the grove

working papers on english studies

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PRÓLOGO

Uno de los objetivos más deseables para una universidad que, como la nuestra, aspire a ser parte del tejido vivo de la sociedad es el lograr una presencia activa en su entorno cercano. Los proyectos que se realicen para conseguirlo pueden ser de mayor o menor envergadura, pero en todo caso han de ser útiles y ajustados a la realidad.

Somos una Universidad aún en germen, todavía con muchas carencias y retos por superar, pero que desde su nacimiento ha asumido que forma parte de su entorno. Por tanto, no queremos sólo concluir, sino también fundar los inadvertidos cimientos sobre los cuales los que nos sucedan puedan encontrar una base firme para seguir construyendo. Somos también una Provincia que comienza a sacudirse la pasividad, la desgana, la postración en la que unos y otros nos han y nos hemos sumido secularmente. Somos lo que somos, pero para acercarnos a ser lo que deseamos hemos de trabajar con constancia y solidaridad. Sin prisa, pero sin pausa, no esperando más de lo que podemos dar en cada momento, pero no contentándonos con menos de lo que efectivamente podemos.

El nacimiento de una nueva publicación es siempre un motivo de alegría para todos y mucho más aún si como es el caso de ésta, que hoy tengo el honor y el placer de presentar, es un ejemplo del desarrollo que parece caracterizar a esta Universidad en general: la expansión modesta y cotidiana, casi inadvertida, pero firme e indispensable.

The Grove es fruto de la contribución de todos (Junta de Andalucía, Universidad, Facultad, Departamento y Grupo de Investigación) y se

dirige, en primera instancia, a nuestra provincia que tanta necesidad tiene de integración y de promoción de iniciativas renovadoras. Mis compañeros del Grupo de Investigación promotor de esta empresa me aclaran que han elegido el título, cuya traducción al español sería algo así como El Bosquecillo, por sus prometedoras y sugestivas connotaciones. Con toda seguridad, en el campo de la Filología Inglesa, esta publicación cumplirá ampliamente con lo que su nombre evoca en cuanto a crecimiento y agrupación, sirviendo como un foro de encuentro, de discusión y de desarrollo sostenido e integrador. Nos felicitamos todos anticipadamente por ello con la certeza de que otras iniciativas la sigan en las distintas áreas de esta Facultad en la aún tantas cosas restan por hacer.

ANA RAQUEL ORTEGA
*Decana de la Facultad de Humanidades
y Ciencias de la Educación*

PRESENTACIÓN

La consolidación de los estudios de Filología Inglesa en la Universidad de Jaén, con siete promociones de licenciados formados en sus aulas hasta el momento, nos ha animado a poner en marcha esta publicación que surge desde el Grupo de Investigación «Aproximación multidisciplinar al inglés» y gracias al apoyo de las instituciones académicas y administrativas de nuestra comunidad. Responde a la necesidad de establecer un vínculo imprescindible entre la Universidad y el profesorado de inglés de los distintos niveles de enseñanza.

En las presentes circunstancias, una vez terminados los estudios universitarios, se produce frecuentemente una desconexión entre los antiguos alumnos y la Universidad que inevitablemente lleva al anquilosamiento gradual de los conocimientos adquiridos. A través de esta revista pretendemos promover una fructífera relación entre todas las instituciones educativas provinciales hermanadas en el esfuerzo común de fomentar los estudios ingleses en el contexto que nos es más cercano y accesible, manteniendo vivos la comunidad de intereses entre los profesionales del inglés, y fomentando la investigación y el debate en las distintas áreas de nuestra disciplina.

La revista quiere ser un foro abierto, especialmente para el profesorado y los investigadores de nuestro ámbito natural de influencia, cuyas colaboraciones tendrán preferencia para su publicación, sin menoscabo de buscar también la conexión con esferas regionales, nacionales e internacionales. De aquí se sigue que está abierta, como se muestra en este nuestro primer número, a colaboradores de otras universidades e instituciones educativas tanto nacionales como internacionales. Y todo

ello en el cuádruple dominio en que se desglosa más comúnmente nuestro objeto de estudio: didáctica, lingüística, literatura y cultura.

En cuanto a los artículos, es conveniente hacer notar que podrán ser el resultado de una investigación inédita, el fruto de experiencias realizadas en el aula, o reflexiones personales sobre posicionamientos metodológicos o doctrinales de diferentes autores. A este respecto queremos hacer hincapié en que se publicarán las posibles coincidencias, apostillas y réplicas a que pudieran dar lugar las distintas colaboraciones, teniendo como único límite el tono de respeto y la fundamentación razonada de la crítica. En la misma línea anunciamos que, hecha la salvaguarda correpondiente a la necesaria variedad y diversidad a que aspira esta publicación, se tendrá en cuenta como un criterio de prioridad la continuidad temática con artículos previamente publicados.

A partir de los próximos números, que aparecerán con una periodicidad semestral, habrá una sección de cartas a los editores, en el caso de que se reciban comentarios sobre los artículos, así como otra dedicada a la reseña de libros y revistas dentro del ámbito de interés de nuestros lectores.

Anhelamos que la revista sea un instrumento adecuado de reflexión teórica y aplicación práctica para los docentes e investigadores en general. Tanto los unos como los otros quedan desde este momento invitados a colaborar en ella y a darle la difusión que esperamos merecer.

El editor.

AMERICAN HUNGER: SOCIETY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN AMERICA

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Since the mid-1950s, when it first took shape, criticism on autobiography has proliferated, despite the fact that there is little agreement about how to define or delimit the genre. Etymologically, the word autobiography means «self» «life» «writing,» of course, but, practically, each derived part of the word is a problem. «Writing» might seem like the most straightforward of the words, until, for example, one begins to consider oral narratives or «as told to» narratives. One of the best and most famous American autobiographies, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, was not written by Malcolm X at all, but was told by him to Alex Haley. Is it an autobiography? Malcolm X thought so. The notion of «auto» in autobiography suggests, as I say, «self» or «selfhood.» It would seem to imply that the written or oral narrative is told by one self about that same self. In another interesting and famous narrative, Anne Bradstreet's seventeenth-century letter «To my Dear Children,» however, the author insists that, though she is the subject of the narrative, she is not the focus or the hero: «I have not studied in this you read,» she

writes, «to show my skill, but to declare the truth, not to set forth myself, but the glory of God» (189). Is her narrative an autobiography? Yes, according to many readers of that narrative (see, for example, Mason). The third word, «life,» would seem straightforwardly to refer to lived experiences. Auto-»bio»-graphies are about the lived experiences of the author/actor. But what do we mean by lived experiences? Do we mean external events: schooling, marriage, career, and so on? Do we mean facts? Or, do we mean internal events—intellectual growth, spiritual struggles, feelings, emotions, and ideas? Thomas Jefferson's *Memoirs* sticks only to external events and Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* to internal ones. Are both of those narratives autobiographies? Probably so.

The genre of autobiography is a relatively recent phenomenon in Western culture, dating back only to the seventeenth century as an emergent genre and to the early nineteenth century as a fully formed genre. By definition, an autobiography is not, as a dictionary might tell us, simply any work written by one person which tells that life story of that person. An autobiography, I would argue, is *any work written or told by one person which struggles to tell the story of how that person came to be an independent, often original, agent.* Thus, for example, the many hundreds of spiritual conversion narratives, like Anne Bradstreet's, which were written in the 17th and 18th centuries are not autobiographies, since they uniformly tell the story of how the narrator gave up selfhood to be fully subsumed as an agent of Christ or God. Though the author may have to struggle in those narratives to overcome the sins of the self—desire, passion, greed, sinfulness, and so on—the author consistently moves away from both sins and selfhood. In autobiography, by contrast, the author struggles to move toward an understanding or comprehension of him or herself, even though in the end that struggle may not be successful.

In Western culture, as I say, the belief that ordinary selves were valuable for some intrinsic or inner quality and were capable of unique and original agency dates, in fully realized form, from the period between 1770 and 1830, a period that encompasses both the American and French Revolutions, as well as profound shifts in manufacturing, economics, and demography. I am not the first critic to note that the word

«autobiography» was not used in English until 1809, and was not used as the title of an original personal narrative until 1834 (see Cox 14). Words are invented by cultures when a need for them arises; and «autobiography» was invented in the early nineteenth century to accommodate the ideas about independent and unique selfhood that had been slowly developing for several hundred years.

These remarks preface my discussion of four particular American autobiographies because, having defined autobiography in the way that I have—as a particular invention of modern, Western society—I want to show how the theoretical ideal of creating a self which is independent and original is complicated in particular autobiographies by social and historical issues involving race, class, and gender. What I will be arguing, quite simply, is that in colonial America and in the United States the belief that selves can, at some point in time, be independent and original could over the years be maintained only by a few white, male writers who were able to ignore the social pressures of race, class, and gender. For black writers, for lower class writers, and for women, the fiction that we are free and independent social agents simply cannot be maintained. Social reality hurt too much to believe otherwise.

I choose as my examples four autobiographies, one each from the four centuries of Anglo-American, North American settlement: Mary Rowlandson's *The Narrative of the Captivity of Mary Rowlandson* (1682), Benjamin Franklin's *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (wr. 1771-1789), Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854), and Richard Wright's *Black Boy* (1945). Rowlandson's Narrative is intensely conscious of gender, Franklin's of class, and Wright's of race. Thoreau's narrative, significantly, ignores or elides all three concepts.

I

In 1945, Richard Wright published his autobiography, *Black Boy: A Record of Childhood and Youth*. When Wright conceived the project in 1942, he was thirty-four years old and already famous as the author of *Native Son*. The record of his upbringing that he produced in 1942 and 1943 was actually a two-part narrative. Part One was entitled «Black Boy,» and it recorded his experiences in the deep south in the teens and

twenties, until he fled the South for Chicago in 1927. Part Two was entitled «The Horror and the Glory,» and it revealed Wright's experiences in Chicago in the twenties and thirties, particularly his initiation into and then his disaffection with the Communist Party. At the request of his publisher or editor—biographers disagree—Wright withheld Part Two from publication in 1945, though he apparently intended to publish it separately at some later date. It was eventually published after his death in 1977. As originally conceived, however, the entire two-part narrative was to be entitled «American Hunger,» a phrase which ties together two of Wright's major concerns in his autobiography: America or the United States as a social reality, and the physical and intellectual hunger experienced by many of its less fortunate citizens.

Physical hunger, Wright wrote, began for him at the age of four or five: «Hunger stole upon me so slowly that at first I was not aware of what [it] really meant. Hunger had always been more or less at my elbow when I played, but now I began to wake up at night to find hunger standing at my bedside, staring at me gauntly» (21-22). Wright would watch white people eat to contentment, and grow angry. He would watch white people throw good food away in boredom or disdain, and wonder if they were human. Once, at the age of seven, Wright was so hungry that he attempted to sell his dog to a little white girl, only to decide at the last minute that he didn't want his dog to live with white people. A week later his dog was run over by a wagon, and his mother's only remark, as cruel as it seems, was: «You could have had [the money]. But you can't eat a dead dog, can you?» (83).

Physical hunger was omnipresent for blacks in the Jim Crow South, and Wright not only personifies it as a figure of death, «staring at [him] gauntly,» but suggests more indirectly the ways in which it warped his life and the lives of those around him. «Again and again,» he writes, «I vowed that someday I would end this hunger of mine» (145), but he cannot do so because it became, over time, «a vital part of [his] consciousness» (184). Internalizing it, Wright figures his initial physical hunger as an intellectual or spiritual hunger. Accused by his family (strict Seventh-Day Adventists) of being irreligious, Wright remarks: «I knew more than [they] thought I knew about the meaning of religion, the hunger of the human heart for that which is not and can never be,

the thirst of the human spirit to conquer and transcend the implacable limitations of human life» (136). And, much later, as he proposes to flee to Chicago, Wright writes: «I now knew what being a Negro [in America] meant. I could endure the hunger. I had learned to live with hate. But to feel that there were feelings denied me, that the very breath of life itself was beyond my reach, that more than anything else hurt, wounded me. I had a new hunger» (284). This «new» hunger was his desire to read and to write. The «breath of life» that he refers to is not the grace of God sought by his family members, but the feelings and ideas embedded in books: «Whenever any environment had failed to support or nourish me,» Wright points out, «I had clutched at books» (292).

This clutching hunger for books set Wright apart in the American South of the early 20th century, set him apart both from the whites who denied him, among other things, an education and from other blacks who feared that reading would only make the «black boy» unhappy with his fate. «This hunger of mine,» Wright insists, was also an «apartness, [an] eternal difference» which forced him «to live with [other blacks] but not [be a part] of them.» «I had my own strange and separate road» (145), he laments. His only friends, his only nourishment, his only *food*, in the world is books, both those which moved him and those, he hopes, that he can one day write.

Within the American autobiographical tradition, Wright's use of physical hunger as a metaphor for intellectual or spiritual hunger has a long history, perhaps not surprisingly given the depth and persistence of Protestant thinking. In 1682, for example, Mary Rowlandson published her account of her eleven-week captivity among the Narragansett Indians of New England. Rowlandson, who was captured as a minister's wife because the Indians knew they could ransom her back to the settlers, was unprepared for the degradation and physical hunger which faced her in captivity. The Indians who held her, hoping to ramsom her for a few English pounds, lived more miserably than did twentieth-century African-Americans in the Jim Crow South. «The first week of my being among them,» she writes, «I hardly [ate] any thing; the second week I found my stomach grow very faint for want of something; and yet 'twas very hard to get down their filthy trash; but the third week . . . [those «filthy» things] were pleasant and savoury to

my taste» (40). Rowlandson adapts to life among the Indians fairly rapidly; indeed, one of her most admirable traits is her resiliency, her willingness to accept her straightened conditions and make the most of them. Hence, she turns her domestic abilities of sewing and knitting into food, bartering her art for the food that sustains her. «There was a Squaw,» she writes at one point, «who spake to me to make a shirt for her [husband]; for which she gave me a piece of Bear [meat]» (43). For many weeks, as the Narragansetts retreat across New England before their inevitable defeat, Rowlandson steals, begs, barters, and finds her daily bread.

But, like Wright, she finally turns her physical hunger into a metaphor. Looking back on her captivity, Rowlandson remarks that just «the other day I was in the midst of thousands of enemies, and nothing but death [was] before me; it was then hard work to persuade myself that ever I should be satisfied with bread again. But now we are fed with the finest of the Wheat . . . with honey out of the rock . . . [with] the fatted calf» (64). Converted by God's astonishing power, Rowlandson comes to realize that physical hunger is but a metaphor for a spiritual hunger which can only be satisfied by the Christ who, in Rowlandson's mind, offers Himself in word and deed as living bread.

Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, written at three different moments in the years before and after the American Revolution, is perhaps the seminal American autobiography written by a white man. Yet here, too, hunger operates as a central metaphor for the narrator's less-tangible desires. In Part One of the *Autobiography*, Franklin points out that he was «born and bred» in «Poverty and Obscurity» (3), that he «was the youngest Son of the youngest Son for 5 generations back» (5), and that his father withdrew him from school at the age of ten in order to «fix [his Inclination] on some Trade or other» (12-13). In other words, by birth, by patrimony, and by education, Franklin was from the lower- or working-class. Yet, for reasons that he—like Richard Wright many years later—finds difficult to articulate, Franklin develops what he calls a «Bookish Inclination» (13), a love of and facility for reading and writing that imprints his personality, first, on the minds of others and, second, on the printed pages of newspapers, magazines, and books throughout the eighteenth century.

As an indentured servant, however, Franklin has little money with which to purchase books. (Remembering that fact in his twenties, Franklin initiates subscription libraries for the working classes, an innovation which, he points out proudly in his seventies, led to «common [American] Tradesmen and Farmers [becoming] as intelligent as most Gentlemen from other Countries» [71].) Note, however, what he does to gain access to books. Chancing to read a book on vegetarianism, Franklin adopts a meatless diet; then, he proposes to his brother, who is also his master, that he will board himself for half the money the brother is currently paying for his board. Franklin knows that without meat in his diet he can live more cheaply. «I presently found,» he says, «that I could save half what he paid me. This was an additional Fund for buying Books» (17). Books here are a kind of food—not the daily bread, but the daily meat for Franklin. Like money in a bank or like capital, books create more books. A book on vegetarianism not only changes Franklin's behavior—books have real and actual power in Franklin's mind—it permits him to buy and read other books, a regenerative cycle of growth and progress that ends only with Franklin's death . . . and even then goes on in the minds of Franklin's *audience*, should they, too, be affected, as Franklin hopes they will, by his story.

Another white male autobiographer, writing in the 1840s and 1850s, Henry David Thoreau, began life with many of the advantages that Franklin lacked, including leisure time in his adolescence and a Harvard education. Recounting his «experiment» (83) of living, as he says, «deliberately» (135) at Walden Pond in the years from 1845 to 1847, Thoreau points out that he had reduced and economized the necessary elements of his physical existence to four items: food, fuel, clothing, and shelter. He talks at length in the narrative about food: about tending his beans, about serving dinner to a few guests in his cabin, about the cost of molasses and dried apples, about making unleavened bread in the Indian method. «I am glad,» he remarks at one point, «to hear of experiments [like that of] . . . a young man [who] tried for a fortnight to live on hard, raw corn on the ear, using his teeth for all mortar» (108). «Most of the luxuries, and many of the so-called comforts of life,» he insists, «are [after all] not only not indispensable, but positive hinderances to the elevation of mankind» (56). For himself, he asserts,

he «can live on board nails. If [we] cannot understand that, [we] cannot understand much that [he has] to say» (108).

What is it that Thoreau is willing to trade sophisticated food—and the time and money spent in preparing it—*for*? What are we to understand in his willingness to live on «board nails»? «With a little more deliberation in the choice of their pursuits,» he writes in the chapter called «Reading,» «all men would perhaps become essentially students and observers» (144). They would become readers and, perhaps, writers, «sustained» (145) by the words of orators, poets, and historians. «How many a man,» Thoreau exclaims, «has dated a new era of his life from the reading of a book» (153). Like Rowlandson and Franklin and Wright, Thoreau possesses a hunger that is much more than physical; it is intellectual and spiritual.

The rhetorical move I have been discussing is made by numerous American autobiographers, including, to name just a few, Ethan Allen, John Fitch, Frederick Douglass, Francis Parkman, Malcolm X, Norman Mailer, and Maxine Hong Kingston. Several aspects of it interest me. First, the physical hunger always takes place against the backdrop of plenty. For Rowlandson, the free, white English settlers have a physical surfeit which they do not appreciate; their spiritual senses are dulled by the food and tobacco and beer which is available to them. For Franklin, the more well-to-do English colonists have plenty of food—and plenty of books. Many of them cannot appreciate the power of books and language precisely because they are physically content. For Thoreau, most people in society—the «mass of men,» he says famously—»lead lives of quiet desperation» (50), working most of the hours of the day so that they can, successfully, he notes, get enough to eat during the remaining few waking hours. For Wright, it is white society that has enough to eat. Time and time again, he watches as white people eat, enjoy, share, or throw away food that is denied to him. In one scene, he watches in disbelief as his employer comes down to breakfast.

> «What the hell,» he snarled. «Every morning it's the-se damn eggs for breakfast.»
>
> «Listen, you sonofabitch,» the woman said, sitting too, «you don't have to eat 'em.»
>
> «You might try serving some dirt,» he said, and for-ked up [some] bacon.

Commenting on the episode, Wright says, simply, «I felt that I was dreaming» (170).

Wright feels like he is dreaming because, metaphorically, he, like his autobiographical antecedents, *is* dreaming. This is the second aspect ·of this thematic and rhetorical configuration that interests me. Mary Rowlandson begins her seventeenth-century captivity narrative by recounting how the Indians attacked «about Sun-rising. Hearing the noise of some guns,» she says, «we looked out» (31). What they see in looking out the window—what she *sees*, as the privileged survivor who, quoting Job, *«escaped alone to tell the news»*—is a nightmare vision of blood and violence and death, a vision which she willingly chooses to enter, even though she had often previously said that she «should chuse rather to be killed by them than [be] taken alive» (33). Immersed in a violent dream world in which existence has been reduced to a brutal, animalistic hunger to live, Rowlandson eventually comes to see that dreaming is the natural condition of mankind. «The Lord,» she says, «hath shewed me the vanity of these outward things, that they are the *vanity of vanities, and vexation of spirit*; that they are but a shadow, a blast, a bubble, and things of continuance; that we must rely on God himself, and our whole dependence must be upon him» (65). We are all living amid the dreams and shadows of human existence, Rowlandson asserts, but only those who learn to look up to God—not «out» into the world around us—see it for what it is.

For Franklin, the writer who made famous the saying, «Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise,» dreaming is simply a waste of time. In the list of virtues which he develops and practices in Part Two of his *Autobiography*, he includes the virtue of «industry»: «Lose no time,» he writes. «Be always employ'd in something useful.—Cut off all unnecessary Actions» (85). Most people, Franklin suspects, live their lives in one kind of dream or another: «metaphysical reasonings,» for example, which lead to theories untenable and useless in real life; or the Biblical «Revelation,» which, he says, «had ... no weight with me as such» (59); or, more often, gluttony and intemperance, which dull one's senses. He recounts how, while in London as a young man, he tried to reform the appetites of the printers at Watts' Printing House. They ate, he reports, «muddling Breakfast[s] of Beer and Bread and

Cheese,» while he ate porridge and water for half the price. Those who followed his example «kept their Heads clearer»; those who did not «continu'd sotting with Beer all day» and were often «out of Credit» to support their intemperance (47-48). Franklin's *Autobiography* is very much the story of a young man who remains alert and wide-awake—and hence prospers—amidst a world of dullards, slackards, and dreamers.

To Thoreau, most men are asleep. «We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake,» he insists, «not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn, which does not forsake us in our soundest sleep» (134). The allurements of 19th-century society lull men to sleep. Elevation and awakening are achieved by Thoreau in his constant «experiments» with life, of which his two-year sojourn at Walden Pond was only the most famous example. In his withdrawal from society at Walden, Thoreau, like a caterpillar, gestates into a new being who transcends the stifling conditions of contemporary life.

Richard Wright comes to consciousness, as Mary Rowlandson awakened one morning, in a hell, a nightmare landscape in which people of a certain skin color are denied civil rights and simple decency. White society denies him and other blacks food, education, housing, and a career, as well as many other intangibles, such as hope, respect, and equality. But early on white people sense something different in Wright: «My words,» he says at one point, «were [often] innocent enough, but they indicated, it seemed, a consciousness on my part that infuriated white people.» He knows that, unlike other blacks, he has not mastered and cannot master the racial dynamics: «I had to keep remembering what others took for granted; I had to think out what others felt» (223). Because he has to think about his behavior—pause to make the correct move—he is punished time and time again by whites. But he is, as well, brought to a higher pitch of consciousness. He rejects the several options open to black males in the American South—as an Uncle Tom, as a black militant, as a drug user, as a professional—precisely because his «reading had created a vast sense of distance between me and the world in which I lived» (287). The world around him, black and white, was short-sighted, materialistic, and afraid. Wright awakens, in his sense of a «new hunger,» into a higher level of self- and social-consciousness.

II

All four of these authors, then, adopt hunger as a metaphor, and rework it in the course of their narratives to refer to spiritual or intellectual deprivation. This rhetorical move, I pointed out earlier, is common to a number of American autobiographies. It is, no doubt, a natural rhetorical move for writers within a Christian tradition, alluding to Christ's admonition that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. It may even be a universal rhetorical move, deriving from man's awareness of his fragile physical state in a harsh world. Yet its use within a specifically American social context seems quite ironic. I emphasize both words—American and so-cial—because, having performed some close reading of those four narratives, I want to end this paper by discussing these four works in their social contexts, asking one question of them all: what social «use» did each author imagine his or her self-life-writing to serve?

Mary Rowlandson, writing in the seventeenth century, did not have the luxury of speaking entirely for herself. The «Preface» to her *Narrative*, signed «Per Amicum,» or «by a friend,» is careful to note that she did not speak in public of her own free will. He gives three reasons why she should tell her story: her friends decided for her that her story «should [not] be hid from present and future Generations»; her husband, a minister, was a public man and hence her life is closely «related to' [his]»; and, finally, God seemed to be speaking through her life. «Excuse her then,» Per Amicum says, «if she come thus into the public» (29-30).

Per Amicum is extraordinarily sensitive to the fact that Rowlandson—a private, domestic woman in a society run by men—is speaking in public, speaking out of place, as it were. He insists, nevertheless, that her story is universal: «Reader . . . from hence lay up something from the experience of another» (31), he writes. But Rowlandson's *Narrative*, though it aspires to be a general message for all members of Puritan society in New England, repeatedly returns to its origins in a *woman*'s experience: she is a mother who, even in captivity, must take care of her children; she is a woman who survives amongst the Indians by sewing and knitting, women's activities; she is a racist woman who imagines, wrongly, that the Indians will rape her (44); and

she is a wife who is returned to her husband who, not ironically, gave her the value that made her worth ransoming in the first place. She can't, in other words, forget that she is a woman, as much as Per Amicum would like her to. Her *Narrative*, though it may have hoped to be universal, records a woman's struggle to survive, and Rowlandson recognizes in the end that despite her best efforts at freeing herself only the ransom money delivered by two men can actually do so, can actually «free» her (57). Agency then, as well as agency in speaking in public later, are denied her.

Benjamin Franklin, by the time he writes his *Autobiography*, literally *was* an agent, acting on behalf of the colonies and states in England and France, voting for constituents who elected him, and authoring a vast number of letters, satires, pamphlets, essays, and newspaper articles. Yet, Franklin insists in his self-biography that he never acted alone, or originally, or independently. While an indentured servant, he imitates works like Joseph Addison's *The Spectator*, trying to improve his writing (15-16); while a young man, he imitates Daniel Defoe's *Essay on Projects*, trying to improve himself and society (13); while a young businessman, he initiates clubs and newspapers—social organs, both—trying to improve himself and his business (61-63); and while a scientist, he imitates and improves experiments performed first on the European continent. Franklin in *The Autobiography* is, in great measure, who he is because of society. Of one young friend who runs off to London, Franklin remarks simply that, «having no Friend to advise him, he fell into bad Company.» He soon sank into oblivion (54). A man can't rise out of the lower class with a «friend,» without the help of society.

Franklin's insistence on sociability results from his sensitivity to class: he was, after all, an indentured servant as a young man, legally bound to another person who at best ignored him, and at worst beat him. «I fancy his harsh and tyrannical Treatment of me,» Franklin remarks without understatement, «might [have been] a means of impressing me with that Aversion to arbitrary Power that has stuck to me thro' my whole Life» (20-21). His *Autobiography* shows how Franklin freed himself from power through the help of others, and then how he later frees others with his help. «Gentlemen, we must now all hang together,» Franklin said famously at the Second Continental Congress,

«or we shall most assuredly hang separately» (Franklin, *Works* 1: 407). His narrative is not the story of how one man became an original agent or self, but the story—as one of its first admirers noted—of «how little necessary all origin is to happiness, virtue, or greatness» (76). It is a perfect story, the friend goes on to say, for «a *rising* people» (74). It is the story of a rising people, a people who, following Franklin, would insist that class was not a social reality because any man could receive the help of society provided he was worthy of it. The social use of Franklin's Autobiography was, in short, to insist that society—comprised solely of white males in his account—could be improved through revolutions in thought, in technology, in science, and in the social worth of all men who contribute to the community's well-being.

The self about whom Richard Wright writes is similarly unable to act independently, though in Wright's case he clearly desires to do so. At the very end of *Black Boy*, Wright comes to realize how much he was shaped, though «warped» might be a better word, by his environment: «deep down,» he says, «I knew that I could never really leave the South, for my feelings had already been formed by the South, for there had been slowly instilled into my personality and consciousness, black though I was, the culture of the South» (294). His racial consciousness teaches him that all people in society are shaped, if not produced, by patterns of thought, a lesson that of course made him open to Communist thinking when he finally did escape north. In reading and writing, he discovers tools with which to combat social prejudices and mores, but even here he cannot act independently, imitating H. L. Mencken's and other modernists' attempt to rip the fictions from the modern world. Even a naive «black boy,» Wright tells us implicitly, cannot be so naive as to think he could live freely, independently, and originally.

Let me then return to my definition of autobiography as «any work written or told by one person which struggles to tell the story of how that person came to be an independent, often original, agent.» Rowlandson, Franklin, and Wright *do* struggle to tell such a story; they are, rightfully, proud of having surmounted tremendous difficulties, and they are, rightfully, proud to have created complex narratives about that achievement. They want to be the agents or actors of their own success stories. But gender, class, and race force each of them to see that their

world is created by a powerful group of people who are different from them. In such a situation, they can't imagine in the end that they are independent agents. They are, they realize, subjects, subjected to someone else's desires, whether that was a husband and other male governors (as in the case of Rowlandson), tyrannous upper-class fathers and brothers and kings (as in the case of Franklin), or prejudiced whites and blacks (as in the case of Wright).

The only autobiographer to escape this quandary and to assert, confidently, his own agency and independence is Henry David Thoreau in *Walden*. And I take his narrative to be typical of a number of autobiographies by white males, such as those by Francis Parkman and P. T. Barnum. In various ways, Thoreau denies that gender, race, and class exist. For example, he pictures himself as a housewife in the narrative, tending house and planting a kitchen garden and cooking dinner. See, he seems to say, housekeeping is not such an onerous task. Or, in another example, he makes this remark, which belies his efforts later in life on behalf of African-Americans: «I sometimes wonder that we can be so frivolous . . . as to attend to the gross but somewhat foreign form of servitude called Negro Slavery, there are so many keen and subtle masters that enslave both north and south» (49). Thoreau, I want to insist, had the *luxury* of picturing reality in these ways. By being male, by being white, and by finding ways around owning things, Thoreau can deny that gender, race, and class are restrictions upon the individual will. He can insist that he acts independently and originally in *Walden* precisely because he thinks outside of those categories.

I don't mean to denigrate Thoreau in this. He is a great author who can teach us much. I mean merely to point out that he had the luxury of not having to *struggle* to tell his story of himself as an independent, original agent. He believed he was such an agent, and could continue to do so because American society saw him, theoretically saw any white man, as, well, as a generic «man,» as a person, as an individual. The fact that he retreated two miles from a town called Concord to live by himself in isolation from others is merely a metaphor for something Rowlandson, Franklin, and Wright—any minority in that place called the United States—could never do: see himself or herself as independent, original, self-authoring. It is no wonder that only Thoreau

is able to satisfy his American hunger in his autobiography, in part by re-imagining America in a way that was impossible for someone like Wright: «the only true America,» Thoreau says, «is that country where you are at liberty to pursue such a mode of life as may enable you to without [superfluities], and where the state does not endeavor to compel you to sustain [its worst actions]» (252-253). Only by having «liberty,» by being «in» that state and, hence, having the luxury of withdrawing from it, can Thoreau imagine, even for a moment, that America offers any of its citizens—male or female, white or black, rich or poor—the right to eat the food that sustains our bodies and read the words that sustain our spirits.

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AN APPROACH TO THE USE OF POETRY IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: ITS DEVELOPMENT INTO A PERFORMANCE: A POETRY READING

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Introducción

This article looks at one particular approach to the use of poetry in the language classroom. It is an account of how the idea developed from the starting point of using a variety of different materials, including poems, in the language classroom with the aim of developing students' communicative skills, especially in the areas of speaking and listening.

Contents:

1. Some general comments and reflections on developing speaking and listening skills in the practical classes

2. The development of the approach.

3. The pedagogic considerations involved in adopting such an approach.

4. The Poetry Reading: rationale and organization

5. Some reflections and considerations on the approach.

1. Some general comments and reflections on developing speaking and listening skills in the practical classes

The students referred to here were in the second year of their studies in English Philology. The first part of this account deals with some general aspects of the practical lessons in that year, and follows through into a narrower focus on activities based on poetry in the following year. This should not be interpreted as meaning that activities based on poetry are only suitable for students at University level. Poetry provides a rich source of material, ideas and starting points for communicative activities for students of all levels of attainment.

One aim of the practical classes was to provide a variety of different activities through which students could practise English and develop their speaking, listening and communicative skills in general. This aim depends very heavily on another; that of developing and building confidence in students in their ability to use spoken English as the means of communication. Some students are naturally confident and do not mind speaking English aloud. Some may feel inhibited for various reasons, some may only consider their English as something which they read and manipulate on paper in order to pass exams, but can generally be encouraged to participate.

In an attempt to find materials which would lead to an active use of English and which would encourage real interaction through pair work, group work and whole class feedback and discussion a wide variety of materials and activities was used. Inevitably some activities appeal more to some groups of students than others and are therefore more motivating than others.Whatever the materials used to stimulate interaction activities, students should be encouraged to use English as the medium through which the activity is set up and carried out.

For example: In a listening activity where students listen to a recorded tape to find specific information in order to fill in a form. The first time students listen they should be encouraged just to listen and not to concern themselves with actually filling in the form at this stage. They can note down relevant information if they wish, but after the first listening students in pairs or small groups can compare what they heard or what they thought they heard, thus extending the pool of knowledge

and possibly helping weaker students by exposing them to a word or phrase that they missed when they listened. This part of the activity can be done as far as possible in English, and if necessary students can previously be reminded of the type of language, e.g. functions and specific vocabulary, that they need to carry out this part of the activity. For the second listening students are then prepared, with a more concrete idea of what to listen for, and what to confirm or reject. The discussion process can be repeated as necessary depending on the degree of difficulty of the listening exercise. Pairs can compare their answers with other pairs, and in a whole class activity possible solutions can be discussed and written on the board.

Two main positive points arise from this approach:

1. It helps to lessen the feeling that listening exercises provoke in students i.e. that they consitute a kind of test or examination, and that the task has to be done individually, and which for many students induces panic and consequent impairment of their ability to listen in a relaxed and attentive way.

2. That an activity which superficially appears to involve only the student responding to the recorded material, can in fact become an activity where student / student and student / teacher interaction becomes as important as the listening activity itself.

During the course various activities and materials were dealt with in this interactive way. One area which was worked with was that of poetry. Poetry provides a very fruitful source of material. Maley and Duff (1989) demonstrate many ways in which poetry can be used in the classroom, not from the traditional viewpoint of literary study and analysis, but rather through an approach which demystifies poetry, making it a resource within the reach of students of all levels.

Poetry can be very accessible and relate to student's own experiences. In addition it can be amusing, evocative, poignant and controversial. It can deal with emotive issues and encourage further thought, different interpretations and discussion. It can enrich students' vocabulary, reveal new meanings to words already met, expose students to fa-

miliar structures in context, and provide in context work on pronunciation, to mention just a few advantages of working with poetry.

Reading poems aloud

One short poem , "Mornings", led to discussion of how students could use their voices to effect in the reading of poems in general and this one in particular.

"Mornings"

Rustling sheet,

Shuffling feet,

Creaking bones,

Stifled groans,

Chirping, crowing,

Noses blowing,

Toilets flushing,

Bath taps gushing,

Coffee cups clatter,

Breakfast chatter,

Neighbours singing,

Telephones ringing,

Radios tuning,

Traffic booming,

Motorbikes thrumming,

Power drills drumming

Jet planes thunder -

I just wonder

At the NOISE !

(A.M. The Inward Ear)

Here, words are used to create an image of the day, starting slowly, with muted sounds and building up in speed and volume to a crescendo of a typical day in a busy city. The poem conjures up the images and the sounds, through words which reflect the sounds they describe. It also provides work on phonology with practice in context of consonant clusters, often a difficult area for Spanish speakers, individual sounds and linking phenomena. It also has a strong rhythmic beat, the full effect of which does not become apparent until the poem is read aloud and heard.

Students were given copies of the poem, which they looked at individually. Then in pairs or small groups they discussed problem words and sounds which were fed back to the whole class as necessary. The simple technique of providing a model for students to copy and repeat for themselves until they felt comfortable with it works as well as any other.

Once familiar with the poem, they were asked to work in groups to decide how they might read it. The activity here is student centred, the role of the teacher is as an advisor, and source of ideas and suggestions when necessary. Some students take naturally to this type of activity others may be less keen. Those who have enjoyed the activity can be encouraged to share their interpretation with the rest of the class. This involves not only deciding how the poem will be read but reading it and projecting it so that others can hear it.

The different interpretations were then discussed. How students created the effect of the build up of noise, speed and stress suggested by the poem. Also the different effects of choral speaking, individual speakers taking turns, etc.,

Different interpretations should be accepted without value judgements. However, students proud of their performance often wanted the class to say which they thought was the best.

Writing poems and speaking them

After working with simple sound poems such as the one mentioned above, students gain confidence when they realise that the structure of

poems does not necessarily need to be complex in order to work and a natural follow up was to encourage students to write their own poems, and if they wished, read them aloud. Plenty sources of ideas can be found which provide examples of poems which can be used as models. For first attempts at writing poems in English, forms which proved fruitful were " thin "poems and "sound" poems.[1] Haiku[2] can also provide a powerful stimulus and inspiration for students and although the strict form is difficult to achieve, it is not necessary to stick rigidly to the classical form.

2. Development of the approach

Second year students had two hours of "practicas" a week, but this was reduced in the third year to one hour per group. One hour provides very little time to indulge in more creative activities, and the focus has to be more sharply on the course requirements, i.e the language dealt with in theory lessons, and listening and dictation exercises.

Nevertheless a considerable number of third year students who had worked with poetry in the second year were keen and interested enough in the topic, to be willing to devote an extra hour a week of their time, which did not form part of their official timetable, to this purpose. So an hour a week was then fixed for this optional, non obligatory class.

A surprisingly large number of students attended the initial meeting and attendance stayed high throughout.The students were given a questionnaire to fill in, which was designed to help them clarify their own feelings about poetry and also to provide me with some insights into their previous experiences of working with poetry.

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[1] For "thin" poems see: Carter & Long 1987. For "Sound" poems see: Lindstromberg.S (ed) and for a variety of starting points for exploiting poetry in general see: Maley & Duff 1989

[2] Haiku is a Japanese verse form consisting of seventeen syllables in three lines of five, seven and five syllables respectively. Such a poem expresses a single idea, image or feeling and is a kind of picture in words. Here is an example by a western poet, James Kirkup.

In the amber dusk
Each island dreams its own night.
The sea swarms with gold.

From this informal questionnaire the students showed an interest in poetry in general, and even though they said they did not know much about either English or Spanish poetry, they expressed a wish to broaden their knowledege and experience of poetry.

The next logical step in the process then was to provide students with access to a variety of poems of different styles and periods so that they might be given the opportunity to find poems they liked and could respond to without too much difficulty. Time restricted the possibilities of setting. If individual students were required to go away and look up poems they liked, the process may have gone on indefinitely.

The way it was dealt with was this. A large selection of poems from different sources and from different periods and styles was collected together and presented to the students. There is, of course the inevitable tendency on the part of the teacher, to choose poems to which they personally are attracted. At this stage there was no attempt to put restrictions on style, period or themes of the poems, but an attempt was made to include in the collection poems which were not necessarily personal favourites of the teacher or to which the teacher was particularly attracted.

From various sources, a collection of poems was made and these, together with the books from which they had been taken, were made available to the students.

Students were then asked to browse through the poems and to select those which for one reason or another, they were attracted to. In order to encourage reflection and discussion students were permitted to work individually or in pairs or small groups .

Reading a poem quietly to oneself gives us a chance to get to know it a little, to bring our own associations to it, but for students unfamiliar with the material, to be confronted with a sizeable collection of poems could be a daunting experience and will be made more manageable by being able to share the experience with another student or students. Students did in fact naturally form small groups .

This process involved being allowed time and space to respond. At this stage the emphasis was on the student's own initial reactions. Those initial reactions sometimes led them to re-read again and again poems they felt themselves drawn to, and intrigued or puzzled by.

We do not always understand everything about a poem even in our native language at a first reading and indeed may never completely "understand" a poem, but this does not mean that that we cannot respond to it, recognize some quality in it or be drawn to it for one reason or another.

> "*Genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood*" *T.S.Eliot*
>
> "*Poetry makes me remember the things I thought I never knew*" *(Unknown source)*

For students reading poems which are not in their native language then, understanding may be much more difficult. New or obscure vocabulary provides problems, unfamiliar structures and stylistic devices are additional factors apart from the allusions and implications which may be confusing and even incomprehensible at times. Nevertheless, one is often able to say "I like that poem", even if one has not grasped exactly the meaning of every word or every nuance.We may feel drawn to a poem for many different reasons. The associations, memories or images that are triggered off in us, the sounds of words, or groups of words. We may be drawn to certain rhythms and sound patterns.We may not be able to say exactly why we like a poem when we first meet it, but we usually have some feeling for it and know if we do. If we are given time to browse and freedom to choose we may perhaps find something we like or which we can relate to in some way.

> "*The simple way to arrive at an appreciation of poetry is to read it - and then to read it again*". *Desmond Flower*

It is important to mention here that the poems were presented to the students for them to react to on a purely intuitive level without demanding of them any type of literary analysis, nor was it an aim of

the sessions that students should become familiar with, for example, the terminology for describing the different types of rhythm and the metre of poems.

At a later stage it may have been useful to classify a poem according to the metre the poet chose to achieve a certain rhythm in a poem, but this was not the aim of these poetry sessions.

Inevitably students wanted and needed explanations of vocabulary and expressions of meanings and connotations. They wanted to know how a word should be pronounced, where to put the stress on a word, which words should be stressed and which not, etc.

If students are working on poems they have selected themselves then they have a stronger interest and need in finding out the meanings of words new to them, or new meanings of words with which they are already familiar.

There are many ways of dealing with these needs. One is to give definitions, suggest meanings, try to explain an expression, to demonstrate the correct pronunciation of a word and write up the phonetic transcription on the board and so on. This can be done in response to individual or group requests, and if relevant to the whole class, then the attention of the entire class is required so that everyone can benefit from the shared information.

Another way of helping students to understand a poem, is by reading it aloud to them. This will not explain every word and every connotation nor necessarily the poet's intentions, nor literary and historical references, but it may give students a feeling of the poem that is distinct from its existence as words printed on a page. We perhaps tend to overlook the fact that most poems are written with the intention that they be heard. A sensitive reading, not over-dramatized, can breathe life into the words on the page.

> *"Poetry, like music is to be heard. It deals in sound,*
> *long sounds and short sounds, heavy beats and light*
> *beats, the tone relation of vowels, the relations of*

consonants to one another, which are like instrumen-
tal colour in music. Poetry lies dead on the page,until
some voice brings it to life, just as music on the stave
is no more than instructions to the player. A skilled
musician can imagine the sound , more or less,and
a skilled reader can try to hear, mentally, what his
eyes see in print ; but nothing will satisfy either of
them until his ears hear it as real sound in the air.
Poetry must be read aloud" Basil Bunting.

It may perhaps be an exaggeration to say that all poetry should be read aloud, but certainly most poetry is meant to be heard. Some of the intrinsic elements of poems, e.g. rhythms, sound patterns, expression and pace, etc., only become apparent when a poem is read aloud. In addition meanings and nuances can sometimes be revealed, and one may become aware of a different interpretation or connotation by hearing the poem. Enjambment and the running on of lines, read correctly and heard, can help to reveal the sense of a group of words not always obvious by a silent reading of the poem.

It is important that students do not feel that they have to understand every word in order to be able to enjoy a poem. Sometimes the general feel of a poem, its sounds and rhythms, its personal associations, memories generated, opinions expressed, feelings of recognition provoked, be they sometimes vague and undefinable, all or any of these elements may contribute to our enjoyment of a poem. Later one can go on to look into it in more depth, check meanings and references.

We often grow to love that with which we become familiar through frequent exposure. Consider young children and the story they want to hear over and over again, despite the fact that they perhaps know it by heart. Often it is because they were attracted to it in the first place. Finding out more about a poem and even finding that bits have stuck in our memories, make it a part of us and our experience. A combination of approaches would seem to be the most suitable way of dealing with conveying meaning, but the importance of letting students hear

the poem read aloud should not be underestimated. In the sessions we are describing this became an important element of the student's exploration of the poems they were offered, and frequently they asked to hear a poem read several times.

3. The pedagogic considetations

The pedagogic considerations of an approach such as this to the use of poetry in the classroom have very positive points in its favour.

3.1. A communicative and interactive approach

Although the initial exposure to the poems can be experienced on a personal level, as mentioned above, and it is important that this should be so, in a setting where an important aim is to develop students' communicative skills, this approach also provides a rich area in which real communication and interaction in the target langauge can take place.

From initial individual work we can move on into pair and group work. This in turn can lead to whole class feedback, when students are becoming familiar and confident with the material through the previous preparatory discussion. Such an approach can encourage different opinions and interpretations and foster a relaxed working atmosphere where students are more likely to feel receptive towards the material presented to them.

3.2. Poetry provides an ideal meeting point with literature

Students can experience work from different periods, different writers, different styles in manageable and digestible form, without the need to isolate a passage from its context, or set long term reading tasks, as with novels and plays. Its completeness, perhaps in only a few lines can make it an attractive, workable and memorable source of authentic material.

3.3. Vocabulary and language enrichment

Through poetry we can expose students to rich sources of vocabulary, and to previously unknown uses and connotations.We also provide students with real examples of the flexiblity of the English language, which may go some way to redressing the balance for students who have been led to believe that there is one "correct " way of saying something, which may serve a useful purpose when answering examination papers, but which can lead to lack of confidence at experimenting with language and taking risks when attempting to express themselves.

3.4 "Affective" materials

Poetry often has the power to encapsulate feelings and memories and trigger off powerful associations acutely and in few words. Precisely these qualities make poetry an ideal resource if we wish students to think and talk about *their* own feelings, emotions, memories and experiences and perhaps compare their reactions to those of their fellow students or the author of the poem. When we ask students to invest something of themselves in an activity the task usually becomes more meaningful and the language used more memorable. This is another reason why poetry can be such a powerful resource in the language classroom.

3.5. Phonology

Poetry provides an excellent means of working on phonology in a natural context. Here again with the emphasis on hearing, and reading or speaking a poem. Elements can be worked on explicitly or simply provide students with the opportunity to listen and absorb, for example, the rhythm of spoken English, exemplified naturally as an intrinsic quality of most poetry. It is perhaps in the rhythms of English, characterized by its perceived isochronous beat produced by the fairly regular occurrence of stressed and weak forms, which leads to English being defined as a "stressed - timed" language, and which can provide problems for the speakers of so called "syllable - timed" langauges. Poetry

provides a valuable resource for working on such areas. In addition it provides opportunities to work on intonation patterns, strong and weak forms and pronunciation, all in context.

4. The poetry reading: a public performance

Having spent time listening to, getting to know and like selected poems, then becoming confident enough to read aloud poems within the group, led the more daring students to feel that they would like to challenge themselves further by preparing a programme of poetry which would then be read to a larger audience.

The basic material was already there, and it required individuals to claim a poem, or poems for themselves to work on their production of them, and to provide some shape and cohesion to a selection which had grown from various and seemingly unconnected sources but which for the purposes of a public performance would need to have some form and logic if they were to have a sense of unity and significance as a public performance.

The focus of these poetry sessions then changed. It became necessary to consider how the students could best use their voices if they were going to speak poems aloud to an audience.

The students became super attentive to pronunciation, of deciding where the stress should fall, if and how the meaning changed with a change of stress etc. Decisions such as these, together with the shaping of the programme provided real reason for student interaction.

The students were understandably nervous at the prospect of standing up and speaking or reading poems aloud in English, but those involved took part with enthusiasm, bravely attempting to overcome their apprehensions, and it seemed important to find ways of building their confidence. Knowing the poem was important (not necessarily knowing it by heart), as was feeling confident about how words should be grouped, and being sure about pronunciation. Individual feelings about how the poem should be read were important too. During the sessions preparatory to the performance, some students did ask if they should learn their

poems by heart. This was not encouraged as the implications were then that they should stand up in front of an audience and speak their poem from memory, which seemed to pose an unnecessary burden on students who were already doing something quite challenging in planning to speak English poetry aloud in front of an audience. However, most students did in fact know their poems almost, if not completely by heart, by the time they came to read them aloud. It has been suggested (Mulcahy 1990) that in order to understand as well as possible what the poet intended, and what those words may mean to someone reading them for himself, the ideal would be to learn the poem by heart. Certainly after having worked in the way described above, with the poems selected by this group of students, many of them "possess" forever, the poem they themselves performed and perhaps some of the others worked on by other members of the group as well.

We often used some simple relaxation techniques at the begjnning of poetry reading and practice sessions. These, apart from anything else often make people laugh at first and in so doing release tension and make for a more relaxed atmosphere in general. They also helped to relax students, improve posture and breathing, and also considerably improved their reading aloud, by helping them to project their voices and by having sufficient oxygen in their lungs so that they could group words correctly, and read run on lines without running out of air.

After individual work and reading in small groups, they progressed to reading their poems aloud in front of the whole group.

Several sessions were devoted to this because the students wanted it and suggestions were made, presentations were commented on in a positive way, as was the projection of voices and whether they could be clearly heard at the back of the room. Right from the beginning of their working together in these optional lessons there seemed to be a strong supportive feeling within the group, and this became stronger as they became more involved in the project in hand.

Through group discussion it was decided how the future poetry performance should be organized, the space in which the performance should be given, the length of the performance, if the poems should be

announced by each reader or by a presenter, if music should be incorporated, and all the other practical details.

Finally a date was fixed for the Poetry Reading, and the performance was announced to the public. Before the performance a couple of rehearsals were carried out in the room which was to be used, and students checked that readers were projecting their voices and could be heard from the back of the room. Music was chosen to set the scene and complement the selected poems, and was used to tie the whole performance together.

The students were understandably nervous on the day, but responded well to the challenge,"read" their poems well, and appeared to enjoy the experience. The performance was video-ed. Feedback, both from the audience and the students themselves was positive, and the students suggested that they would like to embark on a more ambitious performance in the next academic year.

Reflections and considerations

This approach, which allowed students to respond to poems initially in a fairly intuitive way, and then by aiding understanding by hearing the poems read aloud, by encouraging personal choices and interpretations and by giving them opportunities to improve their pronunciation, seemed to build their confidence in speaking English and proved a surprsingly popular activity, considering generally held beliefs about the difficulty of working with poetry.

It was interesting to observe that some of the students who participated in the poetry reading were those who initially, had least confidence in their ability to speak English, and who would never have imagined themselves standing up in public, and reading English poetry aloud in front of an audience.

The whole experience provided a genuine, interactive use of the target language, both in the preliminary stages and in the stages leading up to and culminating in the poetry performance and its organization.

A public performance is not a necessary culmination to this way of working with poems, but in the case of this particular group, it provided an extra challenge and motivation, allowing them to communicate their feelings and responses of the poems to an audience. No less important is the strong feeling of comradeship and working together as a group towards a common aim, which often comes about from this type of experience and which can be so rewarding.

This way of working with poems in the language classroom has many possibilities and variations and could go some way to bringing poetry within the reach of more students, whilst removing it from its pedestal, where it sits with its label of "difficult, unapproachable and only suitable for students at advanced levels". Not so, for the range and choice of material is vast with plenty to suit and interest students of all levels of attainment in English. In this particular project students were exposed to a variety of styles and subject matter and through direct experience now know that not all poems are by definition long, difficult, boring and unfathomable.

Of course, this approach in no way replaces the more traditional literary analytical approach necessary for advanced studies of English, rather, it may be seen as way of encouraging personal responses and enjoyment of poetry. It may be an end in itself or may lead on to a deeper study of poetry. Whichever, I hope that it might leave these students with pleasant memories for them of what poetry can be, that it is not something to be avoided because of its difficulty, and hopefully to give them the confidence to use poetry in future learning and teaching situations in which they may find themselves.

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To give an idea of the variety of poems worked with during the project, the names of the poets whose work was read in the Poetry Reading included the following:

> Richard Bach, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, James Berry, Charles Causley, T.S.Eliot, Vicki Feaver, Adrian Henri, A.E Houseman, Christopher Logue, Rupert Loydell, Derek Mahon. Roger Mc.Gough, Edwin Morgan, Mervyn Peake, Michael Rosen, Mike Starkey, William Shakespeare, William Wordsworth.

LOS NIÑOS OBANYE/ABIKU
EN LA OBRA DE CHINUA ACHEBE Y BEN OKRI

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Abstract

The aim of this essay is to provide information about one of the most fascinating elements of African Religious Beliefs: the existence of a world of spirits moving in a sort of 'interregnus' in which we can find the ogbanje / abiku children. Two Nigerian writers, Chinua Achebe and Ben Okri, offer a literary perspective of this subject. My attempt is to introduce a number of elements that could help us to understand the value and the meaning of the ogbanje / abiku children in Contemporary Nigerian Narrative.

1.Para reseñar el valor de la narrativa nigeriana dentro del panorama de la literatura africana actual convendrá analizar en primer término una doble influencia a la que se acoge la novela africana contemporánea, reconociendo al mismo tiempo que esa doble influencia, en el fondo, no se limita a la literatura, sino que, *mutatis mutandis*, se extiende a cualquier manifestación vital. En primer lugar, la de las leyendas e historias que forman parte de la cultura de transmisión oral de las distintas etnias, transmitidas y preservadas gracias a la memoria de los individuos. Estas manifestaciones culturales dependen de un contacto directo entre los interlocutores, cara a cara, con el que se pretende asegurar también la pervivencia de todo un complejo mundo de costumbres, creencias, técnicas, sentimientos y lazos sociales y familiares. Por ello, las técnicas de transmisión de las leyendas tradicionales están salpicadas de procedimientos textuales destinados a favorecer su memori-

zación. Y ello no sólo por lo que respecta a los recursos formales (ritmo, aliteración, etc.), sino también a determinados elementos de contenido, tales como la ritualización, la incorporación de símbolos fácilmente identificables por la comunidad, y otros. Frente a esta influencia de origen autóctono, nos encontramos, en segundo lugar, una tradición literaria de origen occidental, que se transmite por escrito y para la que el contacto personal es irrelevante. Este foco de influencia, asociada a los medios educativos y a la formación académica que introdujeron los colonizadores, es respónsable asimismo de nuevos elementos culturales, sistemas de valores y actitudes que penetran en las formas de vida de las comunidades indígenas, modificando su equilibrio secular.

En el África colonial la introducción de la literariedad provocó importantes cambios en las culturas tradicionales. Así, produjo un movimiento dentro de la cultura autóctona hacia el interior del individuo, de forma que se incrementó lo individual en detrimento de lo colectivo. Los contenidos culturales que hasta entonces se habían transmitido de una forma inductiva -a través de los ritos de iniciación y el ejemplo de los mayores- como una manifestación de la colectividad, pasan a ser sustituidos paulatinamente por nuevas formas que actúan como exponente de lo personal. El *status* deja de estar determinado por el grupo y se establece un intercambio entre distintas sociedades. Si a esto añadimos la introducción de los idiomas europeos (básicamente, del inglés y del francés, distribuidos según sus antiguo dominio colonial) como lengua común de amplios territorios, nos encontramos ante una sociedad que ha perdido muchos de sus valores y de su identidad.

La introducción del inglés entre la población africana se produce, muy tímidamente al principio, ya en la primera mitad del siglo XIX. Alcanza una mayor presencia a partir de su adopción como lengua oficial en Liberia, país que se independizó de Estados Unidos en 1847. En el caso de otras naciones africanas -Gambia, Sierra Leona, Nigeria o Kenia- la presencia del inglés se consolida como resultado de la dominación colonial inglesa bendecida por la Conferencia de Berlín en 1884-85.

La situación lingüística generada por el pasado colonial otorga una serie de rasgos comunes a la literatura de las distintas naciones del África subsahariana. Las manifestaciones literarias se elaboran casi en su totalidad en una lengua europea, y sólo en fechas relativamente re-

cientes, y de modo esporádico, pueden encontrarse algunos autores que prefieran usar su lengua materna como vehículo literario[1]. Las razones que han llevado finalmente a imponer las lenguas europeas como idiomas oficiales de los estados africanos, y como vehículo de transmisión literaria de sus escritores, es fundamentalmente de tipo pragmático. Las actuales fronteras políticas de los estados africanos no guardan ninguna relación con la realidad étnica y lingüística del continente, lo que ha tenido en ocasiones trágicas consecuencias en forma de guerras civiles. Uno de los ejemplos más significativos de pluralidad lingüística es claramente el de Nigeria, donde, a juicio de algunos estudiosos, cabe documentar más de cuatrocientas lenguas diferentes[2]. En una situación así, los idiomas europeos se encuentran en mejor disposición de alcanzar la condición de *lingua franca*, ya que su uso afecta en la misma medida a todos los habitantes, sin que sean sentidos como una imposición de un grupo étnico sobre los demás. Ahora bien, la adopción, en el caso de la literatura nigeriana, del inglés como idioma de uso literario general no significa en absoluto un abandono de procedimientos y técnicas narrativas procedentes de la cultura original. Por el contrario, ha dado lugar a la introducción de un término nuevo, *orature*, combinación de *oral + literature*, con el que se pretende sintetizar las coordenadas en las que se mueve esta nueva realidad literaria:

> *«African writers derive their original inspiration from their culture bases but they have also at their disposal the whole Western literary tradition.» (Jones, 1992: 6)*

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[1] Es el caso del keniata Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. Una de las discusiones más extendidas entre los autores africanos se centra en la lengua en la que se deben escribir las novelas. Mientras que Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o señala que el uso del inglés está perpetuando la situación colonial, Chinua Achebe considera que el inglés en el que él escribe no es el idioma de la metrópoli, sino que tiene el rango de lengua universal:

> *«On language we are given equally simplistic prescriptions. Abolish the use of English! But after its abolition we remain seriously divided on what to put in its place. One proffered solution gives up Nigeria with its 200-odd languages as a bad case and travels all the way to East Africa to borrow Swahili; just as in the past a Kingdom caught in a succession bind sometimes solved its problem by going to another kingdom to hire an underemployed prince!»* (Achebe, 1988: 41)

[2] Sobre la situación lingüística de Nigeria, pueden consultarse, entre otros, Westermann y Bryan (1952) y Greenberg (1963). Para los nombres de lenguas que menciono en este trabajo me guío básicamente por las indicaciones de Moreno Cabrera (1990).

Un caso especialmente llamativo de esta corriente viene dado por las novelas de Chinua Achebe *Things fall apart* (1958) y *Arrow of God* (1964), en donde, bajo la aparente simplicidad de la narración, se sintetizan de manera magistral la perspectiva original de la cultura africana y el nuevo enfoque de origen europeo. Así, tanto el argumento general como los distintos episodios puntuales son tratados como parte de la realidad propia del narrador, pero al mismo tiempo el relato se desenvuelve con una cierta base antropológica de inspiración occidental que produce inevitablemente un efecto de distanciamiento.

En la mayor parte de las novelas de esta modalidad narrativa la trama argumental tiende a ser más bien difusa, toda vez que se divide en multiplicidad de acontecimientos que tienen como objetivo central la construcción del grupo a partir de la recomposición de sus aspectos parciales. El fundamento étnico les permite añadir una visión metafórica de la sociedad que, a partir de la independencia, obliga a los novelistas a recurrir a ciertos temas cíclicos: la falta de gobierno, la corrupción, la violencia, y la miseria en general. Como corolario se podría añadir que estas literaturas inicialmente tienen un profundo carácter didáctico que las vuelve a unir a sus orígenes orales; es función primordial del escritor africano ser parte de su comunidad y servir de vínculo entre las dos tradiciones, ofreciendo ciertos elementos que no alejen las historias nuevas de las viejas. Lo difícil es encontrar el equilibrio entre las dos culturas, por lo que los novelistas actuales ven necesario huir de un cierto manierismo en el lenguaje que se dio en los escritores anteriores a la descolonización[3].

La literatura nigeriana desempeña, tanto en cantidad como en calidad, un papel primordial dentro de la literatura africana de nuestros días. Y eso no sólo en lo relativo a la producción literaria, sino también por lo que se refiere a la labor crítica. Desde los años cincuenta Nigeria ha ofrecido un amplio número de autores cuya obra ha trascendido más allá de sus fronteras nacionales y ha llegado a convertirse en un punto

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[3] Como, por ejemplo, Amos Tutuola (1952), quien tradujo los proverbios yoruba directamente al inglés, con lo que estos perdían buena parte de su frescura y profundidad.

de referencia obligado para todos los escritores de África. Amos Tutuola, Cyprian Ekwensi y, sobre todo, Chinua Achebe, fueron los primeros novelistas nigerianos que conocieron el reconocimiento de su obra, incluso en los círculos intelectuales de la metrópoli. Después, autores como Gabriel Okara y Wole Soyinka (el primer africano galardonado con el Premio Nobel de Literatura, en 1986) indagan en nuevas formas de experimentación narrativa: el primero, mezclando conscientemente la sintaxis de la lengua iyo con la del inglés; el segundo, mostrando un consumado dominio de técnicas contemporáneas, como el flujo de conciencia o monólogo interior, especialmente en la primera parte de su obra *The Interpreters* (1965). En fechas más recientes, nombres como Festus Iyayi, Ernest Okolo, Eno Obong y Ben Okri han alcanzado también una notable aceptación. Por otro lado, hay que tener en cuenta la presencia de mujeres escritoras, hecho absolutamente excepcional en otros países del entorno, pero que en Nigeria cuenta con representantes de gran calidad, como Buchi Emecheta y Flora Nwapa. Finalmente, ha de mencionarse también el florecimiento, en los años previos y en los inmediatamente siguientes a la independencia, de formas propias de literatura popular, entre las que se cuentan la manifestaciones teatrales en lengua yoruba, así como las novelas de subgénero y los panfletos editados y comercializados en el mercado de la ciudad de Onitsa[4].

Si hay una característica que pueda considerarse común a un buen número de escritores nigerianos contemporáneos, ésta es probablemente su afán por presentar la cultura autóctona desde una perspectiva moderna y abierta, en la que se exponen los hechos sin entrar a valorarlos, dejando que sea el lector el que extraiga sus propias conclusiones. Pero de ello no deriva una narrativa *realista* en sentido estricto (y menos aún el llamado *realismo socialista*), ya que esta actitud no se limita a las costumbres y formas de vida empíricamente constatables, sino que

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[4] El mercado de Onitsha es uno de los centros comerciales más importantes del sudeste de Nigeria. Entre los años cuarenta y sesenta llegaron a ver la luz en él más de doscientos títulos diferentes; en general novelas de amor o relatos inspirados en la tradición y en la historia más reciente de Nigeria. Algunos están escritos en inglés, pero en su mayor parte fueron publicados, bien en ibo, bien en un pidgin que entremezclaba la lengua nativa con el inglés. Su destino eran las clases populares, y resultaban accesibles también para los analfabetos gracias a las frecuentes lecturas públicas que congregaban a una gran audiencia. La importancia de la literatura popular nacida al amparo del mercado de Onitsa ha sido claramente puesta de relieve por Emmanuel Obiechina (1973).

se extiende a todo el complejo mundo de creencias y de vida espiritual de las sociedades tribales nigerianas. Tales creencias, lejos de ser calificadas como míticas o fantasiosas, son integradas plenamente en los relatos, concediéndoles, en términos cualitativos, la misma carta de naturaleza que a los acontecimientos y entidades del ámbito material. Por eso, creo que se puede llegar a la conclusión de que en la literatura nigeriana se manifiesta una forma peculiar de *realismo mágico*, o, como gustaba de decir Alejo Carpentier (1964), de lo *real maravilloso*. El concepto de 'realismo mágico', ampliamente tratado en el estudio de la narrativa hispanoamericana (cf. Franco, 1980[3]) con la que ha llegado prácticamente a identificarse por entero, no ha sido tenido en cuenta todavía a la hora de estudiar la literatura africana. Sin embargo, y en la medida en que dicho concepto pueda ser tenido como válido, sí podría hacerse extensivo a muchos textos de autores nigerianos en los que se incorporan elementos mágicos folklóricos como parte fundamental de la trama novelesca, sin aislarlos de otros elementos 'reales'. Con el fin de ilustrar y justificar esta hipótesis, en las páginas que siguen haré referencia al tratamiento literario de un fenómeno concreto, el de los *niños obanye*, que aparece en la obra de dos de los novelistas nigerianos más importantes: Chinua Achebe y Ben Okri.

2.- Los *niños obanye* (*ogbanje children*) son un elemento común a muchas culturas africanas. Este término procede de la etnia ibo (a la que pertenece Achebe). Los yoruba los denominan *abiku*, que es la denominación que aparece en las novelas de Ben Okri. Los términos *obanye* y *abiku* son, de hecho, totalmente equivalentes, dado que denotan una entidad para la que se ha producido un profundo sincretismo en muchas religiones animistas de los pueblos de Nigeria[5]. Según Robert Wren (1980: 33), se usan para calificar a un niño que "is 'born to die' and is born to the same parents repeatedly". Esta caracterización puede ser completada con la definición que ofrece el propio Chinua Achebe en el glosario de *Things Fall Apart:*

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[5] Maduka (1987: 17), quien también se ha acercado al tratamiento literario de los *obanye*, recoge los nombres que se les da en otras lenguas de Nigeria: *ibajun* (en lengua edo), *mfumfum* (en efik) y *Menyi obo* (en calabar).

«a changeling: a child who repeatedly dies and re-
turns to its mother to be reborn. It is almost impos-
sible to bring up an *ogbanje child* without it dying,
unless its *iyi-uwa*[6] is first found and destroyed.»
(Achebe, 1958: 150)

Por tanto, un *niño obanye* es aquel que se ve condenado a morir a
poco de nacer, para luego volver a nacer de los mismos padres, y así
sucesivamente. Constituyen por tanto un elemento particular ligado al
mundo de los espíritus, que se sitúa entre el mundo de la divinidad y el
de los seres humanos. Son espíritus que, por la acción de cierto objeto o
entidad terrenal (una especie de amuleto, llamado *iyi-uwa* en ibo) se
ven condenados a vagar repetidamente desde la esfera de lo espiritual a
lo terrenal, de forma ininterrumpida, mientras el amuleto permanezca
en activo. Eso provoca la tragedia de la familia que los recibe, pues ven
como todos sus hijos, que no son sino distintas reencarnaciones de un
mismo espíritu, fallecen siempre a poco de nacer, porque, al no despren-
derse totalmente, con su nacimiento, de su origen espiritual, retornan
al mismo prontamente[7].

Los espíritus tienen un papel fundamental en las religiones
animistas de los Ibo y los Yoruba, y las creencias que giran en torno a
ellos están también muy relacionadas con los conceptos de 'reencarna-
ción' y 'predestinación'. La compleja realidad de los espíritus en las reli-
giones tradicionales africanas puede sintetizarse básicamente en las si-
guientes palabras de Mbiti:

«La conclusión que podemos sacar es que en las reli-
giones tradicionales africanas el alma humana está
destinada al modo ontológico de existencia de los
espíritus, sin ir más allá de este punto. Algunos de
los espíritus se vinculan a determinados objetos y

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[6] «*iyi-uwa*: a special kind of stone which forms the link between an ogbanje and the spirit world.
Only if the iyi-uwa were discovered and destroyed would the child not die.» (Achebe, 1958: 149)

[7] Taiwo (1976) ha descrito detalladamente distintos tipos de *obanye* (de los cuales destacan los
del fuego, los del mar y los de la tierra), así como sus correspondientes *iyi-uwa*. En el caso de los *obanye*
de la tierra, su situación viene producida por un amuleto subterráneo.

fenómenos naturales, algunos son temidos por los
humanos, otros pueden poseer a la gente, pero la
mayoría parecen desvanecerse y estar completamente
fuera del contacto humano.» (Mbiti, 1990: 214-5)

3.- La referencia más directa a los *niños obanye* en la obra de Chinua
Achebe se cifra en su primera novela, *Things Fall Apart* (1958). El pro-
tagonista, Okonkwo, tiene tres esposas. Una de ellas, Ekwefi, que aban-
donó a su anterior marido para irse a vivir con Okonkwo, ha tenido de
su unión con éste nueve hijos, y todos han muerto antes de cumplir los
tres años. Solo la décima, una niña llamada Ezinma, consiguió llegar a
los seis años, una edad en la que ya puede colaborar en la destrucción
del maleficio.

Tras morir el segundo de los hijos de Ekwefi, Okonkwo acudió en
ayuda de diversos hechiceros, quienes advirtieron que el niño era un
obanye, condenado a repetir el ciclo de nacimiento y muerte[8]. Como medio
de romper este ciclo, le hacen diversas recomendaciones, tales como el
lugar en donde debe yacer con su esposa, o que, cuando ésta vuelva a
quedar embarazada, abandone a Okonkwo y se vaya a vivir con su fami-
lia. Sin embargo, el tercer hijo, llamado Onwumbiko (nombre que quie-
re decir 'Muerte, yo te imploro') también fallece con quince meses. Uno
de los hechiceros señaló como causa de esta muerte las condiciones
astrales en las que se produjo el nacimiento de este niño. La serie de
vástagos prontamente fallecidos continua inevitablemente hasta la lle-
gada de Ezinma.

A lo largo de la novela nos encontramos con diversos episodios en
los que se muestran los intentos por hacer superar la condición de *obanye*
que atenaza a la descendencia de Ekwefi. Estos son, principalmente, el
entierro de Onwumbiko, la búsqueda del amuleto y el rapto de Ezinma
por parte de la sacerdotisa Chielo.

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[8] Los hechiceros no identifican la llegada del *niño obanye* con ningún tipo de castigo o maldición
concreta sobre la familia. Es una mera desgracia que no es deseada por los dioses ni viene provocada
por ninguna actuación de los padres. Su causa hay que buscarla más bien en la 'debilidad' del espíritu
del niño (cf. Achebe, 1958: 54).

La muerte de Onwumbiko, el tercer hijo de Ekwefi, muestra cómo las recomendaciones iniciales de los hechiceros resultaban insuficientes para salvar al niño de la muerte. De ahí que, el hechicero encargado de enterrarlo opta por seguir un rito especial (cf. Achebe, 1958: 55): con una cuchilla mutila salvajemente el cuerpo del bebé muerto, y lo entierra en un lugar apartado, en el terreno del bosque del mal[9]. La intención de este rito es doble. Por un lado, al infligir este duro castigo sobre su cuerpo, el espíritu del niño se lo pensaría dos veces antes de volver, con lo cual podría evitarse la repetición del ciclo. En cualquier caso, si decide regresar, el ritual seguramente le habría dejado alguna marca que lo delataría: un dedo de menos, una herida, etc. Este rito debió repetirse en el entierro de los demás hijos de Ekwefi, pues sólo la perseverancia podría hacer desistir al *obanye*.

La búsqueda del amuleto (Achebe, 1958: 56-60) es uno de los episodios de más clara raigambre 'mágica' de esta novela, pues muestra la pugna directa, sumamente ritualizada, que desencadena la tribu, a través del hechicero, por arrancar directamente a Ezinma del mundo de los espíritus. Esta niña, que al lograr superar la edad más crítica, hace concebir en sus padres la esperanza de la ruptura del maleficio. Entre madre e hija se establece un vínculo muy especial, e incluso se convierte en la preferida de Okonkwo (por delante de los hijos varones nacidos de sus otras mujeres). Ello se manifiesta, por ejemplo, en algunos privilegios que se le conceden, como el de comer huevos, manjar reservado sólo a los adultos. Finalmente, Ezinma alcanza una edad en la que ya puede ser conjurada por el hechicero y se le puede pedir la colaboración en la búsqueda del *iyi-uwa* que provoca el maleficio. Obtener esa colaboración no resulta tarea fácil:

> «*Ezinma had not wanted to co-operate with him at first. But that was only to be expected. No* ogbanje *would yield her secrets easily, and most of them never did because they died too young-before they could be asked questions.*» *(Achebe, 1958: 57)*

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[9] El bosque del mal (*Evil Forest*) es el lugar maldito donde se entierra a aquellos cuyo espíritu puede traer la desgracia para los habitantes de la tribu. Además de los *obanye*, se entierran ahí los gemelos (que son sacrificados nada más nacer) y cualquier hombre de la tribu que haya cometido una abominación de algún género, como por ejemplo el suicidio. Ese será, por cierto, el terreno en el que los primeros cristianos llegados al poblado construirán su misión.

El hechicero, en compañía de todo el poblado, le pregunta a la niña dónde enterró su *iyi-uwa*. Ezinma, que no entiende muy bien qué se pretende de ella, se toma el rito como un juego y empieza a señalar un lugar tras otro, de forma aparentemente aleatoria, ante la desesperación de Okonkwo. Pero, tras varias tentativas fallidas, el hechicero logra encontrar, a bastante profundidad, una piedrecita brillante envuelta en harapos:

> *«And then the smooth, shiny pebble fell out. He picked it up.*
>
> *'Is this yours?' he asked Ezinma.*
>
> *'Yes', she replied. All the women shouted with joy because Ekwefi's troubles were at last ended.» (Achebe, 1958: 60)*

La última frase de este pasaje que acabo de citar podría hacernos pensar que con la captura del *iyi-uwa* ha concluido, definitivamente, el lazo que mantenía unida a Ezinma al mundo de los espíritus. Sin embargo, ello no es totalmente así. El capítulo once está dedicado por completo a narrar un nuevo episodio en el que esta niña se ve requerida por instancias sobrenaturales. Chielo, la sacerdotisa de la diosa Agbala, irrumpe de improviso en la casa de Okonkwo, gritando: "¡Agbala quiere algo! ¡Agbala te saluda! ¡Agbala quiere ver a tu hija Ezinma!". Temerosos ante el oráculo, Okonkwo y Ekwefi permiten que Chielo se lleve a la niña, aunque, desobedeciendo sus instrucciones, las siguen a distancia a través del bosque, hasta la cueva donde mora Agbala. Al amanecer, Chielo devuelve a Ezinma sana y salva, y tranquiliza a su madre. La diosa ha bendecido a la niña y ha cerrado el ciclo, por lo que ha desaparecido el peligro que acechaba la vida de Ezinma. Definitivamente, ha dejado de ser una *obanye*.

4.- En dos de las novelas de Ben Okri -*The Famished Road*[10] (1991) y *Songs of Enchantment* (1993)- el protagonista principal de la historia es un niño *abiku* que se llama Azaro[11], que a su vez es el narrador de la historia. La familia del niño vive en un suburbio de chabolas en el extrarradio de una ciudad industrial africana, de la que desconocemos el nombre. En cualquier caso, responde al prototipo de ciudad grande que ha crecido de una forma desordenada y en sucesivas avalanchas. En ese entorno de casas humildes y pobres, asentadas sobre un lodazal, se desarrolla la mayor parte de la acción de *The Famished Road*; particularmente en el mercado del barrio, lugar de encuentro e intercambio por antonomasia en la vida tradicional africana, y cuya importancia todavía pervive en el ámbito urbano. Esta novela no se circunscribe a una etnia determinada, como ocurría con el poblado ibo descrito por Achebe, sino que encontramos un lugar en el que se mezclan todo tipo de personajes de los más variados orígenes: desde políticos en busca de un voto para una campaña electoral a *Madame Koto*, una mujer que tiene un bar pero que a la vez es una mezcla de hechicera y benefactora para nuestro protagonista. Con todo ello, Ben Okri irá entretejiendo un complejo entramado en el que disecciona la realidad social de los nuevos estados africanos.

Azaro es un *abiku* especial. Conocedor de su vinculación con el el mundo de los espíritus, ha decidido voluntariamente, y por sí mismo, romper con ellos y aferrarse con denuedo a la vida terrenal junto a su familia. Está a punto de perecer en múltiples ocasiones, pues, según confiesa, los espíritus le ponen continuas trampas para que regrese junto a ellos. Otras veces, tales espíritus optan directamente por aparecérsele y reclamarlo para su mundo. Azaro los rechaza en todo momento. No obstante, en determinados momentos Azaro se ve impelido poderosa-

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[10] A esta novela se le concedió el *Booker Prize* en 1991. Su éxito fue enorme entre los lectores anglosajones, para muchos de los cuales supuso el descubrimiento de un mundo literario completamente nuevo. Este mismo éxito se extendió a otros países europeos, en especial Italia, donde la traducción de la editorial Bompiani (*La Via della Fame*, 1992) alcanzó un número excepcional de ventas. No ocurrió lo mismo en España, donde *La Carretera Hambrienta* (1993), publicada por Espasa Calpe, pasó prácticamente inadvertida.

[11] 'Azaro' no es más que una forma africanizada del nombre cristiano 'Lázaro', lo que remite indudablemente al personaje evangélico que, tras morir, retorna a la vida tras ser resucitado por Jesucristo.

mente a abandonar su hogar, por diversas causas (una voz que lo llama, un animal al que persigue, un tumulto en el mercado, etc.) y desaparece. Pero Azaro no llega a ser trasladado al mundo de los espíritus, sino que reaparece en un nuevo entorno de la misma ciudad, y, finalmente, bien es encontrado por sus padres, bien él consigue dar de nuevo con su casa familiar.

Songs of Enchantment es la continuación de la novela anterior, si bien en este caso el niño vive la mayor parte de sus aventuras con su padre (con el que ha emprendido la búsqueda de su madre, que ha abandonado el hogar). En esta obra, el autor ya no es tan explícito en cuanto a la calificación del protagonista como *abiku*. No obstante, sí son numerosas las citas que muestran la peculiaridad del protagonista, la especifidad de su relación con el ámbito de la espiritualidad. Veamos a continuación dos claros ejemplos de ello:

> «We broke into another level of time. I could hear the moon- voices of my spirit-companions calling out to me from the nocturnal choir of insects, the rococo piping of nightbirds, and the penumbral cries of agonised trees. Haunting flute-songs followed us. I saw solitary fauns dancing in the dark. Hidden monsters that bred all year round watched us as we stumbled through their living spaces. I looked back and noticed green lights, isolated in the air, following us steadily.
>
> 'Ghosts are spying on us,' I said.» (Okri, 1993: 25)

> «That was probably my first time that I felt the doors to my other lives -my past lives, my future lives- opening on me with frightening clarity. Sometimes my other lives would open and then shut, and what I glimpsed didn't make sense.» (Okri: 1993, 30-1)

Azaro, en compañía de su padre, logra reencontrarse con su madre. Poco después, tiene un extraño encuentro con una procesión de espíritus, o 'almas bendecidas' (*blessed souls*) que pregonan, cantando, cómo

el amor crea la inmortalidad. Azaro se siente tentado de acompañarlos, pero finalmente opta por seguir con su familia, con lo que la procesión finalmente desaparece.

5.- Si observamos el tratamiento literario de los niños *obanye / abiku* que hacen respectivamente Chinua Achebe y Ben Okri, llegaremos a la conclusión de que presentan diferencias muy sustanciales. Pero precisamente eso hace que aparezcan como dos perspectivas totalmente complementarias de un mismo fenómeno del que, por separado, sólo ofrecen una concreción parcial. Achebe sitúa su obra en los primeros momentos de la colonización, en un medio rural y ajeno aún a la presencia de la cultura europea. Okri nos sitúa a su *abiku* en el presente, en un marco urbano completamente condicionado por lo que fue el dominio colonial. Achebe describe los hechos desde el punto de vista de la colectividad: aunque la desgracia que trae la llegada de un *obanye* recae principalmente en Ekwefi y su marido, todos los habitantes de Umuofia, poblado en el que residen, se sienten afectados y participan directamente en la destrucción del maleficio. Ésta se consigue finalmente, gracias a la acción de los rituales ancestrales, cuyo poder salvífico, sin ser reconocido explícitamente, sí queda suficientemente asumido al establecerse una evidente relación causa/efecto entre ellos y la pervivencia de Ezinma. En la obra de Ben Okri, por el contrario, la colectividad no interviene, pues los habitantes de la ciudad carecen de la conciencia tribal de antaño. Por supuesto, hay personajes que, a lo largo de su trayectoria, ayudan a Azaro y lo salvan de distintas penalidades. Pero actúan siempre a título individual. La atención en el individuo, y no en la tribu, es sin duda la gran novedad en la exploración de Ben Okri por el mundo de los espíritus. Por eso está totalmente justificado que la voz narrativa sea la del propio *abiku*, aunque Okri en ningún momento pretende imitar los usos propios del lenguaje infantil (en el fondo, quien habla no es el niño, sino 'su espíritu'). Y, lo más importante de todo, la salvación de Azaro no proviene de ninguna actuación ritual, mágica o religiosa. Logra romper sus ataduras con el más allá por sí mismo, por medio de su propia voluntad y como consecuencia de una decisión soberana y consciente. La toma de conciencia de sí mismo, su reconocimiento como *individuo* con voluntad propia, hace que Azaro sea capaz de enfrentarse (y más aún, vencer)

a las fuerzas que lo reclamaban para el otro mundo. La simple voluntad consigue alterar y recomponer la trayectoria para la que ese niño estaba predestinado. En las novelas de Ben Okri no se hace referencia en ningún momento al amuleto o *iyi-uwa* responsable del maleficio, y que está siempre presente en la concepción religiosa tradicional sobre los *obanye / abiku*. Diríase, leyendo las novelas de Okri aquí reseñadas, que el *iyi-uwa* de Azaro no se encuentra enterrado nada más que en su propia psique.

La conclusión que podemos sacar de esta confrontación nos conduce inevitablemente a las reflexiones con las que comenzábamos este trabajo. Ambos autores nos revelan, cada uno a su modo, el conflicto entre *oralidad* y *literariedad* existente hoy día en las manifestaciones culturales africanas. Chinua Achebe escribe una novela (fenómeno indudablemente literario), y no en una lengua vernácula, sino en el idioma de los colonizadores. Sin embargo, la figura de la niña *obanye* se presenta con la misma caracterización con la que se encuentra en la memoria colectiva del pueblo ibo, y que ha sido forjada a través de relatos orales transmitidos de generación en generación. Por ello, resulta perfectamente acertada la observación de Maduka, para quien Achebe, como también Clark y Soyinka[12]:

> «... *using European languages as vehicles of expression draw heavily from materials embedded in the mysthic consciousness of their people. They perpetuate rather than break up the cultural heritage of African peoples, in spite of their being more or less products of the civilizations embodied in the languages they use.» (Maduka: 1987: 30)*

Tales palabras ya no se corresponden en la misma medida cuando nos referimos a la obra de Ben Okri. Éste, al tratar en su obra los niños *abiku*, se mueve en unas coordenadas muy distintas a las de Achebe dentro del eje 'oralidad/literariedad'. Las novelas de Okri, escritas más

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[12] J. P. Clark (de la etnia iyo) y Wole Soyinka (de la etnia yoruba) han recogido también literariamente, en sendos poemas, la realidad de los *obanye / abiku*.

de tres décadas después de *Things Fall Apart*, participan ya de una nueva concepción ideológica que ha absorbido e integrado muchos elementos procedentes de la cultura europea. La literariedad ha penetrado tan profundamente, y ha adquirido tanta fuerza la noción de individuo, en detrimento de lo colectivo y tribal, que se hace ya difícil de reconocer la huella de la tradición oral en la que se forjó la noción de *abiku*. Ezinma, la niña *obanye* de Achebe, responde en cierto modo a un prototipo que contiene lo que es común a todos los niños *obanye* de todos los relatos tradicionales. Azaro, el niño *abiku* de Ben Okri, es sin lugar a dudas un personaje único; en él no se produce de ningún modo una síntesis antropológica de la religión tradicional de los yoruba, o cualquier otra etnia, en relación con los *abiku,* o con la reencarnación, la predestinación o el mundo de los espíritus. Azaro es un producto eminentemente literario. No obstante, a pesar de su enmascaramiento, el hálito de las creencias ancestrales permanece profundamente presente, y es en última instancia el continuo instigador de los avatares del personaje. De ese modo, el mundo de los espíritus, aunque no se reconoce como un referente inmediato de las creencias religiosas populares, sí adopta cierto aire de simbología y misticismo extraño, que se presiente como parte y resultado de una simbología más compleja. Es por eso por lo que el mundo descrito por Ben Okri merece el apelativo de 'mágico', y por lo que presenta indudables similitudes con narradores en lengua española, particularmente gallegos (Cunqueiro, Dieste) e hispanoamericanos (Rulfo, García Márquez). En las historias de estos autores, y a partir de una fuente inicial de procedencia popular, se entreteje un universo literario propio, en el que las fronteras entre lo humano y lo espiritual, lo real y lo fantástico, quedan diluidas y supeditadas a las reglas generadas por el propio desarrollo del plan narrativo.

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THE LOST LEADER: C. S. PARNELL IN THE WRITINGS OF J. JOYCE

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Abstract

James Joyce included in all his fiction different references to the current political situation of Ireland. One of the most relevant political figures of the period was Charles S. Parnell, MP in Westminster and leader of the Home-Rule movement, who appears in the works of Joyce transformed, like many other political allusions, so as to serve a very specific literary purpose. His ascension, decline and ultimate destruction, together with the hopes of a Second Coming turn him into an eponimous of the 'Lost Leader', in a literary game that mixes up devotion, betrayal and remorses.

The betrayal of Parnell belongs to the background of political preoccupations that permeates *Ulysses*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Dubliners* and the *Critical Writings*[1]. Apparently, Joyce considered the personal story of this most relevant political figure of the second half of the XIXth century of an enormous tragic potential, apart from the obvious political and social implications of his rise and fall in the context of such a contradictory country as Ireland was at the turn of the century. Thus, we must have a double consideration when dealing with this figure: its factuality and relation to the political reality of Joyce's

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[1] We have not been able to find a copy of the original version of the *Critical Writings*, being the Spanish one the only available; consequently, all the quotations from this text will be in the translation: We apologize for that.

country, and also its tragic character, that led Joyce to make Parnell embody some of the features of an Irish modern *Christ*, betrayed by his followers and becoming, from that moment, clearly a myth.

Charles Stewart Parnell[2] was elected MP for Meath County in 1875, and from 1877 on he chaired the Home-Rule Confederation. The Home-Rule Movement was his most important political activity, the one in which he had the highest hopes, and his achievements in this political organization founded by Isaac Butt in 1870 granted him a general admiration not only in Ireland but also at Westminster, where he was regarded by British politicians as the leading orator of the moment, and the most agressive member of the House of Commons. He created and developed the politics known as "obstructionism" and "boycott", that where innovative in that, using parliamentary means, they achieved their ends by exploiting some of the weaknesses of the Parliament. During the famine of the last quarter of the XIXth century he organized, together with his political companion Davitt, the so-called "land war" during which they used their privileged status as MPs to protect and help Irish rebel farmers and peasants, with the ultimate intention of acquiring the legislative independence of Ireland. By 1880, the Home-Rule Bill signed by British Prime Minister Gladstone (that was substituted by the intransigent Disraeli) almost granted this first kind of independence; Parnell's death and, above all, his political destruction, prevented it.

The beginning of the end for Parnell was the divorce case of the O'Sheas, Captain O'Shea and his wife Katherine *(Kitty)*. Parnell was named as correspondent in the case when it was made clear that he and Kitty had been committing adultery for ten years, what he didn't try to deny. In fact, the O'Sheas' was already a broken marriage when Parnell's *liaison* with Katherine started in 1881: Since this was a relation that lasted until 1891 when the trial made it public, and they even had children (for many this was a *de facto* marriage), it seems reasonable to

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[2] Obviously, this is a very brief account of the basic facts of Parnell's public activity. References to this extraordinary political figure, and to the consequences of many of his projects, can be found in any History of Ireland or Britain; as two relevant scholarly texts ,we want to mention T. W. Moody & F. X. Martin's *The Course of Irish History*, a collection of essays by professors of Irish Universities (mainly Trinity and UCD); and D. Keogh's *Ireland & Europe: 1919-1989*, which is a much more recent text by a professor at University College, Cork, who analyses in detail the "post-Parnell" period.

think that it was an open, well-kept though, secret. Apparently, Captain O'Shea connived to a relationship that was politically satisfactory for him: When he found out about his wife's infidelity in 1881, a duel was arranged with Parnell which never took place as O'Shea accepted the politician's offer: O'Shea had a quick and successful political career from that moment. Parnell's refusal to defend himself at the trial made O'Shea and the servants' version of the adultery as something secret pass as true (the grotesque story of Parnell climbing down the window shocked many of his well-meaning Catholic voters)[3]. Progressively, and as a consequence, Parnell lost the support of those individuals and social groups that had previously not only voted for him but also elevated him to the position of spiritual leader of the Irish resistance to British rule. His death, that followed almost immediately the discovery of his adulterous relationship, had to do with the strenuous effort of defending his impossible position and trying to save his already split up party. Until the Summer of 1891 he resisted well, losing nothing of his vigour; after a particularly hard day in Co. Gallway, in September '91, when he had to speak to the crowd for hours in the cold rain, his health seemed to weaken rapidly (he suffered from rheumatism), as his energy almost disappeared and he lost the will to live. On the 6th of October, 1891, he died.

Parnell had to face several accusations from different fronts, and he had to fight to maintain a relatively united party and a certain degree of popularity among his voters, but he didn't manage to achieve it. Probably the bitterest accusation came from the Irish Catholic Church, that asked the people of Ireland not to support such a sinner as Parnell: Mr Casey in *Portrait* bitterly remembers this attitude:

> *Let him remember too, ..., the language with which*
> *the priests and the priests' pawns broke Parnell's*
> *heart and hounded him into his grave.* (31-2)

Parnell refused to apologize, and in a risky decission he, until the end, rejected what he regarded as an unbearable interference of the

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[3] Joyce makes an allusion to this story in *Ulysses*, 531-2.

Church into political matters, what is also fictionalized in *Portrait* using the character of the Parnellite Mr Casey:

> *Let them [bishops and priests] leave politics alone,*
> *said Mr Casey, or the people may leave their church*
> *alone.* (30)

He also had to suffer how his party retired progressively its support: in the Committee Room #15 (in the English Houses of Parliament), on 6 December 1890, T. M. Healy became leader of an Irish Parliamentary .majority and managed to split the party, 45 to 26; with "the 45" he tried to depose Parnell, discussing the legitimacy of his leadership, but they failed in this; other influential members retired their support during 1891, and by the end of his life Parnell only had ten or twelve loyal friends by him; this mostly important meeting is recreated by Joyce in the story "Ivy Day in the Commitee Room", included in *Dubliners*. Obviously, the British Prime Minister Gladstone and the English Church benefited from the fall of their main enemy, and they put the British public opinion decidedly against the Irish politician[4]. Finally, the Irish society itself turned its back on its political leader: faced with the alternative of following whom the Catholic Church had discredited as a sinner, or abandoning the only person who could lead them to home-rule, most of the Irish chose the second option[5].

According to S. Gilbert, one of the motifs of *Ulysses* is "the betrayal or defeat of the man of mettle by the treachery of the hydra-headed rabble" (Gilbert, 30). In *Portrait*, Stephen gives a highly illuminating account of the nature of the problem of Parnell's place in Irish history, and the characteristics of history itself: "Ireland is the old sow that eats her farrow" (185), says Stephen to Davin, just after recollecting some of the instances of Irish history in which betrayal has appeared in some form or other:

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[4] Actually, the conservative newspaper *The Times* had, some months before the O'Shea's affair was discovered, tried to prove Parnell's implication in a sordid business by which he would have made a big amount of money; the proof consisted on some letters, signed by him, that were eventually discovered to be forgeries. This frustrated attempt to discredit him made Parnell's popularity increase espectacularly in Ireland as the Irish realised how dangerous their leader was for the British.

[5] Among the anti-Parnellites in Irish society there were also influential journalists and newspapers (such as Matthew Bodkin, William O'Brian or the *United Ireland*), intellectuals (Justin McCarthy) etc...

> *No honourable and sincere man, ..., has given up to*
> *you his life and his youth and his affections from*
> *the days of Tone to those of Parnell but you sold him*
> *to the enemy or failed him in need or reviled him*
> *and left him for another.* (184)

Parnell's defeat becomes then his betrayal, and is considered part of a greater "history of infamy", that has at its climax the figure of the "Fallen Chief" as the sacrificial victim or the scapegoat, and the bishops, O'Shea, and above all Healy and the "Bantry gang" as the traitors. Parnell is initially paralleled to Caesar and Healy to Brutus, but certain elements suggest a more profound and compromising analogy: the death was overweighted with martyrdom, and Joyce seems to start thinking of Christ, betrayed by the Jews themselves before the indifferent presence of the Romans (colonial occupying force)[6]. However, this is not a comparison sustained till the end, and in what seems to be a search for the betrayed in *Portrait* and *Ulysses*, Joyce also finds Hamlet's father, Shakespeare or even himself. Apparently, Joyce was personally impressed by the fate of this figure of such tragic overtones; Sidney Bolt has written that he (the young Joyce) "did not fail to learn the lesson that heroes are stabbed in the back, a fate which he was too apt, if not even eager, himself to expect in later life" (Bolt, 6). It is also possible to find elements of the betrayed in the figure of Stephen Dedalus, more in *Portrait* than in *Ulysses*, and perhaps having more to do with his desires than with factuality; after all, Stephen's renunciation of "nationality, language and religion" in *Portrait* (184), and his ultimate decission to leave Ireland, somehow show not only his discontent but also the inability of his country to offer something worth fighting for, what is some sort of betrayal[7].

In the re-creation of the myth of Parnell Woman has, obviously, an important role to play. Woman as a destructive principle, in

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[6] In fact, some Joycean characters (and in a more moderate way, even Joyce himself) assimilate in many occasions the Irish to the Jews (exiles, migrants, oppressed and persecuted) and the British to the Romans (imperialistic, powerful, oppressors) (*Ulysses*, 108 and 268; *Escritos críticos*, 225, 292).

[7] In *James Joyce and the Politics of Desire*, Suzette A. Henke shares this view with us when she explains: "Both Parnell and Stephen have been betrayed -thrust into a cesspool (one literal, the other figurative) and rent by the rats of a bullying Irish populace. Unjustly punished, brokenhearted, (or sick in the heart), and ill with flu or pneumonia, both will emerge from the cesspool victorious and rise like phoenixes to be celebrated by a band of laudatory disciples." (56).

anthropological terms, is essential to account for the destruction of the Hero, whom she tries to consume, pervert or divert from his ultimate and true goal, with varying success: Adam and Eve, Ulysses and Calypso, Aeneas and Dido, Joseph and Putifar's wife, David and Bethsabe, Samsom and Dalilah, Hercule and Onfalia etc... Culturally, in patriarchal societies, woman is the temptress, the volatile, the charmer, symbol of everything inconsistent, unfaithful, masked and not permanent: Eve, the Sirens or Helen of Troy. In Joyce's treatment of the Parnell affair, and certainly in the perception of this affair by contemporary Irishmen, this role is fulfilled by Kitty O'Shea, the instrumental cause of Parnell's condemnation. *Ulysses* introduces the topic of mysoginy with the figure of the racist Mr Deasy, in his conversation with Stephen; he links Eve, Helen, the Irish historical figure Devorgilla and Kitty. The text, though, seems to reject the thesis through the characteristics of Deasy himself:

> *A woman brought sin into the world. For a woman*
> *who was no better than she should be, Helen, the*
> *runaway wife of Menelaus, ten years the Greeks made*
> *war on Troy. A faithless wife first brought the stran-*
> *gers to our shore here, MacMurrough's wife and her*
> *leman, O'Rourke, prince of Breffni[8]. A woman too*
> *brought Parnell low.* (29)

And the citizen, also in *Ulyses*:

> *A dishonoured wife, says the citizen, that's what's*
> *the cause of all our misfortunes.* (266)

Different characters do not doubt to point at Kitty O'Shea as responsible for Parnell's fall: it was not prejudices, the Irish people

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[8] Later in the novel, the citizen remarks: "The adulteress and her paramour brought the Saxon robbers here" (266). Obviously, it wasn't the Saxons but the Anglo-Normans, who had defeated the Saxons at Hastings one hundred years earlier, but the figure of the adulteress is what matters here, in a clear reference to the sexual weapons of women that points to the Parnell affair.

dependance on the Church or lack of faith in their leader what destroyed Parnell, but only the interference of this English woman:

> *That bitch, that English whore, did for him, the she-*
> *been proprietor commented. She put the first nail in*
> *his coffin. (531)*

The obvious history of promiscuity, commonly attached to non-conventional women, seems to be attracted to the figure of Ms O'Shea, who is re-created with a personality that, as far as historians know, has nothing to do with reality:

> *Fine lump of a woman all the same, ..., and plenty of*
> *her. She loosened many a man's thighs. (531)[9]*

As a modern Ulysses, Parnell is attracted to the shore by the siren-figure of Kitty: "...falling a victim to her siren charms and forgetting home ties" (*Ulysses*, 532), but since he had not such "home ties", his sin, the one he had to expiate through his mastyrdom, was his *treason* to the Irish cause. Woman made him, then, ignore his duty, and the Irish made him pay for that.

Joyce expresses, apart from Parnell's presence in his novels and stories, a political opinion on him, which appears in his *Escritos críticos*; the Irish writer seems to appreciate the political total commitment of Parnell, as well as his actual achievements. His essay, originally published in Italian, "L'Ombra di Parnell", analyses in some detail the activity of the politician, but introducing at the same time a biblical reference that reminds us of the mythical treatment that Parnell receives in Joyce's fiction

> *...un líder que, sin dotes oratorias y sin talento polí-*
> *tico original, obligó a los más grandes políticos in-*
> *gleses a obedecer sus órdenes, y que, como nuevo*
> *Moisés, condujo a un turbulento e inestable pueblo*
> *desde las mansiones de la vergüenza a los límites de*
> *la tierra prometida. (292)*

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[9] In this continuous construction of a *new* Katherine O'Shea certain characters also comment upon a pretended Spanish origin that would account for her sexual potential (*Ulysses*, 532-3).

Joyce, it seems clear, admires Parnell, and reflects objectively his main political actions, with which he seems to coincide; the figure of this man acquires, undoubtfully, an increasing height as it becomes apparent the difficulty of his task and the opposition he had to defeat:

> *Parnell, convencido de que este liberalismo sólo po-*
> *día ceder ante la fuerza, logró el apoyo de todos los*
> *irlandeses, y comenzó una campaña rayana en la*
> *insurrección. Seis años después de su entrada en*
> *Westminster tenía en sus manos la suerte del gobier-*
> *no ... . (Parnell) ... ordenó a sus seguidores que re-*
> *chazaran toda oferta de cartera ministerial, y pro-*
> *hibió a los municipios e instituciones públicas ir-*
> *landesas que recibieran oficialmente a cualquier*
> *miembro de la casa real inglesa, hasta que el go-*
> *bierno de la Gran Bretaña devolviera la autonomía*
> *a Irlanda. (295)*

Joyce captures especially the moment in which Parnell is brought down from his position as a kind of demi-god in the collective unconscious of the Irish; he is particularly impressed by the way in which so much love and admiration turns into infinite hatred and hostility. In *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom wonders at the faith of the cabman since he remembers the bonfires that served anti-Parnellites (the majority of the population after the trial) to burn Parnell in effigy: from hero to sacrificial victim, metaphorically burnt at the stake as an heretic[10], to be eventually (apparently at least) forgotten:

> *All the same Bloom (...) was rather surprised at their*
> *memories for in nine cases out of ten it was a case of*
> *tarbarrels and not singly but in their thousands and*
> *then complete oblivion because it was twenty odd*
> *years. (530)*

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[10] Also, "heaping coals of fire on his head" (*Ulysses*, 532).

Parnell's sacrifice was necessary to purge his sin and also his followers', guilty of adoring this adulterer; all their anger and thirst of blood seems to disappear once their leader has been destroyed and this destruction is confirmed by religious authority:

> *He saw him lift his hand towards the people and heard him say in a loud voice of sorrow over the waters:*
>
> *- He is dead. We saw him lying upon the catafalque.*
>
> *A wail of sorrow went up from the people.*
>
> *- Parnell! Parnell! He is dead!*
>
> *They fell upon their knees, moaning in sorrow.* (Portrait, 24-5; and also 37)

In "Ivy Day in the Committee Room", a story included in *Dubliners*, members of what was Parnell's party meet in the anniversary of his death and clearly state their position: respect for the sacrificed since his sin is forgiven now that he has payed with his life:

> *Do you think now after what he did Parnell was a fit man to lead us?*
>
> *- This is Parnell's anniversary, said Mr O'Connor, and don't let us stir up any bad blood. We all respect him now that he's dead and gone- even the Conservatives, he added turning to Mr Crofton.*

After the punishment suffered by Parnell, his Christ-like figure undergoes, then, a certain process of rehabilitation. For his still loyal followers, the legend of the Return of Parnell arises in different forms: he is not dead, and he will return from his exile to lead, again, the Irish, to the promised land. Parnell is assimilated thus to a modern Odysseus, and the expectation that he will return to Ireland is similar to the expectation that Odysseus will return to Ithaca. The theories that different characters present were not made up by Joyce but taken from

the popular beliefs of many Irish, who desperately held on to this last and remote possibility: a Dublin fusilier was said to have seen him in South Africa, and, more still, he was living there under the personality of the Boer General C. R. De Wet, famous for his skill in the war against the British and, like Parnell, for his dignity in defeat[11] (*Ulysses*, 530); for others, it was even more definite the fact that the corpse was not seen by anybody: the coffin was full of stones (*Ulysses*, 539).

The Second Coming never materialized, but became a common aspiration, a secret wish, of many Irish patriots. Parnell, in some way, never really died, but, as Joyce's prose seems to prove, turned into another element of the conscience of Ireland. Regarded as the "uncrowned king" of the Irish, destroyed by them, then redeemed through his sacrifice, he was rubbed out of the political scenario of the country, only to become a forbidden topic for some or a lost hope for others. The idol with feet of clay was sacrificed by his very same followers: unlike Christ, he never returned again; like Him, he lived in the spirit of the people.

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[11] Obviously, this "theory" owed much of its popularity to the fact that Parnell's followers, and many committed Irish nationalists in general, supported the Boers in their war against the British, who there as well were suppressing the legitimate national aspirations of a people.

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CREATING TEXTS: THE ROLE OF THE READER AND INTERTEXTUALITY PROCESSES

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Abstract

The creation of texts depends upon many different factors. This essay tries to analyse the relevance of these factors, paying special attention to the repercussions they have for non-native speakers. The importance of intertextuality processes is equally highlighted

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1. Texts defined

2. The role of the reader

3. Intertextuality

1. Texts defined

A search for a definition of what a text is constitutes the basis of the investigation of many linguists. A description of this primary unit seems to be the preliminary step before attempting any other more complex approach to the object described. The studies concerning this topic are innumerable (Coulthard 1977, van Dijk 1977, de Beaugrande 1980, Bernárdez 1982), as well as the different scholars' opinions and standpoints. Nevertheless there is a concept which constantly appears

in their analyses: unity. For a text to be considered as such, it has to show that it is consistent, that it has several constant characteristics which endow that piece of writing with a structure. This structure has to work at many different levels: consistency in the grammatical internal links, in the possible reference to an outside world, in the exposition of the topic, in its development, etc. It does not mean that a text has to fulfil all these conditions at the same time, but this unity has to be proved in some way.

Thus, not every time we find a group of sentences put together can we say we are in front of a text. Normally a native speaker of any language has got enough criteria to decide whether the piece of writing s/he has encountered is really a text or not; a number of features present allow him/her to do so. Sometimes this text may be made up of just one sentence. Although this is not the most common case, it is possible:

(i)   Keep off

(ii)   It needn't be hell with Nicotinell

(iii)   "The Independent", the newspaper to read

There is already enough information in these sentences for them to have a structure, to be a whole. Guessing the situations in which they could be found is not a difficult task: a notice in an open space trying to prevent people from stepping on the grass, a TV commercial or an advertisement in a magazine, for instance. However they are not examples of what we usually understand by a text, as we generally assume that a text is formed by more than one sentence.

One of the works which deals with the topic of "unity" in texts is *Cohesion in English* (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Its authors have devoted their efforts to grasping what the essential component of a text is. After acknowledging that this is not a matter of the number of words -they accept one-sentence texts, such as the ones mentioned above - both authors look for a definition of text at a different level. They finally conclude by accepting "texture" as the key word to recognise texts as such:

> *The concept of TEXTURE is entirely appropriate to*
> *express the property of 'being a text'. A text has tex-*
> *ture, and this is what distinguishes it from some-*
> *thing that is not a text. It derives this texture from*
> *the fact that it functions as a unity with respect to*
> *its environment. (Halliday & Hasan, 1976:2)*

Considering several sentences as a whole, not bound together at random, is what gives them a "textual status". Once this unity is recognised and a piece of writing is acknowledged as "text", the next step for the authors of *Cohesion in English* is to consider the level at which this "texture" can work. For this purpose they draw the following double differentiation: a special organisation within the text, on the one hand, and a reference to a world outside it, on the other:

> *The hearer or reader, when he is determining, cons-*
> *ciously or unconsciously, the status of a specimen of*
> *language, invokes two kinds of evidence, the exter-*
> *nal as well as the internal: he uses not only linguis-*
> *tic clues but also situational ones. (Halliday & Ha-.*
> *san, 1976:20)*

This classification is pertinent for the development of this essay in the sense that they include, not only purely linguistic connections among the elements forming a text, but also a possible relationship with an external world. The fact of Charles Dickens evoking the alienating effects of the Industrial Revolution on the citizens of the 19th century England, for instance, is as relevant as the juxtaposition of phrases and clauses, together with the polysyndetic use of the conjunction "and" in the following passage from *Hard Times*:

> *It contained several large streets all very like one*
> *another, and many small streets more like one ano-*
> *ther, inhabited by people equally like one another,*
> *who all went in and out at the same hours, with the*
> *same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same*
> *work, and to whom every day was the same as yes-*
> *terday and tomorrow, and every year the counter-*
> *part of the last and the next. (Dickens, 1854:65)*

These two perspectives a text can be analysed from are so mingled together that sometimes they are not fully separable: so, this external world brought into the text has to be shaped in a determined linguistic form whereas the already existing linguistic forms can make reference to an outside environment (e.g. historical, cultural, social, etc.). Halliday & Hasan call all the external factors that influence the text in any way "context of situation"; "register" would be their linguistic materialisation. Secondly, they use the term "cohesion" to refer to the internal links existing within a text, but they do not discard, completely, the possibility of this cohesion making "reference" to an external world. In our previous example the context of situation the author is immersed in helps Dickens in the depiction of the characters of his novel. He is able to include registers from different social statuses, like, for instance, the special type of slang used by the members of circuses or the workers' northern accent:

> 'Monny's the pleasant word as soom heer has spok'm wi' me; monny's the face I see heer, as I first seen when I were yoong and lighter heart'n than now. I ha neer had no fratch afore, sin ever I were born, wi' any o' my like; Gonnows I ha' none now that's o' my making'. (Dickens, 1854:174)

In the same way, the first quotation from *Hard Times* is syntactically organised (repetitions of words and phrases, reiterative use of the idea of "sameness") to provoke in the reader ideas and considerations about the dullness of the work those men used to perform and the lack of identity and individuality their jobs caused in their lives.

Yet, Halliday & Hasan's analysis is not the only one as far as the definition and description of texts are concerned. In *Linguistic Criticism* (1986) Roger Fowler tries to define the idea of unity in texts, as well. Whereas the former build their theory upon the concept of "texture", Fowler, on the other hand sets the notions of "coherence" and "cohesion" as the basis for the recognition of texts. For a text to be "coherent", it has to fulfil several conditions. The first and most important one is that it has to show a cohesive pattern among its elements, its units:

> *Cohesion distinguishes well-formed texts, focusing*
> *on an integrated topic, with well-signalled internal*
> *transitions, from arbitrary and inconsequential*
> *strings of sentences. (Fowler, 1986:61)*

A "progression" in the exposition of the sequence of ideas, on the one hand, and a process called "thematization" on the other, are the extra requirements used to define a group of sentences as a text. By thematization Fowler understands the phenomenon of "drawing attention to the most important parts of the content of the text, of its themes". However, Fowler's stand-point coincides with Halliday & Hasan's as to which one of these processes really determines the coherence of texts: cohesion. Thus, coherence can be considered the abstract consistency of a text, actually realised by the text's cohesive devices.

But Fowler's characterisation of text has been brought into this essay because of his second differentiation. He distinguishes between texts as simple linguistic products, and texts as "discourse". The second position is clearly favoured in *Linguistic Criticism* as texts, in this case, include what Fowler calls some "extra structure", "extra meaning", derived from the fact that these texts are understood as social constructs:

> *The structure of discourse, as opposed to the more*
> *limited structure of texts, reflects the whole complex*
> *process of people interacting with one another in live*
> *situations and within the structure of social forces*
> *[...] Their language assumes extra structuration re-*
> *flecting their personal purposes in communication,*
> *their social statuses, and relationships, and the na-*
> *ture of the setting within which language is used.*
> *(Fowler, 1986:70)*

As in Halliday & Hasan, Fowler's definition highlights the necessity of placing texts, and consequently literary fiction in general, within a frame, within an external non-linguistic reality. Both perspectives

(Halliday & Hasan's and Fowler's) emphasise the reference to an outside "context" as a basic element for the "unity theory" they are trying to prove. Whatever the terminology we use ("texture", "text", "discourse") this unity has to be achieved by the combination of the analysis of the internal network of relationships in texts and the links to the external environment (social, cultural, historical) that surrounds their creation.

The concept of "context" already mentioned, let us see how, once again, Fowler classifies it. He speaks about three different types of context: context of utterance, context of culture and context of reference. The first refers to the "situation within which discourse is conducted", that is to say, the number of people present, the use of spoken or written language, the location where it is taking place, etc. Under the heading "context of culture" Fowler includes any reference to the social and economic conventions that, in some way, influence the creation of that particular text. Thirdly, the "context of reference" is simply the "topic or subject matter of the text", what it is about. I would reduce them to two different notions: a textual context on the one hand, and a situational context on the other. I have to go back again to the idea of unity and the means available in texts for them to achieve this consistency. First, the textual context serves as the medium to create "cohesion", to establish these internal links I have previously mentioned. Secondly, the situational context is the external frame in which the text is immersed and which determines it as well as the previous one. Fowler follows Halliday & Hasan's classification of the means present in a text to create cohesion in order to establish this textual context. Basically there are five: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion. Some of these processes (substitution, ellipsis and conjunction) have a purely syntactical nature, whereas others (reference and lexical cohesion) are mainly lexical.

The aforementioned situational context is determined by what is called "exophoric reference", as opposed to "endophoric reference". Some elements have the ability of referring backward or forward to some others already present in the text. This capacity is known as "endophoric reference" and constitutes one of the means to create "textual context". But at other times, these units point to an external world instead, helping

in the framing of this situational context: they are said to have "exophoric reference":

> *There are certain items in every language which have*
> *the property of reference [...] that is to say, instead of*
> *being interpreted semantically in their own right,*
> *they make reference to something else for their inter-*
> *pretation. (Halliday & Hasan, 1976:31)*

At this point a new element should be introduced. Recent studies of what are called "narratives" (Fowler 1981, Jauss 1982, Culler 1983, Eco 1990) have focused on the role the reader performs in the process of narration. Nowadays, s/he is considered to take an active part in the creation of what a text is. A movement from text-oriented to reader-oriented theories has taken place. The latter stress the existence of someone or something without whom a text cannot be fully understood, whereas the former consider the analysis of texts deep enough and sufficient to back up their theories. The spectrum of authors and their points of view is quite wide; some of them consider this element a construct without any specific identity; others think that this reader is a determined person with a number of clearly defined characteristics.

This problem leads us to another issue: the concept of assumed knowledge. A book is not an isolated product which comes out of the writer's mind without any reference to the world it has been created in. In one way or another, authors tend to include some of their own lives, their previous readings, anything that can help readers contextualize the final work they have in front of them. Sometimes, however, the amount of presumably known information is such that a failure in its understanding normally results in a failure in the understanding of the whole book. Fowler, for instance, constantly repeats in *Linguistic Criticism* his presupposition of a previous linguistic knowledge on the part of the reader although the meaning of the words are known to the person facing a text, it is necessary to have had a previous contact with linguistics to fully understand it.

This statement works especially in the case of non-native speakers. As a person whose mother tongue is not English, I can observe how

different works contain a great deal of elements normally well-known for the people who have been in contact with English since they were born, but that may not have a special meaning for the rest of the readers. The nature of this assumed knowledge is usually quite wide, varying from typical idioms and expressions or native writers and their books, to elements of society and geographical or historical locations. That is to say, the author's assumptions about the reader can work in two different directions: the linguistic understanding and command of the language studied, and the cultural competence of the reader about the literature, art, society, etc. of the country where the book has been produced. Native speakers should normally be able to recognise and understand the special linguistic usage an author may make in his/her work. Different registers, idioms, forms typical of either British or American English, etc., all fall under this specific use I am referring to. But the cultural knowledge a writer can call for in his/her work may spread out to many different fields: historic, literary, geographical, etc. In this case, both native and non-native speakers of English must try to keep up with the authors' requirements concerning their readership, either by resorting to their own "erudition", or, on the contrary, by keeping themselves informed through other readings or sources.

I would like to stress the fact that the presence of this supposed knowledge is related to the topic of the "implied reader". The greater the use of this previous knowledge, the more reasons we have to give greater credibility to the theories that include an "addressee" as part of their basic considerations. If an author uses a determined type of information in his/her books it is because s/he expects someone specific to read them. But if you do not belong to the group of readers the author seems to have had in mind when creating his/her narrative, you then need to make further efforts to understand the work you have approached. For non-native speakers this effort means, on the one hand, a study of the language the work has been written in at a deeper level, paying special attention to constructions such as "sayings", "idioms", "set phrases", etc., as well as their implications for the text itself (the amount of these constructions in the book, whether they determine the register of the book or not, whether they are not employed at all, etc.). On the other hand, this effort requires an analysis of the way the cultu-

ral background is brought into the book and an estimation of the extent to which it affects the composition and final meaning of the work.

2. The role of the reader

The importance given to the role performed by the reader in the process of narration has incresed during the last decades. Recent studies have paid more attention to this figure than they used to, when the centre of analysis was the text itself. A quick glance at the number of the different denominations this element has received can give us an idea of its relevance:

> Is he the "Actual Reader" (Van Dijk, Jauss), the "Su-
> perreader" (Riffaterre), the "Informed Reader" (Fish),
> the "Ideal Reader" (Culler), the "Model Reader" (Eco),
> the "Implied Reader" (Booth, Iser, Chatman, Perry)
> or the "Encoded Reader" (Brooke-Rose)? (Rimmon-
> Kenan, 1983: 118)

The different terminology each of the authors uses highlights their own conceptions of who or what the reader is as well as the characteristics each theorist attributes to it. However, before presenting my own notions about it, let us first pay attention to the classification of the narrative process as a whole in order to see where the reader is situated. Chatman systematizes the elements taking part in the process of narration as follows:

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real      implied     (narrator)-----(narratee)--->implied--> real
author    author                                   reader      reader
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(Toolan, 1988:76)

Two blocks could be separated in this scheme, according to their function in the narrative process: a productive part, on the one hand, in

which the "real author", the "implied author" and "the narrator" are included; and a "receptive side" which embodies the concepts of "narratee", "implied reader" and "real reader". The former have always tended to be considered the creative aspects of the process, the elements capable of constructing and originating the final product which is literary fiction. Each of them, with their own function (either the actual writing in the case of the real author, or the fictional creation of the text in the case of the narrator, for instance), have been acknowledged as the real "builders" of texts. The latter, on the other hand, have traditionally received a more passive part in the process; they have been defined as mere recipients of the product created either by the real author, the implied author or the narrator. However the above quotation proves that theorists seem to be more concerned now with the potentiality of a more active role performed by the reader, not simply understanding it as a receiver of the information provided by the "productive members" of the scheme. Following these reader-oriented tendencies I would accentuate not only the importance of the reader, but, more specifically, the figure of the "implied reader", with the connections existing between it and the concepts of assumed knowledge and exophoric reference previously mentioned. But before trying to produce a closer approach to this implied reader let us consider the notions of "narratee" and "real reader".

If we give a primary definition of the implied reader as the person/people the author might have had in mind for the reading of his/her work, it is obvious that the real reader does not always conform with this ideal image. The real reader is simply the person undertaking the task of reading a text. On some occasions there is no conformity between these two concepts, but this lack of harmony does not imply a denial of their existence: I am neither a native speaker nor have I had direct contact with British society or culture in general; so, facing the reading of any novel produced in Britain, I am situated outside the scope or the ideal image the author may have had. But this fact does not prevent us from acknowledging the existence of both the real reader, represented by a non-native speaker, and the sum of all the characteristics any author requires from the implied reader to read his novel. As far as the last element is concerned, the "narratee", it is rather a literary construct, a component of the fictional creation. It is someone addressed within the text, not outside it. Marlow's telling of his stories in *Heart of Darkness* is an example of the presence of these figures:

> *We looked on, waiting patiently - there was nothing*
> *else to do till the end of the flood; but it was only*
> *after a long silence, when he said, in a hesitating*
> *voice, "I suppose you fellows remember I did once*
> *turn fresh-water sailer for a bit", that we knew we*
> *were fated, before the ebb began to turn, to hear about*
> *one of Marlow's inconclusive experiences. (Conrad,*
> *1899: 51)*

These concepts can, sometimes, get blurred together as the three of them belong to the same "receptive block". Yet, their differences are too obvious to group them under any simple heading.

A further peculiarity about the presence of implied readers in texts comes from Rimmon-Kennan's book (1983):

> *At one extreme the concept is of a real reader, whe-*
> *ther a specific individual or the collective readers-*
> *hip of the period. At the other, it is a theoretical cons-*
> *truct, implied or encoded in the text, representing*
> *the interaction of data and the interpretative pro-*
> *cess "invited" by the Text. (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983:*
> *119)*

There are two different standpoints regarding the recognition of this implied reader. Firstly some theorists consider this figure as a determined person with concrete characteristics, that could be incarnated by a particular member of the audience. Other scholars agree with the idea of this reader being a hypothetical entity implied in the text, as long as each text is, primarily conceived to be read. Although the second opinion is basically correct in the sense that it makes reference to the primary function of readers, it is lacking in some other aspects which the concept of implied readers should cover. In relation to this primary function readers fulfil, it is obvious that texts are written to be read, and that readers "complete" them merely by reading. Nevertheless, their duties would be very limited if we considered them as simply abstract constructs whose mission finishes when the process of reading ends. On

the contrary I would rather acquiesce in the second opinion as long as it defines the reader either as an individual or as a collective readership, but at least as someone real. It is important to stress the potential reality of the implied reader because of the implications its existence has for non-native speakers. Normally the author's first choice of readers is made among the native-speaker community. If we only acknowledged the implied reader as an abstract entity, the fact of being a person whose mother tongue is not English would not be so relevant, for the writer would not have created his/her fiction following a model which was expected to be recognized by a determined and specific readership.

But the notion of implied reader also comprises some other features apart from the fact of being "someone" specific. Authors may include in their books a certain amount of information that is expected to be recognised by the reader. The implied reader generally shares or should share not just background knowledge but also a series of beliefs, information, data, etc, indispensable for the comprehension of the text. This makes reference to the concept of "assummed knowledge" mentioned previously. The fact of including a great amount of assumed knowledge in a text is an explicit proof of the author's having someone determined in his/her mind. If all these units are not recognized there can be a failure in the complete fulfilment of the narrative process. In this case the author depends on the reader's recognition, yet not any type of reader but precisely "the implied reader" s/he has conceived when creating his/her fiction. These elements help us in the delineation of this figure which, far from being an ideal abstract object, is a person with certain characteristics, capable of coping with and keeping up with the author's expectations about his/her background knowledge and presumed information.

3. Intertextuality

The description of texts aimed at in this essay cannot be complete until reference is made to the concept of intertextuality. This term was

first introduced in the late 60s by Julia Kristeva in her discussion of the ideas of Bakhtin. From that moment many critics have incorporated this term in their theories. Wales defines it as follows:

> *Basically, it can be defined as UTTERANCES / TEXTS in relation to other utterances / texts. So even within a single text there can be, as it were, a continual dialogue between the text given and other texts / utterances that exist outside it, literary and non-literary: either within that same period of composition, or in previous centuries. (Wales, 1989:259)*

Intertextuality is, therefore, the capacity present in texts to evoke some other texts, either explicitly quoting them or simply by referring to the theories there presented. According to this opinion, our perception of fiction in general is determined by our previous encounters with other literary productions.

De Beaugrande & Dressler (1972) make reference to the importance of intertextuality in literary fiction. They mention it as one of the elements that helps texts function as such:

> *The seventh standard of textuality is to be called INTERTEXTUALITY and concerns the factors which make the utilization of one text dependent upon knowledge of one or more previously encountered texts. (De Beaugrande & Dressler, 1972:10)*

In their definition of what a text is, they give as much importance to the last factor as they do to the actual linguistic peculiarities of the text. Unity in texts, as it was said in the first section, does not simply depend on their construction, or on their balance in the exposition of the subject-matter. The fact of making other texts act and speak through the lines of the particular one being analysed is equally relevant.

David Lodge agrees with this opinion and proves it, not only in his novels but in his literary commentaries as well:

> *The meaning of a book is in large part a product of*
> *its differences from and similarities to other books.*
> *If a novel did not bear some resemblance to other*
> *novels we should not know how to read it and if it*
> *wasn't different from all other novels we shouldn't*
> *want to read it. Any adequate reading of a text, the-*
> *refore, involves identifying and classifying it in re-*
> *lation to other texts, according to content, genre,*
> *mode, period, and so on. (Lodge, 1981:3-4)*

His conception goes further in subsequent books, to the extent of ackowledging the indispensability of intertextuality for a complete understanding of literary texts:

> *Since I combined writing fiction with an academic*
> *career for nearly thirty years it is not surprising that*
> *my own novels became increasingly intertextual; [...]*
> *to make the point that intertextuality is not, or not*
> *necessarily, a merely decorative addition to a text,*
> *but sometimes a crucial factor in its conception and*
> *composition. (Lodge, 1992:102)*

He openly states that the fact of being a critic as well as a writer has influenced greatly the degree of intertextuality used in his literary fiction. In his case a mixing of linguistic, philosophical and literary theories, together with the mentioning of several authors and books, create a network of relationships upon which the author has built his books.

In order to illustrate the relevance of this phenomenon I will use three of Lodge's novels. The trilogy formed by *Changing Places*, *Small World* and *Nice Work* constitute a perfect source to take samples from. Intertextuality can manifest itself through different methods. One which seems to be working in the first book of the trilogy is "borrowing", in the form of quotation of the names of books or authors. Each time the writer recalls the presence of this knowledge, he is expecting a reaction of recognition on the part of the reader. The type of reality the author may

be trying to bring out is normally of a quite widespread nature. On some occasions the title of a book serves as a means to include humour in the novel, as is the case in *Changing Places*: Morris Zapp, one of the main characters of the novel, realises that the plane he is flying in towards England is all full of women who are going to have an abortion; he begins a conversation with the girl sitting next to him and, thanks to her, he gets to know that all those women have bought a kind of "package holiday" which icludes the flight, the operation and a visit to Stratford-upon-Avon to see one of Shakespeare's plays. Morris's first reaction before this is to ask her: "All's well that ends well?", obviously trying to mock the weird and casual circumstances of these women's journey, considering what they are really flying for. At other times, Lodge uses this borrowing as mere illustration of the kind of world the main characters are living in, since they are teachers of English Literature who have swapped their University posts on a study leave:

> *He was as happy with* Beowulf *as with Viginia Woolf,*
> *with* Waiting for Godot *as with* Gammer Gurton's
> Needle. *(Lodge, 1975:17)*

What he is really trying to suggest is the lack of specialization by Philip Swallow (another character) who does not mind working either with literature of the 20th century, of the 16th or with medieval literary compositions. As long as Univertity teachers are supposed to, generally limit the scope of their period and study it in depth, Philip appears as quite an indecisive type of person from the very beginning of the book (in fact this characteristic accompanies him throughout the novel).

A second type of borrowing includes the following of some structural models as the main line governing and connecting the plot. This is the case in the second novel of the trilogy, in which Lodge decides to base the story of the scholars travelling around the world on the story of king Arthur, the knights of the round Table and their searching for the Holy Grail:

> *The "break-through" point in the genesis of* Small
> World *came when I perceived the possibility of ba-*
> *sing a comic-satiric novel about the academic jet set*
> *[...] on the story of King arthur and his Knights of*
> *the round Table and their quest for the Grail, espe-*
> *cially as interpreted by Jessie L. Weston in a book*
> *that T. S. Eliot had raided for "The Waste Land".*
> *(Lodge, 1992:102)*

The characters are featured as being themselves knights in a literary world, looking for some type of truth, involving both literature and their own lives at the same time. On some occasions this searching entails funny situations because the lives of the characters get extremely complicated, like, for instance, Persse McGarrigle's desperate love. It leads him to discover that the woman he is in love with has a twin sister; that both girls were adopted after having being found on a plane; that they are, in fact, the daughters of two other lecturers attending these conferences and that the mother, having abandoned them in that plane, pretended to have found them instead.

There is a profound use of borrowing in *Nice Work*. Each of the six sections the book is divided into is headed by a quotatiom, thematically related this time to the progression in the development of the novel. They act as introduction or hint at what that particular section is going to deal with:

> *Mrs Thornton went on after a moment's pause; 'Do*
> *you know anything of Milton, Miss Hale? Have you*
> *seen any of our factories? Our magnificent ware-*
> *houses?' Elisabeth Gaskell:* North and South. *(Lod-*
> *ge, 1988:91)*

In this chapter Dr. Robyn Penrose is about to go, for the first time, to the factory where she is supposed to "shadow" the co-protagonist of the book, Mr. Wilcox. The reason for this is a program of interchange between the University and one company, among all those established in the industrial town of Rummidge. But in *Nice Work* what really predominates, as far as this process of borrowing is concerned, is the

comparison between literary theories and the real world, a kind of practical application of the somewhat abstract hypotheses to the material reality of everyday life. The female protagonist makes use of her deconstructive knowledge and her feminist ideology to explain an advertisement of cigarettes, for instance or in her conversations with her "shadow" Mr. Wilcox, trying to convince him about her semiotic point of view.

Thus, acting at different levels, intertextuality does not only add something to the creation of texts, but is an essential part of them, itself. These three novels are a good example, as we have seen, for the kind of exophoric reference brought into them is mainly intertextual. The use of this exophoric reference is directly linked with the idea of assumed knowledge. The amount of intertextual information amalgamated with the development of the main story line forces us to think, once again, about the intention of the author and the type of reader in his mind when creating his fiction. He clearly thought about a person with enough linguistic knowledge to differentiate or at least recognise the theories present in the text. Facing the novels from this point of view, the fact of being a non-native speaker does not constitute such a hindrance for their understanding. It is obvious that native speakers enjoy more advantages in this respect, but the type of connections summoned up with these intertextual links are more easily appreciated than, let us say, for instance, the socio-cultural ones. The latter imply, most of the time, a direct contact with the society in which the text has been created, implications difficult to appreciate through the mere reading of books. I do not intend to be deterministic about the impossibility of understanding texts in a language different from one's own, but the obstacles and difficulties are there, and should be recognised.

4. Conclusion

In order to summarise the main lines of approach in this essay it is necessary to go back to the concept of text as a group of sentences linked together upon which some kind of unity has been imposed. Such a circumstance is achieved through the interaction of both linguistic and extralinguistic factors. The implications of this recognition for non-

native speakers are quite revealing since, to a certain extent they make some of the hypotheses previously analysed much more obvious. That is the case with intratextual processes. But, nonetheless, the ackowledgement of an implied reader for a non-native speaker exposes the potential difficulties that not complying with the ideal "implied reader" can convey.
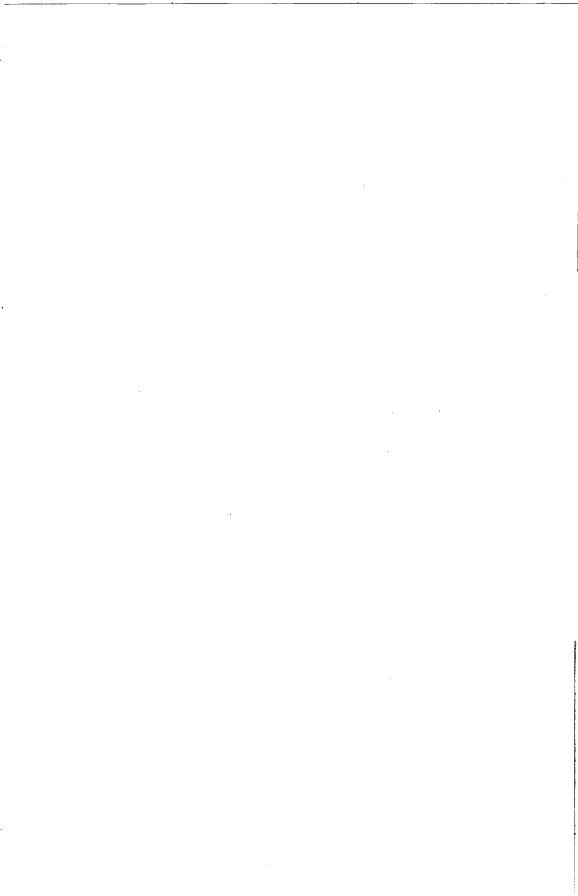
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"THEY ARE DEVILS OF THE PIT!": CONCEPCIONES DE LA MUJER EN *DRACULA* DE B. STOKER (I)

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to deepen into some of the female characters in Bram Stoker's Dracula: *the three vampire sisters and Lucy Westenra. The analysis will lead us to demonstrate that this Victorian writer chose the vampire myth as a suitable way of portraying a threatening model of femininity: a new female type whose behaviour was a challenge to the traditional Victorian woman- primarily defined as mother and wife- and which had to be consequently condemned.*

Indudablemente es en la caracterización de Mina Murray y Lucy Westenra donde el dublinés Bram Stoker se esmeró con especial cuidado. Ciertamente este autor no está considerado entre los maestros de la literatura inglesa; de todas sus obras,[1] sólo *Dracula*- publicada por primera vez en 1897[2]- goza de cierto atractivo para la crítica literaria, y éste ciertamente muy limitado: "*Dracula*'s great success cannot be attributed to conventional literary strength, in which the work is

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[1] Antes de inmortalizar la figura del conde rumano, Stoker había visto publicadas cinco obras: *The Duties of Clerks of Petty Sessions in Ireland* (1879), *Under the Sunset* (1881), *The Snake's Pass* (1890), *The Watter's Mou* (1895), *The Shoulder of Shasta* (1895). Tras *Dracula* (1897) y hasta su muerte aparecerán diez más: *Miss Betty* (1898), *The Mystery of the Sea* (1902), *The Jewel of the Seven Stars* (1903), *The Man* (1905), *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving* (1906), *Lady Athlyne* (1908), *Snowbound: The Record of a Theatrical Touring Party* (1909), *The Lady of the Shroud* (1909), *Famous Imposters* (1911), *The Lair of the White Worm* (1911).

[2] Esta primera edición del libro fue realizada por Archibald Constable and Company. La que nosotros utilizaremos es la de Maurice Hindley, publicada por Penguin en 1993.

deficient" (Bentley 1988:25). Refiriéndonos concretamente a la presen-
tación de los personajes masculinos y dejando a un lado las escenas ini-
ciales en el castillo de Drácula donde el autor nos presenta a Jonathan
Harker y al Conde, los demás protagonistas de la obra existen como
personajes literarios sólo con los recursos mínimos. El mismo Conde va
desdibujándose: su presencia real es dejada para algunas escenas pun-
tuales, existiendo en la obra prácticamente sólo como una amenaza en
la mente de sus posibles víctimas. De entre los cinco miembros de la
cuadrilla que acabará con el vampiro- J. Harker, el Dr. Seward, Q.P.
Morris, A. Holmwood y Van Helsing- sólo este último es presentado con
más detalle, siendo el resto meros instrumentos de sus decisiones. Sin
embargo, y retomando así la argumentación inicial, Stoker sacó lo me-
jor de sí a la hora de dibujar los dos personajes femeninos a los que
aludiéramos al principio, hasta tal punto que son ellas- y no ellos- las
que llevan el peso de la obra y los posibles honores.

Los primeros cuatro capítulos de la novela tienen todos un narra-
dor masculino. Jonathan Harker, agente inmobiliario para más señas,
escribe en su diario todos los acontecimientos de su estancia en un leja-
no castillo de Transilvania: el propietario, un inquietante conde rumano,
quiere adquirir una mansión en Londres y él ha de ultimar los detalles
con el aristócrata. Estamos pues ante un *bis-a-bis* entre dos personajes
masculinos; y sin embargo ya desde el principio, Harker ha hecho ano-
taciones en su diario referidas a aldeanas que va encontrando en su
viaje hacia el castillo (Stoker 1993:9,10). Muy pronto conocemos tam-
bién, por las frecuentes referencias que a ella hace el narrador, a la que
será la protagonista de la novela, Wilhelmina Murray, su prometida
(Stoker 1993:7,9,25). La presencia femenina está en el recuerdo de
Harker, pero también en el aire del castillo; en una de las ocasiones que
se dispone a escribir en su diario, el narrador tiene unos segundos para
la evocación: "Here I am, sitting at a little oak table where in old times
possibly some fair lady sat to pen, with much thought and many blushes,
her ill-spelt love-letter,..." (Stoker 1993:51). Y lo que era sólo una pre-
sencia etérea toma forma entre las paredes de la mansión.

El episodio más significativo de los capítulos iniciales del libro es
sin duda el encuentro con las tres vampiras. El mismo Conde se ocupa

de prevenir a su huésped del inminente peligro que le amenaza si éste se adentra por determinadas estancias de su castillo:

> *"Let me advise you, my dear young friend- nay, let me warn you with all seriousness, that should you leave these rooms you will not by any chance go to sleep in any other part of the castle. It is old, and has many memories, and there are bad dreams for those who sleep unwisely. Be warned! Should sleep now or ever overcome you, or be like to do, then haste to your own chamber or to these rooms, for your rest will then be safe. But if you be not careful in this respect, then"-... (Stoker 1993:47-8)*

Esos "bad dreams" a los que se refiere Drácula resultarán ser las tres vampiras que sorprenderán al incauto Harker en una de sus excursiones. Al materializarse estas tres mujeres, ni Harker ni el lector conocen la naturaleza del peligro que traen consigo. Así, frente a ellas, el narrador parece experimentar atracción, más que miedo o rechazo:

> *In the moonlight opposite me were three young women, ladies by their dress and manner. I thought at the time that I must be dreaming when I saw them, for, though the moonlight was behind them, they threw no shadow on the floor. They came close to me and loked at me for some time, and then whispered together. Two were dark, and had high aquiline noses, like the Count, and great dark, piercing eyes, that seemed to be almost red when contrasted with the pale yellow moon. The other was fair, as fair as can be, with great wavy masses of golden hair and eyes like pale sapphires. I seemed somehow to know her face, and to know it in connection with some dreamy fear, but I could not recollet at the momment how or where. All three had brilliant white teeth, that shone like pearls against the ruby of their voluptuous lips. (Stoker 1993:53)*

Harker es plenamente consciente del deseo sexual que va tomando forma en él e intenta reprimirlo. Desde ese momento, atracción y repulsión serán los dos polos entre los que oscilará su actitud ante las vampiras:

> There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear. I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips. It is not good to note this down, lest some day it should meet Mina's eyes and cause her pain; but it is the truth. (Stoker 1993: 53)

Las intenciones de las tres damas parecen ser puramente carnales y nada más. Sus palabras y sus gestos no hacen sino confirmar esta sospecha:

> The fair girl shook her head coquettishly, and the other two urged her on. One said:-
>
> "Go on! You are first, and we shall follow; yours is the right to begin." The other added:-
>
> "He is young and strong; there are kisses for us all".
> (Stoker 1993:53)

Comenta Bentley que la literatura victoriana, y dejando a un lado algunos ejemplos de literatura erótica de escasa difusión, evitaba las alusiones directas a temas relacionados con la sexualidad (1988:26). Y sin embargo estamos ahora ante tres personajes que muestran con absoluto descaro sus intenciones. Parece como si la naturaleza no-humana de las tres damas les permitiera un modelo de comportamiento impensable para los personajes "vivos" del libro. Su compromiso con Mina y sus convicciones morales llevan a Harker a rechazar una aventura sexual que cada vez se presenta como más inmediata: su oposición, sin embargo, es nula, abandonándose en una especie de sopor hipnótico. Ellas adoptan el papel de iniciadoras de la actividad sexual, tres damas seduciendo a un hombre, mientras que él se limita a ser un mero receptor pasivo; "the ultimate male fantasy", en palabras de Leatherdale (1993:157)

Tras las figuras de estas vampiras Leatherdale adivina a las "New Women" de finales del siglo pasado. Equivalentes y antecesoras de las feministas actuales pretendían liberarse de los condicionantes y barreras que la sociedad victoriana- y los siglos anteriores- les había impuesto. Se mostraban especialmente activas a la hora de desafiar las convenciones referentes a la sexualidad: "what united them in the public image was their willingness to speak more frankly than before on sexual matters from a female perspective" (Leatherdale 1993:145). Las vampiresas que sorprenden a Harker están movidas por su instinto a conseguir la sangre de Harker; pero íntimamente ligado a este propósito- connatural a él- se encuentra su deseo de satisfacer un abierto impulso sexual. Curiosamente es la llegada del Conde la que impide que el asalto llegue a sus últimas consecuencias. En su frustración, la más hermosa de las vampiras hace a Drácula un reproche sin duda revelador. No le muestra ésta su enfado por no haber podido succionar la sangre de Harker, sino por que el Conde ha impedido que las tres seduzcan a su joven huésped: "'You yourself never loved; you never love!'" (Stoker 1993:55).

Entre las otras reivindicaciones de las "New Women", resultaba especialmente conflictivo su rechazo a los papeles tradicionales de la mujer, en otras palabras, el de madre y, consecuentemente, esposa. Por ello, en sus reuniones abordaban algunos de los temas considerados tabú en el momento: relaciones sexuales sin matrimonio, las enfermedades venéreas o la contracepción (Leatherdale 1993:155). A propósito de este rechazo a la maternidad que las más radicales propugnaban, es ilustrativa la manera en la que el Conde zanja la disputa y calma a las tres vampiras. Harker va recuperando paulatinamente la lucidez justo a tiempo de observar con horror cómo el Conde, en respuesta a la pregunta de una de ellas: "'Are we to have nothing tonight?'" (Stoker 1993:55); les entrega a un pequeño niño con el cual desaparecen (Stoker 1993:55-6). Stoker está trazando una conexión muy clara entre estas "anti-madres" y su amenazante sexualidad, o en palabras de Ken Gelder, "between sexually aggressive women and 'bad-mothers'" (75). Estamos ante la destrucción del ideal materno a manos de unas mujeres definidas exclusivamente por su voracidad carnal. Si este episodio es suficientemente ilustrativo de esto, no lo es menos otro que Harker relata poco después. En busca de su hijo, una campesina de la zona llega ante las murallas del castillo; Harker la ve a través de la ventana:

She threw herself on her knees, and raising up her
hands, cried the same words in tones which wrung
my heart. Then she tore her hair and beat her breast,
and abandoned herself to all violences of extravagant
emotion. Finally, she threw herself forward, and,
though I could not see her, I could hear the beating
of her neked hands against the door. (Stoker 1993:64)

El conde llama a los lobos, que inmediatamente la devoran: "There was no cry from the woman, and the howling of the wolves was but short. Before long they streamed away singly, licking their lips" (Stoker 1993:64). No podemos evitar pensar que, de alguna manera, Stoker asocia- al menos de forma inconsciente- a las bestias que devoran a la madre con las tres "weird sisters" (Stoker 1993:67). La alusión explícita que hace el narrador a que los lobos se relamen los labios nos recuerda a esa otra idéntica expresión que utilizara páginas atrás referida a una de las vampiras: "and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal" (Stoker 1993:54). No se trata, en modo alguno, de una referencia aislada. Inmediatamente después Harker alude a "the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth" (Stoker 1993:54) y a "the churning sound of her tongue as it licked her teeth and lips" (Stoker 1993:54). Más adelante, de nuevo, al descubrirlas al otro lado de su puerta, Harker vuelve a repetir lo mismo: "and saw without the three terrible women licking their lips" (Stoker 1993:70). La conexión es obvia, y el mismo narrador parece ponerla de manifiesto de modo explícito cuando, a propósito de la forma en la que el Conde aleja a las vampiras de él, comenta:

With a fierce sweep of his arm, he hurled the woman
from him, and then motioned to the others, as though
he were beating them back; it was the same imperio-
us gesture that I had seen used to the wolves. (Stoker
1993:55)

No es ocioso recordar en este sentido la advertencia que Stoker pone en boca de Thomas Bilder, el guardián del Zoológico de Londres: "you can't trust wolves no more nor women" (Stoker 1993:179); tampoco está

de más mencionar la capacidad que según la tradición tenían los vampiros de transformarse en animales, el lobo entre ellos.[3]

Ya tendremos ocasión más adelante de volver a las tres hermanas. Ahora, sin embargo, nos centraremos en otro de los personajes femeninos que aparecen en la novela y cuyas características son muy similares a las ya vistas: nos referimos a la primera víctima femenina del Conde en Londres. Lucy es una chica de veinte años perteneciente a la alta sociedad victoriana y, por lo demás, de una simpleza absoluta. Sin empleo conocido, dedica su tiempo a las diversiones típicas de una mujer bien acomodada: "we go a good deal to picture-galleries and for walks and rides in the park" (Stoker 1993:75). A su edad parece no estar interesada en otra cosa que no sea coleccionar propuestas de matrimonio por parte de cuantos más pretendientes mejor, una práctica, por otra parte, bastante común entre sus contemporáneas (Leatherdale 1993:141). El atractivo de Lucy se limita al puramente físico. Stoker evita una descripción directa y sólo por alusiones indirectas sabemos que era de piel blanca, de complexión delgada, sus pies pequeños, y morena. En un sólo día recibe tres proposiciones matrimoniales, algo que relata con todo detalle a su amiga Mina en una carta fechada el 24 de Mayo (Stoker 1993:79-82). Sus palabras, escritas en confianza, reflejan con claridad cuales son sus sentimientos a propósito de esto. Ciertamente, no puede evitar sentirse alagada en su situación: así se lo cuenta a Mina, sin importarle la angustia de esta última, por el momento sin noticias sobre el paradero de su prometido. Incluso le hace un comentario que, como mínimo, está totalmente fuera de lugar; el Dr. Seward, uno de sus tres pretendientes, le convendría a ella: "...a man that would just *do for you*, if you were not already engaged to Jonathan. He is an excellent *parti*, being handsome, well off and of good birth" (Stoker 1993:75-6). En absoluto hay el más mínimo atisbo de mala intención por su parte, sino más bien una frivolidad que, pareja con su inocencia, hacen de ella un personaje definido en ocasiones como "silly, transparent, gushy, giggly, beautiful and good" (Wolf 1972:208-9).

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[3] Van Helsing, en su largo discurso sobre las facultades del vampiro, explica: "He can transform himself to wolf,..." (Stoker 1993:307).

Hay ocasiones, sin embargo, en las que esta inocencia de Lucy supone una amenaza más o menos velada a las convenciones morales victorianas. Es nuevamente en su carta del 24 de Mayo, donde Miss Westenra hace de pasada una afirmación muy significativa. Ante el atractivo y cualidades de sus tres pretendientes, Lucy exclama: "Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble?" (Stoker 1993:81). Inmediatamente después de que estas palabras salgan de su pluma, Lucy se retracta de lo escrito: "But this is heresy, and I must not say it" (Stoker 1993: 81). No cabe duda de que se trata de una frase dicha en la excitación del momento y que no tendría más importancia ni trascendencia; el lector bien podría olvidarse de ella. Lo cierto es que, pese a todo, los acontecimientos posteriores hacen que su pregunta adquiera un insospechado matiz.

Por sus características Lucy constituye la persona más propensa a ser la primera víctima femenina del Conde; así lo expresaba Leatherdale en 1993: "So inclined, she makes an ideal 'Eve', for the visiting serpent,..." (140). Y en efecto, Drácula no encuentra en ella ninguna resistencia al proceso de vampirización. Sólo van Helsing y su cuadrilla se oponen frontalmente a que Lucy se convierta en algo parecido a las tres damas que Harker encontró en la mansión del Conde. El episodio de las transfusiones de sangre a las que Lucy se ve sometida se enmarca en la serie de intentos desesperados de salvarla, pero hay algo más. Y es que creemos que existe una conexión clara entre el hecho de dar sangre y el matrimonio. Curiosamente es Art Holmwood, prometido de Lucy, el primero que se presta a la operación: todos entienden que así debe ser por ser él su futuro marido. Así lo entiende también el mismo Art quien, una vez muerta su amada, se expresará en ese sentido:

> "..., we were standing beside Arthur, who, poor fellow, was speaking of his part in the operation where his blood had been transfused to his Lucy's veins; I could see Van Helsing's face grow white and purple by turns, Arthur was saying that he felt since then as if they two had been really married, and that she was his wife in the sight of God" (Stoker 1993: 225)

Van Helsing no puede evitar sentir rubor puesto que, aunque Arthur lo ignore, tanto él como el Dr. Seward y, por último, Q.P. Morris, han prestado también su sangre a Lucy. Seward, al llegar su turno, ponía de manifiesto el significado que para él tenía la operación: "No man knows till he experiences it, what it is to feel his own life-blood drawn away into the veins of the woman he loves" (Stoker 1993:167). Cuando insiste en dar la misma cantidad de sangre que dio Art, Van Helsing le disuade explicando que: "'He is her lover, her *fiancé...*" (Stoker 1993:168). El mismo Van Helsing es también consciente de las connotaciones inherentes a la transfusión y así lo explica, a propósito del comentario de Art, sin poder evitar cierto deje irónico:

> *"If so that, then what about the others? Ho, ho! Then*
> *so sweet maid is a polyandrist, and me, with my poor*
> *wife dead to me, but alive by Church's law, though*
> *no wits, all gone- even I, who am a faithful husband*
> *to this now no-wife, am bigamist." (Stoker 1993:227).*

Como vemos, pues, los hechos han concedido a Lucy el privilegio de desposarse no sólo con sus tres pretendientes, sino además también con el doctor Van Helsing, sin olvidar al Conde. Las palabras de Van Helsing son una denuncia, quizá inconsciente, a la promiscuidad de Lucy. Ciertamente, ella no es moralmente responsable de nada de esto; simplemente los hechos la sitúan en una posición muy delicada. Y sin embargo, una vez vampirizada, la sexualidad de Lucy adquiere la agresividad que ya viéramos en las tres "weird sisters". Así ya en el primer encuentro con la nueva Lucy, lo que había sido algo latente o meramente intuido, sale ahora a la luz:

> *Lucy Westenra, but yet how changed. The sweetness*
> *was turned to adamantine, heartless cruelty, and the*
> *purity to voluptuous wantonness. ... we could see that*
> *the lips were crimson with fresh blood, and that the*
> *stream had trickled over her chin and stained the*
> *purity of her lawn death-robe. (271)*

El nuevo estado de Miss Westenra permite a Stoker presentarla en los mismos términos que presentara a las tres hermanas; de inmediato, sorprendida por la cuadrilla de Van Helsing a la entrada de su cripta, Lucy se dirige a Art:

> *when she advanced to him with outstretched arms and a wantom smile, he fell back and hid his face in his hands.*
>
> *She still advanced, however, and with a languorous, voluptuous grace, said:-*
>
> *"Come to me, Arthur. Leave these others and come to me. My arms are hungry for you. Come, and we can rest together. Come, my husband, come!" (Stoker 1993:271-2)*

Estamos de nuevo ante la demonización de las actitudes enarboladas por las New Women que Stoker, sin duda, veía con recelo. La promiscuidad descarada de esta Lucy va acompañada necesariamente, y como sucediera con las tres damas del castillo, de un rechazo abierto a la maternidad. Como primer anticipo de esto, es curioso observar cómo a medida que Lucy se va vampirizando, la vida de su madre se debilita progresivamente. Este proceso culmina una mañana en la cual, tras la visita del vampiro, la madre aparece muerta, su cadáver junto a Lucy que agoniza (Stoker 1993:190). Con la defunción de Mrs. Westenra, muere también la maternidad, y así serán precisamente niños las primeras víctimas de Lucy. Stoker pretende con esto cargar las tintas y tocar la fibra sensible del lector, conseguir el rechazo y la repulsión por las vampiresas cuya crueldad desmedida les lleva a violar algo tradicionalmente intocable: la infancia. Tanto Lucy como las tres hermanas no sólo no cuidan niños, sino que se alimentan de ellos. Una de las víctimas de Lucy presenta un penoso aspecto: "It was terribly weak, and looked quite emaciated" (Stoker 1993:230). Sin duda el momento álgido de esta violación de la maternidad por parte de Lucy tiene lugar cuando la cuadrilla de Van Helsing la está esperando a la entrada de su mausoleo. Ella no se retrasará.

> *We saw a white figure advance- a dim white figure,*
> *which held something dark at its breast. The figure*
> *stopped, and at the moment a ray of moonlight fell*
> *between the masses of driving clouds and showed in*
> *startling prominence a dark-haired woman, dressed*
> *in the cerements of the grave. We could not see the*
> *face, for it was bent down over what we saw to be a*
> *fair-haired child. There was a pause and a sharp*
> *little cry, such as a child gives in sleep,... (Stoker*
> *1993:270)*

Estamos ante una burla morbosa de la maternidad: una mujer que sujeta a un niño contra su pecho y lo acurruca, pero cuyas intenciones son todo lo opuesto que pueden ser al cariño de una madre. Seward la describe "growling over it as a dog growls over a bone" (Stoker 1993:271). Al verse descubierta, no duda en arrojar al bebé al suelo; justo en ese momento intenta seducir con descaro a Holmwood. La apariencia de maternidad, deja paso a la agresividad sexual que realmente la define. El mismo Seward describe el efecto que la escena produce en la cuadrilla, efecto que seguramente el lector comparte. Este doctor que antes amara a Lucy no duda en afirmar: "At that moment the remnant of my love passed into hate and loathing; had she then to be killed, I could have done it with savage delight" (Stoker 1993:271). Es ahora cuando el lector está del todo preparado para asistir a la destrucción de Lucy, auténtico punto álgido de la novela, verdadero clímax.

La muerte de Lucy ha de ser una especie de inmolación en la que se destruyan todas las amenazas que su existencia plantea. Obviamente no nos referimos sólo al peligro físico inherente a sus excursiones nocturnas, sino más bien al nuevo modelo femenino que hay detrás de su personaje: mujeres sexualmente liberadas, que huyen de los roles tradicionales que la sociedad les plantea (madre y esposa), y que, en último término, no están sometidas a ninguna autoridad masculina. Por ello ha de ser Art Holmwood, su prometido, el que clave la estaca en su corazón. Dejando a un lado las posibles connotaciones sexuales del hecho en sí (Bentley 1988:30; Leatherdale 1993:161-2; Gelder 1994:76-7), parece obvio que el que iba a ser su marido sea precisamente quien ponga punto final a su rebeldía:

> *Arthur placed the point over the heart, and as I looked I could see its dint in the white flesh. Then he struck with all his might.*

> *The Thing in the coffin writhed; and a hideous, blood-curdling screech came from the opened red lips. The body shook and quivered and twisted in wild contortions; the sharp white teeth champed together till the lips were cut, and the mouth was smeared with a crimson foam. But Arthur never faltered. He looked like a figure of Thor as his untrembling arm rose and fell, driving deeper and deeper the mercy-bearing stake, whilst the blood from the pierced heart welled and spurted up around it. His face was set, and high duty seemed to shine through it; the sight of it gave us corage, so that our voices seemed to ring through the little vault.*

> *And then the writhing and quivering of the body became less, and the teeth ceased to champ, and the face to quiver. Finally it lay still. The terrible task was over (Stoker 1993:277).*

Para el lector moderno, el pasaje parece sacado de alguna película "gore" o de serie B. Así ha de ser, pues la sanguinolencia con la que Lucy es destruida es indicativa de la gravedad de su falta- siempre desde el punto de vista de Stoker. Con su muerte se elimina todo lo que de indómito hay en su feminidad. La alusión al dios escandinavo Thor es del todo desafortunada, creemos, y viene a simbolizar de modo gráfico esa supremacía masculina que Lucy ha cuestionado. La supremacía del varón se plantea también en el plano moral: es Arthur quien consigue con su acto ("high duty") la salvación eterna del alma de Lucy. Por si quedaba alguna duda- y tras invitar a Arthur a que abandone el sepulcro (hubiera sido demasiado para él...)- Seward y Van Helsing decapitan a Lucy y le llenan la boca de ajo (Stoker 1993:279). Ambos son remedios tradicionales para impedir el retorno del No-Muerto; pero también- y al tratarse de una mujer- la forma de cegar sus armas de seducción: la belleza facial y el susurro de su voz. Antes de esto, el autor nos ha descrito con detalle cómo Lucy recupera su apariencia angelical: la mujer vuelve a

adaptarse al patrón masculino previsto para ella; todos contemplan con
satisfacción a la verdadera Lucy, libre de todo atisbo de desafío:

> *There, in the coffin lay no longer the foul Thing that*
> *we had so dreaded and grown to hate that the work*
> *of her destruction was yielded a priviledge to the one*
> *best entitled to it, but Lucy as we had seen her in her*
> *life, with her face of unequalled sweetness and purity.*
> *(Stoker 1993:278)*

Dracula termina realmente en la página 278; el resto de la novela
es un puro desarrollo argumental: el Conde ha de ser destruido. Aunque
Stoker intenta suscitar el interés del lector en la persecución de Drácula,
apenas lo consigue y la novela se desinfla al final: la misma muerte del
vampiro es descrita en tan sólo ¡9 renglones! (Stoker 1993:484). Sucede
que la verdadera amenaza no ha sido él, sino Lucy o las tres vampiras
de su mansión; a propósito de esto comenta K. Gelder: "For Stoker-
according to this account- women, rather than Dracula, are the central
horror in the novel: the vampire is simply the means by which that
horror can be realised (1994:77). El último acto de la historia es la des-
trucción de las tres hermanas a manos de Van Helsing. En una historia
en la que no ha aparecido ni una sola figura paterna, él simboliza los
atributos del padre que intenta proteger a los que están a su cargo. Por
eso ha de ser él quien acabe con esas "bad-mothers" que Stoker presen-
tara al inicio de la obra satisfaciendo su apetito con un bebé. Es aquí
donde la novela parece recuperar algo de su atractivo, mientras Van
Helsing se interna en la cripta donde ellas descansan. Allí, en una at-
mósfera de pestilencia sepulcral, con el polvo cubriendo como un suda-
rio las formas, Van Helsing experimenta la seducción de las vampiras:

> *She lay in her Vampire sleep, so full of life and*
> *voluptuous beauty that I shudder as though I had*
> *come to do murder. (...)*
>
> *There is some fascination, surely, when I am moved*
> *by the mere presence of such an one, even lying as*

> *she lay in a tomb fretted with age and heavy with*
> *the dust of centuries, though there be that horrid*
> *odour such as the lairs of the Count have had. Yes, I*
> *was moved- I, Van Helsing, with all my purpose and*
> *with my motive for hate- I was moved to a yearning*
> *for delay which seemed to paralyse my faculties and*
> *to clog my very soul. (Stoker 1993:475)*

Sólo el recuerdo de otra mujer, Mina Murray, le saca de su sopor ("For it was the voice of my dear Madam Mina that I heard" (Stoker 1993:475)). Al llegar a la última de las vampiras, a aquella que tomara la iniciativa en la seducción de Harker, Van Helsing vuelve a sentirse paralizado y describe, casi abiertamente, el impulso sexual que experimenta al contemplarla:

> *I find in a high great tomb as if made to a one much*
> *beloved that other fair sister which, like Jonathan I*
> *had seen to gather herself out of the atoms of the*
> *mist. She was so fair to look on, so radiantly*
> *beautiful, so exquisitely voluptuous, that the very*
> *instinct of man in me, which calls some of my sex to*
> *love and to protect one of hers, made my head whirl*
> *with new emotion. (476)*

El detalle de la magnificencia de su tumba, las palabras de Van Helsing ("a one much beloved") y el especial rango que las otras dos le reconocieran (Stoker 1993:54), todo parece señalar que ella era la preferida del Conde. Van Helsing las elimina a las tres. En esta ocasión Stoker no se detiene a narrar con detalle su muerte: no hace falta pues el lector ya conoce el proceso. Por ello se conforma con una somera referencia a la dificultad y dureza de la tarea, "a butcher work" en palabras de Van Helsing (Stoker 1993:476). En los tres casos, y como sucediera con Lucy, los rostros recuperan la paz cuando las estacas atraviesan los corazones; pero al decapitarlas sucede algo que no pasó con Lucy: "...the whole body began to melt away and crumble into its native dust, as though the death that should have come centuries agone had at last asserted himself

and say at once and loud 'I am here!'" (Stoker 1993:477). Tras la apariencia de hermosura, la muerte muestra la verdadera putrefacción de sus cuerpos, señal visible de su corrupción interior, el castigo ineludible por haber transgredido las normas durante siglos. Van Helsing pone fin a esa especie de harén sepulcral al que Mina Murray se habría unido para ser la nueva favorita, de no haber sido salvada por la cuadrilla. Ella presenta un modelo de mujer frontalmente opuesto a los aquí reflejados, y será tema de un próximo análisis.

Escrita a finales del siglo XIX, *Dracula* muestra los recelos de un anglicano convencido frente a algunas voces femeninas que coreaban consignas desafiantes. La demonización de los personajes femeninos que aquí hemos analizado puede resultar para el lector moderno carente de actualidad: muchos de las reivindicaciones de las New Women son hoy algo cotidiano. Por ello nuestra apreciación del horror que conllevan podría quedarse en lo meramente anecdótico, superficial, puramente emocional. Pese a ser esto así, es posible leer *Dracula* y experimentar cierta inquietud. No en vano el mito tiene todavía en nuestros días plena actualidad, tanto literaria como cinematográfica. Y quizá, al leer la novela en un confortable sillón, aún volvemos la cabeza hacia detrás para comprobar con alivio que estamos solos.

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TINIEBLAS NÍVEAS: DELIRIOS DE FATALIDAD Y VAMPIRISMO EN *THE DRIFTING SNOW* DE AUGUST DERLETH

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Abstract

A meeting of two generations in Aunt Mary's mansion, a place too distant from anywhere, a weird paradise in the limits of existence. The lost souls in the story face a growing sense of fear, terror to Aunt's Mary's own spectres and the threat of a snow storm, being both the murmuring curse of isolation. The nightmare develops, and as the wind drifts the veils of snow outside, the slaves to a sure-to-become destiny, death, also wander in despair trying to close their eyes to damnation. No one is sure this night, not now that the snow of the past is embracing the present, now that fate will reign upon them. Aunt Mary knows this for sure. Beyond the windows, the chilling legend, not only the drifting snow but its essence, its companions. There is someone out there, lurking in the shadowy white curtains of snow, exotic vampires longing for a new prey.

A buen seguro, cuando August Derleth (1909-1971) comenzó a escribir su singular relato de vampiros *The Drifting Snow* (1939), quiso a toda costa enajenarse de la tradición que había estancado la inventiva de autores contemporáneos cuyas pesadillas vampíricas, tanto en concepción como materialización, se habían limitado a proyectar omnipresentes sombras del *Drácula* de Bram Stoker.

Autor consagrado dentro del campo literario de la ciencia ficción, Derleth experimentó su creatividad de horror en *The Drifting Snow* con pretensiones bien diferentes. El relato no es en sí un clásico cuento de vampiros. Su temática transciende el simple enfrentamiento entre un

ente sobrenatural y una porción de humanidad que vive bajo su acecho. La narración es más bien una ténebre arquitectura de impresiones y vacíos oníricos que reflejan el aislamiento y la muerte presentida, una reflexión en desasosiego sobre el ocaso inminente que, a la postre, cierto es, modela y hace emerger la imagen exótica de un vampiro de esencia explícitamente alejada de la concepción tradicional, más que fin, medio y representación metafórica del deceso y la consumación de la venganza; espectro del destino aciago más que majestuosidad de escalofrío a la que se debe destruir.

Asimismo, Derleth tampoco basa el desarrollo argumental de su historia en el típico movimiento desde la luz hasta la claridad purificada, a través de las sombras. Su relato no parte de una primera situación de equilibrio cotidiano, alcanzando después un momento crítico, provocado por la irrupción súbita del ente vampírico, para desembocar en una conclusión de estabilidad, resultado de la caza y destrucción del engendro diabólico, tras la esperada confrontación entre el héroe (o héroes) y el monstruo. Al construir su mausoleo narrativo, Derleth se alejó lo más posible de tales restricciones de composición. Así, *The Drifting Snow* discurre en una constante de desequilibrio en sombras de principio a fin, sin que nada, ningún evento, ni nadie, ningún ente heroico, detenga el curso de la condenación. Es, por encima de todo, un relato de pesadumbre y suspense psicológico que explota diferentes cuitas y pavores de humanidad, en absoluto tomando la figura del vampiro como única fuente de terror exacerbado. La verdadera tensión emana de la irrevocable inercia de la fatalidad que hace de la vida muerte en potencia, siendo el vampiro singular de Derleth metáfora y agente de la postrera condena humana.

Pese a huir de los convencionalismos y construir una historia de realidad en un marco irreal, en un vacío cosmológico más propio del género de ciencia ficción, el autor toma como pilares argumentales ciertos tópicos que reviste de nueva identidad. Así, su manifiesta obsesión por crear la sensación de angustia y apartamiento le lleva a situar la historia en una mansión aislada de la civilización, en los desolados parajes de un bosque, el clásico **setting** para un cuento de fantasmas. Sin embargo, lejos de perderse en descripciones góticas de interioridad -retratos, luz tenue de candelabros, corredores en sombras, rincones en

penumbra, estancias de puertas cerradas, bibliotecas de tomos legenda-
rios- Derleth muestra el hogar como contexto frío, oscuro, sin detalles,
que, si bien ofrece cierto matiz de protección frente a los parajes de exte-
rior, también difuminados en la oscuridad, resulta igualmente intempe-
rie alienada que se funde al entorno de tinieblas.

Dentro de los límites de la mansión, único espacio habitable, el au-
tor pinta una galería de personajes contrastivos que actúan por sí solos,
definiéndose por sus rasgos individuales y relación mutua. La caracteri-
zación es somera e impresionista. La mayoría de ellos aparecen
desdibujados, como fantasmas esclavizados a la inercia de los aconteci-
mientos, como meras marionetas en representación de escenas que ni
siquiera pertenecen a su presente, la renovación de un ritual que nace
del ayer y persiste en un hoy de ocaso. Son dos generaciones contrapues-
tas, un pasado que contamina el presente para estancarlo, para no per-
mitir su evolución. Por un lado, se alinean los entes que habitan la man-
sión: tía Mary y sus dos sirvientes, Lisa y Sam, vestigios sigilosos y
carismáticos del ayer, asociados al secreto terrorífico que viene con la
tempestad; por otro, la modernidad, los visitantes procedentes de
Chicago: Clodetta, Ernest y Henry, intrepidez, abulia y rebeldía, respec-
tivamente.

La historia surge del silencio, de la nada y, paulatinamente, va co-
brando forma al tiempo que las víctimas pierden vida. El escalofrío, siem-
pre presente, va siendo más y más yerto, a medida que nos aproxima-
mos al final y la condensación de desasosiego culmina con la aparición
espectral de la leyenda. Lejos de alcanzar el equilibrio, el relato se ve
cada vez más inmerso en un proceso de degradación -no de mejora- en
pos de un final inevitable que, a pesar de su crudeza, se convierte en
alivio y confirmación. El desenlace no es sorpresivo sino fruto de una
macabra continuidad.

Hemos hablado de silencio. A partir del caos, el lector que se sumer-
ge en las líneas de *The Drifting Snow* es transportado violentamente -**in
medias res**- al interior de una estancia que tendrá relevancia simbóli-
ca a lo largo de la narración. No hay exposición previa, no hay suspiro
preliminar. Desde un principio, surge el conflicto, la ruptura de la armo-
nía. La escena inicial, sigilosa, lerda y casi mímica, rezuma desazón a
pesar de carecer de acción relevante. Es un lienzo de claroscuros. Pri-

mero escuchamos los pasos de tía Mary, como naciente impresión de que algo comienza a ser narrado, pasos atendidos al instante por Clodetta, principal receptor de los acontecimientos dentro de la historia. Derleth hace que la anciana encare rígidamente su temor, su pasado, esas ventanas que dan al oeste. Por otro lado, la joven Clodetta, absorta, se muestra inquieta ante tal actitud:

> *"Aunt Mary's advancing footsteps halted suddenly, short of the table, and Clodetta turned to see what was keeping her. She was standing very rigidly, her eyes fixed upon the French windows just opposite the door through which she had entered, her cane held stiffly before her."(Ryan, 1988: 311)*

La pregunta no tarda en surgir de los labios de la carismática anciana. Clodetta comprende que es ella quien ha provocado la inquietud inicial. En la penumbra se establece una máxima autoridad y una culpable:

> *"'Who withdrew the curtains from the west windows?' Clodetta flushed, remembering. 'I did, Aunt. I'm sorry. I forgot about your not wanting them drawn away"(Op. cit. 311)*

Este sentimiento de culpabilidad es el que va a fustigar su afán por conocer, su constante dinamismo psicológico. Clodetta desea saber cuál es la esencia de su pecado. Desde este preciso instante, se siente ligada a tía Mary y a sus enigmáticos temores, como discípulo que buscará su sabiduría en cada momento de pavor. La condena ya está en curso.

Hemos hablado de desequilibrio. El relato se abre con esas cortinas desplazadas a un lado, dejando que la noche invada la estancia. En éste, su mundo y sus limitaciones, tía Mary es autoridad y sabiduría. Un solo gesto y la sirvienta Lisa mana de las tinieblas para cubrir los vidrios de nuevo. Por momentos vuelve el sosiego. Tras el estertor de intranquilidad, queda el silencio, la habitación, sugerida, delimitada sólo en tra-

zos: unos ventanales, unas cortinas y una mesa, símbolo de reunión. Derleth lega la impresión de vacío, una penumbra estéril, hostil, infinita. Cualquier suspiro tendría eco en esta ilimitación de vértigo, gótica.

Tía Mary toma asiento, presidiendo el instante, y focaliza a un cuarto personaje, Ernest, el marido de Clodetta. A continuación, su mirada vaga hasta detenerse fijamente en otro signo de inquietud. Ante sus ojos, ante los del lector, una silla vacía que simboliza la ausencia de un nuevo personaje cuya aparición en escena es inminente. Tal vacío enmarca la obra. La silla es una visión premonitoria de una ausencia que abre y cierra el relato, como icono de fatalidad.

Obsesivamente, la anciana, si bien silencia el motivo de su desasosiego, insiste una y otra vez en que las cortinas deben cubrir las ventanas del oeste durante la noche. Altiva, añade:

> *"I didn't think it wise to explain why I made such a request. I'm not going to explain. But I do want to say that there is a very definite danger in drawing away the curtains. Ernest has heard that before, but you, Clodetta, have not"(Op. cit. 312)*

Tanto Ernest como Clodetta comparten miradas de complicidad. Para ellos, las palabras de la anciana son fruto de cualquier manía extraña que aviva espejismos subjetivos. El desasosiego psicológico de estos prolegómenos se ve interrumpido por la súbita llegada de Henry, el ausente, quien, fugaz e impulsivo, se sienta a la mesa, sin deseos de compartir un momento de salutación. Ocupa la silla de ausencia que antes habíamos contemplado. La anciana se siente obligada a reprimir su tardanza. Trata de imponer las reglas del ayer a un ente del hoy:

> *"'Late again, Henry,' said the old lady."(Op. cit. 312)*

El recién llegado ignora la reprimenda. Parece venir revestido del frío e impavidez del exterior. En efecto, él es el último en unirse a la comitiva, el último que ha estado en contacto con las circunstancias de

fuera. Su aparición filtra la intemperie al interior por unos instantes y demuestra que aún hay acceso al mundo. Dicho alivio provoca las palabras de Clodetta:

> "You aren't as isolated as I thought you might be up
> here, Aunt Mary."(Op. cit. 312)

Es así como ella se disocia del interior en penumbra. Su pasado cobra vida. A pesar de haberla encontrado desde el comienzo del relato en la maraña de sombras, como si siempre hubiese estado ahí, por unos instantes, sus palabras la liberan de tales limitaciones y la iluminan como personaje de existencia independiente al desolador marco escénico que ocupa ahora. Clodetta, como Ernest y Henry, proviene del mundo exterior, de la modernidad, del hoy. En relación a la idea de aislamiento, tía Mary, primitivismo y ayer, afirma:

> "'We aren't, my dear, what with telephones and cars
> and all. But only twenty years ago it was quite a
> different thing, I can tell you.' She smiled reminis-
> cently and looked at Ernest. 'Your grandfather was
> living then, and many's the time he was snowbound
> with no way to let anybody know"(Op. cit. 312)

Y Henry, avivando las ascuas de hostilidad contra ella, se encarga de ahondar en la herida:

> "'Well, it is far away,' put in Henry, abruptly. 'And,
> Aunt, I hope you've made some provision in case we're
> locked in here for a day or two. It looks like snow
> outside, and the radio says a blizzard's coming" (Op.
> cit. 312-3)

Es así como asocia el paraíso personal de la anciana con la amenaza. Sin perder la compostura, singularmente sarcástica, tía Mary le ofrece la posibilidad de volver a Chicago, retornar a sus circunstancias, a lo cual se niega Henry, tal vez por guardar las apariencias. Cierra así una

primera puerta a la salvación. No está dispuesto a abandonar la reunión. No será él quien marche primero. Aún no, al menos.

Se acumula el recelo. Enclaustrados en la mansión, todos son siluetas de interioridad, guarecidas en el regazo psicológico de la anciana. La morada representa la mente traumatizada de la vieja. Va a dar comienzo el 'psychodrama'. En este escenario, situado en una adimensionalidad temporal y espacial, se confundirán las fronteras entre el pasado y el presente, entre la vida y la muerte.[1]

Flota abstracta, pero agria la quimera que envuelve a los ventanales del oeste, un temor irreal, lo que se ha sugerido pueden ser sólo delirios de senilidad. A ese estremecimiento acaparador, pero no materializado, se une la amenaza del aislamiento, sugerido por Henry, temor que, a diferencia del primero, sí tiene fundamentos de realidad: la tormenta se aproxima. El desasosiego mana precisamente de ese doble pavor: el miedo de tía Mary, subjetivo y difuminado, y la pesadilla de Henry, objetiva, natural y acuciante. Atendiendo al primero de los recelos, la mansión se presenta como refugio y las cortinas como defensa opaca contra el extraño presentimiento. A las luces del segundo, la morada es una tumba de hermetismo. Esto genera la claustrofobia, personificada en Henry.

En realidad, la cena, fugaz y poco matizada, no es sino excusa para que el temor al aislamiento emerja en la congregación.[2] La anciana, parca en palabras, tras afirmar que hay libertad para abandonar su mansión, se levanta de la mesa, asumiendo que todos permanecerán en sus dominios. Ella también piensa en el aislamiento, o más bien, en la nieve, pero no en la tempestad sino en los escalofríos que con ella arriban a la realidad:

> *"From the doorway, Aunt Mary bade them all good-*
> *night, looking impressively formidable with her cane*
> *in one hand her unopened lorgnette in the other, and*
> *vanished into the dusk of the hall, from which her*

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[1] Sería interesante llevar a cabo un estudio contrastivo entre este relato y "The Dead" de Joyce. Hay innumerables analogías simbólicas y argumentales comunes a ambos escritos.

[2] Nótese que ésta es la única ocasión dentro de la historia, exceptuando el cataclismo final, en la que hay copresencia de todos los personajes en la escena.

receding footsteps sounded together with those of the
servant, who was seldom seen away from her"(Op.
cit. 313)

Y esos pasos en la distancia sugieren algo más que alejamiento. Vuelven a reincidir en la sensación de infinitud. Sabemos que la interioridad es estática, si bien se puede dar una interpretación metafórica del espacio hogareño que seguramente quiso reflejar el autor. La mansión es un sendero de existencia, un microcosmos dentro del universo, un trayecto en el que los personajes fluyen dinámicamente de este a oeste o viceversa, según sus aspiraciones, sintiendo el tacto de la muerte o reviviendo por instantes para conservar la esperanza de perpetuar la vida. Así, en el extremo oeste, en el punto geográfico del ocaso, en el límite de la vida, tenemos la habitación de los ventanales, la contemplación de la noche, la mesa, donde se celebra la última cena, y las sillas, una de las cuales aparece vacía como retrato de muerte.

Dentro también de esta estancia, las cortinas son los sudarios que vedan la visión del exterior, la frontera tejida entre la vida y la muerte, mantos que ocultan el ayer y no dejan que las pesadillas impregnen el presente. Así, esta estancia, en la que se abre el relato y en la que concluirá también en cierto modo, es antesala de muerte, un habitáculo de desequilibrio, de cambio de dimensión.

La siguiente posta de sendero, en dirección este, desde la que aún se ven los ventanales, es el comedor, donde los personajes suelen acudir para relajar sus temores. Allí se encuentra el aparato de radio, del que manan ondas de musicalidad, y algún que otro libro para entretener el intelecto. Más al este se halla la habitación de la anciana, al resguardo, alejada de los ventanales, aislada del pavor, el cubil en el que ha permanecido recluida durante largo tiempo, sin querer abrirse al mundo, fiel a sus raíces y a sus temores. Igualmente apartadas están las estancias de cada personaje, habitaciones que nunca serán ocupadas por los protagonistas de la historia.

Al alejarse de la congregación y perderse en la penumbra, Sam y tía Mary se desplazan precisamente hacia el este, en busca del resguardo.

La nueva generación queda a solas tratando de discernir el temor abstracto que atenaza a la anciana.[3] La inquietud no se puede excusar sólo en su locura. Ernest cita una muerte en el pasado, un posible trauma que puede estar afectando a la anciana. Sugiere la posibilidad de que todos estén bajo su influjo, inmersos en una pesadilla colectiva:

> *"'I've an idea why she keeps the west windows covered. My grandfather died out there- he was overcome by the cold one night, and froze on the slope of the hill. I don't rightly know how it happened - I was away at the time. I suppose she doesn't want to be reminded of it.'*
> *'But where's the danger she spoke of, then?'*
> *He shrugged. 'Perhaps it lies in her -she might be affected and affect us in turn."(Op. cit. 313)*

Y esa influencia psicológica de la anciana parece ser confirmada por Clodetta, quien confiesa que una fuerza ajena la impulsó a descorrer las cortinas.[4] Por unos momentos, Ernest se alarma, pero sugiere a su mujer que vayan a escuchar la radio al comedor. Al buscar momentáneamente el este para relajar sus estados de ansiedad, el matrimonio se topa con Henry, quien, acuciado por su fobia al aislamiento, se desplaza a la deriva, hacia el oeste para ver el exterior. Él representa la desgracia, lo negativo, la premonición, el fatal augurio:

> *"I might have known we'd be marooned up here,' and adding, as Clodetta began to protest, 'We're going to be all right. There's a wind coming up and it's beginning to snow, and I know what that means."(Op. cit. 314)*

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[3] Ella busca su propia seguridad y deja a los demás personajes en la habitación del escalofrío, como una madre que desampara a sus 'hijos'. A partir de este momento, sin su tutela, cada uno va a seguir sus propios instintos. Se desata la vesania. Sin la autoridad de la anciana, predomina la anarquía de caracteres. El vacío de la mansión anida en sus conciencias y aflora lo subjetivo. Posteriormente advertiremos que el instinto paternal también está ausente en la atmósfera de la mansión. En el pasado, la figura del padre tuvo un momento para demostrar sus valores, pero se condenó al convertirse en tiranía y abuso.

[4] Como el resto de personajes, en un primer instante, ella había tratado de ocultar tal fenómeno para evitar que se le considerara loca.

Estas palabras vaticinan su propia muerte. Alocadamente, penetra en la estancia del desequilibrio y se abalanza al ventanal para ver la noche, para respirar libertad lejos del hermetismo. Ernest le recuerda la advertencia de tía Mary, pero, ignorando sus palabras, Henry descorre las cortinas. Es la segunda puerta de salvación que se cierra a sí mismo y un nuevo sendero que abre al pavor[5]:

> *"Well, **she** may think it's dangerous but I can risk it"*
> *(Op. cit. 314)*

Su impulso se convierte en tentación que incita a los espectros del ayer. Clodetta, es nuevamente medio para la materialización de tales fuerzas:

> *"Why, there's someone out there!"(Op. cit. 314)*

La aparición emerge de la noche. Sólo ella parece contemplar la vaguedad aterradora. Ernest permanece impasible. Para Henry, la visión es un espejismo:

> *"'No, that's the snow; it's coming down heavily, and the wind's drifting it this way and that.'"(Op. cit. 314)*

La temida tormenta de nieve ha llegado. En el exterior, el viento mece los copos y forma delimitaciones de espanto. En el interior, la brisa de confusión pone a la deriva a los personajes, como si también ellos fueran pétalos albos de nieve.

A pesar de su aparente sosiego, Henry vuelve a correr las cortinas y se aleja de los ventanales buscando el cobijo del comedor, desembocando

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[5] Recordemos que Clodetta descorrió las cortinas sintiéndose obligada por alguna fuerza sobrenatural y ajena. Henry desobedece voluntariamente y a conciencia los designios de la anciana, no sólo por su personalidad subversiva sino también por su deseo de evitar el enclaustramiento.

en la protección del este. Algo parece prevenirle de la amenaza. Se entretiene moviendo el dial lentamente, buscando noticias del exterior, ondas que fluyan a la interioridad para informar sobre la tempestad y la situación de la morada en el vacío. En esa misma estancia, Ernest vuelve a dar la espalda a la escena y, escapista, busca una nueva realidad en las páginas de un libro. Frente a la impasividad de los entes masculinos, Clodetta, absorta en la contemplación de las cortinas, que aún se mecen levemente sobre la hialinidad en la que se acaba de pintar la aparición, se entrega al dinamismo del sendero. Prosigue encadenada a su obsesiva búsqueda de la verdad.[6] Se desplaza hacia el este, en busca del amparo, como niña que acude a la estancia de los padres para contar su pesadilla, para referir ese segundo estímulo del exterior[7]:

> "Presently she got up and left the room, going down
> the long hall into the east wing, where she tapped
> gently upon Aunt Mary's door"(Op. cit. 315)

Es la primera de las dos visitas que Clodetta va a hacer a la dama legendaria. La joven se convierte en mensajera de lo acontecido en las fronteras del oeste, aquéllas que lindan con la muerte:

> "Clodetta opened the door and stepped into the room
> where Aunt Mary sat in her dressing-robe, her dig-
> nity, in the shape of her lorgnette and cane, resting
> respectively on her bureau and in the corner. She
> looked surprisingly benign, as Clodetta at once
> confessed."(Op. cit. 315)

La joven accede así a ese otro mundo de intimidad, donde la anciana lucha contra los temores y escalofríos del ayer. En este contacto inicial, trata de compartir con ella el temor abstracto, deseando confirmar

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[6] Ella es un personaje dinámico, no sólo en movilidad física, en sus constantes desplazamientos, sino también en su continua lucha psicológica, en un intento por preservar la cordura.

[7] Su intrepidez y decisión la unen cada vez más a tía Mary. A diferencia de Ernest y Henry, Clodetta no proviene de la familia, pero se integra perfectamente en el destino de ésta.

así que ella comprende ahora en cierto modo porqué las ventanas deben estar cubiertas. Sin embargo, tía Mary, decidida quizás a sobrevolar sus traumas, niega la aparición, su propia convicción, y se niega a sí misma. Curiosamente, tal y como Henry había hecho momentos antes, la anciana alude a los extraños espejismos que forman las tormentas de nieve:

> "'(...)Your imagination, perhaps, or the drifting snow.'
> 'My imagination? Maybe. But there was no wind to drift the snow, though one has come up since.'
> 'I've often been fooled that way, my dear. Sometimes I've gone out in the morning to look for footprints - there weren't any, ever. We're pretty far away from civilization in a snowstorm, despite our telephones and radios. Our nearest neighbor is at the foot of the long, sloping rise -over three miles away- and all wooded land between. There's no highway nearer than that"(Op. cit. 315)

El suspense mana también de la simultaneidad que subyace tras cada escena descrita. Mientras el narrador presenta este diálogo, más al oeste, hay dos personajes perdidos en el vacío. Puede estar ocurriendo algo. La anciana parece tener presente este temor. Mentalmente, ella sigue encadenada al pasado. La convicción fluye de sus labios:

> "'How's the weather?'
> 'It's snowing-hard, Henry says-and blowing.'
> The old lady's face showed her distaste at the news.
> 'I don't like to hear that, not at all. Suppose someone should look down that slope tonight?' She was speaking to herself, having forgotten Clodetta at the door. Seeing her again abruptly, she said, 'But you don't know, Clodetta. Goodnight."(Op. cit. 316)

La primera aparición ha venido envuelta en la seda de copos. Comienza a arreciar el viento. La nieve pinta escalofríos singulares. Se va formando el pasado y se trenza la fatalidad. El deceso es inminente,

pero la anciana prefiere descansar, no volver al oeste, permanecer aje-
na, en su rincón de sombras. No ofrece mayor amparo a la joven. Es así
como Clodetta queda libre de nuevo en el sendero. Libre, pero perdida.
En su mente se repiten las palabras de la anciana *'But you don't know'*,
que intensifican su impotencia, su sed.

Inmóvil, sumida en la confusión, no tiene tiempo de decidir la direc-
ción de sus próximos pasos. Ernest acude entonces a su encuentro. Trae
noticias del oeste. Una segunda aparición y un segundo testigo:

> *"'Henry's been at the west windows again- and now*
> *he thinks there's someone out there'"(Op. cit. 316)*

Clodetta ve así confirmado su espejismo, si bien es Ernest quien
ahora trata de excusar la visión:

> *"But the snow's drifting frightfully, and I can ima-*
> *gine how that suggestion of yours worked on his*
> *mind"(Op. cit. 316)*

Sin dilación, Clodetta vuelve al reino de la anciana para transmitir
el de-sasosiego. Tía Mary confirma sus sospechas. La confesión de la
joven no había tenido tanta validez como la del subversivo Henry:

> *"The effect on the lady was magical. 'He's seen them!'*
> *she exclaimed. Then she was on her feet, coming*
> *rapidly over to Clodetta. 'How long ago?' she*
> *demanded, seizing her almost roughly by the arms.'*
> *Tell me quickly. How long ago did he see them?"(Op.*
> *cit. 317)*

La anciana pluraliza la visión ('them') y desborda su secreto. Hay
alguien en el exterior. El estímulo sugiere una respuesta cotidiana por
parte de Clodetta:

> *"Then we had better take them in, Aunt Mary."(Op.*
> *cit. 317)*

Pero todo es escalofrío e incomprensión tras la ulterior afirmación de la anciana:

> "'We can't take them in, Clodetta -because they are
> not alive'."(Op. cit. 317)

Los aparecidos no necesitan guarecerse del frío. Ellos son el frío. Ellos son la muerte*. Tal delirio requiere una explicación. Así, la anciana, para evitar que Clodetta considere sus palabras como producto de la locura, se convierte en narradora del ayer. Mediante una detallada retrospección, recupera la totalidad del relato y, por fin, añade las circunstancias que preceden al comienzo **in medias res**. En recuento de nostalgia, talla los pilares argumentales de la narración, la fuente de referencia irreal de los presentes y futuros acontecimientos de espanto. Mientras la tormenta de nieve arrebuja la casona y las visiones de fatalidad retornan, en las palabras de la anciana irrumpe la esencia sobrenatural de la historia:

> "I'm afraid I'm not mad, my dear -I hoped at first I
> might be, but I wasn't. I'm not, now. There was only
> one of them out there at first -the girl; Father is the
> other. Quite long ago, when I was young, my father
> did something which he regretted all his days. He
> had a too strong temper, and it maddened him. One
> night he found out that one of my brothers -Henry's
> father- had been familiar with one of the servants, a
> very pretty girl, older than I was. He thought she
> was to blame, though she wasn't, and he didn't find
> it out until too late. He drove her from the house,
> then and there. Winter had not yet set in, but it was
> quite cold, and she had some five miles to go to her
> home. We begged Father not to send her away -though
> we didn't know what was wrong then- but he paid
> no attention to us. The girl had to go."(Op. cit. 317)

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* La personificación de la naturaleza, como espíritu salvaje, subversivo y enfrentado al hombre con propia voluntad, es un aspecto tomado de la novela gótica.

Tal abuso de autoridad, tal imposición de jerarquía, es lo que destronó la paternidad en el pasado y desencadenó la condena posterior. Arrepentido por su impulso de soberbia, aquel padre mandó que algunos hombres salieran al exterior en busca de la sirvienta. Se desató una tremenda tempestad de nieve y viento.[8] La negritud de la noche tragó a la muchacha. Al siguiente día la hallaron muerta, congelada. Aquello fue sólo el principio. El remordimiento del padre culminaría en castigo años después, cuando, concediéndole la resurrección a la difunta, la naturaleza esclavizó el rencor y, aliada a la nieve que le dio muerte, la joven volvió para llevar al padre al otro lado:

> "Years later -she came back. She came in a snowstorm, as she went; but she had become a vampire. We all saw her. We were at supper table, and Father saw her first.(...) She was just a dim shape floundering about in the drifting snow beyond the French windows. Father ran out to her, calling to us to send the boys after him. We never saw him alive again. In the morning we found him in the same spot where years before the girl had been found. He, too, had died of exposure."(Op. cit. 318)

En este momento de la historia emerge, pues, la figura vampírica. En un arrebato demasiado pretencioso y subjetivo, la anciana alude al fantasma de la niña mediante el término 'vampire', sin que haya realmente rasgos que la caractericen como tal. Es, pues, ella quien la identifica con este ser de leyenda, quizás llevada por su propia fantasía. El concepto surge, emana de su agonía, la principal fuerza creadora del relato y, en este sentido, aparece ligado al contexto de la morada, a la trágica historia del lugar, sin duda, germen de su existencia. Así, la muerta que regresa en busca de venganza, es más bien un tipo de **revenant** o aparecido, un alma en pena que retorna para dar castigo a

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[8] Es el destierro de la inocencia. Podríamos establecer un primer paralelismo con la crucifixión de Cristo. Tras su expirar, se desencadenó un temblor de tierra previo a su resurrección. (San Marcos XV, 38), (San Mateo, XVII, 51-53)

quien provocó su muerte.[9] Ella es efigie metafórica que refleja el temor de toda una comitiva enfrentada al primitivismo de una maldición que, yerta y letal, acude cada invierno para materializarse en muerte. Es una criatura nocturna, que regresa en el regazo de la naturaleza, en la tormenta de nieve, pero que no pretende invadir el reino de los vivos, no pide que se la invite al interior. Quienes deciden ayudar a los espejismos encuentran la muerte.[10] Los fantasmas jamás podrán entrar en la morada porque son naturaleza, nieve, intemperie. El único punto de intersección posible es el exterior, el reino de la insensibilidad y el frío. Sólo hay una posibilidad y ésta es la del movimiento desde el interior, vida, al exterior, muerte. También existe una única solución para los entes de interioridad: cubrir las ventanas y apartar la tentación. Los vampiros de la nieve aguardan, seducen, pero no atacan. Su espera ha sido de años, hasta desembocar en el presente.[11]

Ernest, el último incrédulo, aparece en escena. Él también acaba de ver las apariciones en la noche. Toda la impasividad previa se torna extraña excitación y euforia:

> *"'Come on, you two,' he said, almost gayly,' there **are***
> *people out on the west slope -a girl and an old man-*
> *and Henry's gone out to fetch them in!'"(Op. cit. 318)*

Por supuesto, él ignora la terrible realidad de los que aguardan en el exterior. Henry, por su parte, en su afán por evitar el aislamiento, ya ha salido a la intemperie. Las ventanas ahora están abiertas. Es la entrega total. El condenado fluye a la oscuridad. Dos pasos y quizás esté demasiado lejos, inmerso en el precipicio de la nada. La nieve invade el umbral de los ventanales:

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[9] El vampiro, en su concepción más genérica, es un cadáver viviente, por lo tanto cuerpo y alma, que retorna a la vida y prolonga su existencia bebiendo de la sangre de los vivos. El espectro de Derleth es una materialización de los remordimientos, el regreso de un trauma, una pesadilla a la deriva, el retorno de la inocencia desterrada del mundo prematuramente.

[10] El espectro, y esto sí es propio del vampiro, contagia la muerte. En su segunda aparición, la muerta retornó junto al padre, su súbdito.

[11] El final de la retrospección de la anciana enlaza con el estado presente de la narración. La avidez por atrapar a una tercera víctima permanece. Ellos están ahí fuera aguardando. Se acelera el ritmo de la narración. Los recuerdos de tía Mary definen explícitamente la amenaza que vaga frente a los ventanales del oeste.

> *"Ernest stood on the snow-covered terrace beyond,*
> *calling his cousin. The old lady went directly over to*
> *him, even striding into the snow to his side, though*
> *the wind drove the snow against her with great*
> *force"(Op. cit. 318)*

La tempestad trata de mantenerlos alejados de su presa. La noche, la tormenta, el invierno, la muerte, todo se alía para llevarse a la nueva víctima. Sam, parte de ese ayer que experimentó la terrible pesadilla, sale junto a Ernest en busca del desaparecido. Clodetta y tía Mary los ven sumergirse en la temible nada. Las dos mujeres, junto a Lisa, permanecen a la espera.[12] Henry ya está condenado. Afirma la anciana:

> *"Now there'll be three of them out there"(Op. cit. 319).*

Pero ellos lo traen de vuelta. Penetran en la morada cubiertos de nieve, vestidos en seda de muerte. Acaban de cruzar la dimensión. Ernest se apresura a cambiarse de ropa. Quiere evitar el frío. Sigue mostrando su incredulidad. En ese instante, Henry comienza a hablar. Ya está contaminado por la muerte. Agoniza en un trance mórbido, pero placentero. Sus palabras son una invocación infantil a la resucitada:

> *"Henry came to his feet suddenly, looking dazed. He*
> *walked forward a few steps, his eyes traveling from*
> *one to the other of them, yet apparently not seeing*
> *them. He began to speak abruptly, in an unnatural*
> *child-like voice.*
>
> *The snow,' he murmured, 'the snow -the beautiful*
> *hands, so little, so lovely -her beautiful hands- and*
> *the snow, the beautiful, lovely snow, drifting and*
> *falling about her..."(Op. cit. 320)*

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[12] La masculinidad es la verdadera víctima de la fatalidad en curso. En el pasado, la sirvienta, feminidad, fue la condenada. Expulsada de los lares de vida, fue sorprendida por la muerte en su trayecto a casa.

Es su canto de cisne, su última voluntad, las alabanzas a la palidez sensual. Ahora sí distingue entre la nieve y el espectro. La inercia de su hechizo le lleva a desear volver al exterior. Ha sido tentado por la muerte exquisita. El espectro acude a la llamada. Todos están concentrados en la habitación de los ventanales, como al comienzo del relato. Ahora, la aparición es colectiva:[13]

> *"He turned slowly and looked toward the French windows, the others following his gaze. Beyond was a wall of white, where the snow was drifting against the house. For a moment Henry stood quietly watching; then suddenly a white figure came forward from the snow -a young girl, cloaked in long snowwhips, her glistening eyes strangely fascinating."(Op. cit. 320)*

La anciana, la madre, presiente el final. Tiende sus manos para salvar al hijo condenado, pero Henry se abalanza al exterior abriendo por última vez los ventanales, perdiéndose en la otra dimensión, materializando una muerte anunciada. En el instante de locura, en la sucesión de acontecimientos traumáticos, Ernest trata de seguir a Henry, pero la anciana vuelve a reaccionar:

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[13] La feminidad espectral, el vampiro de Derleth, está ciertamente emparentada con las concepciones vampíricas de Poe, feminidades resucitadas que vuelven al contexto de realidad para saciar cierto anhelo de venganza. Asimismo, también muestra leve conexión con el vampiro folclórico en tanto que retorna a sus circunstancias (ella regresa a la casa donde servía y el padre vuelve a la mansión familiar) y también con los precedentes poéticos del vampiro literario que encontramos en los poemas de los primeros románticos alemanes, composiciones tales como "Lenore" (1773) de August Burgher o "The Bride of Corinth" (1797) de Goethe, impregnadas de ternura y seducción mórbida, en las que la muerte retorna como reflejo de la pasión sobrenatural y el amor se convierte en fuerza que resucita y une a los amantes. En el relato de Derleth, la razón es la venganza, pero prevalece una especial relación entre el fantasma y la víctima, una hipnosis y atracción irresistible, letal. Henry es llevado por la sirena o musa de la muerte.

No se cita el nombre de la resucitada. No tiene identidad, sólo es venganza, símbolo de inocencia violada, de sirvienta oprimida que anida en la reminiscencia de tía Mary. Si en vida había sido inocencia ahora es tentación. Viene a desterrar del hogar a los que la desterraron a ella. Hay una clara oposición entre niñez y vejez. En Aunt Mary está reflejada la senilidad desarrollada, el paso de los años a la vera del trauma. La vampira es la longevidad de infancia, eternidad que viene a traer el castigo y la redención.

> *"'You shall not go! Henry is gone beyond our*
> *help!'"(Op. cit. 320)*

Clodetta se une a ella y Sam cierra los ventanales para dar fin a la pesadilla. Afortunadamente se vuelve a lacrar la frontera entre la vida y la muerte. Tras el clímax, la tensión se va aletargando:

> *"Sam stood menacingly at the French windows, now*
> *closed against the wind and the sinister snow. So*
> *they held him, and would not let him go."(Op. cit.*
> *320)*

Le salvan la vida o está escrito así. Tal vez los vampiros sólo quieren una tercera víctima.[14] Tía Mary dispone que deberán destruir a los monstruos al día siguiente y cita los métodos tradicionales de dar muerte a tales criaturas. La noche ha sido confirmación a sus temores:[15]

> *"And tomorrow,' said the old lady in a harsh whis-*
> *per,' we must go to their graves and stake them down.*
> *We should have gone before."(op. cit. 320)*

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[14] El número tres tiene un valor simbólico en la narración. Ya habíamos citado el paralelismo con la crucifixión de Cristo. En la obra todo gira en torno a la temática de resurrección, de renovación vital. Se invierte el orden natural. Hay fertilidad de muerte. Perecen los vivos y resucitan los muertos.

Cristo resucitó al **tercer** día. Esta constante numérica aparece también en:

Tres mujeres: Clodetta, Aunt Mary, Lisa.

Tres hombres: Ernest, Henry, Sam.

Tres visitas de los muertos: Primero ella. Después la pareja y, por último, en el presente, para llevarse a un tercero.

Tres visiones en la ventana. Tres testigos: Clodetta, Henry y Ernest.

Tres descorrimientos de cortinas: Clodetta, Henry por dos veces, la segunda abre los portones y se condena.

Tres vampiros: La aparecida, el padre y Henry.

[15] ¿Cuál es la razón que subyace tras este encuentro entre las generaciones del pasado y el presente? Probablemente la anciana los reúne "de nuevo ambos" para demostrar la certeza de sus pesadillas, para hacerlos testigos de objetividad. Ella fue condenada por una generación anterior (su padre) y ahora condena a la posterior (Henry).

Mediante una elipsis temporal, el autor nos transporta al siguiente amanecer.[16] Sabemos lo que vamos a encontrar. Es una especie de epílogo, cuyo tono narrativo es más impersonal y externo. Derleth nos presenta una narración sumaria que constituye el anticlímax de la historia. Ya no individualiza a los personajes pues hace referencia general - 'they'- aludiendo a ellos como entes que han sobrevivido al delirio, como humanidad que, tras la tormenta, visita el exterior, esos alrededores de necrópolis, y acude a saborear el último suspiro de condena. Descubren el cuerpo de Henry, helado, como alud de vida desprendido por la pendiente de la colina:

> "In the morning they found Henry's body crouched
> against the bole of an ancient oak, where two others
> had been found years before. There were almost obli-
> terated marks of where something had dragged him,
> a long, uneven swath in the snow, and yet no foo-
> tprints, only strange, hollowed places along the way,
> as if the wind had whirled the snow away, and only
> the wind.
> But on his skin were signs of the snow vampire -the
> delicate small prints of a young girl's hands."(Op.
> cit. 320-1)

Es una efigie de naturaleza, el tronco de un árbol, lo que cobija al último de los condenados. Las huellas del espectro no anidan en la nieve sino en la piel de Henry. Son los estigmas de dulce venganza, el contagio de muerte.[17] Inconclusa, pues no se cita que hayan ido a consumar la

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[16] Hay concisión en la unidad de tiempo. La progresión de acontecimientos guarda una pulcra y precisa ordenación cronológica. Las escenas se suceden sin elipsis notorias. Toda la 'acción' está condensada en la noche. Posteriormente vendrá el día, como culminación. La nocturnidad es antesala de muerte, es símbolo de oscuridad, de desaparición, de desequilibrio estático, psicológico. Más que oscuridad es tempestad pálida. En ella, posteriormente, se suceden dinámicamente los acontecimientos. El día trae un nuevo equilibrio estático, pero igualmente macabro. Representa el descubrimiento de la muerte, servida por las manos de la naturaleza, como inequívoco símbolo de la inercia existencial

[17] No hay ataque explícito por parte del engendro. No hay mordedura, ni colmillos. Tampoco violencia física. No se desata lo cruento. Estamos ante un relato de vampiros sin una gota de sangre derramada, sólo tacto, si bien Henry es condenado al igual que aquel padre que provocó el destierro. En realidad, él es hijo de quien arrebató la inocencia a la sirvienta. La 'vampira', por tanto, se sacia con la muerte de una determinada estirpe familiar, una determinada sangre. También podríamos considerarla vampiro psíquico porque anula la voluntad y tienta a los que habitan el interior. Predomina el frío albor de la nieve, reflejo de la inocencia de la niña y palidez de la muerte por congelación. En muchos relatos de vampiros, la palidez es síntoma de desangramiento, pero no es éste el caso.

destrucción de los resucitados, la historia queda en una estática visión de muerte plácida y delicada. La crueldad del deseo aparece minimizada. Se da más importancia a las huellas tenues que al cuerpo sin vida.[18]

La muerte de Henry, la intrepidez domada -que pronto será vida-cierra así el relato en silencio, una quietud que quizás volverá a ser rota en un futuro, cuando tía Mary hile nuevamente su caminar hacia la estancia del oeste y, a través de los ventanales, vislumbre el trío de aparecidos, sólo nieve arrastrada por el viento, el escalofrío que retornará en su busca. La maldición, como la sed y existencia errante de los espectros, podría ser eterna.

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[18] El título del relato -The Drifting snow-, demasiado general se particulariza así en la alusión del propio autor: *'the snow vampire'*, la criatura que ha legado tales huellas.

THE ANXIETY OF INFLUENCE IN THE ACADEMIC NOVEL: A *TRAP FOR FOOLS* AND *SMALL WORLD.*

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Abstract

After World War II novel writing becomes institutionalized within the university and a new type of novel, the academic, emerges at the time. Set within the boundaries of the university campus, it deals with the everyday psichopathology of the professoriate in its parodic version. This article examines the parasitism of the subgenre and argues that the academic writers need to draw heavily on the structural principles of other literary kinds so as to put their ideas, character sketches, university jokes and campus events together into a unified structure.

1. Introduction.

Although the university student as fictional figure goes back to the fourteenth century, it is not until the nineteenth that he is given the dominant role in the so-called college novel, a genre which focuses on the self-formation of a youth at an educational institution -for the most part, Cambridge and Oxford. The drive towards professionalization[1] and the arrival of writers at universities after World War II encourage professors, and even administrators, to turn writers who, understandably, write about what they know: the unsavoury aspects of their suburban

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[1] See Bledstein, Burton J. *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class Development of Higher Education in America*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1977.

academic lives. The student is thus forced to surrender his protagonism to the faculty in the academic, campus or university novel,[2] a "genre becoming almost as indigenous to England as Mrs Gaskell and the three-penny dreadful" (Tucker 1960: 19).

This new type of novel is set within the limits of the university campus, but, despite its name, is not confined to academic matters. More often than not the story evolv es out of a professor´s marriage, maturation, or some other social adjustment; however, conferences, poetry readings, presentations of doctoral dissertations and committee meetings always come forward as plot movers. The great majority is written in the comic mode - the anti-institutional stance is usual-[3] and the characters are normally reduced to formulaic essences which readers can quickly recognize.[4] But the feature that interests us here is the parasitic or hybrid nature of the subgenre.

By parasitic I mean the abuse of intertextual categories, both materially -through quotations and references- and structurally, by recreating syntactic rules. The campus novel repeats, inverts or mocks the narrative conventions which govern the organization of certain genres and is normally studded with quotations and references to their practitioners. This makes the reader´s satisfactions dependent, to a certain degree, on his/her knowledge of the kind of literature the author recreates.

This article examines two consacrated academic narrations of the '80s, using the critical tools of structuralism. I will argue that *A Trap*

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[2] One of the noteworthy qualities of academic satires is the near-total absence of significant student characters in roles other than sexual prospect or enemy. College novels tend to have a concomitant absence of important faculty characters who, when appearing, are portrayed as obstrusive nincompoops, with occasional exceptions. These two subgenres mix when the protagonist is a teaching assistant or enjoys a similar in-between position, such as in George R. Stuart´s *Doctor´s Orals* (1939), Ken Kolb´s *Getting Straight* (1967) and Margaret Drabble´s *The Millstone (1965)*.

[3] To my knowledge only four novels have portrayed the academic world without satiric implications: *Faithful Are the Wounds* (1955) by May Sarton; *A Friend in Power* (1958) by Carlos Baker, *Drive, He Said* (1964) by Jeremy Larner and *Stoner* (1965) by John E. Williams. According to Leslie Fiedler these serious academic novels are "hopelessly middlebrow, muted where they pretend to be moderate, melodramatic where they pretend to be tragic, commonplace where they pretend to be wise" (1964: 141)

[4] This is a well-established convention in satiric genres. Among the recognizable types mentioned there is the vice-ridden master, the sycophantic dialectitian involved in institutional politics, the low-in-rank professor cringing for tenure, the lost-in-thought intellectual, the seducer of the young, the young seductress, the predatory academic wife and the academic novelist.

for Fools (1989) by Amanda Cross and *Small World* (1984) by David Lodge live, as many other campus narratives, at the expense of the well-structured mechanisms of the detective novel and romance, respectively.

2. Detection in Academe: Amanda Cross

The plot structure of the classical detective novel is fraught with rules. The narration begins with an enigmatic crime, usually a murder with economic, political or sexual undertones, and ends with the elucidation of the mystery. The wrongdoer is invariably punished, the order and stability previously called into question are placidly resumed, and our official notion of reality conveniently reinforced.

The victim is hardly characterized so as to focus the reader´s attention on the stoic detective, the chief device for sustaining suspense. Whatever his status is - detached amateur or tough professional - he is capable of solving the most elaborate puzzles, using clues even the police overlook. Sometimes he describes his own deeds, but most of the times a friend is used to chronicle his exploits.

The real centre of interest lies in the rationality of the detective work, which turns the novel into an intellectual game for the aficionado of detective fiction, who vibrates to the slightest clue in the attempt to discover the identity of the murderer before he is taken into custody.

The huge mass of novels dealing with crimes and criminals within the campus after World War II makes us think that the perpetration of murder and its written recording are, together with research and teaching, two of the most practised activities within the university.[5] The dangers of the campus under darkness are many, or at least so does Jim Sherbune think when writing that "there´s more cut-throat politics and fawning sycophantism in academia than almost anywhere else" (in Blythe 1987: 61). Reginald Hill concurs: "few who move and work in our universities have not at some time or other been aware that under many

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[5] The Kramers in their bibliography cover a period of 100 years (from 1882 to 1982) and mention 632 academic mysteries.

a swirling gown lurks the blade of the assassin and under many a scarlet
hood prick the ears of the bat" (1977: 70). Rosemary DePaolo is aware:

> *the ivied university halls have long and frequently*
> *been the chosen setting for killing. In both British*
> *and American novels, the ivory tower is repeatedly*
> *depicted as an excellent spot from which to hurl a*
> *body, the groves of academe convenient ground for*
> *burying it (1988: 281)*

The question is: Why is the university a convenient setting for
fictionalizing a murder? The most basic reason is that the university
campus resembles the locked room or closed circle Edgar Allan Poe so
recommended as the most suitable location for detective novels. There
also exists a great similarity between the analytic abilities of scholars
and the research methods of detectives. Are not detection and research
mostly putting together a great many facts and bits of information, most
of which do not fit into the final solution, but all of which may be of
value? Gervase Fen, professor of English Language and Literature in
the University of Oxford, stresses this point in the academic mystery of
the gilded fly:

> *'...detection and literary criticism really come to the*
> *same thing: intuition - that miserable and degraded*
> *counter of our modern pseudophilosophies...*
> *However, (....) that is not the point. The point is that,*
> *to put it simply, the relation between one clue and*
> *another - I should say the nature of the relation*
> *between one clue and another - occurs to your*
> *detective in exactly the same way - whether it be*
> *accelerated logic or some entirely extrarational*
> *faculty - as the nature of the relation between, say,*
> *Ben Jonson and Dryden, occurs to the literary*
> *critic'(Crispin 1971: 61-62)*

Both, literary critic and detective, make use of the same deductive
logic and inductive reasoning, both question evidence in the same way

and search for those causo-temporal relationships that will allow them to elaborate the most adequate scripts (Marchino 1989:92). Certainly adequate are Amanda Cross´s.

Undoubtedly Amanda Cross, Carolyn Heilbrun´s pen-name, is the most widely published writer of academic whodunits. Several novels stand to her credit, all protagonized by Kate Fansler -descendant of Dorothy Sayer´s Harriet Vane in *Strong Poison* (1930), *Have His Carcase* (1932) and *Gaudy Night* (1936). As amateur detective Kate is presented as an eccentric, upper-middle class, attrative and succesful American professor of Victorian literature at an unspecified large university in New York, probably Columbia, where Heilbrun got tenure approval some years ago.

The story in *A Trap for Fools* begins dramatically with a seemingly perfect crime. Professor Canfield Adams, an ultraconservative bigot "as beloved as poison ivy" (5), has been found dead on the walkway below Levy Hall. He has jumped, fallen or has been pushed from the window of his office on the seventh floor. Although there is no sign of injury other than that caused by hitting the cement, it is unlikely that he committed suicide. In fact, he was not an impulsive person and he would not have died without arranging for the final stages of his book´s publication.

The issue of "professorial defenestration" gets more complicated with the appearance of another dead body. Arabella Jordan, a revolutionary black student always running counter, seen lurking around Levy Hall on the Saturday of Adams´s death, was discovered smashed in the cement courtyard of her apartment far uptown. Suspense is fostered through the introduction of a wrongly-accused suspect at whom circumstancial evidence points: Humphrey Edgerton, an outspoken black professor of Afro-American literature, known to have come close to blows with Adams. Although the police is ready to hit on Edgerton, we understand he cannot be the real culprit, because detective stories operate on the principle that superficially convincing evidence is ultimately irrelevant.

The dimwitted police cannot get anywhere in the disentanglement of the mystery and the talented investigator -precipitated into an enigma she does not choose to solve- is to tackle the inquiry single-handed. She

succeeds. By the end of the narrative, after the classical dark point in which the mystery seems unsolvable, everything suddenly clicks into place. With the necessary leap of mind, Kate understands it all, as though she had found the magic word. In the resolution she confesses to her husband - whose only function in the story is to listen to the intimate feelings and intentions of her wife - how she has ascertained the identity of the criminal. Her libertarian doubts about the university institution helped her discover that it was vice-president Matthew Noble the one to commit murder in order to protect his job and reputation. Adams knew Noble was siphoning off a good part of the university funds and took advantage of it. Noble murdered Adams to prevent him from getting further and giving the show away, and later killed Arabella when she took up Adams´s game and figured she could blackmail Noble into more scholarships for blacks. Kate cleverly remarks that Noble´s mistake was:

> 'not to realize that I look for narratives. That´s my
> profession, not being a detective. That´s the profes-
> sion of every professor of literature. He thought to
> provide a diversion, but lit. crit. teaches you to be on
> the watchout for exactly that. We deal in subtexts, in
> the hidden story' (Cross 1990: 210)

Kate´s habit to be inspired by literary criticism allows her to solve crimes and explains why her novels are so crammed with allusions to canonized male writers, passing references to low-coded women writers,[6] and acknowledgements to the detective novels and the literary conventions along which Kate very consciously works. These last range from Agatha Christie´s narratives through the Angela Lansbury TV series, to John Le Carré´s charade of deceptions.

As seen, the professor clearly dominates the detective. The site of the crime is the building used by the English Department for social functions, the clues are academic, and the investigation, seen through a person who enjoys a privileged position in academe, proceeds along with comments on the phenomenology of the university, a community

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[6] Low-coded in terms dicated by Fansler´s male-centered institution.

"where egoism was disguised as scholarly rigor and enjoyment as intellectual despair" (1990: 44) We are given accounts of departments where the members do not bother to preserve the most superficial cordiality, of the political and scholarly demands on senior academics, and the pressure for publication on the younger ones. The sexist practices endemic to the institution are also grappled with.

As an ardent supporter of the women´s movement since its dawn, Cross uses the familiar formula of detective fiction as a vehicle for discussing women´s role. She brings our attention to the concentration of women professionals in the fields of humanities, the scarcity of women in high posts, the salary gap or wage discrimination, and the "civilized" and "uncivilized" forms of sexual harassment. Meetings held by women faculty to discuss their particular problems - which by the end of the ´80s became almost routine matters - and lesbianism in high-up administration, are cast in a favourable light.

If Cross´s social and political comments are difficult to reconcile with the conservative message the classical detective story communicates, the gendered assumptions of the latter are even further subverted through the representation of a woman in a role previously assigned automatically to men; the socialization of the crime, and the emphasis on truth and empathy over social justice.

The female detective has been featured in fiction almost as long as the male detective, but she was portrayed either as a ladylike elderly spinster, who both intuited and knitted,[7] or as a somewhat masculine figure. At times she was made to fail professionally and economically, often she got married and retired, and occassionally she passed the torch of the investigation to a male detective. "Previous female detectives were silly, subordinate, eccentric, or unbelievable," asserts Kathleen Gregory Klein (1980: 35). After Betty Friedan´s *The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963, and the initiation of the feminist movement, the detective formula is irreverently meddled with, and the limitations traditionally played upon the female sleuth are gradually removed.[8] Successful women

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[7] In "The Knitting Brigade" Dilys Winn describes three different types of knitting spinsters who have solved crimes in British and American fiction for two generations (1979: 91-93).

[8] In *Reinventing Womanhood* Heilbrun laments "the failure of the imagination" which rendered female writers incapable of creating woman characters, and insists on the need for establishing new female prototypes (1979: 72)

detectives finally broke sex occupational barriers and liberated from most of the stereotypical hang-up. Kate Fansler is one of them. As her detection career spans several novels, Kate suffers several metamorphoses. From being an honorary man in the first novels, she changes into an androgynous being to become, in the last few novels, a woman who identifies herself as feminist. *A Trap for Fools* provides the role model of a woman not dependent on men and not idealized beyong plausibility. In the description of her personaliy, intuition and blandness mix with analytical ability, capacity for logic, courage, power of action and practical intelligence, qualities formerly private to men. She does not lack the scientific or technical knowledge of the male and, although her guesses may be inspired, they are also based on keen observation.[9]

Through the use of both her brains and sensory awareness, Kate solves the crime which, this time, is the consequence of a social, and not just personal, irresponsibility. The two crimes are not dismissed as consequences of an aberrant personality, and so the institution involved -the university- cannot be spared the trauma of having to consider its own institutional politics. Social justice does not apply, but other value, empathy, does. Kate, at the end of the novel, blackmails the provost into creating three large scholarships and settles the case in discreet obscurity.

Cross constructs her story upon a fairly conventional plan: a sensational puzzle is placed before the reader at the earliest possible moment; one enigma leads on to others even more baffling; false trails and temporary setbacks delay the investigation, but in the final chapters the detective triumphantly unmasks the criminal - someone quite unsuspected until that moment. The plot, setting and characters of the plan are drawn from the world of higher education, due to Cross´s close acquaintance with the ins and outs of academic politics; and the crime is solved in a pleasing literary atmosphere. Cross´s awareness of the pressures of circumstance and society on women, makes her use the formula to present a case in favor of feminism, and confront a great variety of issues that concern the place of women in the university.

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[9] But, as she flits from socializing to adventure and is constantly rushing here and there the persevering reader cannot but wonder when she finds time to teach!

3. Romance in Academe: David Lodge

Women, however, do not figure so prominently in the quest romance, defined by Northrop Frye as a utopian fantasy which aims at the transfiguration of the world of everyday reality into either a lost Eden or a new realm from which all the imperfections have been effaced. Frye´s definition implies elements of fantasy and myth, but it does not suggest a complete disrupture from the everyday world. "The quest romance -he asserts - is the search of the libido or desiring self for a fulfilment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality but will still contain that reality" (Frye 1990:193)

In romance, the hero is called, after elaborate preparation, into adventure, in order to struggle, along with various bening agents, against the villain or demon. Although he is, according to Fredric Jameson, closer to a moral spectator surprised by supernatural conflict than to a conscious performer aware of what is at stake, his feats bring about the regeneration of the fallen world and he invariably reaps the rewards of victory. (Jameson 1975:139)

Small World. An Academic Romance by David Lodge, now a retired professor of English Literature, is a campus novel set in 1979, a time when distances shrink by means of new modes of travel and communication. It is a book on the age of "the global campus," where "the American Express card has replaced the literary pass" (1987:64) and top academics are always departing and returning from somewhere. "The day of the individual campus has passed. It belongs to an obsolete technology -railways and the printing press" (p.43), declares professor Zapp. This is a narrative about annual conferences where hundreds of university teachers of language and literature around the world cram into a few hotels, lecture and participate in discussions on every conceivable topic. Food and accommodation are important aspects in conferences (p.65), and the novel therefore delves into the inconveniences of traditional receptions, the aggravations generated by uncomfortable lodgings and the inferior quality of the dinner which normally awaits afterwards. It also brings to focus the discovery that the conference will be sleeping in one building, eating in another and meeting for lectures and discussions on the main campus, thus ensuring for all concerned a

great deal of tiresome walking to and fro. In this anatomy of academic life, Lodge does not forget - how could he? - the informal and intimate contacts at conferences, these being the equivalent of love-boat cruises in our fallen times:

> *It is precisely the tension between professional self-*
> *display and erotic opportunity, between the ambi-*
> *tion to impress many and the desire to impress one,*
> *that, among other things, makes the conference such*
> *a fascinating human spectacle, and such rich mate-*
> *rial for fiction. (Lodge 1986:71)*

The structural principle that enables Lodge to put all these and other diverse things together in a unified narrative is romance. The long journey; the changes of scene; the great number of characters, lost, enchanted or wandering about looking for each other, or for the Grail;[10] the motive of the quest; the amatory; problems of the courtly love tradition, with its erotic undertones; and the miraculous contingencies and coincidences, characteristic of romance, are all retained and dealt with in a carnival spirit.

Although Lodge´s host of globe-trotting scholars - constantly travelling at their universities´ expense- are at times allowed to speak for themselves, they are, for the most part, mouthpieces for the ideas of literary criticism they represent. Northrop Frye asserts that the essential difference between novel and romance lies in the conception of characterization:

> *The romance does not attempt to create 'real people´*
> *so much as stylized figures which expand into psy-*
> *chological archetypes....That is....why a suggestion*
> *of allegory is constantly creeping in around its frin-*
> *ges (1990: 304)*

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[10] Chapter II, part One, for example, covers a four-hour period, and deals with no fewer than seventeen more or less major characters in twelve different settings, from London to Chicago through Australia.

Lodge´s characters are stylized figures of the first rank.Fulvia Morgana, an extremely elegant Italian lady professor of Cultural Studies at the University of Padua, becomes the raving Marxist poststructuralist who analyses literature as an instrument of bourgeois hegemony, as a "fetichistic reification of so-called aesthetic values erected and maintained through an elitist educational system in order to conceal the brutal facts of class oppression under industrial capitalism" (Lodge 1987:318). For Michel Tardieu, narratologist at the University of Paris, the function of criticism is to uncover the laws, structural principles and binary oppositions that uderlay all texts already written and yet to be written. For the reader-oriented Siegfried von Turpitz, art objects enjoy only a virtual existence until they are realized in the mind of the reader. Philip Swallow, who has been reading books for their meaning all his life, incarnates the tradition of humane learning, of robust common sense and simple enjoyment of great books. And in contrast to Swallow´s antitheorist theory, there are the intimidating "jargon-ridden lucubrations of Professor Zapp, in which the perverse paradoxes of fashionable Continental savants are, if possible, rendered even more pretentious and sterile" (Lodge 1987:164).[11]

All are involved in the monomythical story of quest, of departure and return. "Scholars these days are like the errant knights of old, wandering the ways of the world in search of adventure and glory" (Lodge 1987:63) .These academic heroes venture out looking for Angelica, the perfect conference, an original idea, lost relatives, the ultimate academic appointment, happiness, distraction, or simply sex. Professors "are recovering the youth they thought they had sacrificed to learning, they are proving to themselves that they are not dryasdust swots after all, but living, breathing, palpitating human beings, with warm flesh and blood, that stirs and secretes and throbs at a lover´s touch" (p.237). And they all come back loaded with wisdom.

Proper names are good markers of generic taxonomy, and Lodge´s are a clear distortion of the heroic names of romance. The novel begins

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[11] Professor Zapp loses faith in deconstruction by the end of the novel, when a terrorist gang attempts at deconstructing him. He confesses to Persse: "...death is the only concept you can´t deconstruct. Work back from there and you end up with the old idea of the autonomous self. I can die, therefore I am. I realized that when those wop radicals threatened to deconstruct me" (Lodge 1987: 328)

and ends with Persse McGarrigle, and to a large extent involves his particular desire.[12] McGarrigle is an old Irish name which means "Son of Super-Valour" (Lodge 1987:9) and Persse reminds us of Perceval, who in the Grail legend, as in the novel, will cure the King´s sterility. In Chrétien de Troyes´s poem *Le Conte du Graal*, Perceval´s great adventure was to visit the castle of the wounded Fisher King, but he failed to ask the question that would have healed Fisher King. Arthur Kingfisher, Lodge´s king of literary theorists, is no longer able to "achieve an erection or an original thought" (p.94) and is, therefore, retired in a hotel in Chicago, which serves as Avalon. But this time Persse does make the right question:

> 'What do you do if everybody agrees with you?´
> 'A very in-ter-est-ing question... (answers Kingfisher)
> You imply, of course, that what matters in the field
> of critical practice is not truth but difference. If every-
> body were convinced by your arguments, they would
> have to do the same as you and then there would be
> no satisfaction in doing it. To win is to lose the game:
> Am I right?´ (1987:319)

The icy temperature of Manhattan suddenly shoots up and Arthur Kingfisher regains his fertility. He is then ready to allow his name to go forward for the conceptual chair endowed by the UNESCO, which represents the Siege Perilous of the Arthurian legend.[13]

Fulvia Morgana incarnates Morgan, the wicked fairy of the Arthurian legend. In fact, Zapp "couldn´t help thinking of her as a kind of sorceress" (p.151) Miss Sybil Maiden acts as the profetess who assimilates several attributes of Merlin, wizard and counsellor of King Arthur; and Angelica, apart from being a conference freak, becomes the Madelaine of "The Eve of St. Agnes," the Angelica of Milton´s *Paradise Regained* along with both the damsel in distress and the Alcine figure of Ariosto´s *Orlando Furioso*.

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[12] Persse, the hero, is an innocent novice in the academic world. The main feature in traditional romance heroes, from Yvain to Parzifal through Fabrice, Queneau´s Pierrot and The Grand Meaulnes, is their inexperience.

[13] A seat at the Round Table only to be filled by the knight destined to find the Holy Grail.

The novel is interpersed with remarkable coincidences. Dr. Milo
O´Shea, Zapp´s old landlord in *Changing Places*, turns out to be Persse
McGarrigle´s uncle; Joy Simpson, the woman who awakes Swallow´s
most powerful sexual desires, is reported killed with her husband and
child in an air-crash in India but later proves to be alive in Ankara,
Turkey; Angelica is not an only child, as Persse believes, but has a twin
sister, Lily, a porno star, stripper at the club Exotica, run by Girls
Unlimited, the very same firm for which Bernadette McGarrigle, Persse´s
cousin, works. Lodge asserts concerning the twin sisters:

> *The idea of having twins in the novel provided the*
> *solution to the problem of how I wanted Angelica to*
> *appear to be sexually degraded and then to turn out*
> *to be innocent after all, which Frye says is a com-*
> *mon motif in romance (Haffenden 1985:163)*

Angelica and Lily are, we later discover, the daughters of Arthur
Kingfisher and the virginal Sybil Maiden; and Angelica´s lover Peter
McGarrigle, an associate professor at Harvard, turns out to be the first
one appointed at Limerick University, where Persse McGarrigle works
thanks to a mix-up of names.

The novel is not only an exercise in parody of certain textual loci,
Small World is also studded with passing allusions to authors of roman-
ce. References to Tasso, Ariosto, Spenser, Sydney and William Morris
stretch the parallelism.

But just here, let me return to the realities of academic life. The
novel is permeated with comments on academics who work mostly on
planes and at home and hardly ever go to the university; on laws of
academic life like "it is impossible to be excessive in flattery of one´s
peers" (p.152), and references to academic parties where the main object
seems to be:

> *to drink as much as possible, while talking at the*
> *top of your voice and at the same time looking over*
> *the shoulder of the person you were talking·to and*
> *smiling and waving at other people who were also*
> *drinking and talking and smiling and waving*
> *(p.169).*

The combination reminds the reader, should he/she need reminding, that this is not a blatant forgery, not an attempt to pass off as genuine a gobbet of pastiche, but something that remains from first to last a piece of jocose mimicry.

The parodist Lodge is at risk should the purpose of his mimetic tricks go unrecognized. But Lodge´s allusions do not misfire, he - as the professor he is - does not assume his readers will identify the mimicry. On the one hand, he provides the keys or signposts with which his text is furnished through his characters, who discuss in their lectures and conversation all the aspects of romance on which Lodge´s novel draws. And on the other, Lodge does not subvert the novel´s realism, i.e., he does not use the conventions of realism against itself to foreground the complexity of representation.

4. Conclusion

In 1946 C.S.Lewis combined the sensibilities of romance and the conventions of chivalry with the crude realities of the university community at Edgestow in *That Hideous Strength. A Modern-Fairy Tale for Grown-Ups*. John Barth was later, in 1966, to tell the story of a goat-boy, half-human half-goat born out of an omnipotent automatic computer in Tammany College and called to bring love and peace to the university. Women writers, such as P.M. Carlson, Carol Clemeau, Ruth Galbraith, Susan Kenny and Valerie Miner have also combined the detective formula with issues of academe, and depicted women professors who get reluctantly involved in an academic net of deceit and crime which demands their quick metamorphoses into sleuths. Barbara Pym and Alison Lurie set in academe traditional novels of manners; Anita Brookner and Marilyn French use the conventions of the sentimental novels of courtship and marriage to write love stories in universities, and Philip Roth along with Saul Bellow mix the parameters of what Malin and Stark in *Breakthrough* define as Jewish novel with academic matters. Examples multiply.

Intertextuality is a cardinal device in the structure of academic texts. The conventionality of other forms and narrative structures are

incorporated and reformulated along academic parameters. But intertextuality does not make them fashionable novels in the postmodernist sense, for they are usually written within conventional lines.

There exists, as Harold Bloom argued in *The Anxiety of Influence*, a tension between the "good" writers and their predecessors, whose influence they have to cope with and turn to advantage. But, unlike the "strong poets" of Bloom´s book, academic writers do not suffer that guilt-ridden hatred of the father, and do no turn to defensive "tropes" to disguise their will to acknowledge no previous influence. Rather, they enhance the structural and material relationships with other texts, and alert the reader who wants to grapple with their virtuosities to the place to look for access. Maybe academic writing does not aspire to that permanence of Bloom´s "great" works, but that is another academic story.

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MARRIAGE AND POLITICS IN TILLIE OLSEN'S "TELL ME A RIDDLE"

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Abstract

In this essay we endeavour to approach Tillie Olsen's "Tell me a Riddle" by emphasizing the political component present in the presentation of a marital war between Eva and David, the main characters of the novella. Eva is a long-suffering mother and housewife obliged by her husband to emigrate to America from Russia after having taken an active part in the anti-tsarist revolution of 1905. Eva's faithful belief in socialism and her lonely, reclusive life in America contrasts with David's enthusiastic belief in the American Dream and capitalism, a conflict that ends up reaching the characteristics of an open war. Physically Eva wishes to die in peace in her own home, a symbol of her nostalgia for revolutionary Russia and her happy Russian youth and her days as a political activist. She however meets with her husband's and family's incomprehension.

"Tell me a Riddle" (1962) is a novella, in the Cervantine sense of the word, that Tillie Olsen dedicated to her mother, a Jewish lady who had died only a few months before she began to write it in 1956. Therefore in our opinion it is no coincidence that the plot takes place during the last few months of Eva's life, Eva also being a Jewish mother and housewife. Before her death at the end of the story Olsen allows the reader to learn the hard circumstances that Eva has gone through during her life: her childhood in pre-revolutionary Siberia, her relunctant immigration to the United States as a young newly-wed, and, above all, her forty-seven years of marriage to David, a fellow countryman who easily believed in the American Dream.

Eva's forty-seven years of marriage are promptly summarized: she has played a subordinate role by waiting on the needs and whims of her husband and her seven children. The protagonist has endured her long-suffering roles of mother and housewife without a single complaint. Only at the end of her days, once she feels she is free from the burden of raising her children, does she show evidence of a rebellious outburst towards her husband's tyranny. Her major and legitimate demand, no doubt well deserved after so many years of silent and daily sacrifice, consists of refusing to spend her last days in the "Haven", a residence for the aged; she prefers to die in her own home.

In effect, as Olsen states at the beginning of the story through one of Eva's sons, no-one can trace the origin of Eva's rebellion. This is a clear indication of the patient attitude of silence and obedience that she has adopted for so long. No one, not even Eva's own sons and daughters remember having ever seen their mother confronting her husband. Only now: "Only now, when tending to the needs of others no longer shackled them together." ("Tell me a Riddle" (1962) 1993: 545)

Olsen depicts the sad reality of a married couple in which the wife has sacrificed her happiness for a common cause, that of bringing up their children. Eva's quiet self-abnegation is best shown in two aspects: the first is her legitimate aspiration for knowledge and culture. Her housewife and mother's duties -what Olsen calls "endless defeating battle" or "endless war"- and above all, her husband, are impediments to achieving her goal.

> "She thought without softness of that young wife,
> who in the deep night hours while she nursed the
> current baby, and perhaps held another in her lap,
> would try to stay awake for the only time there was
> to read. (...) He would find her so, and stimulated
> and ardent, sniffing her skin, coax: 'I'll put the baby
> to bed, and you - put the book away, don't read, don't
> read'." ("Tell me a Riddle" 1993: 547)

Her second aspiration cut short, which we only learn of during the description of her last living hours and minutes, was her wish to have

remained in Russia to witness the long-awaited revolution that put an end to the Tsar's tyranny. Eva had participated in a failed attempt to create a real people's society in 1905, just before herself and her new husband fled the country. Before being married Eva was imprisoned for these revolutionary activities and it was in jail that she learnt how to read with the help of a revolutionary leader. By 1917 Eva was already in America. Therefore she could not benefit from the social improvements that the October Revolution had brought about. But only at the end of their marriage does Eva complain about having been brought to America against her will in a journey that she had so overtly taken as an escape from the tsarist regime and a betrayal to their cause. Eva tells David "Betrayer. All your life you have run" ("Tell me a Riddle", 1993: 570). He dragged his young wife to America in search of the American dream. To Eva the American dream was a fraud, because her life in America was far from a dream: it was all work, poverty and loneliness. She believed that had she remained in Russia, things would have been better. In her final moments of delirium on her deathbed Eva recalls the Russia of her childhood (including children's songs and riddles) and the revolutionary political slogans of her highly-spirited youth.

Eva was not prepared to give in to what she believed was a new demonstration of selfishness on her husband's part: to sell their house and move to an old people's residence whose name to Eva's ear must have sounded quite paradoxical: "Haven". All Eva wanted was to die in her home surrounded by her own things, which she had finally so relunctantly learnt to love. They had become the substitute for her native land and community back in Russia. Spending her last days at home, she believed, was like going back to her country of origin to die there. If the Bolshevik Revolution had brought freedom to the Russian people, she at long last also wished to enjoy a similar kind of freedom albeit in her own house in America. Her quest for liberty was as simple as this: "Better to eat at my own table when I want, and to cook and eat how I want." ("Tell me a Riddle" 1993: 546)

To die in her own abode was not a mere whim but David thought it was. He does not understand that Eva's last and only attempt to rebel against his authority is aimed at achieving some well-deserved payment for her constant surrender. Her life has been abandoned to her children's

natural needs and interests and to David's selfish concerns. Now that raising the children is no longer their common "cause" -a "cause" she had always thought had much more to do with her than with her husband anyway-, she decides she will not give in. She stands firm to fight her husband, her "enemy", a situation reminiscent of her days of political struggle.

David does not understand that selling the house and moving to the "Haven" is for Eva like having to emigrate. Once more it would be comparable to their escape, that journey which Eva had so relunctantly embarked on in 1905. David fled from the socialist principles for which they had suffered so much, obliging his wife to follow him and selling himself to the capitalist American dream. For Eva, moving to the "Haven" would mean giving in to what she considered no more than an "American nightmare". David attempts to convince Eva to go to the "Haven" in a way that brings to mind strategies used for political campaigns. Olsen speaks of this procedure as a brainwashing campaign:

> "Now he was violating [the reconciled peace] with
> his constant campaining: Sell the house and move
> to the Haven." ("Tell me a Riddle" 1993: 548)

But Eva is aware that in the "Haven" their lives would be like those of the bourgeoisie, those of kings, an idea that she despises. She still believes in the socialist ideas she had fought for in her youth. She believes in them to such an extent that even when she is dying she cannot help uttering the political slogans of the pre-revolutionary stage of 1905. They are so firmly embedded in her mind that she still talks as if she were trying to convince herself of the truth of a political slogan - "Never again to be forced to the rhythms of others" ("Tell me a Riddle" 1993: 548). As David mentions, in the past Eva had even been "an orator of the 1905 revolution" (1993: 556), and this obviously influences her speech. David however continues to try to convince Eva of the advantages of leading a bourgeois life in the "Haven".

> *"(...) 'At the Haven they come in with their own*
> *machines to clean your room or your cottage; you*
> *fish or play cards, or make jokes in the sun, not with*
> *knotty fingers fight to mend vacuums.' Over the*
> *dishes, coaxingly: 'For once in your life, to be free, to*
> *have everything done for you, like a queen.'" ("Tell*
> *me a Riddle" 1993: 546)*

But Eva is not easily decieved: "I never liked queens" (1993: 546). Indeed, to like them would have be anti-revolutionary.

Olsen depicts David, not only as a selfish man, but also as a tyrant who has always imposed his will. He has been the king of his household. Olsen's choice of Eva's husband's name is far from arbitrary. Her Jewish roots and dislike of religion influences her to name him "David", which suggests an allusion to the "King David" of the Biblical and Jewish tradition, a perfectly clear, negative image. This idea is emphasized by the fact that Eva declares herself agnostic and that she wishes to avoid having anything whatsoever to do with rabbis. The Jewish religion, she believes, cares very little, if anything, for women:

> *"In Paradise, woman, you will be the footstool of*
> *your husband, and in life -poor chosen Jew- ground*
> *under, despised, trembling in cellars. And (...) cre-*
> *mated." ("Tell me a Riddle" 1993: 556)*

Eva's biblical name on the other hand aims to represent the whole female race, all of the women that have been forced to work and be subordinated to man's rule since the creation of humankind.

Eva sees David as an enemy, a bourgeois figure obsessed with money, who has surrendered and joined hands with the enemy which is capitalist America. The question raised about the selling of their house and David's proposed move to the "Haven" starts an open war between husband and wife. Eva's rebellion is at first a marital one. She refuses to listen to him. After all she has constantly been obliged to listen during their forty-years of marriage:

> *"[Eva] turned off her ear button, so that she would
> not have to hear (...) 'Turn on your ear button - I am
> talking', David would order. In spite of that, stub-
> bornly she resisted (...)" ("Tell me a Riddle" 1993:
> 548)*

At first their war is also verbal. David proves to be more aggressive at the beginning. He is extremely ironic when he calls her different names. All of these names are of course preceeded by "Mrs", a subsconscious reminder of the fact that Eva is still his wife and therefore subordinate to him. David uses a wide range of derisive denominations: Mrs. Word Miser, Mrs. Enlightened, Mrs. Cultured, Mrs. Unpleasant, Mrs. Take It Easy, Mrs. Live Alone and Like It, Mrs. Free as a Bird, Mrs. Telepathy, Mrs. Excited Over Nothing, Mrs. Inahurry, Mrs. Bodybusy, Mrs. Suspicious, Mrs. Invalid, Mrs. Orator-without-breath, Mrs. Miserable, Mrs. Philosopher, Mrs. Babbler, Mrs. Live Alone and Mrs. Cadaver. On the other hand, Eva seems to be less eloquent in English, presumably because of her immigrant origin and her reclusive life. She has not even been allowed to participate in literary meetings or circles that she would have enjoyed, and when David offers her the possibility of joining one in the "Haven", her dignity makes her refuse the proposal straight away: it is too late now. When they argue she sometimes uses a kind of conciliatory silence. She seems to be asking for a halt in their war when she asks for his arm or some caresses or some company, almost always in vain.

> *"One night she asked him: "You have a meeting to-
> night. Do not go. Stay...with me." ("Tell me a Riddle"
> 1993: 551)*

However, when Eva decides to be aggressive she hits where she knows it hurts and manages to insult more frequently and bitingly than David. Her attacks are fairly mild at first: "Clown, grimacer, floormat, yesman, entertainer" ("Tell me a Riddle" 1993: 547), but her bitterness increases gradually: for example, she says "Diarrhoea of the mouth, is there a doctor to make you dumb?" ("Tell me a Riddle" 1993: 550). When David shows a sarcastic interest in her health, after having made another

attempt to convince her of the advantages of the "Haven", Eva accuses him of being the only one that ever hurts her: "Only you [hurt me]" ("Tell me a Riddle" 1993: 549). She even uses David's own linguistic weaponry when she calls him "Mr. Importantbusy". At the end her insults become more direct with names such as "Swindler!", "Babbler and Blind", "Hypocrite", and, above all, "coward, runner" and "betrayer", which she utters when she is already on her deathbed. These insults are certainly addressed to his manly dignity, and she knows it. Eva's anger towards David gradually takes on a political aspect too: she certainly holds on to old pre-revolutionary values, but he represents an ex-revolutionary who has converted to capitalism.

Eva is faithful to her ideals till the end. "Mrs. Babbler", as David calls her, cries out broken fragments of political speeches in her moments of delirium, pieces of speeches she pronounced in her young activist days:

> "Lift high banner of reason justice freedom light
> (...) Humankind life worthy heroic capacities Seeks
> (...) belong human being." ("Tell me a Riddle" 1993:
> 572)

But her political concern for the people's welfare remains until her death. Before dying she takes to her heart a large Mexican cookie with the shape of a little girl, Pan de Muerto, that symbolises the soul of a recently deceased young member of the people. In spite of this being a custom of a completely different race and culture, Eva shows a great respect for these customs and considers this little piece of Mexican cake as "something of my own around me" ("Tell me a Riddle", 1993: 567). By this Olsen hints that to Eva there is one world and one people, no matter what races, religions or languages the world may be divided into: the people is one people and should be united. Therefore Eva feels Pan de Muerto is also part of herself, as much as any other Russian custom. Furthermore, when she learns of the nuclear catastrophe that killed seventy thousand people, her concern is addressed to "Man...we'll destroy ourselves?" ("Tell me a Riddle" 1993: 566). She does not obviously know any of the victims, and yet her worries are directed towards "Man", that is, one united human race. When in hospital Eva insisted on the same

idea: she was "Born, human; Religion, none" ("Tell me a Riddle" 1993: 555).

The autobiographic elements that appear in Olsen's work should be taken into account. We know of the authoress' struggle to be liberated from her duties as a mother and as a working woman in order to dedicate herself to writing. The necessity of raising and supporting four children through "everyday jobs" silenced her for nearly twenty years: from 1936, when she married Jack Olsen, to the early 1950's. It was then that she began to write her short stories "I Stand Here Ironing" (1956), "O Yes" (1957) and "Hey Sailor, What Ship?" (1957), and the novella "Tell me a Riddle" (Kapla 1990).

In "Tell Me a Riddle" the protagonist, Eva, is an intelligent literate housewife with aspirations of knowledge and whose house chores and motherly duties stop her from fulfiling her goals. Olsen may have been thinking of her own mother, Ida Lerner, who, like the fictional Eva, was a Jewish immigrant that had fled Russia after the 1905 rebellion. As well as this we also believe that Olsen is portraying herself or some "alter ego" of her's in the story. This is shown in the fact that, just like Eva, Olsen began to be a political activist, especially during the time when she began to write *Yonnondio: From the Thirties* (1974), during her early twenties. And, as well as the protagonist in "Tell Me a Riddle", Olsen herself had also been in prison for organising workers in Kansas City (Kapla 1990).

In "I Stand Here Ironing" (1956), a short story written immediately before "Tell Me a Riddle", the mother/narrator is a woman who struggles against her own sense of motherhood when she realises she is forced to leave her first born daughter, Emily, in a cold and distant Child Care Residence because her work does not allow her to take care of her baby. In "Hey Sailor, What Ship?" (1957) the married couple's offspring tell their father off, an alcoholic sailor, for wasting the family's money on alcohol while his wife, their long-suffering working mother and housewife, is literally exhausted from overwork. This female motherly character, as far as the authoress is concerned, is wasting her time, something extremely precious in Olsen's eyes. Therefore we believe it is easy to see that the figure of the mother who throws her talent and life opportunities away whilst doing her every day chores is a recurring and

autobiographical theme in Olsen's work. Child-rearing seems to be the one activity that Olsen believes is worth sticking to, even though this may mean having to sacrifice other personal aspirations. This is made clear in "I Stand Here Ironing" (1956). The mother/protagonist spends the whole story regretting the minute she decided to leave her daughter's education to an orphanage for a few months, only because she could not cope with her new job. The story concentrates on the mother's attempt to justify her having committed the mistake of putting work before her daughter. This mother concludes that she would never do the same with her other children ("I Stand Here Ironing" 1993). In "Tell Me a Riddle" Eva is a reasonably satisfied mother who has done her best to create a family atmosphere and raise her offspring properly, even though that meant having to sacrifice her happiness as far as married life was concerned and to sacrifice her hopes to improve herself culturally. This is why she now asks for compensation from her husband: to be allowed to remain at home and die among the things "[she was] use't" ("Tell me a Riddle" 1993: 546).

A few lines should be dedicated to Jeannie, one of the main characters in "Tell Me a Riddle". She is David and Eva's grand-daughter and seems to be the only one that understands Eva's problem. She is a nurse, a fact that allows her to approach Eva's secrecy and help her in her psychological "disease". On the other hand, her being a nurse also allows her to follow Eva's deadly gall cancer closely, her physical "disease". She is also an objective mediator between both parties in the marital war. She knows how to talk to each one of them in order to be on their good side. Even though Eva does not make a special effort to connect with either her sons or daughters, let alone her grandchildren, Jeannie becomes Eva's accomplice. The fact that she understands Eva and is a woman leads us to suspect that Olsen is introducing a valid model of a working woman. She belongs to a future generation that approaches life in a different way. She is efficient, literate, free and, due to the nature of her profession, able to help others. If we contemplate the negative features of this theory we can only say that perhaps Jeannie's freedom in all aspects of the word is only possible because she herself is not married and has no children. Despite this, however, we get the impression that with Jeannie and the future generations of women things will not be the same as with her grandmother (Banks 1990).

Jeannie collaborates in trying to make it possible for Eva to go back to her physical world, to her house, and back to her psychological world, to her childhood and youth in Russia. She is also the one that reveals to David the significance of Eva's deliriums, broken political slogans and Russian children's songs.

> "*Jeannie came to comfort him. In her light voice she said: Grandaddy, Grandaddy don't cry. She is not there, she promised me. On the last day, she said she would go back to when she first heard music, a little girl on the road of the village where she was born. She promised me. Leave her there, Grandaddy, it is all right. She promised me. Come back, come back and help her poor body to die." ("Tell me a Riddle" 1993: 576)*

In the end the message Olson tries to convey is that David survived Eva, but Eva took her vengeance. She managed to make it to her own "Haven". She won the war.

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THE POET AND HER MUSES: FEMALE SOURCES OF INSPIRATION IN THE POETRY OF AUDRE LORDE

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Abstract

Muses have occupied a central position in the male literary imagination, which has always placed them in the position of "the other." The present paper questions this version of muses as passive "others" by concentrating on the female sources of creative inspiration in Audre Lorde's poetry. As creator, Lorde rejects a language of submission to refer to her muses, and keeps a one-to-one relationship with them. I will show that the real and legendary women Lorde celebrates as muses conform her personal life experience and cultural heritage. Also, they encourage the poet's insights about her own existence, and are closely connected with the author's deepest concerns.

The myth of the muse deals with the source and nature of creativity. Traditionally, the muse has been a central symbolic aspect of the male literary imagination. He, the maker of poetry, needed to be possessed by her in order to create, and used a language of submission and dominance to describe their relationship. The muse has existed for man as a series of opposites: he is subject, she is object; he is lover, she is beloved. The male poet depended upon his muse, but she spoke only through him. Whatever representations muses have assumed throughout history, they have always been placed in the position of "the other." In her analysis of the concept of the muse in Western literature, Mary K. DeShazer identifies three types of muses: the sexual, the spiritual and the natural, each linking the poet to a primary force (1986, 8-10). The female,

the beloved, is acted upon, and her usual response to her lover's declaration is no. This answer shows the traditional function of woman in relation to man: to help the poet transcend the world of physicality by reminding him that the real object of his sexual passion is his own creativity (Farwell 1988, 106).

A number of women poets today are revising this masculine version of muses as passive "others", portraying them as active sources of inspiration born of their own creativity and will. These poets often name as muses women from their lives -mothers, sisters, lovers, and friends. Some of them invoke goddesses and mythical women, especially in poems about creative process, or they focus on figures traditionally viewed as evil or dangerous to men (DeShazer 1991, 278). Audre Lorde is one of these artists. She has claimed that she owes "the power behind her voice" to women, and has always acknowledged a strong feminine influence in her work. This paper analyses the female sources of creative inspiration in Lorde's poetry. I intend to show the real and legendary women Lorde celebrates as muses, their role in her poetic production, and their relationships with the author.

At the beginning of her biomythography *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (1982), Lorde asks "To whom do I owe the symbols of my survival?", "to whom do I owe the woman I have become?." Her answers pay tribute to the women who have inspired her -as mothers, sisters, lovers, goddesses, muses, etc., "Images of women flaming like torches adorn and define the borders of my journey, stand like dykes between me and the chaos. It is the images of women, kind and cruel, that lead me home" -home to what Lorde calls "the journeywoman pieces of myself" (*Zami* 1982, 3-5). In her poetry, Lorde struggles to name herself as a "black lesbian feminist warrior poet." She articulates her internal plurality and the complexity of the communities she belongs to. Lorde considers that poetry is not a luxury but the result of an exercise of personal introspection that confronts us with our inner feelings and with the chaos inside of us, allowing its use as a way of knowledge. Poetry represents a refusal of "dishonesty by silence"; her main goal as a black woman poet then becomes "the transformation of silence into language and action" (*Sister Outsider* 1984, 40).

The presence of female figures in Lorde's poetry participates of our author's search for alternative sources of inspiration different from the traditional ones. These women help Lorde to name her black female selves in her own words and recover a model of female power Western culture has often ignored. By invoking these muses, Lorde questions traditional literary images and offers a reevaluation of the creative act (Farwell 1988, 100).

We find four main female sources of inspiration in Lorde's poetry. First, she celebrates as muses the women who make up her own family: her mother, her mother's West Indian female relatives, and her sisters. Second, Lorde mentions the women lovers of her life, and uses lesbian muses as a way to claim black lesbian sexual difference and to explore difference as a force of creative change within life (Yorke 1992, 207). African goddesses such as Mawulisa, Seboulisa, Yemanjá, etc., and mythical women belonging to old African cultures also constitute a strong source of inspiration in many of Lorde's poems, especially those included in *The Black Unicorn* (1978). Finally, our poet names as muses those women who have been victims of a racist, sexist or homophobic society but show a warrior attitude to the oppressors.

The first and most significant woman from her own life Lorde invokes as muse is her mother, Linda. Lorde considers her relationship with her mother as the source of her creativity, and will learn from Linda new ways and words to name reality. Linda's language has to do with Carriacou, her West Indian homeland, and is full of euphemisms that avoid any explicit reference to sensuality. Lorde uses this material as starting point to develop her artistic abilities. From her mother's silences, she realises of the importance of language. Linda repressed her own language, and used silence to protect herself and her daughters from a reality she could not change. This was the key of her survival in a racist and sexist world, but it had a personal cost for her and for Audre who felt alienated from her friends and her family. To become a poet, Lorde chooses an attitude of active denomination, and moves from Linda's oral poetry to the written text, from her Carriacou songs to poems, from silence to language and from language to action.

Many poems reveal Linda's strong influence on Lorde's life and art. Most of them show an ambivalence of the poet towards her mother.

Sometimes, Linda is depicted as a powerful figure, while other times Lorde deprives her of any power. We also find poems where Lorde expresses deep maternal feelings full of sensuality. In "Black Mother Woman" (*From a Land Where Other People Live* 1973, 16), Lorde shows her mother's influence in the development of her identity. There have been difficult and hard moments in Lorde's relationship with her mother, however, this poem has a grateful mood. The poet evokes her mother's defensiveness towards her, "in the center of furies/hanging me/with deep breasts and wiry hair" (l. 10-12). But Linda cannot keep this attitude for very long, and the poem reveals her weaknesses and her internal fight between offering love and teaching her daughter how to survive in a hostile environment, "with your own split flesh/and long suffering eyes" (l. 13-14). According to Lorde, Linda's strategies are "myths of little worth" (l. 15), which the poet will transform into something different and worthy for other women.

In the last stanza, Lorde is ready to use this maternal legacy to improve her life conditions. The poet feels able to overcome Linda's internal divisions, and to define herself in a positive way, showing strength instead of weakness, "beautiful tough as chestnut/stanchion against nightmares of weakness" (l. 21-22).

Lorde has always found creative energy in her women lovers and in her own eroticism. In some of her essays, particularly in "Uses of the Erotic:The Erotic as Power" (*Sister Outsider* 1984, 53), our author makes a revisionist use of the term erotic. She connects the erotic with the irrational, and places it in a "deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling" (1984, 53). Women, then, should feel and recognise the erotic inside of them, and use it as a source of creative energy in life and in art. Lorde adds that "Through the erotic, my work becomes a conscious decision -a longed-for bed which I enter gratefully and from which I rise up empowered" (1984, 55). Besides, she links the erotic with the concept of difference because she considers the erotic as the source of connection of two people who are basically different.

Lorde displaces conventional heterosexist poetic discourses. Her use of lesbian muses deconstructs some Western sexual metaphors for creativity, and points to the possibility of female autonomy (Farwell 1988, 118). According to Mary Carruthers,

> *In the myth of the Lesbian poets the muse remains*
> *female. This completely changes the relationship*
> *of the poet to her poetry. Because the muse is fema-*
> *le, she is not Other but familiar, maternal and so-*
> *roral (...). Their relationship is not one of posses-*
> *sion but of communal bonding. This myth seeks to*
> *recreate and remember wholeness (...) through a*
> *meeting of familiars which recalls a completeness*
> *that is present but forgotten or suppressed by his-*
> *tory. (...) By familiarizing the muse, Lesbian myth*
> *provides a way of seeing the poet in the woman,*
> *not as alien or monstrous, but as an aspect of her*
> *womanhood (1983, 296).*

An early poem that illustrates the link between female eroticism and creativity is "Love Poem" (*New York Head Shop and Museum* 1974, 26). The poet-lover becomes and earth mother-creator on and in the body of her beloved. The first lines pray for richness and honey:

> *Speak earth and bless me*
> *with what is richest*
> *make sky flow honey out of my hips*
> *rigid as mountains*
> *spread over a valley*
> *carved out by the mouth of rain (l. 1-6)*

Through her union with her lover, Lorde creates the sky from her hips, valleys from her mouth; she becomes "high wind in her forests hollow/fingers whispering sound" (l. 8-9), and celebrates her erotic connection to her lover and the universe:

> *Greedy as herring-gulls*
> *or a child*
> *I swing out*
> *over the earth*
> *over and over*
> *again. (l. 15-18)*

In the poem "Recreation" (*The Black Unicorn* 1978, 81) the sexual relationship is the source of creativity for the poet and her lover. Both are paper and pen, and their intimate communication and connection is expressed with words related to writing, such as "images" (l. 13), "write" (l. 16), "word countries" (l. 14), "poem" (l. 17). As the poet's words become flesh, so the lover's flesh becomes words:

> *you create me against your thighs*
> *hilly with images*
> *moving through our word countries*
> *my body*
> *writes into your flesh*
> *the poem*
> *you make of me. (l. 12-18)*

The third type of muses Lorde invokes are legendary female figures from African mythology, such as goddesses and Amazons. She uses them to reaffirm her racial and sexual identity, and to offer a positive vision of black women's identity that can be useful for the Afro-American community. Also, these mythical figures allow Lorde to claim her African roots, and to establish links with other black communities. But most of all, the presence of African goddesses and Amazons in Lorde's poetry constitutes an alternative to the Judeo-Christian patriarchal myths many women like herself do not feel comfortable with. For Liz Yorke, these mythologies reconstruct the suppressed voices of marginalized spiritual traditions, and celebrate racial and sexual differences as defiant and productive (1992, 199). This way Lorde acts as the mouthpiece of women who lack the opportunity to articulate their own stories.

Lorde's use of Seboulisa, Mawulisa, Yemanjá and other African goddesses denies traditional representations of the divine as exclusively male. Traditionally, patriarchal definitions of God as the father and of human beings as mankind had suppressed women by ignoring their existence. Like other writers, Lorde replaces conventional religious terminology with woman-identified metaphors for the divine. But she goes further than depicting God as a woman because her representation of the divine as a black woman recovers a model of female power Western culture has often ignored (Keating 1992, 27). Lorde does not place these

goddesses in an ideal world far from reality, on the contrary, her myths are attached to Harlem, and the mythical world is often juxtaposed to the real one.

In the poem "A Woman Speaks" (*The Black Unicorn* 1978, 4), Lorde tries to define herself as a black woman. The poem describes this process of asserting her race and gender. The presence of female figures, real and legendary, shows Lorde's interest in establishing a link with African foremothers and in incorporating them as part of her cultural and personal legacy, as we appreciate in the following lines:

> *I do not dwell*
> *within my birth nor my divinities*
> *who am ageless and half-grown*
> *and still seeking*
> *my sisters*
> *witches in Dahomey*
> *wear me inside their coiled cloths*
> *as our mother did*
> *mourning. (16-24)*

Seboulisa is invoked as muse in "125th Street and Abomey" (*The Black Unicorn* 1978, 12), a poem that fuses the ancient Dahomean capital with an ambivalent but familiar American landscape. As the poem opens, the speaker celebrates Seboulisa, present in the territory of Manhattan:

> *Head bent, walking through snow*
> *I see you Seboulisa*
> *printed inside the back of my head*
> *like marks of the newly wrapped akai*
> *that kept my sleep fruitful in Dahomey*
> *and I poured on the red earth in you honour*
> *those ancient parts of me*
> *most precious and least needed*
> *my well-guarded past*
> *the energy-eating secrets*
> *I surrender to you as libation,*
> *mother. (l. 1-12)*

In the past, the poet has been frightened and reluctant to speak. But now, after this encounter with Seboulisa in a familiar land, she feels empowered to break her silence, and asks the goddess to "give me the woman strenght/of tongue in this cold season" (l. 21-22). In the last stanza, Lorde considers Seboulisa as her mother. The harmony in their relationship serves as a model for Lorde's relationship with her own mother, and expresses the poet's desire to achieve a close connection with her:

> *Seboulisa mother goddess with one breast*
> *eaten away by worms of sorrow and loss*
> *see me now*
> *your severed daughter*
> *laughing our name into echo*
> *all the world shall remember (32-37)*

Finally, Audre Lorde also depicts the muse as a warrior who guides the poet in her cultural and creative battles. According to Mary K. DeShazer, the reason for choosing such a muse seems obvious when we consider the sufferings women of color throughout the world have undergone from poverty, starvation, war, etc. By invoking a militant muse, Lorde adds her voice to others who are fighting against oppression (1991, 278).

The warrior identity forms part of the core of Lorde's poetics and politics. Sometimes, this word symbolizes hope for future generations, other times it evokes centuries of history of African women's resistance to discrimination and oppression. However, this word is often associated with terrible war imagery, such as arms, guns, battles, etc., in poems where Lorde supports women and children engaged in global struggles for liberation in South Africa, Grenada, Chile, etc. In my opinion, the presence of a warrior muse in some of these poems is contradictory because on the one hand, Lorde condemns the violence and oppression many women suffer, but on the other, she justifies the warrior spirit of these women and their use of arms to fight the oppressor, who is always white and male.

The poem "Sisters in Arms" (*Our Dead Behind Us* 1986, 3) illustrates this point, and shows the complexity of Lorde's use of the warrior construct, including images of the poet warrior and the warrior muse. Lorde criticizes South Africa political system, and shares bed and armed struggle with a South African woman. The title refers to the concepts of solidarity between the two lovers, and of violence against the oppressor. However, the poet and her lover are not as close as their common fight might suggest. The distance between them makes their common goals artificial, and offers an idealized version of their armed struggle.

The use of a warrior muse is problematic because there are multiple sources of oppression women must fight against, and it is not always easy to accept that women have also participated in other women's oppression. Nevertheless, it represents many women's resistance to discrimination and violence, and offers a metaphor and an identity by which (DeShazer 1991, 283).

The analysis of Audre Lorde's main sources of inspiration confirms women's poets authority as artists. These writers are opening new ways to develop their creative imagination in consonance with the changes and improvements of their position in the world and in their relationships with men. Audre Lorde's muses do not play the passive role they used to have in masculine poetry, on the contrary, they conform Lorde's personal life experience and her cultural heritage. Either real or mythical, these figures encourage the poet's insights about her own existence, and are always closely connected with the author's personal, social, and political concerns.

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INTERVIEWING GENE H. BELL-VILLADA
At Universidad de Granada. April 25th, 1996

By Nieves Pascual Soler
Universidad de Jaén.

Gene H. Bell-Villada, critic, essayist, translator, professor and chair in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts, has contributed extensively to national and international journals. He is the author of definitive books on Jorge Luis Borges (Borges and his Fiction. A Guide to His Mind and Art, 1981)and Gabriel García Marquez (García Marquez: The Man and His Work, 1990) and he has recently published Art for Arts Sake and Literary Life (1996), a brilliant examination of literary aestheticism from the eighteenth century to academic deconstruction.

Bell-Villada is also a novelist. In The Carlos Chadwick Mystery: A Novel of College Life and Political Terror [1], set in an imaginary liberal arts college in rural Massachussetts sometime in the 1970's, he traces the evolution of a student from American centrism to the radical left and, from there, to terrorism: Carlos Chadwick is accused of planting bombs in two college dormitories, protesting the American bombings of Peru. His story is told from different perspectives. Part 1, "Who Is Carlos Chadwick?", written by an obtuse American journalist, Fred Jennings, presents the reader with the basic facts of Chadwick's life: born of American and Venezuelan parents, Carlos happily goes to college in the States, later travels to France where he gets acquainted with the radical left, and returns to the U.S. ranting and raving against the evils of

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[1] Alburquerque, NM: Amador Publishers, 1990.

imperialism. Part 2 is told by Livie Kingsley who recounts her short-lived love relationship with Carlos, which ended when he started to reciprocate her emotions, in a part-memoir part-Harlequin romance narrative[2]. We never get to know if Carlos is responsible for the bombings, and the metaphysical mystery that surrounds his personality remains incomprehensible. His investigators are too dogmatic to shed light on his character. Part 3 consists of Chadwick's own play: "Perspectives Industries, Ltd", a multi-levelled allegory of ideological control, industrialization and multinational firms which "combines 1920s vaudevilliana" with "the ubiquitous telly talk-shows of our time". The three pieces are framed within a foreword to a non-existent British edition written by George O.R. Newell (an anagram for George New Orwell), and an appendix of selections from Chadwick's Private Notebook. The novel trascends the boundaries of campus fiction to become, in the tradition of Swift and Rabelais, a complex and biting satire of U.S. life, values, control policy and perspectivism.

1. Question: Few of the novels which have depicted the academic world have done so in serious terms. Those that do, often turn out to be, in Leslie Fiedler's words, "hopelessly middlebrow". What is your vision of academe? Is it a microcosm of society? Does it still maintain its Arnoldian function of creating finer human beings?

Answer: I placed the narrative at a college because it seemed the appropriate setting for a novel of ideas, which the book certainly is. Students, after all, tend to discuss ideas just for their own sake much more than adults do. They happen to be at that moment in their lives when they're just discovering the big philosophical and social questions. And during times of crisis, a time of protracted war, for example, those ideas tend to take on a certain urgency and immediacy. This is a very talky novel, of course—there is an incredible amount of talking in its pages—and students love to talk. Besides, they have more time for it! So, given that *The Carlos Chadwick Mystery* is a spoof of the American

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[2] Bell-Villada confessed having read 10 Harlequins in preparation for his novel.

"marketplace of ideas" ideology, I needed to show that marketplace at work, and at its purest. What better place than a campus?

Colleges, college life, college romances—they´re a whole American myth unto themselves. There are lots of movies, plenty of pop novels set at colleges; they tend to become ready references. Erich Segal´s *Love Story*, for example, one of the biggest best-sellers of all time. My novel in a sense is a send-off, a satire of that whole literary subculture of the U.S. college romance. By way of preparation for *Carlos Chadwick*, in fact, I read quite a few college novels, both recent ones and specimens from earlier in the century.

On the other hand, the college setting in my novel is casual and accidental, in a sense, the product of a historical conjuncture. The academic novel is a concrete sociological phenomenon that developed after World War II, when writers who could no longer earn their living by their pen, had to turn to the university and start teaching. The academy provides fixed salaries, medical insurance and stable pensions. The atmosphere is certainly more sterile, but I cannot say the traditional bohemian world was better.

2. Q.: Novelists tend to write about what they know best, and most college and academic novels are autobiographical or pseudo-autobiographical. Have you somehow fictionalized in *The Carlos Chadwick Mystery* your experiences as a university student?

A.: There are just a few basic autobiographical elements, like my having lived in Venezuela for two years—an experience which gave me the perspective needed to portray the split between the U.S. and the South American mind—and having experienced the left in the 60s. It was after Vietnam and the destruction of Laos that I became aware of the unreality of American thinking, whereby supposedly nothing is true. The novel, however, does not deal with biography. What interests me most is the way in which biography is seen, through different narrators. And, incidentally, I never attended a small liberal-arts college in New England!

3. Q.: I find it frequent in this type of narratives, written by professors and partly centered on college life, to insist on writing through multiple narrations (you have combined three different discourses: journalism, personal diary and theatrical play), incoherence (your characters are the embodiment of contradiction) and parody. It is my view that the professorial condition of these academic writers has a bearing on the use of these textual strategies and narrative mechanisms. Has your knowledge of literary criticism somehow had an influence on your development as writer?

A.: I suppose so, but I didn't think of it that way. Although it took me fifteen years— I worked on it intermittently—I simply wanted to write a humorous text on a prime preoccupation of American life: relativism. The choosing of techniques depends on your competence as reader, your narrative repertoire and the subject you're dealing with. When speaking of discrepancy, disagreement, conflict, confusion and lack of definite truth, these structures become more appropriate.

4. Q.: "It is inhuman to put people into categories," paraphrasing one of the sentences in your book. Despite our postmodern condition, which forces us to defy all definitions, delimitations and generalizations, the function of the critic is, at least to me, to analyze in order to categorize, otherwise there is no possibility for theorizing. Your novel is certainly about political terrorism on and off campus, but other expectations raised by the title, in terms of genre, are frustrated. Part of it ("A Novel of College Life") brings to my mind the spiritual maturation of a student hero in the bildungsroman tradition, and the word "mystery" assures me that the puzzle is going to be solved at the end and the culprit is going to be taken charge of. None of this. How would you define your novel?

A.: The book is a joke from top to bottom, and the title is another joke. At first, in fact, I thought of "Perspective Industries, Ltd" as title, but the publisher, apart from demanding a framing device for the three original core sections —that's the reason I wrote the Foreword— and pressing me into deleting 20% of the material, he assured me of the need of another title that would catch the eye of the reader. The present title came as an afterthought.

Though I didn´t set out to do it, the narrative portions of the book do tell of the "education" of Carlos Chadwick, and can hence be seen as Bildungsroman of sorts. So, yes, I agree with you there. But with a difference! In this case the Buildung that Carlos the protagonist undergoes is too strange, too foreign for his two biographers to grasp. The pair are simply too obtuse, too rigid and dogmatic, too much caught up in American ideology to be able to understand his intellectual development.

5. Q.: Professor novelists normally write for other professors or for their students. What kind of readership do you have in mind?

A.: I would not call my novel academic. It is not aimed solely at academics and students, but rather intended for the 240 millions of Americans in the States. In fact, it is addressed to a worldwide readership, it is a message for all people concerned about the drift of modern society.

6. Q.: The third part is frightening. In a certain way you antedate Gibson´s *Neuromancer* and Cyberpunk narratives, where the nation-state model becomes irrelevant in a world controlled by multinational firms. Donna Haraway in her "Manifesto for Cyborgs" (1985) speaks of a postnatural present in which "late twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body self-developing and externally designated, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines. Our machines are frighteningly lively, and we ourselves are frighteningly inert." Do you believe technology may force us to question our notions of text, author, narrative and literary education, when the text in the so-called hypertextual space is broadened to include image, sound and design?

A.: Of course, though we yet don´t know how. So many utopias like McLuhan´s have proved too simplistic by today standards. No doubt literature is going to be less important, though I don´t think it will disappear. In the U.S., literature has become the software of the

entertainment industry. There is a great pressure on writers to write "telegeric" novels that can easily be translated into the screen. Publishers simply don´t want complex, serious and difficult novels.

7. Q.: Just to go on with the idea of intertextuality and influences. You have written two books on Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel García Márquez. Have they made an impact on you? How have you combined the Dionysiac impulses of Marquez with the Apollonian narrative of Borges?

A.: I didn´t think of Borges when I started to work on the book. But, retrospectively, I think his constant textual play and the use of the-book-within-the-book device have partially shaped my writing. From García Márquez I learned something different from what most people would imagine. It was not his magic realism but his use of reality that caught my attention. His stories, no matter how magical and fanciful, are always rendered with the most carefully drawn realistic detail. There are continuous references to "plátanos fritos" and "tazas de chocolate" that allow the reader to visualize the scene. George Eliot and Jane Austen, in short, the nineteenth-century realist tradition, have also had an important effect on my writing.

8. Q.: Much of postmodern writing makes use of formula elements, thus blurring the hierarchical division between "high" literature and "subliterature". Fiedler says that "literature is effectively what we teach in departments of English" and Barthes concurs when writing that "literature is what is taught, that´s all." You use elements from Harlequin romance, science fiction, TV. shows and vaudevilles in your novel. Is the division between high/low literature operative?

A.: This is a complex subject. "Serious" writers have always incorporated popular elements in their texts. I think the division is only useful in critical terms. People in the 19th century, for example, were not aware of it. But I also think that if Dickens and Trollope survive, it´s because they were better than many other authors at the time, when the novel was popular culture.

I think it´s safe to say that a literature exclusively bound up with "high" culture runs the risk of being precious, snobbish, even sterile. After all, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Joyce—they´re filled with demotic, popular elements. I´m not saying that trash does not exist, on the contrary, there´s plenty to it, we´re surrounded by it, and by the megaton. And yet, authors like Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler set out to make serious literature out of the pulp mystery fiction in which they were living. We still read them. "High" literature is more a process than a fixed category.

9. Q.: Echoes of Orwell´s dystopias abound in your text. You deconstruct reality in such a way that at the end of the novel one has the impression that nothing has meaning or value. Relativism -or perspectivism- flows down to nihilism.

A.: Yes, it all comes to that. Everything is tolerated, even falsehood, perniciousness and stupidity. Everything is equally valid. The book in this regard is a reply to Orwell. As I see it, social control in our time is achieved not by a totalitarian state or by Big Brother, but by the more elusive and shadowy relativism of the market and the media. I had to tell this truth, no matter what the consequences were. Taking into account how the literary apparatus works, I was afraid of being attacked. What happened was instructive—nothing happened! The left mostly didn´t understand it and the rest simply ignored it!

To become a novelist is indeed difficult. There is a lot of competition, and if your novel is not advertised in the national press and made known through television, it becomes a drop in the ocean, lost in that swamp of popular culture products. Advertising campaigns and publishing houses, with the cultural power to choose and canonize texts, do not promote serious novels that are irreducible to formulas. It is disturbing to see that literature produced by, say Stephen King and Danielle Steel— literature is here to be understood in its broadest sense as words on a page—is backed by publicity and sold in the millions. It is even more upsetting when you know that multiculturalism has become a clumsy excuse to take bad works seriously, merely because they have been produced by victims.

10. Q.: Let me comment on the morals of the book because, though parodic, your novel has very serious implications. According to Jean-François Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition,* the writer´s role in society is that of philosopher, and according to Nadine Gordimer or Chinua Achebe the writer is a teacher whose function is to transform reality or, at least, try to modify our notion of it. Do you agree?

A.: Frankly, I wanted to bestir the reader and make him think of the limits of relativism. I wanted the reader to understand that there are moments in which not everything is relative. There exist certain truths, even in our decentered world. I did not intend to change the world, but certainly to help change the way people think.

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