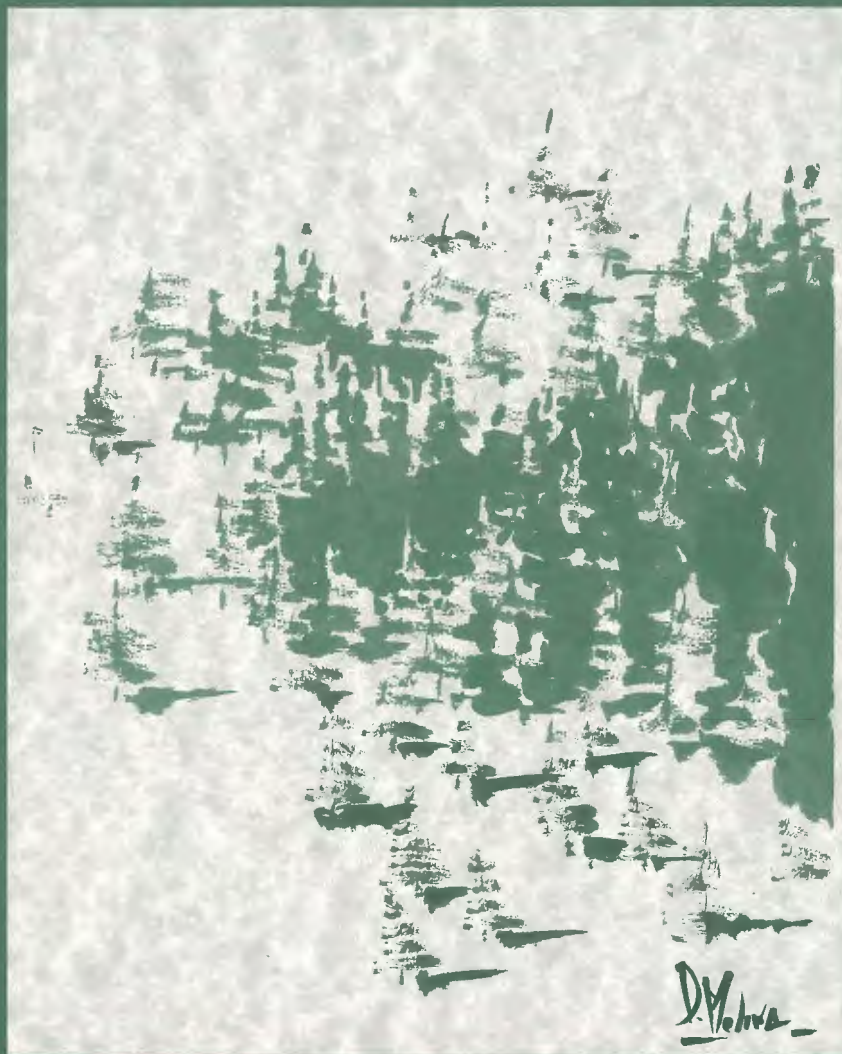


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## INDEX

### ARTICLES

UNTIL YOU CRASHED INTO MY GEOGRAPHY: NATIONNESS, SYMPTONS AND THE PECULIAR PERFORMATIVITY OF TWO CANADIAN FICTIONS <i>Pedro M. Carmona Rodríguez</i> .....	7
HUMOUR AND GENRE IN THOMAS DELONEY'S <i>JACK OF NEWBURY</i> <i>Jorge Figueroa Dorrego</i> .....	23
EL PENSAMIENTO POLÍTICO DE JAMES JOYCE EN <i>THE CRITICAL WRITINGS</i> : IDEALISMO DESDE EL EXILIO <i>Carmen García Navarro</i> .....	35
LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR EFL SELF-ACCESS STUDENTS: STRATEGIES OF TEXTUAL ANALYSIS <i>Eduardo de Gregorio Godeo</i> .....	53
THE FIRST SPANISH TRANSLATION OF VIRGINIA WOOLF'S "TIME PASSES": FACTS MYSTERIES AND CONJECTURES <i>Luis Alberto Lázaro Lafuente</i> .....	71
"AS DEEP AS ENGLAND": THE IRONIES OF ENGLISH HISTORY IN POEMS BY TED HUGHES, GEOFFREY HILL AND TONY HARRISON <i>David Malcolm</i> .....	85
PIONEERING FEMINISM: DEBORAH'S ROLE IN "LIFE IN THE IRON-MILLS" <i>Rosa Muñoz Luna</i> .....	101
GENDER AND CULTURE CONFLICTS IN THE <i>REZ</i> PLAYS OF TOMSON HIGHWAY <i>María Elena Sánchez Hernández</i> .....	111
EFEECTO DE FACILITACIÓN POR EL ESTUDIO Y LA PRÁCTICA DE LOS SIGNOS DE PUNTUACIÓN <i>María Jesús Sánchez Manzano</i> .....	125

### BOOKS REVIEWS

<i>Eva María Cortés Martínez</i> .....	145
<i>María Antonia López-Burgos del Barrio</i> .....	151
LITERARY CONTRIBUTION "Triptych of the Lonely Mountaineer" <i>Gerardo Piña Rosales</i> .....	157



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# UNTIL YOU CRASHED INTO MY GEOGRAPHY: NATIONNESS, SYMPTOMS AND THE PECULIAR PERFORMATIVITY OF TWO CANADIAN FICTIONS<sup>1</sup>

**Pedro M. Carmona Rodríguez**

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## **Abstract**

*The distinct sense with which a settler colony imbues geography and history turns them into unreliable factors to establish the symbolic denominator of the term nation. Furthermore, in Canada, an axis of definition constructed on the intersection between geography and history proves useless when intending to bring to light the particularities of the Canadian national formations. This paper focuses first on the ontological impossibility of the classic symbolic denominator vis-à-vis a postcolonial paradigm of nation as a discourse produced at the juncture of pedagogical and performative impulses. What follows is an analysis of the Canadian performative in Jane Urquhart's *Changing Heaven* (1990) and Anne Michaels's *Fugitive Pieces* (1996) which unveils that it is based on its own interrogation, pinpoints negative definitions and voids of identity as a national peculiarity. Nationness and symptoms of identity are therefore the commonplace issues of an identity that questions itself while rendering national contemporary fictions the scene for a deconstruction of what is considered national, articulated through the underlining, overlapping, and juxtaposing of other geographies to the Canadian one.*

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is part of the research project "Revisiones del canon en Canadá y Estados Unidos, 1975-2000: literatura, cultura y género". The economic support provided by the Dirección General de Universidades and the Canarian Regional Government is henceforth gratefully acknowledged. A longer and slightly different version of this paper was presented at the 13th Encuentro Superior de Estudios Canadienses at the University of La Laguna, December 15-17. I would also like to thank an anonymous referee of *The Grove* for suggestions made concerning this essay.

“I don’t know who I am or even if I am, but I belong with my national and religious roots, therefore, I follow them” (1993:2), explains Julia Kristeva shortly after the opening of her book *Nations Without Nationalism*. Her words unveil the uncertain nature of the mechanisms underlying any national affiliation and the complex position of the subject within a national discourse that largely rests on issues of place, site and origin (see Brennan, 1990; Renan, 1990). For Kristeva, the personal identification with the collective is given by what she terms the “symbolic denominator”, or “the interweaving of history and geography” (1990:188). In Canada, however, *history* and *geography* are complex signifiers: the former unfolds in a multiplicity of *histories* that only have in common their temporal and spatial coincidence in North America, while many of them look for their roots elsewhere (see Turner, 1995:1-18). Recent Canadian Fiction is prolific in examples in which the multiple relations that its works entail with other spaces, be they physical or psychological, question the synchrony of the term *national fiction*. Thus, a novel such as Marwan Hassan’s *The Memory Garden of Miguel Carranza* (1991) presents us with a contemporary urban narrative of success and well-being which uncovers through the suicide of Jaime, Miguel Carranza’s son, the link between the boy and a seemingly remote Muslim past. Carranza’s present as a thriving Torontonion neurosurgeon is haunted by the incomprehensible connection claimed by Jaime, who insisted on being called *tibb halim atrash*, in his latest embodiment, a soldier killed by the French colonialist troops. Through these memories, the novel is connected to the north of Africa, the south of Spain and the Arab cultures and their histories in both places (see Vulpe, 1992). While gathering his dead son’s belongings, Carranza finds a diary where he reads “the life of *tibb halim atrash*, m.i.m. a.k.a. my true life” (Hassan, 1991:74). This diary is written in a notebook exhibiting a maple leaf and the word CANADA in capitals. The insertion of radically different and distant stories within the novel and within the same notebook produces the effect of precluding any issue of a unique way of writing and a unique sense of belonging to the Canadian nation.

The diverse *geographies* of Canada, in turn, posit an element of presumed commonality in the struggle between the individual and the landscape. Yet *geography* is a signifier diversified by the very vastness of the Canadian landscapes. Hence, the Kristevan symbolic denominator, which indeed underlies more atavistic national formations, seems to be

futile in Canada, a country where the intersection of geography and history cannot unify the Chinese based in Vancouver from mid-19th century, for example, the Hispanics, who have arrived more recently and any of the Inuit groups within the national frame. All of them, however, write within the Canadian state and differ when writing about their particular *Canadian nation*. This malleability of the signifier *nation* owes much to the contemporary diaspora of people(s) (Smethurst, 2000:33; see White, 1995; Peach, 1997), a circumstance that “[...] produces a continual slippage into analogous, even metonymic categories, like the people, minorities or ‘cultural difference’ that continually overlap in the act of writing the nation”, and contributes towards turning the nation into “the measure of the liminality of cultural modernity” (Bhabha, 1990b:292). The different forms used to write the nation and the diversified geographies those forms produce can be appreciated in many Canadian novels. To illustrate this, let us take Sandra Birdsell’s *The Chrome Suite* (1992), where we read that Amy Barber’s latest fiancé, the Polish script writer Piotr, is killed when casually witnessing and filming an Ojibwa riotous demonstration in Manitoba. The Native pictographs the couple had seen minutes before, Piotr’s homeland stories of Czech colonisation and Polish resistance, “another of his in-my-country legends” (Birdsell, 1992:350), disappoint Amy. These, together with the Ojibwa motorway protests, all come to synchronically intersect on the Canadian territories which, for the sake of this intersection, bear witness to the dismantling of a unified nation together with the idea of a *first nation*.

On retrospectively analysing much of the fiction produced in Canada for the last twenty years one realises that, as Homi K. Bhabha sustains, the modern nation is born at the juncture of pedagogical and performative impulses. In the former, the individual is interpellated as a national object, whereas in the latter, the interpellation is active and the individual propels that spirit of which s/he is a part. While the diversification of Canadian histories and geographies complicates the pedagogical processes that determine the individual’s objectification as regards national entity, the Canadian performative is even more complex. The identification of national icons such as flags, maps or anthems can be included within this impulse, as can every type of national festivity that celebrates a presumed sense of unity. As Bhabha opines, “[t]he scraps, patches and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into the signs of

a national culture, while the very act of the narrative performative interpellates a growing circle of national subjects” (1990b:297; see also Simon, 1994).

Recently, the performative axis of the Canadian nation has been set against itself by its multicultural presence and the need to accept the former other within the national continuum by brandishing egalitarian, multicultural respect.<sup>2</sup> As a symbol of official policies, tolerance of diversity was immediately transformed into a Canadian characteristic, first as an intertext of the national ethnic mosaic, and more recently as the kaleidoscope. The traditional unity required of the nation comes in this way to coexist with an uncontained multiplicity of mental and cultural geographies, which paradoxically have been viewed as the image of the country’s national paraphernalia. While Kieran Keohane holds that the governmental interest in cultural diversity “fails in articulating a poetry of the nation” (1997:4; see Keefer, 1991), since it intends to monitor the proliferation of difference through the establishment of an *other at bay*, Eva Mackey concludes that the Canadian model is “[...] the nation, reshaped for the 1990s, not in the old model of a culturally homogeneous collective, but as collective hybridity engaged in a shared and progress-oriented project” (1999:83). In this context of arguable egalitarianism, the Canadian peculiarity turns the performative impulse into a national self-questioning. The latter accounts for the proliferation of negative definitions according to which a Canadian is defined in terms of what s/he is *not*, and the popular internalisation of a precarious national consciousness, a feeling of being “[a]s Canadian as possible ... under the circumstances” (Hutcheon, 1991:1-45). This interrogation of a national narrative of unification and unity results in an image of nation as *nationness* (see Kroetsch, 1997; Kostash, 2000).

Likewise, for Keohane (1997), the only form in which a national Canadian identity can be conceived is through a discourse of symptoms closely related to the forms in which the performative un-writes itself in Canada. Like in any medical or psychoanalytical diagnosis, a number of symptoms are the apparent manifestation of a hidden disease or trauma.

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<sup>2</sup> Unlike many American countries, Canada turned the Fifth Centenary into the Canada 125, since 1992 was also the year in which Confederation was a century and a quarter old. This celebration set aside the controversy that might have risen if the Fifth Centenary had been celebrated, since the commemoration had already been linked to the extermination of the First Nations (Mackey, 1999:108-109).

At this stage, however, the symptoms are the only materialisation of an invisible malady and the tenuous line separating any illness from nothingness. Canadian identity is very much consonant to this symptomatic materialisation where the symptoms reflect the invisibility of nation and identity. Those minor factors, Keohane posits, distance the individual from the frightening lack, and they “are the background of everyday practices that embody interpretations that sustain meaning and protect us from the lack, and which simultaneously expose us to the lack enough to animate us” (1997:15). This version of an identity in the void is apparent not only in the lack of national icons, but in the evident manufacture of Canadian myths such as the hostile landscape, the wilderness or the very exacerbated attention to diversity launched and promoted by the official multiculturalism of Ottawa. All in all, the very significant issue is that “while ‘Canada’ may seem to get lost in the antagonist mêlée, it never disappears”, Keohane concludes. “In fact, it is perpetually reconstituted by the antagonistic discourse, as the assertion of any particularity [...] always already implicitly presupposes a unified ideal ‘Canada’ [...] with reference to which the differentiation can be made” (Keohane, 1997:8).

Very aware of Canadian *nationness* and the *symptoms* of national identity, recent Canadian fiction appropriates other geographies and dismantles the Kristevan denominator of nation, while the stories attached to those geographies function as counter-narratives of the same nation. In other words, they are narratives that contradict the most conservative and unifying trends of the national/ist spirit (Bhabha, 1990a:3). The fictive stories produced in the late 1980s and 1990s nourish, and are in turn nurtured by, a national ethos on the paradoxical denial of the national, as shown in the *other geographies* brought to the fore by novels such as Marlene Nourbese Philip’s *Looking for Livingstone, an Odyssey of Silence* (1991), M.G. Vassanji’s *Amriika* (1999), Michael Ondaatje’s *The English Patient* (1992) or *Anil’s Ghost* (2000), Dionne Brand’s *At the Full and Change of the Moon* (1999) or short fictions such as Janice Kulyk Keefer’s “The Dream of Eve” (1986), Margaret Atwood’s “The Age of Lead” (1991) and Leon Rooke’s “The Boy from Moogradi and the Woman with the Map to Paradise” (1997). All employ the Canadian nation as a referent to occlude and, at the same time, highlight; both what is absent and what is present in the landscapes of these fictions reveal through a dichotomy of difference/différance the same mechanisms

underlying any textual production. Keefer's narrative portrays a Canadian traveller in search of origins elsewhere whereas Atwood's exploits and deconstructs a foundational myth ingrained in the hostile North; Brand, Ondaatje, Vassanji and Rooke embed the personal stories of their characters in an international itinerary that, if ever, touches Canada tangentially, but shuts its eyes to its multiplicity from an international arena of displacement and blurred borders; Philip, in turn, ambivalently relies on and displaces any origin in her black anonymous ethnographer's atemporal journey through Africa. In these texts, the symbolic denominator is complicated by the intersection of several geographies and their parallel image of nationness. Unlike the ambivalent Canadian attitude to history, a discourse recurrently constructed and deconstructed in the *national* fictions (see Hutcheon, 1988, 1992), geography and its contribution to the interrogation of the symbolic denominator have been less commonly engaged.

For their particular conjunction of *other* geographies and their grafting on the Canadian axes of nation, let us concentrate on Jane Urquhart's *Changing Heaven* (1990) and Anne Michaels's *Fugitive Pieces* (1998 [1996]), two novels dealing with overlapping geographies which, far from being only metaphorical maps of displacement, uncover their multifarious inscriptions as meteorology, cartography, treatises on sedimentation or human geography. These physical aspects of space act as intertexts that decentre nation, subject and history. In many and different ways, the crossing of geographies in these novels underlines the ontological impossibility of the symbolic denominator, which acutely materialises when intending to *nationalise* these fictions. Urquhart's and Michaels's texts put forward a notion of truncated performativity as the only way to a slippery national identity of symptoms and nationness. In leaving Canada for England and in arriving at Canada from a WWII convulsed Europe, the narratives of *Changing Heaven* and *Fugitive Pieces* situate their setting on the move and advocate diachronic/synchronic identities, multiple subjectivities which, by heavily relying on spatial considerations, transcend the Canadian panorama.

*Changing Heaven* is consonant with a symptomatic production of the Canadian nation, a signifier that is produced and literally displaced by the novel's journey to the West Yorkshire moors popularised by Emily

Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847).<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Brontë's novel explicitly inhabits Urquhart's text in several forms, but first and foremost in terms of locus and in terms of the incorporation of Brontë as a character. Additionally, the novel uses the intertext of the British 19th century literary tradition brought about by the dogmatic teaching of literature carried out by its Canadian protagonist, Ann. When textualising the relevance of that cultural and literary tradition the novel also emphasises the Canadian void and makes of the recurrent symptom the stance from which to negotiate the national lack. Ann attributes part of that void to an irreverent attitude to the Canadian past and the irrelevance with which it is interpreted. "In Canada", she justifies, "much of the past has been thrown away. No one cares. No one records it. It was very hard for me losing the past like that" (Urquhart, 1990:183).

In Urquhart's novel the recentness of the Canadian history is complemented by a productive multiplication of geographies: contemporary Toronto and Franco's Spain, present-day Venice and Yorkshire in opposition to that same landscape of rounded hills at the opening of the twentieth-century. But this characteristically British geography is implemented with the importance given to the typical weather of the area and the entanglement of collective subjectivity it produces in its coalition with the local character and the customs of the Yorkshire moors. The spatial and atmospheric scene form the basis for the intersection of stories on which the novel stands, since Ann's research on the weather of *Wuthering Heights* leads her to this space where her story interweaves with that of the early 20th century balloonist Polly Smith a.k.a. Arianna Ether. Arianna, in turn, meets Brontë's wandering spirit after dying when her parachute does not open over Yorkshire. Just as Ann has a double affair with the art historian Arthur Woodruff and the mill worker and moor-edger John Hartley, Arianna is also immersed in a destructive liaison with the explorer Heathcliff-figure Jeremy Jacobs. Through these love narratives the geography of the novel travels from Canada to Europe and eventually ends end in the North Pole, where the explorer Jeremy, the former Sinbad of the Skies, loses his path when

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<sup>3</sup> Urquhart's fictions are prodigal in displacements, and thus *The Underpainter* (1997) travels incessantly between New York, WWI Europe and Silver Islet in Thunder Bay, while *Away* (1993) turns the nineteenth-century Irish migration to Canada into its centre to create a particular romance of the wild. In turn, *The Whirpool* (1986) and its parallel stories make of spatial and temporal displacements the frontier area to foster a revision of concepts like tradition, colonialism, order and chaos (Goldman, 1997:169-208).

looking for the total cartographic blank. After provoking Arianna's death out of the jealousy he feels for her success, Jeremy undertakes a parallel exploration of self and territory in the Arctic. "Just the idea of entering a territory where land and sea camouflage each other", we read in the novel, "where sameness and mimicry abound, where his form is the only detail and his actions the only adventure, made him almost wince with joy" (Urquhart, 1990:195).

Through its multiplicity of landscapes and geographies, *Fugitive Pieces*, on the contrary, turns nationness into the way in which its displaced characters, the Polish poet Jakob Beer and his Canadian biographer Ben, un-write their belonging. Across changing landscapes of mobility and transoceanic migration, from Poland to Greece, from there to Toronto and back to Greece, these two characters inscribe in parallel fashion a notion of personal and national identity as decidedly intertextual and processual. They thus open up to fluidity the hermetic structures of national affiliation, and advocate, in parallel, the renewal of every identity in order to cope with the traumatic episode of the Jewish genocide of WWII.<sup>4</sup> Beer, a child when the Nazis overrun his Polish homeland of Biskupin on the eve of the war, witnesses the murder of his parents, the disappearance of his sister and wanders till he is found by the Greek geologist Athos Roussos. Adopted by Roussos, his *koumbaros* or godfather from that moment on, Beer will make of his life a text in which Athos' vital narrative is grafted, and will develop mediated by his influence. In the same way, his life as a poet and public man will be an intertext in the life of his biographer Ben, who finds in Beer's existence a correlative for his. Through their auto/biographies, personal and national identity are written and undone in terms of place and site. Text and space, in turn, uncover their many similarities here, which include being ruled by dialectic relations of absence and presence, or the establishment of their respective meaning through intertextuality, through other places and texts (Smethurst, 2000:55; 1997).

Like *Fugitive Pieces*, *Changing Heaven* is a novel whose motif is structured upon the entwining of geographies and lives. In its almost

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<sup>4</sup> Jewish writers and thinkers such as Theodore Adorno in his *Prisms: Cultural Criticism and Society* (1981), Paul Celan in *Prose Writings and Selected Poems* (1980) or Maurice Blanchot in *The Writing of the Disaster* (1995) have referred to the difficulty of writing in general terms and the difficulty of writing poetry after the genocide. Furthermore, the search for an alternative textuality in which to express themselves is a task that Jewish intellectuals have taken upon themselves and interpreted as a debt contracted with the community.



random path, the text unfolds a number of circumstances which, for the sake of their intersections, continually push any identity at its limit. Thus Ann's mother frequently takes her daughter to the Toronto Art Gallery, where she starts to cultivate her particular fondness for Italian Renaissance painting. In the course of the novel, we notice that this concern is the reason for their visit to Madrid and El Prado Museum during the last years of Franco's dictatorship. This interest undergoes a turning point with the appearance of Arthur. Of Italian origin, Arthur, the son of a dyer, becomes enormously interested in the paintings of the Venetian Tintoretto, the Italian word for a child involved in dyeing clothes (Urquhart, 1990:58). Here, the interconnections of art and life are highlighted as they are in relation to Ann and Brontë's fiction. In the course of the novel too, Venice will be the scenario where Arthur and Ann will write the last episode of their love story, and there the painter's work is a mute witness of their break up as well as Ann's return to the Englishman John. The latter, in turn, another figure seemingly extracted from the landscape of Brontë's text, writes and tells stories altering their content according to the occasion of their narration and presents Ann with the tragic story of Sinbad and the female balloonist who dies in the Yorkshire moors. Ann herself notices the ease with which the novel's landscapes cross and overlap when, while talking to Arthur, she asserts: "[b]ecause of you I was able to stand in Emily Brontë's landscape and think about Tintoretto. His lightning was there! [...]", and immediately enquires of him: "[a]nd you, you ... did you ever think of Emily Brontë being transposed into the landscape of Venice?" (Urquhart, 1990:226).

In *Fugitive Pieces*, geographical and cultural dislocation pinpoint a spatio-temporal dimension of identity which, like in *Changing Heaven*, fractures the centred ontology of the most traditional nation, but also the dimensions of subject and text, while underlining their open intertextuality (see Frow, 1990). Michaels's protagonists negotiate their identity among texts such as the recovery of their destroyed Jewish subjectivity, Beer's poetry in his *Groundwork*, their sense of personal and collective trauma, the necessity to perpetuate the sense of community across borders, Athos' book *Bearing False Witness*, his stories of literal displacement and exploration, his fascination with the bog-men, which he shares with Ben, or Ben's PhD on meteorology and biography. In the same way that Jakob's international transit forges for him a notion of identity largely indebted to an ongoing definition and a global world of

goods and cultures in interrelation, the auto/biographies of the novel and the national inscription of the characters are always transitory. In this way, they underline and simultaneously undervalue the relevance of place and landscape. “We long for place, but place itself longs” (Michaels, 1998:53), Jakob points out, to later comment that “what is a man [...] who has no landscape?” (Michaels, 1998:86). The novel then juxtaposes this identity configured in relation to geographical space to a different conception that defines identity temporally and which confronts any symbolic denominator of nation. Thus, Beer’s first food in Toronto, toasts and vegetable soup, are baptised by him as *Canadian*, their *Canadianness* deriving from being served and eaten in Canada; and the same happens with the *Canadian* cigarettes bought by Athos, which are really Macdonald’s, “the ones with the Scottish lass on the package” (Michaels, 1998:91).

Jakob’s provisional national identity is as permeable as his story, a feature that also distinguishes the languages he speaks and those lime stones that prominently appear in the novel through Athos’ geological concerns. For its continuous reference to the physical geographies where its characters dwell, Michaels’s novel develops a politics of commonality in and out of Canada, thus breaking into pieces the in/outside binary supporting national identification. Whereas Biskupin is a flooded city when Jakob is rescued, Ben’s story reports that in 1954 the south of Ontario is barred by the Humber river, which causes his family to leave. In all the cases, physical geography decidedly marks the lives of Beer, Ben and Athos; through his geological excavations in Biskupin, the Greek man comes across Beer, and from this moment onwards, their narratives always progress *vis-à-vis* a geography that determines history and story: “I understood that if I were strong enough to accept it, I was being offered a second history” (Michaels, 1998:20), Beer explains after leaving the watery mud of Biskupin while still bearing the traces of the place on his body.

In the same way, Ann’s notion of identities in movement is clearly foregrounded when, as a child, she grows an extreme attraction for Brontë’s novel and makes it part of her life, whereas she becomes part of the novel: “Ann enters the structure called *Wuthering Heights*” (Urquhart, 1990:48), the narrator comments. At that moment her vital text and the novel entail a strong linkage that is hardly broken with the passing of time, but reinforced by her stay in the Yorkshire moors. The international

dimension of the novel is then neutralised by the local echoes of the moors, a landscape that renews Ann's interpretation of the novel and appears at that moment as another text deeply ingrained in Brontë's: "Heathcliff, she has decided, was the moor and Catherine, she has even more recently decided, was the wind" (Urquhart, 1990:128). Through the narrator's voice, which makes us aware of the intricate form in which characterisation and geography intermingle, the reader perceives that the latter defines the former. Ann's analysis of the atmospheric influence in the depiction of subjectivity and landscape comes additionally to be determined by her particular conception of the weather and landscape of the moors. Yet, her previous geography is also an intertext of her new territory: "she has brought Arthur with her. A part of him has accompanied her into this geography" (Urquhart, 1990:123), she explains making extant the interconnection of her past and present, before and after, Canada and England. Likewise, Arianna and the author Emily cross and crash, and the intersection opened by their stories serves as a standing point from which to observe Ann's. "Until you crashed into my geography" (Urquhart, 1990:181), declares Emily while territorialising and appropriating the lands that greatly defined "[...] the landscape of [her] novel" (Urquhart, 1990:179).

In opposition to Emily's territorialisation, Ann is possessed by this landscape, by the landscape of Brontë's novel and by one of its representatives, the mill worker John, an epitome of the moors. In his endeavour to erect boundaries to enclose the properties and avoid the cattle's devastation, John puts up barriers in the open fields and asserts his control on the theoretically unlimited. In addition, his task of burning the old pastures for new ones to bloom all the more vigorously endows him with the ability to modify geography. For Ann, "the landscape belongs to John [...]; the tributaries of his stories travelling over the moors and into the valleys. They are in place" (Urquhart, 1990:178). Through her words, Ann connects place and text once more, site and story (see Compton 1996). Likewise, the stories of Ann, Arianna and Emily are decidedly inflected by the landscape but they are also grafted into that landscape and contribute to its variation. "You haven't disappeared at all. You are part of the texture of this landscape now", Emily confirms to Arianna. "[...] This cottage is holding its breath because inside it you, your story is on someone's mind" (Urquhart, 1990:244).

The interest in inscribing the landscape with this personal imprint and the concern with showing personal subjectivity as inflected by the traces of the landscape is also common to *Fugitive Pieces*. When looking for Beer's diaries in Greece, Ben claims to have been like "[...] an archaeologist examining one square inch at a time" (Michaels, 1998:261), once again linking the poet's vital narrative and the physical aspects of geography, the finding of former evidence buried by the passing of time or natural disasters. Indeed when randomly found in Beer's house on Idhra island, Beer's notebooks bear the tracks of the isle's rain, sun and wind, which in turn leave their marks on Ben: "I felt the power of your place speaking to my body" (Michaels, 1998:266), he says, and turns his own corporality into another geography in the novel.

The movement of the characters across an international geography precludes the solidification of a national Canadian geography, especially when Michaels's men present Canada as a site of transition. Their presence in Canada is temporary and circumscribed to the urban landscape of Toronto and its surroundings. Beer stays there as a prelude to his return to Greece to end his life in Athens when run over by a car in 1993; for Ben Canada is the setting in which his traumatised family, far from recovering from the Nazi horror, have found no way to escape but silence. Considering this state of affairs, it is not strange that Ben chooses Beer as a model to imitate and a figure to replace his father, the reluctant narrator of the camp episodes (see Cook, 2000). Although already born in Canada, Ben opts for the international geography marked by his surrogate father. Led by the idolatry he feels for Ben, he undertakes the reconstruction of his path, a task between the personal and the political, given the communal relevance of Jewish reconstruction (see Gubar, 2002). This is one of the ways in which the novel echoes Canadian *nationness*, replacing, in other words, the ideal of unity with the multiplicity brought to Canada by a scene of international migration.

In opposition to this image of nationness, Urquhart's texts implants in the national geography of Canada a different image. In this image the country lacks a national history, as pointed out above, but also a national geography. In turn, that geography is formed by a conjunction of several and multiple realities. As a child Ann makes that image of multiplicity through the several realities inhabited by her missing father. Accordingly, the narrator recalls: "Ann's father inhabits a territory called Ungava, a vast trackless region in Arctic Quebec where there may or

may not be minerals. Sometimes Ann's father inhabits a territory called 'the bush', the middle north of eight out of ten Canadian provinces, where there also may or may not be minerals" (Urquhart, 1990:67). Ann, in turn, as the narrator remarks, "[...] had been forced until recently to carry rural attributes around in her mind in much the same way she carried *Wuthering Heights*, the two melding now and then" (Urquhart, 1990:44). And, indeed, it is this notion of landscapes that meld and blend that the two novels deploy in their intertextual geographies of intersections, interruptions and crossings.

In their nationness and symptomatic productions of Canadian national identity, recent fictions produced in Canada cannot help but be compliant to the contemporary problematics on national discourses in Canada and elsewhere. As a minimal sample and from the distant and disparaged contexts of their production, *Changing Heaven* and *Fugitive Pieces* focus on internationality and advocate the proliferation of geographies that un-write the symbolic denominator of nation. In Canada, the close relation between the national spirit and the interconnection of history and geography detected by Kristeva needs, as we have seen, a different treatment. The Canadian nation intertextualises many other geographies and histories that coexist synchronically on Canadian territory, where the peculiar, self-questioning performative renders the nation susceptible to the insertion of other geographies and histories. Their many voices contesting a unified ideal of nation have opened the centred structures of nation and national subjectivity to other forms of narrating the nation. The problematic symbolic denominator of nation uncovers its actual complexity when these fictions are labelled as *national* narratives. Indeed, it would be more appropriate to group them with that of counter-narratives that unsettle the traditional view of nation in favour of an open, fluid and shifting national inscription. It is in this doubleness, reliance and interrogation, of the nation in Canada where the peculiarity of its performative impulse rests. Canada, as Keohane thinks, "[...] wants what we impute to it by fantasy. In the fantasy of Canadian nationalism, Canada desires closure [...] but [...] the sutured Canada also desires to be open, lacking" (1997:160). Canadian fiction echoes this contradictory and two-fold move in its displacement and parallel containment of Canadian national multiplicities. From somewhere else, from distant and changing landscapes, these narratives mirror the inner Canadian

multiplicity and, from the proliferation of geographies and spaces, intersections and overlapping, they all highlight the modernity of the Canadian nation and the vitality of its fictions.

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# HUMOUR AND GENRE IN THOMAS DELONEY'S *JACK OF NEWBURY*

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## **Abstract**

*In Thomas Deloney's novels there is as much idealisation and wishful thinking as in Elizabethan romances. Jack of Newbury appeals to the fantasies of middle-class readers, and it conveys a bourgeois ethical code. To that extent, it can be considered a "trading-class romance." Yet, what makes Jack of Newbury different from romance is not only the social descent of the main characters and the ideology promoted but also the extensive use of humour. We can find comic episodes in seven of the eleven chapters of the novel. This relates the text to the jest-book tradition and contemporary comedy. It is a kind of humour approaching satire and the picaresque and sometimes even the grotesque and scatological. It generally intends to ridicule certain characters for their use of malapropisms or broken English or because they are outwitted by others. Very often humorous situations are brought about by a reversal of roles or of power, and these situations consequently raise interesting social and gender issues.*

Elizabethan prose fiction was regarded at the time as "the most slippery of literary mediums" (Maslen, 1997:11), mainly because it did not conform to the generic categories available. Its malleable nature allowed it to accommodate most literary kinds so that the heterogeneous result was something alien and shady. It was so for contemporary censors and it was so too for twentieth-century scholars, who never knew how to

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deal with Elizabethan prose fiction properly because it did not conform to the characteristics of the “realistic” novel. Fortunately, in the last two decades there has been a considerable shift in some scholars’ attitude towards this kind of texts, which were certainly an important part of Renaissance culture, and their hybrid nature is not seen as a flaw but as an irrelevant issue or even as an appealing quality.<sup>14</sup>

This paper intends to analyse Thomas Deloney’s use of humour in his narrative fiction *Jack of Newbury* (1597) and how this affects its generic hybridity. Unlike Philip Sidney, John Lyly, or Thomas Nashe, Deloney was not a nobleman nor a University Wit but a weaver and a ballad maker. His main readings seem to have been jest-books, Italian *novelle*, historical chronicles such as those of Holinshed and of Grafton, and “popular” texts that reworked classical literature such as Thomas Fortescue’s *The Forest*. Certainly his experience as a weaver and balladeer led him to write for and about the working class in a pseudo-historical, pseudo-journalistic, pseudo-romantic manner which includes social claims, patriotic feelings and comic episodes. This combination of elements proved to be very successful at the time and his novels became best-sellers that were reprinted several times during the seventeenth century. On the title-page of the first extant edition of this prose fiction, which is the eighth, published in 1619, we can read:

*The Pleasant History of John Winchcomb*, in his younger years called Jack of Newbury, the famous and worthy clothier of England; declaring his life and love together with his charitable deeds and great hospitality. And how he set continually five hundred poor people at work to the great benefit of the commonwealth. Worthy to be read and regarded. (Salzman, 1987:313)

So the text is presented as a “Pleasant History” and, even though the word “history” at the time referred to a relation of either actual or fictional events, it certainly plays with that ambivalence, suggesting an air of truthfulness and seriousness that is however qualified as “pleasant” to denote that it is not written as a scholarly historical chronicle but as a light, likable narrative, probably even a comic narrative.<sup>15</sup> Hence, the

<sup>14</sup> A new attitude towards Elizabethan prose fiction can be noticed in Salzman (1985), Margolies (1985), Lucas (1989), Barbour (1993), Relihan (1994), Relihan ed. (1996), and Maslen (1997).

<sup>15</sup> Let us remember that, according to the O.E.D., at that time *pleasant* could mean “humorous, jocular, facetious; merry, gay” or “amusing, laughable, ridiculous, funny.”

story obeys the classical precept of mixing profit and pleasure, as the final words remind us: it is “worthy to be read and regarded.” Thus, Deloney is, after all, “feigning notable images of virtue,” aiming at “delightful teaching,” just as Sidney recommends in his *Apology for Poetry* (Shepherd, 1973:103). As happens in Elizabethan chivalric romances, a brief curriculum of the hero’s deeds and virtues is presented on the title-page. The difference here lies in the type of hero: he is no knight who stands out for his strength, courage, or martial exploits, but a “worthy clothier” well-known for his “charitable deeds and great hospitality.” Jack does not rescue princesses kidnapped by lustful heathens or monsters, nor does he free countries from illegitimate and tyrannical rulers; instead he employs hundreds of poor people “to the great benefit of the commonwealth.” His virtues and deeds do not seem to be those of aristocratic ideology but those of early capitalism and the utilitarianism of the booming middle class.

Yet Deloney’s fiction is not as far away from Elizabethan romance as it may seem and as some scholars have argued. His novels have been praised for their “realism,” for their reflection of the increasing importance of the trading classes in Tudor times. Even a champion of realistic fiction such as Watt (1982:204) claims that these stories give us a most living and unique picture of daily life in the sixteenth century. And to a certain extent this is true, considering Deloney’s successful use of dialogue, with colloquial language, local dialect, malapropisms and a foreigner’s broken English, as well as his presentation of familiar settings and everyday activities such as working, shopping, eating or drinking. However, the influence of romance is still noticeable because there is a great deal of idealisation, allegory and didacticism present in the story. In Deloney’s novels there is as much wishful thinking as in Elizabethan romances. *Jack of Newbury* appeals to the fantasies of the reading public, not of upper-class but of middle-class readers, and it conveys a bourgeois rather than an aristocratic ethical code (cf McKeon, 1987:223-6). To that extent, it can be described as a trading-class romance, a kind of narrative that is reminiscent of popular fairy tales.

It must be said, though, that what makes *Jack of Newbury* different from romance is not only the social descent of the main characters and the ideology promoted but also the extensive use of humour. The latter relates the novel to the jest-book tradition and contemporary comedy. It is a kind of humour which approaches satire and the picaresque and

sometimes even the grotesque and scatological, generally intending to ridicule certain characters for their peculiar use of language or because they are outwitted by others. We can find comic episodes in seven of the eleven chapters of the novel, so humour is no doubt an important element in this text, and one that contributes to its qualification as a “Pleasant History.”

Very often humour is brought about by a reversal of roles or of positions of power; for instance, we see a rich old woman courting a poor young man, female spinners tricking a male jester from the court, or servants hoaxing a lady. According to the incongruity theories of humour, laughter is produced when the ideas and situations presented are divergent from habitual customs. From this point of view, “amusement is an intellectual reaction to something that is unexpected, illogical, or inappropriate in some other way” (Morreall, 1983:15). We laugh when we experience something that does not fit into the patterns established in our orderly world but does not cause fear or indignation. Humour is thus the violation of semiotic, semantic, pragmatic, and social rules (Attardo, 2002:43 ff). In the latter case, it may have a politically transgressive function, as Bakhtin (1987) has noted. Let me focus now on the first chapter, which is the longest and most elaborate, in order to analyse one of these comic reversals.

When Jack’s master dies, his old widow starts to observe Jack, whom she considers a diligent and dutiful worker that makes her business prosper. The narrator does not mention whether she likes his physical appearance or anything of the sort, as is common in romances. In fact we do not really know what Jack looks like, because the narrator only describes him as a hard-working, honest, and cheerful man. What he tells us, and quite meaningfully by the way, is that the old widow “thought herself not a little blessed to have such a servant that was so obedient unto her, and so careful for her profit; for she had never a prentice that yielded her more obedience than he did or was more dutiful” (Salzman, 1987:315-6). This is significant because obedience is certainly a quality to expect in a servant, but not in a husband, particularly at that time, when a husband was considered “the head of the wife,” following the Bible (Eph. 5:23 and I Cor. 11:3), and a virtuous wife was expected to be chaste, silent and obedient. So this is the first reversal: here we have a sixteenth-century woman who wants to marry a man who is younger and socially inferior because he is obedient to her and so we imagine she

expects him to continue to be so after marriage. This unconventional situation will lead to many comic episodes.

Jack is well aware that he is admired and of the benefits which such a match would entail for him, but he does not act as one would expect a male lover to act, that is, by taking the initiative in the courtship. This is, I think, mainly for two reasons: on the one hand because he is, after all, her servant, and such a prudent and respectful young man. At that time, apprentices were considered part of the household and were expected to remain unmarried and sexually abstemious during their period of training—though practice often belied the ideal (cf Ben-Amos, 1994). On the other hand because Jack is influenced by the misogynistic discourse of his time, as we notice when he says: “I durst not try maidens because they seem coy, nor wives for fear of their husbands, nor widows doubting their disdainfulness” (316). This prejudice against widows can also be found in Joseph Swetnam’s *The Arraignment of Lewd, Froward and Unconstant Woman* (1615), which claims that it is better to marry a young maid, “for a widow is framed to the conditions of another man, and can hardly be altered” (Trill, Chedgzoy & Osborne, 1997:86). For Jack, as for other men of that period, an old widow would not be a good wife but a shrew or scold, which means it would be difficult to guarantee her respect and obedience and he would fail as the head of the family. He would become a henpecked husband and, perhaps also a cuckold, the two main causes of masculine anxiety in the early modern period (cf Breitenberg, 1996 and Foyster, 1999), as well as being two recurrent topics of satirical derision in jest-books, *fabliaux*, *novelle*, and comedies.

After seeing how this old widow wittily mocks her three suitors, we see her cunningly tricking Jack into marriage. Taking advantage of his obedience she makes him promise he would not hinder any marriage she may choose, asks him to accompany her to a church and then asks the priest to marry her to Jack. Thus Jack is outwitted by his “dame”, and this is ironically the beginning of his successful career. As Patricia Shaw (2000) has shown, this sort of witty, resourceful woman is commonly found in Deloney’s novels and contributes to their realism and appeal to modern readers.

After marriage, Jack’s older wife proves to be as unruly as he thought she would be. She is accustomed to going out till late at night and continues with this habit, although Jack does not like it, probably because

it questions his control over her and is against the biblical idea that a good wife is never idle but constantly running the household (Prov. 31. 10-31). As Lawlis (1961:xxi) has noted, going out and careless spending were considered cardinal sins in a middle-class wife. She answers Jack's admonitions by saying: "That it is for a woman to make her foot her head," meaning making a servant her husband, and continues: "by my gadding abroad and careless spending I waste no goods of thine. I, pitying thy poverty, made thee a man and master of the house, but not to the end I would become thy slave" (Salzman, 1987:330-331). This is interesting because it shows her self-assertiveness, and how she is unwilling to be subordinated to her spouse, but also that she still considers her own wealth as her own, not as belonging to her husband as was officially accepted according to contemporary marriage laws. It is no wonder this woman reminds Patricia Shaw (2000:189) of the Wife of Bath.

But then Deloney creates a wonderful scene in which Jack locks his wife out at night, a scene that is similar to the story of Tofano and his wife in the *Decameron*, VII, iv (Wright, 1981:62). After some very witty repartee reminiscent of the battle of sexes in Shakespearean comedy, the cunning old wife tells him that she has just dropped her wedding ring, cannot find it and needs his help. The relevance of this symbolic "loss" makes Jack open the door and go out. Then she locks him out and the situation is consequently reversed. After another dialectic fight she accepts to let him in but not to sleep in her bed. Thus she deprives Jack of his privileges as a husband and master, for she meaningfully makes him go to sleep with his former fellow apprentices. The following morning, in a cooler mood, both spouses negotiate power with acts of surrender on both sides. Jack, considering her a shrew, gives up in his attempt to "tame" her and resolves to accept her will. For her part, she promises her desires will not annoy him:

*And seeing ye have sworn to give me my will, I vow  
likewise that my wilfulness shall not offend you ...  
And therefore, forgiving each other all injuries past,  
having also tried one another's patience, let us quench  
these burning coals of contention with the sweet juice  
of a faithful kiss and, shaking hands, bequeath all  
our anger to the eating up of this caudle. (333)*

So she makes her submission conditional to his acceptance of her subjectivity, and proposes to seal the agreement with final images of harmony such as the kiss, the handshake and the drink. This seems to be, hence, a give-and-take negotiation of power in the couple, where both submit and, at the same time, ensure mutual respect. Chapter 1 is, therefore, a self-contained comic episode in which humour is not a form of Hobbesian expression of superiority but a device that leads to human and social communion, quite in the manner of Shakespearean comedy.<sup>16</sup> I think there is no intention to ridicule, humiliate, and abuse neither the shrewish old widow nor the henpecked young husband, because both characters are presented with sympathy and, in Jack's case, even as a model to imitate.

However, Deloney turns to a more satirical approach to humour, conceived as a form of aggressive self-assertion and social correction, in other episodes. Hazlitt (1951:8-9) argued that “[w]e laugh at fools, and at those who pretend to be wise, at extreme simplicity, awkwardness, hypocrisy, and affectation.” And this is what happens, for instance, in Chapter 4, when Jack's female spinners play a trick on the King's fool, Will Summers, who had saucily intended to exchange kisses for money. He had tried to capitalise on the privileges of being a man from the court who could supposedly buy the sexual favours of lower-class women, whilst disregarding their desires and dignity. Yet Deloney does not conceive nobility as a social privilege but as a moral quality and, in the same way that a cloth-worker like Jack can prove to be “a gentleman by condition” (Salzman, 1987:339), female spinners can also claim a right to ethical gentility and be worthy of respect. For that reason, these women feel offended, refuse Will's offer, and determine to punish his sauciness. They bind him hand and foot to a post, gag him, and flap his face with a soaked bag of dog droppings. As they threaten to shave him, Summers is willing to satisfy their desires if they let him go. Then they make him feed some hogs and eat some of that food too. So, ironically, the jester is the victim of a gross, scatological jest devised by a group of women weavers, and by which he is humanly and socially degraded. This “scene of crude slapstick,” as Wright (1981:67) has described it, may be

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<sup>16</sup> In Chapter IX of *Human Nature*, Hobbes claimed: “... the passion of laughter is nothing else but a sudden glory arising from sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmities of others, or with our own formerly ... It is no wonder therefore that men take it heinously to be laughed at or derided, that is, triumphed over.” (Gaskin, 1994:54-55).

disgusting for modern readers, but was surely considered funny at the time, as is attested to by the fact that “the King and Queen laughed heartily” (Salzman, 1987:358) when Will told them his adventure. Again, we see a social and gender reversal producing laughter in this text, but this time comedy does not lead to consensus but to punitive derision.

Another case in which humour is used to chasten lust and social disorder and to claim the moral dignity of working-class women is found in chapter 7. Here an Italian merchant called Master Benedick falls in love with one of Jack’s female servants, Joan, whom he attempts to court with gifts and love rhetoric delivered in broken English:

Metressa Joan, be me tra and fa, me love you wod  
all mine heart, and if you no shall love me again,  
me know me shall die. Sweet metressa love a me,  
and by my fa and tra you shall lack nothing. First  
me will give you de silk for make you a frog. Second  
de fin camree for make you ruffles, and de turd shall  
be for make fin hankercher for wipe your nose. (367)

And as she attempts to get rid of him by telling him plainly that she does not want to get married, he says: “O, ’tis no matter for marry if you will come to my chamber, beshit my bed and let me kiss you” (367). All this clumsy discourse gives occasion to a funny situation of misunderstanding between them that makes Joan and her fellow-weavers laugh at this man. Finding himself ridiculed, Benedick determines to take revenge by wooing the wife of one of Joan’s relatives. His promises of presents and money first tempt this poor woman, but then she tells her problem to her husband, who decides to trick the Italian. John feigns to help Benedick get into Joan’s bed, where he had laid a sow. In the dark, the duped lover launches his love rhetoric once again, although this time with no sign of broken language but providing a hilarious case of situational irony:

*O my love and my delight, it is thy fair face that  
hath wounded my heart; thy grey sparkling eyes and  
thy lily-white hands, with the comely proportion of  
thy pretty body, that made me in seeking thee to for-  
get myself and, to find thy favour, lose my own free-  
dom. But now is the time come wherein I shall reap  
the fruits of a plentiful harvest. Now my dear, from  
thy sweet mouth let me suck the honey balm of thy  
breath, and with my hand stroke those rosy cheeks  
of thine wherein I have took such pleasure... (373)*



When he kisses the sow's snout, he is repelled by the stench and, when the animal begins to grunt and stir, Benedick runs out like a madman thinking it is the devil while John and his neighbours laugh out aloud. This way family order is preserved, the poor women's moral qualities are demonstrated and at the same time selfishness, corruption, and pedantry are punished. The fact that it is an Italian merchant who is mocked is a further significant issue. On the one hand, Italy was easily related to Catholicism in the Elizabethan period and negative stereotypes about its inhabitants abounded, mainly characterised by lust, foppishness, frivolity, and revenge, all these being characteristic of Benedick. On the other hand, foreign weavers who came to trade in England were not welcome at the time because they did not always follow the rules. Indeed, in 1595 Deloney and other English weavers had harshly complained about this and were even arrested as a result (Wright, 1981:18). Laughing at foreigners is a well-known form of nationalist self-assertion, and this is precisely how the comic episode in chapter 7 should be read.

Jack of Newbury ends with two other episodes of corrective comedy. In chapter 10, Jack's servants take revenge on Mistress Frank because she had interfered in the domestic affairs of their household by advising Jack's wife not to be so generous and kind to their servants. This piece of advice had caused a conflict between the spouses and threatened the harmonious atmosphere the protagonist had established in his household. When this indiscreet old gossip criticises the absent Winchcombs in front of the servants, the latter make her drunk and ask a clown to carry her in his basket throughout the town. He goes on shouting "Who knows this woman, who?", to which she constantly answers "Who co me, who co me, who?", and everybody in the street laughs out (386). This exposure to public ridicule, similar to the cucking stool, makes her feel so ashamed that she never dares trouble the Winchcombs again. In effect, the remedial purpose of the jest is successful.

Finally, in chapter 11, Jack outwits a nobleman, Sir George Rigley, who abandons one of his servants after she becomes pregnant. The narrator wittily censures the maid's thoughtless behaviour: "To become high, she laid herself so low that the knight suddenly fell over her, which fall became the rising of her belly" (388). And, due to the blemish this means on her own reputation and that of the household, her mistress threatens to dismiss her. However, Jack determines to reward the girl's

repentance and to reprove the nobleman for his arrogance and irresponsibility. He tricks him through disguise—an effective device in Renaissance literature—by dressing the maid in a lady’s clothes, which makes Sir George believe that she is another woman who is his social equal. With this carnivalesque scheme Jack manages to make Sir George Rigley marry the maid, converting her thus into a real lady, rising in society as he himself had done. And once more, the King’s laughter at the end sanctions this transgressive act of social mobility and reproof of dissolute nobility.

Chapter 11 is the last of the novel, so we may say that there is no true conclusion to the “Pleasant History” of the life of John Winchcomb—it simply ends. It is possible to state that the plot is, therefore, reminiscent of the jest-biographies of the time, which consisted of a series of independent comic anecdotes linked by the figure of the protagonist. It is true that Deloney resorts to romance and allegory in this and other prose fiction texts, but there is no doubt that he never commits himself completely to those narrative forms and always combines them with history, dramatic comedy, and the humorous narrative traditions of *fabliaux*, *novelle*, and the picaresque. This heteroglossia attenuates the seriousness and dogmatism of romance, and revises its ideology. Deloney uses humour to reverse social and gender roles, to defend the dignity of the working class, and to chasten those who threaten the model of social harmony championed by both hero and author. Therefore, he resorts to humour as an effective means to convey his “progressive” ideology. In the composite nature of *Jack of Newbury*, laughter may be generated by deception, by incongruity, by the scatological, or by corrective ridicule. All this hybridity makes generic categorisation very uncertain but I believe it is precisely this fact that makes the text such an interesting achievement in the early stages of novelistic discourse—in spite of its rudimentary plot structure—while it simultaneously raises so many important gender and social issues in Renaissance culture.

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# EL PENSAMIENTO POLÍTICO DE JAMES JOYCE EN *THE CRITICAL WRITINGS*: IDEALISMO DESDE EL EXILIO

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## Abstract

*Este artículo estudia la crítica expuesta por James Joyce en sus ensayos, recopilados por Ellsworth Mason y Richard Ellmann bajo el título de *The Critical Writings* (1959) desde los cuales ataca toda manifestación de nacionalismo exacerbado. De igual modo, estas páginas sugieren un acercamiento a la cuestión del nacionalismo desde la universalidad que desborda cualquier atisbo de localismo, sirviéndonos para ello del debate desde el que se acoge al arte y a las distintas manifestaciones artísticas como campos en los que el autor o el artista ha de mantener una posición con respecto a qué papel juega el intelectual en la sociedad y, como consecuencia de ello, si debe permanecer aislado para centrarse en su obra o si su cometido pasa por implicarse en los asuntos de carácter social o político de su tiempo. En el caso de Joyce, mediante un discurso coherente y rotundo, el autor expone con claridad sus ideas con respecto a Irlanda y al nacionalismo irlandés, mostrando un tono en ocasiones escéptico y en otras apasionado, que no oculta su profundo conocimiento de la historia y de la realidad irlandesa de su tiempo.*

Iniciamos este trabajo diciendo que resulta interesante —especialmente hoy, dadas las circunstancias que atraviesa el presente al que pertenece nuestro contexto político— repasar la crítica que James Joyce dedica en sus ensayos y conferencias, recopilados bajo el título de *The Critical Writings*,<sup>1</sup> a toda manifestación de nacionalismo exacerbado y

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<sup>1</sup> Hemos utilizado la recopilación de un total de 57 discursos, ensayos, reseñas, artículos en diversos periódicos, cartas del escritor a diferentes editores, conferencias y unos pocos poemas, editada por

cargado de violencia. Asimismo, mediante estas líneas deseamos acercarnos a una de las metas que persigue la creación artística, es decir, la universalidad que desborda cualquier atisbo de localismo. Puede pensarse que el tema que se tratará aquí traspasa lo estrictamente literario pero no hemos querido sino dar cabida a diversas cuestiones que explicarán las razones que han provocado el desarrollo del mismo. Así, intentaremos ofrecer respuestas a las distintas preguntas que han ido surgiendo tras leer la obra citada, siendo éstas las que demandan una posición con respecto a qué papel juega el intelectual en la sociedad y, como consecuencia, si es su deber permanecer aislado del mundo para centrarse exclusivamente en su obra, o, por el contrario, si debe implicarse de lleno en temas relativos a la vida diaria, desde los problemas de índole social a los asuntos de carácter político.<sup>2</sup> La primera cuestión ha suscitado pasiones y controversias en la historia cultural contemporánea del continente europeo. En el caso que nos ocupa, ello se aprecia en la unión obligada de Irlanda al Reino Unido: mediante el Acta de Unión firmada en 1800, Irlanda era incorporada a la corona británica. Como afirma Xosé Núñez Seixas (1998:48), ya en el siglo XVIII se encuentran las bases del nacionalismo irlandés, que se diversifica a lo largo del XIX y se extiende en distintas direcciones, algunas de ellas de carácter radical, tanto desde el punto de vista de la importancia otorgada a la lengua y a la cultura gaélicas como al papel que jugaría la religión en la actitud mantenida por las diferentes tendencias. Se habla de que han existido tres maneras básicas de entender la visión de la realidad nacional irlandesa. Por un lado encontramos la originaria, defendida por Wolf Tone, que propugnaba el que las tradiciones culturales y religiosas de Irlanda pudieran coexistir integradas; por otro estaba la propiciada por O'Connell y la *Catholic Association*. Ésta defendía la identificación de Irlanda con

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Ellsworth Mason y Richard Ellmann en 1959 en una nueva edición del año 1989 publicada por Cornell University Press. Existe una versión de esta obra en español titulada *Escritos críticos*, traducida por Andrés Bosch, que editó Lumen en 1991 en la colección "Palabra crítica" y que previamente se había puesto a la venta, con idéntico título, en el año 1987. Reciente es la edición crítica de Kevin Barry para Oxford University Press (2000), *Occasional, Critical and Political Writing*, que como novedad aporta una rica introducción, un apéndice en el que se recogen varios artículos de Joyce escritos en italiano y una sección final de notas, muy útil para la comprensión de distintos matices de los escritos del autor irlandés.

<sup>2</sup> Según Barry, la diversidad temática de los escritos de Joyce permite agruparlos bajo distintos criterios. Este autor apunta una clasificación general que está encabezada por temas como la estética, la historia irlandesa, el teatro europeo y la literatura inglesa. El estudio introductorio de Barry profundiza, sin embargo, en una clasificación que responde a tres objetivos temáticos fundamentales, con la que coincidimos: el aspecto político de los artículos periodísticos de Joyce, la teoría de Joyce sobre el arte y, haciendo de nexo de unión entre ambos temas, el análisis de Joyce sobre la historia cultural irlandesa.

el catolicismo y consiguió la Ley de Emancipación de los católicos en 1829. Por último, Thomas Davis, que fundó la Joven Irlanda en 1840, se distinguía por su “visión romántica y herderiana” (Núñez Seixas, 1998:48) desde la que sostenía la identificación de la nación irlandesa con las tradiciones y la lengua gaélica, aunque integraba a protestantes y católicos. Estas tres tendencias se mantuvieron más o menos mezcladas en las diversas organizaciones nacionalistas. La población protestante, minoritaria y concentrada, principalmente, en la zona norte del territorio, se mantuvo, en su mayoría, fiel a la corona británica. Tras haber enunciado brevemente el esquema de los caminos del nacionalismo irlandés interesa decir que, con respecto a la segunda pregunta planteada más arriba, la razón que nos mueve es reflejar que a pesar de la consistencia creativa del escritor Joyce existe otro Joyce, como se aprecia al conocer la situación de la realidad a la que el autor pertenece, que depende de una red bien trabada de circunstancias históricas sociales y políticas que se reflejan abiertamente en su obra.

El contenido político que se aprecia en la recopilación de *The Critical Writings* puede agruparse en dos apartados. En primer lugar, aquél que el autor dedica a la cuestión irlandesa. Por otro lado y en segundo lugar, los escritos de carácter más general, donde aborda aspectos amplios de la política de su tiempo. Junto a estos dos bloques debemos mencionar otro que, por sus connotaciones, toca el escenario político: la posición que el individuo, en este caso el creador, ocupa en la sociedad. Teniendo en cuenta este esquema de trabajo iniciaremos nuestra exposición, comenzando con la relación individuo-sociedad, seguiremos con los temas políticos de carácter general y finalizaremos con la cuestión irlandesa, que Joyce convirtió en asunto principal de sus preocupaciones como exiliado voluntario que iba a ser durante toda su vida.

### **1. Relación individuo-sociedad**

Hay que partir del principio que revela Joyce a lo largo de los trabajos recogidos en *The Critical Writings* cuando habla de que la sabiduría no llegará al escritor si en la razón humana no se reúnen tres atributos fundamentales. La razón ha de manifestarse, tal y como afirma el autor en “Force”, de 1898, “pudica, pacifica et desursum” (Joyce, 1993:24). En la obra de Joyce puede verse cómo el comportamiento humano se dirige irremediabilmente por el camino elaborado por la relación permanente

entre el binomio yo-sociedad / mundo exterior-sociedad. Ello puede apreciarse ya en *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916),<sup>3</sup> texto en el que Stephen Dedalus conseguiría alcanzar momentos de aislamiento personal desde las primeras etapas de su vida, desde la soledad incierta de una mirada infantil alejándose de la realidad. Será más adelante cuando en este mismo texto aparecerá, con crudeza, el testimonio del narrador hacia la personalidad de Stephen interpretando así, de una manera convincente, la vida futura por la que iba a pasar el autor Joyce: “[...] a free boy, a leader afraid of his own authority, proud and sensitive and suspicious, battling against the squalor of his life and against the riot of his mind” (1986:84). Esta confrontación entre el yo y la sociedad desembocaría en la construcción de un espíritu de rebeldía frustrada que provocaba en el autor una sensación de aislamiento, no sólo hacia sus familiares sino también hacia el lugar que ocupaba en el mundo: “He saw clearly too his own futile isolation. [...] He felt that he was hardly of the one blood with them but stood to them rather in the mystical kinship of fosterage, fosterchild and fosterbrother” (1986:90). Sin embargo, el destino de Joyce tendría que ser eludir el orden establecido, tanto el social como el religioso. Las circunstancias biográficas del autor confirman la idea de defensa por su parte de los valores fundamentales del individuo, forjados mediante el propio descubrimiento y no mediatizados por orden o jerarquía alguna. Es comprensible, pues, que Stephen no estuviera encaminado hacia la vida religiosa, tal y como se da a entender en *Portrait*, sino a la profesión de su propia existencia y a la de su creación literaria: “He was destined to learn his own wisdom apart from others or to learn the wisdom of others himself wandering among the snares of the world” (1986:148).

Creemos que la novela citada se configura en la orilla contraria de cualquier orden establecido, en este caso el orden religioso. Por ello la libertad aparecerá como la salvación en la encrucijada personal en la que se encuentra sumido el protagonista, que no duda en manifestar su deseo de gritar “the cry of a hawk or eagle on high, to cry piercingly of his deliverance to the winds” (1986:154) y que sabrá que conduce al individuo al triunfo sobre la sociedad ordenadamente establecida. Ya en 1898 Joyce defendía la necesidad de que los individuos no vean frustra-

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<sup>3</sup> Nos referimos a la edición inglesa de Grafton Books de 1986. En adelante, utilizaremos la abreviatura *Portrait* para referirnos a esta obra.



das sus aspiraciones. Así, en “Force” manifiesta que entiende como aspiraciones las acciones naturales encaminadas a conseguir un deseo lícito: alcanzar la mayor cota posible de dignidad en la trayectoria vital. Queda puesto en valor que “When right is perverted into might, or more properly speaking, when justice is changed to sheer strength, a subjugation ensues. [...] When unlawful, as too frequently in the past it has been, the punishment invariably follows in strife through ages” (1993:24). De lo anterior se deduce, por tanto, que para Joyce cualquier acto de violencia generado por una acción política desembocaría en un conflicto permanente cargado de opresión.

La importancia de la producción recogida en *The Critical Writings* se afirma cuando observamos la naturaleza de dichos trabajos, escritos muchos de ellos en plena juventud de su autor. Por ello cabe detenerse en esta fecha de 1898 en la que Joyce vive plenamente la coyuntura por la que atraviesa Irlanda en esos momentos. En el plano cultural, aparece el llamado Renacimiento Literario Irlandés, encabezado, entre otros, por W. B. Yeats. Al amparo de dicho renacimiento se fundaron en 1892 la Sociedad Literaria Nacional y el Teatro Nacional Irlandés, entre cuyos principios constaba el deseo de combatir la “anglicización cultural del país” (Núñez Seixas, 1998:50). Al año siguiente se fundó la Liga Gaélica con el objetivo de extender y conservar la lengua gaélica como lengua nacional. Esta institución llevó a cabo una intensa actividad docente y cultural y en poco tiempo se convirtió en una plataforma en la que se formaron jóvenes nacionalistas radicales que luego se adhirieron a distintas organizaciones. Núñez Seixas explica que la Liga consiguió incorporar la cuestión de la lengua a las preocupaciones y reivindicaciones del nacionalismo irlandés (Núñez Seixas, 1998:50), aunque afirma que, de la misma manera, enfatizó el alejamiento de los protestantes irlandeses del nacionalismo porque la cultura angloirlandesa fue considerada extranjera desde todos los puntos de vista. Por otra parte, en el plano político Joyce pudo vivir los cambios sucesivos que se produjeron a lo largo de la década de los noventa del siglo XIX y que se verán a continuación.

## 2. Joyce y la política de su tiempo

Para situarnos es conveniente mirar un poco atrás. Es sabido que los siglos XVIII y XIX hacen posible el paso de la Edad Moderna a la

Edad Contemporánea en occidente (Martínez Carreras, 1985). Este nuevo espacio de tiempo se caracterizó por el progreso alcanzado gracias al desarrollo tecnológico, cuyos fundamentos fueron el empirismo y el pragmatismo. Existió una confianza plena en el progreso, que transcurrió de manera paralela a la aparición de nuevos enfoques en la vida social, política y económica. Al mismo tiempo, se impusieron los valores propios de la burguesía tanto en el terreno cultural como en el político. Según José Martínez Carreras,

Desde 1830 [...] se impone de forma definitiva la revolución liberal burguesa con todo lo que representa, configurando la plenitud del ciclo burgués. El protagonismo de esta corriente revolucionaria corresponde a la burguesía y a las clases medias, que mueven a favor suyo a los grupos populares. (1985:142)

De este modo se debe entender la época de las revoluciones burguesas y el apogeo del liberalismo económico y político, todo ello junto al despertar de la conciencia nacional y el triunfo del capitalismo imperialista hasta la crisis de 1914, cuando comienza la Primera Guerra Mundial. En esta línea, no debe olvidarse el papel de la burguesía como protagonista del movimiento nacionalista, según el modelo explicativo marxista del nacionalismo. Según la clasificación que hace Núñez Seixas (1998:13-14), y sin que pretendamos ofrecer una división pormenorizada que excedería los propósitos de este trabajo, para conocer el origen del nacionalismo hay que hacer mención, por un lado, a las teorías que proceden de los movimientos nacionalistas y de los planteamientos apologeticos y primordialistas que quedan resumidos en la teoría del “despertar nacional”. Por otro lado existen las teorías que aluden a la existencia de una marginación u opresión económica que entronca con la teoría sociológica de la división social del trabajo, que defiende los intereses de un grupo étnico que se encuentra subordinado con respecto a otro colectivo. Ello conecta con la teoría que se articula ante la frustración de unas expectativas sociales por parte de un grupo social con respecto a otros. Por último, la teoría instrumentalista fija en los intereses de un grupo determinado la génesis de las reivindicaciones nacionalistas. Esta teoría sostiene que el grupo apela al conjunto de la nación para defender su postura. En este esquema instrumentalista han de situarse diferentes modelos, como el marxista, para quien la burguesía es la principal protagonista, el modelo que valora el papel de la *intelligentsia* como grupo propiciador de los movimientos nacionalistas, las teorías que re-

conocen a las distintas élites que manipulan o construyen identidades de grupos étnicos con el objetivo de conseguir recursos y la apropiación de éstos, y, por fin, la teoría de los movimientos sociales y la teoría de la selección racional, según las cuales los movimientos nacionalistas surgen al amparo de grupos concretos que defienden sus intereses en un momento específico para mejorar sus condiciones de vida o trabajo. A lo anterior debe añadirse la aportación de E. J. Hobsbawm cuando afirma que “[...] el problema es que no hay forma de decirle al observador cómo se distingue una nación de otras entidades a priori. [...] Observar naciones resultaría sencillo si pudiera ser como observar a los pájaros” (Hobsbawm, 1991:13).

Una vez establecido este marco, hay que señalar que, en el plano político, diversos cambios afectaron a la realidad del pueblo irlandés. Así, la *Irish Republican Brotherhood* volvió a ejercer el uso de las armas durante la década de los 90 del siglo XIX. Al mismo tiempo, hacia 1889 comenzó a articularse un nuevo movimiento político, que se conocería después como *Sinn Féin* y que se constituiría como partido político en 1900. A la labor fundacional de este partido, llevada a cabo por Arthur Griffith y William Rooney hay que sumar la de James Conolly cuando funda el Partido Socialista Republicano Irlandés, nacionalista y socialista. La unión del partido de Parnell en 1899 con la *United Irish League*, presidida por J. Redmond, continuó con su empeño integrador hasta el estallido de la Primera Guerra Mundial. Ahora bien, los proyectos de autonomía para Irlanda fracasaron en Londres por la continua oposición de la Cámara de los Lores. Ello quedaba puesto de manifiesto, por ejemplo, en la reacción de la *Ulster Volunteer Force*, de inclinación paramilitar, que encontró su contrapartida en los grupos radicales de los *Irish National Volunteers*.

Dicho lo anterior, creemos que no es aventurado afirmar que Joyce se adelantaba, sin saberlo, a los acontecimientos que desembocaron en la Primera Guerra al tratar una de las causas profundas de este conflicto bélico. Pero hay que cuestionarse cómo interpretó Joyce este entramado de circunstancias históricas. Lo más llamativo es su trabajo crítico sobre temas tan amplios como los arriba señalados, utilizando para ello tanto la creación literaria como la escritura ensayística de los diversos artículos y conferencias recogidos en *The Critical Writings*. Ello puede verse, asimismo, en el relato corto titulado “Ivy Day in the Committee Room”, perteneciente a *Dubliners*, donde está presente su juicio hacia

aquellas instituciones políticas que son utilizadas por representantes públicos por el mero interés individual, quedando en el olvido el interés colectivo: “The working-man is not looking for fat jobs for his sons and nephews and cousins. The working-man is not going to drag the honour of Dublin in the mud to please a German monarch” (1986:111). El caso de unas elecciones municipales en Dublín y la consiguiente elección del *lord* alcalde ponen en evidencia y en ridículo la situación desesperada de la búsqueda de votos por parte de las candidaturas conservadoras y nacionalistas: “You must owe the City Fathers money nowadays if you want to be made Lord Mayor. Then they’ll make you Lord Mayor, by God! I’m thinking seriously of becoming a City Father myself.” (1986:116).

Volviendo a la figura de Stephen Dedalus, éste era visto por el resto de sus compañeros universitarios como un individuo aparte. Joyce siempre quiso situarse fuera de todo símbolo procedente de la masa y supo distanciarse conscientemente de costumbres y usos sin temor a ser catalogado como excéntrico. Tal caso puede observarse en *A Portrait*, cuando Stephen no quiere participar con su firma a favor de temas como el desarme general, el arbitraje en caso de discordias internacionales o la creación de una nueva humanidad. No intervendrá tampoco en discusión alguna sobre la teoría política marxista y las teorías anarquistas, que por su novedad se introducían en los círculos universitarios en ese tiempo. De ahí que se oiga la réplica siguiente: “Intellectual crankery is better out of this movement than in it” (1986:180). Se puede sospechar que el comentario anterior provenía de las críticas oportunas que Joyce construía para cada caso. Así, es significativo el modo en el que derriba con sus argumentos la acción del personaje de Davin en *Portrait* al apoyar éste último la causa del desarme general cuando, por otra parte, pertenecía a un grupo paramilitar representante del nacionalismo irlandés. Mirado desde este punto de vista, era lógico que para el común de los irlandeses Joyce no fuera sino un ciudadano más en su comunidad. También Stephen era una persona extraña en su propio medio porque siempre se mantenía en una posición alejada de los demás debido fundamentalmente a la consistencia de sus ideas con respecto a la literatura y a la acción política. Por ello puede entenderse que, en un momento dado, Davin replique a Stephen: “I’m an Irish nationalist, first and foremost. But that’s you all out. You’re a born sneerer, Steevie. [...] Are you Irish at all?” (1986:183).

Por otro lado, ya se ha dicho que Joyce defendía la necesidad de no frustrar ninguna de las aspiraciones humanas, quedando dicho precepto por encima de una subyugación ideológica aparentemente prioritaria. Al hilo de la anterior idea, no se debe obviar una circunstancia histórica crucial para entender la sociedad de finales del siglo XIX, tal es la aparición de los imperios coloniales como reflejo de una ansiedad expansiva por parte de los estados europeos occidentales. Joyce vivía este ambiente generado por la civilización europea y se dio cuenta de que necesitaba despejar su horizonte de forma inmediata. Cabe señalar que existe en él una crítica hacia ese planteamiento político del siglo XIX constituido por el librepensamiento y el desenfreno colonizador. Como sostiene en "Force", será en este medio en el que Joyce compruebe que "Men have passions and reason, and the doctrine of licence is an exact counterpart of the doctrine of freethinking" (1993:23). En este sentido, su argumentación con respecto al Imperialismo y al Colonialismo gira en torno a posiciones darwinianas, en las que la selección natural juega un papel primordial al someter la Ley Natural a la condición del ser más fuerte y capacitado para adaptarse a las cambiantes circunstancias. Por ello el autor termina diciendo que "Subjugation is almost of the essence of an empire and when it ceases to conquer, it ceases to be. [...] Politically it is a dominant factor and a potent power in the issues of the nations" (1993:24). Llegados aquí es conveniente detenerse para establecer una diferenciación entre los dos modelos de subyugación que Joyce plantea en sus reflexiones. Por una parte, rastrea las consecuencias que la pareja subyugación-fuerza ha venido ejerciendo desde el inicio de los tiempos hasta nuestros días. Por otra, profundiza en el binomio subyugación-razón como componente básico para alcanzar la sabiduría, que para nuestro autor no ha sido desarrollada del todo como instrumento ideal para alcanzar la justicia y la libertad del individuo en sociedad. Se entenderá, pues, el motivo por el que Joyce critica la ideología política del liberalismo del siglo XIX, al ser ésta un medio que facilita la coacción de la libertad y no un instrumento que propicia el alcance pleno de la misma: "When right is perverted into might, or more properly speaking, when justice is changed to sheer strength, a subjugation ensues —but transient and not lasting". (1993:24)

Similares reflexiones pueden detectarse en sus conferencias sobre la historia política y cultural de su nación. Como muestra "Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages" (1907), Joyce se sitúa en un marco general desde el

que introduce su daga intelectual en lo más profundo de la identidad del ser irlandés. No se debe olvidar que Joyce sintonizaba con lo recóndito de este ser cargado de una aureola mística y mágica, producto de la opresión recibida por parte de los gobiernos ingleses. En este sentido, el autor atribuye a su comunidad, por encima de la denominación de país o nación, la consideración de civilización, realzando así la idiosincrasia de este pueblo en un todo abierto y diverso. Este ensalzamiento de lo universal trascendiendo la cicatería moral de la concepción cerrada del mundo, amparada ésta en el localismo cultural, nace en boca de Joyce como si se tratara de una premisa permanente. Por ello, desde el punto de vista político, el autor sugiere en “Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages” que el concepto de nacionalidad “must find its reason for being rooted in something that surpasses and transcends and informs changing things like blood and the human word” (1993:166). Como puede apreciarse en los escritos de Joyce, es una actitud aconsejable para el nacionalismo el manifestarse de manera opuesta a las posiciones que mantienen ciertos sectores de diversos nacionalismos culturales, pues, como sostiene Andrés De Blas Guerrero, es la demanda impulsada por [las] necesidades sociales, y no la fuerza de las realidades étnico-lingüísticas, la creadora de la nación. [...] Porque lo significativo del proceso es lo que el nacionalismo tiene de respuesta a necesidades estructurales de carácter universal. (De Blas Guerrero, 1997:344)

Al detenernos en el punto de vista político de Joyce sobre la cuestión irlandesa y según se desprende tras la lectura de *The Critical Writings*, se puede comprobar que la visión política del autor sobre Irlanda arranca de su conocimiento de su historia, plagada ésta de incertidumbre, como hemos apuntado en páginas anteriores, y de su respeto por una comunidad vapuleada por unas decisiones políticas desarraigadas de un razonamiento equilibrado. Ahora bien, a pesar de la existencia de ese sentimiento hacia lo irlandés, el escritor detestará y condenará toda creación artística utilizada con fines políticos en defensa de la identidad nacional. En realidad, Joyce se mantiene al margen de cualquier actividad política que vaya en defensa del fervor nacionalista. Con esa actitud, el autor da paso a una concepción mucho más universal de Irlanda pero desde una posición claramente crítica. Por lo tanto, para Joyce el ideal patriótico se encontrará en un nivel inferior a lo puramente artístico y humano.

Se constatan las dudas de Joyce sobre el problema de la definición cultural irlandesa frente a otras culturas occidentales, como la francesa o la alemana en "The Dead", perteneciente a *Dubliners*. A colación viene que evoquemos a un personaje como Gabriel, quien afirma, en una frase crucial en el desarrollo del relato, que "He wanted to say that literature was above politics" (1986:170). Gabriel murmura para sí que no encuentra ninguna connotación de índole política al hecho de escribir reseñas sobre libros para un determinado periódico, en este caso *The Daily Express*. Desde esta línea crítica, reflejada igualmente en la experiencia universitaria por la que atravesó Stephen, en *Portrait*, sabemos del rechazo visceral que Joyce sentía hacia dos componentes esenciales en la vida social irlandesa. El primero estaba constituido por la impronta que dejó en él su paso por el Trinity College de Dublín, institución fundada en 1591 por la reina Isabel I, que desempeñó un importante papel en el desarrollo de la tradición anglo-irlandesa, sobre todo a la hora de forjar una fuerte conexión religiosa entre protestantes y católicos. El segundo componente estaría centrado en la desazón que generaba en Joyce la presencia del nacionalismo irlandés expresado en cualquier manifestación de índole cultural. Como ya se ha apuntado más arriba, el componente cultural religioso se manifiesta de forma constante en su obra, mezclado con asuntos políticos de gran calado en la historia de Irlanda. Por ello se puede afirmar que lo autobiográfico forma parte de la escritura de Joyce, es decir, la imbricada red de acontecimientos de índole exclusivamente personal se ve entremezclada con los diferentes sucesos de carácter político y social de los que el autor tuvo la oportunidad de ser testigo.

En esta aproximación al pensamiento político de Joyce que se desprende de la lectura de *The Critical Writings* puede leerse sobre la situación creada en Irlanda con respecto a la relación entre religión, política y economía, cuestión ésta, que, como es sabido, no abandonó Joyce al desarrollar su narrativa de ficción. Por ejemplo, el desarrollo argumental de *Portrait* participa de este interés: "I'll pay you your dues, father, when you cease turning the house of God into a pollingbooth" (1986:29). En esta cita de la novela se advierte un ataque del autor hacia artimañas en las que la combinación de los asuntos religiosos con los políticos era moneda de uso corriente. Hay que preguntarse hasta qué punto la controversia entre posiciones religiosas diferentes ha sido entendida como una confrontación entre ideas diferentes. Este interrogan-

te desemboca en la postura que Joyce defendía, siendo ésta la necesidad de encontrar la existencia paralela de dos religiones enmarcada en un escenario sin manifestaciones de violencia. Es más, el dilema religioso se resuelve en la obra por cuenta de una clara disyuntiva: o los obispos y los sacerdotes de Irlanda abandonaban la política, o el pueblo abandonaría la Iglesia. Con respecto a la revisión de Joyce de la historia política de Irlanda durante el siglo XIX se observa que aparece en *The Critical Writings* su preocupación máxima, concentrada en una legítima aspiración del escritor: la consecución del estatuto de autonomía para su país. Es posible que fuera este deseo un reflejo de su ansia por conseguir otro más: el de la libertad individual, tal y como es buscada por sus héroes de ficción. Pero sólo el amor por su origen y por su país haría posible que Joyce dedicara toda su vida a hablar de Irlanda. Unido a ello, el conocimiento de su historia *y de sus circunstancias políticas y sociales permitiría una crítica sagaz y acertada de una realidad que el autor veía escapar de las manos de sus coetáneos*. Un ejemplo referido a la idea anterior lo constituye el hecho de que hablara a sus alumnos, ya en 1908, en Trieste, de que

*[...] in spite of everything, Ireland remains the brain of the United Kingdom. [...] The Irish, condemned to express themselves in a language not of their own, have stamped on it the mark of their own genius and compete for glory for the civilised nations. This is then called English literature. (1993:217)*

Si seguimos la línea trazada en sus conferencias observaremos que Joyce entra de lleno en un asunto complejo como el de las sucesivas intenciones de los dirigentes del país para hacer triunfar el estatuto de autonomía entre la segunda mitad del siglo XIX y los primeros años del XX. El escritor intenta buscar las causas que motivaron las reiteradas frustraciones irlandesas en el asunto, entre las que cabe destacar las siguientes. De un lado, hace notar la escasa voluntad que existía por parte de los responsables políticos del partido liberal inglés, entre los cuales destaca a Gladstone. De otro lado, insiste en la postura cicatera y restringida de los lores de Westminster ante los continuados proyectos para sacar adelante el mencionado estatuto. Tal es así que en “Home Rule Comes of Age” (1907) escribe: “Probably the Lords will kill the measure, since it is their trade” (Joyce, 1993:194). La frustración a la que hemos hecho alusión se acrecentaba en la medida en que era una



realidad la postura de oposición a todo lo irlandés, tanto por parte del partido conservador como por las corrientes de opinión cercanas a esta ideología política, que sabía manejar a la opinión pública recurriendo a los bolsillos de los ingleses. Existía un deseo de que la posición de los gobiernos liberales, cuya tendencia natural podría haber motivado un acercamiento a la solución del conflicto, hubiera sido más clara y contundente. A lo anterior se añade el hecho de que el Partido Parlamentario Irlandés se encontrara en decadencia. Ello implicaba al pueblo en una constante lucha por la supervivencia con la continua exigencia sobre el incremento de su aportación económica a las arcas inglesas y la reducción de su población. El pueblo, además, sentía que se había traicionado a su héroe político: Parnell. Referente político de Joyce, el ideólogo aspiró a la consecución de la Home Rule con los medios legales que ponía a su alcance el sistema político inglés. Parnell insistía en que sólo una asamblea parlamentaria de Dublín podría dar respuesta a las necesidades del pueblo irlandés, e interrumpía sistemáticamente la labor parlamentaria de la Cámara de los Comunes para intervenir con tal propuesta. Sin embargo, aunque se produjo el apoyo del Primer Ministro Gladstone, los asesinatos de Dublín de 1882 desvanecieron las ilusiones de conseguir la libertad. A pesar de las razones expuestas, destaca la predisposición de la comunidad irlandesa a entrar en el juego parlamentario, olvidando así el recurso a las armas y a la violencia. Sin embargo, y aunque este dato cuenta a favor de una pronta solución deseada por Joyce, la consecución del estatuto se desvaneció después de la muerte de Gladstone.

A lo largo de sus escritos, Joyce expone que la historia de la revolución irlandesa durante el siglo XIX estuvo mediatizada por dos circunstancias. Una fue la lucha contra Inglaterra y la otra el enfrentamiento entre los que mantenían posiciones diferentes al respecto, lo que se traducía en distintas tendencias dentro del nacionalismo. Así, en "Fenianism" (1907) destaca su punto de vista sobre los fenianos como facción violenta y describe su dogma como el de "the tradition of the doctrine of physical force [that] shows up at intervals in violent crimes" (1993:190). Se caracterizaban éstos por su intransigencia a la hora de crear puentes para llegar a un acuerdo con los partidos políticos ingleses y con los parlamentarios nacionalistas. La postura de los fenianos obedecía, según expone el autor en el artículo citado, a una razón que procedía del devenir histórico al que Irlanda pertenecía: "[...] any concessions that have been

granted to Ireland, England has granted willingly” (1993:188). Por lo tanto, el afán separatista se convertía en un punto de arranque que era necesario transmitir a las generaciones venideras. La cita anterior nos lleva a pensar que, a pesar de que Joyce miraba con cierta simpatía el movimiento feniano en los primeros momentos, temía que el Renacimiento Literario Irlandés estuviera en peligro.

Por otro lado, es curioso observar cómo Joyce establece un contraste entre los intentos de levantamiento de 1865 y de 1867, que fueron un fracaso, con los de principios de siglo de Robert Emmet después de la aprobación en Londres del Acta de la Unión, a la que aludíamos al principio de este trabajo, mediante la que Irlanda se convertía en parte del Reino Unido. Emmet se inspiró en los planteamientos de Wolf Tone, que protagonizó una intentona de independencia con su alzamiento del año 1803, con escaso apoyo. De la misma manera, Joyce se afirmaba en ver como contrapuestos el levantamiento feniano de 1865-67 con el movimiento de la Joven Irlanda, uno de los momentos más terribles de la historia de Irlanda —nos estamos refiriendo al desastre de la cosecha de la patata entre los años 1845 y 1848, que provocó un acusado descenso en el número de la población—. Joyce alude al fracaso feniano, a pesar de la organización de este grupo, y lo atribuye a que en Irlanda fuera una realidad el hecho de que apareciera un traidor en el momento menos indicado. Ya se ha apuntado al comienzo de este trabajo que la línea ideológica del partido de los Nuevos Fenianos se caracterizó, en principio, por mantener una idea favorable hacia la defensa de posturas pacíficas y no sangrientas en la lucha por la independencia de los pueblos. Así, en una carta fechada el seis de noviembre de 1906, Joyce contará a su hermano Stanislaus que

*either Sinn Fein or Imperialism will conquer the present Ireland. If the Irish programme did not insist on the Irish language I suppose I could call myself a nationalist. As it is, I am content to recognise myself an exile: and prophetically, a repudiated one.*  
(1993:237)

No conviene olvidar que, en su génesis, el Sinn Féin defendía una estrategia que propugnaba que los parlamentarios irlandeses en Londres formaran un parlamento en Dublín, donde gobernarían Irlanda fuera de la influencia inglesa. Para Joyce, la cuestión irlandesa fue utilizada para ahuyentar a la opinión pública inglesa de los verdaderos

problemas de la Isla Esmeralda. Ello se produjo al contar Inglaterra con una opinión pública dominada por los medios de comunicación sensacionalistas. La cuestión irlandesa no estaba resuelta porque, para el autor, existía un cinismo por parte de Inglaterra y de sus políticos hacia el pueblo irlandés al no conceder a éste una total libertad de expresión, como escribe en "Ireland at the Bar" (1907). Se edificaba así una opresión permanente para ensordecer al pueblo. Se trataba, pues, de un error, que concebía a los irlandeses "as highmen with distorted faces, roaming the night with the object of taking the hide of every Unionist" (1993:198). De modo que Joyce reconocía la existencia de una manipulación directa de la opinión pública inglesa con el fin de convertir el problema irlandés en el centro de su política, mientras que los asuntos sociales se trataban con el máximo cuidado. Como se puede apreciar, los argumentos de Joyce son convincentes y favorecen su línea crítica en cuanto a la posibilidad real de conseguir un estatuto de autonomía para Irlanda. Por otra parte, sin embargo, el tono de escepticismo que se desprende de sus palabras en "The Home Rule Comet" (1910) aumenta a medida que analiza la raíz de la situación política. Joyce se pregunta: "If the Irish exact autonomy as the price for the support of their votes, will the cabinet hasten to blow the dust off one of their many Home Rule bills and present it to the House again?" (1993:211). Se constata, pues, la duda del autor con respecto al juego de intereses políticos creados dentro del sistema parlamentario inglés con clara intencionalidad, a pesar de la alternancia política proveniente de la época victoriana, quebrada en los primeros años del siglo XX. De esta manera, la rotundidad de su discurso rompe en mil pedazos la historia del liberalismo anglosajón porque, según el propio autor, la estrategia liberal o del sistema "aims to wear down the separatist sentiment slowly and secretly, while creating a new eager social class, dependent, and free from dangerous enthusiasms, by means of partial concessions" (1993:212).

A pesar de su crítica hacia lo inglés como yugo que ha impedido la evolución natural del pueblo irlandés, Joyce comprende por qué Inglaterra ha cometido diversas e insistentes intromisiones políticas con respecto a Irlanda. En su opinión, Inglaterra fue tan cruel como astuta, utilizando para ello la fuerza del látigo. El autor se reafirma en su posición cuando comenta que Irlanda es pobre porque las leyes inglesas han arruinado las industrias del país. A ello hay que añadir que Irlanda ha estado atrasada políticamente debido a que sus pobladores, desde la Edad

Media, eran utilizados por políticos extranjeros. He aquí una crítica hacia la historia de Irlanda, a pesar del reconocimiento sentimental que Joyce le otorga, referida al dispendio al que sometió sus energías el pueblo irlandés, pudiendo haberse aprovechado de las mismas luchando eficazmente para alcanzar períodos prolongados de autonomía.

### 3. A modo de conclusión

Tras la lectura de los escritos citados se percibe, en primer lugar, la búsqueda de Joyce del sentido de la vida. La vida es búsqueda del lugar que ocupa el individuo en ella y de la comprensión del origen y del entorno propios. Joyce se cuestiona los anteriores planteamientos y, como afirma Ellmann, el escritor es el primero en darse cuenta de que un hombre común y corriente, sin ninguna importancia aparente, puede convertirse en héroe. En segundo lugar, tuvo que enfrentarse a la realidad de su país tomando partido. A algunos puede sorprender su auto-exilio. El aparente rechazo por su país, por su hogar familiar y por su religión forman parte de un modo de introspección, pero también son un aviso a sus compatriotas. Lo mismo ha sucedido con autores como Doris Lessing,<sup>4</sup> Mario Benedetti,<sup>5</sup> José Saramago o Juan Goytisolo, entre otros y la misma experiencia habían vivido ya otros autores, en este caso un siglo y medio antes, como el admirado por Goytisolo, José María Blanco White. Por lo que se refiere a la experiencia de Goytisolo, es preciso mencionar su obra *Coto Vedado* (1985), donde se habla de un problema semejante al que Joyce expone en sus textos: “Cualquier país me parecía mejor que aquel país en el que había vivido hasta entonces [...] Presentía oscuramente que un exilio, lejos de ser para mí un castigo, sería una bendición” (Goytisolo, 1985:234). Destaca, empero, el amor a la lengua que permitirá descubrir al escritor sus señas de identidad. De esta manera, la pasión por el lenguaje, por sus juegos, y su reconocimiento de una necesidad de vivir por y para la escritura, lo llevan a expresarse en términos que también pueden reconocerse en Joyce: “[La pasión por la otra lengua y la otra cultura] fue a la vez un baño de identidad lustral y reacción de defensa contra el vacío de un largo destierro” (1985:37).

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<sup>4</sup>Véanse los dos volúmenes autobiográficos de la autora, titulados *Under My Skin. Volume One of My Autobiography, To 1949* y *Walking in the Shade. Volume Two of My Autobiography, 1949-1962*. Ambas obras fueron publicadas en Londres por la editorial Flamingo en los años 1994 y 1997 respectivamente. Existe una versión en español en Destino, cuyos volúmenes responden a los títulos *Dentro de mí* (1997) y *Un paseo por la sombra* (1998).

<sup>5</sup>Véanse sus obras poéticas *Cotidianas* (1979) y *Viento del exilio* (1981), ambas en Alianza Editorial.

¿Qué buscan, pues, estos escritores? Evidentemente, resolver una duda sobre su identidad con respecto al mundo y a la realidad a la que pertenecen, duda que a través de su idealismo creativo, desarrollado en el exilio, queda expresada gracias al lenguaje, pues será éste el que, en última instancia, otorgue forma y respuesta al mundo. En el caso de Joyce, creemos que como colofón a distintas críticas hacia la civilización occidental, el autor dirige su interés hacia hechos como la Primera Guerra Mundial con una contundencia poco disimulada, como ocurre también con su posición hacia la postura de Gran Bretaña y el ejercicio de superioridad mantenido frente a Irlanda. La intención de Joyce no fue otra que la de sostener un enunciado claro a través de sus textos: el carácter pacífico de Irlanda frente a la intención incriminatoria de Inglaterra y la necesidad de superar la tentación del esencialismo propio de los que defendían la supervivencia de Irlanda frente a Inglaterra aludiendo únicamente a la identificación de la primera con un espíritu o alma propios. La actitud persistente del autor en sus escritos comunica la intención de mantener vivo un propósito en el que Joyce creyó siempre y que Barry resume acertadamente: “His motive as a journalist [...] appears to have been that of a sustained, deeply felt, and deliberate persuasion. It is the work of a political writer” (Barry, 2000:xiv).

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# LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR EFL SELF-ACCESS STUDENTS: STRATEGIES OF TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

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## **Abstract**

*A framework of learning strategies for the analysis of texts as a resource for EFL self-study learners is presented in this paper. Following Nisbet and Schucksmith's (1986) typology of learning strategies, a model of strategies for text exploitation is devised here. Strategies of textual processing are thus considered taking into account the techniques which they entail. This textual-processing approach is integrated into the self-access methodology developed in the CRAPEL (cf Gremmo, 1995; Gremmo and Riley, 1995a, 1995b; Holec, 1987, 1996; Riley, 1995). Some implications for learning contexts where this model may be employed are finally discussed.*

## **1. Introduction**

As a review of the literature on EFL teaching and learning (cf Nunan, 1991; Scrivener, 1994; Ur, 1996; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Johnson, 2001) may show, textual analysis as a resource in the foreign language class has been a noticeably neglected area of research on EFL teaching and learning.<sup>5</sup> This neglect has been particularly remarkable in the field of self-access, where texts are without doubt an invaluable instrument for

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<sup>5</sup> Even a most acclaimed work such as that of Carter and Goddard (2001) does not provide EFL learners with clues for the analysis of texts, focusing instead on stylistic features which make it more appropriate for literature students.

the student's autonomous work.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, this present study intends to elaborate a framework of learning strategies to tackle the analysis of texts as a self-study resource for EFL students. Although students of English should become acquainted with text-analysis strategies as soon as possible and may therefore find this model illuminating, this framework is primarily aimed at learners with at least an intermediate level given the familiarity with the English language which it presupposes among learners. The model is based on our teaching experience with university undergraduate students in Spain; however, it may be drawn upon in various other learning contexts where self-access work is undertaken. Thus, after approaching the notions of *learning strategies* and *self-study* which define the theoretical background of this framework, a proposal will be presented where learning strategies for text-exploitation will be envisaged considering the techniques which such learning strategies entail.

## 2. Learning strategies and self-study

In their well-known teaching and applied linguistics dictionary, Richards, Platt and Platt (1992:355) define *learning strategies* as “those conscious or unconscious processes which language learners make use of in learning and using a language”. Quite similarly, O'Malley and Chamot (1990:1) understand this notion as “the special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information”. Among the multiple classifications and typologies of learning strategies, Nisbet and Schucksmith's (1986:50) framework has been selected for the purposes of this contribution.<sup>7</sup> For not only may this strategy typology be easily adapted to specific EFL tasks such as textual exploitation, but it may be easily developed in the form of specific learning techniques as well. Although, depending on the learning task, some of the learning strategies may be more important than others, the authors propose the following categories, which must be activated by students for the successful accomplishment of learning processes:

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<sup>6</sup> For an updated review of the work on self-access in EFL, see Sinclair (2000).

<sup>7</sup> O'Malley and Chamot (1990:3-13), Oxford (1990) and Beltrán (1996:59-72) offer exhaustive reviews of the different classifications and typologies of language learning strategies.



- *Formulating questions*: Such learning strategies involve establishing the objectives and parameters of a task, identifying the audience of an exercise and relating the task to previous ones.
- *Planning*: Planning strategies imply a determination of tactics and their calendar, the reduction of the task or the exercise to its basic components, and deciding which physical or mental abilities are needed.
- *Control*: Control strategies call for a constant attempt to make the efforts, answers and discoveries fit in with initial learning questions or purposes.
- *Checking*: Learning strategies of checking demand a verification of the implementation of the task and its results.
- *Revision*: Revision entails a redefinition or modification of the initial objectives, or even setting new ones.
- *Self-assessment*: Self-assessment strategies have to do with the learner's evaluation of both the results and the implementation of a task.

Before proceeding with the presentation of the theoretical background of the textual-analysis model which is here outlined, it is important to stress the fact that learning strategies may be seen as encapsulating a number of more specific *techniques*. As Monereo *et al.* (1994:23, our translation) explain, “techniques may be considered as subordinate elements to the use of strategies; that is, a strategy may be considered as a guide for the actions that have to be carried out, and which is obviously prior to the choice of any other procedure to act”. In fact, techniques may also be seen as being constitutive of a method, that is, “a rational and practical organisation of teaching procedures and means for directing the student's learning into the desired results” (Carrasco, 2000:134, our translation). Techniques accordingly happen to be a key element to self-access approaches aiming to devise methods for the self-taught activity of learners.

*Self-study* may be understood as “the capacity of materials to be used independently by learners” (Richards, Platt and Platt, 1992:326). Among the wide range of approaches to self-study in foreign-language teaching and learning (cf Sheerin, 1991; Dickinson, 1992; McCall, 1992; Moore, 1992), we will be operating with the self-study methodological

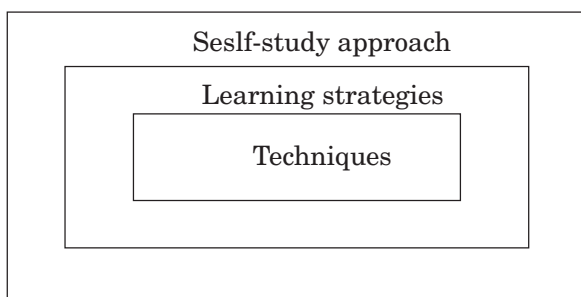
framework developed by Gremmo and Riley (1995a, 1995b), Holec (1996) and Riley (1995) in the C.R.A.P.E.L. (*Centre de Recherches et d'Applications Pédagogiques en Langues* [Centre for Research and Pedagogic Applications on Modern Languages]), at the University of Nancy-2, France. In common with most of the above-mentioned approaches, self-study is here assumed to involve teaching the students how to learn by themselves in an autonomous way (cf Gremmo, 1995). The student's independent learning will thus be accompanied by a teacher acting as a tutor or counsellor who helps learners to accomplish their self-study programme.

Within the CRAPEL approach, the self-student's agenda will include a series of regular interviews with a tutor/counsellor including an initial session and a number of subsequent interviews throughout the learner's self-access programme. At the initial interview, the learning objectives and needs will be negotiated between the student and the tutor. In addition, a pre-selection of materials will be undertaken, and the students will be presented with a number of working procedures to draw upon for their self-taught activity. Once learners have initiated their independent-learning work on their own, succeeding sessions with the counsellor will serve to renegotiate the initial learning objectives, redefine working materials and resources if necessary, and help the self-students to consolidate their working procedures. In the course of such counselling sessions, learners will be provided with assistance for their own self-assessment process as well. As developed in the CRAPEL, Holec's (1996), Gremmo and Riley's (1995a, 1995b) and Riley's (1995) self-access methodology has been mainly applied to the self-study activity which takes place in multimedia language laboratories. However, this methodological approach may also be employed to provide the self-student with a more systematic use of further learning resources and tools, including the strategic use of texts.

### **3. Integrating textual-analysis strategies into EFL self-study processes: a proposal of techniques**

A framework of strategies of textual analysis as a self-study resource for EFL learners is here proposed. This model will be particularly useful for the EFL self-access student. However, it will also be highly valuable for teachers having to perform counselling sessions for learners

embarking on self-study projects. Needless to say, the framework may also be drawn upon by teachers and students following non-self-study classroom instruction programmes. By and large, the outline of learning strategies which we have devised integrates a typology of learning strategies such as that of Nisbet and Schucksmith's (1986) into a self-study approach like Holec's (1996), Gremmo and Riley's (1995a, 1995b) and Riley's (1995). A set of learning strategies consisting of actual techniques for the analysis of texts as an EFL learning resource is thus produced.<sup>8</sup> The following figure represents the integrative approach followed when designing the textual-processing methodology for self-students which is here presented:



Such a framework presupposes that self-students commit themselves to going through a series of counselling sessions with a tutor who will prompt and supervise the learners' use of strategies and techniques as applied to text processing. Admittedly, textual analyses will be just one of the instruments drawn upon by learners throughout their self-access activity. Rather than, and together with, techniques of textual analysis, the typology of learning strategies might be materialised with various other techniques of EFL-learning in the form of, for example, videos and tapes, conversational interactions or online resources, all of which happen to be invaluable instruments for English learners.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, for the

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<sup>8</sup> O'Malley and Chamot echo the research on learning strategies for self-access students developed in the CRAPEL: "A number of second language learning strategy studies have been undertaken in France and elsewhere under the auspices of CRAPEL [...] these studies are guided by an approach in which second language learners are provided with an option for self-directed rather than traditional classroom courses" (1990:166). In particular, Holec (1987) stresses the importance of activating various learning strategies for the successful completion of self-study activity.

<sup>9</sup> In a different work (Gregorio Godeo, 2003), we approach the application of this self-study methodology on the basis of learners' independent work with online resources in multimedia language laboratories.

purposes of this contribution, we have just focused on texts as a resource for the EFL self-student.

### *3.1. Initial counselling session*

When it comes to the use of textual analyses as a resource for the self-study learner, the first interview between the student embarking on a self-access programme and the counsellor tutoring the project will have a key role in familiarising the student with the methodological implications and requirements of a self-access approach like the one chosen. Apart from this, in the course of the first interview the counsellor and the self-student will negotiate the latter's broad learning needs and the accommodation of such objectives to the learning instrument which is being exploited, namely, the analysis of texts. Moreover, the counsellor will assist learners in attempting to systematize their autonomous effort. The tutor will thus encourage the learner to activate such strategies in the form of specific techniques of work organisation.<sup>10</sup> Although, ideally, students should start carrying out individual analyses as soon as possible to learn from their own autonomous work, sometimes a single counselling session may not be enough for the self-student to become fully acquainted with the procedures to employ when working with texts. Consequently, one more counselling session may be devoted to this familiarising process.

#### *3.1.1. Formulating basic questions of textual processing*

In an attempt to establish the basic assumptions and the scope guiding the learner's independent work with texts, a number of techniques may be utilized, which are as follows:

##### *3.1.1.1. Establishing the objectives of textual analyses*

From the very beginning, learners should bear in mind which purposes will guide their text-analysis sessions. Such objectives may include, among others:

- increasing command of grammatical structures
- boosting lexical competence
- using texts to master differences in register

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<sup>10</sup> According to Carrasco (2000:138), even in conventional-instruction situations which do not involve counselling roles for teachers, they must act as a *strategy orientators* teaching students to learn.

- having access to oral structures (in the case of transcriptions of spoken texts)

### *3.1.1.2. Deciding on a language level*

Depending on the students' prior knowledge of English, they will have to lead their study into the achievement or consolidation of a given language level. If in doubt, the counsellor may recommend taking a language-level test. This variable will be particularly relevant when selecting the types of texts to work with, which may be more or less authentic material.

### *3.1.1.3. Relating particular analyses to previous knowledge*

It will be vital for the self-student to take into account the importance of connecting particular analyses of texts to other learning activities at all times, e.g., grammar and vocabulary exercises, written composition tasks, etc.

### *3.1.2. Arrangement of analyses*

The counsellor must make learners aware of the importance of choosing appropriate planning and organisation techniques so that actual analyses are successful and linguistically profitable. As has already been mentioned, given the relevance of becoming familiar with appropriate—and quite often new—analytical procedures, one more counselling session may be employed. Techniques of planning will be as follows:

#### *3.1.2.1. Deciding the types of texts to explore*

Texts may be of various kinds, for instance, textbook materials including listening tapescripts, newspapers and magazines, brochures and leaflets, fragments from novels and other books, etc.

#### *3.1.2.2. Contemplating the regularity of analyses*

Since textual analyses will be but one of the tools employed by learners to accomplish their self-study activity, they will have to determine the amount of time devoted to this practice and its frequency.

#### *3.1.2.3. Selecting supporting instruments for the analyses*

The analysis of texts can only be implemented by means of appropriate helping tools which the learner must not disregard so that analyses are practised correctly. Such instruments include dictionaries of various kinds or grammar reference books. Given the amount of usage information which they contain, monolingual dictionaries are highly recommendable.

#### 3.1.2.4. *Choosing procedures of textual exploitation*

The counsellor will provide the learner with a number of simple but practical techniques which may be highly useful for the analysis of texts, for instance:

- highlighting or underlining new or useful words
- circling prepositions that depend on a specific word
- making notes on the margins of the texts
- using post-it ® notes with additional information obtained from dictionaries
- employing cards for easily confused words appearing in texts
- elaborating lists of phrasal verbs which may be completed over the years.

#### 3.1.2.5. *Opting for and using relevant variables of textual analysis systematically*

In order to exploit and make a beneficial use of texts, students must become familiar with a number of analytical variables which will help them enrich their linguistic proficiency.

##### 3.1.2.5.1. *New vocabulary*

When approaching a new word, the student should try to remember not only its meaning, but also its pronunciation and any relevant grammatical features associated with the word, for instance, whether nouns are countable or uncountable; whether verbs are transitive or intransitive; whether there are any prepositions depending on the word; etc. If the learner considers the word to be fairly important or useful, a sentence where it is contextually used can be memorised.

##### 3.1.2.5.2. *(Pseudo-)new grammatical structures*

All in all, students should attempt to appreciate the contextual use made in texts of grammatical structures which they may have studied independently. Exploring the grammar of texts will thus be a unique opportunity to expand on certain grammatical areas, for example, unknown uses and omissions of the definite article, unfamiliar examples of inversion, cases of mixed conditionals, etc. Particularly problematic grammatical points should be borne in mind in this respect at all times, e.g., tenses, articles, gerunds and infinitives, relatives, modals, conditionals, relatives, the passive or reported speech. When uncertain about new grammatical structures, a grammar reference book should be checked.

### 3.1.2.5.3. Prepositions

The use of prepositions should be taken into account not only regarding the expression of time, place and other logical circumstances. In addition, learners should focus on prepositional phrases (e.g. *on behalf of, up to date, from time to time*, etc.), verb + preposition combinations (e.g. *deal with, belong to, rely on*, etc.), verb + object + preposition combinations (e.g. *apologise to somebody for something, congratulate somebody on something, stop somebody from doing something*, etc.) and adjectives + prepositions (e.g. *keen on, ashamed of, worried about*, etc.).

### 3.1.2.5.4. Linking words

Linking words must be observed as they are used to mark logic relations in texts. Some possible areas of interest are the expression of contrast (e.g. *however, nevertheless, although*, etc.), adding new information (e.g. *moreover, in addition, furthermore*, etc.), giving examples (e.g. *for instance, by way of example*, etc.), expressing result (e.g. *thus, consequently, therefore*, etc.) or drawing conclusions (e.g. *in short, on balance, in conclusion*, etc.).

### 3.1.2.5.5. Collocations

Regular combinations of words should be examined in the course of textual analyses (e.g. *have a look / a good time / something to do with; make a noise / a suggestion / the most of something; do a favour / good / the laundry / one's best*; etc.).

### 3.1.2.5.6. Phrasal verbs

When finding new phrasal verbs in texts, the student should attempt to remember (i) a paraphrase (e.g. *put off* → *postpone*), (ii) the specific grammatical characteristics of the verb in question (e.g. transitive, separable phrasal verb), (iii) an example sentence where the phrasal verb is contextually used (e.g. *Bad weather conditions made us put off the excursion*), and, if possible, (iv) other combinations of the main verb with different particles (e.g. *put up* → *provide accommodation; put up with* → *tolerate*; etc).

### 3.1.2.5.7. Idioms

Texts are a rich source of idioms, that is to say, phrases or sentences whose meaning is not clear from the meaning of its individual words and which must be learnt as a whole (e.g. *Read between the lines; Make a mountain out of a molehill; Pull a few strings*; etc.). When approaching the meaning of idioms appearing in texts, it will be necessary to consider the degree of formality with which such expressions are used.

### 3.1.2.5.8. *False friends*

False friends and words easily confused (e.g. *accost* vs. *go to bed*; *physician* vs. *physicist*; *sensibility* vs. *sensitivity*; etc.) will be the object of learners' practical attention throughout the textual samples being processed.

### 3.1.2.5.9. *Spelling*

In addition to words whose spelling in the students' language is similar to the English spelling (e.g. *accommodate* [English] vs. *acomodar* [Spanish]; *immune* [English] vs. *inmune* [Spanish]), a number of variables to do with spelling should be noticed in the course of students' textual analyses, including:

- differences in spelling between nouns and verbs (e.g. *advice* [N] vs. *advise* [V])
- pronunciation differences between same-spelling words belonging to different grammatical categories (e.g. *export* [N] vs. *expórt* [V])
- irregularities in the formation of plural nouns (e.g. *party* ' *parties*); 3rd person singular Simple Present (e.g. *study* ' *studies*); -ing forms (e.g. *run* ' *running*); Simple Past and Past Participle (e.g. *stop* ' *stopped*); comparatives and superlatives (e.g. *big* ' *bigger*, *biggest*); or adverbs in -ly (e.g. *easy* ' *easily*)
- changes in spelling when adding prefixes (cf *adequate* ' *inadequate* vs. *legal* ' *illegal*).

### 3.1.2.5.10. *Punctuation*

Analyses will allow learners to observe the practical use of punctuation in real texts. Attention to punctuation rules where English and the self-student's mother tongue differ must not be ignored (e.g. *13,700* [English] vs. *13.700* [Spanish]; *3.53* [English] vs. *3,5* [Spanish]; *Dear Sir*, [English] vs. *Estimado Señor*: [Spanish]).

### 3.1.2.5.11. *Spoken-English features*

Explorations of oral-English transcriptions are a good opportunity to become familiar with conversational strategies, such as:

- omission of auxiliaries and personal pronouns (e.g. [*Do you*] *want some more tea?*)
- expressions to show hesitation (e.g. *...er...; well...; and...erm...; etc.*) or interest in the speaker (e.g. *hmm...; uh...huh...*)



- formulae to indicate that one is prepared to begin (e.g. *Right...; Ok...; Well...*)
- expressions to produce thinking time (e.g. *I mean; you know; sort of; etc.*)

#### 3.1.2.5.12. Text type

Attention will be paid to the overall organising textual pattern within which the sample explored may be included, that is, narratives, descriptions, discussions, reviews, letters, reports, and so on. Consequently, the student will consider aspects like the use of tenses or linking devices, as well as the broad structure organising the text as a whole.

#### 3.1.2.5.13. Dialectal features

When dealing with texts written in a dialect other than the standard variety studied in class, consideration will be given to lexical and grammatical features characteristic of the new dialect. By way of example, a learner of British English should notice *honor* rather than *honour* in an extract from an American newspaper being examined.

#### 3.1.2.5.14. Register features

If remarkable features of formal, informal, colloquial English or slang appear in the text, they should be taken into account. Together with characteristic vocabulary, analyses will concentrate on such variables as the use of contractions, phrasal verbs, direct or indirect questions, abbreviations, non-standard punctuation (e.g. dashes instead of commas and periods), exclamation marks and intensifiers, passives, etc.

#### 3.1.2.6. Considering the order of text-analysis steps

Analyses may be done attending to each single variable on its own throughout the text being processed. Thus, the student may start focusing on new vocabulary in the text, and then go on to analyse different grammatical structures, prepositions, collocations, phrasal verbs, and so on. Alternatively, texts may be explored from A to Z considering different analytical variables provided that they become relevant in the sample.

### 3.2. Succeeding interviews

A number of ongoing counselling sessions will follow both the initial interview between the self-students and the counsellor and, as a result, the formers' first attempts to analyse texts on their own. On the whole,

such interviews will help students to activate learning strategies aiming at verifying the correct implementation of textual analyses.

### *3.2.1. Controlling and checking procedures<sup>11</sup>*

Control-and-checking learning strategies may be considered as different aspects of a macrostrategy of verification of the accurate development of textual analyses. Regular attendance at counselling sessions will be fundamental to redefine, if necessary, the students' initial objectives and texts selected for analysis, and to solve any hindrances which they may have in putting the analytical procedures into practice. The counsellor will insist on the importance of controlling one's work by endeavouring to be systematic in the analysis of texts.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, learners will be encouraged to check the correct execution of the techniques with which they have been presented during the first interview, specially the application of analytical variables and the use of supporting instruments to carry out analyses.

### *3.2.2. Revision of knowledge*

Tutors will encourage students to undertake regular reviews of the knowledge which they have acquired on the basis of their textual examinations. This process implies the students' regular revision of the new language which they will have learnt and consolidated by means of the analyses which will have been previously completed.

### *3.2.3. Self-assessment*

Throughout the counselling sessions, students must be urged to evaluate whether the knowledge acquired by means of their analyses is manifested in significant learning. As a matter of fact, learners should attempt to self-assess whether they have gained more fluency and become more systematic in their text-exploitation practices. Furthermore, learners will develop an appreciation of their use of new structures learnt from texts when writing and speaking. Nevertheless, counselling sessions will play a fundamental role in this self-assessment process, for tutors may verify the incorporation of new knowledge in the learners' written and spoken production if the students demand the additional opinion of an expert.

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<sup>11</sup> Given the connections between what Nisbet and Schucksmith (1986) have considered as two different types of learning strategies, we have incorporated both into one as they are activated virtually simultaneously.

<sup>12</sup> For example, in exploring grammar, learners may end up examining structures which they already master, disregarding other relevant variables as a result.

#### 4. Conclusions

This research is based on our teaching experience with university undergraduate students of English in Spain, where the limited allocation of EFL lectures in the university curriculum made us reflect upon the need to investigate the use of supplementary mechanisms of self-study which would help learners to achieve linguistic proficiency. This contribution was also triggered by the need to respond to university students' lack of systematic approaches when exploring texts. A framework of learning strategies and techniques of textual exploitation has been presented, which, as mentioned above, may be completed with the use of further self-study mechanisms. This model is thus most suitable for the self-access learner. Nonetheless, it may likewise be applied in any other EFL learning contexts —not only in Spain— where incorporation of self-study techniques will enrich conventional classroom tuition. EFL teachers in various institutional teaching domains may also find this framework useful when teaching their students how to tackle texts as a learning resource.

The metacognitive function which is activated in the course of the students' counselling sessions will enable learners to reflect more deeply about their own EFL learning process.<sup>13</sup> In actual fact, as a provider of learning strategies for students, the teacher will “help learners to reflect upon the processes and decisions which they make while they are learning” (Monereo Font and Castelló Badia, 1997:74, our translation). In being better acquainted with such processes, learners may apply similar strategies to many other areas of their language acquisition. Moreover, self-study procedures and the autonomy which they provide may act as a stimulus for the learner. As Palma (1997:36, our translation) points out with reference to the relation between the student's motivation and the construction of strategic learning processes, “the students' knowledge of the learning strategies which they may draw upon is likely to result in positive outcomes or, at least, in the expectancy of positive outcomes”. Thus, the acquisition of independent-studying learning strategies will be most appreciated by learners who may decide to proceed with their language improvement throughout their lifetime.

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<sup>13</sup> Following Flavell's (1976, 1987) pioneering use of this term, in the literature about learning strategies, *metacognition* has come to define the capacity that we apparently have of being conscious of internal cognitive processes and products.

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# THE FIRST SPANISH TRANSLATION OF VIRGINIA WOOLF'S "TIME PASSES": FACTS, MYSTERIES AND CONJECTURES

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## Abstract

*In 1931 a Spanish version of Virginia Woolf's "Time Passes" was published under the title "El tiempo pasa" in Revista de Occidente. It is the first known text by Woolf in Spanish, a translation which predates the Argentine version of To the Lighthouse by seven years and which has traditionally been ignored by Woolf scholars and bibliographers. Unfortunately, this significant piece in Revista de Occidente does not contain any information other than the title at the beginning and the name of the novelist, Virginia Woolf, at the end. Who was the translator? Was the same text used in later Spanish editions of the novel? Why was this passage chosen by the journal? What did the editor in particular and the Spanish reading public in general know about Virginia Woolf at that time? These are some of the questions that will be addressed in this paper. In discussing this first Spanish translation and its literary context, several details about the reception of Woolf's work in pre-war Spain will also be provided.*

An interesting event in the publication history of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* is that the central and shortest part of the novel, "Time Passes", appeared in France a few months before the entire novel was published in England in May 1927. The text was translated by

Charles Mauron for the French journal *Commerce*, and it was substantially different from the definitive second part of the novel.<sup>17</sup> Mauron's version, for instance, does not include the first short dialogue between Mr Bankes, Andrew and Prue, nor the events about the family recorded in square brackets. The absence of references to characters introduced in the first part of the novel helps the text appear as an autonomous entity. In 1929 a French version of the whole novel appeared under the title *La promenade au phare*, translated by Maurice Lanoire.

Most curiously, in 1931 a Spanish version of "Time Passes" was published under the title "El tiempo pasa" in *Revista de Occidente*, a prestigious monthly publication founded in Madrid in 1923 by José Ortega y Gasset. It is the first known text by Woolf in Spanish,<sup>18</sup> a translation which predates the Argentine version of *To the Lighthouse* by seven years and which has traditionally been ignored by Woolf scholars and bibliographers.<sup>19</sup> The fourth edition of B.J. Kirkpatrick's *Bibliography of Virginia Woolf* does not include this translation of "Time Passes". A thorough journal article by Luisa-Femanda Rodríguez on the Spanish translations of Virginia Woolf's work does not refer to it either. Similarly, Dámaso López's scholarly introduction to the last edition of *To the Lighthouse* in Spanish ignores this early translation of Woolf's work. It is also very likely that Virginia Woolf herself did not know of its existence. While references to translations of her works into other languages, including Spanish and Catalan, abound in her letters and diary, I could not find any reference to this 1931 Spanish version of "Time Passes". Like the first French text, the Spanish piece does not correspond exactly to the second part of the novel. Its complete title announces that we shall only read some fragments: "El tiempo pasa (fragmentos)". Then we find that three complete sections are missing (1st, 5th and 10th), as well as the sentences in square brackets and a few lines in the 8th and 9th sections. Again, like the early French version, it leaves out any reference to previous characters or events of the novel, as if it were an independent text in its own right. The focus is thus on the house, its aging process, discovering Virginia Woolf's preoccupation with the passing of time.

<sup>17</sup> For commentary on this version, see James M. Haule's article "Le temps passe' and the Original Typescript: An Early Version of the 'Time Passes' section of *To the Lighthouse*".

<sup>18</sup> A Catalan version of *Mrs Dalloway* was published in Barcelona in 1930.

<sup>19</sup> I already announced the existence of this early translation in "The Emerging Voice: A Review of Spanish Scholarship on Virginia Woolf" (2002).

Unfortunately, this translation does not contain any information other than the title at the beginning and the name of the novelist, Virginia Woolf, at the end. Consequently, some important issues deserve attention. Who was the translator? Was the same text used in later Spanish editions of the novel? Was the translation made from the French text published in *Commerce*? Why was this passage chosen by the journal? Some of these questions are very difficult to answer. Information about the editorial policy and the archive of *Revista de Occidente* seems to be shrouded in mist and marked by contradictions. While one critic says that the archive of the journal was destroyed during the Spanish Civil War (Cacho Viu, 1993:49-50, 57), another reveals that the son of the director of the journal, Miguel Ortega Spottomo, who was an officer in the Nationalist army “bought up a majority of the stock in the *Revista de Occidente* and saved the offices from being sequestered by the Franco government” (Gray, 1989:267). As the latter commentator declares, “much remains obscure in Ortega [y Gasset]’s life. Only a handful of his letters have been published, and the most important of his private papers are still in the hands of his family” (Gray, 1989:5-6). Although I have tried several times and in different ways, I have not yet been able to go through the archive and personal documents of Ortega y Gasset. I merely have in my possession a letter from the Centro de Estudios Orteguianos, Fundación José Ortega y Gasset, which assures us that there is no single reference to Woolf in Ortega y Gasset’s archive. Nevertheless, in this paper I will present some facts, some mysteries, and some conjectures that suggest directions for further research.

The first fact that can be established with certainty is that the anonymous Spanish translation of “Time Passes” is completely different from the version included in the Spanish edition of *To the Lighthouse* published in Buenos Aires in 1938, and translated by the Spanish literary critic and biographer Antonio Marichalar. A detailed comparative analysis of both texts is worth making, but is beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice to say, the earlier version is an entirely different work, a reasonably good translation that effectively conveys the lyrical force and resonance of the original English text. Here is an extract from each version in which we can appreciate some clear differences:

So with the lamps all put out, the moon sunk, and a thin rain drumming on the roof a downpouring of immense darkness began. (1967:195)

Así, apagadas todas las lámparas, oculta la luna y, repiqueteando sobre el tejado una menuda lluvia, se derrumbó una inmensa oscuridad. (1931:282)

Apagadas las luces, desapareció la luna; sobre el tejado se inició el tamborileo de una lluvia fina y se hizo inmensa la oscuridad. (1938b:8)

It is interesting to note that Antonio Marichalar also published the middle part of the novel, “Pasa el tiempo”, in the Argentine journal *Sur* before the whole book appeared in print. The text included all the sections and comments in brackets. It is an exact reproduction of the second part of the novel, as a footnote on the first page reveals.

One might wonder then if the Spanish text in *Revista de Occidente* was somehow related to the first French version in *Commerce*. The question is highly pertinent, since, as we have seen, both were published in isolation and had some similarities, such as the exclusion of the first section and the comments in square brackets. Moreover, we know that the journal *Commerce* was distributed in Spain through *Revista de Occidente* (González García, 1993:75); therefore, the Spanish translator could easily have had access to the French text. However, a comparison between the two versions shows that they are very different indeed. There are, for example, several passages of Mauron’s translation that are missing in the definitive English chapter of the novel as well as in the Spanish version. Thus, the Spanish text did not take Mauron’s article as the primary text, but the definitive second part of the novel.

Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that it was the “English” novel that the Spanish translator used as a source for his or her work. In fact, the 1931 Spanish translation was undoubtedly based on Lanoire’s French text, rather than the English original. This was not an uncommon practice at that time in Spain,<sup>20</sup> considering that Paris was the capital of culture for most of the Spanish literary *intelligentsia* and French was the main foreign language at Spanish schools and universities.<sup>21</sup> The fidelity to its French source can be clearly seen throughout the piece at syntactic, semantic and lexical levels. The

<sup>20</sup> There are also other instances in the past. The first translation of Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* into Spanish, made by Ignacio García Malo in 1794, used a French version by l’ Abbé Prévost; see Eterio Pajares Infante’s article “El anónimo traductor de la versión española de *Pamela Andrews*”.

<sup>21</sup> We should also take into account that the first modern language departments at Spanish universities were not established until the 1960s.

Spanish translator systematically follows Lanoire's additions, omissions and departures from Virginia Woolf's prose. A few examples are enough to illustrate this point (the italics are mine):

— Consider the omission of the third reference to “light”, the translation of “mellows” and “lapping”, the rendering of “labour” as “worker” and the addition of the “roughness” of the stubble:

The autumn trees gleam in the yellow moonlight, in *the light* of the harvest moons, the light which *mellows* the energy of labour, and smooths the stubble, and brings the wave *lapping* blue to the shore. (1967:198)

Les arbres automnaux brillent dans le jaune clair de lune, le clair de lune des moissons qui *donne* sa plénitude *heureuse* à l'énergie du *travailleur*, étend sa douceur sur *l'aspérité* du chaume et apporte au rivage la *caresse* bleue de la vague. (1929:151-2)

Los árboles otoñales brillan en la claridad amarilla de la luna, en la claridad lunar de las mieses que *dan* su *feliz* plenitud a la energía del *labriego*, que expande su dulzura sobre *la aspereza* del rastrojo y trae a las orillas la azulada *caricia* de la onda. (1931:286)

— In the following example the syntactical and semantic changes, as well as the inclusion of “fundamental”, are faithfully followed in the Spanish version:

Almost it would appear that it is useless in such confusion to ask the night those questions *as to what, and why, and wherefore, which tempt the sleeper from his bed to seek an answer*. (1967:199)

Il semblerait presque qu'il est inutile dans une pareille confusion de poser à la nuit ces questions *fondamentales auxquelles pour répondre le dormeur est tenté de s'arrecher à son lit*. (1929:152)

Parecía casi inútil en una semejante confusión hacer a la noche esas preguntas *fundamentales, para contestar a las cuales el dormilón siente la tentación de arrancarse de la cama*. (1931:287)

— Notice the translation of the simile “arrow-like stillness” and the phrase “hold court”:

Night after night, summer and winter, the torment of storms, *the arrow-like stillness* of fine weather, held their court without interference. (1967:208)

Toutes les nuits, à travers l'été et l'hiver, le tourment des tempêtes, la fixité du beau temps, *semblable à la droiture de la flèche*, régnèrent sans trouble. (1929:159-60)

Todas las noches, durante el verano y el invierno, la tortura de las tempestades, la fijeza del buen tiempo, *semejante a la rigidez de la flecha*, reinaron sin perturbarse. (1931:293)

Another interesting issue that requires elucidation is the possible reasons for the inclusion of Virginia Woolf's chapter in *Revista de Occidente*. Some information about the journal will certainly explain why this piece was chosen. The principal aim of *Revista de Occidente* was to provide a forum for the discussion of sociological, psychological, historical and literary issues prevailing in the Western world. Its director, José Ortega y Gasset, was a philosopher and humanist who advocated what he called the “Europeanisation of Spain” and intended the journal to be a vehicle for the diffusion of current foreign trends.<sup>22</sup> He was exceptionally sensitive to recent innovation in art, ethics, history and, particularly, in literature. In fact, some of the Spanish *avant-garde* of the 1920s was formed around Ortega's *Revista de Occidente* and the publishing house of the same name that he founded in 1924, where young writers such as Pedro Salinas, Jorge Guillén, Benjamín Jarnés or Antonio Espina published some of their works. The journal also brought an extraordinary influx of new names from abroad, including contributions by Lytton Strachey, Joseph Conrad, D. H. Lawrence, Katherine Mansfield and Aldous Huxley. Also, it is worth stating at this point that Ortega's ideas about the novel were very much in line with the experimental modernist fiction of the time, as can be seen in this comment about the future of the novel from his book *La deshumanización del arte e ideas sobre la novela*: “The possibility of constructing human souls is perhaps the major asset of future novels ... Not in the invention of the plots but

<sup>22</sup> See the section “Propósitos” in the first issue of the journal.

in the invention of interesting characters lies, in my opinion, the best hope of the novel” (1925:149).<sup>23</sup> Given this literary background, it seems only natural that they were drawn to Virginia Woolf and that *Revista de Occidente* should publish the central section of *To the Lighthouse*, as if it were a kind of experimental short story, a lyrical prose piece without action that corresponded to the journal’s aim and scope.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to say how familiar the editorial staff of the journal —Ortega and the secretary, Fernando Vela— were with Virginia Woolf’s work and who took the final decision to include the “Time Passes” part in the journal. They could have become acquainted with her name in different ways. They might have heard about the Catalan edition of *Mrs Dalloway* that had been published in Barcelona in 1930, the year before they decided to include the “Time Passes” section in their journal. On the other hand, as I mentioned above, they could have seen Mauron’s French translation in *Commerce*, since they distributed this journal in Spain. Finally, it is very likely that they knew Antonio Marichalar’s early references to Virginia Woolf disseminated in various articles of their own journal *Revista de Occidente*. In 1928 Marichalar quoted from Virginia Woolf’s booklet *Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown* in an article entitled “Las ‘vidas’ y Lytton Strachey” and distinguished her as an “authoritative voice” (354). The following year Marichalar referred specifically to *Mrs Dalloway* in another piece entitled “Nueva dimensión”, also published in *Revista de Occidente*. And most significantly, he praised Virginia Woolf’s innovative fiction in an article, “Último grito”, that was published two issues before the one that included the Spanish version of “Time Passes”.<sup>24</sup> But, did Ortega read the whole novel himself? Was he really acquainted with Virginia Woolf’s work? It is difficult to say. His two biographers, Rockwell Gray and Gregorio Morán, do not mention any link between Ortega and Virginia Woolf.

As to the particular details of the editorial decision to include the text, without the relevant archival information one can only make guesses based on some general data published about *Revista de Occidente*. Rafael Osuna, in an excellent study of the Spanish periodicals

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<sup>23</sup> “Esta posibilidad de construir fauna espiritual es, acaso, el resorte mayor que puede manejar la novela futura. [...] No en la invención de ‘acciones’, sino en la invención de almas interesantes veo yo el mejor porvenir del género novelesco”.

<sup>24</sup> Antonio Marichalar probably knew of the existence of the 1931 Spanish version of “Time Passes”. Whether he used this text, together with the English original, for his translation of *To the Lighthouse* could be the topic of another essay.

and journals of the 1930s, states that although Ortega was not solely responsible for his journal's editorial policy, it was he who "pulled the strings, invited, discarded and ruled" (1986:35).<sup>25</sup> In contrast, Vicente Cacho's short memoir of Ortega's journal suggests that the names of most of the creative writers were selected by the secretary Fernando Vela (1993:50). On the other hand, some editorial decisions were made at Ortega's daily *tertulia*, which took place at the offices of the *Revista de Occidente* in Madrid's Gran Vía. Ramón Gómez de la Serna, in his autobiography *Automoribundia* said: "The tertulia was the presbytery of the magazine, and both people and texts were selected there" (1948: 430).<sup>26</sup>

The main mystery of this early Spanish version of "Time Passes" that intrigues us is the identity of the translator. Going through the different contributions by foreign authors published in *Revista de Occidente* in the 1920s and 1930s, we realise that the translators' names are seldom given. Why didn't they reveal their names? Who translated Aldous Huxley, Katherine Mansfield, D. H. Lawrence, Joseph Conrad and Virginia Woolf for *Revista de Occidente*? This editorial practice is in line with Ortega's ideas about translation included in his "Misericordia y esplendor de la traducción".<sup>27</sup> Although Ortega discussed here the difficulties of translation, he stated that being a translator was a "modest" and "humble" occupation (1976:128). If he really thought that translation was a minor intellectual activity, it is only logical that he should not bother to divulge the names of the translators who worked for his journal. Perhaps some of these translations were done by the director or the secretary themselves, although Vicente Romano's comments on Ortega raise some doubts about this. Romano says that Ortega was able to gather "a real school of translators" around his journal and publishing house (1976:199).<sup>28</sup> This school of translators included a wide range of recognized literary names, as well as some unknown disciples of Ortega's who might have gained some extra cash with this activity.

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<sup>25</sup> "La *Revista de Occidente* [...] es la revista de Ortega, quien pese a delegar poderes, maneja sus hilos, invita, desecha, organiza y manda; su grupo es un grupo secundario aunque cohesivo, pero la figura del jefe grupal sobresale en exceso sobre las de sus componentes".

<sup>26</sup> "La tertulia era el presbiterio de la revista, y allí se iban seleccionando las personas y los originales".

<sup>27</sup> This essay was first published in several issues of the Argentine newspaper *La Nación* in 1937.

<sup>28</sup> "Ortega supo reunir en torno a la revista y a la editorial una verdadera escuela de traductores, los cuales facilitaron su tarea".



Before we enter the world of conjectures about the possible translator of Virginia Woolf's piece in *Revista de Occidente*, I propose to discard the names of those who are very unlikely to have done the translation. The first one that should be disregarded from the list is Victoria Ocampo, the Argentine literary critic and publisher that was responsible for the early translations of Woolf's works in Buenos Aires.<sup>29</sup> It is true that there are a few details that might lead us to think of her as a possible candidate for our anonymous translator: she knew French and English, was acquainted with Virginia Woolf's *oeuvre*, even became her friend after meeting her in London in 1934,<sup>30</sup> and she was also a friend of Ortega y Gasset's since 1916, having published two books in his publishing house *Revista de Occidente*.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, it is difficult to believe that she was responsible for the Spanish translation of "Time Passes" in 1931, since she admitted in her *Autobiografía* that her education was in French and that it took her some years to write in Spanish; in fact, her first book, *De Francesca a Beatrice* was written in French and translated into Spanish by Ricardo Baeza (1991:198). Doris Meyer confirms this idea in her study *Victoria Ocampo: Against the Wind and the Tide*: "[Ocampo] began to write in Spanish in the 1930s, not all at once but bit by bit" (1979:53). Besides, I found no reference to this translation in her autobiography, in Virginia Woolf's letters to her or in other critical works about this Argentine writer.

We should also exclude the two early translators of Woolf's works into Spanish: Antonio Marichalar and Jorge Luis Borges. On the one hand, we have already seen that Antonio Marichalar's version of *To the Lighthouse* is completely different from the anonymous early Spanish text. On the other hand, I have deep reservations about Borges, the Argentine poet and short-story writer who had translated the first Spanish editions of *A Room of One's Own* and *Orlando* in the 1930s. We must not lose sight of an important fact: after Ortega's visit to Argentina in 1928 Borges was not on good terms with the Spanish intellectual. Ortega had expressed some harsh criticism about Argentines, which had

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<sup>29</sup> She was the founder-editor of Editorial Sur, the publishing house that issued the Spanish editions of *A Room of One's Own*, *Orlando* and *To the Lighthouse* in the 1930s.

<sup>30</sup> See the article Victoria Ocampo published in *Revista de Occidente* that year titled "Carta a Virginia Woolf", where she remembers her meeting with Virginia Woolf and discusses *A Room of One's Own*.

<sup>31</sup> In 1924 *Revista de Occidente* published Ocampo's study of Dante, *De Francesca a Beatrice*, and two years later, they published her dramatic fairy tale titled *La laguna de los nenúfares*.

provoked considerable public resentment.<sup>32</sup> Among those who did not take kindly to his critique of Argentines was Borges (Gray, 1989:182). Therefore, it is difficult to believe that Borges could have penned any translation for Ortega's *Revista de Occidente* in 1931.

Another line of investigation would be to consider those writers and critics who were published by the monthly *Revista de Occidente* and translated from French. This would lead us to such poets as Jorge Guillén or Pedro Salinas, as well as the critic and translator Ricardo Baeza. However, one wonders why such established literary figures as these did not claim the authorship of the translation of Woolf's passage. In fact, two years before, in 1929, Baeza and Guillén signed two articles in *Revista de Occidente* which presented the translations of works by Eugene O'Neill and Paul Valéry respectively. Furthermore, we should dismiss the possibility that Pedro Salinas, the translator of Marcel Proust, might have been the author of "El tiempo pasa", because he had distanced himself from Ortega's group since 1930. The letters that Salinas wrote to Guillén at that time confirm this. For instance, on 2 April 1931 (Virginia Woolf's piece was published in March), Salinas wrote that Ortega had lost all his credibility.<sup>33</sup>

The list of possible translators of this early Spanish version of "Time Passes" could also include the names of the French translators who worked for the publishing house *Revista de Occidente*. If we look at the list of books published by Ortega's firm during its first stage, from 1924 till 1936, we come across three names who appear as translators of French works: Benjamín Jarnés, Ceferino Palencia Tubau and Julián Marías. Of these names, the last should be disregarded, since Julián Marías was born in 1914, which means that he would have been only 17 or 18 years old when Woolf's piece was translated in 1931, and, evidently he was not yet a disciple of Ortega.<sup>34</sup> That leaves us with Ceferino Palencia, who translated some medieval French *fabliaux* in 1927, and Benjamín Jarnés, a Spanish novelist and biographer who regularly contributed articles and reviews to *Revista de Occidente* and translated Paul Tuffrau's

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<sup>32</sup> He had said that Argentines tended to be shallow and insincere, qualities attributed to a feeling of insecurity brought on by the nature of the ever-receding horizon of the *pampas* that surrounded them.

<sup>33</sup> "Para mí Ortega, desde que se ha lanzado al artículo de fondo, ha perdido todo su fondo" (Soria, 1992:135).

<sup>34</sup> He translated Auguste Comte's *Discurso sobre el espíritu positivo* for *Revista de Occidente* in 1934.

*Legend of William of Orange* in 1925 and the French epic poem *The Song of Roland* in 1926. It is interesting to note that Benjamín Jarnés was an *avant-garde* novelist who reduced his plots to a minimum in order to focus on the reflections of the characters, in a very intellectual and lyrical prose that bears considerable affinity with Virginia Woolf's fiction.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, there is a curious detail that deserves attention, if only because it could offer another possible explanation to our great unsolved mystery. I have found a copy of the 1929 French version of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* in the Spanish National Library. As we already know, it is the version used as the source text for "El tiempo pasa". On one of the first pages of this book, someone has written the name "P. Antonio Martín Robles". After checking the library archives, a librarian confirmed that this copy had arrived as a private donation. And, what a coincidence! There is a translator called Pedro Antonio Martín Robles who, in the first half of the twentieth century, translated the works of Roman dramatists such as Plautus and Seneca, as well as other books by several authors including Roald Amundsen, Frank Wadleigh Chandler, Lester F. Ward and Martin Hume. Was Martín Robles simply a reader of Virginia Woolf's novel or was he the author of our anonymous translation? I am afraid that I cannot offer a conclusive answer. Some light, however, has been thrown on this early Spanish version of Virginia Woolf's "Time Passes", and the door is left open to new studies about the reception of Virginia Woolf in Spain.

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# “AS DEEP AS ENGLAND”: THE IRONIES OF ENGLISH HISTORY IN POEMS BY TED HUGHES, GEOFFREY HILL AND TONY HARRISON<sup>38</sup>

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## Abstract

*An analysis of seven poems by Ted Hughes (“Pike”), Geoffrey Hill (four poems from Mercian Hymns) and Tony Harrison (“On Not Being Milton” and “National Trust”) demonstrates their engagement with the history of England. This history is presented as brutal, although Harrison views history from the perspective of the oppressed rather than that of the oppressor. In addition, Hughes’ and Hill’s history is one in which a legendary past is still alive in the present; Harrison concentrates on the cruelties of the last two hundred years. All three poets show a complex relationship towards poetic tradition, which must be understood as part of their engagement with English history. Further, clear ironies are observable in the presentation of England’s past and its relationship with the present. Hughes charts the hyperbolic and metaphoric processes by which a relatively small fish becomes an English heraldic monster; Hill deflates the grim and glorious past by embedding it in a tawdry and childish present; Harrison undermines his speaker’s identification with the “lumpen” past by a sophisticated discourse that may not be fully accessible to the oppressed.*

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<sup>38</sup> An earlier version of this essay appeared in Polish as “‘Tak głęboki jak Anglia’: wizja angielskiej historii w poezji Teda Hughesa, Geoffreya Hilla i Tony’ego Harrisona”, *Eseje o współczesnej poezji brytyjskiej i irlandzkiej*, vol. 2, ed. Ola Kubińska, David Malcolm and Stanisław Modrzewski (Gdańsk: University of Gdańsk Press, 2000), pp. 127-144.

It is immediately obvious that the British novel since the Second World War has been closely concerned with history. In this respect, one only need mention novels by L.P. Hartley (*The Go-Between*, 1953), John Fowles (*The French Lieutenant's Woman*, 1969), J.G. Farrell (*The Siege of Krishnapur*, 1973), or Paul Scott (*The Raj Quartet*, 1966-76). This is a tendency which has become even more marked since 1980. The 1980s and 1990s have seen a plethora of novels —by Salman Rushdie, D.M. Thomas, Graham Swift, Timothy Mo, Kazuo Ishiguro, Jeanette Winterson, Anita Brookner, Penelope Lively, and others— that focus on history. While this history is sometimes a continental European or Asian history, nonetheless it is almost always a history which is entwined with or centrally focussed on the events and processes of English history. In poetry, it is quite obvious, too, that Northern Irish poets are frequently concerned with the issues and figures of Ireland's deeply troubled history. Seamus Heaney's poetry has been extensively discussed in this context.<sup>39</sup> One could, however, observe a similar range of concerns in the poetry of Derek Mahon or Michael Longley. What has been less frequently observed in a direct fashion is a similar concern with English history in the work of English poets.<sup>40</sup> This essay is an attempt to demonstrate this concern and its complex realization in poems by three post-war English poets —Ted Hughes (b. 1930), Geoffrey Hill (b. 1932), and Tony Harrison (b. 1937). The poems chosen for analysis are: Hughes's "Pike" (from the collection *Lupercal*, 1959); four of Hill's *Mercian Hymns* (1971); and two poems "On Not Being Milton" and "National Trust" from Harrison's *The School of Eloquence* (1981). The poems date from three different decades, and all three poets present views of English history which are in themselves of interest and can be compared and contrasted in interesting ways.

## I

The title of Hughes's "Pike" is quite suitable for the beast that the rest of the text depicts.<sup>41</sup> It is an abrupt, unadorned monosyllabic word in which

<sup>39</sup> See for example: Alistair Davies, "Seamus Heaney: From Revivalism to Postmodernism", *British Poetry from the 1950s to the 1990s*, ed. Gary Day and Brian Docherty (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), p. 103, 105, 108; Jerzy Jarniewicz, "Cierpki smak ostrzyg", *W brzuchu wieloryba* (Poznań: Rebis, 2001), pp. 190-195; David Malcolm, "Obecność przeszłości w poezji Seamusa Heaney'a", *Eseje o poezji Seamusa Heaney'a*, ed. David Malcolm i Ola Kubinska (Gdańsk: University of Gdansk Press, 1997), pp. 52-78.

<sup>40</sup> Michael Schmidt's discussion of historical motifs in contemporary British poetry is suggestive rather than exhaustive (*Reading Modern Poetry* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 21-23). It also does not focus on different treatment of specific English history.



the dominant sounds are the harsh plosives /p/ and /k/. It might also be noted that the word “pike” can refer not just to a fish, but also to a weapon of war. The poem itself is divided into three main sections —stanzas 1-4, 5-7 and 8-11. They are distinguished by a differing focus on the fish of the title. Stanzas 1-4 attempt to describe or evoke pike in general; stanzas 5-7 present a reminiscence about particular pike; while stanzas 8-11 contain another reminiscence about an encounter, or an imagined encounter, with particular pike. The first section lacks any overt reference to the speaker of the poem, while the other two sections progressively bring the speaker and his feelings clearly to the foreground of the text.

All the sections share certain features. In terms of formality level, the poem’s language is uniformly neither particularly formal, nor informal, but rather neutral and generally accessible. The text is quite without rhymes. Stress patterns, too, are very similar throughout. Lines generally have three to four main stresses, but occasionally lines with five main stresses occur. The majority of lines in the poem are end-stopped, although, as we shall see, there is an element of enjambment in the third section. Although there are other aspects of the poem which spread over the whole text, there are specific variations within each section which make it advisable to deal with them separately.

Stanzas 1-4 are marked by a considerable degree of phonological parallelism. The first two lines illustrate this perfectly:

Pike, three inches long, perfect  
Pike in all parts, green tigering the gold.

From the very start, relatively harsh plosives dominate the stanza. Later stanzas do not as prominently continue this pattern; however, the initial impression has been made. Subsequently in the first section, we can note considerable phonological parallelism, both in terms of alliteration and assonance (/s/ in stanza 2 or “changed/date” and “subdued/instrument” in stanza 4, for example). Certainly, harsher consonantal sounds predominate, but they are balanced by others, and the ultimate effect is more one of a general richness of sound, rather than of a particular kind of sound.

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<sup>41</sup> The text of “Pike” is taken from *The Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse*, ed. Philip Larkin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp.589-590.

Equally striking in lexical terms is the paucity of finite verbs in this first section. The only ones are in lines 4 and 5, “dance” and “move”. The remainder of the section consists of fragments without a main verb. The pike is initially timeless, generalized, unchangeable —“Not to be changed at this date;/A life subdued to its instrument”. It is also extremely violent and dangerous. Much of the vocabulary used to present the fish carries these denotations and connotations —“tigering”, “malevolent”, “stunned”, “gloom”, “horror”, “heat-struck”, “hooked clamp”, “fangs”. One is clearly dealing with a thoroughly savage beast. It is also a creature evoked through metaphor. As regards its colour, we are told of “green tigering the gold”. “They dance on the surface among the flies”. “[S]tunned by their own grandeur”, they swim “over a bed of emerald”. They are “logged on last year’s black leaves” or “hung in amber caverns of weeds”. But perhaps the most striking piece of figurative language used of the pike in this section is hyperbole. The pike are “A hundred feet long in their world”. They are fearsome creatures doubtless, but they have been evoked by metaphor and by hyperbole, and when one comes to sum up the poem, this process of figurative language will turn out to be of considerable importance.

The sound effects of the poem’s second section (stanzas 5-7) are predominantly harsh ones —“kept”, “glass”, “Jungled”, “sag belly”, “grin”, “born”, “jammed”, “gills”, “gullet”— although there are numerous repetitions of the /f/ sound and substantial amounts of assonance (in stanza 6). Finite verbs occur frequently in this section; the beast has become active at last. The language is once more associated with violence and danger —“sag belly”, “grin”, “dead”, “jammed”, “gullet”. Vocabulary is menacing, ugly, cruel. Once again, this section evokes the pike by figurative language —metaphor, simile and hyperbole. “The same iron in this eye” and “as a vice locks” attempt to capture the pike in terms of an almost mechanical, instrumental brutality. It might be noted that both this metaphor and this simile link the natural pike to man-made phenomena (iron, vice). A figure which is both metaphor and hyperbole occurs in stanza 5. The pike kept by the speaker in the past were “Jungled in weed” in their fish bowl or aquarium. Here “jungled” gives one a very clear image of the small fish moving through their own equivalent of a jungle. However, like some of the language used in the first section, it is clearly hyperbolic. To describe weed in a fish bowl as jungle is, to say the least, grandiloquent.

The poem's third section differs in certain respects from the others. Rhythm and the formality level of lexis and syntax are substantially similar to those of the earlier stanzas, but sound effects are quite different. Fricatives and aspirates, /f/ and /s/, are very common, as opposed to harsher plosives. The rigorously end-stopped lines of the first seven stanzas give way to a degree of enjambment. Lines 30-2 are run-on lines, as are lines 34-6, and lines 42-3. The movement from a seemingly objective vision of the pike to a highly emotional and subjective one is clearly marked by enjambment and a shift in sound effects. The lines cannot contain the speaker's fears and imaginings; the text is embodying unstable emotion rather than brute facts; the sound effects, perhaps, suggest dream or mystery. However, the last five lines echo the opening stanzas in their lack of a finite verb. This section of the poem may be evoking an individual state of mind rather than a savage fish, but the two are closely connected and one is as permanent and timeless as the other.

This section is notable for the repetition of lexis —“depth” and “deep”, “immense”, “cast”, “move”, “darkness”. Clearly certain words are foregrounded in this way, concerned with depth, size and darkness, and one can readily see how they connect with other elements of the poem. Repetition as such, as device, is harder to interpret. A sign of the speaker's semi-paralysed fear? An incantation? A sign of stasis? It is hard to say. But it does seem to contribute towards one's sense of the speaker's fear and of the sinister nature of what he has evoked.

As in previous sections, the figurative language is prominent and predominantly hyperbolic. “Stilled legendary depth”, for example, is metaphoric and hyperbolic at the same time, as is “With the hair frozen on my head”, while the simile “as deep as England”, when applied to a “pond”, seems similarly grandiloquent. Hyperbole is elsewhere too —the pond holds pike “Too immense to stir”; the speaker talks of a “Darkness beneath night's darkness”. Even the synecdoche “what eye might move” seems exaggerated —the eye of fish? the eye of God?

This final section of the poem does not only give a very personal response to the pike, but also connects the pike with a wider world. The pond which the speaker fishes is

Stilled legendary depth:  
It was as deep as England.

The pike is related to England's past. The fish and its environment are compared to the legends, the deep, ancient history of England. Yet another layer of meaning is added to the humble fish. And, indeed, this occurs throughout the poem. In the poem's supercode, the pike is built up into a heraldic, terrifying creature, a legendary beast representing England's past, and a past that has not died, but is waiting to be summoned from the depths. As we have seen, the pike is primeval and unchangeable ("Not to be changed at this date"). It is violent and brutal ("One jammed past its gills down the other's gullet") and linked to death and mystery ("For what might move, for what eye might move"). It is also associated with depth—the world of the pike is transformed to its own scale ("A hundred feet long in their world"); the pond in the final section is presented as extraordinarily deep. And it is a creature which captivates the speaker, from the quasi-objective description of the first section to the worried speculations of the conclusion.

So much else in the poem supports this development of the poem's subject. Its lexis clearly does. The sound effects combine harshness and menace with the richness of alliteration and assonance. Lack of rhyme and the variations in line stress also give an impression, perhaps, of an unaccommodated harshness. And this is the picture of England and England's history which the poem presents. Like the pike, they are dark, threatening, savage. The past can be called up into the present; indeed the speaker can barely resist doing so. He "dared not cast / But silently cast", and the terror of the past rises up to answer his fascination.

But the processes by which the pike has been turned into this emblem of England's history (and a history which can become alive in the present) have been heavily underscored in the poem. The pike has been made to mean all this by metaphor, synecdoche and, above all, by hyperbole. It is all a question of size. The monster swims to the surface, but the speaker has willed himself into a state of terror. After all, the beast is not that big, it is no real threat to him. (One might compare this speaker and his response to the pike with the willed and ambiguously presented terror of the speaker of Blake's "The Tyger".) England's history is associated with a primeval, savage, intriguing monster which can be summoned to the present. Its savagery, its dark glamour are celebrated. But at the same time, the text ironises this picture of England's history.

Its power, its terror are a product of figurative language. This heraldic beast, one must insist, is, nevertheless, simply a fish.<sup>42</sup>

## II

Geoffrey Hill's *Mercian Hymns* is a sequence of thirty short prose poems which attempt to bring the legendary and distant past of England into conjunction with its more recent past and its present.<sup>43</sup> The eighth-century King Offa is the presiding spirit whose life and world echoes those of a later England (or vice-versa). While almost any of the poems in the collection might be used to demonstrate the view of English history the text presents, poems iv to vii very clearly present Hill's enterprise in all its complexity and ambiguity.

Poem iv is spoken by a figure buried in earth, waiting for something which at this point is unspecified. It consists of two short prose stanzas of roughly equal length. Language is rich and largely dignified. The physical arrangement of the verse paragraphs immediately suggests a Biblical text and all the weight and authority that this entails. Syntactic parallelism confirms this impression of Biblical dignity. The first stanza contains two sentences beginning "I", and the end of the first stanza and all the second consist of two "where" clauses. There is further syntactic parallelism in that almost every sentence of the text is marked by syntactic extension — "in mother-earth, the crypt of roots and endings", "abode there, bided my time", "the clogged wheel, his gold solidus", "the Roman flues, the long-unlooked for mansions". Lexis, too, is predominantly formal, archaic, and, indeed, at times, ecclesiastic — "mother-earth", "invested", "abode", "solidus", "mansion", "tribe", "Roman flues". Sound effects contribute, too, to the sense of richness — the assonance in, for example, "invested/earth/endings" or "abode/mole/shouldered/gold" and "clogged/solidus/thronged/long-unlooked-for".

Like the last section of Hughes's "Pike", this poem centres on a motif of depth. It is concerned with building up the meaning of "mother-earth" in the poem, with penetrating it and with revealing the nature of the

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<sup>42</sup> This suggests the necessity of a rather more complex view of Hughes's savage and violent monsters than is usually found in criticism. See, for example: Michael Homberger, *The Art of the Real: Poetry in England and America since 1939* (London, Toronto and Tottowa, New Jersey: Dent/Rowman and Littlefield, 1977), p. 212.

<sup>43</sup> Geoffrey Hill, *Collected Poems* (London: André Deutsch, 1986), pp. 105-134.

place from which the “I” of the poem will later emerge. In the poem, the term “mother-earth” takes on several layers of meaning. It is a “crypt of roots and endings”, it is ecclesiastical, a hidden place, a place of endings and beginnings, of death and of life. This association with life is re-inforced by the simple interjection “Child’s-play”. There is life and vitality there, and also the present as well as the past, for “Child’s-play” strikes a contemporary note. The following clause —“I abode there, bided my time”— again combines past and present. “Abode” is certainly archaic, whereas “bided my time”, while of archaic origin, is quite contemporary. Mother-earth is associated with animals, with the mole and the badger, and also with the distant and rich past, the “gold solidus” and the “flues” of Rome. It belongs to the dignified and racial past, the “mansions of our tribe”.

In this poem we see an unidentified (and therefore generalized) “I”, waiting to be born out of a hidden, semi-forgotten past. It is a past of nature (earth and animals); it is mysterious (the crypt); it is rich and substantial (the lexis, the syntax, the sound effects); it is classical (the solidus, the Roman flues); it is tribal. This is the past of England, the history out of which the individual will emerge. But the picture is more complex than that, for the seriousness is deflated or ironised too, by the cocky and modern “Child’s-play” which interrupts the sonority of the first stanza. We will highlight this process in our discussion of the other poems in this four poem sequence.

Poem v has many features of the preceding poem. As with all the *Mercian Hymns*, the Biblical associations of the prose stanzas and their lay-out are very obvious. The poem, too, is phonologically rich, full of assonance and alliteration. It is marked in each verse sentence by the syntactic parallelism of extension—for example, “the elves’ wergild, the true governance of England, the gaunt warrior gospel”. There is a rich elaboration of meaning, and the repeated syntactic organization of each sentence adds to this. Vocabulary is a mixture of the archaic, or words with archaic associations and referents—for instance, “wergild”, “governance”, “scrollwork”, “pilgrim”, “a maimed one”— and the modern—“So much for”, “smug-faced”, “sick on outings”. There are also references to nature—“ivy”, “fern”. The motif of depth here too is central to the poem. The speaker declares “I wormed my way heavenward”, suggesting a journey upwards through obstacles towards the surface of things.

The speaker seems to move out of the past into the present, leaving the “elves’ wergild” for “outing”. But the past is still active in the present, for the speaker is still “taken to be a king of some kind, a prodigy, a maimed one”. As in iv, this past is mysterious and legendary (elves, wergild), but also severe and authoritarian (“the true governance of England” is a “gaunt warrior gospel”); it is associated with nature (ivy, fern) and tribal superstition (the maimed one is a prodigy). And, as I suggest above, this past still seems valid and active in a modern world of “outing”. But, once again as in iv, the modern reference is ambivalent. On the one hand, the connection between past and present is made, but, on the other, the present —the little boy who vomits on the coach trip—ironizes and deflates the past. This ambiguity is reinforced by the opaque sentence which begins the second stanza —“Exile or pilgrim set me once more upon that ground”. This is very difficult to construe. Does an exile or pilgrim set the speaker on the ground of his childhood? Is it a request to some anonymous power to set the speaker, who is an exile or a pilgrim, on that ground? The answer is far from clear and matches the ambiguity of the presentation of this English past out of which the speaker emerges.

Similar features are present in the two following poems, vi and vii. In vi, the English past (“Mercia”) is dignified and linked with nature (“The princes of Mercia were badger and raven”). It is also very dynamic —“Orchards fruited”, landscape “flowed away”, natural phenomena speak. But it also seems unattainable. The natural phenomena in stanza 3, which are surely linked to the ancient past of stanza 1, call to the poem’s speaker, but then flow away “back to its source”. And the present seems a debased version of the past. The “honeycombs of chill sandstone”, the “Candles of gnarled resin” become the “dried snot”, the “impetigo” of modern children in their school cloakroom.

In vii, it is a human-shaped landscape of “gasholders”, “milldams”, “marlpoools” and “old quarries” which is the site of a coming together of past and present. This poem reverses the ordering of the other poems. The present is conjured up first, and then connected to the past, rather than the other way round. It differs from the others, too, in that the “I” has become a “he”. However, the poem is concerned about bringing past and present together. The violence of the present is dignified by the name of one of the boys involved, Ceolred. The “he” of the poem is presumably the Offa figure in modern or ancient guise. The derelict sandlorry in

which the Offa figure sits after punishing his friend is called Albion, suggesting an exalted and ancient England. The past is used to glamourize and ennoble present cruelty. But here, too, there is irony and ambiguity. The incidents depicted are, indeed, only childish pranks. Cruelty to the frogs is real enough, but the flaying of a schoolboy friend surely must be understood metaphorically. In addition, the splendid Albion which the Offa figure commands is only a derelict sandlorry, going nowhere.

Thus, the picture of the English past in Hill's poems bears a considerable similarity to that in Hughes's "Pike". It, too, is associated with depth, from "mother-earth" to "old quarries". It is also a past linked with nature through the animal and plant motifs of the four poems. It is a rich and dynamic past, but also cruel and authoritarian. This is suggested by phrases such as "wergild", "gaunt warrior-gospel", and by the violence of the actions in vii. And this past is constantly connected with the present. The "I" and the "he" of these poems is both the Offa of the past and a twentieth-century boy. Their development is portrayed as growth through the legacies of his country's past, which are celebrated in the poems. But, as in "Pike", this bringing together of a savage and legendary past with a present moment involves a degree of irony and ambiguity. The present reality of schoolrooms and dried snot cannot but undermine the dignity of the country's dark and mysterious past. The cocky "Child's play" of iv deflates the past's solemnity, and, in the end, Albion is now nothing but a derelict sandlorry, journeying only in a child's fantasy.<sup>44</sup>

### III

English history and a particular vision of this subject matter are central to Tony Harrison's poems "On Not Being Milton" and "National Trust".<sup>45</sup> The former begins with an allusion to the literary past, to Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751) ("Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest"). The reference in the title also fulfills the role of a motif of order. Gray's poem celebrates those who are humble, the socially

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<sup>44</sup> Perhaps this is what Michael Homburger has in mind when he writes of Hill, "With *Mercian Hymns* (1971) the skills of the formalist and the inclinations of the myth-maker are harnessed to a poetry whose full meaning is historical" (*The Art of the Real: Poetry in England and America since 1939* (London, Toronto and Totowa, New Jersey: Dent/Rowman and Littlefield, 1977), p. 210).

<sup>45</sup> Tony Harrison, *Selected Poems* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), p. 112, 121.



lowly, but it does so in very traditional, regular closed iambic stanzas, and also in their place. All the potentially great and heroic of the village have never spoken, never done anything beyond their local fields. They have never challenged the social order which surrounds them. The reference to English literary history, however, is paired with a dedication to members of a modern, African revolutionary and anti-colonial movement, Frelimo of Mozambique. The tension, embodied here, between tradition and order, on one hand, and change and disorder, on the other, is sustained throughout the poem.

The poem is a sonnet, albeit a sixteen-line one. It has traditionally patterned rhyming quatrains, though only four, rather than the usual octave-sestet composition of the traditional sonnet. The rhyme schemes are conventional, and almost all rhymes are also traditional (except, perhaps, "call"/"natal" (ll. 1, 3), and "stress"/"ingloriousness" (ll. 9, 12)), but there is a large amount of enjambment in the first ten lines, suggesting a straining of the framework of the sonnet and its iambic pentameters.<sup>46</sup>

This structure forms part of a pattern of stresses and tensions within the poem itself and in its vision of English history. The text can be divided into two main sections, a personal opening quatrain and the last twelve lines which contain general reflections on language and writing (the speaker even talks of "we" here). The poem brings to the fore rebarbative working-class language (reflected in the predominance of harsher consonantal sounds —/k/,/b/— in, for example, "committed", "call", "black" and "boots" in the first quatrain), but does so with a very sophisticated range of reference. The poem starts with an allusion to a Latin poem by Milton in praise of his father, given as an epigraph to the whole collection, but not translated.<sup>47</sup> This is followed by an allusion to the black Francophone poet Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*.<sup>48</sup> The rhetorical strategy of the poem itself is very sophisticated. For example, the mixed metaphor of "growing black enough to fit my boots" involves some awareness of "négritude" along with an understanding of

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<sup>46</sup> Neil Roberts writes of Harrison's "quite loose" handling of iambic pentameters ("Poetic Subjects: Tony Harrison and Peter Reading," *British Poetry from the 1950s to the 1990s*, ed. Gary Day and Brian Docherty (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), p. 49.

<sup>47</sup> I am grateful to Agata Miksa, MA, for translating the Latin text for me.

<sup>48</sup> For an interesting recent discussion of Césaire's poetry by a contemporary US poet, see: Clayton Eschleman, *Companion Spider: Essays* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), pp. 131-146.

the English idiom “to grow too big for one’s boots”. It is certainly not easy to see how one relates to the other (as they do; the speaker, like Césaire, is trying to return to lost origins which, presumably, he has earlier aspired to escape). There is considerable sophistication, too, in the extended metaphors of the poem’s central eight lines. The vocabulary itself is sophisticated —“branks” (a scold’s bridle used to punish uppity women), “glottals”, “morphemes” and the references to the Luddites and their hammers (the latter is usually glossed in reprintings of the poem). This section, typically, ends with another literary allusion, again to Gray’s “Elegy”. The last quatrain (the general sense of which is not entirely easy to establish) also involves a historical allusion, this time to the Cato Street Conspiracy to blow up the British Cabinet in 1819.

The whole poem is riddled with conflicts, and this is the essence of its picture of English history. The growth of an English provincial boy from his place of origin is comparable to the cultural uprooting of a black, West-Indian intellectual. Class-prejudice is related to its racial counterpart. The metaphors for working-class speech are the “stutter of the scold” who has had a bridle attached to her tongue to *prevent* her from speaking, and the hammers of the Luddites smashing the machines that were their enemies. The line “Three cheers for mute ingloriousness” is surely ironic. The humble are not mute in Harrison’s poem, but rather fight against the society that bridles their tongue, that lays them off. Their fight is not only through speech, but also through the actions of the Luddites or the Cato Street conspirators. Harrison’s English history is a violent one of class conflict and resistance to authority (“the looms of owned language smashed apart!”). That it expresses this through the language of authority —sophistication of lexis, literary and historical allusion— is an irony which I will consider shortly.

“National Trust” presents the same view of English history. The title is deeply ironic. The National Trust is an official body concerned with the preservation of national monuments. But the title may also refer to the trust which the poor, the humble, those who are not “gentlemen” should *not* have for their social superiors. Once again the poem’s very genre and composition fight against order and tradition. Just like “On Not Being Milton”, “National Trust” is a sixteen line sonnet, and although it is made up of four rhymed quatrains, the text breaks through this framework by having a first section of 5 lines, followed by a single line isolated by spacing, and then the remainder of the first three quatrains.

The eruption of a line in Cornish in line 15 is only another example of this straining of the limits of the traditional English sonnet form.

As in “Pike” and in Hill’s poems, we are presented with an England of depths (“Bottomless pits”) which need to be plumbed. But the depths are seen from a very different point of view. English history in this poem is a matter of abuse of power and social oppression. The first 5 lines recount an incident of such, while the remainder of the poem focuses on the destructive power of other “gentlemen” over those who work for them. It is all oppression and casual cruelty. In this, the poem is similar to “On Not Being Milton”. However, as opposed to that poem, “National Trust” employs much more accessible language. The sophistication of “On Not Being Milton” is replaced by a much greater degree of informality. This is true of syntax—see the first 5 lines of the poem, a fragment and a multiple compound sentence held together with “ands”—and of lexis—“hush-hush”, “holler”, “say”, “a place where they got tin”, and all the poem’s contractions (for example, “and not one gentleman’s been brought to book”). Furthermore, Cornish in this poem is presented as a language of lower class society, and the line is in any case translated.

In Harrison’s poems, English history is brutal and cruel, a matter of oppression and resistance, a matter of the exercise of power over the lower classes by “gentlemen”. The scold’s bridle and the casual cruelty of the gentlemen to their convict guinea pig stand as central metaphors of this view of history. The resistance of the Luddites and the simple anger and complaint of the speaker in “National Trust”—“The dumb go down in history and disappear/and not one gentleman’s been brought to book”—serve as the opposite pole to this brutality. The poems reflect and embody this in their straining of the sonnet form and in the contradictions which permeate “On Not Being Milton”. But “On Not Being Milton” has ironies and ambiguities that “National Trust” does not. The sophistication of language and allusion sit ill with the poem’s historical complaint. The celebration of working-class (“lumpen”) linguistic resistance is embodied in a rather gentlemanly discourse. Perhaps there is even a trace of this in “National Trust”. Why should a “scholar” be hung in the booming mine shaft? Because the scholar inevitably disappoints the poor and oppressed, even when he comes from such “roots” himself?

## IV

A fascination with English history is evident in all the poems discussed in this essay. They show certain striking points of similarity in their presentation of this history. Motifs of depth, a depth that needs to be explored and delved into, are very prominent.<sup>49</sup> The history presented is one of harshness and cruelty —the pike, the “gaunt warrior-gospel”, the flayed Ceolred, the scold’s bridle, the mad, abused convict. English history in these poems is not a pleasant place to be. Yet these poems differ substantially too. Hughes’s and Hill’s poems evoke a legendary, mythic past still active in the present —the heraldic pike, Offa. They do so too within poetic forms that are relatively traditional, as are the orderly unrhymed stanzas of “Pike” and the quasi-Biblical prose of Hill’s poems. And there is no doubt that these authors’ poems at a certain level celebrate the cruel oppressors of history. The pike is a tyrant; Offa flays his friend who annoys him. Brutality is seen from a different angle in Harrison’s poems. The pike’s victims, Offa’s subjects are here spoken for, or allowed to speak themselves. Harrison’s poems also struggle with tradition; the sixteen-line sonnets strain the received form of the genre to a limit. In addition, Harrison’s history differs from Hughes’s and Hill’s. It is not a legendary one, but one which deals with the events of the last two hundred years in mine or factory.

And yet, a certain ambiguity unites most of the poems I have discussed. “On Not Being Milton” speaks for the oppressed, but in a discourse which may not be fully available to them, written in the language of the oppressors. Hill’s glorious past is undermined by its echoes in a tawdry present. And most strikingly, the process whereby the heraldic beast of English history is created out of a humble fish is made evident in Hughes’s “Pike”. It is as if none of the authors discussed here can take quite seriously the version of English history he presents.<sup>50</sup> What this might suggest about broader cultural views of English history and how these poetic focussings on history might be similar to or differ from other accounts of “the depths of Britain” (“National Trust”) is a subject for more detailed study, and perhaps for a bolder author.

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<sup>49</sup> This is something all these poems have in common with Heaney’s approach to Irish history. There is a lot of excavation in the Irish poet’s poems.

<sup>50</sup> Michael Schmidt notes an ironic stance to the world in the work of many contemporary British poets. They use, according to him, “a language which finds conviction hard” (*Reading Modern Poetry* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 28). Hughes, Hill and Harrison seem to illustrate this point.

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## **PIONEERING FEMINISM: DEBORAH'S ROLE IN "LIFE IN THE IRON-MILLS"**

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### **Abstract**

*The following paper is an analysis of the character of Deborah, the female protagonist in Rebecca Harding Davis's "Life in the Iron-Mills", focusing on her position of inferiority in this short story. This analysis is based on the feminist approach of major Davis scholars, such as Sharon Harris and Jean Pfaelzer, and it emphasizes the treatment Deborah receives in every sphere of her life: the place where she works, the situation within her family, and her sentimental relationship with another worker, her cousin Hugh, traditionally interpreted as Davis's main character. In spite of the fact that Deborah is utterly rejected and even ignored by her companions, she plays, in my opinion, the most crucial part in the story. This perceptible contradiction is clarified by interpreting that it was Davis's apparent desire to make the figure of Deborah the key element of the plot; an element whose passive role forces the reader to think about the situation in which women have lived throughout history.*

Rebecca Harding Davis, now recognized as the nineteenth century writer responsible for introducing the subject of labor conditions to American literature, was born in 1831 and graduated from the Washington Female Seminary, a privilege not available to many women at that time. In his study of American society, William H. Chafe argues

that the situation has not radically changed, “Although women comprise a majority of the population, they are often treated like a minority group—assigned a definitive place in the social order” (1987:258). However, unlike minority groups, women do not live together in a ghetto, they are distributed through every region, class, and social group, and often share greater proximity and intimacy with their oppressors than with each other. Women are not all alike, in opposition to the historical description of women in society, their individual activities and stories are rather varied. A careful analysis of Davis’s portrait of Deborah and her relationship with Janey in “Life in the Iron-Mills”, clearly illustrates this fact. Maribel W. Molyneaux, among others, describes this story as “an important social document” (1990:157). Davis reflected perfectly not only the worker’s plight in her pioneering study of social realism, but the situation of women as well. “Life in the Iron-Mills” must also be considered a central text in the origins of American feminism with the creation of the figure of Deborah: she is often viewed as meek and submissive by nature, consistent with the stereotype of the “True Woman”, as defined by Barbara Welter, “The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors and society, could be divided into four cardinal virtues —piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity” (1966:152). Furthermore, the story also shows how gender interacts with other categories such as social class to deny individuals and groups the possibility of equal opportunity and treatment.

“Life in the Iron-Mills” tells the story of the deplorable working conditions that some immigrant workers suffer as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution. Employers from the higher social classes exploit these workers mercilessly. Deborah, the female protagonist, hungry for a better life for herself and her family, steals money from Mitchell, one of the employer class; her cousin and love object, Hugh Wolfe, the main male character, is accused of the robbery and is sent to prison for 19 years. There he commits suicide rather than face a life enchained and behind iron bars. The tale concludes with Deborah entering a Quaker community, where women are permitted to use their voices, perhaps in search of hope and relief.

As this story reflects, women and men for the most part worked in separate spheres in the nineteenth century. Women often found jobs in the cotton-mills, where Deborah works, exemplifying the continuation



of the stereotyped “seamstress” women. Cotton mills proliferated in the years after the War of 1812 especially in the region north of Boston. Taking as a reference the studies carried out by S. J. Kleinberg at the end of the 20th century, we find that: “Women comprised 85 to 95 per cent of the operatives of some of these mills in the 1820s” (1990:12). Employers preferred female employees because most of them worked obediently and unquestioningly. Even among male workers Welsh men were the favorite ones because they did not protest, they worked without rest and quietly, and they were meek like women. Hugh Wolfe, the effeminate Welsh puddler, is the perfect example of this kind of worker.<sup>35</sup> Employers could dominate these workers easily.

Apart from the discrimination and exploitation associated with being a member of the working class, Deborah is considered inferior to male members of her same social class. In this case, she is at the far end of this process of discrimination. This prejudice is a result of nothing more than the fact that she is a woman; but she is further rejected because of her physical appearance. Appearance is an important element in this story: Hugh, who can be considered as a kind of frustrated artist, focuses his artistic eye on physical beauty and he observes and studies the human body carefully. The description offered of Deborah, just like that of Hugh's father, Old Wolfe, and those of the meek men in general, emphasizes the features of her horrible physical image. She is a woman and, as a consequence, she is expected to fulfill some physical requirements. However, she is criticized because she lacks them: she is “deformed”, “hunchback”, she has a “ghastly face”, “blue lips”, “watery eyes”, in other words, she does not have any of the expected charm at all (1998:43).<sup>36</sup> Although the narrator does not explicitly say whether Deborah is married or not, she clearly represents the spinsters rejected by men, and demonstrates the fact that the older a woman gets, the less possibilities of getting married she has, a situation that may have been weighing on the author's conscience, since the unmarried Davis was about to celebrate her 30th birthday when “Life in the Iron-Mills” was published.

Deborah appears to be obsessed with Hugh. Sharon Harris, one of Davis's principal biographers, points out that “[L]ike all the workers,

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<sup>35</sup> A puddler is a worker in charge of stirring the molten iron before it is refined.

<sup>36</sup> All of the page numbers for quotes from Davis's “Life in the Iron-Mills” are taken from the recent edition by Cecelia Tichi, 1998.

Deb is physically hungry, but she is also sexually and emotionally deprived because of her deformity” (1991:34). Perhaps Deborah, after rejecting the possibility of being physically attractive to Hugh, steals the money at the mill to make herself worthy of Hugh’s love, or maybe she wants to convince him of her price as a brave woman, but it is more likely that she does it only to take revenge on the upper class for making her dear Hugh feel so bad. She needs Hugh’s care and attention —she wants Hugh to feel sexually attracted to her— but she also knows that the passive, dependent Irish girl, Janey, is the woman Hugh desires. Hugh focuses his art on Janey’s purity and beauty because he and everything which surrounds him lack them. In contrast, Mitchell finds the sufferings and the ugliness of Hugh’s social class much more interesting. Both characters feel attracted to what they lack. Janey, the object of Hugh’s attention, is younger and more beautiful than Deborah, and she has “real Milesian eyes, dark, delicate blue, glooming out” in spite of being sick and hungry (1998:44). As a result, Deborah experiments an internal struggle: on the one hand, Deb is jealous of Janey and sees her as her rival. Janey tries to dissuade Deb from going to the mill because it is raining heavily, but Deborah fears that Janey does not want her to meet Hugh and that she wants to get in their way; while on the other hand Deb feels pity and compassion for little Janey and symbolically lets her sleep with them.

The social behavior and stereotypes that society continually attributes to men and women are clearly outlined in the story: men are expected to work very hard, and if they do not they are compared to mild and weak women. Women are expected to comply with men’s expectations in order for men to choose the woman they consider the best one, according to their fierce thirst for beauty. Janey and Deborah represent extreme opposites from a man’s point of view: Deborah has “no sense of fertility in her decrepit young body”; in other words, she is not a desirable woman, and she “still retains the capacity to love, but can never find fulfillment in this ash-filled environment” (Harris, 1991:35). However, Deb believes that Hugh is the only one who can calm her desires. On the other hand, little Janey is the image of standard beauty: she is pretty, fragile-looking, innocent, timid, helpless, demure, completely dependent. The giant statue that Hugh has sculpted, which represents a strong, independent, bold, and even vindictive woman, terrifies Kirby and his friends because they think it is real: “I thought it was alive’, he said”

(1998:53). They are especially surprised when they discover a woman who searches for what she thinks also belongs to her: rights, job, money, progress, equality, freedom, independence, etc. In the same way, Deborah is rejected not only for her physical appearance, but for her surprising internal strength, utterly unusual in women's behavior at that time.

Both Hugh and Deborah suffer the consequences of the established patterns of standard beauty. Ironically, physical deformity in Deb's case may be the result of the exploitation that she suffers at the mill. In the same way, Hugh is not granted a classical male physical constitution. The korboman may even be an image of himself because his body looks like a woman's body, and he was also thirsty for justice, and a different kind of life. These facts make Deb and Hugh innocent, discriminated against, defenseless, and powerless. Both of them cry out for rescue and both of them are symbols of displacement, disappointment, and what Rosemarie Thomson, in her article which focuses on disabled bodies in literature by women, describes as "subjugation, despair, and impotence" (1996:557). Each of them represents some minority, which is considered to be inferior in our society nowadays, such as invalids, homosexuals, women, etc.

As far as the relationship between Deborah and Hugh is concerned, a deep gulf, to use one of Davis's favorite expressions, exists between these two characters. This distance and incomprehension can be explained on two different levels. On the one hand, there is a physical gulf because Deb hardly ever dares to touch him —she probably does not consider herself to have the same status as Hugh, or perhaps she fears some violent reaction or rejection from him. On the other hand, the gulf is also psychological, since there is lack of communication between them— their conversations seem to be nothing more than Deb's soliloquies. In fact, Deb's audience is not Hugh, but the reader. The reader is the person who feels pity for Deborah (readers usually feel pity and not love or acceptance as Deb would obviously like to inspire, at least in Hugh). The most important reason for the reader's attitude is the fact that "Davis situates poor, naïve, motherless Deb at the iron mill" (Thomson, 1996:564) and at other masculine institutions such as the prison, thus creating a harsh contrast between the men's world and Deborah's attempt to be accepted as a feminine woman. Davis has clearly rejected the stereotypical cozy kitchen as the setting for Deborah.

However, although Deborah does not display the stereotyped female beauty or role, Davis does confer some deep-seated feminine attributes. For example, Deborah develops a maternal function in the story. This sense of motherhood and domesticity explains her compassionate and protective behavior towards little Janey and the fact that, although she is extremely tired and chilled to the bone, “Deborah was stupid with sleep; her back pained her sharply; and her teeth chattered with cold”, she takes Hugh’s supper to the mill every night (1998:46). There, “she stood, patiently holding the pail, and waiting” until someone realized she was there (1998:46). Other examples of Deb’s caring role, especially towards Hugh, appear throughout the story: “Come home, Hugh!”—she said, coaxingly”, “she brought some old rags to cover him” (1998:59, 61). All of this can be either the result of the compassion and the sense of humaneness that Deborah retains, or simply the love that she feels for Hugh, or both. This woman in love is able to do anything in order to try to please her man, even criminal acts. Deborah is an example of the reality which women experimented during those times, when, according to Kleinberg, “motherhood provided scope for women to act from their position of inferiority to achieve domestic bliss” (1990:21). Furthermore, Deb is backed up by what Kleinberg defines as “the Cult of Domesticity which, during the nineteenth century, saw motherhood as the most important female responsibility” (1990:20). Earlier writers viewed motherhood as merely one of women’s tasks, but as Kleinberg goes on to point out “nineteenth century motherhood necessitated immolation upon the altar of domesticity” (1990:20).

In “Life in the Iron-Mills” Deborah also represents feminine instinct in opposition to rough male feelings. Deb knows by instinct that Hugh “loathes the sight of her” and she also instinctively feels things that hurt her and make her feel very sad (1998:47). Sometimes these and other feminine features are used to describe Hugh as a weak man and they give the character negative connotations: Hugh “was never seen in the cockpit”, “Molly Wolfe’ was his *sobriquet*”, “he drank but seldom; when he did, desperately” (1998:48). Hugh’s behavior is described as typically feminine and at the same time as desperate, an adjective used in the story to refer to Deb’s manners and behavior. Near the end of the story, this same feminine intuition helps Deborah to guess what Hugh is going to do (commit suicide): “oh, boy, not that! for God’s sake, not *that!*” (1998:67). Moreover, Janey, as a young woman, has this feminine

intuition too. She can see details probably imperceptible to a male's eye: "A vexed frown crossed her (*Deborah's*) face. The girl saw it" (1998:44). This same instinct can be explained from a very different point of view: "she felt by instinct, although she could not comprehend it" (1998:47). So Deborah's acts are governed only by instinct and desperate impulses (like animals), and not by human intelligence.

In contrast with the intuitive, sensitive, and sentimental behavior of women, a rough and rude male character appears near the end of the story in the person of Haley, one of the jailers of the prison. After probably the most dramatic moment in Deborah's life, when she sees Hugh off forever, Haley pushes her out of Hugh's cell. When he realizes that she staggers, he asks her scornfully if she has been drinking alcohol: "Drinking to-day?" broke out Haley" (1998:69). He is not able to see beyond her physical appearance to discover Deborah's deepest feelings. Likewise, Deb finds an element within Hugh "which makes him something unique among his fellow-workmen, set apart"; she has the capacity of sympathizing with Hugh and human beings in general (1998:47).

Throughout the whole story, Deborah tries to satisfy her relatives' and friends' necessities, although she receives only unpleasant treatment in exchange. Hugh ignores her many a time: "Wolfe had forgotten her" and sometimes he even despises her (1998:46). Her status of nonentity is clearly defined when she enters the mill. Hugh seems not to pay much attention to Deborah: "He threw her an old coat for a pillow, and turned to his work" (1998:46). Furthermore Hugh sees her as a mindless supplier of food and depersonalizes her by referring to her simply as "woman" and not by her name; and not only does Hugh look down on Deb but his fellow-workers do the same by calling her "t' hunchback" (1998:45-46). The story repeatedly employs sentences which show the negative treatment that Deborah receives from Hugh: "he did not seem to hear her", "he answered her in a muttered word or two which drove her away", "Good night, Deb' he said, carelessly", "she took his passive hand and kissed it" (1998:67, 69). This relationship creates a palpable gulf between these two characters. Perhaps, if Deborah were more physically attractive, the bond between them would be closer —Hugh would not see her only as his supplier of food but as his supplier of physical pleasures—. Janey seems to offer this function although she is never really an entirely credible character. After all, having the food prepared, cleaning the house,

and sex is all that a stereotypical man, in this case Hugh, asks of a woman. Marriage and motherhood were considered the main goals in a woman's life during the nineteenth century (and the greatest part of the twentieth). Furthermore, "Married women became the agents who purchased goods and services, while young women became the first industrial labor force in the United States" (Kleinberg, 1990:12). This is the reason why Deborah does not find her place in society, she does not fit in anywhere.

Nevertheless, we can also try to sympathize with Hugh; maybe he does not want to hurt Deborah and he treats her as he does as a consequence of being very tired after his work in the mill, or because he needs something more in his poor life, or perhaps he cannot tolerate social injustices. But in any case, his psychological state does not seem to justify his negative treatment of Deborah at all.

The comparisons of Deborah to animals (especially to submissive dogs) appear constantly in the story. They emphasize the subordination of Deb to Hugh even more: "Deborah watched him as a spaniel his master" (1998:47). Women are considered to be objects for men to dominate and Hugh is criticized by his partners because he does not own one: "he did not own a terrier" (1998:48). Apart from that, Deb's movements are silly, clumsy and slow: "Deborah, stupidly lifting up her head, saw the cause of the quiet", "she crept into a corner of the cell" (1998:49, 66); her manners are neither elegant nor graceful, as expected/demanded of a woman.

Another important aspect of the relationship between Deb and Hugh is the conversations they hold: in them she is reduced to nothing. From Deborah's point of view, Hugh is the most intelligent one, he is always right, he is reasonable. Deb admits docilely: "Hur knows best", "I'll never worrit hur again", "Is't good, Hugh?" (1998:71, 46, 60).<sup>37</sup> Ironically, Deborah conforms to female stereotypes despite suffering humiliation in order to win a man's affection.

Not only Deb but every relevant female character that appears in the story receives the same socially discriminatory treatment. Each of them acts on behalf of a particular group of women in society: firstly,

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<sup>37</sup> Davis transcribes Deborah's speech to reflect the Welsh working-class dialect, a further example of her pioneering realism.

Janey exists as an object. She is a beautiful object of desire and she follows women's role in society and medieval literature perfectly. She represents women who live to fulfill men's physical desires. Secondly, Deborah exists for suffering and sacrifice. She acts as the head of the family in some aspects, i.e., she works at home and outside and she takes care of each member of the family, while she also represents women workers. However, as Jean Pfaelzer points out, the deterministic frame of the story lies in the fact that "Deborah will destroy her family in her desperate attempt to provide for it" (1981:236). And thirdly, we find the Quaker woman, who is an idealized figure, like Janey. According to Thomson's description of her, "no distinction exists between body and will; her body functions as a an efficient vehicle of her will", whereas in Deb's case, "her body is her primary oppression, her defining feature" (1996:572). In contrast, there are no women in the powerful social group. Mitchell and his friends are people with money and the possibilities to develop their own ideas about philosophy, literature, economy, etc. For example, their discussions are always theoretical in nature: "there's something wrong that no talk of *Liberté* or *Egalité*", "[T]hat is true philosophy", "Come and preach your Saint-Simonian doctrines tomorrow" (1998:54, 55, 57). Even the effeminate Hugh belongs to this separate group due to his creative power, which gives him the necessary distinctive features to place him in a class apart. Meanwhile, Davis's women are down to earth, their preoccupations are with physical survival, and they unselfishly work to improve living conditions for others, and do not only talk about doing so.

Finally, Deborah never feels truly fulfilled, with the possible exception of her life with the Quakers after prison, which is merely hinted at. She does not fulfill the requirements to be either accepted as a woman or as a worthy worker. This is one of the reasons why Davis's work continues to speak for women, and perhaps the reason why the Feminist Press chose to publish it as their inaugural piece in 1972. Nowadays, equality and opportunity are still a paradox because "for millions of women, gender continues to be an imposing barrier to full freedom" (Chafe, 1987:268). This story has been told through female eyes; as a consequence, sensibility and comprehension towards Deborah are much more palpable than for Hugh.

As we have seen, Deborah's role is important and well-defined in this story. Paradoxically, she must be seen at the same time as the main

character of the story and as a figure rejected by all her companions, marginalized in both the workplace and at home. Her frustrated true love towards Hugh and her tense relationship with Janey are but some of the insuperable obstacles to her happiness. The theft of the money is decisive for the plot, and it is interesting to analyze the reasons which drive her to steal: love for Hugh, revenge on capitalism, jealousy, or simple economic necessity. Although Deborah appears to be a very passive character upon a first reading of "Life in the Iron-Mills", by interpreting this characterization ironically, we can appreciate how the author has forced the reader to participate actively in her suffering. More than being a good example of how working class women lived and were treated during those times, Deborah serves as Davis's subtle way of rousing women to reconsider their passive social roles.

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## GENDER AND CULTURE CONFLICTS IN THE *REZ* PLAYS OF TOMSON HIGHWAY

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### **Abstract**

*This article aims at analyzing the function of the main gender and culture conflicts of the so-called “Rez Plays” of native Canadian writer Tomson Highway. The juxta(o)position of some of the most representative Cree and white myths and traditions creates a series of antagonisms between the men and the women of the Wasaychigan Hill Indian Reserve that result in their reconsideration of their present and future lives. However, while the responses of the male protagonists traumatically expose the actual predicament of a great majority of the native population in Canada, the women’s responses show that recoverable ideal that intellectuals like Highway defend in their writings.*

Born on his father’s trapline on a remote island on a lake in Manitoba and educated according to the Cree and the Roman Catholic traditions, Tomson Highway also spent some years at the University of Manitoba and Western Ontario, where he studied music and English. An urban by choice, he has blended the literary heritage of the western (white) culture and that of the native in a most creative way.

James Reaney has been pointed out as a major influence on his work, especially his *Donnelly Trilogy*, “because of his use of poetic language, imagery and its mythological overtones” (Petrone, 1990:173). Nonetheless we cannot discard the influence of other two major Canadian playwrights

like George Ryga and Michael Tremblay on the two plays which are the subject of my discussion, *The Rez Sisters* (1988) and *Dry Lips Oughta Move To Kapuskasing* (1989),<sup>53</sup> especially in their use of symbolic types, marginal social and cultural settings, vaudeville, travestism, music, and dance. The presence of some surrealist and expressionistic devices in both plays also suggests the influence of Expressionism, Surrealism, and even of the Theatre of the Absurd, which might have reached him through European drama and/or American film.

According to Dell Hymes, “the oral tradition in North America was basically verse drama” (Petroni, 1990:24), the *mise en scène* was as important as the spoken word, to which a supernatural power was ascribed. The word had the power to create, to make things happen, to change reality; it held a potential for magic. In Highway’s contemporary urban world, theatre proves the medium that, according to him, “gives the oral tradition a three-dimensional context, telling stories by using actors and the visual aspects of the stage” (Petroni, 1990:173). He has also proved as skillful as his ancestors in the use and manipulation of language. He loves “playing with words —the sound and sensuality of syllables, the feeling and images and meaning” (Petroni, 1990:173). This is what gives that poetic character to his language, enriched through the combination of the hilarious, visceral, genderless, and musical Cree and Ojibway languages, with a more puritan, abstract, and patriarchal one, the English.

But music is not only an inherent quality of the language Highway uses, it is also an integral part of the staging of his plays. It is as essential to them as it was to his ancestral Canadian Indian cultures, because music, together with song and dance, played a vital role in everyday life. No act, special or ordinary, was devoid of its fitting song. In the *Rez* plays, country and blues, on the one hand, and drums, whistles, and rattles, on the other, underscore, in a pacific coexistence, each situation, each mood, and ceremony.

Conversely, the coexistence of the two great myths (the native and the Christian) that permeate the lives of the inhabitants of the fictitious Wasaychigan Reserve on Manitoulin Island is not that harmonious. The “Trickster”, of a histrionic and androgynous character, is

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<sup>53</sup> Further references to the plays, when these are not explicitly mentioned, will include their dates of publication.

as pivotal and important a figure in the Native world as Christ is in the realm of Christian mythology. “Weesageechak” in Cree, “Nanabush” in Ojibway, “Raven” in others, “Coyote” in still others, this Trickster goes by many names and many guises. In fact, he can assume any guise he chooses. Essentially a comic, clownish sort of character, he teaches us about the nature and the meaning of existence on the planet Earth; he straddles the consciousness of man and that of God, the Great Spirit. (Highway, 1988:xii)

Another native writer, Daniel David Moses, has called the “Trickster” a baffling figure, “half-hero, half fool, an every man and a no one” (Petrone, 1990:16). Essential for both plays, the figure of the “Trickster” as “Nanabush” stands for native lost spirituality. In both, it is vindicated:

Some say that “Nanabush” left this continent when the whiteman came. We believe he is still here among us —albeit a little the worse for wear and tear— having assumed other guises. Without him —and without the spiritual health of this figure—the core of Indian culture would be gone forever. (Highway, 1988:xii)

And updated: “The trickster now takes strolls down Young Street and goes into bars” (Petrone, 1990:174).

Agnes Grant is right when she states that the women in *The Rez Sisters* accept Nanabush as part of their daily life, while the men of *Dry Lips* are much more confused about their own spirituality (1992:53-54). Marie-Adele Starblanket resents the presence of Nanabush at first because she knows that his/her appearance as a bird means her end, her death. But later, after she has survived the experience of the Bingo, she accepts such mythological presence, since it will give her the strength, “the wings” (Highway, 1988:104) she needs to join it in the spiritual world. Zhaboonigan Peterson, the mentally disabled adopted daughter of Veronique St. Pierre, tells Nanabush about her rape by white boys. Nanabush is also the Bingo Master, seen and admired by all since he is “the most beautiful man in the world [...] dressed to kill: tails, rhinestones, and all” (Highway, 1988:100).

On the contrary, Dickie Bird Halked, Big Joey’s dumb illegitimate son in *Dry Lips*, torn between the two cultures, shows his psychological strain when, at the jockey arena, “caught between Simon’s chanting and

Spooky's praying, blocks his ears with his hands and looks with growing consternation at the 'game'" (Highway, 1989:73). And Simon, though the character that symbolizes that search for a lost cultural identity,<sup>54</sup> once he knows that his girlfriend, Patsy Pegahmagahbow, has been raped by Dickie Bird with a crucifix, rebels against that Christian doctrine that has imposed a male deity on them and hysterically debates between it and their Cree genderless "raped" spirituality:

Fucking goddam crucifix yesssss... God! You're a man. You're a woman. You're a man? You're a woman? You see, nineethoowan pogoog neetha ("I speak only Cree") [...] (1989:112)

But the white and Indian cultures are bound together when the "Trickster"/ "Nanabush" becomes the Bingo Master in *The Rez Sisters* and in *Dry Lips* with Creature's touching reminiscences and Zachary's impotent curses, which transcend the ethnic to formulate universal and compelling statements about mankind lost in a universe dominated by an indifferent, Lucretian, God:

CREATURE:

William. Think of your father. Remember the words of Nicotine Lacroix [...]

"Men who do not worship the Christian way do not automatically go to hell. There are many, many other ways of communicating with the Great Spirit. And they are all perfectly legitimate. What them priests said about me —about us— is not right. It's just not right. Respect us. Respect all people!" Remember that? (Highway, 1989:106)

ZACHARY:

Aieeeeeee-Lord! God! God of the Indian! God of the Whiteman! God-Al-fucking-mighty! Whatever the fuck your name is. Why are you doing this to us? Why are you doing this to us? Are you up there at all? Or are you some stupid, drunken shit, out-of-your-mind-passed out under some great beer table up there in your stupid fucking clouds? Come down! Astum oota! ("come down here!") Why don't you come

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<sup>54</sup> He struggles to "hear the drum again" (Highway, 1989:44-45), has dreams of "going to south Dakota" to "dance with the Rosebud Sioux" (Highway, 1989:66), and vindicates the figures of the shaman (Highway, 1989:65), and the medicine woman (Highway, 1989:88).

down? I dare you to come down from your high-fa-  
lutin' fuckin' shit-throne up there, come down and  
show us you got the guts to stop this stupid, stupid,  
stupid way of living. It's got to stop. It's got to stop.  
It's got to stop. It's got to stop. It's got to stop. It's got  
to stop... (Highway, 1989:116)

This juxta(o)position of cultures is also seen in the combination of icons belonging to both, such as in the case of the ever present jukebox (with the western music it constantly plays), which is Nanabush's perch, situated in an upper level on the stage, and the appearance of Nanabush as Black Lady Halked, Dickie Bird's mother, as a "surrealistic, miraculous vision of 'the Madonna'" (Highway, 1989:52), wearing "a maternity gown, [...] [holding] a huge string of rosary beads [...] and drinking a beer" (Highway, 1989:52).

If the white culture has "raped" the Indian civilizations through its cultural and religious colonization, Highway does not deny that it has taken place, in Marc Maufort's words, "with the help of the Indians themselves" (1993:237). According to Gitta Honegger, "everyone had avoided facing up to the truth of their own irresponsibility, their dependence on the self-perpetuating cycle of the dominant culture's destructive forces" (1992:91).

Highway's perspective is far from that of the pessimist victim/observer. His is an optimistic point of view. The *Rez* plays depict the absurd and pointless lives of some of the inhabitants of a reserve, but this playwright's works have another aim, which in his own words is "to make the 'rez' cool, to show and celebrate what funky folk Canada's Indian people really are" (Johnston, 1992:254).

The tragic note that pervades both plays is associated to the crisis of identity that the native Indian suffers in a dominant white society. Deprived of their traditional hunting-fishing life-style and handicapped by lack of training and experience to pursue the activities of the white man, many native inhabitants of Canada have proved unable to adapt. Furthermore, the scorn and debasing treatment to which they have been subject has destroyed their morale and robbed them of their pride and self-confidence. Their situation in the reserve is best summarized by Pelajia in *The Rez Sisters*: "Everyone here's crazy. No jobs. Nothing to do but drink and screw each other's wives and husbands and forget about our Nanabush" (1988:6).

The Wasaychigan Hill Indian Reserve, the location for both plays, does not, in fact, seem a very nice place to live in: alcoholism and unemployment, a very high birth-rate, suicide, cruelty towards other people's frailties, rejection of other's disabilities and inclinations, lack of privacy, indolence, and violence characterize the lives of its inhabitants.

Outside the reserve they have met with the racist attitudes and actions of the white man. Their situation is best summarized by Emily when she desperately states: "And talkin' about bein' a woman. An Indian woman. And suicide. And alcohol and despair and how fuckin' hard it is to be an Indian in this country [...] No god-damn future for them [...]" (Highway, 1988:97). Symbolic of the outrage of the dominant culture against the Native is Zhaboonigan's rape at the hands of some white boys in *The Rez Sisters*. This incident, which is actually based on an event that happened in Highway's community of Lac Brochet, Manitoba, in which two white hunters raped a fourteen year-old handicapped girl, took her eyes out with a screw, and left her to freeze to death (Grant, 1992:51), becomes all the more painful as it is revealed to Nanabush through the simple, direct and too graphic words of the mentally retarded Zhaboonigan:

Are you gentle? I was not little. Maybe. Same size as now. Long ago it must be? You think I'm funny? Shhh. I know who you are. There, there. Boys. White boys. Two. Ever nice white wings, you. I was walking down the road to the store. They ask me if I want ride in car. Oh, I was happy I said, "Yup." Took me far away. Ever nice ride. Dizzy. They took all my clothes off me. Put something up inside me here. **Pointing to her crotch, underneath her dress.** Many, many times. Remember. Don't fly away. Don't go. I saw you before. There, there. It was a screwdriver. They put the screwdriver inside me. Here. Remember. Ever lots of blood. The two white boys. Left me in the bush. Alone. It was cold. And then. Remember. Zhaboonigan. Everybody calls me Zhaboonigan. Why? It means needle. Zhaboonigan. Going-through-thing Peterson. That's me. It was the screwdriver. Nice. Nice. Nicky Ricky Ben Mark. **As she counts, with each name, feathers on the bird's wing.** Ever nice. Nice white birdie you. (1988:47-48)

And in *Dry Lips* we find Big Joey's bloody reminiscences (1989:119-120) about the siege of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, on 27<sup>th</sup> February

1973, during which time some 200 members of the Sioux Nation pressed the U.S. to accept their demands, until their final surrender and evacuation some nine days afterwards.

Their loss of identity, brought about by such a violent cultural and religious colonization is clearly associated in both plays with men's loss of masculinity and an obsessive and delirious fear provoked by women's better integration within the dominant (white) culture and, at the same time, embodiment of a supposedly lost native spirituality, represented by the figure of the "Trickster" as "Nanabush", which manifests itself only to them.

The result is that the men of the reserve express their frustration by abusing their women. Their initiative to play hockey, men's last stronghold of masculinity in *Dry Lips*, is considered a "pritty damned stupid" one (1989:71). The men of the reserve cry out to cancel the game, to tell others to shut up and not to encourage those women (1989:72), while describing some of its participants as "walrus pudding" (1989:80), or "too fat, [...] positively blubbery" (1989:126), and referring to the "horrendous, scarifying [...] bosom crack" of one of them (1989:81). Still worse was Big Joey's attitude towards Lady Black Halked, whom he left drunk (while pregnant) until she passed out in the tavern where he used to work, leaving his illegitimate son, Dickie Bird (called so after the name of the tavern), to be born with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. His domineering and denigratory attitude towards women is a mark of his character. He also appears in *The Rez Sisters* and is responsible for Emily Dictionary's black eye (1988:37) the first time we meet her, and for other ill treatment she is subject to (1988:99).

Abuse seems to be an ever-present aspect in both plays, but in *Dry Lips* it is continually re-enacted: when Lady Black Halked falls on the ice of the hockey arena, Nanabush appears naked, nine months pregnant, like her, seventeen years before, and completely drunk, barely able to stagger towards her perch. Nanabush also appears as Patsy Pegahmahbow and is raped by Dickie Bird with a crucifix.

Nanabush in the role of women also maintains a constant presence in *Dry Lips*, but they are women who don gigantic rubberized breasts and bottoms, expressionistic symbols of men's sexual fantasies. Their power appears, in Zachary's obsessive dream, as he would like it to be: as provisional or false as those prosthetic devices, which does not diminish

the increasing importance of the feminine presence in their masculine world, a presence that was so important in Highway's ancestral traditions. According to the Cree Elder Rose Auger,

there's no power or medicine that has all force unless it is balanced. The woman must be there also, but she has been left out. When we still had our culture, we had balance. The women made ceremonies, and she was recognized as being united with the moon, the earth, and all the forces on it [...] Men need to do research into their family trees and find out where the women fitted in, traditionally [...] If they truly have power they will give guidance to discover the strength of women and work with her again. And women will work with men, in balance. (Grant, 1992:48)

In both plays tragedy is also balanced through comedy. In this sense the words of the epigraph in the *Dry Lips* program of *The Globe and Mail* (17 April 1991), quoted by Marian Botsford Fraser, are significant. According to them, "before the healing can take place, the poison must be exposed [...]" (Conolly ed., 1995:366). Once the outrage has been exorcized, the healing comes about precisely through humour, that medicine so essential for native survival (Petroni, 1990:183). A good dose of humour is administered through the many descriptive and symbolic names used, following the native tradition but also that of classical drama, and it is not devoid of some degree of irony: Emily Dictionary, Zhaboonigan Peterson, Philomena Moosetail, Pelajia Patchnose, Dickie Bird, Spooky Lacroix, Nicotine Lacroix, Simon Starblanket, etc.

Misunderstandings and mistakes also abound. Vaudevillian humour is achieved in *The Rez Sisters* through the exaggeration of the quarrels and the outrageous banter to which the characters submit one another, and through the way the women of the Rez show their enthusiasm and happiness when they think about the possibility of going to The Biggest Bingo in the World, collapsing on the floor and "roll[ing] around for a bit" (1988:58). Their frenetic activity hanging one line of laundry after another, hammering roofs, cleaning windows, baby-sitting, and selling some domestic accessories, apples and blueberries, in order to obtain the necessary funds to travel to Toronto, is reminiscent of cartoon caricaturing.



The absurd and grotesque elements Highway introduces in both plays also tend to diminish the realism of the characters and alleviate the tragedy of their lives. There seems to be no doubt about such tragic component in native life nowadays, but Highway rejects and parodies stereotypes.

In *Dry Lips*, while Zachary, Pierre, and Spooky talk about hockey, some reminiscences of the past related to what happened to Lady Black Halked, seventeen years before, begin to appear in their conversation. Simon, in his crusade for their lost traditions, joins the group trying to convince Spooky that his wife should give birth with the help of Rosie Kakapetum, the medicine woman, and not in a cold hospital, where her baby would be treated like a hamster. The conversations mix reaching a confusing climax until they end with Zachary's words of satisfaction because the ingredients he had been using to make a pie finally worked, in spite of using chili powder instead of cinamon, since both had the same colour (1989:80-95).

Later, after Patsy's rape, Simon pounds violently at Pierre's door asking him for one of his bottles of alcohol in order to gain the necessary strength to kill Dickie Bird. Simon misses a shot at Pierre's head and then leaves the place. Pierre is left on the spot sillily debating whether he should warn the boy, continue with his rest, or find the puck to play hockey (1989:101-103).

In one of the stage directions Highway creates a tense atmosphere, intensified by the manipulation of lights and shadows, that finally seems to lead to Dickie Bird's suicide. The result cannot be more surrealistic:

Big Joey is sitting, silent and motionless, on the couch, staring straight ahead, as though he were in a trance. His hunting rifle rests on his lap. Dickie Bird Halked stands directly in front of and facing the life-size pin-up poster of Marilyn Monroe, also as though he were in a trance. Then his head drops down in remorse. Big Joey lifts the gun, loads it and aims it out directly in front. When Dickie Bird hears the snap of the gun being loaded, he turns to look. Then he slowly walks over to Big Joey, kneels down directly in front of the barrel of the gun, puts it in his mouth and then slowly reaches over and gently, almost lovingly, moves Big Joey's hand away from

the trigger, caressing the older man's hand as he does. Big Joey slowly looks up at Dickie Bird's face, stunned. Dickie Bird puts his own thumb on the trigger and pulls. Click. Nothing. In the complete silence, the two men are looking directly into each other's eyes. Complete stillness. Fade out. Split seconds before complete black-out, Marilyn Monroe farts, courtesy of Ms. Nanabush: a little flag reading "poot" pops up out of Ms. Monroe's derriere, as on a play gun. We hear a cute little "poot" sound. (1989:107)

Highway not only parodies the stigmatized vision the white man has about the native world, but also the image that some Indians have contributed to perpetuate about themselves, and subverts the expectations of the reader/audience. Hence the mixed reception with which his plays have been met by native and non-native men and women alike. Some native males of the audience have rejected the vision that *Dry Lips* gives about Natives as drunkards, aggressive, indolent and alienated men, powerless before a series of actions that seem to be imposed on them. They do not seem to learn from their tragedies as the Rez sisters do.

One cannot avoid thinking about the symbolism of the names Zachary Jeremiah (both belonging to prophets of the Old Testament) and the possible implications of such a dream (especially if we take into consideration the significance of visions and dreams for the native world): "Are native men more susceptible to the poison of their modern social context, of surviving in a Euro-Christian society, than native women are?" (Johnston, 1992:263). Highway avoids giving an answer, but it seems to be "yes".

His women are powerful, active, and full of initiatives. Both plays are studded with misogyny, but as this comes from the male characters themselves, I do not think Highway defends or even tolerates it, in opposition to what some critics think (Botsford Fraser, 366). However, he does play with male sexual fantasies and with the fear of feminine sexuality and power that these men have. In fact, he likes women, as we can appreciate by the ways he portrays them and the good insight into their nature with which he provides us.

*The Rez Sisters* and *Dry Lips Oughta Move To Kapuskasing* are far from being deep historical, sociological, or even political tracts about white (western)-native relations, yet Highway's ludic use of cliché certainly calls for reflection upon the traditional roles ascribed to "the other", be this a member of a different culture or of a different sex. His strategy seems clear, as he explains drawing a circle on a piece of paper. "This", according to him, "is the way the Cree look at life. A continuous cycle. A self-rejuvenating force [...] Human existence isn't a struggle for redemption for the Trickster. It's fun, a joyous celebration" (Johnston, 1992:255). And that is what the circular structure of both plays demonstrates. At the end of *The Rez Sisters* we see hope expressed for future generations, together with Pelajia again, who just as at the beginning of the play, is on the roof nailing shingles with her hammer (the symbol of her power), with the rest of the women of the play experiencing the regenerative effects of the tragedy they had suffered, and in *Dry Lips* we see the conventional and unexpected (as unexpected, as mysterious, and as arbitrary as the title itself is) happy ending, with Zachary on his couch, naked, just like at the beginning, and relieved at the fact that everything has been a bad (and past?) dream.

The meaning of the number that underlies the plays is also significant. Seven is a mystical number not only in Cree mythology but also in the western cultures. It indicates an important change after a cycle, a positive renewal, and total dynamism. According to Highway:

Legend has it that the shamans who predicted the arrival of the white man and the near destruction of the Indian people, also foretold the resurgence of the native people seven lifetimes after Columbus. We are that seventh generation. (Johnston, 1992:263)

He adopts the role of that comic, clownish sort of character, celebrating "what funky folk Canada's Indian people really are", adopting a multiplicity of styles and forms to suit his purposes, and using the power of the word to make things happen, to change reality. But his strategy is also one of resistance, and, like the Trickster, he "straddles the consciousness of man" with parody and irony, a way, according to Linda Hutcheon, "of coming to terms with [...] duplicity, for it is the trope that incarnates doubleness" (1991:49): of native/white cultures, religion,

past, present, language, of tragedy and comedy or poison and healing. George Lipsitz points out that,

since ethnic and racial minorities can neither assimilate nor separate completely from the dominant culture, they are forced into ‘complex creative cultural negotiations’ with and against the dominant force, negotiations that involve confronting it with their own history and traditions. (Hutcheon ed., 1991:52)

The result should be, as in this case, that “otherness” ceases to be something quaint, colourful, and safely different and inferior, and becomes, in Highway’s case, more than an alternative, complementary to the familiar/dominant culture.

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# EFEECTO DE FACILITACIÓN POR EL ESTUDIO Y LA PRÁCTICA DE LOS SIGNOS DE PUNTUACIÓN

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## **Abstract**

*The aim of this paper was to ascertain whether there was a priming effect as a result of the independent variable learning and practicing punctuation marks, using a Pre-test / Post-test design. An experiment was carried out with two different groups of subjects (I, II), each group with the same level of knowledge in English as a foreign language. For group I there were two tasks related to punctuation: with (SP) and without punctuation (NP). For group II there was one task (SP). It was hypothesized that subjects in group I would show a significant difference in the NP task. Thus, the significant difference obtained in the SP task in this group is explained as a priming effect on comprehension.*

## **1. Introducción**

La facilitación o *priming*, como se le denomina en las investigaciones especializadas, en la ejecución de la tarea se puede atribuir a información que se adquiere, de modo inconsciente, durante la realización de una prueba (Ratcliff, 1992; Schacter, 1992; Shimamura, 1992) o por el desencadenamiento de un recuerdo específico provocado por una determinada situación (Reber, 1985). Numerosas investigaciones de distinta naturaleza (lingüísticas, psicolingüísticas, etc.) apoyan la existencia del

efecto de facilitación con el que aquí se trabaja (Frenck-Mestre & Grainger, 1998; Graf & Ryan, 1990; Jacoby, 1983; Roediger, 1990; Roediger, Weldon & Challis, 1989; Schacter, 1990; Tulving & Schacter, 1990). Normalmente, éste se evalúa con tareas de completar fragmentos con la primera palabra que se le ocurre al sujeto o dando una palabra y pidiendo después las palabras relacionadas; también se puede hacer a través de la presentación de palabras o dibujos degradados para que se identifique el estímulo (Shimamura, 1992). Con estas ideas en mente se pensó que sería posible detectar si el hecho de realizar una tarea relacionada con la introducción de signos de puntuación en un texto podía producir un efecto de facilitación en la comprensión. Por ello, se llevó a cabo un estudio con el que se pretendía comprobar si el efecto de facilitación se daba por la manipulación de la variable independiente *estudio y práctica de los signos de puntuación*, y como consecuencia de haber realizado antes una tarea de puntuación.

Para poder comprobar la existencia del efecto de facilitación se pensó en un experimento con un diseño Preprueba/Posprueba con dos grupos de sujetos (I y II). La hipótesis de trabajo que se manejaba llevaba a pensar que la comprensión en la tarea SP (aquella con textos que presentaban los signos de puntuación) se haría de forma más eficaz una vez que los sujetos se hubieran visto sometidos a comprender el texto de la tarea NP (textos sin puntuación y, por lo tanto, sin mayúsculas después de punto y sin indentación). Se parte de que el estudio y la práctica de los signos de puntuación, importantes éstos para una comprensión del texto escrito (Bayraktar, Say & Akman, 1998), facilitan o ponen al estudiante en posición de prestar especial atención a todo aquello que acompaña a las palabras y que completa el significado. Por lo tanto, el material en la tarea NP (la primera del grupo I) debía permitir detectar cambios en la comprensión por la práctica llevada a cabo en el aula con la puntuación de textos y con el estudio de los signos de puntuación. Mientras que si el mismo material, en la tarea SP (la segunda que se utiliza con el grupo I, y la única del grupo II), rendía diferencias significativas en el grupo I sería debido exclusivamente a un efecto de facilitación. De confirmarse esta hipótesis, tendría efectos positivos en las actividades relacionadas con la comprensión de textos en lengua extranjera porque se podría empezar a trabajar en actividades relacionadas con la puntuación con el fin de mejorar la comprensión.



## 2. Método

### 2.1. Sujetos

Los dos grupos de sujetos (I y II) con los que se contó en esta investigación en el grupo experimental<sup>51</sup> eran estudiantes de primer curso de la Universidad de Salamanca, matriculados en la licenciatura de Psicología. Todos ellos estaban inscritos en la asignatura de Libre disposición *Inglés Aplicado a la Psicología*. Se trataba de grupos homogéneos de características similares con un conocimiento similar del inglés. La media de años estudiando inglés del grupo I (7,14) y del II (7,08) apuntaba a la homogeneidad lingüística en este idioma, aspecto importante ya que con el diseño Preprueba-Posprueba elegido para llevar a cabo el propósito de esta investigación se necesitaba que los sujetos fueran inicialmente similares. A los sujetos, los cuales participaron voluntariamente, se les ofreció un crédito adicional en la asignatura de inglés ya mencionada. En el grupo I participaron 27 sujetos, y en el II 25 (véase tabla resumen de sujetos y tareas en el Apéndice II). Todos estos sujetos, pertenecientes al grupo experimental, servían para evaluar el efecto del estudio y explicaciones de clase, en relación a los signos de puntuación, al pasar de una fase a otra de aprendizaje y, también, para poder inferir, como consecuencia de esos cambios, un efecto de facilitación. El periodo de tiempo para la detección de los cambios, momento en que se hizo la Posprueba, fue de unos dos meses en el grupo I, tiempo que iba desde que a los estudiantes se les pasó la Preprueba hasta que se dio por concluido el estudio de un material objeto de examen en la asignatura de *Inglés Aplicado a la Psicología* titulado "Traducción de algunos signos de lo suprasedgmental" (Moya, 1994). En el grupo II el periodo de tiempo entre pruebas también fue de unos dos meses.

Los sujetos que intervinieron en el grupo de control en el grupo I eran estudiantes de tercer curso de Psicología de la Universidad de Salamanca. Todos estaban matriculados en la asignatura *Lengua Inglesa*. En realidad, era la misma asignatura que la de los alumnos de primero. La única diferencia es que para estos últimos era opcional. A los sujetos se les ofreció también un crédito adicional en dicha asignatura por su participación voluntaria. Se puede decir, si pensamos en la cantidad de años que llevaban estudiando el inglés como lengua extranjera,

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<sup>51</sup> Grupo en el que, a diferencia del grupo control, se manipula la variable independiente.

que se trataba de un grupo muy homogéneo en cuanto al conocimiento de inglés. A eso apuntan los datos sobre la media de años de los sujetos estudiando este idioma: 7,1 (grupo I) y, para el grupo II, compuesto por estudiantes de primer curso, 7,4, cifras que se aproximan bastante a la de los sujetos experimentales (en el grupo I, como ya se ha dicho era 7,14 y en el grupo II 7,08). En el grupo I se pasó la prueba a un total de 29 sujetos, pero se desecharon los datos de 4 porque no participaron en la Posprueba. En el grupo II realizaron las dos fases de la prueba 25 sujetos, y se desecharon los datos de 3 porque sólo habían intervenido en la primera fase. El periodo de tiempo entre pruebas, tanto para los grupos control I y II, también fue de unos dos meses.

A pesar de la homogeneidad de los sujetos, reflejada en el número de años estudiando la lengua inglesa, se planteó la duda de si el grupo I (experimental/control) podía en el transcurso de los dos años que van de primero a tercero haber realizado un aprendizaje del inglés no formal (ej. clases extracurriculares, intercambios con estudiantes angloparlantes, etc.). Por lo tanto, se imponía la comparación previa en cuanto a su manejo del inglés, la cual se hizo con los resultados obtenidos en la prueba de nivel hecha a principio de curso en todos los grupos. El ANOVA resultante manifestó que no había diferencia significativa entre los sujetos, así se obtuvo un valor  $F=0,996$ ,  $p=0,3714$ . Con lo cual podemos tener la seguridad de que el nivel en ambos cursos era prácticamente igual.

Aunque se había planeado tener el mismo número de sujetos en las dos fases del experimento, la insuficiencia de sujetos y la mortandad hizo que se acabara con números diferentes. No obstante, dado que íbamos a utilizar la prueba *t* de Student<sup>52</sup> en los análisis, esto no constituía un problema (Brown, 1988). Se asignó a cada uno de los sujetos al grupo experimental o al de control sin que el investigador tuviera noticia del nivel de conocimiento de inglés de los estudiantes que participaron, con lo cual se puede decir que la asignación a un grupo o a otro fue aleatoria. Sin embargo, hemos de decir que estamos tratando con un experimento cuasi experimental, porque se decidió para facilitar la recogida de datos que en el grupo I los estudiantes de primer curso serían en bloque el grupo experimental, mientras que los de tercero serían el grupo control.

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<sup>52</sup> Una de las medidas más usadas en investigación lingüística para comparar las medias entre dos grupos.

En el grupo II, para evitar el sesgo en la asignación de grupo, la pertenencia a un grupo o a otro se decidió en la Posprueba. El grupo experimental estaría compuesto por los sujetos situados en una parte del aula, mientras que la otra mitad sería el grupo control. Dado que era una tarea aparentemente igual, las presuposiciones de los sujetos con respecto al experimento no ponían en peligro los resultados que del mismo se pudieran alcanzar.

## 2.2. *Materiales*

El material que se utilizó en esta investigación para la Preprueba en el grupo I (tareas SP y NP) fue un breve fragmento de la obra *Lady Chatterley's Lover* de D. H. Lawrence (1928, 1990: 227-228). Éste y todo el utilizado en esta investigación se puede ver en el Apéndice I. Se suprimieron tres renglones situados casi al final del fragmento para poder lograr un texto en el que se pudieran extraer preguntas de contenido sin que se hiciera demasiado largo, terminando con un total de 301 palabras. Se hizo así para aminorar el posible cansancio que podía provocar en los sujetos la lectura de dicho texto y la realización de las tareas que se les pedía que hicieran. En cuanto al material empleado en la Posprueba (tareas SP y NP), también procedía de la misma novela, en concreto de las páginas 285-286. Se procuró que la dificultad y la longitud del texto utilizado en esta fase, 288 palabras, fueran similares a las de la Preprueba. De este modo, se podía estar seguro de que si existían cambios en los datos no se debía a la diferencia de longitud o a la dificultad del material de una fase a otra. Para el grupo II se usó el mismo material que en la segunda tarea del grupo I (SP); además, en la Posprueba se recurrió a un breve texto sin puntuar de 153 palabras, perteneciente también a la obra *Lady Chatterley's Lover* de D. H. Lawrence (1928, 1990:286). Se empleó este texto con el propósito de replicar las condiciones del tratamiento de la variable independiente que se había aplicado a los sujetos del grupo I.

Para tener la certeza de que los textos eran similares en cuanto al nivel de dificultad, dos profesores de lengua del Departamento de Inglés de la Universidad de Salamanca evaluaron ambos textos. Según ellos, los dos eran equivalentes; no obstante, sendos profesores advirtieron que a los sujetos de esta investigación le resultarían complicados de leer. Sin embargo, el nivel de dificultad no constituía un problema ya

que así había un campo amplio para demostrar el efecto de la variable independiente, es decir, el estudio y la práctica de los signos de puntuación.

Los textos utilizados estaban en forma de diálogo y con un tema de conversación muy concreto entre los dos personajes principales. Teniendo en cuenta las circunstancias de la primera tarea del grupo I, lectura del texto sin signos de puntuación, convenía que intervinieran pocos personajes y que el contenido no se dispersara con varios temas de conversación. Las preguntas que respondieron después de cada lectura se formularon de la manera más clara posible. Se intentó en todo momento evitar que se dieran pistas sobre las respuestas debido al modo de formular las preguntas y, también, se procuró no interferir con lo que habían comprendido los sujetos.

### *2.3. Procedimiento*

#### *Sujetos del grupo I*

Para la Preprueba se les pasó una hoja a los sujetos del grupo experimental y del grupo de control en la que se incluían unas breves preguntas sobre su identificación personal y el fragmento de texto que tenían que leer sin los signos de puntuación, con la excepción de algunos nombres propios (tarea NP). En esta hoja se les informaba de que, una vez se hubiera terminado el tiempo que se había asignado a la lectura, 10 minutos, tendrían que contestar a una serie de preguntas con la información más completa posible. Concluido este tiempo, se les entregó otra hoja con las preguntas del texto, y se les dio la instrucción de que dieran la vuelta a la hoja anterior para que, durante los 10 minutos en los que debían realizar la tarea, no miraran al texto buscando ayuda para responder a las preguntas. Cuando finalizó el tiempo, se les dijo que dieran la vuelta a la hoja con el fin de que no hicieran ningún cambio en sus respuestas. A continuación, se les entregó la tercera hoja para que durante 10 minutos leyeran el texto correctamente puntuado (tarea SP). Acabado el tiempo, volvieron la hoja y se les entregó la última. Durante 10 minutos respondieron a unas preguntas distintas de las anteriores de acuerdo con el contenido del texto. El tiempo total empleado en realizar este experimento fue de unos 40 minutos. El procedimiento seguido en la Posprueba fue idéntico, el único cambio que se introdujo tenía que ver con el material, es decir, con el texto y, en consecuencia, con las preguntas.

### *Sujetos del grupo II*

El procedimiento seguido fue similar al descrito anteriormente. La única diferencia es que sólo realizaron la segunda parte de la tarea, es decir, la prueba con los signos de puntuación. Además, en la Posprueba se introdujo una variante para intentar replicar las condiciones del tratamiento de la variable independiente que se había aplicado a los sujetos del grupo I. Se consideró que, dado que a estos alumnos no se les iba a proporcionar instrucción de los signos de puntuación, no era prudente hacerles estudiar con anticipación el uso de los mismos. Esto alertaría a los sujetos sobre su pertenencia al grupo experimental o al control, con lo que peligrarían los resultados de este experimento. Por ello, antes de realizar la prueba, se pidió a los miembros del grupo experimental, antes de realizar la prueba, que durante 25 minutos leyeran los puntos principales del artículo sobre signos de puntuación (Moya, 1994) y los pusieran en práctica en un texto carente de signos de puntuación. Una vez terminado este tiempo, se les dio la puntuación correcta para que durante 5 minutos la cotejaran con la suya. Realizada esta operación se procedió a realizar la tarea (SP) de la misma manera que los sujetos del grupo I. El grupo de control en la Posprueba comenzó con la tarea de comprensión del texto puntuado. Una vez que hubieron terminado, hicieron la tarea que ya había hecho el grupo experimental sobre la práctica y estudio de los signos de puntuación.

### *Evaluación*

En la Preprueba se obtuvieron una o dos hojas de respuestas con las contestaciones a seis preguntas diferentes por cada estudiante, dependiendo de si se trataba de los sujetos del grupo I o II. La hoja de la tarea NP la completaron sólo los sujetos del grupo I una vez leído el texto sin puntuar, mientras que la hoja de la tarea SP la rellenaron tanto los sujetos del grupo I como los del II una vez que habían leído el texto con los signos de puntuación. De la Posprueba, realizada en el grupo I cuando se acabó el plazo para que el grupo experimental ya tuviera leído el artículo sobre signos de puntuación que se había asignado para el examen, también se obtuvieron dos hojas de respuesta por estudiante (tarea NP y SP). De los sujetos del grupo II, sólo se obtuvo una hoja de respuesta (tarea SP). Aunque en esta fase los sujetos del grupo II puntuaron un breve texto, no se tomó ninguna medida debido a que lo que movía esta investigación no era comprobar la pericia en la puntuación de textos sino el interés por descubrir si existía un efecto de facilitación en la comprensión.

Cada pregunta se evaluó de 0 a 1, dependiendo del grado de corrección de la respuesta. Todas las hojas de respuesta fueron evaluadas por una sola persona para evitar una variación en la puntuación por la intervención de distintos correctores. Además, se empezó con la primera pregunta de cada una de las hojas de respuesta y, así sucesivamente, para evitar que a los sujetos se les evaluara de manera distinta dependiendo de factores que podían afectar al corrector en el momento de realizar esta tarea (ej. comienzo, final, cansancio, etc.).

### 3. Resultados y discusión

El fin que se perseguía era el de detectar un efecto de facilitación en la comprensión debido a haber realizado antes de la tarea SP la NP. Para comprobar la hipótesis de este trabajo se realizaron pruebas *t* dependientes e independientes (entre el mismo grupo o grupos distintos) entre las distintas fases: Preprueba o Posprueba del grupo experimental y control en la tarea NP. Previamente, se decidió que el experimento se llevaría a cabo con un nivel alfa del 0,01, el cual se interpreta como la probabilidad de que 1 vez de 100 los resultados se den al azar. Los resultados de la prueba *t* llevados a cabo con las puntuaciones obtenidas en la lectura de dicho texto resultaron ser significativos tanto para el grupo experimental al pasar de la Preprueba a la Posprueba:  $t(26)=6,15$ , nivel de significación de  $p<0,0001$ , como para el grupo experimental y control en la Posprueba:  $t(50)=5,32$ ,  $p<0,0001$ . Como se esperaba, en la Preprueba no se dieron diferencias significativas entre el grupo experimental y el grupo control; tampoco se observaron en el grupo control al pasar de la Preprueba a la Posprueba (los resultados no significativos se pueden consultar en el Apéndice II).

También se realizaron pruebas *t* dependientes e independientes entre las distintas fases del grupo experimental y control en la tarea SP del grupo I. Los resultados de la prueba *t* llevados a cabo con las puntuaciones obtenidas en la lectura de dicho texto resultaron, sorprendentemente, ser significativos tanto para el grupo experimental al pasar de la Preprueba a la Posprueba:  $t(26)=2,784$ ,  $p<0,0099$ , como para el grupo experimental y control en la Posprueba:  $t(50)=2,91$ ,  $p<0,0054$ . En la Preprueba no se dieron diferencias significativas entre el grupo experimental y el grupo control, al igual que tampoco se observaron en el grupo control al pasar de la Preprueba a la Posprueba. Las diferencias sig-

nificativas aquí obtenidas son inesperadas, ya que la mejora en la comprensión de textos una vez aplicada la práctica e instrucción de signos de puntuación se debería dar sólo con textos carentes de estos signos.

Finalmente, se quería comprobar, con los sujetos del grupo II, si existían diferencias frente a un texto puntuado entre los sujetos del grupo experimental, que habían estudiado y practicado los signos de puntuación, y los del grupo control. En ningún caso se hallaron diferencias significativas, lo que resulta más coherente que los resultados significativos hallados en la tarea SP del grupo I. Es razonable pensar que el aprendizaje sobre signos de puntuación no incide en el modo de comprender textos correctamente puntuados.

#### **4. Conclusiones**

La primera parte de este experimento, tarea NP, en la que se demuestra la importancia de la práctica y del estudio de los signos de puntuación en la comprensión, es interesante para ver cómo se comporta un mismo grupo en una condición diferente. Ayuda a explicar, mediante un efecto de facilitación, los datos hallados con los mismos sujetos en la tarea SP, ya que si no resultaría sorprendente y de difícil explicación el que los sujetos que han estudiado y practicado los signos de puntuación mejoren en la comprensión en la Posprueba cuando los textos presentan una correcta puntuación. Se piensa que los sujetos, estudiantes acostumbrados a leer y, por lo tanto, diestros en la lectura, deberían presentar resultados similares frente a un texto puntuado. En un principio, se puede llegar a pensar que el hecho de que presenten estas diferencias significativas en la tarea SP puede deberse a que los sujetos del grupo I han realizado una segunda lectura, aunque no una misma tarea, del mismo texto. Sin embargo, el hecho de que el grupo de control no haya experimentado diferencias, estando sometido también a una segunda lectura, lleva a descartar esta idea.

Una vez que se ha desechado la idea de que la mejora en la comprensión se debe a haber estado expuesto a la misma lectura, se puede achacar a un efecto de facilitación. El haber realizado la tarea SP ha colocado probablemente a los estudiantes que sí estudiaron la influencia de los signos de puntuación en el modo de procesar, influidos por la tarea NP, a un nivel más profundo. Los sujetos contrastaron la atenta lectura que ya habían hecho (con atención a las pausas, lugares,

interlocutores, etc.), y no necesariamente a nivel consciente, con lo que después encontraron en el texto, razón por la que no hay diferencias significativas en las distintas etapas de los sujetos del grupo II, los cuales al no tener que realizar la tarea NP no se han visto forzados a pensar y a utilizar sus conocimientos en cuanto a signos de puntuación. Con lo cual, se puede concluir que la utilidad del aprendizaje de los signos de puntuación, con textos puntuados y en relación a la comprensión, es relevante si antes se ha presentado el texto sin puntuar, ya que es cuando se produce el efecto de facilitación con este tipo de sujetos. Este hallazgo ofrece una buena perspectiva en la instrucción de una lengua extranjera. Es muy probable que, si el instructor enfatiza el papel que desempeñan los signos de puntuación en los textos que utiliza en el aula o realizan alguna actividad en la que ellos tengan que introducir signos de puntuación, los estudiantes se acostumbren a realizar una lectura minuciosa y presten especial atención a las pausas, entonación, etc. Como consecuencia, la lectura resultará más provechosa.

Sería interesante comprobar si los resultados aquí obtenidos serían diferentes si los sujetos tuvieran un nivel de conocimiento del inglés más bajo. Por lo que se propone como siguiente paso de esta investigación verificar si el estudio en torno a los signos de puntuación también produce un efecto de facilitación en estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera con un nivel básico.

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## Apéndice I

*PREPRUEBA, sujetos del grupo I. Lectura sin signos de puntuación*

quite nice to contemplate the extermination of the human species and the long pause that follows before some other species crops up it calms you more than anything else and if we go on in this way with everybody intellectuals artists government industrialists and workers all frantically killing off the last human feeling the last bit of their intuition the last healthy instinct if it goes on in algebraical progression as it is going on then ta-tah to the human species goodbye darling the serpent swallows itself and leaves a void considerably messed up but not hopeless very nice when savage wild dogs bark in Wragby and savage wild pit-ponies stamp on Tevershall pit-bank te deum laudamus Connie laughed but not very happily then you ought to be pleased that they are all bolshevists she said you ought to be pleased that they hurry on towards the end so I am I don't stop 'em because I couldn't if I would then why are you so bitter I'm not if my cock gives its last crow I don't mind but if you have a child she said he dropped his head why he said at last it seems to me a wrong and bitter thing to do to bring a child into this world no don't say it don't say it she pleaded I think I'm going to have one say you'll be pleased she laid her hand on his I'm pleased for you to be pleased he said but for me it seems a ghastly treachery to the unborn creature ah no she said shocked then you can't ever really want me you can't want me if you feel that she felt he was bitter now partly because she was leaving him deliberately going away to Venice

1. How many speakers are there in the text?
2. Which sex are they?
3. Who are the bolshevists in this text?
4. What is said about dogs and horses?
5. What is the meaning of the answer you gave for question # 4?
6. Explain the meaning of this expression: "If my cock gives its last crow ..." (e.g. kind of people using it, context, etc.)

*PREPRUEBA, sujetos del grupo I y II. Lectura con signos de puntuación*

'Quite nice! To contemplate the extermination of the human species and the long pause that follows before some other species crops up, it calms you more than anything else. And if we go on in this way,

with everybody, intellectuals, artists, government, industrialists and workers all frantically killing off the last human feeling, the last bit of their intuition, the last healthy instinct; if it goes on in algebraical progression, as it is going on: then ta-tah! to the human species! Goodbye! darling! the serpent swallows itself and leaves a void, considerably messed up, but not hopeless. Very nice! When savage wild dogs bark in Wragby, and savage wild pit-ponies stamp on Tevershall pit-bank! *te deum laudamus!*

Connie laughed, but not very happily.

'Then you ought to be pleased that they are all bolshevists,' she said. 'You ought to be pleased that they hurry on towards the end.'

'So I am. I don't stop 'em. Because I couldn't if I would.'

'Then why are you so bitter?'

'I'm not! If my cock gives its last crow, I don't mind.'

'But if you have a child?' she said.

He dropped his head.

'Why,' he said at last. 'It seems to me a wrong and bitter thing to do, to bring a child into this world.'

'No! Don't say it! Don't say it!' she pleaded. 'I think I'm going to have one. Say you'll be pleased.' She laid her hand on his.

'I'm pleased for you to be pleased,' he said. 'But for me it seems a ghastly treachery to the unborn creature.'

'Ah no!' she said, shocked. 'Then you *can't* ever really want me! You *can't* want me, if you feel that!' She felt he was bitter now partly because she was leaving him, deliberately going away to Venice.

1. What does one of the characters want for the bolshevists?
2. Is anyone leaving? Who and where?
3. What is the attitude of the other character in this situation?
4. What is said about a baby?
5. What is the attitude of the speakers when they talk about the baby?
6. What is said about intellectuals, artists, etc.?

*POSPRUEBA, sujetos del grupo I. Lectura sin signos de puntuación*

sir Malcolm was pleased Connie was his favourite daughter he had always liked the female in her not so much of her mother in her as in Hilda and he had always disliked Clifford so he was pleased and

very tender with his daughter as if the unborn child were his child he drove with her to Hartland's hotel and saw her installed then he went round to his club she had refused his company for the evening she found a letter from Mellors I won't come round to your hotel but I'll wait for you outside the Golden Cock in Adam Street at seven there he stood tall and slender and so different in a formal suit of thin dark cloth he had a natural distinction but he had not the cut-to-pattern look of her class yet she saw at once he could go anywhere he had a native breeding which was really much nicer than the cut-to-pattern class thing ah there you are how well you look yes but not you she looked in his face anxiously it was thin and the cheekbones showed but his eyes smiled at her and she felt at home with him there it was suddenly the tension of keeping up her appearances fell from her something flowed out of him physically that made her feel inwardly at ease and happy at home with a woman's now alert instinct for happiness she registered it at once I'm happy when he's there not all the sunshine of Venice had given her this inward expansion and warmth was it horrid for you she asked as she sat opposite him at table he was too thin she saw it now

1. How many people utter a sentence in this text?
2. What is the relationship between them?
3. Do the characters belong to the same social class?
4. Reason your answer for question # 3?
5. What was there for Connie at the hotel?
6. What is Sir Malcom's attitude in relationship with the baby?

*POSPRUEBA, sujetos del grupo I y del II. Lectura con signos de puntuación*

sir Malcolm was pleased. Connie was his favourite daughter, he had always liked the female in her. Not so much of her mother in her as in Hilda. And he had always disliked Clifford. So he was pleased, and very tender with his daughter, as if the unborn child were his child.

He drove with her to Hartland's hotel, and saw her installed: then he went round to his club. She had refused his company for the evening.

She found a letter from Mellors.

I won't come round to your hotel, but I'll wait for you outside the Golden Cock in Adam Street at seven.

There he stood, tall and slender, and so different, in a formal suit of thin dark cloth. He had a natural distinction, but he had not the cut-to-pattern look of her class. Yet, she saw at once, he could go anywhere. He had a native breeding which was really much nicer than the cut-to-pattern class thing.

'Ah, there you are! How well you look!'

'Yes! But not you.'

She looked in his face anxiously. It was thin, and the cheekbones showed. But his eyes smiled at her, and she felt at home with him. There it was: suddenly, the tension of keeping up her appearances fell from her. Something flowed out of him physically, that made her feel inwardly at ease and happy, at home. With a woman's now alert instinct for happiness, she registered it at once. 'I'm happy when he's there!' Not all the sunshine of Venice had given her this inward expansion and warmth.

'Was it horrid for you?' she asked as she sat opposite him at table. He was too thin; she saw it now.

1. Connie is said to be the favourite one, why?
2. Where and when do the two speakers see each other?
3. Who is the one who has a good looking aspect?
4. How does Connie feel being with Mellors?
5. What is the meaning of the sentence: "Not all the sunshine of Venice ..."
6. Describe Mellors' physical aspect.

*Material utilizado en la POSPRUEBA con el grupo II*

people are always horrid he said and did you mind very much I minded as I always shall mind and I knew I was a fool to mind did you feel like a dog with a tin can tied to its tail Clifford said you felt like that he looked at her it was cruel of her at that moment for his pride had suffered bitterly I suppose I did he said she never knew the fierce bitterness with which he resented insult there was a long pause and did you miss me she asked I was glad you were out of it again there was a pause but did people believe about you and me she asked no I don't think so for a moment did Clifford I should say not he put it off without thinking about it but naturally it made him want to see the last of me

**Apéndice II.**

**Tabla resumen de la composición y tareas de los grupos:**

<b>G. Experimental</b>	SP	NP
Grupo I (N=27)	Sí	Sí
Grupo II (N=25)	Sí	
<b>G. Control</b>		
Grupo I (N=25)	Sí	Sí
Grupo II (N=22)	Sí	

**Tabla resumen de diferencias significativas:**

**SUJETOS GRUPO I**

TAREA NP	G. EXPERIMENTAL	G. CONTROL
Preprueba		
	*	
Posprueba		*

NP = lectura sin signos de puntuación. \* = diferencia significativa

[Preprueba experimental y Preprueba control:  $t(50)=1,32, p=0,1913$ ]

[Preprueba y Posprueba control:  $t(24)=1,51, p=0,1437$ ]

TAREA SP	G. EXPERIMENTAL	G. CONTROL
Preprueba		
	*	
Posprueba		*

SP = lectura con signos de puntuación. \* = diferencia significativa

[Preprueba experimental y Preprueba control:  $t(50)=2,451, p=0,0178$ ]

[Preprueba y Posprueba control:  $t(24)=2,598, p=0,0158$ ]

**SUJETOS GRUPO II**

TAREA SP	G. EXPERIMENTAL	G. CONTROL
Preprueba		
Posprueba		

SP = lectura con signos de puntuación. \* = diferencia significativa

[Preprueba y Posprueba experimental:  $t(24)=0,2794, p=0,7823$ ]

[Posprueba experimental y Posprueba control:  $t(48)=0,2755, p=0,7841$ ]

[Preprueba experimental y Preprueba control:  $t(48)=0,0661, p=0,9476$ ]

[Preprueba y Posprueba control:  $t(24)=0,4743, p=0,6395$ ]





## *Book Reviews*



**Torres Núñez, J. J. 2002. *Toros en el hotel. Teatro (Español / Inglés)*. 62 páginas. ISBN: 84-8240-596-9. Universidad de Almería: Servicio de Publicaciones.**

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*Toros en el hotel* pertenece a la segunda etapa de la investigación que lleva a cabo Juan José Torres, en la Universidad de Almería, en el campo del teatro. En la primera etapa, el teatro en la educación, ha publicado dos libros: *Teatro inglés para estudiantes españoles* (1995) y *Nuevos horizontes para el teatro en la enseñanza de idiomas* (1996). En la segunda etapa, el teatro en la universidad, ha publicado *La conferencia* (2001), *Susana* (2001) y *Toros en el hotel* (2002).

Con este tipo de teatro, Juan José Torres nos brinda la posibilidad de enseñar inglés por medio de diálogos en *situaciones* coherentes, ayudando así al profesor/a de idiomas en su clase. Lo que el autor nos ofrece es enseñar inglés en el nivel de secundaria y en las clases de lengua y literatura en la universidad, considerando en ambos casos la representación escénica como técnica didáctica de aprendizaje y como proceso de comunicación. Parte de la idea de que el teatro debe considerarse como un texto de literatura escrito para ser representado por los estudiantes, y ésta es, según nos dice, la mejor metodología para impartir un curso de teatro. Para el autor, el teatro ofrece la posibilidad de enseñar por medio de *learning by doing*, entendiendo el teatro como un proceso continuo de aprendizaje y rechazando, por tanto, el concepto de teatro como producto

Una vez estudiados el drama y el teatro en la práctica de la enseñanza del inglés, Juan José Torres propone unos *criterios generales* que servirán para ver sus posibilidades de escenificación. En su libro *Nuevos horizontes para el teatro en la enseñanza de idiomas* el autor describe catorce criterios generales entre los que destaca el tercero y el cuarto. El tercer criterio resalta la necesidad de incluir en la pieza uno o varios personajes españoles que no hablen inglés o que sean bilingües, con el fin de crear un conflicto del que surgirá necesariamente la traducción del español al inglés y viceversa. En el cuarto criterio, se habla de un *teatro de entorno*, es decir, un teatro enraizado en el entorno cultural de los alumnos con ambiente local. En la introducción del mismo libro, el autor describe la metodología empleada en este tipo de teatro siguiendo un proceso circular. Nos dice que de la experiencia en las aulas, pasamos a la teoría de lo escrito sobre el teatro en la enseñanza, y, basados en esa teoría del estado actual, regresamos una vez más a la realidad de nuestra situación, deduciendo nuevos principios y proponiendo una nueva teoría que aplicamos a las obras de teatro que leemos, teniendo siempre presentes nuestros criterios generales (pág. 14).

Teniendo en cuenta la existencia de numerosos problemas, tanto en la universidad como en los institutos de educación secundaria, a la hora de representar una obra de teatro, debido a la falta de medios necesarios, Juan José Torres crea un teatro nuevo, diferente, y con la intención de eliminar todas las barreras del teatro convencional. Los personajes que encontramos en *La conferencia*, *Susana y Toros en el hotel* se mueven por un escenario desnudo, con un decorado mínimo y sin problemas técnicos de luces ni de montajes. Al hablar en español y en inglés, se producen malentendidos que nos divierten. Es un teatro cómico que hace reír pero al mismo tiempo pretende que el espectador se cuestione su propia risa.

Existen obras de teatro inglés con temas universitarios, como por ejemplo, *Butley* (1971) de Simon Gray, *French Without Tears* (1936) de Terence Rattigan, o *The Writing Game* (1991) de David Lodge. Sin embargo, no existe un verdadero teatro de campus con un contenido similar al de las conocidas novelas de campus *Changing Places* (1975) y *Small World* (1984), de David Lodge.

No es la primera vez que encontramos en el teatro inglés personajes que hablan otro idioma. El mejor ejemplo nos lo ofrece Shakespeare con

la historia del beso que Henry quiere dar a Catherine, en *Henry V* (5.2). Este diálogo en francés y en inglés, con la ayuda de Alice, la intérprete, nos muestra un ejemplo muy valioso para apreciar las posibilidades del teatro en la enseñanza de idiomas. En el caso de *French Without Tears* vemos a un grupo de estudiantes ingleses que intenta aprender francés en la Riviera francesa. Sin embargo, al igual que *Henry V*, la obra está escrita enteramente en inglés, con algunas pinceladas graciosas en lengua francesa. Existen otros ejemplos de teatro bilingüe en español/inglés, como el teatro chicano feminista, *Women in Teatro* (Sue-Ellen Case, 1988:106), que se dedica a representar obras escritas por mujeres y para mujeres, en donde se muestra la opresión de la cultura dominante. La obra bilingüe de este teatro chicano, *Voz de la mujer / Voice of the Woman*, es un ejemplo en el que la lengua se convierte en una cuestión fundamental.

Estamos, por tanto, ante un teatro pionero como señala el periódico *Ideal* de Almería (30/10/2001:50), con una metodología muy clara: enseñar inglés por medio del teatro a los estudiantes de enseñanza secundaria y lengua y literatura en la universidad. Además, las situaciones creadas con los diálogos no son absurdas. Muy al contrario, este tipo de teatro no sólo enseña lengua y literatura sino que trata los temas más recurrentes del teatro contemporáneo.

En la obra *Toros en el hotel*, vemos el complejo mundo de los toros presentado de una manera cómica. La trama se desarrolla en una escena única que tiene por título "Una habitación de hotel". El decorado es sencillo: una cama, una mesita de noche, sillas, una mesa, un espejo grande a la derecha y un cuarto de baño también a la derecha. En este escenario tan simple se lleva a cabo la divertida historia. En ella, aparecen cinco personajes femeninos: dos profesoras universitarias, Petra D'Haen y Erika Thorpe, dos hermanas gemelas, Macarena y Lola, que trabajan en el servicio del hotel, y la jefa de personal, que aparece sólo al final de la escena.

En el argumento se ofrecen dos puntos de vista totalmente opuestos: uno, el de los toros como cultura, y otro, el de los toros como corrupción moral. La profesora Erika va a leer una ponencia en la Universidad de Almería en la que denuncia la corrida de toros por considerarla inmoral. Desafortunadamente, pierde la carpeta en donde guarda los apuntes. Aconsejada por la profesora D'Haen decide poner en práctica el con-

tenido de su ponencia teniendo como espectadoras a las dos hermanas gemelas. Macarena no está de acuerdo con lo que la profesora Erika dice en su ponencia. De este modo, Macarena trata de explicar a la profesora el arte y el misterio del mundo de los toros, así como su extensa tradición cultural, como reflejan las siguientes palabras: “The corridas are the most learned and cultural event in the whole world” (pág. 35). Para ella, la fiesta taurina representa la tragedia de la vida y la muerte del ser humano, y la concibe, por tanto, como un encuentro y como un ritual (como aclara Macarena en español, ya que no existe una palabra para “bullfight”). En el encuentro entre el toro y el torero, éste último muestra su coraje y su honor, desafiando la muerte para glorificar la vida. Estas palabras, que en principio resultan paradójicas, muestran la influencia de Hemingway, como el propio autor señala en el prólogo: “Parte del diálogo lo he creado mediante un *rewriting* del conocido libro de Hemingway *Death in the Afternoon*, en un contexto completamente diferente” (pág. 8).

Obcecada en su afán por transmitir el espíritu artístico y cultural de una corrida de toros, Macarena no duda en impartir una clase práctica a las dos profesoras, transformando la habitación del hotel en un ruedo. De este modo, la imaginación de este personaje sumerge al espectador en un ambiente taurino: la cama se convierte en el burladero, el cuarto de baño en la puerta de chiqueros y la habitación en el ruedo. También, las cuatro mujeres tienen su papel asignado: Lola representa al toro, Macarena al torero, Erika al caballo, y Petra al picador. Por medio de esta representación escénica y exposición práctica de las distintas partes o tercios de una corrida de toros, se puede enseñar también inglés para fines específicos en el campo de la tauromaquia, de la misma manera que en la obra *Susana* encontramos bastante vocabulario relacionado con la medicina. Una vez finalizada la clase práctica, Erika se siente enferma para dar la ponencia. Pero su naturaleza vanidosa puede más, y decide que Lola se haga pasar por ella, pues su máxima preocupación es la publicación de la ponencia. Aunque Lola pone todo su empeño, la ponencia que trata de ensayar resulta un fracaso. A medida que avanzan los ensayos, Lola, con la interpretación de su papel de toro, cambia su visión sobre la importancia cultural de la fiesta taurina, como se puede apreciar en sus palabras:

*Sí, muerta en el ruedo con una ehtocá en el corazón.  
No he vihto ninguna intensidad ehpiritual ni nin-*

*guna belleza. Lo que sí he sentío ha sio un dolor intenso y el frío de la muerte. Y seguro que eso eh lo que piensan los toros cuando loh matan loh toreros.”*  
(pág. 52)

Ahora, para Lola, la fiesta taurina ya no encierra ningún misterio. Tampoco ve estética alguna en la agonía de la muerte. En su papel de toro, se percata de la terrible crueldad del hombre hacia los animales.

Otro asunto que la obra trata pero de manera secundaria es el litigio sobre Gibraltar. Por un lado, aparece la postura de que pertenece a España, como afirma Lola: “I am from Gibraltar, but I am Spanish” (pág. 23), y por otro, se argumenta que esta cuestión de pertenencia del Peñón poco importa en la sociedad globalizada en la que vivimos. Esta segunda visión es la que sostiene Erika en su conversación con Lola:

*We live in a global village. It doesn't matter whether you are Gibraltarian, Spanish or English. What really matters is that we are here and we all have the same problems. We have to live together and try to find the answers to our problems. (pág. 23).*

Se hace mención también a otros temas tales como la codicia de los profesores, a los que se tilda de “peseteros”, o a que a los alumnos solamente les interesa la nota, pasando a un segundo plano el aprendizaje en sí. En suma, en *Toros en el hotel*, nadie parece escaparse de la crítica. El propio autor explica en el prólogo de la obra que quiere ver y descubrir los límites del teatro, así como sus posibilidades, invitando al espectador a pensar en las vanidades y falsedades del ser humano.

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La literatura de viajes por la Península Ibérica ha sido objeto de infinidad de estudios que en líneas generales han centrado su interés en los relatos escritos entre la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII y primera del XIX, período que tradicionalmente se ha denominado “la época dorada de los viajes por España”. Este período culmina con obras tan importantes como *A Handbook for Travellers in Spain, and Readers at Home* (1845) y *Gatherings from Spain* (1846), de Richard Ford; *Gazpacho; or, Summer Months in Spain* (1850), de William George Clark; *Las Alforjas; or, The Bridle Roads of Spain* (1853), de George John Cayley; o *Castile and Andalusia* (1853), de Lady Louisa Tenison, considerados los últimos clásicos del género durante el siglo XIX, y con tantos y tantas otras que también lograron una gran difusión por gran parte de Europa.

A partir de la década de los cincuenta se modifica la forma de viajar. La mejora de las carreteras a la vez que la gradual implantación del ferrocarril son factores que contribuyeron en cierta medida a que los viajes perdiesen el componente de aventura que los caracterizaba. Las ventas de los caminos se van adecentando y las principales ciudades ya

cuentan con hoteles equiparables a los que ofrecen los países más civilizados de centro Europa. Sin embargo, a pesar de todo esto, no se reduce el número de viajeros que, subyugados ante la belleza y pintoresquismo de esta tierra indómita, siguen escribiendo, incluso hasta hoy día, relatos sobre España. Tampoco se reducen las editoriales interesadas en publicar este tipo de obras, que podemos contar por cientos; lo que si decrece es el número de estudiosos cuyo interés se centra en los libros escritos entre mediados de siglo XIX y la época actual.

El investigador pierde el interés excusándose en la mayoría de los casos en la idea —por otra parte perfectamente cierta— de que el género decae a pasos agigantados, hasta llegar a tocar fondo en los últimos años del siglo y sobre todo en el siglo XX, y somos pocos los que nos hemos atrevido a adentrarnos más allá, y cuando lo hemos hecho, ha sido con cierta timidez.

Salvo algunos estudios parciales de viajeros contemporáneos (Gerald Brenan y Laurie Lee son los grandes acaparadores de la atención de investigadores de libros de viajeros anglófonos por España en el siglo XX), podríamos afirmar que los relatos escritos en esta época se encuentran escasamente valorados por los especialistas, lo cual tiene también mucho de injusto porque es algo que se basa en gran parte en el desconocimiento.

El nuevo libro del Dr José Ruiz Mas, *Libros de viajes en lengua inglesa por la España del siglo XX*, se constituye por lo tanto en linterna que nos alumbrará en nuestra exploración de un bosque de relatos por nuestro país escritos durante el siglo que acabamos de despedir. En efecto, tenemos en nuestras manos un estudio general serio y magníficamente estructurado sobre la evolución que ha sufrido el género durante los últimos cien años de nuestra historia. El profesor Ruiz Mas ha sido pionero y se ha atrevido a adentrarse, ahora por segunda vez —la primera lo hizo, eso sí, con la tranquilizante compañía de la Guardia Civil— en un periodo tildado de decadente, de ser una mera continuación empobrecida del XIX, de ser recipiente de una larga retahíla de clichés y lugares comunes repetidos hasta la irritación por los avisados y los no tan avisados viajeros extranjeros. Y, resulta innegable, el siglo XX tiene bastante de eso, pero es también un siglo denso, politizado, complicado, apasionante, voluble y turbulento. Durante el siglo XX España ha vivido importantísimos acontecimientos políticos, sociales, económicos, religio-

sos, etc, que han dado forma al país tal y como lo conocemos en la actualidad y de los que en cierto modo las personas de mi generación hemos sido testigos.

El libro de Ruiz Mas recoge con fidelidad notarial el grado de incidencia que han tenido todos estos acontecimientos claves en la evolución del género del relato de viajes y en la visión que han recogido en sus notas los viajeros anglófonos, observadores rara vez objetivos o inocentes de esta compleja realidad, para luego transmitirlos en letras de molde a un público siempre ávido de leer y relamerse con este tipo de obras, sobre todo si se trata de un viaje por un país considerado exótico y romántico como el nuestro, tan admirado y a la vez tan odiado, envidiado como pocos, acusado incluso por los que parecen mirarnos con simpatías, de ser, en palabras de V. S. Pritchett, “el necesario enemigo de Europa”.

En su obra, Ruiz Mas ha elegido, a mi juicio muy acertadamente, una metodología historicista y una aproximación cronológica. La divide en siete capítulos que se corresponden cada uno de ellos con momentos claves de nuestra historia reciente: la mayoría de edad del rey Alfonso XIII (1902-1923), la dictadura del general Primo de Rivera (1923-1930), la II República (1931-1936), la Guerra Civil española (1936-1939), la etapa pre-turística del régimen de Franco (1940-1951), la etapa turística del mismo régimen (1952-1975) y la España democrática (1976-2000). Cada uno de estos capítulos, ni que decir tiene, se caracteriza por acoger una tipología diferente de viajero y en consecuencia distintos tipos de relatos. En cada uno de ellos Ruiz Mas disecciona los distintos retratos-robots de los viajeros que nos han visitado y observado y los distintos relatos que publican, algo en lo que también es pionero. Su conocimiento de primera mano de las obras que cita, su estilo fácil, a veces irónico, a veces comprometido, a veces valiente, siempre ameno, su erudición, sus guiños al estudioso, hacen que su lectura se convierta en una gratísima experiencia.

El peso específico del profesor Ruiz Mas entre los investigadores de literatura de viajes está más que probado. Miembro activo del Grupo de Investigación HUM 594 “Viajeros e Hispanistas”, su amplia formación ya le ha llevado con anterioridad a ofrecernos diversas facetas del fenómeno del viaje y la literatura resultante. Entre otras podemos mencionar su investigación sobre la imagen literaria de la Guardia Civil en el

género desde su nacimiento en 1844 hasta nuestro más reciente pasado; los viajeros anglófonos y sus relatos durante el periodo de la dominación británica de una isla mediterránea escasamente conocida por el público español como es Chipre; la presencia de los expatriados en España y su particular visión de nuestras cosas; y tantos otros aspectos que el profesor Ruiz Mas ha publicado en importantes revistas y ha presentado en conferencias y congresos nacionales e internacionales. Ahora, como última entrega le ha llegado el turno a los relatos de viajes durante el siglo XX.

Aparte de todo lo que acabamos de exponer sobre la obra *Libros de viajes en lengua inglesa por la España del siglo XX*, resultan de especial interés para el investigador dos apartados importantes: por un lado, la amplísima bibliografía de fuentes primarias, es decir una catalogación bastante exhaustiva de obras sobre España publicadas en lengua inglesa a partir de trayectos realizados durante el periodo 1900-2000, a nuestro entender, la primera y única realizada hasta el momento, y que ya se hacía imprescindible. En esta magnífica bibliografía se recogen las primeras ediciones de centenares de obras, dando cabida no sólo a los británicos, estadounidenses o irlandeses (que constituyen la mayoría), sino también a australianos, neozelandeses y a otras nacionalidades de habla inglesa, que son, obviamente, los menos, pero que también cuentan con su parcela de representación. La utilidad de este catálogo bibliográfico, producto de muchos años de investigación, habla por sí sola.

Por otro lado, está el prólogo de otro excelente investigador de las relaciones anglo-hispánicas, el Dr Carmelo Medina Casado. En éste el profesor Medina Casado introduce una visión inédita y original del estudio del fenómeno del viaje literario por España, pues relaciona la vinculación existente entre el relato de viajes y la novela y los principales hitos ocurridos durante tan fructífera simbiosis.

No deseo finalizar esta reseña sin volver a insistir en la importancia del libro de Ruiz Mas. No cabe la menor duda de que nos encontramos ante uno de los más importantes que se han escrito sobre literatura de viajeros de habla inglesa por España. Entre las monografías que todos los estudiosos de este apasionante rincón literario tenemos en mente como claves en nuestras investigaciones, hemos de incluir a partir de ahora la de Ruiz Mas. Quien quiera “viajar” por la España del siglo XX, tendrá necesariamente que meterla entre sus alforjas.

## *Literary Contribution*



## TRIPTYCH OF THE LONELY MOUNTAINEER

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The entire life is like a game  
whose rules are purely arbitrary  
and mean next to nothing  
Paul Bowles

### The Ascent

After a strong cup of coffee and a long drink of cool water, the mountaineer made a mental check of the contents of his backpack: sleeping bag, emergency kit, several maps of the region, compass, binoculars, flashlight, batteries, lighter, sweater, change of clothing and socks, loaf of bread and half a pound of cheese; on his belt, canteen and hunting knife. He would also take his Rolleiflex, should he feel the urge to take some shots in mid hike.

The brown ridges of the Ramapo Mountains were silhouetted like giant humps against the milky light of dawn. Seeing them now, eroded to gentle hills by the effects of wind, rain and the tongue of the ancient glacier, who would think that three million years ago, these same mountains presented a topography similar to the Rockies! A peak or a

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cliff of a certain height rose naturally here and there. Over the course of many moons and many suns, the Munsee Indians, the Algonquins, the Ramapos were lords and masters of that fertile reserve, abundant in deer, bear and pheasant. With the arrival of pale face, everything changed: nature must be conquered! Luxuriant forests were felled to provide fuel for the iron foundries (abundant in the region), skillfully forged iron which became a key element in the War of Independence against the British. In the sixteen hundreds, Suffern's name started to be heard in the region; and in the seventeenth century, that of Claudius Smith, the famous bandit (whose hideaway, a hidden cavern a few miles away, he had once visited, gripped, or rather, possessed with enthusiasm). In our century, at the urging of philanthropists like Harriman, Perkins and Torrey, the area finally became a National Park.

On this occasion, the mountaineer had decided to begin the hike on a zigzagging path that would take him —according to the map— to the peak of Aramah Mountain. The outing would take only a couple of days. He would spend the night at the summit, and the following day, going deep into the forest, he would descend to Lake Kanawakee, take a dip in the clear waters and then link with the road to Suffern, which leads to Bear Mountain. In total: about twenty five miles of varied terrain.

He drove the old Jeep on Route 17 North, going into Orange County. Behind him were the Versailles-like gardens of Ringwood, New Jersey, with the mysterious Erskine's mansion —iron magnate and eminent cartographer— and the Skyland castle (favorite haunts during his wanderings in the region.) Now surrounded by several highways, the old Presbyterian church and Gates of Praise cemetery had become isolated in time and space. Did the bones of the dead rattle to the rhythm of the bustle of cars, trucks and motorcycles? Did the bell toll at rush hour? In the name of sacrosanct "progress," more and more roads were being built, more highways, endless tarred tongues, suffocating forever the whispering breath of the forests, choking the throbbing anticipation of the marshes, silencing the lilting sound of the streams. And not only the fauna and flora were disappearing: entire towns, with their churches and cemeteries, lied submerged under the waters of modern reservoirs and dams. And in spite of such ignominy, of such senselessness, apples and pears and peaches and blackberries continued to grow and bear fruit, year after year, in the orchards of abandoned farms.



The Jeep left behind the towns of Hillburn —once smelly from the slaughterhouse, and now, from the chimneys of the Avon laboratories—, Sloatsburgh —with its fruit and vegetable stands—, Tuxedo —bastion and fief of the rich, protected by high stone walls—, Arden (from whose desolate eighteenth century graveyard he had once stolen, some time ago, a small and nameless marble headstone, which would mark, years later, the garden grave of his dear cat Melibeo), and he stopped under the shade of a majestic sycamore tree, surrounded by extensive laurels.

At the park entrance, nailed to the trunk of a chestnut tree, a small sign —in English and Spanish— warned: ATTENTION! IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS SEVERAL RATTLESNAKES, AS WELL AS RABID RACCOONS AND FOXES, HAVE BEEN SPOTTED. IF YOU ARE BITTEN BY A WILD ANIMAL, GET IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION AT THE NEAREST HOSPITAL.

Bordering the moonscapes and boulders of Echo Mountain, he walked on Arden Road, until he reached the bank of a river. He sat on a rock and took a long drink from the canteen. The river crept along shadowy sand banks, in whose dark mud, infested with mosquitoes, weeping willows and linden trees sank their muscular Laoocontian roots. An otter, sniffing the warm morning air with its shiny little snout, stared at him hypnotized, but then it returned, ipso facto, to its meticulous, conscientious engineering projects, always at the mercy of now gentle, now rough river currents.

He continued hiking.

Parallel to the river, under a green canopy of luxuriant vegetation, the path advanced through a narrow ravine. It was getting hotter. The straps of his backpack were digging into his shoulders. His glasses, misted with sweat and mud, blurred his vision. “If the mountain does not come to you, you must go to the mountain,” the mountaineer repeated to himself with each step, in the way of an invigorating and prodding mantra, and he continued the ascent, reaching steep slopes, spying promontories. At some point, the evil bird of listlessness fluttered around him, but he slapped it away, clenching his jaws, and pretending, with illusory simplicity, that neither heat nor humidity had any effect on him, and that invisible wings propelled him upwards.

Three hours later, the solitary mountaineer reached the summit of Amarah Mountain.

### Samadhi

The mountaineer, gasping, bathed in perspiration, his quadriceps stiff, his stomach upset, lied on the moss, in the shade of an impressive magnolia tree; he drank until he was satiated and then he ate half a loaf of bread with a chunk of cheese. Later, he lit his pipe, inhaled the sweet smoke with deliberate delight and observed the dazzling view. To the North was the Interstate Thruway, going towards Albany and Canada. To the South, at his feet, fragmented by the Palisades, spread the wide and green valley, dappled with pointed church steeples. To the East, the old Hudson flowed, crisscrossed by tugboats with hoarse horns, graceful sailboats, slender frigates, noisy motorboats (and sometimes, the bluish and bloated bodies of suicides) —the mythic Hudson River, sung by Whitman and García Lorca, from its source at Lake Champlain, in the remote Adirondacks, to the spectacular mouth of its estuary, with Ellis Island and the Verrazano Strait, already in the arms of the Atlantic; the venerable Hudson River, whose waters carried the Hispanolusitanian explorer Esteban Gomes, sailing under the Spanish flag, half a century before Henry Hudson. To the West, Sterling Forest (semi-devoured by an insatiable urbanizing drive) shone in its pristine beauty; in the distance, the Appalachian Mountains took shape, from Maine to Georgia. The mountaineer filled his pipe again, and gazed at the turquoise blue sky, swiped with strands of white nimbus; at the ferns' graceful elegance, like pointed green formations, blossoming of arches and spears ready for action (humble vestiges of those Precambrian ferns, colossal like the dinosaurs themselves). Oh new Rockland Buddha, in perfect communion with Nature, with the world, with himself!

Samadhi! Samadhi!! Samadhi!!!

In the stupor of the afternoon, one could hear the incessant chirping of cicadas and crickets, in counterpoint to the isochronal, machine-gun rat-rat-rat of the woodpeckers. Among the jungle of azaleas, cackled the mockingbirds and blue-jays.

But as the afternoon wore on, the forest filled with shadows and the din of birds and insects gradually turned silent until it was reduced to a muffled rustle.

### Kundalini's Awakening

The sun hid behind the hills and a cool wind stirred the leaves of the trees. Feeling stiff, the mountaineer decided to put up his tent and build a fire. He got up and walked a few steps to a rocky place nearby to get some stones for the base of the fire. He bent down to lift a stone, and in doing so, he felt as if he had been stung with an incandescent needle: a rattlesnake had dug its sharp incisors in his left hand. Out of his mind with pain, he withdrew his bloody hand. The snake—a wiggling body of gray-blue corneous rings—, shaking its rattle (like a bugle proclaiming the winner's joy after the battle), quickly hid among the rocks. "Damn you!" uttered the enraged mountaineer, as he unsheathed his hunting knife. Blood and venom oozed from the bite. The pain was unbearable. He told himself that he must control his fear, the panic that seized him, a remnant reflex of the species' collective atavistic memory. With a couple of cross cuts, he opened up the wound and sucked out the viscous, yellow liquid. The poison burned his tongue; he retched, and sickened, he spit it out. He repeated the operation two more times, and he staggered to get the emergency kit from his backpack. In all his years of hiking, it was the first time that anything like this had ever happened to him. The accident had caught him by surprise. But the kit had everything. Everything, except the antidote which he so urgently needed.

Since he didn't have any flares, he decided to leave the camp and go back to the highway by the same path he had taken. The important thing was not to be overcome by panic.

He bandaged his swollen, festering hand, and he made himself a tourniquet with his belt; he drank from the canteen again (almost one third empty), and, flashlight in hand, he started down the hill, leaving behind his tent, backpack and sleeping bag. He could not waste a minute. He also knew that the faster he ran, the more he would accelerate his metabolism, which in turn would make the venom travel directly to his heart.

In spite of the strong beam of light from the flashlight, he could hardly get his bearings on the path. Overpowered by fever, hounded by thirst, he stumbled forward on the rocky trail. Painful spasms of pain ran up his arm. But the highway wasn't far. It couldn't be.

Suddenly, he tripped and rolled down the side of the hill.

An owl was heard batting its wings.

When he opened his eyes, a stab of pain moved through his arm. He tried to get up, but he collapsed: he had sprained his ankle. He had lost his way as well as the flashlight. Short of breath and hobbling, he walked blindly into some reeds. The stems hit his face and his feet sank in the sticky mud. But he had to keep walking: the highway, help, it was so near!

He could not go on. Unable to breathe, he dragged himself through the dead leaves, struggling in vain with the chills that traveled up and down his spine, against the thirst, the awful thirst that was consuming him.

Two days later, another lonely mountaineer found the body. The main highway was less than half a mile away.

*(Translated from the Spanish by Carmen Fernández Klohe)*

ARTICLES

UNTIL YOU CRASHED INTO MY GEOGRAPHY: NATIONNESS, SYMPTONS AND THE PECULIAR PERFORMATIVITY OF TWO CANADIAN FICTIONS <i>Pedro M. Carmona Rodríguez</i> .....	7
HUMOUR AND GENRE IN THOMAS DELONEY'S <i>JACK OF NEWBURY</i> <i>Jorge Figueroa Dorrego</i> .....	23
EL PENSAMIENTO POLÍTICO DE JAMES JOYCE EN <i>THE CRITICAL WRITINGS</i> : IDEALISMO DESDE EL EXILIO <i>Carmen García Navarro</i> .....	35
LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR EFL SELF-ACCESS STUDENTS: STRATEGIES OF TEXTUAL ANALYSIS <i>Eduardo de Gregorio Godeo</i> .....	53
THE FIRST SPANISH TRANSLATION OF VIRGINIA WOOLF'S "TIME PASSES": FACTS MYSTERIES AND CONJECTURES <i>Luis Alberto Lázaro Lafuente</i> .....	71
"AS DEEP AS ENGLAND": THE IRONIES OF ENGLISH HISTORY IN POEMS BY TED HUGHES, GEOFFREY HILL AND TONY HARRISON <i>David Malcolm</i> .....	85
PIONEERING FEMINISM: DEBORAH'S ROLE IN "LIFE IN THE IRON-MILLS" <i>Rosa Muñoz Luna</i> .....	101
GENDER AND CULTURE CONFLICTS IN THE <i>REZ</i> PLAYS OF TOMSON HIGHWAY <i>María Elena Sánchez Hernández</i> .....	111
EFFECTO DE FACILITACIÓN POR EL ESTUDIO Y LA PRÁCTICA DE LOS SIGNOS DE PUNTUACIÓN <i>María Jesús Sánchez Manzano</i> .....	125

BOOKS REVIEWS

<i>Eva María Cortés Martínez</i> .....	145
<i>María Antonia López-Burgos del Barrio</i> .....	151

LITERARY CONTRIBUTION

"Triptych of the Lonely Mountaineer" <i>Gerardo Piña Rosales</i> .....	157
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