions<sup>6</sup>, and one of the landlords, Sir Murtagh, marries a woman who is a tough dealer in legal matters. Her stinginess is confirmed by her surname Skinflint. The Scotchwoman is rigorous at lent in accordance with her Puritanism and greed, and she funds a school for poor children who spin free for her. Proud of her merit, she obtains lots of gifts. Sir Murtagh married for money, preferring her to a young woman, and according to Thady: "she made him the best of wives, being a very notable stirring woman, and looking close to everything. But I always suspected she had Scotch blood in her veins; anything else I could have looked over in her, from a regard to the family" (Edgeworth, *Castle* 9-10). The same as the Jewess Jessica, the Scotchwoman does not like the country, and, after his husband's death, she returns to England to live on "her income and jewels" (Edgeworth, *Castle* 21). If she is punished, it is due to her negative attitude, which surpasses her mere filiation to Scottish culture.

At a more specific level, Edgeworth includes several examples of Scottish discourse. "Angelina, or L'Amie Inconnue" (*Moral Tales*) is a story in the tradition of Anti-romance ridiculing sensibility and escapist literature. In this narrative, the fourteen-year-old orphan Angelina Warwick becomes the ward of an irresponsible fashionable woman, Lady Diana Chillingworth, and, feeling disappointed by her new environment, Angelina seeks solace in literature. She corresponds with "Araminta", the *nom de guerre* of the writer Miss Hodges, and finally goes to Wales to meet her. On this journey, she stops in Bristol where she mixes with Scottish, Welsh and French characters in a Quixotic

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<sup>6</sup> For Mary Jean Corbett, the Rackrents "themselves [are] treated as the site and medium for property exchange between men, the ladies Rackrent fetishize what they accumulate, seeing self-interest as the limit of their interest" (2000: 48).



atmosphere. However, language erases cultural differences because it is the “unaffected language of feeling and benevolence” (Edgeworth *Moral*: 253), and Clara Hope is compassionate of the protagonist’s confusion: “gif over, an ye have any gude nature —gif over your whispering and laughing [...] ken ye not ye make her so bashful, she’d fain hide her face wi’ her twa hands” (Edgeworth *Moral*: 250).<sup>7</sup>

Another tale for young people, “Forgive and Forget” (*Popular Tales*), features Mr. Oakley, who has prejudices against the Scottish and especially against Mr. Grant, Maurice’s liberal-minded father because, apart from his neighbour, he is an excellent gardener who cultivates wonderful raspberries. After some quarrels, Maurice sends some strawberries seeds and the book explaining how to cultivate them, but Mr. Oakley destroys everything. The families are reconciled again when they see that a misunderstanding with a Welsh maid provoked the first quarrel.

If we turn to another literary genre, the Scottish appear in two works in *Comic Dramas* (1817). “Love and Law” deals with two families, the Scottish M’Brides and the Irish Catholics Rooneys, and with the love story between Honor M’Bride and Randal Rooney. The protagonist couple finally marries and the matriarch Catty Rooney rectifies her words when she discovers that Honor’s reputation has been unfairly slandered: “here, publicly, as I traduced you, ax your pardon before his honor, and your father –and your brother– and before Randal – and before my faction and his” (Edgeworth, *Comic* 128). However, the stubborn Catty deprecates against the Scottish:

*Catty*. Cromwelliams at the best.-Mac Brides! *Macks*-Scotch! –not Irish native-at-all-at-all.-People of yesterday, *graziers* and *mushrooms*–(mushrooms) –which tho’ they’ve made the money, can’t buy the blood. My anshestors sat on a throne, when the M’Brides had only their *hunkers* to sit upon; and if I *walk* now when they ride, they can’t look down upon me-for every body knows who I am– and what they are (Edgeworth, *Comic* 45-6).

In the same volume, “The Rose, Thistle and Shamrock” revolves around a new inn finally granted to an Englishman who marries

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<sup>7</sup> In this story, the narrator has to explain the meaning of some expressions: “laird” (Edgeworth 1969: 2), “court” (Edgeworth 1969: 6), “lass” (Edgeworth 1969: 14), “buskin” (Edgeworth 1969: 30), “goff” (Edgeworth 1969: 45).

an Irishwoman, and it contains a Scottish character. Andrew Hope constantly reminds his "gude Kate" in Scotland and feels grateful to the Irish Kellys for having helped his family years ago. Now he wants to offer a post as a bugle-boy to Owen: "[...] gif your brother here gangs with me, he shall find a brother's care through life, fr'a me" (Edgeworth, *Comic* 335). Though Hope has a secondary role, when Owen wants to go to the army, Hope tells him to make a sensible choice:

Mr. H. The gude mother must wish above all things here below, the weal and advancement, and the honor of her bairns; and she would not let the son be tied to her apron-strings, for any use of profit to herself, but ever wish him to do the best in life for his sel' (337).

Both Forrester in *Moral Tales* and Orlandino in Edgeworth's last narrative are in contact with Scotland through his tutors. The former is sent to Edinburg to reside with his appointed guardian, Dr. Campbell, a rational parent modelled after Richard Lovell. *Orlandino* features Dr. Carlton as a Scotchman to whom Orlandino feels grateful, since the boy realizes that he has become a new man willing to work and learn things:

I shall be able to support my mother in ease and comfort all the days of her life, and I shall be myself with one of the ablest and most benevolent of men; and always learning, always acquiring new *knowledge*, and always engaged in pursuits the most ennobling and delightful (*Orlandino* 129-30).

Carlton gives Orlandino some money and also time to study and learn. After cultivating Orlandino's intellect, the boy is finally considered an independent man with good character (163). Then Carlton wants to take Orlandino to Scotland, since both can work as "sleeping" and "waking partners" according to Walter's uncle: "The mature prudence of the Scotch philosopher he saw would be well adapted and useful to guide the hand-over-impetuosity of this Irish youth" (165).

Earlier in her career, Edgeworth had introduced a Scotchman in the series *Tales of Fashionable Life* (1809-1812). *Ennui* deals with the earl of Glenthorpe, an indolent heir who discovers he is really a commoner changed at birth with the real heir, Christy O'Donoghue, a humble Irishman. When Glenthorpe visits his Irish estates, he meets M'Leod, a trustworthy agent contrasting with Mr. Hardcastle. Mr. M'Leod appears as a man who speaks with

deliberate distinctness, in an accent slightly Scots; and, in speaking, he made no use of gesticulation, but held himself surprisingly still. No part of him but his eyes moved, and they had an expression of slow, but determined good sense. He was sparing of his words; but the few that he used said so much, and went directly to the point [...] He seemed to be cold and upright in his mind as in his body (Edgeworth, *Ennui* 254).

Glenthorpe admits his prejudices against the Scotch: "I had a notion that all Scotchmen were crafty; therefore I concluded that his blunt manner was assumed, and his plain-dealing but a more refined species of policy" (Edgeworth, *Ennui* 255). Nevertheless, once that accounts are submitted to Glenthorpe, the protagonist discovers that M'Leod "could be both an agent and a honest man", and is suspicious he might cheat him out of power (Edgeworth, *Ennui* 257). M'Leod contrasts with Lady Ormsby's agent, who hardly reads and always speaks without thinking carefully. He believes in gradual improvement through education and his characteristic expression is "I doubt". All in all, M'Leod is an enlightened man: not only does he make reference to Adam Smith's *The Wealth of the Nations* (1776), but also explains that, if one wants to educate the Irish, the main point is "to teach men to see clearly and to follow steadily their interests" (Edgeworth, *Ennui* 268). Relying on education as the means to make people independent, M'Leod maintains that you cannot apply a general principle to a country: "One experiment was not conclusive against a whole nation" (Edgeworth, *Ennui* 269). Thanks to this philosophy, he creates "a paradise amid the wilds" (Edgeworth: 291) and Glenthorn feels as if he were in England. M'Leod voices his policy towards Ireland:

We took time and had patience. We began by setting them the example of some very slight improvements, and then, lured on by the sight of success, they could make similar trials themselves. My wife and I went among them, and talked to them in their cottages, and took an interest in their concerns, and did not want to have everything in our own way; and when they say that, they began to consider which way was best; so by degrees we led where we could have not driven; and raised in them, by little and little, a taste for conveniences and comfort (Edgeworth, *Ennui* 291).

M'Leod insists a lot on the importance of early education: "There is something very important and that is beginning with the children, a race of our own training has now grown up, and they go on in the

way they were taught, and prosper to our hearts content, and what is still better, to their hearts' content" (Edgeworth, *Ennui* 292). At his school, there is no difference between Protestants and Catholics (292). During a general election, Glenthorn perceives that M'Leod has no second intentions and trusts him unconditionally (328). He also warns him there will be an uprising soon (337). When Glenthorn discovers his true identity, M'Leod treats him respectfully and in low voice says to him: "I cannot but esteem and admire the man who has acted so nobly as you have done" (368). Glenthorn sees authenticity in his words and energy in his friendship (368). Though he returns to Scotland, he sends presents from time to time, and he unveils who Christy is during one of his visits (393-4).

Another honest agent appears in *The Absentee* bearing the suggestive name of Mr. Burke. He is introduced by the landlord in Colambre as "the man that will encourage his improving tenant; and show no favour or affection, but justice, which comes even to all, and does best for all in the long run" (Edgeworth *Castle*: 165). The school he manages is an example of good management too: "neither too much nor too little has been attempted; there was neither too much interference nor too little attention. Nothing for exhibition; care to teach well, without any vain attempt to teach in a wonderful short time" (Edgeworth: 166), where Catholics and Protestant are sitting side by side.

## 5. Conclusion

Edgeworth became immersed in the debate about the role of Scotland in nineteenth-century Britain at the same time that she understood Scotland as part of a larger Union, to which Ireland must also belong. A close reading of Edgeworth's characters reveals that, except for a limited number of cases, Edgeworth praised the Scottish character and renders it positively in her *oeuvre*. National affiliation, which is second to the personal qualities and values upheld by Scottish Enlightenment (gratefulness, kindness, an enterprising mind and the will to improve society through learning), is emphasized while backwardness and prejudice are systematically rejected. Edgeworth was criticized in Scottish journals for her indeterminacy –which has curiously attracted modern critics– and profusion of personal details. The Anglo-Irish authoress was more concerned with deeper issues than

with exotic details and, if she used the Scottish as stereotypes, it was precisely to make readers participate in a rethinking of cultural images and to attack wrong attitudes in consonance with her enlightened spirit.

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# **‘TRAIDORAS A LA RAZA’: MALINCHES CHICANAS**

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## **Resumen**

La imagen de La Malinche ha pasado de representar la madre de una raza mestiza a ser una tradora a ojos de mexicanos y chicanos. Una acusación similar se lanzó contra la primera escritora chicana, Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton, quien al igual que La Malinche tres siglos antes actuó como vínculo entre dos civilizaciones, idiomas y religiones. El matrimonio entre la escritora Maria Amparo Ruiz y el General Burton supuso la unión entre los ‘californios’ mexicanos y los nuevos invasores, los yanquis. Al igual que La Malinche, ella se integró en la cultura colonial a través de su matrimonio justo tras la colonización. Resulta razonable decir que ambas mujeres actuaron como puentes entre dos culturas, intérpretes dentro de una frontera semiosférica lotmaniana y madres del mestizaje. Pero el papel de Ruiz de Burton en el periodo inmediatamente posterior a la colonización del suroeste sólo ha comenzado a ser explorado con cierta profundidad desde hace dos décadas. Las escritoras chicanas contemporáneas intentan reapropiarse de la imagen de La Malinche para crear nuevos roles para las mujeres chicanas. Sin embargo, tienen su propia historia de La Malinche desde finales del siglo diecinueve, lo que implica estudiar el papel socio-histórico de las chicanas. La investigación chicana contemporánea, en su intento por ofrecer interpretaciones feministas alternativas de este mito, excluye las narrativas mexicano-americanas de finales del diecinueve. En este artículo intentaremos retextualizar este mito tradicional para explicar mejor la especificidad de la colonización chicana durante la segunda mitad del siglo diecinueve.

**Palabras clave:** La Malinche, lecturas feministas, mexicano-americano, *mestizaje*, Ruiz de Burton.



## ‘TRAIDORAS A LA RAZA’: CHICANA MALINCHES

### Abstract

The image of La Malinche has changed from her being the mother of a mestizo race to a traitor in the eyes of both Mexicans and Chicanos. A similar accusation was directed at the first Chicana writer, Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton, who like La Malinche three centuries before, was a link between two civilisations, languages and religions. The marriage between the writer Maria Amparo Ruiz and General Burton meant a union between the Mexican “californios” and the new invaders, the Yankees. Like La Malinche, she married into the colonial culture immediately after the colonisation. It is reasonable to say that both women served as a bridge between two cultures, interpreters in a Lotmanian semioespheric border space and mothers of miscegenation. Yet Ruiz de Burton’s role in the period right after the Anglo-American colonisation of the Southwest has only received fresh consideration in the last two decades. Contemporary Chicana writers try to reclaim the image of La Malinche to create new roles for Chicana women. Yet they have their own ‘La Malinche’ story from the end of the 19th century – and this warrants analysis with respect to the socio-historical role of Chicanas. Contemporary Chicano/a research on the image of ‘La Malinche’, attempting to offer alternative feminist interpretations of this myth, excludes the Mexican-American narratives of the late 19th century. In this paper, we will try to retextualise this traditional myth to better explain the specifics of Chicana colonisation during the second half of 1800s.

**Keywords:** La Malinche, feminist readings, Mexican-American, miscegenation, *mestizaje*, Ruiz de Burton.

La relación en el siglo dieciséis entre mujeres indígenas y hombres españoles se repite en aquella que existe entre el hombre anglo-americano y la mujer mexicano-americana del siglo diecinueve. Es decir, el colonialismo español del siglo dieciséis se subsume bajo aquel colonialismo que el pueblo chicano sufre dentro de los Estados Unidos tras la guerra entre este mismo país y México y el consiguiente Tratado de Guadalupe-Hidalgo en 1848. La situación de la chicana se

vio agravada tras 1848 cuando ya no sólo sufre una opresión en razón de su género sino también de su raza. Es en este contexto en el que encontramos el mito de La Malinche, considerado simbólicamente como la personificación de la violencia cometida contra el pueblo indígena durante la Conquista de México (1519-1521) y, en particular, de las mujeres violadas que tuvieron descendencia. Como podemos observar en la siguiente cita de su obra seminal *Chicano Manifesto*, Armando Rendón alude a esta figura confiriéndole un significado totalmente negativo:

We Chicanos have our share of malinches, which is what we call traitors to la raza who are of la raza, after the example of an Aztec woman of that name who became Cortez' concubine under the name of Doña Marina, and served him also as an interpreter and informer against her own people. The Malinches are worse characters and more dangerous than the Tío Tacos, the Chicanismo euphemism for an Uncle Tom ... In the service of the gringo, Malinches attack their own brothers, betray our dignity and manhood, cause jealousies and misunderstandings among us, and actually seek to retard the advance of the Chicanos, if it benefits themselves while the gringo watches. (Rendón 97)

De ese modo, La Malinche viene a ser todo aquello que traiciona y deshonra la raza chicana. Sin embargo, Rendón apunta que estas “traidoras” a la raza se diferencian de los angloamericanos en el hecho de que no sólo traicionan a su misma comunidad (la chicana), sino que al mismo tiempo favorecen mediante este proceso al gringo. Así pues, La Malinche es destructiva para los chicanos, un obstáculo para el desarrollo de dicha comunidad en los Estados Unidos. Rendón, que sigue la tradición establecida por escritores mexicanos como Paz y Fuentes en la interpretación negativa de La Malinche, contextualizando, al mismo tiempo, esta negatividad dentro del movimiento chicano, no es el primero en ofrecer tal tipo de interpretación sobre la figura en discusión.

El objetivo del presente artículo es por un lado, proporcionar una aproximación histórico-literaria a las diversas representaciones e interpretaciones que se han hecho de la Malinche a lo largo de los siglos hasta el presente, para de este modo poder explicar el rechazo inicial, durante los años del llamado Renacimiento Chicano de las Letras, a incluir dentro del embrionario “canon” de la literatura chicana

la producción literaria de una serie de escritoras mexicano-americanas que ya desde finales del siglo diecinueve publican novelas y relatos cortos en Estados Unidos. Como intentaremos demostrar, tal rechazo es consecuencia de la existencia de un discurso dominante homocéntrico chicano que asume una posición malinchista a la hora de considerar la producción de estas primeras escritoras chicanas – María Amparo Ruiz de Burton y Cristina Mena – quienes, casadas con el colonizador anglo y al igual que hiciera la Malinche de la colonización española siglos atrás, sirven de puente entre dos culturas – la anglo y la mexicana – recientemente enfrentadas como consecuencia de la colonización angloamericana tras 1848.

Desde el siglo dieciséis hasta el siglo veinte, encontramos una serie de representaciones de La Malinche codificada en diversos textos narrativos. Dentro de ese contexto, la Malinche es un palimpsesto de la identidad cultural mexicana/chicana en el sentido de que ha ido recibiendo distintos significados a lo largo de la historia, significados que se han ido acumulando en forma de capas. Al mismo tiempo, las chicanas contemporáneas han comenzado a reformar —a partir de las últimas dos décadas del siglo 20— el mito de La Malinche a través de una serie de relecturas, rehistorizaciones y reinterpretaciones con el objetivo de situarla en un plano sociopolítico que se encuentre liberado de distorsiones masculinas. Las escritoras chicanas actúan ante las representaciones cosificadas que se han proporcionado de La Malinche, ya que consideran dichas representaciones un ataque directo hacia la mujer en un intento patriarcalista de mantener la subordinación y el tratamiento de la mujer como mero objeto sexual, ser pasivo y moralmente inferior. Es necesario, no obstante, un estudio exhaustivo de las mujeres mexicano-americanas del siglo diecinueve, pues no es suficiente examinar desde la perspectiva feminista la compleja y misteriosa figura de La Malinche del siglo dieciséis para poder de ese modo rehistorizar y transformar el mito. De por sí, en los ensayos de las chicanas contemporáneas sobre La Malinche existe un silencio respecto al siglo diecinueve. Si bien es cierto que debemos tener en cuenta la condición de la mujer azteca y la de la mujer durante la Conquista y Colonia española, también es cierto que las escritoras chicanas contemporáneas, en un intento por reformar la imagen de La Malinche, para, de este modo crear roles nuevos para la mujer, parten

del mito mexicano tradicional ignorando que es precisamente en el siglo diecinueve, a raíz del Tratado de Guadalupe-Hidalgo, cuando debemos hablar del papel socio-histórico de la mujer chicana y del resurgir del mito, en este caso propiamente chicano, de La Malinche. En la investigación actual sobre esta figura existe un gran vacío histórico y es imperativa la rehistorización de ese mito tradicional para mejor entender la particularidad de la colonización de la chicana.

En el siglo diecinueve México no sólo recobra su independencia, sino que al mismo tiempo el interés por los códigos aumenta en varios países europeos y en Estados Unidos, dando lugar de forma paralela a un reconocimiento del valor de los mismos. Es a partir de finales de este siglo, en gran parte debido a los movimientos nacionalistas mexicanos, cuando comienzan a surgir un serie de textos en los que aparece por primera vez el tema de la Conquista española desde el punto de vista del colonizado el cual, a partir de esa época, comienza a ser más autoconsciente de su propio pasado y a dejar de tener en cuenta ese jurado invisible, si bien siempre presente, que es el discurso hegemónico eurocéntrico. Será entonces cuando México emprenderá el estudio de tales obras culturales no ya bajo la influencia del occidental sino de su legítimo dueño azteca, maya u otro.

Como figura humana, La Malinche nos ha llegado llena de contradicciones. Sus orígenes, oscuros, han ido transmitiéndose a través de una serie de relatos e historias donde muchas veces es casi imposible distinguir lo real de lo ficticio. Se la ha acusado de traicionar a los de su raza siendo de ese modo vilipendiada, incomprendida, vejada y escarnecida no sólo por escritores sino también por historiadores. Es más, su mismo nombre, esto es, Malinche (o Malintzin) resulta ser una corrupción del nombre azteca originario: Malinalli Tenépal<sup>1</sup>. Será tres siglos más tarde con los movimientos nacionalistas y la definitiva independencia de México en 1821, cuando Malinalli Tenépal pase a ser La Malinche traidora de un pueblo y de ahí surja el adjetivo calificativo *malinchista*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Aun hoy día existen discrepancias entre la crítica chicana en cuanto al origen del nombre de La Malinche.

<sup>2</sup> *Malinchista* es un concepto asumido y asimilado por Octavio Paz en “Los hijos de La Malinche”, ensayo perteneciente a la obra *El laberinto de la soledad* (59-80) que trata de la identidad mexicana tras la revolución de 1910.

Es decir, desde la primera representación de La Malinche después de la Independencia, en 1826, hasta los llamados “hijos de La Malinche” acuñados por Octavio Paz en 1950, y otras tantas creaciones de escritores chicanos contemporáneos (Armando Rendón entre otros) la trayectoria mítica, ‘literaria’, es sumamente negativa por su interpretación patriarcalmente nacionalista. Tras la independencia de México, La Malinche pierde el título de “doña” y se asocia de ese modo con la infame Chingada: además de una traductora, es la traidora. Es decir, el nacionalismo mexicano exagerará todo lo negativo, ignorando lo positivo, del mito de La Malinche.

La Malinche debe ser considerada como una de tantas voces excluidas por el discurso dominante de la literatura eurocéntrica patriarcal, las cuales forman parte de la cultura del silencio. Por otro lado, como Gayatri Spivak comenta, el neo-colonialismo fabrica sus aliados proponiendo un nuevo modo de participar en el centro (Spivak 36). De ese modo, La Malinche podría ser considerada como un mito tanto de los márgenes como del centro, una esclava y una gran señora. En “La Malinche y el primer mundo”, Jean Franco argumenta el hecho de que en el siglo dieciséis la participación en el centro se sellaba por medio de una serie de “contratos” los cuales daban a La Malinche carta de inclusión: 1) el bautismo que marca su inclusión en la Iglesia (proporcionándole un nuevo nombre, esto es, Doña Marina),<sup>3</sup> 2) la maternidad que la hace un sujeto legal y 3) el contrato de matrimonio con Jaramillo, que la convierte también en sujeto legal (Franco 179). Como hemos argumentado previamente, se destaca el hecho de que la literatura colonial se nutre de toda una serie de motivos e imágenes tradicionales europeas haciendo prácticamente imposible la aparición de una narrativa desde el punto de vista indígena. Como Herrén enfatiza: “Marina [Malinalli Tenépal] desaparece silenciosamente y el silencio la cubre a lo largo de todo el período colonial: nadie se acuerda de ella, con la excepción de algunos historiadores de la Conquista y de sus propios descendientes” (Herrén 158).

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<sup>3</sup> La Malinche fue bautizada tras ser entregada como obsequio de Cortés a Hernández de Portocarrero. Ricardo Herrén comenta al respecto: “La joven de mirada vivaz que pasó al lecho del capitán Hernández de Portocarrero recibió un nuevo nombre por bautismo y empezó a llamarse desde entonces Marina, como la virgen gallega de Orense martirizada junto a sus siete hermanos” (Herrén 26).

La crítica coincide en destacar el hecho de que Doña Marina o Malintzin desaparece durante el período colonial. Deliah Storm explica cómo tan sólo existe una novela, *Noticias históricas de la Nueva España*, de 1589, escrita por Suárez de Peralta, en la cual se nos proporciona una descripción de La Malinche como una mujer bastante apasionada.<sup>4</sup> Por otro lado, encontramos una serie de relatos diversos sobre Malintzin que la presentan europeizada (como muestran los Códices de Cuatlancingo y Aperreamiento), como una rubia traductora (en las pinturas de Durán), o como una reina salvaje (Storm 37).

Es difícil encontrar las causas del oscurecimiento y olvido de los personajes que vivieron la Conquista española. El hecho imperialista pasó casi inadvertido durante los tres siglos que duró el período colonial. En *La Malinche in Mexican Literature: From History to Myth*, Sandra Messinger Cypess comenta al respecto:

The discovery and colonization of the New World, with its scope and grandeur as well as pathos, served as a source of literary inspiration to many European writers. Ironically, as José Sánchez observes, aside from the chroniclers Spain did not incorporate the American scene into its literature in any serious way, despite the fact that Spanish literature enjoyed a “golden age” (Siglo de Oro) following the discovery and exploration of America. (Messinger 38)

Las causas de tal desaparición o exclusión del tema americano en la literatura española deben encontrarse, según Ricardo Herrén, en la ignorancia y desprecio de la “Castilla machadiana” hacia todo lo sucedido al otro lado del charco. Sin embargo, la exclusión de La Malinche como figura más que fundamental dentro de la Conquista de México se debió, y desgraciadamente aún se debe, a las concepciones misóginas y sexistas de la mujer a lo largo de la historia. Como sabemos, la cultura patriarcal dirige la identidad de género y excluye a la mujer de la cultura masculina. Es precisamente debido a la existencia de las relaciones de género que encontramos a lo largo de la historia relaciones de dominación que agrandan al hombre a expensas del empequeñecimiento de la mujer. En la obra *Malinche: drama de la*

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<sup>4</sup> Para una relación más detallada de la aparición de la figura de La Malinche en la literatura pre-colonial anglo-americana, consúltese la tesis doctoral de Deliah Storm: “Retextualized Transculturations: The Emergence of La Malinche as Figure in Chicana Literature”.

*conquista (en México)*, Ramón F. Vásquez pone en boca de Malinche: “Poco soy, una mujer” (Vásquez 112). Es precisamente debido a su pertenencia a la categoría *mujer* que La Malinche, al igual que el resto de las mujeres en el período independentista, se verá oprimida, marginada y situada a nivel de objeto sexual dentro de los límites falocéntricos impuestos por la sociedad masculina. Como Herrén expone:

La india no hace ninguna referencia a sus méritos personales, a su posición como intérprete, a que forma parte de la élite de los conquistadores y nuevos amos del imperio, a sus riquezas materiales. Al contrario: desecha cualquier gloria que podría darle el poder a cambio de la posibilidad de servir a tan importantes amos. No se atreve a ser. (Herrén 149)

Debido a la existencia de un número bastante reducido de obras producidas durante el México colonial, el tema de la Conquista española no se restablece definitivamente hasta la independencia de México a principios del siglo diecinueve. Es en ese momento cuando comienzan a surgir novelas en las cuales comenzará a cuestionarse el comportamiento de Malintzin o Doña Marina. De hecho, con la publicación de la novela anónima de 1826, *Xicoténcatl*,<sup>5</sup> surge el tema de la traición de La Malinche y el rechazo de lo español con el único objetivo de romantizar un pasado pre-hispánico ignorado o prohibido hasta esa época. A pesar de ser la primera novela histórica del romanticismo latinoamericano que trata el tema de la Conquista de México, *Xicoténcatl* ha recibido poca atención de la crítica latinoamericana y chicana.<sup>6</sup> Sin embargo, esa novela destaca por ser la primera en atribuir a La Malinche la culpa de la Conquista de México. Como Messinger postula: “Doña Marina, in direct contrast, symbolizes all the evils and misfortunes

<sup>5</sup> Sandra Messinger Cypess comenta en *La Malinche in Mexican Literature: From History to Myth*: “The republican, antimonarchical sentiments expressed by the narrator of *Xicoténcatl* clearly place the author in opposition to the political events in newly independent Mexico and perhaps explain his need to have his work published anonymously” (Messinger 43).

<sup>6</sup> En el capítulo titulado “Eve and the Serpent: The Nationalists’ View” (del estudio *La Malinche in Mexican Literature: From History to Myth*), Messinger nos proporciona un estudio bastante exhaustivo de la obra *Xicoténcatl* (1826) la cual inicia la necesaria reconsideración. Existen, al mismo tiempo, tres novelas posteriores basadas en esa novela, a saber: *Xicohtencatl* (1828) de José María Moreno y Buenvecino; *Teutila* (1828) escrita por Ignacio Torres Arroyo; y *Xicoténcatl* (1829) de José María Mangino (Messinger 44). En estas tres obras encontramos a una Marina celosa del amor que Cortés profesa hacia Teutila, la verdadera heroína india en estas obras. De su parte, los chicanos han reclamado esa obra como parte de su legado cultural. Bajo el *Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage* se reedita la obra en 1995.



that Americans suffer when they accept European ways. Within this context, the narrator unreservedly delivers devastating attacks on the morality, integrity, and dignity of both Doña Marina and Cortés” (Messinger 45). A partir de la anónima *Xicoténcal*, la cultura popular mexicana comenzará a producir una serie de obras en las cuales se repita el mito de La Malinche como traidora.

En la segunda mitad del siglo diecinueve, existen una serie de obras literarias en las cuales se enfatiza la relación sentimental entre Cortés y La Malinche y se acusa a ésta de haber traicionado a su cultura a través de una completa y voluntaria sumisión sexual hacia el invasor. Novelas tales como *Guatimozín, último emperador de México* (s.f.) de Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda; *Los mártires de Anáhuac* (s.f.) de Eligio Ancona; *Amor y suplicio* (1873) y *Doña Marina* (1883) de Gustavo A. Rodríguez describen una intensa relación amorosa entre ambos personajes históricos (Messinger 90). Todas parecen seguir el modelo de *Xicoténcatl*. Como expone Ricardo Herrén: “Marina es despertada de su largo sueño para aparecer en esas páginas (en *Xicoténcatl*) como la responsable de todas las desdichas mexicanas” (Herrén 160). Será a partir de la independencia de México cuando La Malinche se convierta en una “astuta serpiente”, contaminada por la inmoralidad europea; pudo haber sido – argumenta Herrén – una “mujer apreciable sin la corrupción a la que se la adiestró desde que se reunió con los españoles” (Herrén 160).

La trayectoria ‘literaria’ de Malinalli Tenépal es sumamente compleja a través de la historia. En “La Malinche: sus padres y sus hijos”, la mexicana Margo Glantz postula:

Malintzin, Marina, Malinche son etapas de un proceso. En el siglo XVI esta mujer pasaba de una sociedad en que su estatus estaba determinado no solamente por el nacimiento sino también por un sistema que la convertía en mercancía. Durante la Conquista se vuelve sujeto por medio de la conversión y el bautismo, por medio de la maternidad y por último, y quizás más importante, por el contrato de matrimonio que la convierte en sujeto legal. (Glantz 170)

Es decir, considerada como mito, La Malinche es la figura femenina más enigmática de la historia de México y el suroeste chicano. El discurso sobre su imagen es deplorablemente borroso y misterioso. Doña Marina es digna de figurar en el archivo de héroes de la Conquista



y la Colonia, pero la histórica Malinalli Tenépal no existe. Su infancia, su esclavitud y su victimización no existen o, como Glantz argumenta, Tenépal “sólo existe como pre-texto” (Glantz 170). Por otro lado, a partir de la Independencia La Malinche – es decir, Malintzin mítica – contará con una infinidad de “padres” críticos y hegemónicos. En toda esta trayectoria, Malinalli Tenépal es una mujer histórica, silenciada y rodeada de una espeluznante realidad histórica creada por los hombres.

Queda claro que es a la mitad del siglo diecinueve cuando encontramos la dicotomía prostituta/virgen, Malinche/Virgen María. Por un lado encontramos a La Malinche como la personificación de la traición, la vendepatria, la serpiente del Mal y, por otro, Doña Marina se nos presenta como la Virgen María, símbolo de la pureza. Tal oposición binaria, la cual se perpetúa hasta mediados del siglo veinte, aparece en obras tales como el ensayo de 1950, “Los hijos de La Malinche” de Octavio Paz y la obra de teatro de 1970, *Todos los gatos son pardos* de Carlos Fuentes, y refuerza la ideología del patriarcado en tanto que relaciona a la mujer con la pasividad, la apertura, lo inerte; y al hombre con la agresividad, actividad y el cierre.

En *La Malinche in Mexican Literature*, Messenger proporciona un análisis de la transformación experimentada por La Malinche, pasando esta última de ser una figura histórica a un signo literario con infinidad de manifestaciones (Messenger 2). En su opinión: “La Malinche functions as a continually enlarging palimpsest of Mexican cultural identity whose layers of meaning have accrued through the years” (5). Consecuentemente, el mito debe ser entendido como un signo polisémico cuyos distintos significados dependen directamente de la época histórica o momento socio-político por el cual fluye. Según Messenger: “The invasion constituted a clash of cultures involving archetypal patterns that have formed a myth more consequential than the historical reality. The historical event has been described, interpreted, and converted into a symbolic construct that is reinterpreted by each successive generation” (Messenger 1). Los significados que La Malinche ha adquirido se deben a la influencia de la imagen de la mujer producida y mantenida por la sociedad patriarcal. En cierto sentido, el mito puede ser considerado como el subtexto de la vida de la mujer mexicana y chicana. Como Messenger comenta a este respecto: “For too long, false myths have distorted the images of women; and especially in Mexico, the myth of La Malinche has been one of the most restrictive” (Messenger 6). Para

esta crítica chicana, la figura de La Malinche demuestra una evolución del mito cultural a través de los tiempos actuando siempre como modelo de relación entre hombre y mujer (Messinger 7).

A inicios de los 80, las críticas feministas chicanas comenzaron a incrementar su participación política en el movimiento chicano de 1960–1970 y a combatir el papel tradicional de género, enfrentándose a una opresión basada en el género experimentada dentro de su propia comunidad y, paralelamente, a una discriminación por parte de la cultura hegemónica angloamericana. Para algunas escritoras chicanas, el romper con la cultura masculina y, de ese modo, el lograr recrear sus mitos femeninos, significó un avance crítico dentro de un proceso evolutivo de afirmación y reconocimiento. Como reacción a las representaciones misóginas que hacen de la mujer los escritores Octavio Paz, Carlos Fuentes y Armando Rendón,<sup>7</sup> esas escritoras chicanas contemporáneas tomaron como punto de partida el mito de La Malinche como por un lado la madre del mestizo y, por el otro, traidora y prostituta del pueblo mexicano. Consecuentemente, el mito ha experimentado a partir de los años 80 del pasado siglo veinte varias retextualizaciones que combaten los diversos roles añadidos a lo largo de las múltiples épocas históricas pasadas.

De ese modo, la retextualización de La Malinche forma parte de un tipo de “literature of apology” por parte de las escritoras chicanas contemporáneas que, como explica Alvina E. Quintana:<sup>8</sup>

is liberal in the sense that it develops the argument that traditions and cultural values kept women from developing to their full potential . . . is a reclamation of history as opposed to the rebirthing of a literature that until this historical moment, was virtually nonexistent. (Quintana 39)

Argumentamos que, en la actualidad encontramos una serie de voces de mujeres chicanas que se reapropian de las figuras históricas tradicionalmente representadas por el discurso masculino. El objetivo es desconstruir el uso de dicotomías del tipo *virgen/prostituta* (Quintana 41). En su artículo titulado “Malinche, Guadalupe, and La Llorona:

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<sup>7</sup> Véanse: *El laberinto de la soledad* (1950) de Octavio Paz, en particular el capítulo “Los hijos de La Malinche”; *Todos los gatos son pardos* (1973) de Carlos Fuentes; y *Chicano Manifesto* (1971) de Armando Rendón.

<sup>8</sup> Véase: Alvina E. Quintana, *Home Girls: Chicana Literary Voices*, 1996.

Patriarchy and the Formation of Mexican National Consciousness”, la crítica chicana Alejandra Elenes postula lo siguiente:

The construction of these three figures, in their similarities and differences, are all related to the forging of Mexican nationalism from colonial times to independence; and to the formation of Chicano nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s. Although they are three figures, they work in a Manichean logic between good and bad. Guadalupe is the virginal loving mother, and Malinche and Llorona are deviants. (Elenes 95)

Las escritoras chicanas continúan hoy en día transformando el mito tradicional de La Malinche. Cuestionan interpretaciones pretéritas de dicho signo en un intento por enfatizar el hecho de que el uso reductivo de La Malinche sostiene el poder masculino, poniendo a la chicana, al mismo tiempo, en una posición de inferioridad. Como Alejandra Elenes concluye: “Alternative feminist interpretations of these figures [La Malinche, la Virgen de Guadalupe, La Llorona] can transform nationalism and cultural identity in ways that will benefit women and not continue to place them in a subordinate position” (Elenes 99)

Varias chicanas han participado en la nueva retextualización de La Malinche. Los aportes más significativos pertenecen a Adelaida del Castillo, Cordelia Candelaria, Norma Alarcón, Margarita Cota-Cárdenas y Erlinda Gonzales-Berry. Las retextualizaciones van desde la madre de los mestizos hasta una activista en lucha a favor de su pueblo. Esta actual reconstrucción del mito de La Malinche representa la necesaria recuperación feminizada del mito de La Malinche.

Malinalli Tenépal fue condenada al olvido y al rechazo durante los trescientos años de la colonización española y, bajo el signo ‘Doña Marina’, se la mantuvo subordinada y sumisa. Con la colonización angloamericana resurgió su significado alusivo a la mujer colonizada; sólo tiene lugar una leve alteración cultural. Por su parte, las escritoras chicanas han cuestionado la imagen que a lo largo de la historia se le ha dado a Malinalli Tenépal. De esa manera, puede dejar de ser un invento y un producto de la ideología patriarcal hegemónica – La Malinche – para simbolizar un nuevo sujeto social femenino. Las escritoras chicanas han reformado el mito de La Malinche para de ese modo crear nuevos roles femeninos y romper con una pasada existencia mítica que, hasta hace poco tiempo, había sido utilizada por los mexicanos y chicanos como un instrumento de control y cosificación de las mujeres. Sin embargo,

dichas escritoras se limitan a conectar el mito de La Malinche con el siglo dieciséis y el México independiente, ignorando el hecho de que es precisamente durante la segunda mitad del diecinueve cuando debemos hablar del resurgir de la figura chicana de La Malinche en el suroeste.

Llegados a este punto es imprescindible mencionar la figura de la primera escritora chicana, María Amparo Ruíz de Burton, puesto que encontramos bastantes paralelismos entre su vida y la que nos ha llegado de La Malinche. Esta escritora nació en Loreto (o La Paz),<sup>9</sup> Baja California, el tres de julio de 1832 (ó 1835, ya que no existe una fecha de nacimiento segura y fiable por el momento),<sup>10</sup> pocos años antes de que el estado de Texas lograra independizarse definitivamente de México.

Como consecuencia de la invasión norteamericana de La Paz,<sup>11</sup> María Amparo Ruiz conoció al angloamericano Henry S. Burton, un teniente coronel graduado en West Point, que había luchado precisamente con el ejército norteamericano invasor, y que era veinte años mayor que ella y protestante. En su artículo de 1984 titulado “María Amparo Ruiz de Burton: The General’s Lady”, Kathleen Crawford, miembro de la sociedad histórica de San Diego, señala que fue bastante posible que María Amparo Ruiz y Henry S. Burton se conocieran durante algún evento social una vez finalizada la lucha armada y rendida la ciudad de La Paz al invasor norteamericano. Como ella misma expone:

A proclamation in the name of the United States government ordered the people of La Paz to disperse or be punished and offered protection for their lives and property. The Baja Californios responded well to the edict and, in fact, a number of balls and receptions were held to entertain the American soldiers. Possibly at one of these balls, María met her dashing, West Point educated husband-to-be. Whenever they met, it

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<sup>9</sup> Tanto el lugar de nacimiento como la fecha son estimadas. En 1829 una considerable inundación barrió la ciudad de Loreto y como consecuencia el gobierno decidió llevar la capital a La Paz trasladando a su vez todos los documentos oficiales (bautismales, etc...) a dicha ciudad. Varias revueltas y revoluciones (causadas por los indios así como por los norteamericanos que invadieron La Paz en 1848) dio lugar a la pérdida de muchos de estos informes.

<sup>10</sup> La fecha de nacimiento que Sánchez y Pita establecen parece ser la más fiable. Estas investigadoras toman como referencia el libro de Hubert Howe Bancroft *California Pastoral* donde a raíz de una entrevista entre el autor y la misma María Amparo, éste fija su fecha de nacimiento en 1832.

<sup>11</sup> La invasión norteamericana de la Baja California tuvo lugar entre 1846 y 1848. Para los mexicanos fue todo un éxito no perder este estado tras finalizar la guerra y firmarse el tratado de Guadalupe-Hidalgo en 1848.

was not long before Burton was captivated by the vivacious, dark-haired beauty. (Crawford 200)

Teniendo tan solo dieciséis años, y con la ayuda del capitán Burton (quien además prestó su ayuda a cualquiera que quisiera abandonar Baja California), María Amparo emigró junto a su madre y hermano a Monterrey, en la Alta California. Contra la voluntad de su madre y parientes, y apenas pasados tres años, María Amparo, recién cumplidos los diecisiete años, decide casarse con él. En 1888, el historiador americano Hubert Howe Bancroft en *California Pastoral, 1769-1848*, relata al respecto:

Captain H.S. Burton fell in love with the charming Californian, María del Amparo Ruiz, born at Loreto, and aged sixteen. She promised to marry him. The servants reported this to a certain ranchero who had been unsuccessfully paying his addresses to her, and he informed Padre González, saying that a Catholic should not marry a Protestant. The padre thanked the man in a letter, which the latter hawked about offensively, out of spite because his suit had been rejected. But for all these, the Loreto girl married the Yankee captain. Although a heretical marriage, Rubio, guardian of the see, deemed it discreet not to declare it null. (Bancroft 330-1)

No obstante, el matrimonio fue considerado un “heretical marriage” puesto que suponía la mezcla de dos religiones y culturas diferentes y con esto, el inicio de un nuevo tipo de mestizaje, el mexicano-americano; una mezcla de mestiza con anglo. Ruiz de Burton, al igual que hiciera La Malinche tres siglos atrás, sirvió de puente entre dos civilizaciones, lenguas y religiones distintas y en desacuerdo. Es decir, ambas no solo se casaron con alguien de la cultura invasora sino que lo hicieron en un contexto inmediatamente posterior a la invasión. No obstante, y como Bancroft documenta, el matrimonio entre ambos provocó un gran revuelo puesto que: “On the 23d of August, 1847, Governor Mason ordered all the authorities of California not to authorize any marriage where either of the parties was a catholic” (Bancroft 332). Aun así, sabemos que la boda finalmente pudo llevarse a cabo, si bien se establecieron una serie de condiciones:

He [Rubio, the guardian of the see] accordingly allowed the marriage before the padre at Santa Barbara, before [...] witnesses, omitting *proclamas conciliares*, nuptial benediction, and other solemnities, but with the condition that the wife should not be seduced from the church, that the children

should be educated catholics, and that the wife should pray  
God to convoy [sic] the captain to the church. (Bancroft 331-2)

Winifred Davidson (1874-1964), una articulista de mediados del siglo diecinueve, escribe varios artículos sobre la historia de amor de Burton y Ruiz en el *San Diego Union* y *Los Angeles Times*. A través de éstos llegamos a conocer el hecho de que existió incluso una balada inspirada en María Amparo y titulada “The Maid of Monterey”<sup>12</sup> y que era cantada por los veteranos de la guerra entre México y Estados Unidos.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> En un artículo de 1984, “María Amparo Ruiz de Burton: The General’s Lady,” Kathleen Crawford transcribe la balada:

The Maid of Monterey  
The moon shone but dimly  
Beyond the battle plain  
A gentle breeze fanned softly  
O’er the features of the slain

The guns had hushed their thunder  
The guns in silence lay  
Then came the senorita  
The Maid of Monterey.

She cast a look of anguish  
On the dying and the dead  
And made her lap a pillow  
For those who mourned and bled  
Now here’s to that bright beauty  
Who drives death’s pangs away  
The meek-eyed senorita  
The Maid of Monterey.

Although she loved her country  
And prayed that it might live  
Yet for the foreign soldier  
She had a tear to give  
And when the dying soldier  
In her bright gleam did pray  
He blessed this senorita  
The Maid of Monterey.

She gave the thirsty water  
And dressed each bleeding wound  
A fervent prayer she uttered  
For those whom death had doomed  
And where the bugle sounded  
Just at the dawn of day  
They blessed this senorita (sic)  
The Maid of Monterey. (200-201)

<sup>13</sup> Según nos cuentan Sánchez y Pita (11), la fuente del artículo de Winifred Davidson donde aparece esta balada se encuentra en *Los Angeles Times Sunday Magazine* (16 de octubre, 1932).

El autor de dicha canción es desconocido; sin embargo, es bastante significativo el hecho de que Davidson en uno de sus artículos titulado “Enemy Lovers” califica dicha unión como una de “enemigos naturales” dadas las diferencias existentes de religión, nacionalidad y edad (Sánchez y Pita 11). Al mismo tiempo, a María Amparo se la describe como una mujer de una belleza e inteligencia superior. En ese sentido, Ruiz de Burton no solo dominó la lengua inglesa (en la cual escribió sus dos novelas), sino que también tenía conocimientos tanto de historia como cultura europea y americana. Con todo eso, es necesario recalcar la gran similitud que existe entre María Amparo Ruiz de Burton y Malinalli Tenepal/La Malinche en tanto que ambas fueron no solo mediadoras e intérpretes de dos culturas opuestas sino al mismo tiempo, madres de cierto mestizaje. El enlace Ruiz y Burton significó una unión entre los ‘californios’ y los nuevos invasores ‘yanquis’.

Las chicanas contemporáneas en su intento por cuestionar el mito de La Malinche, dominado por el patriarcado desde 1826 y nunca antes interrogado, logran dar una versión subversiva o antipatriarcal de Malinalli Tenepal y de su papel histórico dentro de la conquista. En su obra titulada *Paletitas de guayaba*, publicada en 1991, la chicana Erlinda Gonzales-Berry recupera la identidad cultural del sujeto femenino chicano a través de un viaje a México cuya culminación es un encuentro de la protagonista con La Malinche. Gonzales-Berry nos ofrece también una retextualización de La Malinche que si bien reformula el mito de La Malinche confiriéndole una función diferente a la tradicionalmente dada, no obstante ignora e incluso perpetúa, al igual que todas las demás escritoras chicanas, el vacío histórico de la figura de La Malinche en el período narrativo mexicoamericano de la última mitad del siglo diecinueve.

La escritora chicana Ruiz de Burton, al igual que hiciera La Malinche/Malintzín/Doña Marina cuatro siglos atrás, sirvió de enlace entre dos culturas la mexicana y la angloamericana que, a finales del siglo diecinueve y principios del veinte, seguían aún en desacuerdo y en constante lucha. Ambas como consecuencia de formar parte de una sociedad colonizadora y hegemónica negocian un lugar en la sociedad española y angloamericana respectivamente. Mary Louise Pratt subraya la similitud entre ambas colonizaciones:

Just as the indigenous Mexicans were there before the Spanish arrived, so the Mexican Americans in the southwest

were there before the Anglos arrived. The analogy rests on deep historical continuity: until 1848 the US Southwest was Mexico, and the Mexican Americans were Mexicans. The contemporary Malinche myth is historically transposed, but not transplanted. (Pratt 862)

La crítica chicana en general apunta el poder que la figura mítica de La Malinche —mexicana— ha tenido en el proceso de autoafirmación de la identidad de género de la chicana así como en su lucha contra el etnonacionalismo androcéntrico imperante. No obstante, es necesario que las chicanas contemporáneas tomen conciencia de la existencia a finales del siglo diecinueve de una La Malinche propiamente chicana y no mexicana. La reivindicación de la figura de una chicana malinche de finales del siglo diecinueve es no sólo necesaria sino un acto de justicia.

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# **“THIS IS THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY, YOU KNOW”: TRACES OF THE VICTORIAN GOTHIC ROMANCE IN DAPHNE DU MAURIER’S *JAMAICA INN***

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## **Abstract**

Before publishing her seminal novel *Rebecca* (1938), Daphne du Maurier had published *Jamaica Inn* in 1936, deliberately setting its action in the nineteenth-century and featuring a young heroine, Mary Yellan, who, after her mother’s demise, is compelled to live with her aunt Patience and her uncle Joss Merlyn in their gloomy house known as Jamaica Inn. Explicit references to the nineteenth-century become recurrent in the novel; as a case in point, Francis Davey, the vicar in the novel, openly addresses the heroine stating “this is the nineteenth-century, you know.” *Jamaica Inn* especially underlines clear intertextual links with early Victorian gothic romances such as Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*. This article aims at analysing the intertextuality established between Daphne du Maurier’s novel *Jamaica Inn* and the Brontës’ canonical nineteenth-century gothic romances so as to highlight *Jamaica Inn* as a forerunner of Neo-Victorian fiction as well as to show that not all literary manifestations written at the time of modernism adopted an entirely critical position with regard to the immediately preceding Victorian past.

**Key words:** trace, gothic romance, Victorian fiction, modernism, Neo-Victorianism.

## **“ÉSTE ES EL SIGLO DIECINUEVE, YA SABES”: RASTROS DEL ROMANCE GÓTICO VICTORIANO EN *POSADA JAMAICA*, DE DAPHNE DU MAURIER**

### **Resumen**

Con anterioridad a la publicación de su influyente novela *Rebecca* (1938), Daphne du Maurier publicó *Posada Jamaica* en 1936, situando deliberadamente su acción en el siglo diecinueve y retratando a una joven heroína, Mary Yellan, quien, tras morir su madre, se ve obligada a vivir con sus tíos, Patience y Joss Merlyn, en su misteriosa casa llamada Posada Jamaica. Referencias explícitas al siglo diecinueve recurren en la novela; como claro ejemplo, Francis Davey, el vicario en la novela, se dirige abiertamente a la heroína diciendo “éste es el siglo diecinueve, ya sabes.” *Posada Jamaica* especialmente pone de manifiesto claros giros intertextuales en relación a romances góticos victorianos como es el caso de *Jane Eyre* de Charlotte Brontë o *Cumbres Borrascosas* de Emily Brontë. Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar la intertextualidad que se establece entre la novela *Posada Jamaica* de Daphne du Maurier y los canónicos romances góticos victorianos de las hermanas Brontë con el propósito de señalar *Posada Jamaica* como precursora de la ficción neovictoriana, al tiempo que demostrar que no todas las manifestaciones literarias escritas durante el periodo modernista adoptaron una posición enteramente crítica con respecto al pasado victoriano que inmediatamente las precedía.

**Palabras clave:** rastro, romance gótico, ficción victoriana, modernismo, neovictorianismo.

### **1. Retracing the Victorians: from modernist to postmodern perspectives**

With the advent and recent proliferation of a great number of novels within Neo-Victorian fiction, contemporary critical theory, and, especially, postmodern approaches have contributed enormously to theorising and analysing these works, giving shape to what has become known as Neo-Victorian Studies, to use the term that has currently acquired most wide acceptance. In this respect, critics such as Marie-Luise Kohkle have conflated the inception of Neo-Victorianism with

the publication dates of seminal postmodern novels such as Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) and John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) in the decade of the 1960s.

The apparently inextricable connection established between Neo-Victorianism and postmodernism has been aptly and frequently noticed to the extent that Gloria Jones and William Naufftus have described Neo-Victorianism as "the re-emergence of the Victorian novel in a postmodern form", thus taking for granted that the Neo-Victorian novel can be categorised as a species of postmodern fiction (Carroll 181). Likewise, Christian Gutleben has extensively noticed the similarities existing between postmodernism and Neo-Victorian fiction, considering Neo-Victorian texts highly illustrative of postmodern tenets, and vice versa, taking postmodernism as an appropriate critical apparatus to use in order to analyse Neo-Victorian texts.

Nonetheless, critics such as Robin Gilmour have stretched the origination of Neo-Victorianism further back in time, referring to novels such as Michael Sadleir's *Fanny by Gaslight*, published in 1940, and Marghanita Laski's *The Victorian Chaise-Longue*, published in 1953, as apt precursors of the genre (189). Following this tendency, Matthew Sweet has even more recently claimed that novels dating back as far as the 1920s could be considered neo-Victorian antecedents precisely because they engage in a dialogic exchange, to use Mikhail Bakhtin's terms, which ranges from satiric sentimentalism to parodic diatribe in relation to the irretrievable Victorian period (Sweet xvii). In terms of chronology, these precursory Neo-Victorian texts necessarily coexisted with the quest of innovation that characterised the modernist movement and what Matthew Sweet sarcastically refers to as "the Modernists' open season on the Victorians" (xvii) in relation to the anti-Victorian attitude that used to characterise modernist tenets. In this respect, Sweet's claim to identify the first Neo-Victorian texts many decades prior to the advent of postmodernism would destabilise the traditionally assumed belief that Neo-Victorian novels—envisioned as texts that willingly move back to portray and recreate the nineteenth-century from a contemporary perspective—are uniquely and inextricably linked to postmodernism, both exemplifying postmodern theories as well as stimulating postmodern critical approaches.

Modernists were thus the first to pave the ground to establish an ongoing debate with the immediately preceding Victorian period, even

if their approach was naturally uninviting, significantly contributing to coupling the epithet Victorian with values which stood in sharp contrast with modernist principles. In this respect, Andrea Kirchknopf aptly refers to “the highly dismissive reaction to the Victorian age” which characterised the modernist refusal of the nineteenth-century, often betraying clear Oedipal undertones, thus being reluctant to accept the parental authority and assumed stiffness of the Victorians from a modernist perspective that mostly looked for innovation and intellectual freedom (57). As Simon Joyce argues, a decisive feature of the Bloomsbury group of British modernists was precisely their so-called anti-Victorianism, willingly assuming that what could be termed as Victorian had to come to an end.

As a case in point, Simon Joyce refers to Virginia Woolf’s manifesto of Bloomsbury modernism entitled *Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown* (1923), which, in his view, implicitly criticises the Edwardians for not making a decisive break with their Victorian past, thus engaging in a sort of Oedipal struggle with them in “the terms their predecessors had taught them”, to use Cora Kaplan’s and Anne Simpson’s terms (xii). Likewise, Lytton Strachey’s *Eminent Victorians* (1918) ultimately seemed to amount to deconstructing the Victorians’ own view of themselves through Strachey’s sketches of Victorians that he felt had been overvalued. This willing attempt to distance themselves from the Victorians could be perceived in their efforts to relegate all things Victorian to a remote past and differentiate themselves from their precursors, even though this aim would often prove self-defeating, as Simon Joyce further admits (10). In this sense, it can be argued that the Modernists’ effort to insist on innovation and difference inevitably gave way to what Harold Bloom termed ‘the anxiety of influence’, precisely because of their will to set themselves apart from the Victorians even if necessarily departing from the Victorian shadow.

Nonetheless, drawing on Robin Gilmour’s precepts about stretching Neo-Victorian traces further back in time to reach works published in the mid-twentieth-century, it can be argued that Daphne du Maurier’s novel *Jamaica Inn*, published in the year 1936, presents significant echoes referring back to the nineteenth-century. Likewise, *Jamaica Inn* also shows a remarkable intentional vein to establish a dialogue with major Victorian tenets, even if it was published many years prior to the advent of postmodernism. Hence, given the principles regulating

Neo-Victorian fiction, *Jamaica Inn* could be regarded as a forerunner of this genre. In fact, Daphne du Maurier's novels often underscore a sense of a bygone era, given the author's lifetime interest in history and the past as well as the early influence that her grandfather, the well-known Victorian writer George du Maurier, exerted on her writings. Therefore, even though *Jamaica Inn* was released during the years of the modernist period, it refers back to the nineteenth-century through nostalgia rather than scorn, thus distancing itself from modernist literary works that often rejected their immediately preceding Victorian past.

Thus, even though the ongoing return to the nineteenth-century mostly characterises Neo-Victorian novels published in the rise of postmodernism and beyond, it may be claimed that this willing return to establish a dialogue with the Victorian period truly began to take place through the modernist movement, soon after the Victorian age was perceived to be drawing to a close, even if, in most cases, it was merely to underline its difference in relation to the immediately preceding Victorian past. As Cora Kaplan notices, as a case in point of the diverging dialogue established with the nineteenth-century, there lies the evolving and different treatment of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* in the twentieth-century by critics such as Virginia Woolf and Raymond Williams, respectively. In her essay entitled "*Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*," published in *The Common Reader* (1925), Virginia Woolf underlines the necessary differences perceived between Charlotte Brontë's perspective and that of any twentieth-century reader, considering that this fiction had 'no lot in the modern world' and wishing that modernist aesthetics would disregard and transcend this type of nineteenth-century women's fiction for both being too focused on the domestic as well as being too afraid of female anger.

Conversely, as Cora Kaplan also claims in her seminal volume *Victoriana*, Raymond Williams' celebration of *Jane Eyre* in his essay "Charlotte and Emily Brontë" published in his volume *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (1970), more than forty years after Virginia Woolf's dismissal of *Jane Eyre*, is rooted in the novel's capacity to challenge conventions through a woman's voice, as the narrator effectively establishes an intimate relation with the reader through a confessional mode. The facile approach of equating postmodernism with a nostalgic view of the past, envisioning the nineteenth-century as "the

privilege site of return for a mal-adjusted present” (Carroll 176), and conversely, modernism with a persistent anti-Victorian feeling because of its permanent search for innovation only seems to respond to a general tendency which disregards the fact that some novels published in the advent of modernism willingly recreated the nineteenth-century with some sense of loss, and conversely, some Neo-Victorian novels, published through the heyday of postmodernism, aimed to recreate the Victorian period so as to highlight the inequities and hierarchies that characterised Victorian times.

This Manichean or traditionally established dichotomy of modernist as anti-Victorian and postmodern as somehow pro-Victorian precisely because of its will to recreate an irretrievable past seems to be based on no ground. Actually, in the light of Neo-Victorian studies and its aim to analyse twentieth-century novels recreating the Victorian period, novels published at the turn of the century or the first half of the twentieth-century, and thus in the advent of modernism, displayed a clear intention to portray the Victorian era, even if with a different aim if compared with postmodernism. In this respect, it can be argued that modernism first began to renegotiate with the Victorian past in an attempt at ‘othering’ Victorian life and institutions. As Marie-Luise Kohlke argues, early twentieth-century works already engaged in conversation with Victorians, both moving “forwards in re-conceptualising the nineteenth century but backwards too” (4-5), thus paving the ground for future Neo-Victorian endeavours. Stretching the limits and the origins of Neo-Victorian fiction seems to be a particular focus of attention in Neo-Victorian Studies, as critics are willing to move further back in time to analyse early works of fiction, even with no postmodern purposes, which go back to the nineteenth-century and recreate it from a contemporary perspective. An analysis of the trace of the nineteenth-century in Daphne du Maurier’s novel *Jamaica Inn*, especially taking into consideration the Brontës’ legacy, may thus contribute to this thread of study within Neo-Victorian studies which seeks to explore early works published many years prior to the advent of postmodernism.

## 2. An early exponent tracing the nineteenth-century

As a reflection of this growing interest, Daphne du Maurier’s often underrated novel *Jamaica Inn*, published in 1936, can be highlighted

as an early exponent, a twentieth-century novel that goes back in time to recreate the nineteenth-century through a mixture of nostalgia and condescension at the time modernism was considered to be in its prime. As an early supporter of a willingly literary recreation of the nineteenth-century, Du Maurier's novel gained some unprecedented popularity at the beginning of the twenty-first century, being republished by Virago Press in 2003, and then, reprinted twice a year in the short span of three years, from 2004 to 2006. In its 2003 edition, Sarah Dunant, contemporary writer of historical novels, wrote an introduction highlighting the dual nature of Du Maurier's novel, paying homage to Victorian classics but also displaying an important undercurrent of modern sensibility. In this respect, Sarah Dunant seemed to be well aware of the interest that *Jamaica Inn* might possibly have for Neo-Victorian scholars and readers, and, thus, emphasised blatant Victorian echoes that she could identify as reverberating all through the novel. Dunant highlights the fact that Du Maurier's novel "opens with echoes of *Dracula*" (vii), and she also deliberately depicts Joss Merlyn, Mary Yellan's uncle in *Jamaica Inn*, as "the romantic hero inverted into violence and self-loathing – a Mr Rochester without a Jane to redeem him" (viii), thus referring to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*.

Sarah Dunant's stress on the Victorian undertones underlying Daphne du Maurier's *Jamaica Inn* seems to respond to what Christian Gutleben considers a "certain commercial orientation" (182), which often dominates Neo-Victorian novels through the use of paratactic blurbs that emphasise any resemblance of a contemporary novel with a Victorian classic in an attempt to attract more readership, thus corroborating the still ongoing popularity of Victorian fiction. Despite the important Victorian resonance reverberating in Du Maurier's novel, Dunant also notices its contemporary modern background, and thus, its presumed reluctance to succumb to the happy ending that characterising most Victorian plots as well as the sense of reassurance that most readers experiment by the end of many Victorian novels. Hence, Dunant also admits that "[f]or a book which at one level is a romantic adventure story, *Jamaica Inn* is full of decidedly unromantic thoughts" (x). Likewise, even if claiming that the end of the story brings "the reader out of the darkness into at least a semblance of light" (xi), Dunant also seems to whisper to any prospective reader that "you can be sure Mary [the female protagonist of Du Maurier's novel] will not sleep well at night" (xi).



All in all, *Jamaica Inn* arises as a novel published in the inter-war period, with a modern sensibility, but with strong romantic undertones, revealing a clear and obvious legacy to the gothic romance and Victorian classics, mainly Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. Du Maurier's *Jamaica Inn* could be both interpreted as an early exponent of Neo-Victorian fiction as well as a modern novel within the tradition of romance fiction. Its portrayal of nineteenth-century Cornwall through a series of undeniable Victorian echoes and the display of a turbulent love story reminiscent of nineteenth-century gothic romances contributes to conferring a nostalgic depiction, which conforms to a Neo-Victorian return to a past that has inevitably been lost. Nonetheless, as a novel with specific modern undertones, it also seeks to take a bleaker and less reassuring picture of life, as well as unveiling a fairly vindicating attitude with regard to gender issues.

### 3. Revealing Victorian echoes

Daphne du Maurier's novel *Jamaica Inn* tells the story of young Mary Yellan who, having been brought up in a farm in Helford, is compelled to move away and live with her Aunt Patience and her husband Joss Merlyn after her mother's demise. This beginning inevitably brings to mind *Jane Eyre* as a child, when she comes to live to Gateshead Hall, under the protection of her despondent aunt, Mrs. Reed. In Daphne du Maurier's novel *Jamaica Inn*, even though Mary's memories of her aunt are comforting, her prospects to live a happy life with her relatives come to no avail as she gradually realises that all the villagers try to avoid approaching the gloomy and threatening *Jamaica Inn*, which presents many points in common with Emily Brontë's depiction of the house of the Earnshaws, *Wuthering Heights*. On her arrival, Mary gains insight into the vicious nature of her uncle Joss, who is permanently inebriated, and her aunt's hopeless subjection to her husband as a result of fear; a beginning that significantly echoes Isabella's despondent life with her husband Heathcliff, as well as Hindley Earnshaw's dissolute habits in *Wuthering Heights*. Mary soon realises they both keep a terrible secret and begins to feel trapped in a dreary place which is never open to the public and only seems to give shelter to terrible secrets and rooms with locked doors, in clear resemblance with *Thornfield* in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. As also happens with many heroines of the Brontës' novels,

in a short span of time, Mary's innocent and child-like appearance undergoes a blatant transformation as she falls under the untamed and gloomy influence that pervades Jamaica Inn. Against her will, Mary increasingly grows attracted towards her uncle's younger brother, Jem Merlyn, despite his coarse and devious manners. Nonetheless, Mary is uncertain whether to trust Jem when she realises that her uncle is apparently the leader of a gang of smugglers attacking wrecked ships to slaughter any survivors and rob them of their possessions.

When one day Mary gets lost on the moors, she becomes acquainted with Francis Davey, the albino vicar of a neighbouring village and a wicked alter ego of Mr. St John in Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*. Francis Davey offers Mary help and shelter and comes to her rescue when she is left alone after spending the day with Jem, or when her uncle compels her to accompany his gang of wreckers and witness the slaughter of the survivors of a crash as they try to reach the shore. Mary decides to report her uncle to the authority of Squire Bassat, but when Mary goes back to Jamaica Inn, she finds both her uncle and her aunt murdered. In her despair, she is again rescued by the vicar, who offers her shelter and relief. However, during her stay, Mary discovers a drawing of the vicar in which he has pictured himself as a wolf while the members of a congregation have heads of sheep. As a result, the vicar confesses he is the actual leader of the gang as well as the murderer of her uncle Joss and her aunt Patience. As the vicar runs away on the moors taking Mary as a hostage, Jem manages to follow them and defeat the vicar in a fight, rescuing Mary, who eventually plans to go back to her former peaceful and quiet life in Helford. Nonetheless, as she walks on the moors to Helford, she encounters Jem in a cart heading towards the opposite direction, and after some hesitation, Mary realises that she is no longer able to pursue her former life, and thus, finally agrees to stay with Jem; a conclusion that also echoes *Jane Eyre* and the final decision of the young protagonist to go back to Edward Rochester.

Du Maurier's novel *Jamaica Inn* clearly follows the plot of the *reifungsroman* or novel of female development, depicting Mary Yellan's loss of innocence and the process whereby she comes to terms with her own nature, and especially, her own sexuality. Some episodes and narrative twists in the plot as well as the portrayal of characters such as Mary Yellan, Aunt Patience, and both Joss and Jem Merlyn, often evoke and inevitably bring to mind some of the passages in the Brontës'

gothic romances, thus contributing to a significantly prematurely Victorian revival merely a few decades after leaving the Victorian period behind. In this respect, as Patsy Stoneman admits in her volume *Brontë Transformations*, these Victorian novels could easily be coalesced with the quality that Jacques Derrida named as ‘iterability’, that is to say, a capacity to be constantly re-read and re-written, making use of diverse meanings and striving for plural effects (2). Likewise, Du Maurier’s novel and her particular homage to the Brontës also match Linda Hutcheon’s view of writing as revision, bringing her novel closer to Neo-Victorian and early postmodern endeavours.

Broadly speaking, despite its publication in the 1930s, Daphne du Maurier’s *Jamaica Inn* seems to illustrate the three features with which Daniel Candel Bormann associates Neo-Victorian novels, mainly the awareness of time flowing as poised between the Victorian past and the present, the dialogue with a Victorian past, and the use of any narrative levels to achieve this purpose, from the narration of action to argumentative exposition (62). The important influence of Victorian writings on Du Maurier’s novels has frequently been highlighted by critics, often taking for granted that one of the strongest influences to create her renowned novel *Rebecca* was Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, while her fascination with the Brontës would become obvious when she published the non-fiction volume entitled *The Infernal World of Branwell Brontë* in 1960. Likewise, often noticing Du Maurier refused to be categorised as a romantic novelist, critics such as Oriel Malet have noticed that her brand of romanticism unveils outstanding sinister overtones which rather seem to recall Wilkie Collins’ sensation novels.

The Victorian trace in Du Maurier’s *Jamaica Inn*, to use Jacques Derrida’s critical concept, seems to pervade important passages in the novel as well as the portrayal of some characters, which are strongly reminiscent of those in Victorian gothic romances. Mary Yellan’s arrival at Jamaica Inn echoes the first time Mr Lockwood sets foot on Wuthering Heights, especially for the sinister connotations that all the neighbourhood attaches to the family manor. In clear resemblance with Wuthering Heights, Jamaica Inn is depicted as a dilapidated house, vulnerable to bleak weather, which in turn reflects the fallible and dissolute life of its inhabitants. In Daphne du Maurier’s novel, Jamaica Inn is described as follows: “there was no other house, no other cottage. If this was Jamaica, it stood alone in glory, foursquare to the winds”

(14). Significantly, this description resembles that of Mr. Lockwood once he arrives at Wuthering Heights as, in his narration, he highlights the bleak weather to which the house is constantly exposed:

Wuthering Heights is the name of Mr. Heathcliff's dwelling. 'Wuthering' being a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather. Pure, bracing ventilation they must have there at all times, indeed: one may guess the power of the north wind blowing over the edge, by the excessive slant of a few stunted firs at the end of the house. (24)

Likewise, when Mary Yellan first sets eyes on her uncle, her depiction of Joss Merlyn inevitably recalls that of Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's novel, as Mary states that her uncle "was a great husk of a man, nearly seven feet high, with a creased black brow and a skin the colour of a gypsy" (16). Mary's description brings to mind Mr. Lockwood's well-known portrayal of Heathcliff, depicting him as "a dark-skinned gypsy in aspect, in dress and manners a gentleman" (26). Similarly, Joss Merlyn's marriage to Aunt Patience strongly recalls that of Heathcliff and Isabella, as both women are degraded as a result of their respective subjection to their husbands. However, for the most part, Joss Merlyn's permanent state of inebriation is also reminiscent of Hindley in Emily Brontë's novel; likewise, the way he treats Aunt Patience often recalls Hindley's harsh treatment of his sister Cathy.

In terms of its plot, Du Maurier's novel often brings to mind several passages of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, such as her encounter with the vicar Frances Davey, the locked room in Jamaica Inn and the supernatural undertones that seem to pervade her family's manor house. Mary Yellan's first encounter with Francis Davey on the moors bears a close resemblance with Jane's almost preternatural first meeting with Edward Rochester, when both Mary and Jane overhear a horse approaching and their imagination unleashes to indulge in frightening fantasies of goblins and creatures of the night until they finally catch sight of the rider. In *Jamaica Inn*, this scene is described as follows: "Mary waited in the middle of the track, her nerves a-jingle with the suddenness of the approach, and presently the horse appeared out of the mist in front of her, a rider on his back, the pair of ghostly figures lacking reality in the dim light" (94). This description in *Jamaica Inn* certainly resembles Charlotte Brontë's novel, when Jane Eyre is about

to meet Edward Rochester, and feels haunted by goblins in the midst of nature:

As this horse approached, and as I watched for it to appear through the dusk, I remembered certain of Bessie's tales wherein figured a North-of-England spirit, called a 'Gytrash;' which, in the form of horse, mule, or large dog, haunted solitary ways, and sometimes came upon belated travellers, as this horse was now coming upon me. (117)

Later on in Du Maurier's novel, Mary Yellan feels unable to hide her surprise when she sets eyes on Francis Davey for the first time, noticing his vampiric pale eyes and white hair despite his blatant youth, finally realising that he is an albino: "she saw his eyes for the first time from beneath the brim of his hat. They were strange eyes, transparent like glass, and so pale in colour that they seemed near to white" (95). Likewise, in Charlotte Brontë's novel, when Jane first meets Mr. St. John, she is also immediately struck by his eyes, "which were large and blue, with brown lashes" and "his high forehead, colourless as ivory, [which] was partially streaked over by careless locks of fair hair" (363). Francis Davey and Mr. St. John resemble each other not only in terms of physical appearance and in their role as vicars of the congregation, but also in the continuous assistance that they both offer to Mary and Jane respectively, even if both will prove to be very different from each other by the end of these two novels.

Likewise, Jamaica Inn, in clear resemblance with Thornfield in *Jane Eyre*, is full of trapped doors and dark secrets waiting to be unravelled. Soon after her arrival, Mary notices that "in the opposite direction from the kitchen, was another room, the door of which was locked" (31). Aunt Patience's reluctance to tell her niece the secret lying behind that door and the preternatural explanations, in which Mary begins to indulge out of fear, establish a parallelism with Jane's arrival at Thornfield and her immediate realisation of a dark secret lying dormant in the attic of Edward Rochester's manor house:

Mrs. Fairfax stayed behind a moment to fasten the trap-door; I, by dint of groping, found the outlet from the attic, and proceeded to descend the narrow garret staircase. I lingered in the long passage to which this led, separating the front and back rooms of the third story: narrow, low, and dim, with only one little window at the far end, and looking, with its

two rows of small back doors all shut, like a corridor in some Bluebeard's castle. (112)

Taking into consideration these blatant echoes of early Victorian gothic romances in Daphne du Maurier's novel, *Jamaica Inn* can be described as a palimpsest of Victorian texts and thus as a forerunner of Neo-Victorian fiction, being rooted in a Victorian tradition and seeking to bring those gothic romances back to life but from a modern perspective. In this respect, Du Maurier's novel also responds to the Neo-Victorian aim to offer "critical friction", to use Mark Llewellyn's term, in an attempt to shed light over the Victorians from a contemporary view, and vice versa, striving to go deeper into our contemporariness through a return to the past.

#### 4. Looking down on Victorian traces

Either as an early Neo-Victorian attempt to transform Victorian classics or as a modern exponent trying to highlight its difference from the immediately preceding Victorian period, Daphne du Maurier's novel departs from the early Victorian gothic romance to transform it and address it to a modern readership. Despite the nostalgia for a lost past and the blatant intertextuality with novels such as *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*, *Jamaica Inn* also underlines a subversive discourse which destabilizes Victorian values and standards. Joss Merlyn, Mary's uncle, plays an active role in smuggling and profiting from the wrecked ships on the coast of Cornwall, thus showing a dreadful counterpart to the splendour of the British Empire and its float. Likewise, Joss Merlyn and Aunt Patience are far from exemplifying and spreading the Victorian ethics and values presumed in the institution of the family, which is perceived as totally disrupted in the novel. Moreover, Mary Yellan stands in an awkward position, dangling from the angel-of-the-house image that she seems to impersonate when she arrives at Jamaica Inn, to that of a fallen woman as she decides to ramble upon the moors with Jem Merlyn and finally resolves to stay with him despite his coarse manners and his dissolute past.

Despite the novel's subversion of Victorian notions of empire, family and somehow gender, *Jamaica Inn* becomes specially subversive with regard to religious issues. Francis Davey, the vicar of Altarnun and clear counterpart to St. John in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, hides his

identity as the real leader of the smuggling gang as well as the eventual murderer of Mary Yellan's relatives in Jamaica Inn. Even though Francis Davey always comes to Mary's rescue when she is in need, she eventually manages to unravel his true and dark nature. Choosing the vicar and the priest of the novel to play the role of the villain involves a significant challenge to one of the Victorian pillars: religion. Even in his cinematic adaptation of Du Maurier's novel, Alfred Hitchcock felt compelled to disregard any unsympathetic portrayal of the clergy as it was forbidden by the Production Code in Hollywood, finally choosing the squire, Bassat, instead of the vicar, to become the villain in the film.

Nonetheless, Francis Davey also fulfils an important metanarrative function in Du Maurier's novel which underlines his double nature. In his series of encounters with Mary Yellan, he often tries to soothe and appease her anxiety repeating the litany "this is the nineteenth-century, you know," in an attempt to convince her that, in the century of progress and advance, there is no place for any irrational fear. Conversely, when Mary unveils his identity as both smuggler and murderer, Francis Davey confesses his scepticism about the modern world and his nostalgic wish to return to the past. His double-sided nature is somehow reminiscent of the conflation of apparent opposites in novels that intend to trace back the past. In this respect, like Daphne du Maurier, as a modern writer indebted to the Victorian gothic romance, Francis Davey also attempts to recreate a past that has been inevitably lost but also pinpoints those presumably Victorian aspects that he feels compelled to criticise from a modern and contemporary perspective.

## 5. Conclusions

Only two years before publishing her seminal work *Rebecca*, Daphne Du Maurier envisioned a novel totally set in the nineteenth-century, with clear echoes of early Victorian gothic narratives mostly reminiscent of the Brontës' great classics. Recent re-editions of her often underrated novel *Jamaica Inn* display an increasing interest in rediscovering early modern novels with Neo-Victorian aims preceding contemporary postmodern novels, which give shape to most Neo-Victorian fiction. The rediscovery of early novels with Neo-Victorian aspirations remains an important domain to explore so as to prove Matthew Sweet's thesis that Neo-Victorian fiction was firstly rooted



in early modernist novels at the beginning of the twentieth-century. The blatant trace of Victorian echoes in Daphne du Maurier's novel *Jamaica Inn* transforms it into a forerunner of Neo-Victorianism as a novel intentionally set in the nineteenth-century with both a nostalgic and subverting purpose, thus bringing to the fore a blending of both Victorian recreations and modern tenets, thus, to use Marie-Louis Kohle's words, 'othering' Victorianism from a modern perspective.

Exploring Daphne du Maurier's *Jamaica Inn* in order to find traces of early Victorian novels not only enriches the study of Du Maurier's fiction but also contributes to destabilising the traditional assumption that Neo-Victorian features only pertain to postmodern works. This comparative approach can be further extended to other Du Maurier's novels. As a case in point, her bestselling novel *Rebecca* has traditionally been highlighted from this perspective given its acknowledged homage to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Similarly, Du Maurier's first novel, *The Loving Spirit*, published in 1931 and whose title derives from a line in Emily Brontë's poem "Self-Interrogation," is also heavily influenced by *Wuthering Heights*, as Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik have aptly noticed. Moreover, Du Maurier's romance novel, *Frenchman's Creek*, published in 1941 and portraying the love affair of the protagonist, Dona, with a pirate, equally brings to mind evocative images of Heathcliff, as Kathy imagines her beloved friend being of noble origins and kidnapped by wicked sailors. Likewise, Du Maurier's novel *My Cousin Rachel* also presents remarkable similarities with sensation novels by Victorian writers such as Wilkie Collins, and especially, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, taking into account the plot of the novel as well as the double nature of the protagonist. Hence, by means of pursuing this comparative approach, it is possible to delineate the important influence Victorian literature, and the Brontës in particular, exerted on Daphne du Maurier's novels, and thus, identify evocative traces of the nineteenth-century in many of her literary works.



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# TALES, SEX AND FUN IN KATE ATKINSON'S REWRITING OF FAIRY TALES IN *HUMAN CROQUET*

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## **Abstract**

This paper analyses how Kate Atkinson, in *Human Croquet* (1997), enacts the feminist re-vision advocated by Adrienne Rich while developing hidden aspects of the fairy tales. This exposure of the artifice is as much the aim of the novel as it is a structuring element and the topic of the text. As the self-conscious dimension of the narrative indeed suggests, becoming aware of the lie is part of the growing-up process for the heroine. After examining how fairy-tale motifs come into play as structuring devices in the novel, this paper focuses on Atkinson's idiosyncratic re-vision of women's roles in fairy tales as this point is indeed a capital element in postmodern fairy-tale rewritings. Finally, it considers how she tackles what is often seen as the hallmark of the fairy tale: the happy ending.

**Keywords:** rewriting, fairy tale, happy ending, novel, Kate Atkinson, *Human Croquet*

## **CUENTOS, SEXO Y DIVERSIÓN EN *HUMAN CROQUET*, REESCRITURA DE LOS CUENTOS DE HADAS DE KATE ATKINSON**

## **Resumen**

Este artículo explora cómo *Human Croquet* (1997), de Kate Atkinson, reproduce la revisión feminista de Adrienne Rich a la vez que desarrolla aspectos escondidos de los cuentos de hadas. Este desvelamiento del artificio es tanto el objetivo de la novela como un elemento estructurador y asunto central del texto. Tal y como sugiere

la dimensión auto-consciente de la narración, la percepción de la mentira constituye parte del proceso de crecimiento de la heroína. Tras examinar cómo los motivos del cuento de hadas se constituyen en dispositivos que estructuran la novela, este trabajo se centra en la revisión idiosincrática de los papeles femeninos en los cuentos de hadas, dado que este asunto constituye un elemento central en las reescrituras de los cuentos de hadas. Finalmente, se analiza la forma en la que se resuelve lo que a menudo se considera en elemento identificador del cuento de hadas: el final feliz.

**Palabras clave:** reescritura, cuento de hadas, final feliz, novela, Kate Atkinson, *Human Croquet*

## Introduction

Kate Atkinson's novels literally seethe with intertextual references and *Human Croquet*, the second in what has come to be regarded as a trilogy<sup>1</sup> focusing on "young female protagonists engaged in a quest for identity" (Parker 17), is no exception.<sup>2</sup> In Emma Parker's words, "the trilogy contains countless allusions to classical fairy tale motifs of quest and test. The central protagonists all identify with fairy tale figures and accept fairy tales as true" (21). Isobel Fairfax, the homodiegetic narrator of *Human Croquet*, shares with many fairy-tale heroines a motherless status, which she compensates for by making up her mother, inscribing Eliza in a legendary descent. In fact, in her narrative, life or experience is strikingly mediated through stories and many of them are classical fairy tales by Perrault, Grimm and Andersen acting as a structuring device as well as subject matter: direct allusions pepper the narrative while some episodes of the plot are rewrites of fairy tales.

Fairy tales, like myths, offer "archetypal stories available for re-use and recycling by different ages and cultures" (Sanders 82). Because they do not display an explicit social context, they tend to be seen

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<sup>1</sup> *Behind the Scenes at the Museum* (1995), *Human Croquet* (1997) and *Emotionally Weird* (2000) constitute this trilogy.

<sup>2</sup> For a study of the Shakespearean intertext in *Human Croquet*, see Chapter 3 in Julie Sanders, *Novel Shakespeares, Twentieth-Century Women Novelists and Appropriation* (Manchester: MUP, 2001).

as timeless. Scholars such as Jack Zipes and Marina Warner have however exposed the process of production of these tales and revealed that these tales were always written and rewritten with a purpose. In the late twentieth century, fairy tales underwent the type of “re-vision” advocated by Adrienne Rich:

Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is (...) an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves (...) We need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us. (35)

With a similar idea in mind, Patricia Duncker later argued for the need “to rewrite the fairy tales—with a bolder hand” as their patterns were now at odds with women’s existences (12). Writers put this in practice as indeed, twenty-five years later, Laura Tosi was able to observe that

(m)any contemporary rewritings of fairy tales tend to challenge the conservative norms of social behaviour and the implications of gender roles in fairy tales. Feminist critics and writers have collaborated in the critical exposure of fairy tales as narratives voicing, in the main, patriarchal values. (369-370)<sup>3</sup>

But rewritings come in many shapes. Early feminist rewritings often used reversal as their main device to illuminate the conservative gender assumptions underlying classic fairy tales,<sup>4</sup> while a more complex relationship between hypotext and hypertext appeared in later “postmodern” rewritings and re-visions, as highlighted by Cristina Bacchilega:

Postmodern revision is often two-fold, seeking to expose, make visible, the fairy tale’s complicity with “exhausted” narrative and gender ideologies, and, by working from the fairy tales’ multiple versions, seeking to expose, bring out, what the institutionalization of such tales for children has forgotten or left unexploited. (50)<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For a thorough introduction to fairy-tale criticism, see Donald Haase.

<sup>4</sup> See Jack Zipes (*Don't Bet on the Prince* 13) and Elizabeth Wanning Harries (100).

<sup>5</sup> See also Wilson about Atwood: “she displaces the fairy-tale plotline to make the marginalized subtext (...) central” (100).

Not only does the postmodern fairy tale denounce the patriarchal lie but it points towards and develops other aspects of these classic tales. Besides, postmodern rewritings also have a self-conscious dimension that questions the rules of production (Bacchilega 23). All these layers can be found in *Human Croquet* which portrays the developing conscience of a young girl in the sixties. *Human Croquet* is a *bildungsroman* insofar as it depicts Isobel's trials and tribulations of growing up and achieving maturity, which is also the underlying plotline of a number of fairy tales. In a phenomenon of embedding, Isobel narrates her experience of life via situations and characters borrowed from fairy tales. The question is: what happens to her and to fairy tales when she "trans-contextualizes" (Hutcheon 7) them? Possibly because *Human Croquet* is a full-length novel that bristles with fairy-tale intertexts but cannot really be summed up as the exclusive rewrite of one specific fairy story, it is rarely mentioned in recent works focusing on contemporary rewritings of fairy tales.<sup>6</sup> Yet Atkinson's use of fairy tales is of the postmodern revising type described by Sharon Wilson,

Postmodern novelists who embed fairy-tale intertexts generally "revise" or deconstruct them, using irony, parody and sometimes satire of these intertexts alongside the tales' original character types, themes, motifs and images. Often turning fairy-tale plots upside down, reversing outcomes, and using unreliable narrators, anti-heroes/heroines, and magical realism, the texts generally exist in a romance mode and may still depict transformation and metamorphosis. (99)

We shall see in this paper how Atkinson enacts the feminist re-vision advocated by Adrienne Rich and exposes "the fairy tale's complicity with "exhausted" narrative and gender ideologies" (Bacchilega 50) while developing hidden aspects of the fairy tales. This exposure is as much the aim of the novel as it is a structuring element and the topic of the text. As the self-conscious dimension of the narrative indeed suggests, becoming aware of the lie is part of the growing-up process for the heroine.

After examining how fairy-tale motifs come into play as structuring devices in the novel, I shall focus on Atkinson's idiosyncratic re-vision

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<sup>6</sup> Julie Sanders mentions it in her chapter on "'Others Versions' of Fairy Tale and Folklore" in *Adaptation and Appropriation* (87-88) and Kevin Paul Smith grounds his reading of *Human Croquet* as a magic realist novel on the use of fairy-tale intertextuality.

of women's roles in fairy tales as this point is indeed a capital element in postmodern fairy-tale rewritings.<sup>7</sup> Finally, we shall consider how she tackles what is often seen as the hallmark of the fairy tale: the happy ending.

## Part 1: Fairy-tale types and motifs as structuring device

*Human Croquet* is set somewhere in England in 1960 and, for the most part, makes a show of being firmly anchored in the real, notably with recourse to precise details of everyday life. For instance, a character's Adam's apple is compared to a Cox's Orange Pippin (26), characters look for Sellotape (34) and Hoovers are used to clean houses (71). Yet, even though its 384 pages obviously place it in the genre of the novel rather than in that of the fairy tale, *Human Croquet* continuously refers to the fairy tale: it borrows and appropriates a number of motifs and structures for shape, as we shall now see.

In *Human Croquet*, Atkinson retains the oral quality of tales and puts this to the fore with a homodiegetic narrator who frames her tale with two parts entitled beginning and "future", "I am Isobel Fairfax, I am the alpha and omega of narrators (I am omniscient) and I know the beginning and the end. The beginning is the word and the end is silence. And in between are all the stories. This is one of mine" (20).<sup>8</sup> The word is the world and the narrator's subjectivity and possible unreliability is foregrounded, which for Harries, is typical of twentieth-century tales: "Instead of presenting their stories as somehow immutable (...) recent storytellers tend to stress the subjective unreliability of their narrators. Each new tale is only one version of the many possible versions" (102). The introductory chapter, in which the narrator, Isobel, inscribes herself in a family line where magic, legends and fairy tales intertwine, displays the postmodern piling up of intertexts that will be found throughout the novel, and points to the fictional dimension

<sup>7</sup> As Cristina Bacchilega observes, in rewritings, whether they are subversive or not, "gender is almost inevitably the privileged place for articulating these de-naturalizing strategies" (23-24).

<sup>8</sup> Compare with the Gospel according to St JOHN 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made"; Revelations 1:8: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord".



of Isobel's narrative. Her sixteenth-century ancestor—Sir Francis Fairfax—is thus alluded to as a Bluebeard figure: “Some said (...) Some also said that he had a beautiful child wife (...) locked away in the attics of Fairfax Manor. Others said the woman in the attics was (...) his mad wife. There was even a rumour that his attics were full of dead wives, all of them hanging from butcher's hooks” (14). The reference to Perrault is clearly coloured by Charlotte Brontë's version of the tale in *Jane Eyre*: this weaving of intertexts underlines how tales are not flat and fixed but evolve and answer one another.

In *Human Croquet*, the narrator (sometimes self-consciously) reaches for fairy-tale motifs and patterns to depict her life. The reader thus recognizes punctual or sustained episodes rewritten from *Cinderella* —when Isobel goes to then runs away from the ball—, *Snow White* as well as *Hansel and Gretel* —when young Isobel and her brother Charles are lost in the woods —while Perrault's *Sleeping Beauty* gradually emerges as major hypotext. The reference to Perrault's princess who pricks her finger in an attic before falling in her enchanted sleep is established early. Indeed, Isobel begins her tale depicting herself lying in bed on “my birthday, my sixteenth —the mythic one, the legendary one. The traditional age for spindles to start pricking and suitors to come calling and a host of other symbolic sexual imagery to suddenly manifest itself” (23). Here as everywhere in her narrative, Isobel thus refers to fairy tales in a most knowing way. She jokingly and self-mockingly associates with Perrault's *Sleeping Beauty*. Yet in true postmodern manner, the distance imposed by the self-consciousness does not cancel what is being said: her own story is a new take on the tale in which Isobel is in a coma (as the reader learns three-quarters of the way through the book). The narrative displays and conflates certain key-features of the fairy tale: for instance, the kiss supposed to be given by the prince is the object of much longing and anticipation; in fairy tales, things come in threes and Atkinson applies this rule to the waking up scene now set on Christmas eve which repeats itself with variations, but always with the same ending—now a gruesome one, as it ends with the bloody death of Isobel's teenage love.

Most characters are also explicitly cast in parts to be found in fairy tales, focusing on a specific telling trait. Her brother Charles is thus said to be “as ugly as a storybook dwarf” (26); Gordon is the inefficient father, who, like Thomas the Rhymer, was away for seven years (a magic

number if any), who remarries, bringing in a stepmother into the family. Her next door friend Audrey Baxter is a conflation of Rapunzel —with her beautiful long hair— and of the princess in “Donkeyskin” (282) persecuted as she is by her incestuous father, Mr Baxter; Mrs Baxter is Isobel’s fairy godmother, albeit a powerless one. Handsome Malcolm Lovat is “a prince” (38) whose mother is declared to be an ogress (38) just like the Prince’s in Perrault’s version of Sleeping Beauty. Julie Sanders appropriately reminds us that “Atkinson is especially interested in the fairy tale’s invocation of the family both as an ideal and as an entity capable of horrific dysfunctionality” (87). Fairy tales are double-edged indeed. Encouraged by Disney representations of the tales, references to the tale may misleadingly be associated with lightness. But they all have a dark side that is now brought to the fore. Emma Parker aptly remarks that “Atkinson draws on the menace of the original fairy tales to expose the underside of ordinary life, which features murder, incest, and domestic violence” (14). Yet, Isobel also draws on fairy-tale patterns for comfort and notably to fill in the blanks left by her mother’s absence: the narrative she invents for her mother is inspired by fairy tales and legends, illustrating the idea that “Fairy tales play to the child’s hankering after nobler, richer, altogether better origins, the fantasy of being a prince or a princess in disguise, the Freudian ‘family romance’” (Warner 210). The enigmatic Lady Fairfax who appears in some parts of the novel is indeed Isobel’s template for her representation of Eliza, her unknown mother: the same motifs from folktales and legends are drawn on to represent these elusive feminine characters. One notes for example the fantastic arrival of Lady Fairfax, an “enigmatic creature whose beginning and end were veiled in mystery” (15), on “one wild, storm-driven night” (15), which is echoed in “Eliza was a mystery. Nobody knew where she came from” (91). Both women are given a similar destiny: appearing and /or disappearing in forests and woods, which are traditional places for fairies to live in. A mystery surrounds the birth of their children, evoking relationships between mortals and fairies relying on the mortal abiding by a condition set by the fairy. The narrator also indicates that the “new lady Fairfax favoured green”(16), which is the colour of the fairies and accordingly the one worn by Eliza on the day of her supposed disappearance in the woods, just like Lady Fairfax “disappearing from underneath the Lady Oak, fading away”(16). The distinction between past and present seems to be utterly collapsing

when Isobel finds herself in the same situation as the other two women, disappearing from the eyes of the boys pursuing her because she has turned into a tree (262). This repetition of a similar disappearance suggests the enactment of a timeless plot: progression in time is stalled and Isobel is in danger of following the same female patterns as previous generations of women. In most cases however, Isobel derails the fairy-tale plot when it comes to her own life as the sign of her growing up and emancipation from set patterns of behaviour. A young girl growing up in the 1960s, Isobel has the feminist convictions of her time and accordingly points to the inadequacies of both fairy-tale patterns and the period she lives in.

## **Part 2: Re-vision via humour and parody**

The “trans-contextualization” (Hutcheon) of fairy-tale episodes to the England of the sixties brings to the fore elements that are usually passed over or taken for granted. While the numerous references and allusions to fairy tales are accessible and definitely have a rallying dimension because they belong to popular culture, these well-known motifs undergo “re-vision” as they are “defamiliarised” (to borrow Viktor Schklovsky’s term): topoi are made new and strange to point to their construction of gender roles in conflation with patriarchy. In its questioning of the assumptions usually made about gender, Atkinson’s novel fully subscribes to the agenda of postmodern fairy tales described by Cristina Bacchilega: “If the fairy tale symbolically seeks to represent some unquestionable natural state of being, postmodern fairy tales seek to expose this state’s generic and gendered “lie” or artifice” (35). What is particularly interesting in Atkinson’s approach is that this takes place via parody and humour. The technique of parody or “repetition with critical distance” (Hutcheon 6) or “repetition with difference” (Hutcheon 101) allows for the “critical revision” (Hutcheon 15) of the well-known. As Hutcheon convincingly argued, the ridicule is not necessarily the purpose of contemporary parody. In Atkinson’s usage, parody is nevertheless often accompanied with derision and humour which may add their weight to the subversive project of rewriting.

It is a fact that fairy tales can be read as misogynist and Atkinson’s rewriting clearly aims at “re-righting” (Zabus) the situation. “Ironical inversion is a characteristic of all parody”, Linda Hutcheon tells us (6)

and we find it at work in *Human Croquet* in which Atkinson makes significant amendments to fairy-tale figures and plots, adopting the simple but efficient technique of gender and/or role reversal. So, on the one hand, for instance, the part of the jealous witch in "Rapunzel" is significantly attributed to a man: "If Audrey develops womanly curves and wiles, Mr Baxter will probably lock her at the top of a very high tower"(26). As father, husband and headmaster of the local school, Mr Baxter represents despotic patriarchal authority. Cast in the part of the evil villain he is a concentrated version of all the negative aspects of male figures in tales: cruel husband, incestuous father and murderous lover. On the other hand, female characters are empowered: they are given a more central and active part in the plot, with different values attached. Such is notably the case of the mother and the stepmother. Indeed, like many fairy-tale heroines, Isobel is motherless. But far from being dismissed in the early opening lines to concentrate on the ensuing trials and adventures, this absence of the mother is at the core of her narrative and seems to constitute the object of the heroine's quest.<sup>9</sup> As in other similar cases of motherless children, Isobel is duly granted a stepmother whom she professes to dislike intensely but there is a major difference in Atkinson's novel: the step-mother, Debbie, is a helpless and harmless young woman trying to do her best with a disastrous household. Atkinson thus refuses to take up the stance of women oppressing women often displayed in tales (Marina Warner points out that in many stories all over the world women are often the agents of the young heroine's sufferings (202)).<sup>10</sup> In fact, she reverses the situation since Debbie is the one who saves Isobel (after the latter has been hit by a tree) when she gives her "the kiss of life" (347). The usual Snow White scenario is inverted and the female character of the stepmother rehabilitated. Instead of poisoning her stepdaughter, the stepmother saves her and thus gains a status akin to the "real" mother's, confirming the similarity between the two female figures hinted at earlier in the novel when both were associated with Grimm's Ashenputtel

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<sup>9</sup> It turns out that Isobel and her brother have repressed the memory of their mother's murder.

<sup>10</sup> Patricia Duncker also argued that "The division between Mother and Daughter, and between Sisters, is one of the cornerstones of patriarchy. (...) Cinderella, Snow White, Beauty and the Beast all argue the case for women, beware women" (7).

(Cinderella).<sup>11</sup> Atkinson's narrative thus sets up a sisterhood between both mother and stepmother instead of opposing one to the other.

As for the teenage protagonist who struggles with the role models offered by fairy tales, she quickly appears as an anti-heroine. First and foremost, Isobel is the opposite of the dainty blonde princess or girl: as is suggested with the reference to the ugly duckling (215), she is probably not pretty and she is big (23). Secondly, she is an anti-fairy-tale heroine also because of her proactivity and awareness. Thirdly, Isobel is indeed centre stage in her tale that gradually appears as a rewriting of Sleeping Beauty's story. One of the key-features of rewriting is to give a voice to the voiceless<sup>12</sup> and Atkinson definitely follows this rule here when, instead of being discussed and then left to sleep in a corner until it is time for the prince to come, the narrative focuses on the young heroine's point of view. It is highly significant that Atkinson's version of Sleeping Beauty should be in charge, telling the tale. Indeed if Perrault's Sleeping Beauty is supposed to be the heroine of the eponymous tale, she does not have a voice of her own and is the epitome of passivity. Not only does Atkinson give a voice to the sleepy heroine but she parodies the whole tale: Isobel's sleep is coma-induced after a tree fell on her. Sixteen-year-old Isobel is repeatedly said to be lying in her attic bedroom. She is waiting for her prince, desperate to be kissed but this scene—when the prince wakes her up with a kiss—is parodied with a multiplication of waking up scenes that are never caused by a prince's kiss. On one occasion, in place of the prince (225) is a spotty boy trying to force himself on her (227). The life-saving kiss usually comes upon the passive heroine unaware. Here, Isobel, “a bag of hormones” is, if not actively looking for it, obsessed with the idea. She makes no bones about the fact that her interest in her prince is mainly sexual: when offered to make a wish, “I wish, naturally, for sex with Malcolm Lovat” (49); “I (...) concentrate on imagining Malcolm Lovat without his clothes” (142); “I was just daydreaming about him flinging me onto a four-poster bed and telling me how beautiful I am compared

<sup>11</sup> Each is associated with a different stage in the life of the heroine: the toiling years for Debbie asked to separate lentils from ashes as a condition to go the Prince's ball while Eliza is cast as the “true bride” to be found thanks to her shoe.

<sup>12</sup> Angela Carter gave a voice to the nameless wife on Bluebeard in “The Bloody Chamber” (1979); Margaret Atwood to the ugly sisters, the witch and the stepmother in “Bad Gals” (*Good Bones*, 1992); Robert Coover also followed the witch's point of view in *Stepmother* (2004).

with Hilary" (215). This is a far cry from Sleeping Beauty, who must not initiate sexual activity. There is a kiss eventually but far from being romantically given by a handsome prince, it is "performed" by her much mocked and abused stepmother Debbie trying to reanimate her. In the end, Sleeping Beauty alias Isobel wakes up by herself and definitely not with the help of a male agent, thus indicating the self-sufficiency of the character and her maturity.

Another key-element in *Human Croquet* is how the fairy-tale episodes repeatedly alluded to by Isobel are treated with humour. In this respect, Atkinson's text is close to this "number of unusually funny feminist fairy tales whose main purpose is to show the farcical side of sexist expectations in classical fairy tales" (Zipes, *Don't Bet on the Prince*: 15). For example, when she fantasises that the dog newly appeared on her doorstep might be her brother Charles, she immediately alludes to the tale *The Wild Swans* only to mock Andersen's sacrificial sister and assert her difference: "I suppose a better sister would have set about weaving him a shirt from nettles and throwing it over his furred-over body so that he could be released from his enchantment and resume his human form. I give him some cat food instead. He is absurdly grateful" (72-73). Humour derives from the contrast in attitudes —a contrast enhanced by the change in style when a long and complex sentence is followed by two simple ones that consequently seem more abrupt. Atkinson thus points to the unsatisfactory nature of the models fairy stories propose. Again it is one of Andersen's tales of unrequited love and sacrifice that is the butt of her mockery: on one of the occasions that Malcolm fails to kiss her, Isobel comments, "How long will I keep my passion silent? Until my tongue is cut and my silver-scale sardine tail is turned into awkward, unwieldy legs? Perhaps not quite that far" (218). Here again Isobel realizes that she cannot follow the proposed pattern. In a humorous tone Atkinson denounces the masochistic sacrifice expected of the young heroine in fairy stories. In having Isobel refusing to fit in with these motifs, Atkinson points to the limitations and gender roles imposed on women. The heroine is shown to construct herself against the gendered role these narratives impose: they may form a large part of her models and references (showing the formative part fairy tales play or might play in female development) but they

do not suit her.<sup>13</sup> Treating the roles set by the tales with humour, which in Freud's words is "the ego's victorious assertion of its own invulnerability", is Isobel's way to assert her difference, i.e. her own identity. As Freud explains in "On Humour", "humor is not resigned, it is rebellious" and throughout the text, humour is indeed Isobel's way to resist.<sup>14</sup>

The gloomy rewriting of Cinderella going to the ball is an example of how Atkinson debunks romantic myths via parody (252-4): Isobel is unexpectedly given the chance to attend a Christmas eve party but her dress is ugly, nobody notices her or is interested in her and she has to search the house to find her prince —and when she eventually finds him he is nursing a bottle of gin. The famous episode of the shoe lost while running away reappears in a very different context: the heroine loses it while leaving the house followed not by an enamoured prince but by a group of lecherous college boys who want to rape her (261). Contrasting the fairy-tale pattern with her actual situation is again a source of humour, "Why is this happening to me? I'm supposed to be waltzing rapturously in Malcolm Lovat's handsome arms not running for my virtue" (261).

Isobel's relationship with fairy tales and her regular confrontation with their heroines as unsuitable role models illustrate the girl's journey to adulthood. The ultimate acceptance of the happy ending as a deceit is presented as the sign of her new maturity.

### Part 3: Rewriting the happy ending

Not all fairy tales contain the promise of a happy ending but most of the ones that Isobel refers to and associates with do: with the exception of the little Mermaid, Snow White, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty and the heroine of "The Wild Swans" all meet a happy fate in the guise

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<sup>13</sup> In this respect, Isobel seems to be a mouthpiece for Rowe's argument that "Fairy tales no longer provide mythic validations of desirable female behaviour; instead they seem more purely escapist or nostalgic, having lost their potency because of the widening gap between social practice and romantic idealization" (Zipes 1986, 211).

<sup>14</sup> Isobel's humour can rarely be separated from an acute awareness of language and stories. For instance, 'Go out,' I repeat cautiously. 'Do you mean (surely not) on a date?' 'Well,' he says, looking sullen, 'we don't have to call it that if you don't want to.' A wave of mild hysteria begins to roll over me. 'What shall we call it then? A fig? A prune?' (226).



of a wealthy prince who often comes as a reward for their endured hardship. For Bruno Bettelheim, the happy ending with its reassuring dimension is a condition of the genre: "In the traditional fairy tale, the hero is rewarded and the evil person meets his well-deserved fate, thus satisfying the child's deep need for justice to prevail. How else can a child hope that justice will be done to him, who so often feels unfairly treated?" (144). But fairy-tale happy endings have long been the target of feminists' reworkings because "Patriarchy becomes entrenched not only in content but also in the recurring utopian closure of structure, which lends itself particularly well to rigid gender roles" (Tiffin 21). Our final question is: how does Atkinson deal with the usual happy ending motif?

Isobel's experience of various Christmas eves all ending with the death of the object of her teenage love augurs ill for a happy ending. Moreover, Sanders rightly points that a "knowing attitude adopted by the narrative towards its intertextual source (...) causes us persistently to question any possibility of the traditional fairy-tale happy ending for these characters" (88). Fairy stories and their endings are indeed openly discussed in the novel. Isobel addresses the question and challenges the form the reward often takes. Indeed, as we know, retribution for the fairy-tale heroine often comes in the guise of a prince to marry. Atkinson directly challenges these reductive expectations for girls. For instance, when Isobel despairs of ever attracting attention from the opposite sex, her friend Carmen supposedly reassures her with: "Oh, it'll happen to you one day,' Carmen says airily. 'It happens to everyone — *you fall in love, you get married, you have kids*, that's what you do... someone will come along.'" (160, *italics mine*). The repetition of the same rhythm is significant and adds to this deliberately bored and boring presentation of a girl's future. A passing reference to the song in Walt Disney's 1937 *Snow White* movie further helps to expose the manufactured lie: " 'Oh, one day,' Mrs Baxter, equally assured, "your prince will come (she almost breaks into song) and you'll fall in love and be happy" (160).

The notion of progress that underlies many fairy tales and is crowned by a happy ending is denied in *Human Croquet* in which the narrator asserts, "But we all know what ugly ducklings grow up into. Ugly ducks." (215). This denial reaches a peak in the story of Isobel's mother's life told from beginning to end in a chapter ironically called "The bonny bonny road" (recalling the one that takes Thomas the



Rhymer to “fair Elfland”): bought, then stolen from her rich parents as a baby, a victim of incest with her adoptive father and of her neighbour’s lust, Eliza runs away and becomes a high-class whore, marries, has two children before being murdered by her lover. One can recognize an inverted version of the fairy-tale plot as the movement from misery to happiness is reversed: Eliza goes from wealth to poverty, from a doting environment to a sordid murder. There is no retribution for the ordeals of this very active protagonist in what seems to be an anti-fairy story.

Atkinson ensures her readers are aware that fairy-tale narratives are neither natural nor innocent. The ending of the tale tells on the teller. Isobel thus points out that Mrs Baxter and Eliza give different conclusions to “Little Red Riding Hood” and other tales, thus revealing their different characters and views on life: “when Eliza had told them they had frequently ended badly and contained a great deal of humiliation and torture, whereas in Mrs Baxter’s versions, the stories all had happy endings”(192). Mrs Baxter is thus an old-style teller, of the type described by Marina Warner:

when critics reproach fairy tale for the glib promise of its traditional ending—‘And they all lived happily ever after’—they overlook the knowledge of misery within marriage that the preceding story reveals in its every line. The conclusion of fairy tales works a charm against despair, the last spell the narrating fairy godmother casts for change in her subjects and her hearers’ destinies. (217)

But as the happy ending version comes from is the victim of a violent husband who is moreover unable to protect her daughter from him, the charm is clearly shown to be ineffectual.

Having foregrounded the fabricated dimension of the fairy tale and mocked its saccharine ending as presented by Carmen and Mrs Baxter, Isobel thus gives her definition of the happy ending: “The second coming of Eliza was no longer just around the corner, with its restoration of real right justice and suffering rewarded (the happy ending)” (208). The satisfaction of the retributive fairy-tale happy ending is not entirely renounced but it is clearly limited to the domain of fiction. Isobel thus declares: “Only the imagination can embrace the impossible—the golden mountain, the fire-breathing dragon, the happy ending” (356). Whereas the villain (Mr Baxter) commits suicide, he is only punished in the narrator’s imagination when twice, she imagines him murdered

by his empowered wife. Isobel can then end her version of events with the satisfied “Real right justice. Done” (351). The same contrast can be found between the outcomes to Eliza’s story as opposed to that of Lady Fairfax. Whereas in actual fact Eliza is murdered, Isobel can picture Lady Fairfax riding off into the sunset, away from her violent husband with her lover.

Outside the realm of the imagination, Atkinson really relinquishes the happy ending with its promise of marriage and progress. In an ultimate chapter entitled “future” that reads like an epilogue, Isobel lists the fates of the main characters. Reflecting the emancipation of women in the 60s and 70s, most female characters have a life outside the domestic sphere: “Audrey became one of the first women to be ordained in the Church of England (...). Eunice (...) worked as a geologist for an oil company (...)” (371), Isobel is a writer of historical romance. But this last part is deprived of the humorous and lively tone that runs through the rest of the novel. Hard-edged reality seems to finally hit the characters. As a contradiction to the set pattern of fairy stories, there is something completely random in the fates given to the characters, the cruelty of which is enhanced by the laconic style in which the information is given. For instance: “Six months pregnant, Carmen died, along with Bash, in a car crash in 1962” (371). Whole lives are covered in one sentence, as in “Hilary became a solicitor, married a doctor, had two children, divorced the doctor, married a journalist, had another child (born with a slight mental handicap), became a barrister, divorced the journalist, became human. Became my friend” (372). The paratactical structure and repetition of verb and object enhance the factual nature of the life depicted here, deprived of a story.

The heroine does not marry her so-called prince at all of course but she has sex with him years later. In fact, no marriage is mentioned and she finally appears as a single mother. In some respects, the text resolutely offers an anti-happy ending: no marriage, and no progress. If there is a marriage, it leads to no good. Just like Jeanette Winterson and Sarah Maitland when they go beyond the happy ending,<sup>15</sup> Atkinson

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<sup>15</sup> Winterson picks up the story of the twelve dancing princesses in *Sexing the Cherry* (1989) after the Grimms’ conclusion and in “Sleeping Beauty Wakes Up”, Maitland goes beyond the happy ending: the prince and the princess turn out not to be suited to each other and by mutual agreement, he puts her to sleep again with a new kiss.

negates the happiness traditionally attached to final unions in tales. Characters get divorced and murdered and raped.

## Conclusion

In Atkinson's revision of *Sleeping Beauty*, we recognize the familiar transformation operated by contemporary rewritings that give a voice to the voiceless. The narrative now belongs to the young girl in her sleep and she really becomes the heroine of her tale. Besides, through the character of Isobel who is looking up to fairy stories for guidance in the absence of her mother, Atkinson humorously confronts the readers to the limiting and inappropriate role models set up for girls and women in fairy tales. *Human Croquet* thus appears as a postmodern fairy tale inasmuch as it parodies and challenges the fairy stories it self-consciously represents. Cristina Bacchilega's words concluding her study of tales rewritten by Raymond Carver, Robert Coover and Donald Barthelme apply here too: "rewriting need not be simply a stylistic or ideological updating to make the tale more appealing to late twentieth-century adult audiences" but a "questioning of both narrative construction and assumptions about gender" (50). Yet in some respects Atkinson's novel differs greatly from other rewrites of fairy-tales, and particularly from Angela Carter's, whose tales collected in *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) have become canonical examples of fairy-tale rewriting. Atkinson adopts the genre of the novel, which implies a long narrative in which the necessarily stretched rewrite of *Sleeping Beauty* is consequently diffused. Fairy-tale rewrites are indeed usually shorter: even Coover's *Stepmother* (2004) is no longer than ninety pages long. Atkinson also summons a multitude of fairy tales and thus does not offer as precise a rewriting of a set text as done by Angela Carter in *The Bloody Chamber* or A.S. Byatt in "The Glass Coffin" in *Possession* (1990) for instance. Moreover, she anchors the story in a realist setting and endows her characters with realist attributes, as is obvious from the fact that the characters are all given relatively common names – whereas both Carter and Byatt tend to stick to nameless protagonists. Whereas Carter, Byatt and Winterson directly rework the original tales, Atkinson fleshes out realist characters with fairy-tale traits and motifs. She also gives her tale a self-conscious narrator. In doing so, Atkinson offers her own challenging re-vision/rewriting with the debunking of underlying ideological implications that characterises postmodern fiction.

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# POLYPHONY AS ALLEGORICAL STRATEGY IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN*

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## **Abstract**

This article is a study of narrative voice in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), trying to illustrate that Rushdie conceives an allegorical method by which the language acquires a plasticity that "reveals" more than states; the polyphonic quality of the novel is Rushdie's way to "stage" and highlight the rich and variegated condition of postcolonial India, and to preserve it from interested categorizations, language becoming thus not a means but a goal in itself. The ambitious intertextual scope of the novel, with its myriad of references to the nation's narrative tradition, most often in a playful tone, attempts at denouncing the bigotry and artificiality implicit in our historical and cultural constructions.

**Keywords:** Rushdie – *Midnight's Children* – Postcolonial literature – Allegory – Postmodernism – Polyphony

## **Resumen**

Este artículo es un estudio de la voz narrativa en la novela de Salman Rushdie *Midnight's Children* (1981), tratando de demostrar que Rushdie sustenta su obra en un método alegórico por el que el lenguaje "revela" más de lo que afirma; la naturaleza polifónica de esta novela es una forma de "escenificar" y hacer visible la riqueza y diversidad de la india postcolonial, con el fin de preservarla de toda clasificación interesada, y haciendo así del lenguaje un fin en sí mismo. La ambiciosa dimensión intertextual de la novela, con su infinidad de referencias a la

tradición narrativa de la India, casi siempre en un tono informal, busca denunciar el dogmatismo y la rigidez de nuestras creaciones históricas y culturales.

**Palabras Clave:** Rushdie – *Midnight's Children* – Literatura postcolonial – Alegoría – Postmodernismo – Polifonía

### 1. Introduction: *Midnight's Children* as an allegorical counter-narrative

The publication of *Midnight's Children* in 1981 gave its author, Salman Rushdie, an unexpected degree of prominence in the world of English letters. The spotlight on the book became more intense as a result of its being awarded the Booker Prize. Shortly thereafter, Rushdie's work became a staple of postcolonial literature, one that was featured in numerous English courses and which prompted prolonged discussion in the academic arena. Part of its appeal derived from the diverse, sometimes incompatible readings the text prompted. Thus, in the preface to the novel that Rushdie had written almost a quarter of a century before, he acknowledges what appears to be a profound cultural divide that shapes the different exegeses of his book: "In the West people tended to read *Midnight's Children* as a fantasy, while in India people thought of it as pretty realistic, almost a history book" (Rushdie xvii). It is part of our conventional thinking that that which is history is not fantasy, and viceversa; at first glance, these two are mutually exclusive labels, but Rushdie's novel hinges them into a rich amalgam of cultural references that manages to both stress and resist the rigidity of historical discourse.

First and foremost, *Midnight's Children* is not a single story, but a compendium of many; it is the result of the individual endeavour of its narrator, Saleem Sinai, a character who believes that he has a special privilege to tell the world about his trajectory as a result of his having been born on the midnight India gained its independence. As a narrator, Saleem tries to bridge gaps supposedly as wide as that which separates India and the West and their modes of meaning-fixing. That's the way to interpret Saleem's obsession with "swallowing the world" (*Midnight's Children* 4), as an attempt to bring the varied cultural hues that his

environment is composed of under the scope of his “multitudinous” narratives; but their openness, hybridity, and heterogeneity appear threatened by other larger narratives which are based on ideas of purity, and this contention gives way to the novel’s ideological gist, as it will be seen later. *Midnight’s Children* is an essentially subversive text, one that makes extensive use of storytelling to challenge both imperialist and nationalist cultural systems.

This article is a study of narrative voice in *Midnight’s Children*, trying to illustrate that Rushdie conceives an allegorical<sup>1</sup> method by which the language acquires a plasticity that “reveals” more than states; the polyphonic quality of the novel is Rushdie’s way to “stage” and highlight the rich and variegated condition of postcolonial India, and to preserve it from interested categorizations, language becoming thus not a means but a goal in itself. In allegory, the metaphorical frame of reference is found at the level of discourse, it is the text’s textured language that “speaks” and gives insight into the literal frame of reference.<sup>2</sup> *Midnight’s Children* is not a novel of plot, but one where the confrontation of different discourses stresses the dangers of dogmatic thought and the weaknesses of grand narratives. Saleem’s unprejudiced verbal style is often stifled by the biased rhetorics of power, and his audacious undertaking involves achieving verbal emancipation.

Rushdie blends masterfully postmodern strategies in the mode of historiographic metafiction as conceived by Linda Hutcheon<sup>3</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup> As Brian McHale explained in his still esteemed book *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987), allegory is a postmodernist formula par excellence that devises “(...) a text-length trope which preserves the two-level ontological structure of metaphor (literal frame of reference, metaphorical frame of reference), but in which, instead of being announced explicitly, the two-level structure remains implicit, disseminated throughout the text” (McHale, 140). The fictional world of an allegorical narrative is a tropological world, and *Midnight’s Children* projects a reality that is based on discourse; the cultural and ideological conflict that is the novel’s main theme is then tropologically veiled by the verbal conflict.

<sup>2</sup> Allegorical in nature is the heterogeneous quality of the voices that crowd Saleem’s speech, but also the most essentially hybrid linguistic complexion of his prose. Thus Saleem constantly blends not only English and Indian words, as in “And drinking so much, janum... that’s not good (*Midnight’s Children*, 106); “Amina Begum! . . . Wake up! Give something, Begum Sahiba! (*ibid*); and “Come, cousinji, lady is waiting!” (*ibid*, 122), but also Bombay slang and Urdu and Hindi words that Rushdie very often incorporates in his text without translation, thus resisting and highlighting the interested transparency of dominant discourses.

<sup>3</sup> Hutcheon coined this term in her seminal work in 1988, and it has been since broadly applied for the interpretation of the paradoxical and often contradictory presence of the past in much postmodernist and contemporary cultural manifestations. As she



strategies inspired in the Indian oral folklore, as the author himself explained:

Listening to this man (a famous story teller in Baroda) reminded me of the shape of the oral narrative. It's not linear. An oral narrative does not go from the beginning to the middle to the end of the story. It goes in great swoops, it goes in spirals or in loops, it every so often reiterates something that happened earlier to remind you, and then takes you off again .... So that's what *Midnight's Children* was, I think, and I think everything about Laurence Sterne, García Marquez, and all that, comes a long way behind that, and that was the thing that I felt when writing it that I was trying to do. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *The Empire* 181)

But the irregular and often chaotic structure of *Midnight's Children* does more than simply echoing the genuine and essentially oral — and, like Rushdie's novel, also often allegorical—character of Indian culture;<sup>4</sup> the ambitious intertextual scope of the novel, with its myriad of references to the nation's narrative tradition, most often in a playful tone, is shaped up in the form of an allegory intended to dismantle, in a markedly postmodern fashion, history and fiction as human constructs. According to Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, allegory "(...) becomes particularly significant for postcolonial writers for the way in which it disrupts the notion of orthodox history, classical realism and imperial representation in general" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Post-Colonial* 9). Allegory, which is by definition a tropological evocation of characters and actions outside the narrative frame of reference, is a convenient rhetorical strategy in postcolonial writing as an indirect form of representation that resists verbal and political domination.

As Frederic Jameson claimed "All third-world texts are necessarily, I want to argue, allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call *national allegories*, even when, or perhaps I should say, particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel." (Jameson

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explained: "Historiographic metafiction incorporates all three of these domains: that is, its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs (historiographic metafiction) is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past" (Hutcheon 1988, 5).

<sup>4</sup> Allegory is said a prototypical form of Indian thought —it is probably the most popular form of story-telling (examples of this are the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, which are allegories narrating the war between good and evil).

69). Following Jameson's argument, the historical discourse of the Indian nation can never be a discourse of facts, but a discourse of the imagination; the struggle for the creation of a national culture makes of postcolonial India a nation that has mainly come into existence through its fictional and non-fictional writings.

If the tendency in early postcolonial studies was generally to foster the dichotomy between colonizer and colonized nations, more recent criticism concentrates on the cultural hybridity generated in all processes of colonization; Homi K. Bhabha, –one of the members of the “Holy Trinity” of postcolonialism, together with Said and Spivak–, has studied and reconceptualized the intermediate space where the West and the non-West negotiate meaning; in his book *The Location of Culture* (1994) he explains: “The ‘beyond’ is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past ... we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion” (Bhabha 1). Terms like “hybrid” or “liminal” have become recurrent notions in the discourse on postcolonialism.

In this same book, Bhabha argues that the “struggle against colonial oppression not only changes the direction of Western history, but challenges the historicist idea of time as a progressive, ordered whole” (ibid. 41). Simon Malpas interprets this comment as an example of that sense of postmodern history that challenges the exclusive structures of a grand narrative. For him, what Bhabha means is

... that postcolonialism's struggle against the grand narratives that underpin imperialist thought is not based simply on a strategy of ‘changing’ their ‘direction’ to include under the heading ‘Man’ people from non-European or North American cultures, but that it is also seeking to transform the idea of progress and universality by thinking about the discontinuities generated by the violence of colonialism. On the basis of this, a key aim of Bhabha's criticism is to produce counter-narratives that make explicit the legacies and effects of the carnage and brutality of colonial rule that modern histories have tended to downplay. (Malpas 99-100)

*Midnight's Children* provides one more counter-narrative, and an allegorical one, with Saleem's personal and richly evocative voice confronting different cultural codes and, above all, the nationalistic

discourse that Indira Gandhi epitomizes, as it will be illustrated in the third section.

The hybrid character of *Midnight's Children* finds its highest expression in Rushdie's language. According to Scott Langeland, this author's literary style is best recognized by its "Rabelaisian humour, a hybrid form of post-colonial and post-modernist discourses" as well as a properly "'Rushdiesque' language" (Langeland 16). The latter consists of a particular form of non-English English, with its own subset techniques, that has the power "to mould a vibrant prose whose positive tone makes language a bridge between cultures" (ibid. 21). As previously illustrated, Saleem's discourse incorporates —very often untranslated— words and voices from different languages and dialects, an allegorical showcase of his and postcolonial India's heterogeneous historical and cultural complexion. Rushdie's method is remarkably fruitful not only because his text-length allegory denounces the bigotry implicit in our historical and cultural constructions, but because it also mirrors one of the main effects of postcolonialism, that of the explosion of boundaries; in the allegorical polyphony that is *Midnight's Children*, both the Orient and the Occident —in Edward Said's terminology— constitute an entangled network of cultural allusions, and the perfect dialogue between the text's form and content harmonizes with a historical context where any mode of rigid categorization seems untenable.

## 2. Saleem's Polyphonic voice: Interplay and Legacies

It would be impossible for Saleem to embrace diversity if his voice were not a characteristically polyphonic one modulated by the dissonant echoes of his forebears, whose own trajectories constitute an integral part of his. Taking stock of the critic Fred Evans' idea that "each voice is shot through with the rest" (Evans 727), it can be argued that it would be difficult to depict Saleem's use of language without initially paying careful attention to the voices that fight for audibility in his most immediate milieu. It is precisely this aspect of his self-fashioning that he sets out to validate from the beginning of his narrative project, which focuses on Aadam Aaziz's —Saleem's grandfather— problematic return to Kashmir after having spent four years studying medicine in Germany (*Midnight's Children* 6). His growing detachment from his background is made evident by his decision "never again to kiss earth

for any god or man” after he hits his prominent nose against the soil during prayer (Ibid. 4).

This proclamation signals Aadam's departure from what can be considered a stricter practice of Islam, and, more importantly for hermeneutic purposes, its cultural legacies. However, Aadam can't find absolute comfort in an alternative system of meaning-fixing, such as the Western one he became acquainted with during his stay in Heidelberg, as can be understood from his placement of Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?* and the Social Democratic Party of Germany's press organ *Vorwärts* in a shelf that seems to be surrounded by forgetfulness on all sides (ibid. 16). Rather, he is forced to coexist with a hole within him (ibid.4), which symbolizes his lack of a cultural substratum that can completely fill him. Therefore, Aadam is portrayed as a culturally ambivalent character; yet, his hybridity is not expressed in terms of presence, but of absence. Saleem does not only inherit his grandfather's nose, but, as it will be seen in the course of this essay, his fragmentary perspective, too.

Aadam's weakening of his previously held monolithic beliefs about cultural allegiances in the context of geographical displacement is to be replicated by Saleem himself, especially when he moves with his family to Pakistan, “the Land of the Pure”, —the adjective “pure” is associated in the novel with sectarian and fanatic forms of thought— and when he later manages to return to India. It is to be observed that, whereas Aadam Aaziz possesses a culturally malleable voice that inflects Saleem's, her wife Naseem —Saleem's grandmother, a staunch defendant of Kashmiri traditional modes of meaning-fixing (*Midnight's Children* 38; 50-51)— decides to relinquish the bulk of her expressive capabilities. Even when she allows herself the privilege of speech, her discourse is peppered with the ubiquitous “whatisname” term (ibid., 49), which speaks to her vulnerability as a communicative agent. Thus, it is to be expected that she will be less able than her husband to make an impact on the crystallization of Saleem's voice and, by extension, on his narratives.

Focusing on Saleem's parents, it's essential to notice the separation between his biological and adoptive parents. On one side we find William Methwold and Vanita, and on the other, Ahmed and Amina Sinai. Except for Vanita, whose intervention in unfolding of the novel

is rather muted, the other three characters assert themselves in ways that are crucial to Saleem's definition of his own voice. Padma's surprise at the revelation of Saleem's true origins provides us with a succinct yet incomplete framing of the narrator's selfhood: "An Anglo?" Padma exclaims in horror. "What are you telling me? You are an Anglo-Indian?" (ibid.,158).

Taking into account the importance that is given to the idea of the interplay of voices in Evans' analysis of *Midnight's Children* (Evans, 727), any study that seeks to uncover what lies beneath the labels Saleem might accept for himself should seek to explain the ways in which the voices of his many parents interact with each other in order to create the highly polyphonic language that is peculiar to Saleem's tales. The first instance in which an interaction between these culturally disparate figures is established happens when, in August 1947, the month when India finally gains independence, William Methwold, a departing Englishman, sells his Bombay estate to the Sinai clan and other local upper-middle class families (*Midnight's Children* 124). The physical substance of Methwold Estate —"conquerors' houses! Roman mansions; three-storey homes standing on a two-storey Olympus"—and also the symbolic —"houses which their owner, William Methwold, had named majestically after the palace of Europe: Versailles Villa, Buckingham Villa, Escorial Villa and Sans Souci"—reminds the reader of the fact that, despite political autonomy, after centuries of foreign domination, the new India will have to conform to hybridity in the cultural arena.

Methwold's legacy is larger still, for, in what might be his last direct attempt at shaping the voice of India through oral exchange, he manages to impose the long-held tradition of the cocktail hour on all the new inhabitants of the Estate (ibid.126). One sign of his success as a manipulator of cultural codes is the fact that Ahmed Sinai chooses or feels the need to speak in what is described as a "mockery of an Oxford drawl" during his conversations with the aristocrat (ibid. 127). That Ahmed's speech is an imperfect imitation of a prestigious British variety does suggest that Methwold's influence is pervasive; simultaneously, his choice of this hybrid variety of the English language hints at the permanence of Indian pre-colonial modes of expression in the face of alternative cultural forces.

In this context it should not be surprising Amina Sinai's ambivalence towards making known the prophecy about his soon-to-be-born child that she heard from the lips of Ramram Seth, a soothsayer. By being silent about the source of her knowledge, Amina can strike a balance between what are typically European forms of meaning-organization — the ones approved by Methwold — and traditionally Indian ones — the ones executed by the likes of Ramram Seth. Nevertheless, in *Midnight's Children* influence is a two-way street: as well as Ahmed's voice is "contaminated" with the foreign tones Methwold stands for, the latter is unable to shut himself from the rhythm on which the cadences of his Indian counterparts are projected. His confession of his taste for allegory reveals his own hybrid nature (ibid.127). Allegory has been said to be a prototypical form of Indian thought, that is, of Indian meaning-fixing, one to which Methwold is voluntarily paying his dues as he stages his carefully planned exit from the subcontinent.

However, as Saleem himself makes it clear, his line of parents does not just include his biological and adoptive ancestors. Since to understand one's life, it is necessary to "swallow the world", the narrator goes into a protracted enumeration of the many figures and phenomena that somehow "leaked into him", that is, that contributed to the birth of his polymorphous voice. By reading only a section of this list one can gain a better insight into the heterogeneity of Saleem's "umbilical" inheritance:

And fishermen, and Catherine of Braganza, and Mumbadevi coconuts rice; Sijavi's statue and Methwold's Estate; a swimming pool in the shape of British India and a two-storey hillock; a centre-parting and a nose from Bergerac; an inoperative clock tower and a little circus-ring; an Englishman's lust for an Indian allegory and the seduction of an accordionist's wife. Budgerigars, ceiling fans, the *Times of India* are all part of the luggage I brought into the world... do you wonder, then, that I was a heavy child? Blue Jesus leaked into me; and Mary's desperation, and Joseph's revolutionary wildness, and the flightiness of Alice Pereira... all these made me, too (ibid. 145-146).

It would be unthinkable to try to explain the essence of Saleem's inheritance just by resorting to one predominant narrative that could hold all these strands together; there is none such framework at hand. Instead, there is a profusion of physical and psychological

characteristics, historical and mythical figures and geographical features of multiple cultural sources; although at first this reality may seem chaotic, the truth is that neither the commonly universal nor the restrictively national can encompass all of them. Saleem's tale is a "collage" of discourses, and its extraordinary plasticity is originated in the heterogeneous "textures" of his voice. According to him, only by considering the bulk of these diverse elements can the reader understand him and his narrative in the context of postcolonial India. Exclusive narratives of one kind or another will not help in the realization of Saleem's allegorical quest for meaning.

### 3. Saleem's Purpose: Swallowing, Digesting, and Retelling

This section will concentrate on how Saleem grows to devote most of his life to his story-telling with the only purpose to contain and safeguard in the face of many powerful threats the multicultural world that has surrounded and made him; after all, his narrative is a mirroring of his life and, simultaneously, an allegory of the history of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh as independent states. It will be seen though that these processes of story-building and self-fashioning are not without their fissures and complexities.

Early in his infancy, some of Saleem's traits suggest that his presence in the world will change the categories by which the latter is understood. For instance, his early inability to close his eyes (*Midnight's Children* 171) can be associated with his yearning to swallow the whole world. His ever-open vision contrasts with his capacity to shut himself away from images that are believed to be undesired or unexplainable. From the very beginning, hints are found that he is committed to accepting all the shades that come his way instead of rejecting any which do not fit into whatever system of meaning-fixing is preferred; his porous eyesight is one of the foundations of his polyphonic voice.

One of the first things that Saleem sees is the city where he lives, Bombay. The city is one of the main reasons for Saleem's dependence on pluralistic modes of discourse as well as a source which he can tap for the unfolding of the many stories that his narratives comprise. It would be impossible to narrate the "teeming, as manifold, as multitudinously shapeless as ever" Bombay —or, for that matter, Saleem himself—



without taking into account the multiplicity of flavours that pass through its digestive system. No single cultural pattern can contain the profligate Bombay, and Saleem will incorporate as new “textures” of his discourse all those urban tendencies which appear to be irreconcilable.

On a more microscopic level, what happens to Methwold Estate after William Methwold finally leaves is also revealing about the hybrid condition of space in *Midnight's Children*. Even though it is said that “after the Englishman’s disappearance his successors emptied his palaces of their abandoned contents” (ibid. 175), the truth is that some objects and presences of the previous era remain after independence arrives. Among these should be included Lila Sabarmati’s pianola, Ahmed Sinai’s whisky-cabinet, Ibrahim ceiling-fans and Wee Willie Winkie’s nostalgic songs. In spite of the fact that each of these goods is transferred to a new owner, their preservation is symbolic of a set of imperialistic habits —and their verbalization by Saleem is a form of textual acknowledgement. Yet, it should not be forgotten that they do not exist in a void but partake in a milieu in which the colonized have recently gained political autonomy; in such a setting, what prevails is a series of practices and routines that connect two forms of accumulating cultural capital —in vaguely defined terms, the Western and the Indian— which in conventional modes of story-telling belong in totally different dimensions of being.

Early in his life, Saleem finds in culturally diverse fairy-tales and comic books what he does not encounter in the realm of purpose; even before he was nine years old, “everybody was waiting for him” (ibid. 210). This sense of self-justification that is required of the narrator from the members of his family, especially his father and his grandmother, proves self-defeating, for Saleem does not grow confident of his prospects; rather the contrary, he states: “I became afraid that everyone was wrong —that my much-trumpeted existence might turn out to be utterly useless, void, and without the shred of a purpose” (ibid.). Yet, this realization does not force Saleem into a state of utter despondency. Even though he physically isolates himself by hiding in his mother’s washing chest, he goes in search of intellectual solace in the stories that popular fiction affords; thus, besides fantasizing about the European girls who spend their spare time in the nearby Breach Candy Club he “buries” himself and his discourse in narratives that feature Hatim Tai, Batman, Superman, Sinbad, Aladdin, Ali Baba (ibid. 210-211).



Saleem draws from all of them without taking into consideration the fact that, in an alternative view of the universe, their coexistence might be seen as incongruous; on the contrary, their multidimensionality both enriches his speech and helps resist the familial pressures to work on a stable, uniform, almost oppressive narrative.<sup>5</sup>

Fairy-tales and comic books are not the only artistic elements that move Saleem's voice into projecting a polyphonic and allegorical melody. The picture that hangs on his bedroom wall featuring a young Walter Raleigh and a seaman who points towards the sea with an extended finger is of utmost importance. Saleem is haunted by the sheer difficulty of grasping or confining the horizon that is represented by this picture, even though, in the lay-out of his room, the finger happens to point directly towards the letter the Indian leader Jawaharlal Nehru wrote to Saleem in the day of his birth (*Midnight's Children* 167). According to Ten Kortenaar, "the finger of destiny pointing to the writing on the wall reminds us that, with the fight for independence, history ceased to be the purview of European nations and has been made by Indians. That Indian history will look like English history" (Kortenaar 236-237). Ten Kortenaar's reading suggests that, even though the history of India after independence will not follow that of Europe, it will necessarily imitate its patterns by resorting to its lexicon. This leads to one of the novel's main claims, that the discourse of history is always manufactured and partial.

Saleem's narratives, which are concerned with the telling of the history of India, will necessarily have to negotiate this equilibrium between Western idioms and Indian self-reliance. An example of this tendency is Mountbatten's English clock, which is used to foreground Saleem's discourse, whose purpose at this point is to chronicle the birth of India as an independent nation (*Midnight's Children* 142-145). What we see here is that, in Saleem's eyes, a supposedly typical English notion of time can contain all that which precedes the newly muscular India.

Immodestly, in what constitutes another occasion of looking back to grand narratives, Saleem decides to link his fate to that of the prophet Muhammad after he tunes into his personal All-India Radio, the germ

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<sup>5</sup> Even the advertising mantras of the Kolynos Kid become part of Saleem's discourse: "Keep Teeth Kleen and Keep Teeth Brite! Keep Teeth Kolynos *Super White!*" (*Midnight's Children* 212).

of the Midnight's Children Conference (ibid. 225). Yet, the comparison is not as far-fetched as might initially seem; after all, Saleem, as well as Muhammad, has been told once and again of his unique character and of the purpose that is awaiting him. Nevertheless, his parents interpret his pretence to prophet-like status as culturally subversive and, consequently, inappropriate of him (ibid. 227). As a result, even though Saleem's intentions are to pay his due respects to the Islamic traditions from which he hails by gesturing towards his likeness to Muhammad, he ends up being perceived as someone who has trespassed certain codes of proper behaviour. Somehow, Saleem has perverted Muhammad's tale by adopting a share of its elements and adapting them to his own hybrid discourse and quest for self-definition, which totally decontextualizes the original meaning of the narrative about the prophet Muhammad.

The Midnight's Children Conference —MCC from now on— is the ultimate multicultural space in the novel. The establishment of this arena has its antecedent in Saleem's discovery of his telepathic powers after his hiding place in the washing-chest is unexpectedly found out by Amina (ibid. 223-225). His new powers let him hear "the inner monologues of all the so-called teeming millions, of masses and classes alike" (ibid. 232), which contributes to the plasticity of Saleem's tale with the different "textures" of class registers and voices. In time, almost coinciding with Saleem's tenth birthday and resulting from a bicycle accident the narrator suffers at the hands of the American tomboy Evie Burns, his personal All-India-Radio turns into the Midnight's Children Conference. This works as a kind of mental parliament in which five hundred and eighty-two of the "special" children who were born on the midnight of India's independence will come together in an attempt to reshape their surrounding realities (ibid. 287). The MCC, which operates inside Saleem's head, is polyphonic by nature, and it essentially contributes to the textual allegory; that is why, in order to become the medium through which they all can communicate, Saleem yearns to access the pure forms of thought that lie beneath the several languages that are spoken by the members of this multitudinous body: "I was obliged to get beneath the surface veneer of front-of-mind thoughts in incomprehensible tongues" (ibid. 304).

He is the only Midnight Child who can achieve this feat. The latter attainment modulates his narration of events concerning the MCC

and expands the reach of his narrative scope, which by now becomes overtly political in tone. Despite their undeniable gifts, the members of the MCC are not able to create new forms of expression, that is to say, new ways to fix meaning and define purpose, which is what Saleem demands of them; actually, they are as dependent on traditional modes of being and understanding as, say, their parents: “their [the children’s] heads were full of all the usual things, fathers mothers money food land possessions fame power God” (ibid. 317). The proposal of multiple philosophical tendencies in the midst of the MCC (ibid. 316) makes it difficult for Saleem to lead this movement in a direction that proves a real alternative to other dominant grand narratives; instead, the children cannot separate themselves from them, and thus assume collective forms of thought and speech.

Not only may this dispersion of goals have something to do with the children’s future annihilation at the hands of the government of Indira Gandhi; it also refutes Saleem’s dreams of forcing a monologic kind of discourse into that which naturally rejects uniformity, such as is the case of the multivoiced miniature society that the Midnight Children’s Conference constitutes:

my narrative could not cope with five hundred and eighty-one fully-rounded personalities; ... the children... remained, to my mind, a sort of many-headed monster, speaking in the myriad tongues of Babel; they were the very essence of multiplicity, and I see no point in dividing them now. (ibid., 317)

The narrator comes to recognize that, however expansive his voice might be, it will not be wholly capable of representing the whole of diversity, which is by nature mutable, unfixable, and open-ended.

Later on in the novel, the MCC starts to fall apart partly as a result of the children’s engulfment by the ethnic/cultural warfare that surrounds them: “as the prejudices and worldviews of adults began to take over their [the children’s] minds, I found children from Maharashtra loathing Gujaratis, and fair-skinned northerners reviling Dravidian ‘blackies’; there were religious rivalries” (ibid., 353). The ultimate multicultural space cannot be preserved in the face of prevalent struggles in the outside world, even though Saleem makes a last attempt at bringing the children back together by invoking a “third principle” (ibid. 354). By trying to escape duality, Saleem expresses his commitment to hybridity. Yet, his pronouncement puts him in a position

of vulnerability in relation to the grand narratives which, contrary to his intentions, his fellow *Midnight Children* have espoused. Not surprisingly, the oppressive way in which these totalizing stories are filtered into the children reminds Saleem of an outpouring of poison: "children are the vessels into which adults pour their poison, and it was the poison of grown-ups which did it for us" (ibid. 355). We are told that the "third principle" dies alongside childhood (ibid., 356).

Saleem's move to Pakistan—his exile—marks, among other things, a technical suspension of the MCC: "in Pakistan, I discovered that somehow the existence of a frontier 'jammed' my thought-transmissions to the more-than-five-hundred" (ibid. 394). In Pakistan, the so called "Land of the Pure", reaching back to the cultural mixture that the MCC represents is not feasible. Now, Saleem's trajectory overlaps with that of his new country of residence: "I helped change the fate of the Land of the Pure" (ibid. 398). Therefore, although Saleem's search for prominence in the making of the history of India is threatened by his territorial displacement, he gets an opportunity to participate in the shaping of the narrative of another country, Pakistan—the first instance of his intervention in the affairs of this nation occurs when he is told by his uncle, General Zulfikar, to manipulate a series of pepper pots in a symbolic representation of a soon-to-come coup d'état (ibid. 403).

In Pakistan Saleem comes to suffer from the existence of a hole within him, a lack that obviously reminds the reader of that which his grandfather Aadam Aaziz experiences when he returns to Kashmir after having spent exactly four years in Europe. The grand narrative of Pakistan, with its emphasis on religious purity and militaristic exertions, cannot fill up Saleem entirely. He longs for the multivocality of the MCC, even though the latter has proven an unsustainable arrangement; these four years are also defined as the ones he spends "away from the midnight children" (ibid. 406).

Saleem's final return to India to live in the magicians' ghetto in New Delhi confronts him with a new threat: that of the Widow, the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Such is Saleem's sense of self-importance in this struggle that he believes that his duty is to take upon himself the task of saving India in the face of the two-thirds parliamentary majority held by Gandhi's New Congress Party: "I had given myself the right to choose a better future, I was resolved that

the nation should share it, too" (ibid. 538). It is not only that the New Congress Party and its leader gain a great share of political power, but that they try to change the direction of Indian cultural development; theirs is an attempt to fashion a master narrative with which to replace the many forms of meaning-fixing India is home to. The means by which they hope to achieve this goal include the imposition of the Emergency, which signals the ushering in of a new era in Indian history, characterized by Saleem as one of "suspension of-civil-rights, and censorship-of-the-press, and armoured-units-on-special-alert, and arrest-of- subversive-elements" (ibid. 585). Into this new cultural landscape is born Saleem/Shiva and Parvati's child: "[He was] the child of a time which damaged reality so badly that nobody ever managed to put it together again" (ibid. 586).

For Saleem that which happens to arise during the times of the Emergency has little to do with the old India, but is a completely new cultural construct. Saleem's goal as a storyteller is to revive the narrative of India that has been held back by Indira Gandhi and her allies when they decide that "*Indira is India and India is Indira*" (ibid. 597). This restrictive, absolutist slogan contravenes Saleem's expansive maxim of "swallowing the world" in order to understand himself and, by extension, India. This is a confrontation between two ways of endowing the country with meaning, and it is highlighted rhetorically and thus allegorically by the dialectical dispute between the Widow Hand, who claims that "The people of India... worship our lady like a god. Indians are only capable of worshipping one God" (ibid. 611), and Saleem, who reacts by bringing up the "three hundred and thirty million gods of Hinduism alone? And Islam, and Bodhisattvas...?" (ibid. 612).

According to Pranav Jani:

The ideals that Rushdie expresses represent, at once, a desire for the end of nationalist rivalries and a tautological faith in the unity of the Indian nation: it will never split because it 'just is there.' National borders mean little for this postnational intellectual, but his position is derived from a deeply Indian notion of subjectivity, one that is secured in almost a religious manner through the sacred, silver block, a talisman marked with the nation and handed down through the family. (Jani 2010, 239)

The writing of a new grand narrative for India on behalf of Indira Gandhi and her associates cannot reach its culmination without neutralizing what is left of the Midnight's Children Conference. Saleem is made captive, and the other members of the MCC, as well. Despite their detention, Saleem is optimistic about the prospects of the midnight children: "Children, something is being born here, in this dark time of our captivity; let Widows do their worst; unity is invincibility! Children: we've won!" (*Midnight's Children* 610), implying that they have been able to triumph over their differences without fully erasing them, which is what the Emergency seeks to achieve: "now... we're all on the same side, no language-rivalries, no religious prejudices" (ibid. 610). Rushdie's nationalistic discourse affirms rhetorically his commitment to a multicultural and multivocal national space represented by the MCC.

Finally, the members of the MCC are deprived of their talents by being subjected to forced operations which turn them into "Broken promises; made to be broken." (ibid. 614). The hope that they will manage to preserve the diverse cultural milieu of India is dashed. Nevertheless, it is not the case that the Widow and her satellites come out of the battle having achieved a resonant triumph; on the contrary, they end up being defeated at the hands of the opposition Janata Party in the elections of 1977 (ibid. 616). As a consequence of this change in the distribution of political power, India comes off as acutely resistant to the imposition of exclusive grand narratives such as the one Indira Gandhi devises.

The allegorical and textured interplay of voices does not stop with Saleem. Familial inheritances are not only passed onto him, but from him to others. His adoptive son, Aadam Sinai, stands on the other end of the receiving line. Interestingly enough, the first word Aadam pronounces is *abracadabra*, which is "not an Indian world at all, a cabbalistic formula derived from the name of the supreme god of the Basilidian gnostics, containing the number 365, the number of the days of the year, and of the heavens, and of the spirits emanating from the god Abraxas" (ibid. 642). This lexical choice, with its universalist connotations, suggests that Aadam will grow up a cosmopolitan kid; clearly, he seems to be following the steps of his adoptive father, who reaffirms that he is no longer "obsessed with purity" (ibid. 644), and not those of his biological

one, the authoritarian Major Shiva, who epitomizes the sectarianism and narrow-mindedness Saleem contumaciously defies.

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper has examined textual evidence that supports the thesis that the composition of *Midnight's Children* is based on an allegorical method which makes of language a primary goal; the narrator's heterogeneously textured and richly variegated voice is the hybrid product of a culturally diverse nation, a rhetorical form that confronts directly the espousal of restrictive grand narratives. Saleem's storytelling generates an alternative kind of narrative, one that is multicoloured and open-ended, prototype of verbal plasticity in the manifold historical and cultural echoes that reverberate in its narrator's subjective and fragmented memory; because of their links with history, Saleem's stories—which chronicle not only the development of India as an independent nation, but also the birth and evolution of Pakistan and Bangladesh—constitute in themselves an ideological discourse that refutes the “absolutist” discourses fostered by imperialism—in its British/Western variety—and nationalism—in its Indian and Pakistani versions. This text-length trope not only denounces the dogmatism of our historical and cultural constructions, but it simultaneously highlights one of the main consequences of postcolonialism, that of the dissolution of boundaries; *Midnight's Children* becomes a highly motivated novel that favours pluralism and intercultural tolerance by “staging” allegorically the dangers of culture and history as constructions when subject to interested thought.

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# **THE POETRY OF LONELINESS: HERMAN MELVILLE'S "THE PARADISE OF BACHELORS AND THE TARTARUS OF MAIDS", SAUL BELLOW'S "SOMETHING TO REMEMBER ME BY", BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S "THE MANAGEMENT OF GRIEF"**

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## **Abstract**

Although accounts of loneliness have appeared in many writings of poets, novelists, and philosophers, it is difficult to define the state of feeling lonely and to identify the individual and collective conditions that can cause anxiety, distress, and insecurity. Melville, Bellow and Mukherjee explore the question of loneliness and its poetic quality and offer valuable insights into this complex human experience from different perspectives. They try to grasp the new meanings and patterns that come into view when we face ourselves in silence. Though often painful, loneliness can also be an opportunity for personal growth as epiphany is achieved in the lonely quest for self-discovery. Gender alienation, passage to adulthood, and grief are significant aspects in our life, which the protagonists cope with in their own ways.

**Keywords:** Short story, loneliness, Melville, Bellow, Mukherjee

**LA POESÍA DE LA SOLEDAD: "THE PARADISE OF BACHELORS  
AND THE TARTARUS OF MAIDS", DE HERMAN MELVILLE,  
"SOMETHING TO REMEMBER ME BY", DE SAUL BELLOW, Y  
"THE MANAGEMENT OF GRIEF" DE BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S**

## **Resumen**

Aunque han aparecido explicaciones sobre la soledad en muchos escritos de poetas, novelistas y filósofos, es difícil definir la sensación

de sentirse solo así como identificar las condiciones individuales y colectivas que pueden causar ansiedad, angustia e inseguridad. Melville, Bellow y Mukherjee exploran el tema de la soledad y su cualidad poética y ofrecen una comprensión profunda de esta compleja experiencia humana desde diferentes perspectivas. Los autores revelan los nuevos significados y pautas de comportamiento que aparecen cuando nos enfrentamos con nosotros mismos en silencio. Aunque a menudo dolorosa, la soledad puede ser una oportunidad para el crecimiento personal, ya que la epifanía se alcanza en el solitario camino hacia el descubrimiento de uno mismo. La alienación por discriminación de género, el paso a la madurez y el duelo son aspectos significativos de nuestra vida, que los protagonistas tienen que afrontar a su propia manera.

**Palabras clave:** Relato corto, soledad, Melville, Bellow, Mukherjee

## Introduction

Loneliness is described in literature as one of the most disturbing human experiences, often bearing a meaning beyond appearances, a journey towards inner truth, a painful account of the bitterness of some unavoidable situations in life. In his study *Loneliness in Philosophy, Psychology, and Literature* Ben Lazare Mijuskovic offers a definition of loneliness considering it both a meaning and a feeling: “As a meaning, it can be defined as the self-conscious desire to be positively, mutually, and reciprocally related to another thinking being and yet being unable to relate in this desired fashion . . . As a feeling (or sensation), it is indefinable just as all sensations and feelings are indefinable” (Mijuskovic xxxix). He explores loneliness as a “prism through which we can see the entire spectrum of human life” (Mijuskovic liii) and argues that “only the self-conscious or reflexive paradigm of awareness is capable of accounting for the phenomenon of loneliness and that embedded in its dynamic is a powerful desire to avoid it” (Mijuskovic, xxix). Drawing on his theory of loneliness I have sought to reveal from three different viewpoints the quest for authentic existence and the inner pressures and conflicts related to the protagonists’ perception of the discrepancy between ideal and real social relationships. The

present study is based on a selection of three short stories from the *The Oxford Book of American Short Stories* (1994), edited by Joyce Carol Oates and is an attempt to establish a paradigm and give meaning to the feeling of loneliness in different social and historical contexts. The choice of Melville's "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids", Saul Bellow's "Something To Remember Me By", and Bharati Mukherjee's "The Management of Grief" is based on the idea that they approach the problem from three different perspectives, which offers a wide view on the topic and allows for a deeper inquiry into the nature of loneliness. The study explores the common elements shared by the three authors and accounts for the variety of narrative strategies applied by them. Only by examining distinct manifestations of loneliness and distinct responses to it can we create a model that provides an insight into the complexity of this human phenomenon. Melville's "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" points to the collective alienation of the Maids from men, from nature, from their work and opposes the dehumanizing effect of their labour to the life full of leisure of the Bachelors. To approach the story from the viewpoint of feminist theorists, who criticize the "problematic" model of representation of woman as embodied subject, inferior to man, who, on the other hand, is identified with reason, creativeness, and soul, means to draw up connections between the loneliness of the Maids and their alienation from those representing power. Saul Bellow's "Something To Remember Me By" and Bharati Mukherjee's "The Management of Grief" are examined in terms of the spiritual phenomenon of existential loneliness as a source of deeper understanding of the self as an extension of moments in life like the passage to adulthood or the death of a beloved spouse. The emotional and social loneliness resulting in vulnerability, emptiness and distress are viewed as a way of achieving an insight into the meaning of our actions and an attempt to live the painful account of self-enclosure as a choice of freedom, possible only after converting the experience into authentic step to rebirth. Existentialism is a philosophical movement that is concerned with the anxieties of everyday life raising the question of what it means to live an authentic life, how to confront the inner journey towards awareness, and how to approach death, among others. For Sartre, one of the best known philosophers of existentialism, if existence really precedes essence, man is responsible for what he is. A central notion in his

philosophical reflection is that of “man being essentially ‘nothing’ but what he makes of himself” (Earnshaw 74). Therefore, the first move is to make man aware of his existence and responsible for it. One of the most important problems that existentialism deals with is the problem of free choice of the individual, who must find his true self through a series of experiences. Man is condemned at every moment to invent himself in the sense of finding his identity by making his choice in existential situations.

In the service of brevity short story writers have mastered a wide range of narrative techniques, such as discontinuity, fragmentation, a heavy reliance on inference, drawing the reader’s attention to detail, favouring ambiguity, ellipsis, and several other devices characteristic of poetry. The use of some of these techniques to describe and represent loneliness are examined in the light of the above mentioned theoretical ideas.

### **Loneliness as Gender Alienation**

Tracing the inner meaning of the metaphorical process in Melville’s diptych “The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids” we can observe that the author contemplates on the reasons and consequences of alienation. The device he uses with artistry is a two-part sketch, or rather an innovative blending of two genres: the sketch and the short story. The two narrative modes - exposition and description - pertaining to the sketch, successfully develop an idea, not a process and transmit the feeling of slow motion, of dreamlike reality in suspension. The absence of plot connectibility foregrounds the primacy of the image, of the impressionistic predominance of the aesthetic moment over duration. Description allows the author an extensive use of metaphors which blur the boundary between the ordinary and the mysterious and create a mystical world of paradox and ambiguity. At the same time, through exposition and mainly description, Melville enhances our perception of the characters’ loneliness and inactivity.

The division of two sections as a narrative technique intensifies the feeling of alienation as the objects of representation are cut out not only from the rest of the people, but also from each other at fictional and structural levels. Branka Arsi argues that

What is thus cut off is the origin of life as the origin of language. What is cut off, in other words, is desire itself; both the desire for language and the language of desire. And it is precisely such a cut (of language and desire) that separates the Paradise of Bachelors from the Tartarus of Maids. The end of the Paradise of Bachelors is separated from the beginning of the Tartarus of Maids by a blank space that keeps them forever apart (Arsi 90).

The structural separation of Bachelors and Maids enables the juxtaposition of two worlds, two moral systems, related by the narrator's awareness that one is the complete antithesis of the other. A symbolic cohesion between the two parts is established through other relations, which emphasise and deepen the contrast between Bachelors and Maids. Melville suggests that Bachelors live indirectly on the Maids' labour as "among these heaps of rags there may be some old shirts, gathered from the dormitories of the Paradise of Bachelors" (Melville 85), which the girls use to make paper for "all sorts of writings . . . sermons, lawyers' briefs, prescriptions, love letters, marriage certificates, bills of divorce, registers of births" (Melville 88).

Setting and spatial markers need special attention. The Temple-Bar and the Paper Mill form a geographical and moralistic dichotomy, representing two civilisations - Old and New, two continents - Europe and America, and two countries - England and United States. The only resemblance we can find is the notion of physical isolation, which to a great extent reinforces the feeling of loneliness and transforms the place into a prison, or rather a monastery, if we take into consideration the history of the Templars. Right in the heart of London but away from "the mud of Fleet Street" in "a dim, monastic way" (Melville 70) stands the Temple-Bar or the Paradise of Bachelors. Melville compares the place, "sequestered from the city's surrounding din" (Melville 72), to "the oasis in Sahara" and "the charming isle-groves of August prairies" (Melville 70), thus evoking images of seclusion and displaying features typical of monks' withdrawal from life. In the process of constructing a dreamlike reality of slow motion and tranquillity the writer merges lyricism and symbolism. All are excluded from the "agreeable refuge" the Eden's garden can offer except for a privileged few wealthy lawyers. The repetition of images of luxury and splendour strengthens our awareness of the contrast wealth-poverty when the narrator visits the Mill, which is hidden away in the frozen mountain.

The route to the Mill is depicted in terms of horror and painful isolation to which the choice of violent names strongly contributes: Woedolor Mountain, Black Notch, Devil's Dungeon, Blood River. The "dusky pass" enclosed between the "cloven walls of haggard rock" (Melville 78) is called Mad Maid's Bellows'-pipe. The legend of the crazy spinster's hut relates the name to forceful confinement and suffering. The excessive use of vocabulary associated with freezing, snow and whiteness intensifies the reader's feeling of isolation and reveals the presence of death. The surroundings are hostile: "sounds of torrents fall on all sides upon the ear" (Melville 78) and "the congelation made the whole country look like one petrification" (Melville 79). Unlike the Temple-Bar, the Mill doesn't provide shelter from the world but is the utmost expression of everything negative in the neighbouring scenery: "Not far from the bottom of the Dungeon stands a large white-washed building, relieved, like some great whited sepulchre . . ." (Melville 79).

Beryl Rowland argues that "The early use of mill to express a fundamental concept, its persistence in proverb and in literature, point to continuous colloquial usage. It could apply to an individual woman or to women collectively as prostitutes, and there is no reason to suppose that the metaphor ever lost its vitality" (Rowland 392). Likewise the Templars were accused of horrible sexual practices, such as sodomy, though those accusations were never proved. Linking symbolically the Maids and the genuine Templars, Melville constructs three frameworks of relation and opposition: Templars-Bachelors, Bachelors-Maids and Maids-Templars suggesting that a simple dichotomy Bachelors-Maids wouldn't explain gender alienation. Later, when shown around the factory, the narrator is astonished at the fact that the paper-making process takes exactly nine minutes, which coincides with the number of the founders of the Templar order and the number of Bachelors attending the dinner party. Number nine appears again in the myth of Tartarus: an abyss used as a dungeon of torment and punishment that is situated beneath the underworld.

The key to understanding loneliness as awareness is the experience of the narrator. "The unnamed narrator is self-effacing and chameleon-like, reflecting the state of those around him; he is static, and only through irony does he reveal himself" (Weyler 462-3). Irony is the strongest device of a lonely observer. Only after comparing his experience at the Mill to that at the Temple-Bar does the detailed

description of food and drink in the first part acquire full meaning in the ironic dissection of the Bachelors' way of life. The narrator is the most important link between the dreamlike reality at the Temple-Bar and the nightmare at the Mill. His anxiety for not being able to speak, to communicate, or for being misunderstood by Cupid turns him into the impotent observer similar to Acteon. In an ancient myth the hunter Acteon sees the goddess Artemis (Diana) naked when she is bathing and is stunned by her beauty. Once noticed, he is punished by Artemis to become a stag if he tries to speak again. The inactivity and isolation of the narrator allows him a moment of meditation, an insight into the fate of Maids and he interiorises the scene at the Mill to such an extent that he physically resembles them when "two white spots freeze on his cheeks" (Melville 83). Facing the trauma of his experience, "wrapped in furs and meditation", "all alone with inscrutable nature" (Melville 90) the narrator finally understands the message coming from the two worlds.

Images of sterility explicitly lay bare the extreme alienation between men and women. Templars were a unique combination of knight and monk. However, the Bachelors' celibacy aims at avoiding commitment and fully enjoying an empty life of leisure and comfort. On the other hand, Maids' sterility is forced by industrialisation and poverty. E. H. Eby claims that "Melville's main intention is to represent through the medium of the story the biological burdens imposed on women because they bear children" (Eby 97). Sexual symbols are widely employed to describe the process of paper-making. The girls stand in front of sharp "swords edge-outward", around a machine with "rude, manger-like receptacles" (Melville 85) in a room "stifling with a strange, blood-like, abdominal heat" (Melville 86).

According to Sidney Bremer "The perverse resemblance to pregnancy of the nine-minute process exposes . . . the destruction of human vitality in a factory . . ." (Bremer 55), where girls are slaves to the machines mutely accepting their fate. "Not a syllable was breathed. Nothing was heard but the low, steady, overruling hum of the iron animals. The human voice was banished from the spot" (Melville 83). To achieve the feeling of gender alienation there is no plot development, no events, just pure timeless suffering.



### Loneliness as Existential Self-Becoming

In order to get a complete notion of Bellow's main character in "Something To Remember Me By", his motives, fears and wants, it is important to turn to some of the central ideas of existential philosophy. From this perspective, "the concept of boundary or limit situation defined as a universal situation that can neither be surpassed nor subjected to rational analysis, has been a key existential idea . . . Death is a prototypical limit situation, but other examples would be: chance, historicity, suffering, struggle, and guilt" (Berguno 246-247). For Louie, a seventeen-year-old boy a revelatory break-up of the rhythm of everyday reality offers a possibility of self-knowledge and growth, in fact, of his "first knowledge of the hidden work of uneventful days" (Bellow 511). Such is the significance of a single day that years later he leaves the narrative of the moment of his self-becoming as a gift to his only child. In his study "Saul Bellow and the Moral Imagination" Irving Halperin claims that

[N]owhere has Bellow intimated that he has *the* answers to the questions of 'what we human being are and what this life is for'. Human life, by definition, is complex, the mystery of the Self increases, he has said, or at least it does not grow less as we continue to discard familiar conceptions of human nature (Halperin 24).

Louie is "an indifferent student, generally unpopular, a background figure in the school" (Bellow 512) who comes from a strict Jewish family. Many critics have related Jewish experience to modern alienation suggesting a specifically Jewish attitude towards suffering and its acceptance. According to Keith Michael Opdahl, "The problems of alienation, identity, mobility, and powerlessness all form a link of kind, though not of degree, between the oppressed Jew and the faceless modern man" (Opdahl 25). L. H. Goldman examines the way in which Saul Bellow makes use of the specific biblical narratives that express Jewish perspective. He outlines the major points of the narratives of the bible and relates them to certain themes in literature. Goldman claims that "Those themes generally associated to Judaism and the Jews are exile, wandering, and alienation" (Goldman xii). In his work *After the Tradition: Essays on Modern Jewish Writing* (1969) Robert Alter reflects on the idea of the Jews as the archetype of modern alienation and argues that "[Jews] were not alienated from themselves or from a

large world of unfolding purpose, they were merely considered aliens by people whom they tended to look down upon in any case" (Alter 113).

Although it is not Louie who faces death but his mother, we can see that death as a limit situation is present throughout the story. It forms a framework for the development of the plot as Bellow opens and closes the narrative with the image of Louie's dying mother. The story becomes a representation of his lonely journey towards knowledge, his efforts to create his authentic identity by solving a series of moral dilemmas. We can interpret the presence of death as a background of the character's actions at several levels. As a boundary situation imposed on him it increases his awareness of the transcendence of his decisions and finally leads to the recognition of another feeling—that of guilt, essential to the understanding of Bellow's heroes. In this context, the image of death plays a creative role in the development of the character. Louie's parents "didn't hesitate to speak of death and dying. What they seldom mentioned was sex" (Bellow 512). To successfully decode the meaning of the contrast death-sex we should consider the notion of death as a symbol of the oppression coming from family and society and sex or sexual desire as representing the desire for freedom; hence the importance of the female characters in the story and what each of them symbolizes.

Bellow reveals the boy's painful passage from childhood to adulthood through his encounters with these female characters. His relationship with Stephanie consists of "adolescent kissing without restraint" (Bellow 513), though "she didn't deny herself the company of other boys" (Bellow 523) when he couldn't take her downtown. Then on his errand of delivering flowers he discovers that the lilies are for a dead girl "older than Stephanie", but "not so plump" (Bellow 515). By comparing the dead girl with Stephanie, Bellow lays bare the recognition of the end of adolescence and of Louie's preparation for a new stage in life. At leaving the house with the mourners, completely alone in the street, he turns to a book, his basic source of knowledge, in an attempt to understand the meaning of life and death. Then somehow he decides not to go home but to visit his brother-in-law Philip, who appears to be a kind of mentor and an example to follow, and who is more indulgent than his own brother in teaching him the secrets of life. When chance takes him to the limits of shame, loneliness and anxiety,

he would always try to imagine what Philip's opinion would be, how he would react in a similar situation.

Even though his decision is innocent, the protagonist feels guilty, a burden he tries to cast off later as an act of personal liberation: "Why did I need to account for my innocent behaviour when it *was* innocent? Perhaps because I was always contemplating illicit things. Because I was always being accused. . . but self-examination, once so fascinating to me has become tiresome" (Bellow 517). Not being able to find Philip, Louie enters into his colleague's office, where he finds a naked woman, lying on the examining table. Should he wake her up or just withdraw, what is the right thing to do? The reader is made aware how chance can alter the course of life and how a moral dilemma, resulting from this chance can create an opportunity of self-knowledge. Dazed by the odours, strongly excited by the sight, Louie compares the naked woman to Stephanie: "She, too, wore a racoon. As I took it from the hook I wished it had been something else. But Stephanie's coat was newer than this . . ." (Bellow 520). Examining the comparisons between the women, we can say that Stephanie, the dead girl, and the naked woman represent three different stages in Louie's journey in search of his authentic identity.

An extremely bitter feeling of alienation overwhelms the protagonist as he struggles against his self-destructing impulses. Weak, frightened and lonely, trying to ward off the effect of the naked woman, Louie even evokes the image of his mother's "chest mutilated by cancer surgery" (Bellow 519), but this time temptation, the desire to break free are stronger than guilt. On the way to her flat he feels a sudden urge of freedom, he feels he has a tremendous potential to read and interpret the "boring, depressed, ugly . . . city" (Bellow 522), to understand people. He feels he can make "something extraordinary of himself" (Bellow 522). His perception of the world turns out to be just an illusion as the woman throws all his clothes through the window and leaves him naked, humiliated and shivering with shame. Ethan Fishman points out that "Bellow, too, devotes a good deal of each of his works to the exposure of the vagaries of cynicism" (Fishman 618). Aware of his transformation and the fact that reality has prevailed over read knowledge, the boy considers the fragment of an untitled book he is carrying "the most serious loss of all" (Bellow 526). Running away in women's clothes, Louie tries to find help, but nobody seems to care.

Estranged from the world around him and from himself, he is allowed a third-person stance towards his experience through the eyes of the druggist, the barman, and the two daughters of the drunkard: "The druggist with his pain-sensitive head was all irony. And now the barman is going to get his fun out of my trouble. . . . Then I could have a full hour of shame on the streetcar" (Bellow 532). According to Elaine Safer, "[Bellow's] characters are usually painfully aware of their inadequacies and they struggle to live with them. Bellow often uses comic means to lighten the dark seriousness of their problems" (Safer 127).

After the grotesque scene with the drunkard, Louie makes a last desperate attempt to recover his world, looking for the lost pages of the book, while the haunting image of his mother slowly surrendering to death adds a further dimension to his experience. His thoughts about the Old Testament, confession and punishment are a projection of his guilt and misery. Frustrated by the world and the others, having little sympathy for himself, Louie is not afraid of his father's outraged blows as he considers them an archaic everlasting right and a deserved penalty. So when the blow finally comes it fills him with gratitude, as in this way he gets free from the burden of guilt, is redeemed, and his life can be meaningful again. This is a gentle and ironic tale of adolescent desire for self-becoming, a tale of a revelatory moment, "when the measured, reassuring, sleep-inducing turn-table of days become a whirlpool, a vortex of darkening toward the bottom" (Bellow 539) and the protagonist had only the pages of an anonymous book in his pocket as a guide. " . . . Bellow does, in the end, insist that full humanity is found in the acceptance of a contract that links us to others in ethical mutuality" (Corner 370).

### **Loneliness as the Meaning of Loss**

In "The Management of Grief", built upon the terrorist attack when "a bomb, planted in an Air India jet on Canadian soil, blew up after leaving Montreal, killing 329 passengers, ninety percent of whom were Canadians of Indian origin" (Mukherjee 31), Bharati Mukherjee focuses on the painful experience of various victims facing loss and despair. The story reveals an episodic structure based on lyric moments of realisation evoking images of loneliness and distress. The prevailing use of present tense, the abrupt beginning with the scene of many unknown people

“whispering and moving” in the protagonist’s kitchen, and the image of “the open doors” (Mukherjee 698) expresses a complex inner state of tension between involvement and detachment. Surrounded by the frenetic activity of neighbours and people willing to help, who answer endless telephone calls, attend reporters, comment on the accident, and listen to two radio stations and a TV channel, Shaila seems to be a mere observer, a witness of events, shutting out reality from her inner world: “Sound can reach me; but my body is tensed, ready to scream. I hear voices all around me. I hear my boys and Vikram cry, ‘Mommy, Shaila!’ and their screams isolate me, like headphones” (Mukherjee 699). She sits on the stairs remaining calm, trying not to succumb to the initial shock of the news, able to speak to the only other victim of the plane crash in her house, her neighbour Kusum, who has lost her husband and daughter. For Sonya Domergue, “The story charts shaila’s journey through bereavement, from the initial stages of the stunned calm that envelops her when the news first breaks, through her rejection of the facts, despair and final acceptance” (Domergue 2).

The story displays various levels of plot, generated by the approach to the experience of Kusum and Dr. Ranganathan, who has lost all his family. Discerning the uniqueness of each human tragedy, the writer proves that there can’t be a single recipe to face suffering, that the “textbooks on grief management” (Mukherjee 709) can’t provide a solution to pain caused by loss. Victims must find their own way out of the darkness of their despair, forced by realisation of the meaning of life and death. Kusum refuses to live in the real world and grows susceptible to seek consolation in religion, in the words of her swami, who has a ready answer to all her doubts and questions. Finally, “pursuing inner peace”, Kusum withdraws from the world and her other daughter into an ashram. Dr. Ranganathan “a man who knows important secrets of the universe” (Mukherjee 704), on the other hand, relies on what he knows and understands best - science. “It’s parent’s duty to hope,” he says. “It is foolish to rule out possibilities that have not been tested” (Mukherjee 704) and standing on a rock overlooking a bay in Ireland, in a desperate attempt to nourish hope, suggests that Shaila’s sons could have swum safely to a small island after the crash. After refusing for months to sell his house, converting it into a shrine, he finally takes refuge in his work and moves to another city, where he can anonymously suffer in solitude. Shaila is aware that neither

religion nor work can relieve her emotional disturbance. Alienated from the people around her, she only has her Valium. The image of the dead bodies of their beloved, eaten by sharks, appears as a representation of ultimate isolation.

Cut from the rest of the victims, trapped in a distorted reality is an elderly Sikh couple, who have lost their two sons, their only connection with the real world. Taken to their house by a social worker to help with the translation, Shaila finds two elderly people in a stuffy dark room, with no telephone and electricity, gas and water soon to follow for unpaid bills, unable or unwilling to acknowledge the truth and accept help. Too many barriers that separate them from the land of their present - language, religion, customs, culture, ethnicity - make them completely impossible to reach.

A recurrent theme in Mukherjee's novels and short fiction is the loneliness of immigrants who have reluctantly left behind country, family and everything that has shaped their identity, with hopes for better future, but who feel they still do not belong. Invisible boundaries of culture, history and national codes separate them from the Canadians. In the introduction to her novel *Darkness* Mukherjee writes: "In my fiction, and in my Canadian experience, 'immigrants' were lost souls, put upon and pathetic. Expatriates, on the other hand, knew what foul fate had befallen on them" (Mukherjee xiii). Shaila's loneliness is deeper and more tragic because the only people who seem to understand her are other relatives of the killed in the plane crash, though they become close not for belonging to the Indian community but for being victims of the explosion: "We've been ruled down and recast as a new tribe" (Mukherjee 708). There are interpreters, policemen, a social worker, and a nun, appointed to help, but "they don't always have the human touch, or maybe the right human touch" (Mukherjee 701). All of them sympathise, still communication is impossible. Judith Templeton, an appointee of the provincial government, is described as too elegant and distant with her new stylish leather briefcase.

Confused and weakened by pain, Shaila travels to India, back to her roots in search for emotional balance. In fact, she undertakes four journeys, each of them closing a cycle of her life and thus leading to the completion of her journey towards the final moment of epiphany. She goes to Ireland to identify the dead bodies of her husband and

sons and to physically face loss. In India she closes another life cycle as she goes back to her past. There she observes the passivity with which other Indians submit to customs and rituals related to death, but feels alienated from her family and the ancient culture of her origins: "Like my husband's spirit, I flutter between worlds" (Mukherjee 707). Her desire to discover the meaning of loss takes her on a pilgrimage around India with a small group of servants and poor relatives. From her search for the truth and her love for her husband a vision is born and he descends to her in a temple in a tiny Himalayan village. While not quite sure about what he means by "*You must finish alone what we started together*" (Mukherjee 708), Shaila knows she has to return to Toronto, where she gets involved in public life and charities as a refuge from her trauma. It proves to be a temporary solution to loneliness and pain, as it inevitably leads to disillusion when a politician tries to use her to manipulate the Indian voter.

Mukherjee offers a tender description and insight into unhappiness and isolation and suggests there is a way out. So much in need of help and guidance, Shaila hears the voices of her family and in a moment of epiphany is overwhelmed by hope and a desire to live, and finally understands her husband's message. Then she starts her last journey, that of hope and life: "I do not know where this voyage I have begun will end. I do not know which direction I will take. I dropped the package and started walking" (Mukherjee 713).

## Conclusion

I have gone through various categories of loneliness as a social, existential, and spiritual response to some circumstances perceived by the protagonists as collective alienation on the basis of gender discrimination, as discovering of one's true self, or confronting the critical question of death. Exploring the way in which the three authors apply narrative strategies and devices that lead to economy and compression, I have reached the conclusion that brevity, the most important characteristic of short stories, places a strong demand on artifice. Brevity allows for attention to a fragment of reality, a moment, or a scene. It is hardly surprising that the meaning and emotional impact of the three short stories are not heavily dependant on the working of the plot. The plot, if noticeable at all, is subordinate to other elements. As a result



the writers focus on the exceptional or significant experience to try to account for loneliness as essential part of the existence of the self and reveal its power to shape actively and reflexively our identity. Melville, Bellow and Mukherjee represent this emotional response as a way of being in the world and examine it as a means of grasping the meaning of one's subjective reality in the face of inevitable human conditions that cause anxiety but also lead to self-awareness at the end of their protagonists' journey. Loneliness is seen as the purposeful confrontation of despair, as an inevitable fact of human existence. The reader takes pleasure in deciphering complex messages in the text and is, in the end, overwhelmed by a sense of renewal, a sharp awareness of how common everyday events can offer transcendental moral alternatives, and, in brief, is allowed a better insight into human nature.

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# **SPECIFIC ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' AND TEACHERS' OPINIONS ON CROSS-CURRICULAR EDUCATION IN THE ELT CLASSROOM**

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## **Abstract**

The national curricula for compulsory education that came into force in Spain in 1991 promoted the teaching of a series of cross-curricular issues within all subjects. This study includes the specific analysis of data gathered from a vast sample of 2063 learners and 79 practitioners in the Spanish city of Jaén about the teaching of these value-laden topics in their primary or secondary education ELT classroom. The variables of level, cycle, gender and kind of institution have been controlled among students' responses, whereas those of level, age, gender and kind of institution have been considered in the information provided by teachers. Results show that the ANOVA Test yields many statistically significant differences among pupils' answers if they are grouped by level and cycle. As far as teachers are concerned, there are differences among their opinions that are relevant from a statistical point of view mainly when the variable of level is controlled.

**Keywords:** Teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), compulsory education, cross-curricular teaching, values education, content and language integrated learning (CLIL) and analysis of variance (ANOVA) test.

## ANÁLISIS ESPECÍFICO DE LAS OPINIONES DE LOS ALUMNOS Y PROFESORES ACERCA DE LA EDUCACIÓN TRANSVERSAL EN CLASE DE INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA

### Resumen

Los currículos nacionales correspondientes a las etapas de educación obligatoria que entraron en vigor en España en 1991 promovían la enseñanza de unos temas transversales en todas las asignaturas. Este estudio incluye el análisis específico de datos recogidos de una amplia muestra de 2063 estudiantes y 79 profesores de Jaén sobre la enseñanza de estos temas cargados en valores en su clase de inglés de Primaria o Secundaria. Las variables de nivel, etapa, género y tipo de institución se han controlado entre las respuestas de los alumnos, mientras que las de nivel, edad, género y tipo de institución se han considerado en la información proporcionada por los profesores. Los resultados muestran que la prueba de ANOVA arroja muchas diferencias estadísticamente significativas entre las respuestas de los alumnos si éstas se agrupan por nivel y etapa. En cuanto a los profesores, hay diferencias entre sus opiniones que son relevantes desde un punto de vista estadístico principalmente cuando se controla la variable de nivel.

**Palabras clave:** Enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera, educación obligatoria, enseñanza transversal, educación en valores, aprendizaje integrado de contenidos y lenguas extranjeras (AICLE) y test de análisis de la varianza.

### Introduction

Descriptive research was conducted in the academic years 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 across primary and secondary schools in Jaén, a city in the southern Spanish region of Andalusia. It aimed at finding out several aspects related to the teaching of a series of value-laden issues in the English Language Teaching (ELT) classroom (cf. Rascón Moreno, "Cross-curricular teaching in foreign" 108-13). Dealing with them had been suggested in the official curricula of the educational law that was applicable at the moment, the *Ley de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo –LOGSE*. The results yielded by that research

are very interesting, as they were obtained just before the curricula explicitly encouraging their teaching were no longer applicable. Soon afterwards they were replaced by the curricula of a new law, the *Ley Orgánica de Educación*, where values education is mentioned as a methodological principle to be followed by all teachers but no reference is made to the *LOGSE* "cross-curricular issues" (CCIs). Thus, this study belongs to descriptive research which sheds light on the level of success of the cross-curricular approach in the ELT classroom before it stopped being officially advocated.

Students and teachers were asked a few questions (see Rascón Moreno, "Cross-curricular teaching in foreign" 108-13) connected with the teaching of the eight CCIs (consumer education, environmental education, gender education, health education, moral and civic education, peace education, road safety education and sex education) in their English classroom. The close relationship of these topics with values education has been stated by many experts, e.g. Gavidia, González Lucini, Palos Rodríguez and Yus Ramos.<sup>1</sup> The data gathered were analysed together, without taking any variable into account, some months later.

In the following academic year, as data with respect to a few variables had been gathered as well when the questionnaires had been administered, making a specific analysis of all the information was considered, controlling this time the variables of level, cycle, gender and kind of institution –in the case of students– and the variables of level, age, gender and kind of institution –in the case of teachers. Furthermore, in 2010, the ANOVA Test was applied in order to know whether the differences in results were statistically significant or not.

This paper includes that specific analysis with which my descriptive research across schools becomes more complete and enriched. The whole general descriptive study of learners' and educators' responses can be found in Rascón Moreno (*Cross-Curricular Teaching by means of*).

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<sup>1</sup> Palos Rodríguez's (41) definition of the CCIs can be given as an example: 'The cross-curricular issues are the logical and coherent context with the "for what" of values education, which include a collection of motivating and current social problems, which show the need of educating in values and which allow the building of the scientific-technical knowledge and the development of the moral personality dimensions' (my own translation).

Objectives

The objectives of this study are fundamentally two:

- 1. To know whether the results obtained from students about the teaching of the CCIs in their English classroom vary significantly after considering the variables of level, cycle, gender and kind of institution.
- 2. To know whether the results obtained from teachers about the teaching of the CCIs in their English classroom vary significantly after considering the variables of level, age, gender and kind of institution.

Methodology

Sample

All primary and secondary schools in the city of Jaén were visited and asked for cooperation at the end of the first terms of the academic years 2005-2006 and 2006-2007, respectively. The descriptive research conducted sheds light on 26 out of 30 (86.6%) schools offering the third cycle of primary education and on 20 out of 23 (86.9%) schools offering *Enseñanza Secundaria Obligatoria (ESO)* (“compulsory secondary education”). In primary education, the study focuses on the third cycle only as it was not thought to be very convenient to conduct it in lower ones (the teaching of English was optional in the first cycle under the *LOGSE*, so most pupils in the second cycle were complete beginners).

Fifteen of the primary institutions sampled are state schools (out of 17 state schools) and the other 11 private schools (out of 13 private schools), of which 2 do not receive any state subsidy. As for secondary education institutions, 10 of them are state-maintained schools (out of 11 state schools) and the other 10 are private schools (out of 12 private schools). Two of the latter, the same institutions as above, do not receive any state subsidy (*colegios privados*), in contrast to the other 8 which are publicly funded (*colegios privados concertados*).

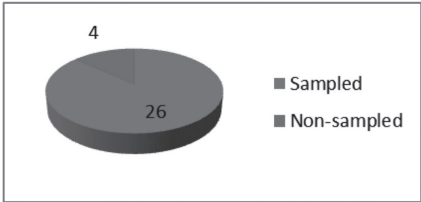


Figure 1. Primary schools in Jaén

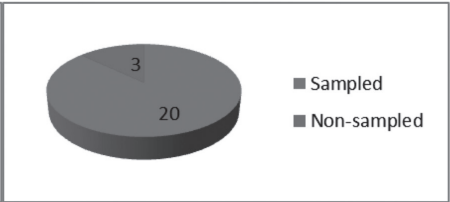


Figure 2. High schools in Jaén

2063 students participated, 757 were in primary education and 1306 were studying *ESO*. The vast majority of the former were only learning one foreign language, English, in their schools. In contrast, many of the latter were also studying another language their schools offered them, but all who were sampled had chosen the English language as the first foreign language in their curricula. Whole classes were sampled. On average, the primary education ones were made up of 23 students and the *ESO* classes of 25.

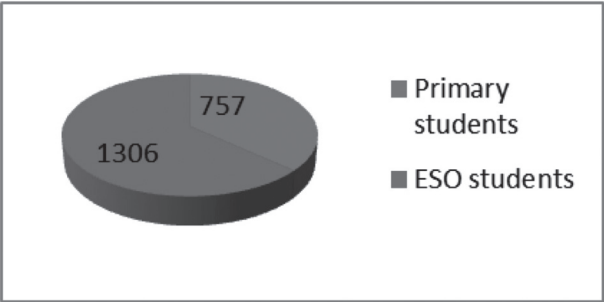


Figure 3. Level of students

All 757 primary education students were in the third cycle of this stage, that is to say, in its year five or six. On the other hand, of the 1306 *ESO* learners participating, 640 were in the first cycle of this level, in other words, in year 1 or 2 of secondary education; and the other 666 were in its second cycle, that is to say, either in year 3 or 4 of this last compulsory education period.

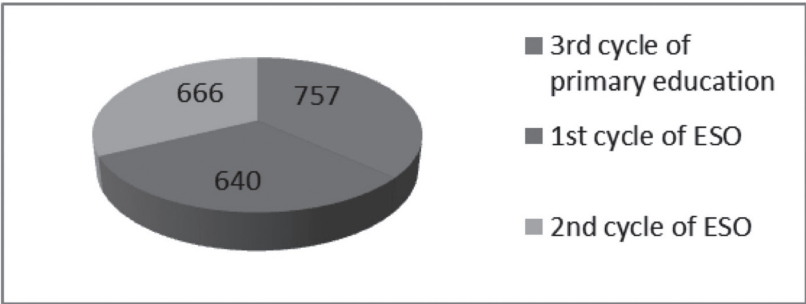


Figure 4. Educational cycle of students

All groups were mixed save for the 8 classes from the 2 private schools not receiving any state subsidy (*colegios privados*) that participated. Four of those classes were constituted only of boys and the other 4 only of girls. The final number of male and female students included in the survey, 1011 (or 49%) and 1052 (or 51%), respectively, is almost identical.

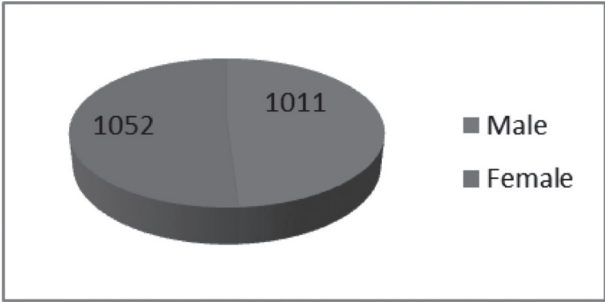


Figure 5. Gender of students

If we group learners taking into account the kind of institution they belonged to, 1164 were in state schools (*colegios públicos*) and 899 studied in private schools (either *centros privados* or *centros privados concertados*). Thus, the percentage of students from the former type of institutions is higher than that of the latter (56.4% as against 43.6%).

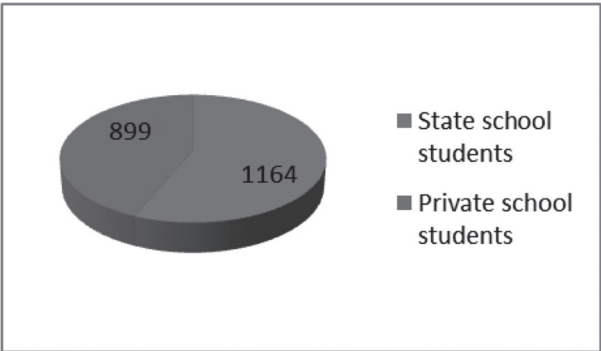


Figure 6. Kind of institutions of students

Just a group of students of each ELT teacher at these levels was sampled, although in the vast majority of cases teachers were in charge

of a few groups, especially private school educators. The classes to be entered were selected randomly or depending on which was the most convenient for the teacher to sample and/or even for myself. Also, it was ensured that more or less a similar number of groups in each of the cycles under research from each of the two types of schools would participate in the study. Therefore, the number of groups sampled, 85 (33 and 52 primary education and *ESO* ones, respectively), is equivalent to the number of teachers to whom a questionnaire was administered. Unfortunately, the surveys given to 6 teachers could not be handed back for different reasons, despite having sampled their classes. Thus, 79 are in the end the amount of practitioners who provided information to be analysed.

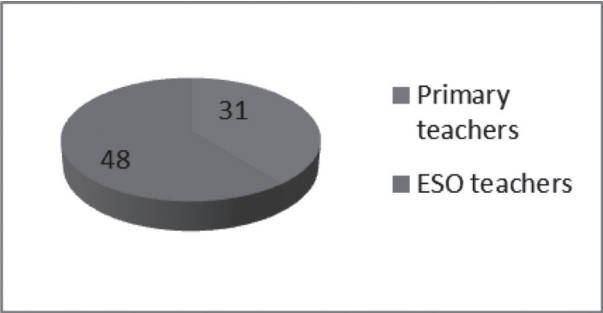


Figure 7. Level taught by teachers

Twenty-six of them were male teachers, and exactly double that number, 52, were female. The remaining teacher forgot or did not want to say his/her gender, so that questionnaire was ignored when data were analysed considering the variable of gender.

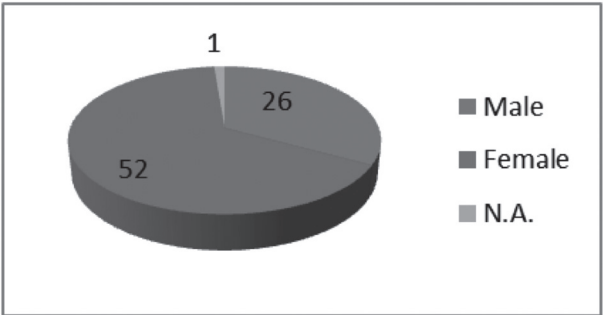


Figure 8. Gender of teachers



As far as the kind of institution is concerned, the amount of teachers belonging to one category –state schools–, is almost twice as much as that of the other category, –private schools. This does not happen with regard to the number of students, which is more similar (see figure 6), the reason being that state institution classes are not so large as private ones.

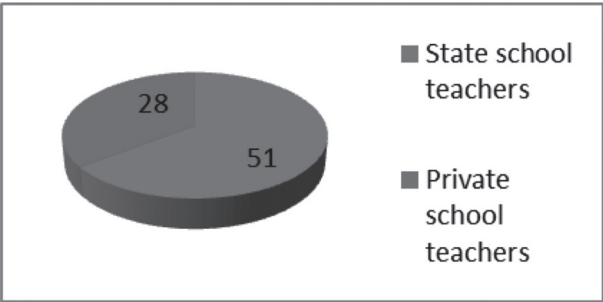


Figure 9. Kind of institutions of teachers

The last feature of each of the teachers sampled that is considered worth highlighting and that is the fourth variable controlled in the analysis of answers from these subjects is age. Ten were young, as they were less than thirty years old; 44, more than half of them, were between thirty and fifty years old; and 25, slightly less than a third of them, were older than 50.

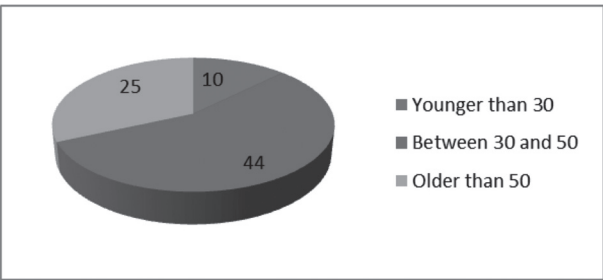


Figure 10. Age of teachers

### *Instruments*

For the descriptive research on which this study is based, questionnaires on cross-curricular teaching were designed because of their advantages of being able to be administered to many people at the same time and of providing standard, uniform and accurate data (Madrid Fernández and Bueno González 659). On the one hand, the students' questionnaire was structured and consisted of ten items that could be graded using the "Likert scale" depending on the frequency of the statements included. On the other hand, the teachers' survey was semi-structured as it allowed for some elaboration in the answers.

Both research tools included a profile section in which respondents gave some personal information. This was very useful for making the specific analysis of data according to a few variables which this study shows. A shortened<sup>2</sup> and translated-into-English version of the two questionnaires can be found in Rascón Moreno<sup>3</sup> ("Cross-curricular teaching in foreign" 108-13). However, these instruments were in Spanish and were answered in this language as well. This was so in order that language did not interfere with the collection of the most accurate possible data as Spanish was, in the vast majority of cases, the respondents' mother tongue.

### *Procedure*

At the end of the first terms of the academic years 2005-2006 and 2006-2007, the questionnaires were administered in the primary and secondary education institutions, respectively. The vast majority of schools allowed the research. On a first visit, students were sampled, and on a second one a few days later, the teachers' questionnaires were collected. During the following months, the data gathered were generally analysed.

In the academic year 2008-2009 the information collected from primary education and *ESO* classes was analysed in more detail.

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<sup>2</sup> The questions which were not finally taken into account in the analysis of all the data gathered (for being considered irrelevant or redundant) were omitted in the published questionnaires.

<sup>3</sup> Note that the study cited is focused on *ESO* only, so it does not include the complete general descriptive research. The latter can only be consulted in Rascón Moreno (*Cross-Curricular Teaching by means of*).

Namely, the results were analysed again but taking into account a few control variables. Finally, in 2010, so that the study could be truly complete and have a solid statistical basis, the ANOVA Test was used to know whether the differences in the results shown by the specific analysis are statistically significant or not.

### ***Data collection***

The data that were collected correspond to around 87% of the total of educational establishments offering the third cycle of primary education or *ESO*. Thus, this descriptive research can be argued to be a very accurate depiction of the teaching of the CCIs in the English classrooms of this part of Andalusia. The information obtained can be considered to be applicable to the first term of the corresponding course.

The instruments were designed to try to collect data without having to infer too much. Most questions and statements were “low inference” categories. However, answering on the frequency of CCI teaching probably required “high inference” on the part of students, in Madrid Fernández and Bueno González’s (645) words. Pupils were helped to bridge this difficulty by reading aloud the most important contents of each of the CCIs that must be taught at their level. Those that should be covered in the *ESO* English classroom can be found in Rascón Moreno (“Cross-curricular teaching in foreign” 98-99). It is also worth mentioning that both questionnaires enabled respondents to remain anonymous in order to ensure the truest possible answers.

The specific analysis included in this study required data to be quantitative. Most of those which were collected were so. This was always the case with students’ answers. Some semi-closed questions in the teachers’ survey yielded qualitative results, but this was sorted out by transforming these answers into numerical data.

### ***Data analysis***

Students’ answers have been analysed in detail according to these variables:

- Level
- Educational cycle

- Gender
- Kind of institution

The variables leading to the grouping of teachers’ responses in different ways are:

- Level
- Age
- Gender
- Kind of institution

These specific data from students and teachers are shown below in five tables. The central tendency of answers has been identified by calculating the “mean”.<sup>4</sup> The coding of students’ responses is always between 1 and 4 (1 = never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often and 4 = always). However, the coding of teachers’ responses varies. For the majority of items it is 0 (no) and 1 (yes). When it is different, it is indicated after the name of the item in brackets. The 1-4 coding corresponds to the same values as above, but not the 0-4 one (0 = none, 1 = less than 25%, 2 = between 25% and 50%, 3 = between 50% and 75%, and 4 = more than 75%). Together with the mean, it is interesting to know the “standard deviation” (SD in tables) of results in each of the questions, so this is also shown.

The programs that have been used are *Microsoft Excel* and *Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)*, in its 17th version. General tendencies are described, and special attention is paid to those occasions when differences are statistically significant. When this is so,<sup>5</sup> the corresponding means producing low p results will be highlighted in bold type in the table.

1. Students’ responses

According to the variable of **level**, students’ results vary a lot in all questions but one in table 1. These differences are statistically significant. They have to do with peace education (p=0.000), health

<sup>4</sup> Its calculation is easy: the scores are added up and divided by the number of scores that you have (Brown 66).

<sup>5</sup> Differences are statistically significant when the ANOVA Test yields p results that are equal to or below 0.050.

education ( $p=0.000$ ), environmental education ( $p=0.000$ ), gender education ( $p=0.000$ ), sex education ( $p=0.010$ ), moral and civic education ( $p=0.000$ ), road safety education ( $p=0.000$ ), consumer education ( $p=0.000$ ), use of ICT ( $p=0.002$ ), learning something else apart from the English language and culture ( $p=0.000$ ), and being taught to be critical, open-minded and respectful ( $p=0.000$ ). The means of these questions are always lower in *ESO* than in primary education.

With regard to the variable of **cycle**, the same happens as with level. All differences among students' answers are statistically significant and are found in the same questions: peace education ( $p=0.000$ ), health education ( $p=0.000$ ), environmental education ( $p=0.000$ ), gender education ( $p=0.000$ ), sex education ( $p=0.020$ ), moral and civic education ( $p=0.000$ ), road safety education ( $p=0.000$ ), consumer education ( $p=0.000$ ), use of ICT ( $p=0.000$ ), learning something else apart from the English language and culture ( $p=0.000$ ), and being taught to be critical, open-minded and respectful ( $p=0.000$ ). Moreover, in practically all cases means also decrease from one cycle to the next one.

In contrast, results differ little concerning the other two variables controlled. As for **gender**, differences are statistically significant in peace education ( $p=0.043$ ), sex education ( $p=0.000$ ), consumer education ( $p=0.005$ ), use of ICT ( $p=0.001$ ), and being taught to be critical, open-minded and respectful ( $p=0.040$ ). Curiously enough, sex education is more frequently approached in the ELT classroom according to male students.

The **kind of institution** yields the smallest number of statistically significant differences, only three. Private school students believed that health education was more commonly addressed than state school pupils thought ( $p=0.040$ ), and the other way round regarding gender education ( $p=0.007$ ) and sex education ( $p=0.028$ ).

VARIABLES		Statistical data	Peace	Health	Environmental	Gender	Sex	Moral and civic	Road safety	Consumer	Use of ICT	Learn more than the foreign language and culture	Are free to discuss and give one's viewpoint	Are taught to be critical, open-minded and respectful
Level	Primary education	Mean	<b>2,55</b>	<b>2,61</b>	<b>2,6</b>	<b>2,55</b>	<b>1,53</b>	<b>2,92</b>	<b>1,99</b>	<b>2,1</b>	<b>1,41</b>	<b>2,49</b>	2,85	<b>3,16</b>
		SD	0,96	0,98	0,97	1,22	0,84	1,01	1,01	1,01	0,79	0,97	1,05	0,98
	ESO	Mean	<b>2,32</b>	<b>2,37</b>	<b>2,33</b>	<b>2,35</b>	<b>1,44</b>	<b>2,34</b>	<b>1,73</b>	<b>1,86</b>	<b>1,31</b>	<b>2,29</b>	2,88	<b>2,94</b>
		SD	0,88	0,89	0,89	1,05	0,7	0,94	0,83	0,85	0,64	0,88	1,02	1
Educational cycle	3rd cycle of p.ed.	Mean	<b>2,55</b>	<b>2,61</b>	<b>2,6</b>	<b>2,55</b>	<b>1,53</b>	<b>2,92</b>	<b>1,99</b>	<b>2,1</b>	<b>1,41</b>	<b>2,49</b>	2,85	<b>3,16</b>
		SD	0,96	0,99	0,97	1,22	0,84	1,01	1,01	1,01	0,79	0,97	1,05	0,98
	1st cycle of ESO	Mean	<b>2,45</b>	<b>2,47</b>	<b>2,3</b>	<b>2,51</b>	<b>1,46</b>	<b>2,41</b>	<b>1,78</b>	<b>1,86</b>	<b>1,37</b>	<b>2,33</b>	2,87	<b>3,02</b>
		SD	0,88	0,95	0,94	1,09	0,73	0,97	0,84	0,86	0,73	0,90	1,02	0,99
	2nd cycle of ESO	Mean	<b>2,2</b>	<b>2,28</b>	<b>2,36</b>	<b>2,19</b>	<b>1,42</b>	<b>2,27</b>	<b>1,68</b>	<b>1,86</b>	<b>1,25</b>	<b>2,25</b>	2,89	<b>2,86</b>
		SD	0,87	0,81	0,85	0,98	0,67	0,91	0,83	0,84	0,54	0,86	1,02	1,01
Gender	Male	Mean	<b>2,36</b>	2,45	2,41	2,43	<b>1,55</b>	2,6	1,84	<b>2,01</b>	<b>1,29</b>	2,36	2,84	<b>2,97</b>
		SD	0,92	0,93	0,93	1,13	0,78	1,01	0,93	0,93	0,66	0,91	1,06	1,03
	Female	Mean	<b>2,44</b>	2,47	2,44	2,41	<b>1,4</b>	2,51	1,81	<b>1,89</b>	<b>1,39</b>	2,37	2,90	<b>3,06</b>
		SD	0,92	0,93	0,94	1,11	0,73	1	0,9	0,91	0,74	0,93	1,01	0,97
Kind of Institution	State school	Mean	2,42	<b>2,42</b>	2,44	<b>2,48</b>	<b>1,5</b>	2,57	1,83	1,93	1,35	2,37	2,90	3,04
		SD	0,93	0,97	0,95	1,15	0,79	1,06	0,92	0,94	0,75	0,92	1,01	0,99
	Private school	Mean	2,39	<b>2,51</b>	2,42	<b>2,34</b>	<b>1,43</b>	2,54	1,82	1,98	1,34	2,36	2,83	2,99
		SD	0,91	0,88	0,91	1,07	0,71	0,94	0,9	0,89	0,64	0,91	1,06	1,01

Table 1. Most important items in the students’ questionnaire

2. Teachers’ responses

Answers from teachers are not usually very different. A few statistically significant differences per variable can still be noticed in the large amount of questions that are being considered in this analysis. Let us begin with the nine questions shown in table 2.

According to **level**, teachers of primary education and *ESO*, on average, followed the syllabus of English very often, but even a little more frequently at the *ESO* level. On the other hand, when they

designed it, more teachers of the first level selected contents and objectives on CCI teaching. It is also worth remarking that the means of the primary education staff are also higher in connection with the number of CCIs they could remember, approaching some CCIs more than others, considering the teaching of these issues easy and believing to have received enough training to teach them. The ANOVA Test shows that differences in the last two are statistically significant ( $p=0.020$  and  $p=0.000$ , respectively).

As far as **age** is concerned, there are several differences in the results. For example, teachers that were younger than thirty followed the syllabus, could define the CCIs and taught them a little more often than their older colleagues. Contrarily, the older the group sampled, the more they selected contents and objectives on CCI teaching when designing the syllabus, and the more they thought they had been sufficiently trained to teach them. However, none of these differences are significant from a statistical point of view.

The differences that are worth mentioning with regard to **gender** are that male teachers selected contents and objectives on CCI teaching more often, could remember more CCIs and considered their teaching easier; and that female teachers taught them more, approached some more than others a little more frequently, and believed to have been trained better in them. Only in this last question differences are statistically significant ( $p=0.016$ ).

In connection with the **kind of institution**, state school teacher means are higher in the definition of the CCIs, number of CCIs remembered, viability of their teaching, percentage given to their education and approaching some more than others, whereas private school teacher means are higher with respect to frequency of following the syllabus, selecting contents and objectives on CCI teaching, and meeting teachers of other subjects to plan the teaching of these issues. Also in this case only the differences related to the last issue are statistically significant ( $p=0.002$ ).

VARIABLES		Statistical data	Frequency of following the syllabus (1-4) Can define CCIs	Teachers' favourable attitudes towards CCI teaching			Number of CCIs remembered (0-8)	Viability of CCI teaching	Enough CCI teacher training being given	Percentage given to CCI teaching during the whole academic year (0-4)	Approaching some CCIs more than others
				Select contents and objectives on CCI teaching	Meet teachers of other subjects to plan CCI teaching						
Level	Primary education	Mean	3,57	0,43	0,5	0,15	4,27	<b>0,82</b>	<b>0,45</b>	1,15	0,73
		SD	0,57	0,5	0,51	0,37	1,96	0,39	0,51	0,61	0,45
	ESO	Mean	3,73	0,38	0,37	0,12	3,3	<b>0,54</b>	<b>0,11</b>	1,19	0,63
		SD	0,45	0,49	0,49	0,33	2,24	0,5	0,31	0,73	0,49
Age	< 30	Mean	3,8	0,5	0,33	0,13	3,6	0,71	0	1,56	0,67
		SD	0,42	0,53	0,5	0,35	1,84	0,49	0	1,13	0,5
	30-50	Mean	3,7	0,35	0,38	0,13	3,67	0,61	0,26	1,21	0,78
		SD	0,46	0,48	0,49	0,33	2,29	0,49	0,44	0,62	0,42
	> 50	Mean	3,56	0,44	0,55	0,15	3,72	0,75	0,29	0,95	0,48
		SD	0,58	0,51	0,51	0,37	2,19	0,44	0,46	0,49	0,51
Gender	Male	Mean	3,56	0,35	0,57	0,13	4,04	0,74	<b>0,08</b>	1,08	0,62
		SD	0,58	0,48	0,51	0,34	2,17	0,45	0,27	0,78	0,5
	Female	Mean	3,71	0,43	0,34	0,14	3,51	0,62	<b>0,33</b>	1,23	0,71
		SD	0,46	0,5	0,48	0,35	2,20	0,49	0,47	0,64	0,46
Kind of Institution	State school	Mean	3,61	0,43	0,38	<b>0,04</b>	3,76	0,71	0,22	1,21	0,7
		SD	0,53	0,5	0,49	0,21	2,19	0,46	0,42	0,66	0,46
	Private school	Mean	3,78	0,33	0,52	<b>0,3</b>	3,5	0,57	0,26	1,09	0,62
		SD	0,42	0,48	0,51	0,47	2,19	0,51	0,45	0,75	0,5

Table 2. First questions on CCI teaching in the teachers’ questionnaire

Let us now concentrate on the most frequently approached CCIs by teachers who said they taught some more than others (see table 3). Concerning **level**, some differences can be found. The clearest ones have to do with primary education teachers educating more in peace, gender and moral and civic issues, and *ESO* ones teaching more in health and consumer contents. Nevertheless, none of these differences is statistically significant according to the ANOVA Test.



If the variable of **age** is controlled, the clearest differences have to do with health and environmental education. They are statistically significant ( $p=0.045$  and  $p=0.021$ , respectively). In both cases, teachers between thirty and fifty years old addressed them most frequently, and younger teachers were those who least covered these issues.

Results do not vary much with regard to **gender**. The clearest differences have to do with male teachers devoting more to consumer education than female ones, and the other way round as far as gender education is concerned. However, they are not significant from a statistical point of view.

No statistically significant differences are yielded by the ANOVA Test either for the **kind of institution** variable. Nevertheless, differences are clearer here. State school teachers address more frequently the first four CCI's in table 3, while private school ones educate more commonly in the last three.

VARIABLES		Statistical data	Peace	Health	Environmental	Gender	Sex	Moral and civic	Road safety	Consumer
Level	Primary education	Mean	0,71	0,29	0,47	0,53	0	0,65	0,06	0,12
		SD	0,47	0,47	0,51	0,51	0	0,5	0,24	0,
	ESO	Mean	0,52	0,52	0,52	0,48	0	0,48	0,09	0,26
		SD	0,	0,51	0,51	0,51	0	0,51	0,29	0,4
Age	< 30	Mean	0,5	<b>0,17</b>	<b>0</b>	0,67	0	0,67	0	0,17
		SD	0,55	0,41	0	0,52	0	0,52	0	0,41
	30-50	Mean	0,5	<b>0,58</b>	<b>0,63</b>	0,42	0	0,54	0,08	0,21
		SD	0,51	0,50	0,49	0,5	0	0,51	0,28	0,41
	> 50	Mean	0,9	<b>0,2</b>	<b>0,5</b>	0,6	0	0,5	0,1	0,2
		SD	0,32	0,42	0,53	0,52	0	0,53	0,32	0,42
Gender	Male	Mean	0,54	0,38	0,46	0,38	0	0,54	0,08	0,31
		SD	0,52	0,51	0,52	0,51	0	0,52	0,28	0,48
	Female	Mean	0,63	0,44	0,52	0,56	0	0,56	0,07	0,15
		SD	0,49	0,51	0,51	0,51	0	0,51	0,27	0,36
Kind of Institution	State school	Mean	0,66	0,48	0,55	0,55	0	0,52	0,07	0,14
		SD	0,48	0,51	0,51	0,51	0	0,51	0,26	0,35
	Private school	Mean	0,45	0,27	0,36	0,36	0	0,64	0,09	0,36
		SD	0,52	0,47	0,5	0,5	0	0,5	0,3	0,5

Table 3. CCI's that are most frequently approached according to teachers

The widest differences in teachers' responses have to do with the materials and resources used for CCI teaching, as can be seen in table 4. Concerning **level**, *ESO* teachers on average use the coursebook, the activity book/workbook and technology, with the exception of the radio-cassette player and the video, more than their primary education counterparts. In contrast, the second use other books/literary works, role-playing or drama, authentic materials, the radio-cassette player and the video more often than the first. Of these differences, those about the use of role-playing or drama ( $p=0.006$ ), authentic materials ( $p=0.041$ ), the CD-player ( $p=0.001$ ), the data projector ( $p=0.012$ ) and the Web ( $p=0.005$ ) are statistically significant.

Grouping these results in terms of teachers' **age** does not throw up differences that are so clear. Regarding the ICT resources (the data projector, software and the Web), younger teachers were never the practitioners who used them the least. However, none of the differences derived from considering this variable are statistically significant.

Surprisingly enough, the analysis of results depending on the **gender** of participants shows that male teachers used all technological devices save for the radio-cassette player more often than female ones. Statistical differences can be found in this case in the use of the activity book/workbook ( $p=0.030$ ) and the DVD-player ( $p=0.032$ ). The first was more commonly exploited by female teachers and the second by their male colleagues.

According to the data obtained and their analysis concerning the **kind of institution** of teachers, the CCIs were more commonly dealt with by the majority of materials and resources below, especially the technological ones, in private schools than in state schools. The more frequent use of the data projector and the camera or video camera in the ELT classrooms of the first institutions is only just statistically significant ( $p=0.049$  in both cases).

VARIABLES		Statistical data	Coursebook	Other books or literary works	Activity book/Workbook	Role-playing or drama	Authentic materials	Radio-cassette player	CD-player	Video	DVD-player	Data projector	Software	Camera or video camera	The Web
Level	Pr. ed.	Mean	0,82	0,32	0,68	<b>0,54</b>	<b>0,25</b>	0,79	<b>0,46</b>	0,57	0,36	<b>0</b>	0,07	0,07	<b>0,07</b>
		SD	0,39	0,48	0,48	0,51	0,44	0,42	0,51	0,5	0,49	0	0,26	0,26	0,26
	ESO	Mean	0,95	0,15	0,83	<b>0,22</b>	<b>0,07</b>	0,59	<b>0,83</b>	0,54	0,54	<b>0,2</b>	0,15	0,15	<b>0,37</b>
		SD	0,22	0,36	0,38	0,42	0,26	0,5	0,38	0,5	0,5	0,4	0,36	0,36	0,49
Age	< 30	Mean	0,88	0,38	0,63	0,25	0,13	0,5	0,63	0,63	0,5	0,13	0,13	0,25	0,38
		SD	0,35	0,52	0,52	0,46	0,35	0,53	0,52	0,52	0,53	0,35	0,35	0,46	0,52
	30-50	Mean	0,92	0,21	0,77	0,36	0,08	0,67	0,69	0,49	0,49	0,15	0,1	0,13	0,26
		SD	0,27	0,41	0,43	0,49	0,27	0,48	0,47	0,51	0,51	0,37	0,31	0,34	0,44
	> 50	Mean	0,86	0,18	0,82	0,36	0,27	0,73	0,68	0,64	0,41	0,05	0,14	0,05	0,18
		SD	0,35	0,39	0,39	0,49	0,46	0,46	0,48	0,49	0,51	0,21	0,35	0,21	0,39
Gender	Male	Mean	0,83	0,22	<b>0,61</b>	0,3	0,22	0,61	0,83	0,61	<b>0,65</b>	0,17	0,22	0,17	0,35
		SD	0,39	0,42	0,5	0,47	0,42	0,5	0,39	0,5	0,49	0,39	0,43	0,39	0,49
	Female	Mean	0,93	0,22	<b>0,84</b>	0,38	0,11	0,71	0,62	0,53	<b>0,38</b>	0,09	0,07	0,09	0,2
		SD	0,25	0,42	0,38	0,49	0,32	0,46	0,49	0,5	0,49	0,29	0,25	0,29	0,4
Kind of Institution	State school	Mean	0,89	0,17	0,79	0,32	0,19	0,64	0,7	0,51	0,4	<b>0,06</b>	0,09	<b>0,06</b>	0,19
		SD	0,31	0,38	0,41	0,47	0,4	0,49	0,46	0,5	0,5	0,25	0,28	0,25	0,4
	Private school	Mean	0,91	0,32	0,73	0,41	0,05	0,73	0,64	0,64	0,59	<b>0,23</b>	0,18	<b>0,23</b>	0,36
		SD	0,29	0,48	0,46	0,5	0,21	0,46	0,49	0,49	0,5	0,43	0,39	0,43	0,49

Table 4. Materials and resources used for CCI teaching according to teachers

Table 5 includes the specific data analysis of the last two remaining questions in the teachers' survey that are considered in this study. As far as **level** is concerned, primary education teachers worked more on CCI attitudinal contents whereas *ESO* teachers focused more on conceptual contents. The second results are statistically significant ( $p=0.025$ ). Teachers of the lower level also evaluate the CCIs more, although differences are not significant in this case according to the ANOVA Test.

With regard to **age**, there are no clear differences in the results. In fact, they are not statistically significant. It could be highlighted, though, that younger teachers taught the CCIs more attitudinally and procedurally, that those between thirty and fifty taught them more conceptually, and that older ones taught all contents to the same extent a little more frequently than the rest. The third are also the teachers assessing cross-curricular topics slightly more, followed by the first.

Results do not vary much either with respect to **gender**. Male participants taught the CCIs attitudinally and procedurally more commonly than their female counterparts, while it is the other way round for teaching the CCIs conceptually, and for teaching all types of contents to the same extent. Those giving a slightly higher percentage of the English subject mark to CCI evaluation were female teachers.

Grouping answers according to the **kind of institution** of participants yields the most different results concerning these last questions. State school teachers tended to teach the three kinds of cross-curricular contents to the same extent more frequently, and they also stated they assessed the CCIs a bit more. The first differences are statistically significant ( $p=0.023$ ). On the other hand, private school teachers said they taught these issues more attitudinally and procedurally. The first of these ways, the attitudinal one, also yields statistically significant differences ( $p=0.010$ ).

VARIABLES		Statistical data	Attitudinal	Procedural	Conceptual	All contents to the same extent	Percentage given to CCI evaluation (0-4)
Level	Primary education	Mean	0,74	0,19	<b>0,07</b>	0,22	0,88
		SD	0,45	0,4	0,27	0,42	0,68
	ESO	Mean	0,5	0,19	<b>0,31</b>	0,25	0,56
		SD	0,51	0,4	0,47	0,44	0,73
Age	< 30	Mean	0,75	0,25	0,25	0,25	0,71
		SD	0,46	0,46	0,46	0,46	0,76
	30-50	Mean	0,55	0,21	0,3	0,21	0,59
		SD	0,51	0,41	0,47	0,41	0,71
	> 50	Mean	0,64	0,14	0,05	0,27	0,81
		SD	0,49	0,31	0,21	0,46	0,75
Gender	Male	Mean	0,68	0,27	0,18	0,18	0,5
		SD	0,48	0,46	0,39	0,39	0,61
	Female	Mean	0,58	0,15	0,23	0,25	0,77
		SD	0,5	0,36	0,42	0,44	0,78
Kind of Institution	State school	Mean	<b>0,5</b>	0,16	0,2	<b>0,32</b>	0,72
		SD	0,51	0,37	0,41	0,47	0,72
	Private school	Mean	<b>0,84</b>	0,26	0,21	<b>0,05</b>	0,57
		SD	0,37	0,45	0,42	0,23	0,76

Table 5. CCI contents most deeply worked on and CCI evaluation according to teachers

Conclusions

**Objective 1.** Most data from students on the different aspects on cross-curricular teaching they were asked about vary significantly if the variables of level and cycle are considered. However, it must be remarked that these variables do not affect their results as expected. It was thought that the teaching of the *LOGSE* value-laden topics in

the foreign language classroom would be more frequent the higher the course is. Surprisingly enough, in the opinion of students, they are more often dealt with in primary education than in *ESO*, and in the first cycle of *ESO* than in the second. On the other hand, not much data from learners are different statistically according to the other two variables, gender and kind of institution (see table 1).

**Objective 2.** The ANOVA Test shows that there are statistically significant differences among teachers' results especially when the variable of level is controlled. This is so in the following specific aspects: the viability of CCI teaching, the training being given in them, the use of resources like role-playing or drama, authentic materials, the CD-player, the data projector and the Web, and the degree of work on conceptual contents (see tables 2-5). Nevertheless, in contrast to the analysis of this variable of level among students' responses, the information from primary education and *ESO* practitioners is very similar concerning the percentage of the course that they devote to cross-curricular teaching (see the penultimate issue in table 2).

According to the variables of age and gender data from teachers are rarely statistically significant. This is the case only in relation to health and environmental education as the most frequently addressed CCIs; and to the training being given in all of them, and the use of the activity book/workbook and the DVD player, respectively (see tables 2-5).

Concerning the last of the teachers' variables controlled, the kind of institution, it is the second variable producing more significant differences from a statistical point of view: in terms of meeting teachers of other subjects to plan CCI education, as regards the use of the data projector and the camera or video camera, and in relation to the predominance of work on attitudinal contents and on the three types of contents to the same extent (see tables 2-5).

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**“TIS THE HUMOUR OF OUR SEX”: INDAGACIÓN  
HUMANA Y LITERARIA EN *THE UNFORTUNATE  
BRIDE; OR, THE BLIND LADY A BEAUTY* DE APHRA  
BEHN**

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**Resumen**

Este trabajo estudia el relato de Aphra Behn *The Unfortunate Bride; or, The Blind Lady A Beauty* con la finalidad de poner de manifiesto su valor pionero en la historia de la literatura inglesa. Se analiza a la narradora (en sus vertientes heterodiegética y homodiegética) mostrando la correlación entre la voz *auctorial* y el discurso textual. De esta forma, se indaga en los asertos de carácter universal que la escritora pone en boca de sus personajes o en pluma de la narradora. Asimismo se aborda el componente social que contextualiza y singulariza la historia que, como en otros trabajos de Behn, es un reflejo de aspectos fundamentales tales como el factor económico, la belleza, el deseo, o la igualdad de género.

**Keywords:** mujer escritora, Aphra Behn, narrativa, relato breve, novela.

**“TIS THE HUMOUR OF OUR SEX”: HUMAN AND LITERARY  
INQUIRY INTO *THE UNFORTUNATE BRIDE; OR, THE BLIND  
LADY A BEAUTY* BY APHRA BEHN**

**Abstract**

This paper aims to study Aphra Behn's short fiction *The Unfortunate Bride; or, The Blind Lady A Beauty* in order to expound Behn's



pioneering place and value in the history of English Literature. The interrelationship between the auctorial voice and the textual discourse is analysed through an examination of the narrator (heterodiegetic and homodiegetic) and furthermore through the universal ideas that are stated either by means of the character's dialogue or by the narrator's pen. In addition, social factors that contextualise the story (such as economic position, ideas of beauty and gender equality) are reflected upon.

**Keywords:** female writers, Aphra Behn, narrative, short fiction, novel.

## 1. Introducción

Aphra Behn es un caso singular en la historia de la literatura inglesa que objetiva cómo la crítica puede revisar conceptos y valorar rectamente la obra de una escritora cuyo talento no ha sido siempre reconocido con justicia. No se trata de una mera cuestión de género sino del valor intrínseco de su legado que, ineludiblemente, no está disociado de su condición de mujer ni de la sociedad patriarcal de la Inglaterra del siglo XVII en la que le tocó vivir.

En 1688 Aphra Behn publica *Oroonoko* y *Agnes de Castro*. Al año siguiente sale de las prensas *The Lucky Mistake* y *The History of the Nun*. Este mismo año muere. Son varios los trabajos de ficción que tiene preparados y que deja sin publicar. Cuando Aphra alcanza los 49 años, sus alforjas literarias están cargadas de obras como *The Unfortunate Bride; or, The Blind Lady a Beauty*.

En lo que atañe a las ediciones de Aphra Behn, ocurre un hecho llamativo porque cambia de editor en algunas de las obras publicadas durante sus últimos años. *Love Letters* lleva la firma de editores nuevos para la autora, de hecho una edición está al cuidado de J. Hindmarsh, la otra la lleva a cabo R. Taylor. *Oroonoko* tiene el sello editorial de W. Canning, mientras que *The Lucky Mistake* es publicada por R. Bentley.

No se pretende indagar aquí las motivaciones de este cambio editorial ni tampoco las razones por las que no publica *ipso facto* unos relatos que, ciertamente, abren una nueva vertiente en la historia de la narrativa y de la novela inglesa, por tratarse de un género poco explorado y por estar firmados por una mujer. Queremos centrar la atención en la *opera prima*, en la inmanencia textual, sin obviar el reflejo de unas

circunstancias personales singulares ni la contextualización de la materia discursiva en una época determinada que, naturalmente, hace de vasos comunicantes entre la literatura, la escritora y la sociedad.

*The Unfortunate Bride; or, the Blind Lady a Beauty* es una historia de amor y de pasión en la que hay asesinatos, enredo y engaño. Es un relato donde reluce la voz de la narradora prolongando así el eco y las reivindicaciones de la propia Aphra Behn.

## 2. Heterotaxia y homeostasis: trama y cronotopo

El relato, señalando la amistad desde la infancia entre Frankwit y Wildvill, parte de Staffordshire. Los aconteceres cambian el escenario a Londres. La historia presenta a dos enamorados, Frankwit y Belvira, que recrean y disfrutan su amor mutuo con carácter cuasi espiritual, no carnal. La protagonista es enviada a Londres y el personaje principal llega a la misma ciudad, porque su padre tuvo que marchar allí. Son azares del destino, ideados por Aphra Behn.

El protagonista (“fancied little of Heaven dwelt in his yellow angels”, Behn 200) dejaba volar a sus “ángeles dorados” como si poseyeran “alas de oro”. Frankwit ve estos ángeles solamente en los ojos de Belvira que sirve para concitar y producir el deseo masculino. Es aquí cuando la trama plantea un primer giro adversativo para anticipar que el mar de su amor puede “tocar fondo sin que la ola regrese”. Entonces, Frankwit “solicits with more impatience the consummation of their joys”. (Behn 200)

Cuando Frankwit plantea a Belvira su unión, la protagonista duda entre mantener la felicidad del amor mutuo o consumir el placer final. En este momento interviene Celesia (que es ciega) generando un atractivo triángulo. Por un lado, Frankwit anhela que pueda ver para apreciar las maravillas deslumbrantes de Belvira. Esta última, por su parte, predice que su prima desea recobrar la vista solamente para contemplar a Frankwit. Celesia comenta que “sight is fancy” (Behn 201) a lo que el protagonista añade que la imaginación de la ceguera supera la realidad de la vista junto a la paradoja contenida en “the fancy of your sight excels even in blindness” (Behn 201).

La futura novia argumenta la conveniencia y el deseo de disfrutar el sueño del amor, a pesar de su carácter efímero, para mantener así la

ilusión y el deseo del enamorado. Frankwit esgrime razones para unirse a Belvira la que, finalmente, cede entregándole “el sol del amor” (Behn 202). Tras este cambio en la trama, viene otro viraje adversativo en este caso motivado por la cuestión económica. No han hecho más que mostrar su acuerdo y, por tanto, establecer la armonía argumental cuando se desmembra el equilibrio (heterotaxia) plasmado introductoriamente mediante la conjunción adversativa que articula Frankwit para decir que debe marchar hacia Cambridge por asuntos de negocios.

El protagonista se encamina hacia el sureste del país con el fin de cobrar unas cuentas pendientes para de este modo dar a la celebración nupcial el boato que merece. Aquí se erige otro escenario que trae un episodio secundario de modo especular y retrospectivo dentro del cuadro principal. Por un lado está el escenario principal en Londres donde Belvira y Frankwit gozan de sus miradas y su amor. Por otro lado está Cambridge, donde llega el visitante y se encuentra con una viuda llamada Moorea que, tiempo atrás, se casó con un señor caprichoso. El cronotopo principal es ejemplar y tiene un contenido aleccionador en muchos aspectos. El cronotopo segundo es detestable y tiene un contenido negativo. El primero es foco del bien, el segundo es foco del mal. De hecho, el foco del mal, encarnado en una actante en Cambridge, hace que el foco del bien pervierta sus valores positivos, corrompiéndose y alterándose de forma permanente.

Así pues, aparece otro enlace matrimonial en este caso a modo de historia dentro de la historia recontado mediante el empleo de la analepsis. Una parte de las razones y los motivos se repiten en este recuento gracias al cual un caballero quiere disfrutar con Moorea. La fugacidad de esta relación cristaliza en la obra mediante la brevedad de la narración textual que la presenta.

La señora negra intercepta las cartas entre Frankwit, que cae enfermo, y Belvira. De hecho ensambla una misiva falsa en la que describe la supuesta muerte de Frankwit para, de una vez por todas, eliminarlo del mapa de los enamorados. Mientras tanto, Wildvill se encuentra con Belvira que le cuenta la desaparición y el supuesto fallecimiento de Frankwit. Wildvill pide matrimonio a Belvira y se unen. Cuando Frankwit vuelve a Londres descubre los hechos.

Belvira confunde a Frankwit con un fantasma; el hecho de que haya padecido una enfermedad, es cierto, lo deja pálido. Pero la confusión va

más allá. Frankwit, al saber que Belvira acaba de casarse con Wildvill, desenfunda su espada decidido a suicidarse ante su amada. Cuando ella se desmaya, él la coge en sus brazos. La pulcritud del personaje Frankwit le hace incluso pensar en que no debería reanimarla por no ser su marido para no ocupar, así, el terreno que ahora le corresponde a Wildvill.

Antes de que la historia se tergiversara, fue ella la que se echó en los brazos de Frankwit; ahora es Frankwit quien se ve *motu proprio* avocado a cogerla durante su desvanecimiento. Llega Wildvill oyendo un grito y arremete lanzándose contra Frankwit que está sosteniendo a Belvira yacente entre sus brazos. Wildvill, víctima y victorioso a la vez por la misma mentira muñida por Moorea, acusa a Frankwit de infame y traidor por haber estado con una “prostituta” y perjudicarle ahora a él a través de Belvira.

Pero siguen los malentendidos y el enredo de la trama porque Wildvill apunta su espada contra Frankwit y atraviesa a Belvira desde el costado hiriendo también el brazo de la dama. Frankwit desenvaina su espada y se la clava a Wildvill. Entre el tumulto, la gravedad y la urgencia de la escena reaparece Celesia evitando que Frankwit se suicide. Es notable cómo Frankwit practica dos intentos de suicidio que son evitados, el primero por Belvira; el segundo, por Celesia. El protagonista, retorciéndose en el dolor del amor, trata de segarse la vida. Así las cosas, es significativo que tanto en un caso como en otro el intento de asesinato haya sido frenado por dos mujeres. Si Frankwit pierde a su amada por la malicia y la manipulación de una mujer (una especie de “wit” negativo) son precisamente otras mujeres con “ingenio” las que salvan y rescatan al protagonista de la muerte. Aquí está también la primacía y la relevancia femenina en el discurso de Aphra Behn.

Celesia, con la vista recobrada, prefiere seguir ciega a tener que ver este episodio macabro. Exhalando su último aliento, Belvira encomienda a Frankwit que se case con Celesia como señal de su amor y de su recuerdo. En este momento, la moribunda Belvira y Frankwit unen sus labios diciéndole ella que muere entregada a él. Ahora se trata de una actante renovada que puede ver y cuyos ojos, aplicando el tópico literario que recrea Aphra Behn, sirven de entrada para el amor.

En este momento, se observa cómo la escritora plantea una posible reconciliación en la tensión argumental. Si antes se objetivaba la ruptura

de la armonía, ahora se plasma el concierto. Aunque sea a las puertas de la muerte, la escritora quiere que Belvira y Frankwit aparezcan unidos al final a modo de recomposición del orden fragmentado (homeostasis) por culpa de la contra protagonista o antagonista Moorea.

La intervención de Wildvill hace surgir otro posible final de la obra que, si bien no llega a producirse, queda anotado en el relato. Se trataría de la potencial infidelidad de Frankwit hacia Belvira por culpa de la señora negra que se intercala en medio de la relación. De ahí que la interlocución de Wildvill emplee el condicional. Ocurre una clara aceleración y compresión de los eventos narrados para ofrecer al lector un micro cuadro relevante y ambivalente.

### **3. Elementos extrínsecos e intrínsecos en la construcción de los personajes**

La obra se abre describiendo a los dos personajes masculinos que acaparan la escena. Frankwit y Wildvill son los primeros sustantivos que encuentra el lector. Hallamos a un tal Frankwit que muestra implícitamente un sintagma nominal el cual puede traducirse por “ingenio sincero” o “sentido franco”, junto a un tal Wildvill que porta el significado intrínseco de “voluntad salvaje” o “deseo furioso” e incluso “desolado” o “decisión errática”. En cuanto a sus atributos, el primero es presentado de forma relumbrante, como una persona encantadora, como poseedor de unas virtudes interiores que le llevan a la buena conversación y, en suma, a tener un toque de humildad en su comportamiento. Wildvill es perfilado por su fuerza y por su carácter viril, proveniente de una familia más rica que la de su amigo Frankwit.

El linaje de Frankwit nos hace pensar en la nobleza, en el buen espíritu y en la sinceridad innata que tiene, en tanto que la ascendencia de Wildvill nos alerta sobre su origen acaudalado: “Wildvill was of the richest family, but Frankwit of the noblest” (Behn 198). De hecho se nos informa de que “he still caressed his charmer with an innocence becoming his sincerity” (Behn 199). La escritora enfatiza estos extremos morfológica y sintácticamente gracias al empleo de dos superlativos.

Se registra una referencia a los padres tanto de Belvira como de Frankwit para reseñar que de pequeños vivían cerca y para poner de manifiesto incluso el amor que en la infancia se tenían. Aparece de

manera fugaz una mayor referencia al padre de Frankwit en analepsis para explicar que tras su fallecimiento su hijo marcha a Londres. Frankwit aparece como una reluciente luminaria que atrae a las mujeres, si bien la única que lo impresiona es la protagonista llamada Belvira, cuyo nombre evoca el movimiento de lo bello, así como el dinamismo y el cambio. La primera referencia la presenta con catorce años siendo celestial, encantadora y hermosa. La introducción de Belvira transmite frescura y lozanía cuando la narradora está detallando que, al fallecer su madre, es enviada a Londres. Los términos que Aphra Behn emplea para describir a la actante, entonces adolescente, son dignos de referencia: “And now Belvira in her fourteenth year (when the fresh spring of young virginity began began to cast more lively bloomings in her cheeks, and softer longings in her eyes) [...]” (Behn 198-199).

Celesia es introducida un poco después entre paréntesis. La narradora también antepone el asunto económico y especifica su patrimonio tanto monetario como en forma de terrenos. Se trata de la hija única de un mercader turco acaudalado que le donó al fallecer cincuenta mil libras en metálico junto a otra herencia en tierras. Estas posesiones contrastan con la ceguera y nos explica que su carencia de visión es de nacimiento. La actante que carece del sentido de la visión porta otras virtudes como el buen juicio y el razonamiento hasta tal punto que su prima Belvira le consulta cada uno de los pasos que da en la vida. Por lo demás, Celesia significa celestial, divina, puesto que procede del adjetivo latino “caelestis” (de *caelum*, cielo). Aphra Behn realiza de esta forma una nueva cala en la condición de la mujer. Según Ballester:

Through her use of a disabled character, Behn is able to explore how women are valued, or rather, de-valued. Worded differently, Behn deconstructs the ideology that normalcy somehow serves for favors the female gender. Rather, Behn shows that deviance from the norm allows a woman to exist on her own terms. Deviance allows a woman to be admired but not possessed, to be valued for something intrinsic, rather than to be reduced to what the male gaze (and its reciprocation) can absorb. (Ballester 200)

Por contraste, en el resto de personajes atestiguamos la importancia capital del sentido de la visión por donde se ven, simpatizan y hasta se enamoran manteniendo placer regodeándose en el contacto visual. Así las cosas, como el placer se transmite mediante la visión, esta actante

es incapaz de compartir el placer y de hacerlo mutuo. Finalmente, milagrosamente recobra su vista.

En el nuevo escenario que emerge en la obra, Cambridge, hay que insertar al primo de Frankwit que es el dueño de la casa donde reside Frankwit y la señora negra que está allí alojada (Moorea). Moorea es el principio de una parte de la obra y también marca el fin de los acontecimientos. Impide la relación entre Belvira y Frankwit escondiendo sus cartas y fingiendo el supuesto fallecimiento de Frankwit. Está perfilada como una mujer mala, mentirosa y que practica el juego sucio para lograr sus propósitos.

Mintz (5-8) estudia que Belvira encarna el deseo corporal mientras que Celesia representa el deseo material debido a sus posesiones. Richard Allestree, en *The Ladies Calling* (1673), arremete contra la belleza efímera exterior para realzar, por contraste, la gracia interior, la belleza moral. A tenor de lo antedicho, es posible inferir el contraste entre lo exterior y lo interior, entre la apariencia de oropel y lo íntimo verdadero y perenne. Se trata incluso de contraponer la belleza como arma y fuente de poder y, por ende, sus limitaciones o sus miserias. Incluso se puede ir más allá, pensando en las artes perversas aplicadas por Moorea que son un reflejo, en suma, de su ingenio por muy al servicio que esté de las fuerzas del mal. La estratagema de Moorea corrobora la superioridad de la inteligencia respecto a la hermosura exterior. Igualmente, confirma la victoria del mal sobre el bien.

Se comprueba tanto la belleza masculina como la hermosura femenina, como si la escritora estuviera llamando la atención sobre la igualdad de ambos géneros, algo que no es extraño en su universo discursivo, tal como se corrobora en otras obras como *Memoirs of the Court of the King of Bantam* donde incorpora la expresión taxativa “to make the number of both sexes equal” (Behn 121).

Pero, ¿por qué y para qué se enfatiza tanto el atractivo del protagonista en el que Aphra Behn emplea la hipérbole de una manera desmesurada? Curtin (77) esgrime tres razones para la artificialidad y la construcción personajística que bien podemos aplicar tanto a los personajes como a las actantes en esta historia. En primer lugar, la escritora busca suscitar el deseo en el lector, a tenor del énfasis puesto en los encantos y en las lindezas descritas. En segundo lugar, Aphra Behn trata de conseguir con esta forma descriptiva la empatía del

receptor, focalizando su atención en los personajes trazados y finalmente pretende impulsar con este detallismo y mediante esta explicitud la evolución del propio argumento.

Es un hecho insoslayable que, independientemente de los fines, la escritora se deleita dibujando a los personajes femeninos. De hecho, en *A Discovery of New Worlds* la autora alude a esta predilección suya a la hora de siluetear a las actantes femeninas. En este sentido, Antoinette Curtin (77) recalca que “the fictive female form is the apex of art, the symbol of the greatest achievements of human inspiration”.

#### **4. La voz de la narradora y la presencia de Aphra Behn en la obra**

Frankwit se está regodeando en el placer “secreto” del amor mutuo que goza cuando alude a modo de contraste a quienes no consiguen la correspondencia de la amada lo cual supone una afirmación de carácter general puesta en boca de la narradora como “He saw his rivals languish for that bliss, those charms, those rapturous and ecstatic transports which e engrossed alone” (Behn 199). A esta aseveración suma otra sobre el paso del tiempo que, para quienes están anhelando fusionarse y quieren ir más allá, tiene un efecto multiplicador y desesperante:

But now some eighteen months (some ages in a lover's calendar) winged with delights, and fair Belvira, now grown fit for riper joys, knows hardly how she can deny her pressing lover and herself to crown their vows and join their hands as well as hearts. (Behn 199-200)

Otra declaración de la relatora alude a la generosidad que va implícita en el amor verdadero porque “his generosity was boundless as his love, for no man ever truly loved that was not generous” (Behn 200). De nuevo se objetiva una aseveración de índole universal.

Cuando Frankwit piensa que este gozo espiritual puede acabarse urge a su deseada Belvira a consumir el placer. Es ahora cuando la narradora relata que “it was agreed between them that they should both be one” (Behn 200); y precisamente en este momento de la narración es cuando la protagonista incorpora la reticencia que suele oponer el lado femenino de la relación aunque, en realidad, esté ardorosa de su unión. Introduce esta parte del discurso mediante la conjunción adversativa:



[...] but not without some reluctance on the female side, for 'tis the honour of our sex, to deny most eagerly those grants to lovers for which most tenderly we sigh: so contradictory are we to ourselves, as if the deity had made us with a seeming reluctance to his own designs, placing as much discords in our minds, as there is harmony in our faces. (Behn 200)

Se trata de una tesis con carácter absoluto, según la visión de la narradora y además se refiere de manera particular a un patrón de comportamiento que, según se esgrime, suele seguir la mujer en la relación amorosa. Se infiere, por tanto, que Aphra Behn está haciendo aflorar la interioridad femenina a la superficie textual. Gracias a este pormenor de los actantes la escritora muestra y bucea en la psicología de la mujer. Para refrendar más esta manifestación la compositora recurre al símil de unas “nubes enfurecidas” que disocian los truenos de los relámpagos: “We are a sort of airy clouds, whose lighting flash out one way, and the thunder another. Our words and thoughts can ne·er agree” (Behn 200). La meticulosidad de la autora a la hora de insertar el pronombre primero de plural no puede ser más delicada y laudable. La maestría de Aphra Behn para seleccionar elementos naturales irremediables e inevitables y relacionarlos sagazmente con el carácter y la psique de la mujer no puede ser mayor.

Se vislumbran otras tesis de carácter holístico a propósito de Adán y Eva. Porque la escritora se encarga de incluir a “todos” y “al mundo entero” cuando está predicando “la maldición” de los padres primigenios que, por lo demás, supone una referencia bíblica (Libro del Génesis, 3: 22-24) y literaria (“Libro IX” de *Paradise Lost*, Milton). Son más las aserciones que la narradora entrevera a lo largo de la historia.

Las aseveraciones sobre el matrimonio como esclavitud laten en una de las intervenciones de Belvira. Ella misma lo define como una especie de autoflagelación limitándose, así, el hombre a una sola mujer. Un aserto de calado similar se halla en este momento cuando Frankwit replica que si la mujer susodicha es como “el maná”, entonces resultará en una síntesis del sabor de todas y que alcanzará la plenitud al estar dentro del paraíso. La contrarréplica de la protagonista pone sobre la mesa una especie de teoría universal, que sobrepasa la dimensión del tópico horaciano sobre el *carpe diem*, señalando que todos somos como perfumes que al olerlos de modo continuado nos hacen creer que hemos perdido nuestras dulzuras. Belvira plantea de nuevo la duda sobre ir

más allá transvasando la frontera del amor platónico: “I’ll be judged by my cousin Celesia here, if it be not better to live in mutual love, without the last enjoyment” (Behn 200).

La concepción antedicha del matrimonio recalca en otros trabajos de la escritora. *Memoirs of the Court of the King of Bantam* en uno de sus momentos finales presenta una interpretación de cariz parecido. Se trata del matrimonio entre Philibella y Goodland, logrado tras pasar por muchos vericuetos y argucias, junto a una aparente unidad entre Would Be King y la señorita Lucy. Pues bien, en este momento la narradora inserta el aserto perentorio “the ungrateful obligations of matrimony” (Behn 136), tras lo que incluso se matiza en superlativo que se trata de “the most nauseous, hateful, pernicious, and destructive of love imaginable”.

Mas volvamos a la historia objeto de este artículo. Su prima le responde extrañada por haber confiado a ella (ciega) un tema en el que no está experimentada en absoluto. Cuando la escritora está poniendo su intervención en estilo directo no se olvida de insertar un inciso apostillando que en su mente Celesia ve con meridiana claridad. La respuesta no deja de sumarse al predicamento universal que leemos en la obra: “I believe it is but a sickly soul which cannot nourish its offspring of desires without preying upon the body” (Behn 201). En este sentido encaja otra tesitura engastada en la historia mediante una sintaxis clara y transparente compuesta de sujeto verbo copulativo y atributo: la vista es ilusión (Behn 221). Mediante esta enunciación se confirma lo anterior a la vez que se entrevera una paradoja entre quienes teniendo el sentido de la visión no ven correctamente y quienes careciendo del mismo llegan más allá en su visión de la realidad.

Celesia, dentro del triángulo dialogal generado, llega a afirmar que si tuviera el sentido de la vista no se casaría, que permanecería sin mantener placer de la misma forma que hacen en este segmento de la obra Frankwit y Belvira. De manera implícita la actante plantea la dualidad entre la carne y el amor espiritual.

Belvira predica el aserto del placer como efímero al decir textualmente que el amor es como un sueño del que hay que despertarse (“to be wakened”; Behn 202). De esta forma especula con el cambio desde el amor gozoso y dichoso hasta el matrimonio que llegaría a romper los sueños dulces del paraíso. La protagonista

se inclina por no saber demasiado, por no perder el paraíso. Prefiere prolongar el gozo del amor mutuo a tener que perder esta felicidad consumándolo. Finalmente, discuten sobre el interés y el desinterés de los enamorados antes y después de unirse. A este respecto, Frankwit responde contundentemente afirmando que no tendría placer yendo de una a otra, persiguiendo el sol que es inasible; “corriendo de colina en colina” es la metáfora aplicada: “That expectation were indeed a monster which enjoyment could not satisfy; I should take no pleasure [...] runnin from hill to hill, like children chasing the sun which I could never catch” (Behn 202).

Cuando Aphra Behn dibuja la imagen de Belvira acercándose hacia los brazos de su amado, el lector asiste al consentimiento y a la unión de ambos actantes. Es la aceptación del amor. También estimamos que es una imagen del deseo sexual y de la consumación del amor.

Cuando se distancian, la narradora aprovecha para hacer dos profundizaciones sobre la naturaleza humana. La primera es el sabor agridulce de los amantes (dice textualmente que es como cuando llueve y brilla el sol a la vez) por el distanciamiento, resultando en una mezcla de gozo y tristeza (Behn 202). La segunda se asienta sobre lo contradictorio del comportamiento humano. Está relatando la llegada de Frankwit a Cambridge, yendo al detalle locativo y temporal, cuando se permite introducir una oración exclamativa entre paréntesis: “strange, that he should have made such haste to fly from what so much he loved” (Behn 203). La táctica del paréntesis hace pensar en una escritora que baja al texto y, cuando lo desea, desde un segundo plano esclarece los eventos y da su consejo al lector. En esta ocasión lo aparentemente discordante es que justo tras haber conseguido el amor y a la persona tanto ansiada se retire tan pronto de ella. Claro que el factor económico emerge tal como ya se ha dicho.

En lo que atañe al modo de la enunciación, y siguiendo la terminología genettiana, destaca la convivencia de una narradora heterodiegética con la relatora homodiegética. La heterodiegesis presenta la historia desde el nivel extradiegético, mostrando un conocimiento de los vericuetos a la perfección. En la mayoría de los casos se trata de una narradora omnisciente si bien en ocasiones aparece como testigo. Tomemos como ejemplo la oración final cuando el Frankwit, macerado por el dolor, se casa con Celesia. La narradora nos explica que promete obedecer la

voluntad de la moribunda Belvira con pena y dolor: “With tears and wondrous sorrow, he promis’d to obey her Will, and in some months after her interment, he perform’d his promise” (Behn 208).

Este horizonte narrativo permite engendrar otro nivel más profundo, siguiendo el diagrama genettiano, que es el intradieгético del narrador-personaje homodieгético. En este caso lo inaudito de la historia es que Aphra Behn se permite salir al escenario de la ficción para intervenir directamente como una actante más:

I was at this time in Cambridge, and having some small acquaintance with this Blackmoor Lady, and sitting in her Room that evening, after Frankwit departure thence, in Moorea’s absence, saw inadvertently a bundle of Papers, which she had gathered up, as I suppose, to burn, since now they grew but useless, she having no farther Hopes of him: I fancy’d I knew the Hand, and thence my Curiosity only led me to see the Name, and finding Belvira sub-scrib’d, I began to guess there was some foul play in Hand. (Behn 207)

Es elocuente el final de este texto donde la participante comienza *in situ* a adivinar la praeclara existencia de “juego sucio”. Aphra Behn aparece como personaje en un momento especial para desenmascarar y desentrañar la mentira urdida por Moorea. Resulta que Aphra Behn está por este tiempo en Cambridge y, tras decir que tiene cierta amistad con “this Blackmoor Lady”, entró a su habitación aquella misma tarde y de esta forma supo de primera mano lo ocurrido. Este recurso en plena simbiosis con el anterior, el del narrador heterodieгético, ofrece una mezcla que da más viveza y verosimilitud a la obra, aportando grandes dosis de realismo que están en la base de las afirmaciones universales que la escritora suministra en sus líneas.

En dos ocasiones atestiguamos cómo la narradora alude a la “gracia de nuestro sexo”, mediante los sintagmas “for ‘this the humour of our sex” (Behn 200) y “as ‘tis the humour of our sex” (Behn 205). Estas rotundas afirmaciones confirman los comportamientos contradictorios que vemos en los protagonistas, que se regodean en su amor mediante sus miradas y a través de su empatía pero que posponen el ir más allá en la relación, esperando un mañana más apropiado. En principio se trata de unas paradojas circunscritas a la mujer (“nuestro sexo”). Podemos profundizar más. Por contraposición, está circunscribiendo comportamientos consustanciales al ser humano como el deseo de lo

prohibido mientras que pone en evidencia la auto-negación de consumir lo deseado en aras de gozar regodeándose en el deseo mismo.

Entre la inserción de ambos testimonios, la relatora nos hace llegar otra afirmación categórica consistente en lo poco que dura el placer a través de esta oración copulativa que ya se ha registrado: “Pleasure is but a dream [...]” (Behn 202). Tesis de esta guisa -qué duda cabe- parten de la experiencia de la autora y siendo aplicadas a la mujer pueden, igualmente, referirse al género masculino, al ser humano. Por ende, Aphra Behn está enunciando asertos de carácter general a modo de verdades universales que ponen de manifiesto tanto las contradicciones en la conducta del ser humano (gracia, temperamento) como la existencia de ciertas realidades en la persona cuales son lo efímero del placer o la satisfacción en su percepción, entre otras.

Aphra Behn, de esta forma, está haciendo gala de un marcado modelo de “linguistic empowerment”, en palabras de Jacqueline Pearson (194), distanciándose de los estereotipados tópicos que recaen sobre la mujer. La autora está criticando sin ambages la “ideología de género recibida” (Pearson 193), que en otras ocasiones no vacila en recrear mediante el comportamiento y las palabras de sus personajes. Lo que hallamos en este relato es una llamada de atención al lector para subvertir los estereotipos que sobre la mujer existen en su época. La escritora con las posibilidades reivindicadoras que le ofrece el arsenal retórico de la prosa combate la situación de la mujer a la vez que deja constancia de su enjundioso conocimiento humano.

## 5. Reflejos sociales

El principio de la obra está configurado en términos económicos, inspeccionando el linaje de los personajes masculinos. El aspecto financiero está latente desde el inicio de la historia. Así introduce tanto a Frankwit como a Wildvill: “Frankwit and Wildvil were two young gentlemen of very considerable fortunes, both born in Staffordshire, and during their minority both educated together, by which opportunity they contracted a very inviolable friendship [...]” (Behn 198).

Es elocuente la forma en que menciona que Frankwit recibe, tras el fallecimiento de su padre, 700 libras al año. Porque cuando está describiendo las lágrimas que derramó por la pérdida de su progenitor

integra de manera abrupta y sin ligazón semántica aparente un paréntesis con dicho contenido “master of seventeenth hundred pounds a year, which his father left him” (Behn 199).

El tema de la economía, que puede interpretarse como una manifestación más de la ambición humana, está presente en la obra. Porque el protagonista se encamina hacia otro condado para cobrar un negocio pendiente y con este dinero (unas mil libras) piensa regresar en una semana para invertirlo, precisamente, en el esplendor de la celebración de la boda. El personaje quiere marcar la altura del amor mutuo a nivel monetario. El mismo personaje que tanto anhela el amor verdadero aparece viciado por la cuestión económica.

A saber, Franwit está explicando que debe marchar a la zona de Cambridge y no desdeña realizar una explícita referencia monetaria al matizar que volverá colmado de dinero. Dentro del global de la obra, esta dedicación pecuniaria aparece por encima del amor que Belvira y Frankwit se tienen, desean y gozan, pues el personaje se distancia a sabiendas de que deja en Londres a su amada, de que ambos van a sufrir la ausencia aunque según lo previsto vaya a ser durante un corto periodo de tiempo. Este punto de inflexión en el personaje y en el relato nos permite derivar el interés de Aphra Behn por mostrar la importancia material y capitalista sobre los propios sentimientos sinceros e incluso sobre la propia ventura de los protagonistas: “I must retire into Cambridgeshire, where I have a small concern as yet unmortgaged; I will return thence with a brace of thousand pounds within a week at farthest, [...]” (Behn 202).

Cuando en el fragmento final cambia el orden creado y Frankwit siguiendo el consejo de la moribunda Belvira se va a convertir en el marido de Celesia, la narradora asoma el significado económico también: “Belvira only survived him [Wildvil] enough to unfold all their most unhappy fate, desiring Frankwit [...] to marry her poor dear Celesia, [...] all her fortune, and he, much dearer than it all [...]” (Behn 208).

La retórica y la semántica pecuniaria asoma en otras obras de la escritora como se observa, por ejemplo en *The Fair Jilt* cuando la fortuna de Alcadiana merma y pierde automáticamente a su amante de linaje aristocrático teniendo que arreglárselas con un comerciante, también reflejo especular de una época. Llega a decir, finalmente, que “the merchant” es tal vez el mejor de los dos (Pearson 199). Volviendo

a nuestro relato, hay que acentuar el hecho de que al casarse Frankwit con Celesia unifican no solamente las fortunas de ambos sino también la herencia que Belvira dona a Celesia. Además del aspecto del capital hay otra faceta que gobierna la segunda mitad y que merece capítulo aparte.

Podemos titular dicha faceta como el juego sucio en la obra (“foul play”; Behn 207), el cual aparece con tintes tanto generales como particulares encarnado en la persona de Moorea. A partir de esta inclusión comprobamos cómo los personajes van a tomar decisiones basadas en una mentira. Se trata de la ocultación de la verdad que rompe y cambia para siempre la vida de los personajes. Las artes de Moorea hacen que Frankwit sea el perdedor al no lograr su objetivo de culminar la conquista y la correspondencia amorosa de Belvira. La tergiversación y la ocultación de la realidad a manos de Moorea trunca los designios y el destino de Frankwit y Belvira. Frente a las relumbrantes y “omnipotentes” bellezas masculina y de Belvira se erige el ingenio malicioso de Moorea.

Porque por las maniobras perversas de terceras personas quien estaba en el núcleo del mosaico personajístico aparece después en la periferia como foráneo. Frankwit, antes en el centro de la historia, es llevado a los arrabales por culpa del engaño que teje la propia Moorea. Quien en la primera mitad del relato habita en un lugar privilegiado de la casa viene luego reclamando un cuarto trastero bajo las escaleras en el que ser admitido. Se trata de la búsqueda de un τόπος en la obra y en el reparto de personajes tratando de acercarse al que le correspondería de forma natural si no hubiesen intervenido las artimañas de Moorea.

Otro aspecto lacerante se atisba en el mismo episodio del matrimonio fugaz entre el caprichoso caballero y la señora negra en Cambridge que en la obra aparece ya como viuda. Porque este matrimonio muestra un aspecto superficial, significando que lo carnal es un fin per se postergando y arrinconando así la importancia del amor. Se aprecia, igualmente, un claro clamor sobre la marginación social hacia la mujer puesto que es el varón quien se atreve a manifestar abiertamente su apetencia sexual en un universo eminentemente patriarcal (Tomé 227-225). Para adobar la negatividad, también se trasluce la fortuna puesto que cuando el caballero muere se nos informa de que le deja a la viuda negra seis mil libras al año. Ahora la autora asoma algunos aspectos antes tratados, a propósito de Belvira y Frankwit, pero adobados con parámetros de corrupción y de malas prácticas.



Aparece, por tanto, otro enlace matrimonial tomado del pasado y, tal como se manifiesta, a modo de historia dentro de la historia. Parte de las razones y de los motivos se repiten. Se trataba de un caballero caprichoso que deseaba “gozar” de una señora negra que ahora también se aloja en la casa de Cambridge. Ante la negativa de aquélla, el caballero por mor de “acostarse con ella” se apresuró a contraer matrimonio, lo cual ocurrió en el pasado y también se aprehende en este momento mediante la vertiginosa escritura aplicada a estas alturas de la narración.

En el centro de la historia cuando Belvira se convence de ir más allá en la relación, vemos claramente cómo es ella la que toma la iniciativa en la relación y se echa en los brazos de Frankwit quien interviene en estilo directo para proclamar otra suerte de igualdad: “be assured I shall be yours, as you are mine” (Behn 202). Esto ocurre tras un jugoso diálogo. Con esta ilustración Aphra Behn trasciende el mero ámbito reivindicativo y va más allá, pasando al terreno de la acción porque es la mujer quien toma la iniciativa en una sociedad que, como antes se ha dicho, tiene arrinconado al género femenino tanto en la esfera social como en el marco de las relaciones de pareja.

El deseo de paridad que tanto preocupa a la escritora sigue estando presente en la obra mediante otra matización referida al envío de cartas porque, tal es la disposición de la protagonista que, todas las cartas que Frankwit sea capaz de redactar y de enviar a Belvira serán contestadas por ella con una generosa voluntad.

Por consiguiente, otro aspecto social a subrayar es la igualdad de género que Aphra Behn postula y realza en *The Unfortunate Bride*. Encontramos dos epístolas en el centro del relato. Si el protagonista envía una misiva y por decisión propia prefiere escribir poesía mejor que prosa, la protagonista también hace lo mismo:

This letter Belvira received with unspeakable joy, and laid it up safely in her bosom, laid it where the dear author of it lay before, and wonderfully pleased with his humour of writing in verse, resolved not to be at all behind hand with him, and so writ as follows [...]. (Behn 204)

Aphra Behn no solamente escribe sobre la paridad de género desde un plano teórico. La escritora la aplica de facto al terreno práctico ficcional en una sociedad donde la mujer está considerada como



inferior al varón. Esta cala del contenido, por otra parte, conlleva una consideración en la formación literaria de Frankwit y en la capacidad creativa de Belvira. Además, trazamos la conclusión de que la mujer de este tiempo necesita demostrar sus capacidades para poder asomarse siquiera de soslayo al terreno que es privativo del hombre.

Asimismo, esta equiparación connota el dominio de la retórica del amor (Pearson 199) tanto por el amante como por la mujer. Además, si el hombre se regocija escribiendo en verso (en este caso en detrimento de la prosa), la mujer también prefiere este tipo de composición. Se trata de posicionar a ambos sexos a la misma altura ontológica y epistemológica.

Quien toma las decisiones a pesar de los motivos que le impelen a ello es a fin de cuentas Belvira, una mujer. Después, una vez que Belvira muere, quien toma las decisiones es Celesia, otra mujer. Frente a esta realidad, Frankwit es engañado al antojo de Moorea. Se pudo hablar, por tanto, de mujeres virtuosas e inocentes y de mujeres malas investidas en la persona de la dama negra. Es por ello que Belvira se casa con Wildvilll y, también por la falsificación de Moorea, Celesia acepta finalmente casarse con Wildvilll.

La colosal belleza de Frankwit atrae la mirada y el deseo de cuantas mujeres se encuentra en su camino. El foco catalizador de la belleza masculina es crucial en esta obra. Ello no obstante, es la manipulación de Moorea la que se impone, la cual también encarna una especie de “wit” empleado con fines perversos.

No es la primera vez que Aphra Behn hace fracasar a un personaje bello. En *The Forc'd Marriage*, cuando está debutando en la carrera teatral, Galatea echa en cara de Erminia que su belleza le corrompe. La hermosura provoca lo indigno y lo no deseado, rompe la estabilidad política y llega incluso a invertir el orden natural (Curtin 80).

## **6. El contenido metaliterario: la autorrepresentación y la centralidad de la escritura**

*The Unfortunate Bride* proyecta sobre el papel el fracaso amoroso, tanto de un hombre bello como de una mujer hermosa. A tenor de cuanto se ha dicho en este capítulo, la protagonista no lleva el timón de su felicidad; no aparece como dueña de su destino puesto que unas

fuerzas externas condicionan, tergiversan y perturban el rumbo de sus decisiones. De este modo, late la frustración de Behn que es, al fin y al cabo, el espejo del género femenino. Porque la mujer no conduce por completo la toma de decisiones ni, por tanto, su propio deseo.

El asunto de la escritura está relacionado también con la subjetividad que en la obra aparece materializada por el sentido de la visión (Ballaster 201-202); pues supone un proceso de interpretación, al igual que el proceso y la descodificación que entraña la escritura misma.

En el momento estelar cuando se produce el diálogo sobre la conveniencia de continuar la dicha del amor platónico o la posibilidad de romper la felicidad espiritual mediante la unión carnal, Belvira acude a un símil literario. Expresa que cuando el placer ya se ha consumado, la mujer es comparable con un romance ya degustado o con un espectáculo ya visto. Que esto ocurre desde que se da el consentimiento: “It is that very lulling wakes you; women enjoyed, are like romances read, or raree-shows, once seen, mere tricks of the sleight of hand, which, when found out, you only wonder at yourselves for wondering so before at them” (Behn 202).

De nuevo, la escritora vuelve al campo del deseo para escudriñar en su naturaleza y para mostrar su veredicto al respecto. En este caso la autora hace que la actante central delimite un antes y un después en la felicidad de los amantes utilizando para ello el símil de una obra de teatro y sembrando en el texto el gozo del lector. Mediante este recurso, el placer del receptor de la obra de arte verbal es equiparado con el placer que deleita a los enamorados. A un nivel terciario, esta imagería da fe de la familiaridad que una parte de los lectores, al menos, tendría con las historias de amor y con la dramaturgia.

Continúa la imagen teatral para acercar el foco hacia la figura de la audiencia. Está demarcando la pérdida del interés del destinatario de la obra, porque cuando los acontecimientos han terminado y se echa el telón el receptor siente indiferencia hacia la representación vista: “Heaven would not be Heaven, could we tell what ‘tis. When the plot’s out you have done with the play, and when the last act’s done, you see the curtain drawn with great indifferency” (Behn 202)

Esta afirmación literaria se está refiriendo a la brevedad del gozo, a la fugacidad del placer que genera el deseo así como al estado que

puede engendrarse tras el matrimonio según la representación y el panorama dibujados en la obra. Mas la ficción novelada se dirige hacia el centro de la historia cuando Belvira acepta a Frankwit. Para mostrar la empatía y la igualdad entre ambos personajes acude a las cartas de amor que, de nuevo, traducen una referencia literaria: “you shall never draws bills of love upon me so fast as I shall wait in readiness to pay them” (Behn 202).

La acotación del viaje tangible que tiene lugar, naturalmente, desde Londres hasta Cambridge va acompañada del otro viaje figurado y literario que se inserta en la descripción ilustrado por las cartas que los protagonistas se escriben y se envían. Aphra Behn quiere que el lector distinga el desplazamiento real y locativo, de la aventura literaria que pergeñan los actantes. Si el primero escenifica el cambio de contexto para peor en la vida de los personajes, el segundo comienza estando incólume y termina falseado y desfigurado por la carta que Moorea escribe. Así se reseña la decisión de Frankwit de sentarse ante el papel:

[...] and now, tired with the fatigue of his journey, he thought fit to refresh himself by writing some few lines to his beloved Belvira, for a little verse after the dull prose company of his servant, was as great an ease to him (from whom it flowed as naturally and unartificially, as his love or his breath) as a pace or hand gallop after a hard, uncouth, and rugged trot. He therefore, finding his Pegasus was no way tired with his land travel, takes a short journey through the air, and writes as follows [...]. (Behn 203)

Relucen, entre las líneas de Belvira, dos versos de contenido metaliterario referidos a la creación poética: “I find, methinks, in verse some pleasure too, / I cannot want a Muse, who write to you” (versos 7-8). Con esta intervención la protagonista evidencia su preferencia por la lírica respecto a la prosa o, cuanto menos, su cariño por los versos, al tiempo que señala el valor del trabajo frente a la inspiración. Se trata de la dualidad entre “ars” y “techné”. Podemos inferir que la actante no escribe por mera inspiración o por una simple expresión estética y emotiva (*ars*). Yendo al meollo de la cuestión y aplicando el verso a la propia escritora, colegimos que Aphra Behn escribe de modo concienzudo afanándose en volcar su energía en la obra de arte verbal (τέχνη) que incorpora, obviamente, los componentes de las musas de la memoria, la meditación y el canto. La constancia que aplica la escritora supone, por tanto, inspiración y conocimiento (λόγος).

Volvamos al personaje de Belvira. Porque ella no quiere ser menos; busca y aplica la igualdad de género. Por eso hallamos una respuesta simétrica, *inter pares*, y ello en una época en la que no existe equidad entre el género femenino y el género masculino. Con esta contestación, Belvira quiere demostrar dos postulados bien delimitados y marcados en su reacción. Primero, que ella ama a él de la misma forma que él ama a ella. Segundo, que ella es capaz de escribir de la misma manera que él, que su inteligencia y su madurez creativa son las mismas que las del hombre. Así pues, Belvira demuestra al sentarse y al ponerse a escribir su carta que no es un sujeto pasivo y que no está sometida a la inferioridad de una sociedad androcéntrica, porque su disposición, aptitud, competencia, imaginación y predicamento son idénticos que los de Frankwit.

Llegados a este punto, la historia necesitaba un cambio que fuera apuntando hacia el desenlace y dicha mutación está marcada por las cartas que sirven de frontera y bisagra entre una parte de la obra y la que está por venir. En el tramo anterior a las cartas todo es gozo y fruición, ornamentado por la elaboración de los campos léxicos del amor junto a los de la pasión (fuego, luz, mitología). Este límite es notorio no solamente por el contenido descrito sino también por la misma anatomía de los versos escritos que, inevitablemente, centran la atención del receptor en la disposición plasmada sobre el papel. A partir de esta línea divisoria la plenitud cae en picada y el deleite se termina. Se encadenan las desgracias y los sinsabores.

La recepción de la epístola por parte de Frankwit predice el devenir argumental. Por boca de la narradora sabemos que “often he reads the letter o’er and o’er, but there his fate lay hid, for ‘twas that very fondness proved his ruin” (Behn 205). Ahora es cuando se nos informa que se aloja en casa de su primo. Entra en escena una referencia explícita al deseo carnal, una suerte de lujuria que ya no se separa de los estambres argumentales, materializada en los términos de “devil” y “flesh”, vocablos que son definidos seguidamente como inmorales e indecentes (“unlawful”; Behn 205).

La forma de presentar los eventos de la narración permite razonar la importancia de la escritura dentro de la obra. Las misivas (la escritura) ocupan un lugar preeminente en el orden de la historia ya que se anteponen incluso a la presentación de la casa del primo

de Frankwit, lugar donde habita el protagonista durante su estancia en la ciudad a orillas del río Cam. Es decir, el lector no sabe todavía dónde vive el visitante pero, en cambio, ve brotar tanto la escritura de las cartas así como su contenido. Primero sabemos que escribe cartas literarias; luego se nos dice que vive en la casa de su primo. Las cartas, como se ha indicado, marcan el final de la luz y del fuego; la casa significa el comienzo de la negritud, los problemas, la melancolía y la manipulación.

El poder de la visión se emparenta con el poder de la escritura (Ballaster 201). Si la vista es el punto de contacto y no logra el triunfo de sus portadores, la escritura representada a través de las cartas supone un estrepitoso fracaso.

En la fase final de la historia, la percepción, la habilidad y la escritura se funden en otra cita que cierne su semántica en el mismo acto escritural: “What tongue, what pen can express the mournful sorrow of this scene; at first they both stood dumb, and almost senseless [...]” (Behn 207). La narradora está preparando al lector para el aspecto espeluznante de la escena final ponderando de modo metaliterario el contenido que va a escribir.

Es expresiva la centralidad que ocupa la literatura en el relato. Como se ha visto, aparece a modo de metáforas y símiles. Pero la escritora va más allá cuando el discurso, en forma de bucle, reproduce un cuadro literario. Aphra Behn recurre al tema de la literatura dentro del discurso creativo y literario.

## 7. Conclusiones

Estamos ante un relato de amor donde late el tema del deseo y del placer sin desdeñar el importante asunto de la felicidad o el omnipresente tema económico. Entre estas telas, aparecen también los pliegues introspectivos del sujeto ora en forma de voz *auctorial* ora mediante las intervenciones directas de los personajes. Aphra Behn hace emanar afirmaciones y tesis de carácter universal con un componente ontológico y gnoseológico bastante elocuente.

El relato entrelaza aseveraciones y técnicas narrativas que van más allá de la mera superficie textual, requiriendo por consiguiente una relectura profunda. No se trata, según indica Ruth Salvaggio

(253) de relatos tipo “chico conoce a chica” o “chico consigue a chica”. No estamos ante versiones al uso de expresiones como “lector, me casé con él”. Hay más bien una parte sombría que es la que trasluce Aphra Behn en su escritura. Con estos textos, Aphra Behn se vuelve política, reivindicativa y crítica con algunas lacras presentes en la sociedad de sus días. Tal como hemos comprobado en las páginas precedentes, la escritora está poniendo en tela de juicio algunos aspectos sociales que maceran y postergan el estatus de la mujer. Estas aseveraciones fluyen en la obra a través de los parlamentos en primera persona de los actantes, también gracias a la exploración o explotación semionarrativa de la relatora.

Otro indiciario temático capital es el de la igualdad entre el hombre y la mujer, encarnados en la ficción de los protagonistas, de la pareja formada por Belvira y Frankwit y objetivados mediante varios recursos que despuntan en la narración. Un ejemplo fiel de dichos recursos es el de las idénticas capacidades mostradas por Frankwit y Belvira a la hora de escribir una misiva; a la hora de de saber y poder redactarla en verso.

La lealtad inviolable (“inviolable faith”; Behn 202) de los protagonistas es decapitada por las ansias pecuniarias de Frankwit quien, inocentemente, marcha a Cambridge para recaudar un dinero pendiente. Este distanciamiento rompe la armonía para siempre pues es en este distrito donde se entromete Moorea descoyuntando el concierto que estaba desarrollándose a través de los eventos ocurridos hasta el momento del traslado de Frankwit desde Londres a Cambridge. El alejamiento de los personajes predice la perversidad que aplica la antagonista y, según se ha ido explicando, llega incluso hasta el terreno semántico y hasta la construcción misma del discurso.

Bajo el atuendo de una historia de amor y de distanciamiento, Aphra Behn evidencia algunas de las taras sociales de su tiempo rebelándose contra la inferioridad femenina en una sociedad patriarcal. También plasma la naturaleza humana que rige y decanta muchas de las decisiones de la persona. Destaca, a la vez, la hipocresía y el engaño que mediatizan y condicionan las decisiones de personas de bien.

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# THE KEYS TO THE HOUSE OF HEALING: TONI MORRISON'S *HOME*

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“Tell us what it is to be a woman so that we may know what it is to be a man. What moves at the margin. What it is to have no home in this place. To be set adrift from the one you knew. What it is to live at the edge of towns that cannot bear your company.” ---Toni Morrison, *Nobel Lecture* (2006)

“In their gardens, they are home”

---Patricia Klindienst, *The Earth Knows My Name* (242)

## **Abstract**

In this paper the related concepts of ‘home’ and ‘belonging’ as presented by Toni Morrison in her latest novel, *Home* (2012), are explored in the context of the African American experience of racism, dispossession and homelessness in the United States. These issues, which shape African American history from slavery times to the present day, were originally dealt with by Morrison in an earlier and homonymous essay, ‘Home’ (1998), and are now developed in her most recent work of fiction. Whereas Morrison’s work has repeatedly addressed the notions of ‘identity,’ ‘community,’ ‘oppression’ and ‘redemption’, in this concise novel she imbues the notion of ‘home’ with a density of (apparently) contradictory meanings; thus, ‘home’ is developed as the paradox of a people who, simultaneously and in the face of adversity, are presented as utterly uprooted but also trying to (re)create a home. Eventually, the essay explores how the novel builds a dynamics of redemption —itself a typical concern of Morrison’s fiction— around this apparent contradiction through a loaded symbolism (like in the lotus metaphor) by means of the healing power of love and nature.

**Keywords:** identity, Afro American, Toni Morrison, *Home*, novel.

## LAS LLAVES DE LA CASA DE SANACIÓN: VOLVER DE TONI MORRISON

### Resumen

En este artículo se abordan los conceptos relacionados de “hogar” y “pertenencia”, tal y como se presentan en la última novela de Toni Morrison, *Volver* (*Home*, 2012), dentro del contexto de la experiencia afroamericana de racismo, desposeimiento y falta de hogar en los Estados Unidos. Estos temas, que vienen conformando la historia afroamericana desde los tiempos de la esclavitud hasta el momento presente, habían sido originalmente tratado por Morrison en un ensayo anterior homónimo titulado “Home” (1998), y vienen siendo ahora desarrollados en sus obras de ficción más recientes. Si bien la obra de Morrison se ha ocupado repetidamente de las nociones de “identidad”, “comunidad”, “opresión” y “redención”, en esta concisa novela la autora infunde a la noción de “hogar” una densidad de mensajes (aparentemente) contradictorios, de tal manera que “hogar” se despliega como la paradoja de unas gentes que, simultáneamente frente a la adversidad, se presentan como absolutamente desarraigadas pero intentando (re) crear un hogar. Finalmente, este artículo explora cómo la novela llega a construir una dinámica de redención —en sí misma una preocupación típica de la ficción de Morrison— en torno a esta aparente contradicción a través de un recargado simbolismo (tal y como se ve en la metáfora del loto) por medio del poder sanador del amor y la naturaleza.

**Palabras clave:** identidad, afroamericano, Toni Morrison, (*Volver*) (*Home*), novela.

In an essay entitled “Home”, published in 1998 in Wahneema Lubiano’s edited book *The House that Race Built*, Toni Morrison muses about the concept of home and belonging as embedded in the peculiar trajectory of the African American people in the United States. The kaleidoscopic nature of the idea of home is revealed to Morrison under a wide range of metaphorical homes, as she writes in her essay

("Home" 5). The concepts of race and home appear intertwined in the lived experience of a community, African Americans, whose ordeal because of their skin color triggered their social and spiritual demise and subjection to a sense of homelessness in U.S. territory, from slavery times to segregation and Jim Crow discrimination. Morrison's contention that "matters of race and matters of home are priorities in my work" ("Home" 4) is implemented in her narrative from her very first novel. It is our aim to explore the implications of the idea of home in Morrison's latest novel, which shares the homonymous title of the aforementioned essay—*Home*, as well as to analyze the dynamics of recovery and healing undergone by its protagonists.

Morrison's new novel has deservedly received general kudos from critics;<sup>1</sup> all Morrisonian themes throughout her acclaimed books concentrate this time in only 147 pages making of it, in Michiko Kakutani's words, "a kind of tiny Rosetta Stone to Toni Morrison's entire oeuvre" ("Soldier"). *Home* is indeed a new *tour de force* where the author puts her mastery at work once again, as well as her extensive and effective use of metaphor and symbolism. The loaded image of home is used inextricably connected with a myriad other concepts in Morrison's narrative, such as community, belonging, identity, oppression, racism and segregation, journeying, search, nature, healing, and redemption.

Taking into account the African American experience in the United States, the idea of home acquires new dimensions and stands as a paradox for a dispossessed uprooted people, who in the face of adversity and the lack of a real home, have to create and recreate their own. In Cynthia Dobbs's words,

What does an American home mean to African Americans as a group whose origins in the United States stemmed from a profound unmooring from African homes?...What does the idea of home mean to anyone displaced because of color, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and/or domestic violence in its most capacious sense—that is, "domestic" as family, social, or national space? (111).

Drawing on Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*, Dobbs reminds us that "a physical house does not guarantee a sense of safety and belonging" (111). Indeed, Morrison gives good proof of this in her

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<sup>1</sup> See Akbar, Charles, Cohen, Kakutani and McDowell.

novel *Home*, which revolves around the lives of two siblings, Frank and Cee Money and their journey from alienation and dispossession into redemption, community and a new-found home. As African Americans in a hostile land four-year-old Frank and his family are forced to flee from their house in Texas, where lynching and persecution against African Americans take place: “he knew that being outside wasn’t necessary for legal or illegal disruption. You could be inside, living in your own house for years, still men with our without badges but always with guns could force you, your family, your neighbors to pack up and move—with our without shoes” (*Home* 9). Thus, the prevailing idea of home is but one of contested encountered feelings, an ideal hankered after but definitely absent. As Carole Boyce Davies argues, “home is contradictory, contested space, a locus for misrecognition and alienation” (113).

The protagonist of *Home* inevitably reminds the reader of Shadrack, the deranged war veteran from World War I in *Sula*. Frank Money is a former soldier in the Korean War (1950-1953) who after being discharged returns to the United States suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. While he is in Seattle, he receives news that his beloved sister is in danger back in Georgia, so he sets off on a journey South to save the only living close relative he has left. Frank’s hometown in Georgia is symbolically called Lotus, a word similar to the term “locus” (=place). Apart from the idea of place, this name clearly brings to mind the traditional symbolism of the lotus flower, which represents re-birth and enlightenment. For Ancient Egyptians, the lotus flower “symbolizes the sun, creation, an rebirth” because of its life cycle: “The lotus starts as a seed in a muddy environment at the bottom of a water source. As the flower grows, it moves towards the sun until it floats to the top of the water and blooms...moving toward the sun is the process of gaining clarity.” (Brown Green 27). In a similar light, Gauding contends that the lotus flower is a “metaphor for the journey of the soul from the primeval mud of suffering, through the waters of spiritual practice, into the bright sunshine of enlightenment” (307). Reading these descriptions of the lotus flower, it is inevitable to find clear associations with Frank Money’s journey of growth from alienation and self-loathing to personal enlightenment and a renewed self at the end of the novel, back in Lotus. But the concept of home transcends physical location, as Morrison argues in one of her interviews: “home is an idea rather than a place. It’s where you feel safe. Where you’re among people who are kind to

you—they're not after you; they don't have to like you. And if you're in trouble they'll help you...It's community" (Leve).

From the beginning of *Home* direct references to place and home and their counterparts--displacement and homelessness--point to the main narrative and thematic axis of Morrison's new work. After being run out of their Texas house, the Money family settles in Lotus, a small Georgia town where there were "no sidewalks or indoor plumbing" (46-47). Having no house there at first, they were begrudgingly accommodated by Lenore, Franks' grandmother, and her husband. Significantly enough, the first reference to home in the novel made by Frank is deeply charged with negative connotations: "When we got home we expected to be whipped or at least scolded for staying out so late, but the grown-ups did not notice us" (5). Far from being a real home and haven, Lotus stands as a stagnant suffocating place for Frank, who sees enrollment in the army as the only possible way out. He "hated Lotus. Its unforgiving population, its isolation, and especially its indifference to the future were tolerable only if his buddies were there with him" (16). After being discharged, Frank does not want to go back home, whose negative image has remained intact across time, "*Lotus, Georgia, is the worst place in the world, worse than any battlefield*" (83). Franks' deep sense of homelessness is best shown when he is asked where he is from and he answers "Korea, Kentucky, San Diego, Seattle, Georgia. Name it I'm from it" (20). The lack of a true home triggers off an alienated fragmented identity, like the scattered pieces of home acknowledged in his answer. Frank's unconscious mission will be to collect those scraps and patch them together in a sort of identity quilt, like the one his sister creates at the end of the novel.

Although Frank fought in the first desegregated army in the United States, his return home makes him face a hostile environment where racism and segregation are rampant. President Truman's Executive Order 9981, signed on July 26, 1948, called for the end of military segregation in the armed services (Packard 225) and in 1950 the Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services enforced the complete end to "every vestige of segregation" in the Army, Navy, and Air Force (Quarles 273). As the reverend who helps Frank in his journey South after escaping from the mental hospital warns him, "Listen here, you from Georgia and you been in a desegregated army and maybe you think up North is

way different from down South. Don't believe it and don't count on it. Custom is just as real as law and can be just as dangerous" (19). As a matter of fact, racism and Jim Crow laws are in full force in the 50s through segregated education, transport and housing. And this is the social setting that awaits Frank's return from the war. Instances of this appear throughout the novel. One such instance of house segregation makes reference to the so-called "restrictive deed covenants" (Packard 105) which were created to prevent blacks from buying houses in white neighborhoods or areas, as it happens to Frank's lover, Lily, when she tries to buy a house and she is told about the restrictions on house sale for ethnic people: "No part of said property hereby conveyed shall ever be used or occupied by any Hebrew or by any person of the Ethiopian, Malay or Asiatic race excepting only employees in domestic service" (73) (underlined in the original).

The familial circumstances that surround Frank's pre-war life in Lotus also contribute to both his hate of the place and his estrangement from the community. From an early age, Frank and Cee experienced emotional bereavement caused by the long hours their parents worked and the lack of loving care from a grandmother, Lenore, who is in charge of them while their parents are at work:

A mean grandmother is one of the worst things a girl could have...Because Mama and Pap worked from before sunrise until dark, they never knew that Miss Lenore poured water instead of milk over the shredded wheat Cee and her brother ate for breakfast. Nor that when they had stripes and welts on their legs they were cautioned to lie, to say they got them by playing out by the stream where brambles and huckleberry thorns grew (43-44).

This emotional gap will have an effect upon the siblings, who can only rely on each other for love and safety. Thus, the idea of orphanhood, one of the thematic cornerstones in Morrison's narrative, is metaphorically represented in *Home*, since despite having living parents, brother and sister have to fend for themselves in an unwelcoming home, where love is not one of its inhabitants: "Their parents were so beat by the time they came home from work, any affection they showed was like a razor—sharp, short, and thin. Lenore was the wicked witch. Frank and Cee, like some forgotten Hansel and Gretel, locked hands as they navigated the silence and tried to imagine a future" (53). In the face of lack and absence, they have to re-invent parental nurturing figures

and in that pursuit, they encounter the comforting presence of natural elements, like trees.

Tree symbolism is very often employed by Morrison in her works. In this respect, there is a clear connection to West African cosmology and religions, where the tree figure plays an important role, since it is considered to be the abode of spirits and the connection between the world of the living and the spiritual realm of the dead. In keeping with Brooks De Vita's contention that the effects of orphanhood are usually mitigated by the presence of trees as symbolic mothers (51), Frank and Cee find solace "leaning on a lightning-blasted sweet bay tree whose top had been burned off, leaving it with two huge branches below that spread like arms. Even when Frank was with his friends Mike and Stuff, he let her tag along. The four of them were tight, the way family ought to be" (52). Thus, Morrison uses once again the image of the tree as a multilayered metaphor of life, spirituality and mothering.

On the one hand, trees stand for mother figures, spreading their branches "like arms" to comfort and provide roots to those uprooted and alienated. But, on the other hand, since the tree described in this scene is "blasted" and has a "burned off" top, the idea simultaneously conveyed is that of distortion, destruction and death. Uprootedness, alienation and homelessness can be equated with emotional and spiritual death. Further symbolism is implied in the sweet bay tree (botanical name *Laurus nobilis*) also known as laurel, which according to plant lore represents victory and accomplishment (Cirlot 181) and is therefore proleptic of the protagonists' final catharsis and regeneration. Morrison's novel, as well as her previous narrative, is riddled with natural elements--especially tree imagery--with strong spiritual overtones, which rely heavily on the West African and African American inextricable connection between some of those elements and the realm of spirits and the dead. In this light, there is another poignant episode in *Home* centered on tree symbolism. When the Money family have to abandon their Texas house because of racist deadly threats, there is an old man who refuses to leave and is therefore "beaten to death with pipes and rifle butts and tied to the oldest magnolia tree in the county—the one that grew in his own yard. Maybe it was loving that tree which, he used to brag, his great-grandmother had planted, that made him so stubborn" (10). The image of the tree here stands once again not only as a sign of endurance and life but also as another culture-bearer



which provides connections to forebears and deceased family members, like this old man's great-grandmother. Like the resilience of trees, the resilient spirit of this man is determined to stick to whatever is left from that background, namely a house and, especially, his family tree. Significantly enough, the old man is later on buried "beneath his beloved magnolia" (10), following the African American association between trees and spiritual immortality and perdurance and their tradition of planting trees next to graves. In this respect, the study of Robert F. Thompson about African remains in the Americas is highly relevant. Regarding the implied meaning of tree lore, he states: "Trees planted on graves also signify the spirit, their roots literally journey to the other world...the tree stands sentinel above the grave as the immortal presence of the spirit" (138-139). It is interesting to point out here how the tree also symbolizes the special connection to the land African Americans have. From their work on slave plantations to the possession of patches of land after emancipation and the creation of their own gardens the land and nature often turn out to be the only possible real "home" available to them. In her seminal study of ethnic gardens in the United States, Patricia Klindienst acknowledges that deep connection when she explores the "stories of ethnic Americans for whom the making of a garden is a way of keeping memory alive and protecting their cultural heritage from everything that threatens their survival as a people" (xvi). In *Home*, Miss Ethel's garden aptly illustrates this point: "An aggressive gardener, Miss Ethel blocked or destroyed enemies and nurtured plants...Her garden was not Eden; it was so much more than that. For her the whole predatory world threatened her garden, competing with its nourishment, its beauty, its benefits, and its demands. And she loved it" (130).

Frank's journey South from Seattle reverses the journey of the African American population northwards through migratory waves in search of better life opportunities. This physical journey South is also paralleled by a psychological, metaphorical departure from internal chaos and remorse to redemption and healing. War memories constantly haunt Frank, who finds refuge in alcohol. Images of death and destruction take second place to the death of her two best friends, Stuff and Mike, whom he cannot save. Only when he meets Lily, his lover and partner, does the sense of near homelessness momentarily disappear. Upon seeing her for the first time at the cleaners, the idea

of home comes to Frank's mind: "I felt like I'd come home. Finally. I'd been wondering. Not totally homeless, but close. Drinking and hanging out in music bars . . . I knew I needed help but there wasn't any. With no army orders to follow or complain about I ended up in the streets with none (68). Lily and the love relationship Frank has with her become his anchor in that they give him an idea of a newfound home and a new life. However, during their relationship, the cruelty of war images still disturbs his mind, especially one of a little Korean girl he shot during the war. All in all, Lily brings him closer to what feeling cared for and feeling at home is. In fact, it is only due to news about his sister's critical situation that he leaves Lily. But he is well aware that "his attachment to her was medicinal, like swallowing aspirin...Lily displaced his disorder, his rage and his shame" (108).

The episode of the shot girl is one of the most heart-rending ones in the novel. It depicts how the frustration of an oppressed human being runs the risk of producing oppression on weaker helpless beings in a position of inferiority. Frank's shame makes him lie in his first-person narration about this fact, telling the reader—and trying to convince himself—that another soldier had killed the girl: "Thinking back on it now, I think the guard felt more than disgust. I think he felt tempted and that is what he had to kill" (96). It is not until Frank is in Atlanta, at the end of his journey, that he finally atones for his crime and reveals who pulled the trigger. By opening up, giving free rein to his pent-up feelings about this event, he finally acknowledges the reasons that provoked his mistaken act and by doing so he finally finds some kind of redemptive catharsis. Killing the girl implied hiding and killing his own shame, the shame of hankering after love in a distorted manner. It is a way of protecting himself from an inside part which he does not accept. Being unable to restrain such necessity, the only way out is to kill what caused it:

How could I let her live after she took me down to a place I didn't know was in me?

How could I like myself, even be myself if I surrendered to that place where I unzip my fly and let her taste me right then and there?

And again the next day and the next as long as she came scavenging.

What type of man is that? (134)

In a similar vein to Milkman's transformative journey South in Morrison's *Song of Solomon*, upon reaching Atlanta Frank realizes that "Unlike Chicago, the pace of everyday life was human here. Apparently there was time in this city (105-106). Time in the South slows down and expands, outside lineal time marked by clocks. The suspension of time is symbolized in the Bulova watch Frank finds in a matchbox when he cleans and repairs his parents' house: "no stem, no hands--the way time functioned in Lotus, pure and subject to anybody's interpretation" (120). Apart from the dismantling of linear time, other changes occur as Frank approaches his home town. On the way South, the effect of war memories relents and mitigates, as if foreshadowing the power enclosed in the re-connection to home and community: "Sitting on the train to Atlanta, Frank suddenly realized that those memories, powerful as they were, did not crush him anymore or throw him into paralyzing despair. He could recall every detail, every sorrow, without needing alcohol to steady him" (100). Frank's initial negative description of Lotus turns now into a different perception. While Lotus was dominated by lack of life opportunities and stagnancy before, it is now portrayed through words full of optimism and positive meaning:

It was so bright, brighter than he remembered...children still laughed, ran, shouted their games; women sang in their backyards...There were no sidewalks, but every front yard and backyard sported flowers protecting vegetables from disease and predators...Had these trees always been this deep, deep green? (117)

After his brother's enlistment, Cee is left to her own devices, without the protection she had always had from him. A frustrated marriage with an undeserving man deepens the rift and Cee feels broken, "'Not broken up but broken down, down into her separate parts" (54). Displaced, not having her brother for protection, Cee is determined never to go back home so as not to endure any more her grandmother's unkind, unloving manners. So after her parents die, she tries to make a living working as a live-in assistant to Dr. Beau. This new job will entail Cee's final fall into the abyss of one more kind of victimization and oppression. The fact that Cee's room in the doctor's house has no windows is eminently proleptic of the isolation and even symbolic imprisonment she will undergo at the hands of her boss. Little did Cee imagine that she would become the doctor's guinea pig or experimental tool in the scientific racism he advocates. The books he has on his shelves leave

no doubt as to his professional orientation: "Now she examined the medical books closely, running her finger over some of the titles: *Out of the Night*...Then *Passing of the Great Race*, and next to it, *Heredity, Race and Society*" (65), all examples of eugenicist publications. Thus, Cee's body becomes one more object on which to experiment. Cee ends up at death's door, suffering from severe unrelenting fever, bleeding and loss of conscience. This is how Frank finds her when he finally rescues her from Dr. Beau's house.

Lotus female community proves to be the only place where Cee and Frank can be healed from their physical, spiritual and psychological ailments. No soon does Frank arrive with Cee that a group of Lotus women take it upon themselves to heal her not only through traditional medicine and remedies but also through the healing power of dedication and affection. Under the care of the healer Miss Ethel and the group of women in Lotus Cee gets over her physical illness as well as her previous dependence and frailty: "So it was just herself. In this world with these people she wanted to be the person who would never again need rescue...she wanted to be the one who rescued her own self" (129). Despite all the love she has for her brother, she now feels the need to take decisions for herself and "she didn't need him as she had before. He had literally saved her life, but she neither missed nor wanted his fingers at the nape of her neck telling her not to cry" (131).

Cee's recovery process is dominated by some of the traditional healing elements present not only in Morrison's narrative but also in African American literature written by women, namely the idea of community, natural and traditional remedies, quilting, singing, storytelling and love. Working on her self-esteem and self-love proves vital to her recovery:<sup>2</sup> "Who told you you was trash?" (122) she is asked. Miss Ethel's words of wisdom and mother wit definitely empower a previously helpless Cee:

Look to yourself. You free. Nothing and nobody is obliged to save you but you. Seed your own land. You young and a woman and there's serious limitation in both but you a person too. Don't let Lenore or some trifling boyfriend and certainly no evil doctor decide who you are. That's slavery. Somewhere

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<sup>2</sup> bell hooks is one of the African American scholars who has written extensively about the positive consequences of promoting an ethic of love and connectedness. For a critical study of hooks' ideas see Vega-González.

inside you is that free person I'm talking about. Locate her and let her do some good in the world. (126)

Miss Ethel's encouraging words try to instill in Cee the importance of assertiveness, self-determination and self-esteem. And she passes on that message through images coming from nature, thus foregrounding the need to establish and keep links with the only true home oppressed people will always have, nature and the spiritual world. Miss Ethel's command "Seed your own land" is both a literal and metaphorical one. As Patricia Klindienst argues in her study of ethnic gardens, the land and cultivating the land represents a way of taking action rather than being acted upon (54). Apart from the products the land provides for sustainability and nourishment, the design of gardens also represents the necessary connection to nature as well as an outlet for creativity and agency. The importance of those two elements, nature and the spiritual world hark back to the ultimate ancestral West and Central African origins of the slaves who were transported to the American continent. In this respect, referring to the idea of communal bonds in African American culture Philip Page contends, "The emphasis on the intersubjective web in African American culture stems in part from the belief in West African cultures that individual fulfillment only occurs through harmony with the community and the cosmos" (Page 26). Communal ties also enforce the idea of belonging. Thus, the concept of connectedness is one of the keys in the process towards healing.

Another African tradition which has been continued by the African American community is that of quilting. Quiltmaking entails much more than a craft. By matching scraps of material from discarded or outworn clothes quilters create anew a collective communal composite. The fragmentation Morrison's characters endure--like fragmented pieces of quilting material--is metaphorically restored to unity and harmony at the end of the healing process, thus resembling the implied meaning of quilting. The craft of quilting thus entails, in Margot A. Kelley's words, "an opportunity to rework the outmoded, whether it be in clothing, novel structures, or conceptions of the self" (66). The quilt Cee makes at the end, together with the community of women, also provides her with a sense of autonomous agency and self-empowerment, which she did not have before: "Cee refused to give up the quilt ... The quilt was the first one she had made by herself" (141).

Cee's quilt significantly acquires new meaning when it turns into an improvised shroud and coffin at the end of the novel. The black man's burial which Frank and Cee witness unseen at the beginning of *Home* is brought back to the scene at the end of it. The image of horses and the burial remained indelible in Frank's memory throughout the years he spent away from town. Asking Lotus men about the place with the horses and the buried man, Frank listens to a heart-rending story. In that farm they used to hold black men's fights in which one of the two men was supposed to die; otherwise, they would both be killed. White men took bets and used the deathly fights as entertainment. Frank is told about a particular case of a father and a son who were forced into this peculiar betting game, which "turned men into dogs" (139). To preserve his son life over his own, the father gives the son no choice but to be the one who kills: "Obey me, son, this one last time. Do it.' Said he told his daddy, 'I can't take your life.' And his daddy told him, 'This ain't life'." (139).

The black stranger is hurriedly buried, thrown into a whole, while hidden Frank and Cee watch the scene.<sup>3</sup> After realizing that that the man killed by his son is the same one whose burial he had witnessed as a child, Frank decides to give him a second burial and with the help of his sister Cee reenacts a proper ceremony in which the quilt and the sweet bay tree play a crucial role: "Quickly they found the sweet bay tree—split down the middle, beheaded, undead—spreading its arms, one to the right one to the left. There at its base Frank placed the bone-filled quilt that was first a shroud, now a coffin" (144).<sup>4</sup>

This second burial at the end of the novel is loaded with meaning and symbolism. Not only does it imply an act of homage and respect paid to one of the victims of racism but it also embodies the final burial of Cee's and Frank's former transcended selves.<sup>5</sup>

The opening image of the two fighting horses standing up "like men" turns into real men fighting at the end of the novel. The parallelism

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<sup>3</sup> This parricide brings to mind Sethe's infanticide in *Beloved*. Both are instances of heinous distortions provoked by such institutionalized oppressive systems as slavery and enforced racism.

<sup>4</sup> The quilt containing the man's bones is reminiscent of Pilate's sack containing her father's bones in Morrison's *Song of Solomon*.

<sup>5</sup> The practice of the second burial is characteristic of West African burial rites. For information about this tradition see Finkelman.

between men and horses, or the animalization of men, black men, is clearly used by the author to underscore the dehumanization of blacks in a white racist society. Interestingly enough, dealing precisely with racism, Morrison relates in one of her interviews how unfathomable racism has always been to her to the point that in order to understand it, she had to imagine a situation in which she might feel something similar to white racism. So she tried to imagine a world where horses could talk and go to school and so on. Picturing that, she realizes she would certainly disagree with being on an equal level to horses. But she realizes something more relevant and striking: in order to try to understand an illogical feeling such as white racism she has to “go *outside the species...*,” she has to imagine horses in the place of black people, which emphasizes the idea of irrationality and dehumanization enclosed in the concept of racism:

I didn't know if I could turn over a bus full of little white kids. I didn't know if I could feel that... fury. And I tried very hard to. This is what I did: I said suppose... horses began to speak. And began to demand their rights. Now, I've ridden horses. They're very good workers. They're very good racehorses. Suppose they just... want more. Suppose they want to go to school! Suppose they want to sit next to me in the theatre. I began to feel this sense of – ‘I like you, but...’; ‘You're good, but...’ Suppose they want to sleep with my children?!” She's laughing heartily now. “I had to go *outside the species!* But it worked, I could feel it. You know; don't sit next to me. (Brookes)

Although Morrison acknowledges that she does not know where the picture of the horses fighting came from when *Home* was unfolding in her mind (Houston), it is another powerful image charged with implied meanings. The horse is a symbol of war that is dedicated to Mars, the Roman god of war, and it is also associated with the Yoruba god of fire and lightning, the warrior Shango (Kaldera 208). According to Mircea Eliade the horse “is associated with burial-rites in chthonian cults” (quoted in Cirlot 152). Horses are also symbols of power, strength and masculinity, all of which are in turn related to war. Thus, the symbolic image of fighting horses in the opening of the novel prefigures the setting of the Korean War Frank will be involved in. But, on the other hand, it also foreshadows the fragility of personhood and manhood in a debasing social system where oppression and racism are rampant. At the end of *Home*, it is a man and not horses the one who stands, as



the epitaph of the buried man shows: "Here Stands A Man" (145). Once again, Morrison resorts to paradox and inversion; physical death is not the end, it is not falling but standing, soaring up on to the spiritual dimension and a different kind of life. The limits of life and death are once again blurred, as it is always the case in Morrison's narrative.

The fight is over. War resides in the recesses of memory. Frank's crime has finally been atoned for through analysis and recognition. Not only does Frank re-envision a new home in Lotus, which "now [...] seemed both fresh and ancient, safe and demanding" (132), but he is also in the process of learning that masculinity is not exactly about fighting or bravery but it also about facing and expressing—not repressing—ones' emotions. After Cee tells him she will not be able to have children, Frank's memory of the dead Korean girl comes back and he finally decides it is time to admit the truth: "His eyes burned and he blinked rapidly to forestall what could have become the crying he had not done since he was a toddler. Not even with Mike in his arms or whispering to Stuff had his eyes burned that way. True, his vision was occasionally deceitful, but he had not cried. Not once" (132). At the end of the process nature, love and community take precedence over violence, fighting and repressed emotions, and there resides as well a renewed vision of what masculinity is.<sup>6</sup>

*Home* comes full circle at the end, beginning and ending merge in a perfectly circular structure. Not only does the novel open and close in Lotus, but it starts and finishes with the same images. At the beginning of chapter one, we can read about the image of horses rising up like men, fighting, and the improvised burial of an unknown black man, while Frank and his sister crawl on their bellies through the grass. The poignancy of the scene reveals a world upended, where human beings are animalized crawling, and horses are personified, standing up. Frank admits, "I only remembered the horses. They were so beautiful. So brutal. And they stood like men" (5). In the last chapter it is Frank who stands this time, not the horses, as a result of his evolution and final healing. Likewise, the epithets "strong" and "beautiful" appear this time applied not to horses but to a tree:

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<sup>6</sup> For a critical analysis of men, masculinity and the management of emotions and love, see hooks' seminal work *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity and Love*.



I stood there a long while, staring at that tree.  
 It looked so strong  
 So beautiful.  
 Hurt right down the middle  
 But alive and well.  
 Cee touched my shoulder  
 Lightly.  
 Frank?  
 Yes?  
 Come on, brother. Let's go home.(147)

The symbolic images of the tree and the circle coalesce at the end of *Home*. The tree or cross in the circle is a traditional religious symbol in Kongo cosmology. It represents the connection between the world of the living and that of the dead and spirits, as well as the four moments of the sun, which in turn symbolize the four different stages in the life of man: birth, maturity, death, and rebirth (Holloway 168, Thompson 103, and Jennings 2-3)

Frank and Cee's journey culminates with the return to their departure point and their decision to live there and start anew. Both have experienced a journey of evolution, be it physical or metaphorical, at the end of which they both learn something. With their return to their community and the different vision Frank has of it now, the process has been completed, the circle has been closed. It is precisely the image of the circle that corresponds, according to J.E. Cirlot, to "this ultimate state of Oneness" (47) and "inner unity". The scattered patches have been gathered and put together into that inner unity which constitutes Frank's and Cee's renewed selves. As Toni Morrison contends, "If your character knows something at the end of a book she didn't know at the beginning, she is in a better position. Everybody wants a happy ending, but the real happy ending is when somebody really figures something out" (Houston).

The community in *Lotus* provides a valid proof of Therese E. Higgins' contention that "Morrison's communities...are never one-dimensional" (89). They can be both safe haven and stifling enclosure. But it is an undeniable fact that, regardless of their contested connotations, home and community remain "the psychic support for the 'self' or subjectivity" (Schreiber 2). Together with and within the concept of home, nature and

love remain the keys to recovery, healing and empowerment. Frank's vision of his town and its people has changed along his own personal transformation. Lotus, with its community of helping hands and healing women, has lived up to its name. Like the lotus flower, this town has grown from the muddy waters of stagnation into transformation and renewal. Nature prevails in the end and closes the circle: "the sweet bay was pleased to agree. Its olive-green leaves went wild in the glow of a fat cherry-red sun" (145). As it happens in most of Morrison's novels, there is always a place for hope. The powerful image of the fat cherry-red sun encloses the idea of potentiality and the healing power of love. Frank's journey out of love for his sister proves to have been necessary. As Margot Anne Kelley concludes in her study of quilting, "the search for meaning in a postmodern world might well begin at home" (67).

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## **BOOK REVIEWS**



**BASTIDA RODRÍGUEZ, PATRICIA AND JOSÉ IGOR  
PRIETO ARRANZ, EDS. (2008). *ON CULTURAL  
DIVERSITY: BRITAIN AND NORTH AMERICA*. PALMA.  
Universitat de les Illes Balears, ISBN: 978-84-8384-112-9. 226 p.**

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The essays that make up this stimulating volume entitled *On Cultural Diversity: Britain and North America*, edited and introduced by Patricia Bastida Rodríguez and José Igor Prieto Arranz, are the result of the research carried out by the research group ‘The expressions of diversity in the English-speaking world’—and financed by the research project from the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science (COLE Project [HUM2007-66053-C02-02/FILO])—which was first made public in a Summer Course of the same title as that of the research group involved in it, and now sees the light in this volume.

The editors explain that given that they had only the five days of the course to cover the English speaking world, they—very sensibly—decided to limit the scope of the course to Great Britain and North America (including the United States and Canada).

These papers, however, are not simply sheer transcriptions of the course sessions—in fact, not all the papers of all the sessions have been included. They are “fully reworked articles in which the authors have tried to bring the complex and highly specific realm of English studies to the broadest possible readership without renouncing the rigour expected of academic publications” (11), offering a general and very interesting panorama of “various social, linguistic, literary and, on the whole, cultural aspects of the English-speaking areas covered” (11).

If we stop for a moment to consider the state of the question, we find that, as early as 1874 E. W. Winthrop wrote the one-page article



“American English and English English” in which he offered both lexical and phonetic differences between both varieties of English. Roughly a century later, in 1948, John S. Kenyon wrote “Cultural Levels and Functional Varieties of English,” where, very tentatively and briefly, the author dealt not only with differences between British English and American English, but also with other varieties of English. Years later, in 1983, Manfred Görlach, Braj B. Kachru and Loreto Todd published the journal *English World-Wide: A Journal of Varieties of English*. Manfred Görlach writes, again, on the subject in 1997: “Varieties of English world-wide: where we stand,” where he summarizes the state of scholarly research on the subject, extending his scope to Canada, Australia and South Africa, focusing on pronunciation and lexis. In 2002 Laurie Bauer published the book *An Introduction to International Varieties of English*. “This book aims to seek out generalities which determine the ways in which English will diverge in different locations,” therefore, “there are chapters dealing with matters such as vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation, but in each it is shown how the same fundamental principles apply to a number of different varieties with disparate outcomes” (Bauer 2002: vii). Bernd Kortmann and Edgar W. Schneider edited *A Handbook of Varieties of English* (2004). In it the authors mapped the structural variation among 60 sets of non-standard varieties of English.

Rajend Mesthrie and Rakesh M Bhatt are the authors of *World Englishes: The Study of New Linguistic Varieties* (2008). This book focuses on the linguistic structure that the varieties of English spoken in former British or American colonies share.

So far, having offered the state of the question, I can point out that, while most books on international varieties of English take each variety in turn and discuss the vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation which is special to that variety, this book –which is aimed at researchers in the field and advanced graduate students– offers a new and fresh perspective: The nine articles of the volume have been wisely and carefully arranged to offer a smooth transition from the merely linguistic to the more cultural and literary perspectives, always evoking, even if sometimes shaded, Stuart Hall’s perspectives on Cultural Studies. According to this critic, an ideology does not become the dominant one because it is the one of the dominant classes, but due to the process through which it is easy to produce “the effective coupling of dominant

ideas to the historical bloc which has acquired hegemonic power in a particular period which is what the process of ideological struggle is intended to secure” (Hall, 1996: 44). Thus, it is easy to understand that the ideologies in the cultures which are the object of study in this book, that is, the British and the American, serve the purpose of hegemony by reaffirming their power by appropriation and transformation of the identity signs of both the latent subcultures and the new ones which emerge within the context of the above-mentioned dominant ones.

From the linguistic point of view, Paula López Rúa, José Igor Prieto Arranz and Marián Amengual Pizarro offer us an enticing panorama of the characteristics which mark the difference among the varieties of English spoken in the above-mentioned areas. The order in which these articles appear derives from a non-arbitrary decision on the part of the editors: “Each article deals with a different linguistic field, although they are all intimately related –vocabulary and spelling (López Rúa), pronunciation (Prieto Arranz), syntax and grammar (Amengual Pizarro) and discourse (Suárez Gómez) (11-12). They affirm that “The order in which they appear somehow evidences the productivity of the differences between the varieties of English analysed, these being most visible in vocabulary and least in grammar and discourse” (12). His immersion in the intricacies of language is also defended by Cultural Studies, since, in *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain* (1990 [1976]), when Hall defines the primordial goals of his theoretical perspective, he explains that: “It has to analyse certain things about the constitutive and political nature of representation itself, about its complexities, about the effects of language, about textuality as a site of life and death. Those are the things cultural studies can address” (273).

Thus, Paula López Rúa, in her chapter, entitled “Clarifying Notions: British English, American English and Canadian English,” analyses differences and similarities among those varieties of the English language taking into account parameters such as orthographic and lexical variations between British and American English, and the linguistic hybridism of Canadian English. In her view, lexical variation “may capture specific sociocultural, historical and geographical conditions, all of them being diverging factors,” accordingly, “when dialects start to diverge, they may end up turning into different languages” (44).

Jose Igor Prieto Arranz, on his part, in “Comparing British and North American English Pronunciation. A Sociocultural Approach,” starts by offering a brief account of the three accents under study. He then discusses intercultural considerations on different aspects of pronunciation, such as the phonemes existing in the variations under study, the distribution of those phonemes and their phonetic realisation. After that, he contrasts the RP repertoire of phonemes with their distribution and different realisations in the countries to be studied. He ends with a relevant part devoted to the study of stress in the different varieties of English object of study, always offering very relevant and illustrative examples.

Marian Amengual Pizarro, in “‘I’ve Got the Tickets’ or ‘I’ve Gotten the Tickets’? Two Countries Divided by a Common Language,” offers “a general introduction to the current status of English” (84) and analyses the main grammatical differences between British English and American English, as well as some distinctive characteristics of Canadian English. She concludes that, in educated speech, those differences are blurred, and she suggests that standardization is partly due to “increased world-wide communication and the rise of the mass media” (106). Besides, even if she does not state it overtly, she seems to tentatively suggest that the above-mentioned standardization may be also partly due to the current status of English as *lingua franca*.

The contributions from Cristina Suárez Gómez and Roberto Valdeón García establish the transition “from purely linguistic concerns to broader social and cultural issues” (15)—a connection which had been previously considered by other critics, such as Braj B. Kachru in “World Englishness and Applied Linguistics” (1990), who does not divorce applied linguistics from social or cultural concerns either; or by Farzad Sharifian and Gary B. Palmer, who, in *Applied Cultural Linguistics* (2007) include contributions that explore the interrelationship between language, culture and conceptualisations.

Cristina Suárez Gómez, in “Pragmatic markers: What are They? Where do They Come From?” starts by defining and characterizing pragmatic markers, to offer then an interesting diachronic perspective on the presence of pragmatic markers throughout the history of English and to frame this later within the processes of grammaticalization. The author finds that “there is a continuous renewal of forms,” even if the

pragmatic functions pervade, because “the development of pragmatic markers evolves at a very fast pace, justified by the oral nature of such items, and their association with informal conversational styles and with the speakers’ desire to be original” (135).

Roberto Valdeón García’s “Text, Sentence and Word Levels of Colloquial English in the Non-Native Classroom” offers a revealing study of the attention colloquial language is paid to in formal English teaching. To that aim, the author analyses the features of spoken English at text level, at grammar level and at word level, and the features of informal English both in contemporary textbooks and in the classroom. Valdeón García concludes that “audiovisual scripts represent an infinite corpus for the teacher” (157), since they include the language, the context and even the visual component. Besides, they can also “convey pragmatic information for the listener” (157), even if scripted material, unlike natural conversation, is usually deprived of performance errors.

Identity issues, from the point of view of Cultural Studies, already latent in the first, more language-oriented chapters, stand as central concerns in the final essays of the volume, which are the work of Patricia Bastida Rodríguez, Andrés Enrique Arias, Paloma Fresno Calleja, and Marta Fernández Morales. Chris Weedon’s *Identity and Culture: Narratives of Difference and Belonging* (2004), dealing with issues of class, race and gender, would be a key text to be taken into account in this respect, together with *Questions of Cultural Identity* (1996) by Stuart Hall.

Patricia Bastida Rodríguez, in “Belonging and Not Belonging: The Writing of Identity in Britain’s Ethnic Minorities,” studies the impact of decolonization on British identity, and analyses the treatment of that subject and the concept of Britishness in three works: Andrea Levy’s *Small Island*, Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane*, and Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth*. Bastida Rodríguez finds that “a frequent motif in all of them is the stereotypes of Britishness which have been interiorised by the protagonists” (185) and that the evil of racism and issues of gender are present in the three novels. She states that Britain’s current reality is one in which “ethnic diversity and hybridity are gradually becoming part of everyday life” (186).

Andrés Enrique Arias's "Past and Present of the Anglo-Hispanic Cultural Conflict in the United States" retraces "the history of the different forms of cultural contact which have existed between Anglo-Americans and Hispanics in the US". Thus, the author offers a look back at the colonial era, analysing the process of colonization, as well as the consequential one of decolonization, in an attempt to find the historical seeds for the present conflict. There follows an interesting overview of the Hispanic heritage, from the earlier influence, to the Hispanophobia which grew from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards and the nostalgia present in the writings about Hispanic California in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Finally, attention is focused on re-hispanisation, the growing presence of Spanish language in the US, and the linguistic conflict arising from it, which has even led to movements for the officialisation of English. What I miss in this article are a few words in the introduction revealing the critical approach the author is going to frame his analysis from then onwards.

Marta Fernández Morales, in "*Real Women Have Curves?* Chicana Identity and Bodily Issues in Patricia Cardoso's Film," compares the film to the original play, in order to study such complex matters as Chicano/a identity, feminist issues, politics, and bodily issues. However, it would have been helpful to learn, from the beginning of the article, the critical approach the author is to apply to her analysis. In this last part, the reflection, in Patricia Cardoso's film, of current concerns as the pressure of the beauty myth, food and gender politics, sexuality and liberation are successfully dealt with. Fernández Morales finds that "the film introduces a clear call for action" (243). In fact, Ana, the protagonist, "does not accept her given position as a docile member of a hierarchical, sexist and racist society" (243).

Paloma Fresno Calleja, in "Canadian Multiculturalism and its literary discontents," starts by offering an overview of the policy of cultural diversity which had a great impact in the reshaping of Canadian national identity, to proceed to assume a deconstructive perspective, by reflecting the most common objections which have been directed against that policy by different Canadian authors of diverse ethnic origins. Fresno Calleja concludes that Canada's cultural diversity, multiculturalism, is both a reality and "an idea in process of being shaped and reshaped" (Hinz 1999: vii).

To conclude, the editors should be congratulated on the overall high standard of the publication. Its nine chapters, impeccably edited, do certainly make a significant contribution to Cultural Studies as a growing discipline, although it should be noted that the disposition of the articles into different blocks is a little disconcerting at times (for example, in the introduction, the article by Suárez Gómez is, at first, enumerated in the introductory chapter with those which “offer a fascinating insight into key features that characterise English as spoken in the areas noted,” (11) to be later included among those which “make a transition from purely linguistic concerns to broader social and cultural issues” (15); Andrés Enrique García’s article, which has been included in the block about identity issues, would also fit in perfectly with linguistic issues), however, it is also true that the variety and complexity of the subjects dealt with in each chapter, make a simple classification almost impossible. However, a wider scope concerning the analysis of the different varieties of English (here reduced to North American and Canadian) would have been both desirable and convenient.

Nevertheless, the fact that this is a multi-authored volume has in no way diminished its value, since that characteristic has not led to repetitiveness. Actually, the conclusions drawn from those nine articles, far from constituting an end, are rather a starting point for both Cultural Studies and Linguistics researchers interested in studying, in depth, new aspects of these highly interesting disciplines.

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**GREGORIO-GODEO, EDUARDO DE (2009). *LA CONSTRUCCIÓN DISCURSIVA DE LA MASCULINIDAD. UN ESTUDIO DE CONSULTORIOS EN REVISTAS PARA HOMBRES DEL REINO UNIDO.***

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528 páginas.**

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El auge de la llamada *segunda ola* feminista en los últimos decenios del siglo XX supuso una revisión historicista en clave de género sin precedentes. Bajo la premisa de que la discriminación de la mujer en Occidente se ha sustentado en una concepción androcéntrica, se propuso adquirir la plena igualdad de derechos mediante la identificación de los mecanismos de pensamiento generalizados que actúan en menoscabo de la condición social de la mujer (Millett 1970). Con independencia de los logros del movimiento, esta línea de reflexión derivó en una frecuente equiparación de lo masculino con los valores patriarcales ancestrales que implica un reduccionismo de la realidad del hombre, en especial dentro el contexto de la sociedad actual. Este desajuste ha provocado una respuesta dentro de los estudios de género, los llamados estudios sobre la condición masculina o *Men's Studies*, dedicados a la identidad masculina heterosexual, que han conquistado su parcela junto a los *Women's Studies* o los *Queer Studies*. El volumen monográfico firmado por Eduardo de Gregorio-Godeo bajo el título *La construcción discursiva de la masculinidad. Un estudio de consultorios en revistas para hombres del Reino Unido* aborda esta temática desde uno de los ángulos menos trabajados en el mundo académico: el lingüístico. El trabajo se integra así en la línea de trabajo sobre lengua y masculinidades reivindicada por McIlvenny (1998), y avanzada por Labwoski (1996), Johnson & Meinhof (1997) o Coates (2003).



Esta nueva propuesta analiza una muestra integrada por veinte columnas de consultorio aparecidas en Gran Bretaña a finales de los noventa en revistas de interés general para público masculino —*Men's Health*, *Sky Magazine*, *GQ*, *Later*, *Arena*, *ZM*, *FHM* y *Maxim*—, un sector preferencial de los grandes grupos editoriales anglófonos que ha terminado por hacerse un hueco también en el mercado editorial español. La elección se fundamenta desde el presupuesto de que tales publicaciones ejercen “un poderoso influjo en la construcción y proyección de modelos masculinos entre su público de hombres lectores” (106). La sección del consultorio se antoja doblemente reveladora al incidir directamente tanto en las preocupaciones de los lectores como en los valores promovidos desde la redacción de las revistas. Se produce además la paradoja de acceder al conocimiento de la identidad netamente masculina desde una sección y una figura, la de las *agony aunts*, tradicionalmente consideradas como típica y exclusivamente femeninas.

El resultado es una completa reflexión destinada a estudiosos y activistas de los estudios de género y lingüistas en general, en especial aquellos que trabajan o desean iniciarse en el Análisis Crítico del Discurso (ACD). El autor se propone paliar la escasez de estudios sobre género y masculinidad en el campo de la Lingüística, y en concreto contribuir al mejor conocimiento de este tipo de revistas desde una perspectiva que, a su vez, reivindica la posición de las nuevas masculinidades en el Reino Unido. La obra consta de siete capítulos y un apéndice final con los textos incluidos en el corpus. En el primero se aporta una declaración de intenciones y se avanza la metodología y la estructura del volumen. El capítulo II traza una cronología de los estudios de lengua y género, que parten de la plasmación de estereotipos —normalmente aplicados al habla de las mujeres— como el clásico estudio de Jespersen (1922), y las posteriores aproximaciones feministas al lenguaje desde los enfoques de *dominio* y de *diferencia* con respecto a la incuestionabilidad del habla patriarcal en claves que continúan vigentes, si bien progresivamente imbuidas de una aproximación al género como construcción social, cultural e histórica. Finalmente, se avanzan los estudios que relacionan lenguaje y masculinidad, que no surgirían hasta los años noventa del pasado siglo, y que, por su atención hacia las particularidades de este binomio, suponen una inversión de la situación inicial en la que las

características del habla de las mujeres eran analizadas por oposición al habla masculina, entendida como normativa.

Pese a que el estudio se centra en el nivel discursivo, se analizan los resultados que estudios previos arrojan sobre otros factores, tales como el fonológico y fonético, con el análisis de diferencias en pronunciación y entonación; así como de los niveles morfosintáctico y léxicosemántico. En lo que se refiere a los estudios a nivel discursivo, se pasa revista a trabajos sobre el uso de actos de habla directos y las diferentes interpretaciones de actos de habla que pueden llevar a situaciones de malentendidos entre individuos de diferente sexo, como la diferente intencionalidad en la utilización de las preguntas, de los halagos, de gestos como la sonrisa o del silencio, que son explicados, en su mayor parte, en términos de relaciones de poder.

Posteriormente, en el capítulo III se definen los llamados *Men's Studies* y las posturas a nivel político encontradas desde el surgimiento de este dominio: los que encontraban el sistema patriarcal como natural, los que se unieron a las premisas feministas, y los que analizaron los daños causados a largo plazo por estos valores ancestrales también a los hombres. Se advierte asimismo cómo el estudio de la masculinidad se propagó a otras disciplinas sociales tales como la Sociología o la Psicología en un momento de cambio estructural que hacía especialmente atractivo el análisis de género conjuntamente con el de la raza o la posición social.

La monografía distingue entre patrones de comportamiento característicos de los varones y los ideales de masculinidad compartidos por estos que —si bien todavía deudores de la imagen proyectada por la gran pantalla y dramaturgos como Arthur Miller o Tennessee Williams— evidencian una transición debido a reestructuraciones de los roles de género. Así, actualmente el concepto de lo masculino, sobre cuyo “declive” tanto se ha especulado, se entiende como un constructo cultural que abarca una pluralidad de interpretaciones. De Gregorio Godeo se acerca a las nuevas imágenes sobre la masculinidad surgidas en el contexto mediático anglosajón actual: figuras como el *New Lad*, heredero de la tradicional imagen marcada por la competitividad, la agresividad, la seguridad y la racionalidad, y el *New Man*, más sensible y en busca de la paridad de género y el equilibrio emocional con la mujer. De igual manera, se explora cómo la masculinidad se define de

manera activa, a través de las decisiones diarias y sus implicaciones, y cómo se construye discursivamente, siendo el lenguaje un instrumento privilegiado en dicho proceso.

La metodología utilizada, el Análisis Crítico del Discurso, basado en la obra de referencia *Language and Power* de Norman Fairclough (1989) y sus posteriores actualizaciones, se refleja detalladamente en el capítulo IV con un grado de precisión y claridad que constituyen uno de los grandes logros de la monografía. La elección del método se justifica por su conexión de los hechos lingüísticos con los sociales, y la construcción de la identidad, a partir de los hechos de habla, también minuciosamente analizados a lo largo del volumen. Se parte, pues, de una concepción tripartita del discurso (como texto, como interacción y como práctica social) que fundamenta un modelo donde la *descripción* de los rasgos textuales da lugar a la *interpretación* de los mecanismos de producción, interpretación, distribución y consumo del tipo de discurso generado, para finalizar con la *explicación* de la ideología subyacente y la determinación social del discurso como práctica social en sentido más abstracto. Conforman el quinto capítulo de la obra el repaso a las revistas como vehículo característico de la prensa escrita, y en concreto las revistas para hombres, además del estudio de género y registro de los consultorios que este tipo de publicaciones suelen incluir.

En el amplio capítulo de resultados, la lista de los problemas reflejados en los consultorios supone una significativa muestra de los conflictos visibles del hombre de finales del siglo XX en las sociedades occidentales: dudas ante su papel en la relación de pareja –si se está asumiendo desde una perspectiva dictatorial, hasta qué punto deben satisfacerse las demandas de la mujer–; la paternidad, trastornos de la vida sexual, problemas de orientación sexual, sobre cómo entablar relaciones con mujeres, problemas de adicciones, celos profesionales con respecto a los amigos, creciente preocupación por el aspecto físico y los efectos del envejecimiento y la falta de conocimientos sobre lo adecuado estéticamente. Todas las preguntas dejan translucir un sentimiento de inadecuación que resume la llamada “crisis” de la masculinidad tradicional, plenamente reconocible. La figura del consultor, cuya relación con los lectores es también objeto de análisis, refleja los valores de la publicación que, en la muestra, oscilan entre los de los mencionados *New Man* y *New Lad*. Curiosamente es una mujer la consultora que se decanta de manera más abierta por el segundo. No faltan tampoco

las respuestas que minimizan o frivolizan los problemas más serios de los lectores, que en general no precisan de ayuda profesional más especializada, lo que contribuye a un nivel de distensión en la lectura. También se produce la paradoja de que en una de las columnas se realiza una visión peyorativa de la sección del consultorio de las revistas.

La obra revela cómo el discurso sobre la masculinidad construido en estas revistas posee una dimensión de práctica o acción social cuya matriz se ubicaría en las cambiantes relaciones entre géneros de sociedades occidentales contemporáneas como la británica, y el impacto del consumismo sobre los varones. Los constructos ideológicos sobre lo masculino que conforman las posiciones de sujeto del *New Man* y el *New Man* —y la tensión entre ambos— no solo reflejan sino que determinan rasgos lingüísticos concretos de la dimensión estrictamente textual de dicho discurso (léxico, agencialidad, procesos verbales, modalidad, negaciones, cohesión textual, macroestructuras textuales, etc.). El estudio arroja luz sobre una relación constitutiva entre la dimensión textual y la de acción social del discurso sobre la masculinidad, así como la mediación entre ambas de la dimensión del discurso como interacción, donde —habida cuenta de las particularidades de distribución y consumo del discurso articulado en los consultorios— se examina cómo se proyectan imágenes concretas sobre lo masculino a través de opciones pragmáticas determinadas (actos de habla, presuposiciones, implicaturas). Se evidencia así un proceso mediante el cual, en el acto de lectura individual, los lectores vienen a negociar su identidad de género con las posiciones de sujeto activadas en el discurso sobre la masculinidad que se configura en las revistas. Los resultados se apoyan en porcentajes y gráficos en clave de numerosas variables referentes a la utilización del lenguaje para la construcción de la identidad y al análisis de las masculinidades emergentes *per se*.

Aunque la obra se justifica en sí misma, una de las mayores deficiencias que se detectan en el volumen es su carácter excesivamente especializado, al haberse optado por centrarse exclusivamente en una sección de las revistas para hombres como es la de consultorio y no llegar a dar una visión más amplia sobre las revistas masculinas en que dichas secciones se insertan. Por otro lado, la voluntad del autor de aplicar pormenorizadamente el modelo de ACD de Fairclough (1989) para el análisis de la selección de textos examinados es también de algún modo censurable, pues, queriendo ser excesivamente sistemático,

da lugar a un análisis demasiado reiterativo de cada uno de los textos que componen el corpus analizado. En este sentido, en una obra donde el análisis lingüístico se orienta hacia la obtención de resultados de índole cultural más amplio, hubiera sido esperable una adaptación más libre del modelo de análisis que sigue el autor para evitar así la impresión de cierto encorsetamiento que la fiel aplicación de la metodología de análisis acaba proyectando en el capítulo de resultados. De hecho, en lugar de partir de la descripción de los rasgos textuales para llegar a la explicación de la determinación social del discurso y la ideología sobre lo masculino subyacente, en un estudio donde es fundamental desvelar el papel del lenguaje en la construcción discursiva de la masculinidad, podría haberse operado a la inversa a la hora de aplicar el modelo de ACD de Fairclough; esto es, partir de un estudio sobre la ideología que impregna las posiciones de sujeto representadas en las revistas y su determinación social, y, desde ahí, examinar las opciones textuales en que dichos constructos ideológicos sobre lo masculino cobran cuerpo en las consultas analizadas. Por último, no podemos pasar por alto el hecho de que, a pesar de que el autor se propone constatar la validez del ACD como herramienta para los estudios culturales y de género, esto es algo que estaba constatado desde hace al menos una década, según demuestran estudios como el de Terry Threadgold (2003) y, mucho antes, en el propio libro de Fairclough (1989).

En todo caso, la obra, además de abrir camino para nuevos estudios de masculinidades y Lingüística, muestra la aptitud del ACD para el estudio de diversos fenómenos sociales, un camino ya previsto por Fairclough (2003). De Gregorio-Godeo se suma así a la línea de investigación que se plantea de qué manera se construyen las identidades en el discurso (Benwell y Stokoe 2006; de Fina, Schiffrin y Bamberg 2006), y los discursos de género (Litosseliti & Sunderland 2002; Sunderland 2003). El volumen, cuidadosamente redactado y de fácil y amena lectura, supone un riguroso estudio que ofrece una completa revisión lingüístico-discursiva del complejo concepto de la masculinidad en el contexto mediático británico actual.

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**ÁNGELES GARCÍA CALDERÓN Y ANTONIO LASTRA  
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Desde la primera traducción al español de la novela de Sir Walter Scott *Ivanhoe* (1819, publicada en 1820) a cargo del ilustrado romántico y benthamista gaditano José Joaquín de Mora en 1825, varias decenas de ediciones de esta novela en castellano han ido apareciendo en los últimos casi doscientos años, lo cual prueba su popularidad en el mundo hispano-hablante.<sup>1</sup> Esta obra de ficción romántica, escrita y publicada tras *Rob Roy* (1817), pertenece al ciclo conocido como *The Waverley Novels*, y supuso un cambio relevante en el planteamiento literario del autor escocés, pues Scott abandonó en ella, en gran medida, la historia de Escocia para centrarse en la de Inglaterra de finales del siglo XII, justamente en los años previos a la promulgación de la *Carta Magna*. Nacido en Edimburgo en el seno de una familia acomodada (su padre era un abogado de cierto prestigio), Walter Scott (1771-1832) es probablemente el primer autor en lengua inglesa que gozó de un inmenso e inmediato favor popular, hasta el punto de que, junto con Lord Byron (con quien mantuvo una interesante relación epistolar),<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Para un análisis de las primeras traducciones de *Ivanhoe* al español, véase los estudios de Ángeles García Calderón “*Ivanhoe* traducido al español: Análisis contrastivo de tres versiones” (2011) y “First Translations of *Ivanhoe* into Spanish” (2012).

<sup>2</sup> Byron, de forma poco sorprendente dado el talante de este escrito, no se refirió en términos muy elogiosos a Scott en su poema satírico *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809), si bien, como él mismo explicó en una carta a Scott, “The satire was written when I was very young & very angry, & fully bent on displaying my wrath & my wit, & now I am haunted by the ghosts of my wholesale Assertions” (Marchand ed. 182-83). Por su parte, Scott criticaría en otra carta dirigida al poeta Robert Southey la pose aristocrática de Byron, que no necesitaba como él del favor popular para asegurarse su subsistencia: “it is funny to a whelp of a young Lord Byron abusing me, of whose circumstances he knows



se convirtió en un escritor internacionalmente reconocido, tanto en Gran Bretaña (el príncipe regente, futuro Jorge IV era uno de sus más rendidos admiradores) como en el resto de Europa y en los Estados Unidos.<sup>3</sup>

El *Ivanhoe* de Scott, atravesado por intertextos de la *History of England* (1754-61) del filósofo e historiador David Hume y de las baladas populares sobre la figura legendaria de Robin Hood, fue un inmediato éxito de ventas de la época, además de una novela a la que progresivamente le fue reconocido su valor literario e ideológico. Más allá de la fantasía escapista con la que se le ha definido frecuentemente, se trata de una narración que, de forma muy inteligente, no sólo se articula como auténtica novela histórica (característica que el filósofo marxista húngaro Georg Lukács consideraba extensible a gran parte de la producción literaria de Scott),<sup>4</sup> sino que reflexiona sobre aspectos contemporáneos de la sociedad británica e inglesa. Así, las figuras de los judíos (padre e hija) Isaac y Rachel (con ecos shakespearianos de Shylock y Jessica) reproducen no sólo la situación de los judíos en la Inglaterra medieval, que desembocó en el Edicto de Expulsión de Eduardo I (el *Edict of Expulsion*, con el que culminaron casi dos siglos de hostigamiento y por el que los judíos fueron proscritos en Inglaterra hasta 1657), sino que también introduce al lector en el movimiento decimonónico inglés, y contemporáneo a Scott, a favor de la

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nothing, for endeavouring to scratch out a living by my pen. ... I can assure the noble imp of fame it is not my fault that I was not born to a park and £5000 a-year, as it is not his lordship's merit, although it may be his great good fortune, that he was not born to live by his literary talents and success" (Grierson 214). A pesar de esto, la relación entre ambos fue relativamente amistosa y de cierta admiración mutua.

<sup>3</sup> Véase, por ejemplo, la obra editada recientemente por Murray Pittock, *The Reception of Sir Walter Scott in Europe* (2006), en la que se analiza en gran detalle la enorme popularidad alcanzada por Scott en Europa. En los Estados Unidos, su fama e influencia llegó hasta el punto de que Mark Twain (que acuñó el término *the Walter Scott disease*) culpó, en su obra *Life on the Mississippi* (1883) a Scott y a la gran influencia de sus novelas del estallido de la Guerra de Secesión: "He did measureless harm; more real and lasting harm, perhaps, than any other individual that ever wrote. ... Sir Walter had so large a hand in making Southern character, as it existed before the war, that he is in great measure responsible for the war" (2000:337). A juicio de Twain, la trasnochada visión del mundo de los caballeros del Sur era atribuible al pernicioso efecto producido por los escritos de corte caballeresco y romántico de Scott, de enorme popularidad en los Estados Unidos.

<sup>4</sup> En su obra seminal sobre la novela histórica, Lukács consideró a Walter Scott el creador de dicho sub-género, ya que supo reproducir de forma acertada la disolución progresiva de una forma histórica residual, la aristocracia, así como el surgimiento de la que la reemplazaría, la burguesía, al tiempo que ligaba las características de sus novelas a las condiciones materiales de existencia históricamente consideradas (1962:3-19).

Emancipación de los Judíos (*Emancipation of the Jews*). Por su parte, el enfrentamiento entre los sajones (representados en la novela por Cedric, Robin of Locksley y el propio Ivanhoe) y los normandos (a la cabeza de los cuales aparece en la novela Ricardo I “Corazón de León”), reproduce tanto los esfuerzos de la sociedad inglesa por eliminar los conflictos sociales y étnicos que separaban a ambos grupos en la Edad Media como, de forma si se quiere oblicua pero evidente, los problemas derivados de la Unión entre Escocia e Inglaterra, vigente desde 1704. Asimismo, la novela participa del debate intelectual entre los partidarios de la Revolución francesa (Scott escribió *The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte* en 1825, una biografía bastante laudatoria, y por ello controvertida, de Napoleón) y las fuerzas más conservadoras que se oponían a todo lo que dicha Revolución representaba (fuerzas entre las que paradójicamente a menudo se encontraba Scott), en el contexto de la *Carta Magna* (a la que Scott evitaría referirse en *Ivanhoe*) y las medidas que el Parlamento inglés, atemorizado por la corriente revolucionaria que recorría Europa, aprobó en la primera mitad del siglo XIX.

En su edición y traducción para Cátedra, los profesores y traductores de la Universidad de Córdoba, Ángeles García Calderón y Antonio Lastra, han realizado una puesta al día de *Ivanhoe* que resulta ágil al mismo tiempo que respetuosa con el original de Scott. La introducción, suficientemente detallada y con un grado de especialización adecuado, explora, primero, aspectos biográficos de Walter Scott en relación con su producción literaria, anterior y posterior a la redacción y publicación de *Ivanhoe*. Así, sabemos de sus orígenes en la frontera escocesa, sus empeños poéticos, sus éxitos novelísticos, sus dificultades económicas (que desembocaron en la bancarrota de 1825 y que ya no le abandonarían hasta su muerte en 1832), sus relaciones con otros autores (Byron o Carlyle, entre otros), y su demencia final. De incluso mayor interés para la correcta comprensión de la novela son, sin duda, las explicaciones textuales, que exploran con gran acierto aspectos que, probablemente, puede fácilmente pasar por alto el lector actual de Scott, máxime si no se trata de un especialista en este autor: la función textual de la naturaleza, y muy especialmente los bosques y el campo, frente a la creciente importancia de la ciudad; la caballería como institución en declive; el heroísmo y su función social, en tanto que actitud ante la vida igualmente presentada en su crisis y decadencia inminente; o los conflictos entre comunidades condenadas a convivir pero inicialmente

hostiles la una con la otra: los enfrentamientos entre los sajones y los normandos de *Ivanhoe* no pueden dejar de hacer pensar al lector avisado en las difíciles relaciones surgidas tras la Unión británica entre escoceses e ingleses, y, como ya apuntamos, el tratamiento positivo de Scott hacia la minoría judía en *Ivanhoe* hace pensar en su posicionamiento político respecto a la “cuestión judía” (la Emancipación), asunto candente a principios del siglo XIX en Inglaterra. Cabe decir que podría tal vez esperarse una mayor extensión de esta Introducción que, debido a su relativa brevedad, deja en el tintero algunos aspectos centrales de la obra, a saber: su compleja función dentro de la serie narrativa conocida como *Waverley*, la relación de esta novela con otros textos de Scott, su frecuentemente exitosa adaptación a otros medios –comic, televisión, cine, etc...);<sup>5</sup> también podría apuntarse que en general evita utilizar citas del texto para ilustrar la mayoría de sus aseveraciones, y que no hace prácticamente alusión alguna a escritores escoceses contemporáneos de Scott. En definitiva, y a pesar de esta objeción, se trata indudablemente de un estudio notable de introducción a la obra de este autor y, concretamente, a esta novela, y de lectura por tanto muy recomendable para quien se aventure en ella.

El texto utilizado para esta traducción es, como Lastra y García Calderón manifiestan, una colación de la canónica primera edición de diciembre de 1819 (aparecida como de 1820), y de la edición, algo posterior, utilizada para la *Magnum Opus*: una colección de las novelas de Scott aparecida en 1830 con fines más económicos que literarios, y que es la base del *Ivanhoe* de 1996 publicado por Oxford University Press. La edición traducida por Lastra y García Calderón incluye, como esta última, la ‘Introducción a *Ivanhoe*’ del propio autor.

La traducción, en mi opinión, es igualmente de gran altura. Traducir a Walter Scott, como cualquier anglista o traductor sabe, presenta una doble dificultad. Por un lado, los largos periodos y la barroca adjetivación, recursos activamente buscados por Scott para conseguir el efecto arcaizante tan característico de sus novelas, encierra una gran dificultad para el traductor. Mantener dicha estructura corre el riesgo de alienar a cierto segmento de lectores, muy especialmente los más jóvenes (no olvidemos el atractivo que Scott ha tenido dentro

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<sup>5</sup> En la nota 4 de la Introducción se hace una muy breve referencia a este último aspecto.

de lo que podríamos llamar “literatura juvenil”), que pueden acusar el esfuerzo de una lectura de estas características. Por otra parte, no cabe plantearse (y los traductores acertadamente no lo hacen) una traducción alternativa, que interrumpa gramaticalmente dichos periodos o aligere la adjetivación, pues al hipotético beneficio de acercar el texto se le opondría el seguro perjuicio de traicionar el estilo de Scott.

En un sentido más específico, el *Ivanhoe* de Scott contiene, como cualquiera que conozca la obra sabe, abundante número de términos muy específicos desde un punto de vista no sólo histórico sino cultural, que se han traducido de forma muy acertada en la mayoría de los casos, combinando el efecto medievalizante buscado por Scott con las necesidades de comprensión surgidas al verter la obra a otra lengua: monedas, vestidos, arquitectura de castillos, festividades y referencias culturales varias encuentran una más que aceptable, en muchos casos sobresaliente, traducción al español, en general clara, ágil y precisa, y muy respetuosa con el original. Por otro lado, una traducción de más de ciento setenta y cinco mil palabras no puede dejar de presentar algunos errores. Así, algunas separaciones de palabras inglesas son incorrectas (“Jo-hnson” 24-5, “Sco-tt” 12); hay ciertas decisiones terminológicas más que cuestionables, como “opresión” por “presión” en “los dos que tenían sujeto a Gurth aflojaron la opresión” (217), o cambios erróneos de registro, como en el uso de la segunda persona de singular “tu” cuando el texto requería la segunda de plural de cortesía “vuestro”: “En vuestra época teníais buen paso, pero ahora vuestro andar es lento y sin ritmo. Vamos, desviad *tu* rumbo y marchaos.” (363, mi cursiva).

Caso distinto es el de la decisión de no traducir los términos *franklin* y *thane*, que los traductores han optado por mantener en inglés en una decisión valiente pero que precisaría, a mi juicio, una justificación más amplia. Así, los traductores manifiestan lo siguiente sobre este asunto: “Dejamos en el original *franklin* y *thane*, cuyo significado explica el propio Scott, que los pone deliberadamente en boca de personajes normandos” (32). El término *franklin* procede del anglo-latín “francolanus”, se adaptó al anglo-normando “fraunclein” y se consolidó en inglés medio como “francolein”, apareciendo por primera vez en el poema alegórico de William Langland *Piers Plowman*, de 1377 (*Oxford English Dictionary*), adquiriendo una gran notoriedad poco después en *The Canterbury Tales* de Geoffrey Chaucer (finales de 1380), donde uno de los peregrinos es un “franklyn”. El problema traductológico surge por la dificultad de

encontrar un término español que contenga la cantidad de sentidos que el original proporciona, y por ello en esta edición se opta por mantenerlo en inglés a pesar de que, a mi entender, se podría haber solventado el problema con la voz española “hacendado” o incluso “terrateniente”, matizada, si fuese necesario (que probablemente lo sea), por una aclaración en nota a pie de página. Igualmente, el término *thane*, mucho más antiguo y procedente del inglés antiguo “þegn”, transformado en “þeyne” y “thaine” en inglés medio y convertido en el moderno “thane” en el siglo XV, podría traducirse por “soldado del rey” o “guerrero”, de nuevo con la consiguiente aclaración en nota, dado que a este sentido se añadía el de “servidor del rey” e incluso el de “hacendado”. A pesar de la evidente dificultad que estas aclaraciones suponen, derivada de la complejidad lingüística e histórica de estas voces, entendemos que sería mejor solución proporcionar a lector un término en español antes que optar por dejar en el texto estos términos en inglés que, de forma decorosa, podrían traducirse.<sup>6</sup> A favor de la decisión tomada, no obstante, hay que reconocer que se trata de situaciones límite para las que es probablemente imposible encontrar una solución que satisfaga por completo, teniendo los traductores, siempre, la última palabra.

En conclusión, y tal y como ha quedado dicho, la edición crítica y traducción del *Ivanhoe* de Walter Scott a cargo de Ángeles García Calderón y Antonio Lastra constituye una notable contribución a la traducción literaria en lengua inglesa en el mundo hispanohablante. Se trata, como he argumentado, de un trabajo, en su conjunto, de un gran rigor científico y de una elevada calidad filológica y traductológica, no exenta afortunadamente de gran elegancia literaria, que logra ese difícil equilibrio entre accesibilidad y precisión lingüística y discursiva que toda traducción de una obra de literatura debe aspirar a conseguir.

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<sup>6</sup> Dicho esto, debo aclarar que estas observaciones las hace un filólogo (anglista), que no un traductor, y es bien sabido que para muchos traductores las notas a pie de página constituyen una forma de admisión de derrota que, evidentemente, no comparto.

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**TORO SANTOS, ANTONIO RAÚL DE, ED. (2011).**  
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This is a new book in the collection on Irish studies published by the University Institute of Research in Irish Studies, Amergin, Universidade da Coruña. Along the lines of its field of interest, this volume is dedicated to Irish Music in contemporary Irish literature. Genres, music and literature, which have a generous presence in the rich Irish cultural world since ancient times. It is remarkable to observe how such a relatively small country as Ireland has contributed in such an important way to music and literature in the English speaking world. An Irish output on music and literature that clearly has surpassed that of other countries of what is known as the Angloxason cultural world, and that of its closer neighbour, Britain.

It should be remarked for those readers not familiarized with Irish studies that, even if Ireland is a country that mainly uses English, usually assumed as being within the orbit of the Anglo-Saxon world, it has its own customs and environment. Historically, Irish culture is based on Celtic traditions and has its own ethnicity and language, the Gaelic. The Irish have a rich literary background based on ancient Celtic myths and legends in literature and their own old musical instruments in music such as the harp, the most representative, and best known among its instruments, which also identifies Ireland and the Irish in the world. In spite of external historical pressure coming from its powerful neighbours, Ireland has managed to preserve throughout centuries its own sources of inspiration, which are closely related to the sea, and to its own traditions, which the Irish have managed to transmit with an extraordinary sensibility.



The purpose of this book is to analyze the interrelationship between music and literature, which established its foundation on Irish legends and the mythological cycles. The Celtic artistic traditions in Ireland have a clear presence in folk musical compositions and in literature, prose and verse, a reality that is presented to the readers. The book has an Introduction and ten chapters written by experts and researchers on Irish literature; they deal with the presence of music in the works of different Irish and Galician writers and musicians, and underline the relevance that music currently has in the spirit and sensibility of Irish contemporary literary authors. The book offers also an unusual fact: all its contributors live in that Western part of Europe known as Galicia, they belong to the Celtic tradition for their origins, studies and academic interest, and most of them also have a significant University research background on Irish culture and literature.

A general approach to the subject of this volume is given in the Introduction by Professor Antonio de Toro, who transmits to the readers the love that the Irish and himself have for music and literature. It is a well documented text with plenty of illustrative quotations and an important bibliography. There is a clear development of the topic that includes historical references and examples on the important presence and interrelationship between music and literature in contemporary Irish literature. The text includes a dense anthology of Irish writers, poets, playwrights and musicians, singers and players, both ancient and modern, with academic data and quotations to their works. Among the references to different writers in the Introduction, it is worth mentioning the one made to the presence of music in Joyce's *Ulysses* "a novel, an author, and a topic that Professor de Toro has investigated for years" and the allusions done to the literary and musical connexions appearing in other Joyce's works such as *Finnegans Wake*, *Chamber Music* and *Dubliners*. Joyce is the contemporary Irish author whose works are the best example of the perfect communion between music and literature, as Prof. de Toro corroborates it in his Introduction.

Joyce's *Ulysses* is also the topic analysed by J.M. Alonso-Giraldez who writes about the "Sirens," an episode that epitomizes Joyce's interest in music thanks to the use of musical techniques in its content, where music and words appear in close association. The study concentrates on a well known Irish traditional song, "The Croppy Boy," which according to his author is mentioned ten times in *Ulysses*,

most of them with complex and diverse significance; in this episode the symbolic connotations of the song refer to Bloom and Stephen. Different parallelisms between the story of the croppy boy and Bloom are mentioned, among them the betrayal of the croppy boy and that of Bloom, who was cuckolded by his wife, Molly, just at the time when the song was sung, a fact that contributes to Bloom's actual alienation the novel.

There are two others important Irish writers who also emphasize in their works the empathy between music and contemporary Irish literature, they are Seamus Heaney and Bernard MacLaverty, both are analysed in two different chapters. The poem "The Given Note" by Heaney, which is included in a CD, *The Poet and the Piper*, is studied by Prof. de Toro, who considers it a clear example of the symbiosis between music and literature. The poem is set "in the essence of 'Irish Island,'" the Blasket Islands, situated in the West coast of Ireland. The article also offers an approach to what the field of Word and Music Studies is and signifies. According to his author "the history of music in Western civilization [...] has involved an unbroken relationship between 'music' and the 'word'" a fact that in Ireland can be identified with the ancient Irish custom of playing music and reciting, something that, the study states, it is still present in modern Ireland. The chapter is a first hand approach to his author's personal experiences: he has visited the setting of the poem and was a personal friend of the late Seamus Heaney; this fact and the many quotations and references in it made this essay especially recommendable.

The chapter dedicated to MacLaverty's novel *Grace Notes* illustrates the interrelation in prose between music and literature. The protagonist in the novel, Catherine, is a young composer and teacher of music from Belfast, who lives on her own outside her native country. The novel describes how the protagonist, who is in a complicated personal situation, is working hard to create a musical composition that she wants to present in an international contest for young European composers. The novel shows the parallelism of music as profession and as vocation that also runs parallel to the life of the protagonist. MacLaverty introduces in the plot important topics such as individuality, family relations, identity, maternity, political situation in Belfast and others. The authors of this chapter, Margarita and Jose Manuel Estévez, have already published on MacLaverty and this novel,

and have also met him in a visit he did in 2000 to give a lecture at the University of Santiago.

The contribution made by several contemporary Irish composers, singer-songwriters to the topic of this book can be read in the next two studies, one by Anita Morgan, who emphasizes the role of humour in Tommy and Colum Sands' songs, and the other by David Clark, who underlines Damien Dempsey's social compromise and the love-hate relationship with his home country appearing in the words of his songs. The two chapters are about singers who started their career at the end of the 20th century and continue in the present one; both chapters have the value of their immediateness, as the singers' careers are too close to us to be able to have a detached historical point of view to analyse the real impact in time of their work. There are interesting quotations to Dempsey's words in his songs; they help to understand better his odd relationship with his home country. The study also offers references to other social problems he deals with in his songs, such as those of the Irish emigrants in New York, and to the greed and human exploitation behind the economic boom in the 1990s in Ireland, known as the "Tiger," which gives the title to one of his song, "Celtic Tiger". The chapter about humour in Tommy and Colum Sands' songs offers, with its many notes and bibliography, an interesting approach to this attractive topic. In my opinion, some recurrent ideas should have been avoided in the text. The study has to be praised by the rich information given throughout its pages, such as the ten functions and benefits of humour in songs offered in it.

The next two chapters are devoted, one to Irish and Galician Women Poets, and the other to music references in the Shakespearean Work of Alvaro Cunqueiro; both chapters offer remarkable information to those readers not familiarised with Galician culture. The two studies use a clear scholarly approach, something that has characterised their authors in previous publications and will help to open new paths to future researchers on this and similar topics. The one on performing spaces with the poet Yolanda Castaño as protagonist, is innovative and shows the art of performance as a promising cultural manifestation. His author, Eduardo Barros-Grela, offers two interesting diagrams to illustrate Castaño's written words, and develops in the article the subject of the body as a linguistic instrument that in his opinion women poets in Ireland and Galicia use to transgress traditional discourses

in literature. The subject studied by Rubén Jarazo deals with the references to orality and musicality in Galician and Portugal Medieval literature and in Shakespeare's spoken words and music given by the contemporary Galician writer Alvaro Cunqueiro. He offers quotations to other writers' references on Cunqueiro, focusing on words and music in his work, and to many others appearing in Cunqueiro's *The Uncertain Lord Don Hamlet* where music and words are, according to Dr. Jarazo, put together as essential features of his work.

The state of the art of Galician contemporary Folk Music is the subject of the next studies. One is about the leading position of the bagpipe as a traditional instrument and the other deals with folk music in Galicia and other Western European territories where historically ancient Celtic tribes inhabited: Ireland, Scotland, Brittany and Galician. To those who wish to know more about Celtic music the reading of the thirty pages on contemporary Folk Music in this article will be a rewarding task. There are many references to the immediate historical background of this music and to different individual players, groups and composers. The study describes how, thanks to the increasing interest in traditional music and to the help of the mass media and international Celtic festivals, folk Celtic music has become a profitable source of inspiration to its composers. The chapter about bagpipes and digital music is a learned study that its author, the writer Xelis de Toro, with an agile prose, offers as a text easy to read and appreciate. The quotations to the words appearing in songs, and the references to players and other writers' opinions, help to appreciate the current importance of Galician bagpipe as a symbol of its culture in the wider context of the other Celtic countries. More than fifty notes and an interesting bibliography of books, journals, newspapers and CDs, add interest to a topic that can be considered already fixed to future researchers.

All in all this is an interesting book for readers in general and to University students and researchers on Irish Studies in particular, thanks mainly to the interest of the different studies and the important bibliographical sources on music and literature that can be found in its pages. The field of Irish studies is a sure value, and a rising one; a credit much due to the University Institute Amergin and its many academic activities and publications. To those interested in interdisciplinary research, a field currently promoted by national and international

academic institutions, this book is a clear example to follow. The quality of the edition of the book, the authors of the chapters, and the variety of topics on the same main subject, music and literature interrelationship in different European countries, are reasons to recommend this book.

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**Esther Bautista Naranjo** is conducting research for her doctoral thesis on the reception and the rewriting of the myth of Don Quixote in English and French Literatures, a study of Comparative Literature and Myth Criticism. She is the author of one book and several articles within these research fields.

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**Carmen María Fernández Rodríguez** holds a PhD in English Philology (University of A Coruña). Her dissertation thesis analysed Maria Edgeworth's and Frances Burney's narrative works. She is a member of The Burney Society and the research network “Rede de lingua e literatura inglesa e identidade,” funded by the Galician Government and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Fernández is at present a teacher at the English Department of the Official School of Languages in Santiago de Compostela (Spain). She has published several articles in the field of translation and cultural studies and is currently working on Edgeworth's reception and translation on the Continent and on the oeuvre of Sarah Harriet Burney, Frances Burney's half-sister.



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## **NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS**



## NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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In his work, "Fiedler focused on Shakespeare only, and he included women and 'Indians' ...", while in my analysis I will include a wider corpus of early modern English texts (10) or (López-Peláez 10).\*

\*If more than one work by the same author is included in the bibliography, the citation should include the first word(s) of the title of the book/article: (*Strangers* 10) or (López-Peláez, *Strangers* 10).

Block quotes (five or more lines):

... the Spanish monarchs Isabel and Fernando were simultaneously campaigning to defeat the last Iberian stronghold of Islam, the kingdom of Granada. The year they succeeded, 1492, was also the year in which they obliged Spain's remaining Jews to convert to Christianity or emigrate. Ten years later Muslims were given the same choice. After another century of tensions Philip III moved to expel all Moriscos in 1609. (Burns 188–89)

If part of the original text is omitted, three dots without brackets should be included.



**Bibliographical References. Examples:**

Author's surname(s), Author's name(s), and 2nd Author's name(s) 2nd Author's surname(s). *Title*. Original publication date. Edition. Volumes. Place: Publisher, Year.

**Monographs:**

Duiker, William J., and Jackson J. Spielvogel. *The Essential World History*, Volume 2. 2005. 6th. ed. 2 vols. Boston: Wadsworth, 2011.

**Multiple works:**

Follett, Ken. *Lie Down with Lions*. New York: Signet, 1986.

---. *The Pillars of the Earth*. New York: Signet, 1990.

Citations: (*Lie Down* 123) or (Follett, *Lie Down* 123); (*Pillars* 123) or (Follett, *Pillars* 123)

**Edited book / Chapter:**

Kavanagh, James H. "Shakespeare in Ideology." *Alternative Shakespeares*. 1985. 2nd ed. Ed. John Drakakis. London: Routledge, 2002. 147–69.

López-Peláez, Jesús. Foreword. *Strangers in Early Modern English Texts*. Ed. Jesús López-Peláez. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2011.

**Translated book:**

Eco, Umberto. *The Name of the Rose*. Trans. William Weaver. New York: Harcourt, 1983.

**Two or more authors:**

Greer, Margaret R., Walter D. Mignolo, and Maureen Quilligan. *Rereading the Black Legend. Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Rivara, Frederick P., et al. "Prevention of Bicycle-Related Injuries: Helmets, Education, and Legislation." *Annual Review of Public Health* 19 (1998): 293–318.

**Article:**

Solé, Yolanda. "Valores aspectuales en español." *Hispanic Linguistics* 4.1 (1990): 57–85.

**Reviews:**

Camhi, Leslie. "Art of the City." Rev. of *New York Modern: The Arts and the City*, by William B. Scott and Peter M. Rutkoff. *Village Voice* 15 June 1999: 154.

**Online Journal:**

Barry, John M. "The Site of Origin of the 1918 Influenza Pandemic and Its Public Health Implications." Commentary. *Journal of Translational Medicine* 2.3 (20 Jan. 2004): 1–4. Web. 18 Nov. 2005. <<http://www.translational-medicine.com/content/2/1/3>>.

**Websites:**

*Research Project: Muslims, Spaniards and Jews in Early Modern English Texts: The Construction of the 'Other'*. Ed. Jesús López-Peláez. University of Jaén.

Web. 21 Oct. 2011. <<http://www.ujaen.es/investiga/strangers/index.php>>.

**Further guidelines:**

- The font Times New Roman should be used in the whole manuscript.
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- Bold font should be used for headings and subheadings only.
- Abbreviations such as pp., i.e., e.g., etc., should be avoided. Use instead: that is; for example; and so on.
- When page numbers are used for citation, they should be included within parenthesis and without abbreviations such as p. or pp. The format 100–08 is preferred instead of 100–108 or 100–8.
- Style should be coherent throughout the whole text: British or American English.
- Long dashes should be used for additional comments, and the spaces between dash and comment should be removed.

















## POEM BY ADRIANA CAROLINA BULZ

Adriana Carolina Bulz is a graduate of the American Studies Program at the University of Bucharest. The title of her PhD thesis is "Transatlantic Connections: The Reception of Eugene O'Neill's Drama in Romania" (2012). The author declares: "This poem is dedicated to the Dâmbovitza River, our Romanian Thames."

### Running Water\*

#### \*Has No Memory

I am no longer trickling up the wall!  
Seeping in the dark, bubbling in the sun,  
I am still striving to fill up my course,  
So I keep running  
With no solid memory on my shores  
Except for a faint foreignizing whistlebow.

Within immemorable distance from my source  
I am confined to leaking through the pipelines  
Where I unravel my feelings up to bursting point.  
Letting these loose,  
I solidify into hopes, and rage, and remorse  
But never regret my aching ripples.  
(Having no body I cherish the traces of pain  
Inflicted upon my reflection at which I smile so often.)

I wish now I were a drop in this quivering turbid pond!  
At least its borders recall how grassy roots used to tickle  
[its insole  
While my waves travel constantly to their underneath  
[repose.  
How can I grow old when I have no regrets?

Still there is memory in the great outside  
(I believe in my heart that roots may still breathe  
From underneath a concrete layer). Here I am:  
My face a blank stare colored with clouds and creased  
[by sparrows,  
Blushing at sunset and turning purple with the stars,  
Floating ever so stealthily and filled with resilience  
In my watery bed.

Fishermen love me for the silvery cues I provide  
And sing to me daily whirring their rods with knotty  
[fingers  
While I undo my wishbones.  
As the noon sinks its rays vertically into my chest  
I feel like leaping towards the riverbanks to unfurl  
Mermaid-like tresses for the occasional pedestrian.

I am most resigned by early morning, when ink-blue  
[shades  
Dip their misteries into my foam. Then I receive any  
[stranger coily,  
With a smug assent. I could spell the names of all those  
[whose image I embraced  
Were I not sworn to silence by my own  
Monolithic passage.

I don't overindulge in personal thoughts  
(these here express a mere fad once upon an afternoon)  
So I wish you well, my enemy's children, and may you  
[delight  
in my restlessness forevermore!  
*Your sweet-watered foe*

# the grove 20 - 2012

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