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FOREWORD

Dear reader:

As we announced in our previous issue, *The Grove. Working Papers on English Studies* is progressively but steadily introducing some new guidelines in order to improve its accessibility and impact. Today we can proudly confirm that the English studies journal of the Universidad de Jaén is decidedly achieving many of the goals that we set two years ago, and that the adoption of MLA formal guidelines has proved to be the right decision. The number of articles received at our office has increased significantly, and—as the reader may appreciate in this volume—the quality of many of these papers is outstanding. Furthermore, these works proceed (as the norm began in 2006) from a diversity of universities and institutions located all over the world, bearing witness to the international penetration of the journal and to the interest it raises in the academic community. Of course, this is to the credit of our readers, contributors, and referees, who not only maintain the high standards of quality that *The Grove* already established almost fifteen years ago, but have raised these to the extent that we are becoming a referential journal in this field in our country, according to the indexes and repertoires where we appear and those which have manifested their interest in us.

Due to the huge amount of valuable manuscripts we have received, the present issue (16) is considerably longer than the average. As can be easily perceived, the diversity of literary and cultural topics is significant, including the (sorrowfully) increasingly neglected areas of early modern studies, which *The Grove* has traditionally made the effort to include in each issue. Sadly enough, we can only present one work on linguistics; although the number of papers on linguistic topics is traditionally lower than those on other issues in most journals, this

editorial team is working on this deficiency that we will try to solve in the near future: from here we encourage scholars working on the field of general, English and comparative linguistics (very especially including applied linguistics) to send us their manuscripts for the 2010 (which still has room for one or two essays) and 2011 issues of *The Grove*.

Following a tradition that our readers appreciate and which has become the trademark of this journal (together with its characteristic olive green covers!) we include a short fascinating literary contribution by Stephanos Stephanides, which we hope will make us all remember that our commitment to the theoretical study of English language, literature and culture must always be connected to our practical enjoyment of language use in all forms. Finally, and as always, our gratitude goes to our referees, editorial board, contributors, assistants, the Universidad de Jaén Research Group HUM 0271 and the Caja Rural (institution that co-sponsors the journal), for their invaluable assistance.

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Editors

SIMPLY BRITISH: STRUCTURED TRAUMA AND COLONIAL PAST IN ZADIE SMITH'S *WHITE TEETH*

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Abstract

Second generation migrants, who supposedly live in a space of in-betweenness and double consciousness in (Post-) postcolonial Britain, have been an increasing focus of attention in postcolonial and cultural studies in recent years, together with the role that colonial past plays in the re-invention of identities in minority groups today. This paper will focus on the second generation British-born Irie Jones in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and the different stages she goes through (assimilation > integration > discovery of hidden and silenced histories > acceptance) in the process of re-asserting an individual identity outside a predetermined national identity that places her in a minority ethnic group due to her Caribbean origins and, primarily, her skin colour.

This paper intends to subvert postcolonial notions which claim that historical, trans-generational traumas become structured as a way of defining and unifying second generation identities. What happens when a second generation migrant does not want to be fixed into structured trauma? Is it possible to inhabit a present neutral space in a New Britain without it being historically determined? The necessity of culture-specificity when dealing with matters of British identity is highlighted in this paper. However, Smith's presumed celebration of difference and ordinary hybridity may also be considered to be exaggeratedly optimistic at present when racism still exists disguised in notions of diversity and ethnicity. In fact, this paper aims to question recent British politics as well as the discourses of some postcolonial and cultural critics when dealing with "multicultural" Britain, as we must not forget that laws and theories regarding this issue are frequently

made by the systems of power to which so-called minority groups have no access.

Key words: second generation migrants, colonial past, trauma, Zadie Smith, hybridity, multiculturalism.

Resumen

La situación del sujeto inmigrante de segunda generación, que supuestamente habita un espacio de intermediedad y doble conciencia en la Gran Bretaña (post-) postcolonial, lleva siendo el principal foco de atención en los estudios culturales y post-coloniales de la última década, junto con el papel que el pasado colonial de éste juega en la reinvención de su identidad como miembro de una minoría étnica en la sociedad británica actual. Este artículo se centra en la británica inmigrante de segunda generación Irie Jones en *White Teeth* de Zadie Smith y en las diferentes etapas que ésta atraviesa (asimilación > integración > descubrimiento de historias silenciadas > auto-aceptación) en el proceso de reafirmar una identidad individual fuera de una identidad nacional establecida que la sitúa forzosamente en una minoría étnica debido a sus orígenes caribeños y, primordialmente, al color de su piel.

Es mi propósito en este artículo subvertir las nociones postcoloniales que afirman que los traumas históricos y trans-generacionales se vuelven estructurados en la creación de la identidad del inmigrante de segunda generación. ¿Qué ocurre cuando este sujeto se niega a ser fijado en un trauma estructurado? ¿Es posible ocupar un espacio neutral no determinado históricamente en una Nueva Gran Bretaña? Este artículo pretende poner de relieve la necesidad de la especificidad cultural cuando se tratan cuestiones de identidad británica. No obstante, la supuesta celebración en Smith de la diferencia y la cotidianeidad del hibridismo podría considerarse exageradamente optimista aún en el presente, cuando el racismo existe todavía oculto detrás de conceptos de diversidad y etnicidad. De hecho, este artículo quiere cuestionar las recientes políticas británicas, al igual que algunos de los discursos de varios críticos de los estudios culturales y postcoloniales, referentes a la Gran Bretaña "multicultural", puesto que no debemos olvidar que las leyes y teorías concernientes a este tema son frecuentemente creadas por los sistemas del poder a los que estas denominadas minorías étnicas no tienen acceso.

Palabras clave: inmigrantes de segunda generación, pasado colonial, trauma, Zadie Smith, hibridismo, multiculturalismo.

> 'Where are you from, if you don't mind me asking?'
> 'Willesden,' said Irie and Millat simultaneously.
> 'Yes, yes, of course, but where *originally*?'
> 'Oh,' said Millat, putting on what he called a *bud-bud-ding-ding* accent. 'You are meaning where from am I *originally*.'
> Joyce looked confused. 'Yes, *originally*.'
> 'Whitechapel,' said Millat [...] 'Via the Royal London Hospital and the 207 bus'. (Smith 319)

In the United Kingdom today, we increasingly find second and third generation coloured migrants who have to face up to difficulties in belonging to Britain due to their colonial origins. Although they consider themselves as British, they will be forced to fit into a position of in-betweeners, inhabiting the margins of society and feeling at home neither in Britain nor in their parents' land. For them, the historical trauma through which their ancestors almost certainly went becomes structured and it is not always straightforward to escape from it.

The passage extracted from Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and used to introduce the topic of debate in this paper shows the complex situation of double-consciousness in which these subjects are placed by the neighbouring whites who, most of the times, are also British "in a hyphenated way" (Childs, "Hyphen-Nation" 29). This reality is evidenced here in view of the fact that the person who asks second generation migrants, Irie and Millat, where they are from *originally* is white middle-class Joyce Chalfen, scientist Marcus Chalfen's wife, both of them symbolizing

> the prime exemplars of [...] Englishness in *White Teeth* [...] because of their liberal middle-class values, and also their empiricism. [...][1] However, they are third-generation Poles, originally Chalfenovskys: not more English than the English, but as English as anyone else. (Childs, "Hyphen-Nation" 25)

They are white though, therefore they do not represent a threat to the homogenised and racialised notion of British identity which only contemplates those people, although hybrid too, that are protected under

the coat of whiteness and that are not visibly different and, for that reason, they can apparently mix with the host community (Kennedy-Dubordieu 51). On the other hand,

> It is those [...], the blacks and Asians, who have provided the dominant challenges to existing identities. Despite the fact that they make up no more than about 7 per cent of the total British population, and are outnumbered by recent white immigrants, it is they [...] who are thought of and for much of the time treated as 'aliens' by the dominant white majority. (Kumar 241)

In this process of defining itself in opposition to the Other, however, Britain "finds itself in great difficulty when presented with those who seem keen to resist definition [:] these 'in-betweens'" (Phillips 284). These characters want to be simply British and become indispensable to get a move towards a necessary New Britain.

A significant number of academics on postcolonial and cultural studies these days and literary representations of the post-war migrant experience in the last decades have presented second and third generation migrants in current Britain as being traumatized subjects who find the necessity to look for their historical roots in order to assert an identity in multicultural Britain, without taking much into account that, for them, the post-war British experience and "the concepts of 'migrancy' and 'exile' have become too distant to carry their former freight of disabling rootlessness" (Head 107-108). This is the case of Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*'s British-born Irie Ambrosia Jones, of English and Jamaican parentage (reminiscent of Zadie Smith herself). Irie revises her colonial and traumatic past, in order not to re-live it positively (as Faith in Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon* does)[2] but not to re-live it at all, although the acknowledgement of this past could help her reach a balanced individual identity escaping from the predetermined imposed idea of a unified, fixed and essential identity, which academics on cultural studies such as the eminent Stuart Hall have long rejected:

> The end of the essential black subject also entails a recognition that the central issues of race always appear historically in articulation, in a formation, with other categories and divisions and are constantly crossed and recrossed by the categories of class, of gender and ethnicity. ("New Ethnicities" 444)

However, the term "ethnicity" has recently turned out to be excessively universal too when referring to the hybrid characters analysed here and it becomes necessary to dissociate this concept from its racist and imperialist connotations. The reason for this necessary dissociation is that this term has been constructed by the dominant discourse of power, which continues to be based on binary oppositions in which a superior English national self is maintained over the rest of ethnicities (as happened before with the dominant whites over the inferior black Others):

> [...] on the first day black and white people were created; on the second day black people, and only black people, were then differentiated into their various ethnicities. 'True nationals'— 'whites'—remain indivisible. But if only OTHERS have ethnicity, what do 'whites' have? Well, they have... they have ... 'whiteness'. (James and Harris 2)

And it is for these reasons that academics, artists and ordinary people themselves have still a great deal of work to do in order to subvert these essentialist notions referring to "multiethnic" Britain. Smith, through Irie, starts walking this path towards a New Britain optimistically. Irie represents a post-postcolonial, post-postmodern and almost certainly post-multicultural London. However, in this search for an individual non-stereotyped identity, she will have to go through several stages which could symbolize the different stages immigrants into Britain have necessarily gone through due to the different immigration policies imposed on them from the postwar period up to the present day.

In Irie, "the struggle between the personal and political is written [...] deeply into her skin and body" (Lowe 176). Irie's crisis of identity at the doors of the new millennium culminates in an apparent personal equilibrium and acceptance of her own reality, contrary to England, which is "still struggling to find a way to stare in the mirror and accept the ebb and flow of history which has produced this fortuitously diverse condition" (Phillips 286). With Irie, there is a hope that England will finally accept its diverse, changing and multiethnic (in an equalitarian sense) reality.

The first step fifteen-year-old Irie takes involves her desire to assimilate to the dominant stereotyped British identity. Since this construction of a national identity is based on visible features such as skin colour, it is comprehensible that Irie wishes she had the size

of her white counterparts in order to belong to the society around her but she is

> big. The European proportions of Clara's figure had skipped a generation, and she was landed instead with Hortense [her grandmother]'s substantial Jamaican frame, loaded with pineapples, mangoes and guavas; the girl had weight; big tits, big butt, big hips, big thighs, big teeth. (Smith 265)

And she cannot avoid feeling this sense of in-betweenness at the beginning of her progression: "Irie didn't know she was fine. There was England, a gigantic mirror, and there was Irie, without reflection. A stranger in a stranger land" (Smith 266). In fact, in her thirst for belonging, she goes through a humiliating episode at a hairdresser's when intending to have her afro-hair straightened. For her,

> what should be part of ordinary, innocent everyday ablutions (looking after your hair) turns into political crises that slap her so hard in her face, political consciousness-raising is a necessity, a question of survival, and not a choice that can wait for the next century to come around. (Lowe 176)

Assimilationist episodes like the one mentioned are observable in other second generation migrants with a background similar to Irie Jones': in the twin sisters Olive and Vivien, presented by the also English novelist to Jamaican parents Andrea Levy in *Never Far From Nowhere*: "My hair was a lie. It wasn't really straight. […] Olive and me straightened our hair. But I didn't like people to know" (43), or in the three Jacobs sisters in *Every Light in the House Burnin'* by the same author: "I looked forward to the day when I'd go with the women of my family to the hairdresser to have my frizz tamed permanently. I was twelve when my mum agreed that now was the time" (165).

Later in the novel, however, Irie will follow a good piece of advice from the British-Bengali Neena (Alsana and Samad's niece, who is called "Niece of Shame" by both of them and the rest of her Bengali family due to her lesbianism and her rejection of her Muslim origins): "Look: you're a smart cookie, Irie. But you've been taught all kinds of shit. You've got to re-educate yourself. Realize your value, stop the lavish devotion, and get a life, Irie" (Smith 284-285) and she will do it; she will gradually re-educate herself.

It is evident, then, that assimilationist policies that used to take place in social, cultural and educational spheres in the initial postwar

period and that promulgated that "alien minority ethnic cultures were inappropriate and consequently needed to be assimilated into the mainstream culture of the British society" (Fons 79), move away from these second generation migrant's real need of identification with surrounding Britain. This is shown by Smith and confirmed by Homi Bhabha, who states (precisely in the same year in which Irie goes through this assimilationist process) that "the time for 'assimilating' minorities to holistic and organic notions of cultural value has passed" (*The Third Space* 219). He adds that "it is only by losing the sovereignty of the self [*i.e.* England] that you can gain the freedom of a politics that is open to the non-assimilationist claims of cultural difference" (213). It must not be ignored either that Conservative Norman Tebbit's famous cricket test[3] (which mounted an attack on those who in his view had refused to assimilate) took place in this same year 1990 as well. From this moment on, scholars on multiethnic Britain have been discarding these assimilationist policies. In fact, some of them made this aim clear in paragraph 4.12 of the Parekh Report:[4]

> The essential problem with the nationalist or assimilationist model [...] is that it is based on a false premise of what Britain is and has been. Britain is not and never has been a homogenous and unified whole—it contains many conflicting traditions and is differentiated by gender, class, region and religion as well as by culture, ethnicity and race. Assimilation is a fantasy, for there is no single culture into which all people can be incorporated. In any case, it seldom leads to complete acceptance, for the demand for assimilation springs from intolerance of difference [...]. Furthermore, assimilation cannot be justified morally [...]. A fundamental practical problem is that assimilation cannot be pursued in an age of increasing globalisation. (Parekh 4.12)

Although in the sixties it was thought that if minority ethnic groups absorbed the values and behaviour of mainstream culture and finally assimilated to it, they would mix with the English and racism would disappear, the result was far from this. In actual fact, the DES (Department of Education and Science) Circular 7/65 regarding immigrant's education happened to reinforce racial stereotypes even more and encouraged migrant parents not to emphasize their racial and cultural differences. If truth is to be told, the British educational system was unable to face the recent influx of immigrants in the classrooms, which represented a microcosm of what happened in British society at

the time. Consequently, a change of immigration politics was needed and eventually came in 1966 with Labour Secretary Roy Jenkins.

According to Jenkins, integration policies would not substitute assimilationist ones but would complement them by supporting equalitarian opportunities and accepting cultural diversity and the mutual tolerance between different cultures. However, with the arrival of the Conservatives in the seventies, coloured minority groups were considered to be a problem once more. Policies kept being ethnocentric and discriminatory, promoting only the values of dominant white population. With regard to our protagonist, Irie becomes victim of this integrationist system once she gets punished by her high school headmaster to attend a two-month programme consisting of two-hour after-school study group with the Chalfens. As said by the headmaster, this time with the Chalfens will provide Irie and the British-Bangladeshi Millat with a more stable educational and family environment than their own, which could be damaging for them. And he concludes by pointing out that "this kind of thing is very much in the history, the spirit, the whole *ethos* of Glenard Oak, ever since Sir Glenard himself" (Smith 303). A few lines later, Smith describes Sir Glenard as "a successful colonial who had made a pretty sum in Jamaica farming tobacco, or rather overseeing great tracts of land where tobacco was being farmed" and as a man who thought that by building an educational institution addressed to both English and Jamaicans could live with a feeling of "goodwill and worthiness" (304) for the rest of his life. Accordingly, the Chalfens, and more especially Marcus Chalfen, will educate Irie Jones following Sir Glenard's spirit (who, sarcastically, had also educated Irie's great-grandmother in Jamaica):

> It was Marcus who seemed to keep an eye out for her. It was Marcus who had helped these four months as her brain changed from something mushy to something hard and defined, as she slowly gained a familiarity with the Chalfen way of thinking. She had thought of this as a great sacrifice on the part of a busy man, but more recently she wondered if here was not some enjoyment in it. (Smith 335)

Initially, Irie accepts and even worships this instruction she receives by the white man: "She had a nebulous fifteen-year-old's passion for them. [...] She wanted their Englishness. [...] The *purity* of it. It didn't occur to her that the Chalfens were, after a fashion, immigrants too"

(Smith 328). She even repudiates her own family and roots: "she *wanted* to merge with the Chalfens, to be of one flesh; separated from the chaotic, random flesh of her own family and transgenically fused with another. A unique animal. A new breed" (Smith 342). The fact that Marcus objectifies her sexually when talking about the size of her breasts to Magid and offers her the sole professional opportunity of being his secretary cannot be obviated either:

> Well, things are the same round here except that my files are in excellent order, thanks to Irie. You'll like her: she's a bright girl and she has the most tremendous breasts [...]. Sadly, [...] she hasn't any head for the concepts, no head at all. She could try medicine, I suppose, but even there you need a little bit more chutzpah than she's got ... so it might have to be dentistry for our Irie. (Smith 368)

Although she accepts Marcus's opinion without saying a word and eventually decides to become a dentist, Irie will soon realize that she is not going to find her true personal identity by feeling ashamed of her colonial roots and trying to integrate into a fictitious Britishness that does not truly include her.

Therefore, not only did assimilationist theories fail, but also integration policies do. As a result, Irie will change direction and search for other means of representation in her past. The turning point which makes Irie seek refuge in her grandmother Hortense's house is the discovery of her mother Clara's false teeth. Clara loses her teeth by a bike accident at the very moment in which she breaks with her past to start a new life with the white English Archibald Jones. Clara disguises her roots and traditions with false teeth, in the same way Irie wanted to hide her original afro-hair. Both mother and daughter intend to ignore their history but, although covered in a paint coat, past is there, "because this is the other thing about immigrants [...] they cannot escape their history any more than you yourself can lose your shadow" (Smith 466). Irie is tired of "secret histories, stories you never got told, history you never entirely uncovered, rumour you never unravelled. [...] These parents were full of information you wanted to know but were scared to hear. [...] She was sick of never getting the whole truth. She was returning to the sender" (Smith 379), where she finally uncovers her roots through oral tradition, books and pictures. At this stage, Irie adopts an exaggerated romantic vision of this past, as a place

> where things simply were. No fictions, no myths, no lies, no
> tangled webs—this is how Irie imagined her homeland. […] And
> the particular magic of *homeland*, its particular spell over Irie, was
> that it sounded like a beginning. […] A blank page. (Smith 402)

Later in the novel she will understand that this page is not so
blank because the present intrudes in the past and vice versa. When
Irie grows up, Jamaica becomes demystified and she concludes that the
idea of belonging is itself a "lie" (Smith 407). But this stage back to
her past becomes indispensable in her process of maturation towards
becoming a post-in-between, towards being simply Irie.

At this point, it is interesting to compare Irie's revision of her
Caribbean past with also second generation migrant Faith's in *Fruit
of the Lemon*, when they are both in search of a unified identity.
Whereas Irie only re-visits Jamaica through Hortense's words, books
and pictures, Faith visits her 'original' place *in situ*. Although there
is no question that for both of them Britain is their home, Faith's
Afro-Caribbean Black British identity becomes "strengthened, more
whole, due to her contextualization within an Afro-Caribbean and
transatlantic family history" (Machado 15). In other words, Faith's
journey to Jamaica means a solution to her hybrid position and her
initial sense of belonging neither to England nor to Jamaica (Toplu 15).
On the contrary, Irie fights to identify herself outside her "past rooms"
(Smith 514), in which she enters for a while in order to fill the void of
history and the hidden silences in her life (as Faith herself does) but
from which she escapes because, for her, past "*doesn't fucking matter*"
(Smith 515). She wants to be British, to be simply Irie, who happens to
be black and who happens to have Caribbean origins, as other English
inhabitants have Asian, European or African descendants or a mixture
of all of them. She wishes she did not have to be more proud of her black
origins than whites are of theirs, which would mean that hybridity is
normalised and no more racialised. A clear evidence of this rupture
with the burden of the historical roots in Irie is her fatherless daughter-
to-be, who will never know if her father is Magid or Millat and who
could be brought up by white English Joshua.

Both Smith and Levy portray a second generation black woman
(with an identical background to that of their respective creator) who is
in search of a personal identity in modern Britain. But, whereas Levy's

Faith reinvents home by recovering her cultural roots so that she can finally claim her Afro-Caribbean self,

> I am the granddaughter of Grace and William Campbell. I am the great-grandchild of Cecelia Hilton. I am descended from Katherine whose mother was a slave. I am the cousin of Africa. I am the niece of Coral Thompson and the daughter of Wade and Mildred Jackson. [...] I am the bastard child of Empire and I will have my day. (Levy, *Fruit* 327)

Smith's Irie, on the other hand, does not want "to spread the myth, the wicked lie, that the past is always tense and the future, perfect" (Smith 541). She does not want to live a present traumatised by a tense past but a neutral present in which everybody is the same and different at the same time, in which the children of the black diaspora are not defined and regrouped by trans-generational traumas any more but by their individual and cultural specificities.

Like this, the last part of Irie's evolution is set in the multicultural Britain of the new millennium. Quite a lot has been said about current multicultural Britain and the way Zadie Smith deals with it. There is an apparent celebration of ordinary hybridity in *White Teeth* but what Smith may well be doing is questioning "a liberal version of multiculturalism and showing that it is not applicable for every immigrant native" (Bentley 499). In effect, multicultural theories that supposedly recognise different cultures and identities have been recently criticized "because of its unwitting tendency to further reactionary currents within ethnic minority communities" (Dawson 167), because multiculturalism means what Hall calls "the exotica of difference" ("Old and New" 151) and because this concept views

> minority ethnic cultures as 'fixed' and homogeneous [...] [and it perpetuates] a simplistic view of wider social and cultural power relations in a post-modern world. [In addition, it also fails] to examine or challenge the dominance of ethnocentrism in educational practice, political processes and economic structures dominant in Britain. [...] Like assimilationist policies, multicultural education serve[s] to maintain the status quo. (Fons 83-84)

Consequently, the "new mythology of multiculturalism" (James and Harris 2) or the "multicultural make-up" (Bentley 501) created by the discourses of power which still construct their Englishness on the basis of the legacies of colonialism is not something to be celebrated yet.

White Teeth's second generation characters are often considered as to be living in a multicultural and postmodern London. For instance, Paproth affirms that *White Teeth* could be positioned in-between modernism (in structure) and post-modernism (in the chaotic relationship between past and present) (10-11). On the contrary, this paper aims to support the view that *White Teeth* goes beyond post-colonial and post-modern analysis which seem to be "fixated on history, [whereas] the post-post-colonial 'couldn't give an f-word for it'" (Moss 11).[5] Smith seems convinced that "we are all hybrid post-colonials, biologically as well as culturally, and the pursuit of pure ethnic origins is a pointless objective. And in celebrating this hybridity, Smith embraces its contradictory and haphazard nature" (Head 114). Smith, then, seems to be dismissive of a "Happy Multicultural Land" (Smith 398) in the present, but she could be anticipating a time when "roots won't matter anymore because they can't because they mustn't because they are too long and they're too tortuous and they're just buried too damn deep" (Smith 450).

In this sense, *White Teeth* could be well thought out as post-postcolonial and mixed-race inhabitants like Irie Jones as post-in-betweeners; they are not portrayed as outsiders anymore (as Sam Selvon and other early immigrant writers' characters used to be described), but as "insiders, however embattled" (Lowe 173). They do not feel nostalgia for the life back home as it used to happen in the early immigrant writings, because "Jamaica is not 'home' to Irie, any more than Bangladesh is to Millat: they belong in the place they know and are known" (Preston 14). Furthermore, mixed British inhabitants in *White Teeth*, and probably in modern London, recognize that their past is obviously there but they feel that their present identity is not necessarily historically determined, as it happens with Faith in *Fruit of the Lemon*. Just from the very beginning of the novel, Smith means to break with the historical weighty chains of these mixed British characters, or their own, with the Epigraph she makes use of: "What is past is prologue" from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* which,

> of all works in the canon, is perhaps the one that has most occupied postcolonial scholars. Yet the effect of this quotation is possibly to indicate the novel's rupture with what might be considered conventional post-colonial hang-ups. (Sell 29)

In point of fact, *White Teeth* denies determinist positions which claim that "the present state of the universe is the effect of its previous state

and the cause of the state that follows it"[6] in favour of coincidental and random realities. Confirmation of this belief is recognizable in the bad fortune of the Bengali Samad who, eager to turn at least one of his sons into a true deeply-rooted Muslim, sends Magid back to Bangladesh when he is only nine years old. Paradoxically, he returns a true Englishman whereas his twin Millat, who has stayed in London all his life, has become a fundamentalist Muslim. Another clear example of Smith's anti-determinism is reflected at the end of the novel with the failure of Marcus Chalfen's FutureMouse experiment, which "holds out the tantalizing promise of a new phase in human history where we are not victims of the random but instead directions and arbitrators of our own fate" (Smith 433). By liberating the mouse whose future was supposed to be determined by its earlier period, the white English Archibald Jones becomes once more during the novel the "hero in Smith's non-casual universe" (Sell 29). Accordingly, although Smith acknowledges the fact that living entirely outside the influence of one's colonial history is not easy at the present time, this paper aims to defend that she banks on the possibility that one day this past influences everybody in the same arbitrary way, no matter the colour of their skin or where they are from *originally*.

With Irie, and with Zadie Smith herself (since both of them are born in the same year), "a new London is in the process of being born" (Childs, "Zadie Smith" 202); a neutral space where there is not "everybody's old historical shit all over the place" (Smith 514); a third space "produced by the [equal] interaction of cultures, communities, or individuals" (Moss 12); a New Britain where second, third and future generations migrants feel free not to fix into structured trauma and "the biggest traumas of her lives are things like recarpeting" (Smith 515). Contrary to Phillips and other scholars' claim, this paper supports the idea that *White Teeth* is not a celebration of hybridity but a description of an ordinary, everyday-nature hybridity whose subjects are not "in-between" (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 361) anymore, but simply ARE, and do not need to re-invent anything because in some cases this hybridity is not forced anymore, but chosen. *White Teeth*'s are hybrid subjects who are not necessarily in a "state of flux, panic, trauma, or border-crossing" (Moss 13) and who aim to feel free "as Pinocchio, a puppet clipped of paternal strings" (Smith 541). Moss quotes second generation black British artist Sonia Boyce as an example of this rejection of the

position of "in-betweeners",[7] and as another example, a scene of the recent American film *The Visitor* could be portrayed as follows: when the Syrian Mouna Khalil (undocumented citizen in the United States) visits his son Tarek's lawyer (Tarek gets arrested as an undocumented citizen), she gets upset with him because she assumes that he is not doing his best to avoid Tarek's deportation. When the lawyer explains to her that he himself lived a similar situation with his uncle, Mouna changes her attitude towards him in search of solidarity between migrants and asks him where he is from. The lawyer, much younger than her and obviously second, not first, generation migrant, answers that he is from Brooklyn. In this way, he breaks the bonds of complicity with her since he does not feel he is a victim of a traumatic experience, as previous generation Mouna is. He admits and is conscious of his migrant past but he is not part of it anymore. He is North-American, from Brooklyn, and refuses to be a victim of a structured trauma.

Nonetheless, Smith seems to acknowledge this is still too optimistic in Irie's generation when the concepts of multiculturalism or multiethnicism are greatly politicised and these second and third generation migrants still have to fight racism. She is conscious of the problems that being hybrid still entail, even if this is a chosen hybridity. For the time being, she merely

> explores the ramifications and outcomes of cultural mixing, aware of the dangers and possibilities of a globalised world in which purity is impossible. The future for London immigrant subcultures cannot be reduced to either assimilation or marginalization; instead, Smith shows us the emergence of something else entirely, a London that is British and Caribbean and South Asian and American all at the same time. (Dalleo 93)

And she is hopeful that in a near future (in Irie's daughter's generation, for instance), being Irie (a hyphenated subject) in Britain means the real meaning of the name "Irie" in Jamaican Patois: "no problem".

In the end, Irie becomes a dentist as her nearest real-life counterpart Zadie Smith writes a book called *White Teeth*. The whole book is full with references to teeth and metaphors with them. They "have roots, they grow, they decay, and are in one sense the same and in another sense different for everyone" (Childs, "Zadie Smith" 213). That is to say, teeth are white for everyone, no matter the colour of our skin and, at

the same time, everyone's teeth, containing marks of personal histories, are different. To conclude, being a dentist, Irie will be able to clean and re-define white teeth (in other words, she will be able to speak and be listened) and reach a neutral space in which she can dislocate English/ Caribbean histories and set up new structures of power. And if, in the future, the image of "Irie, Joshua and Hortense sitting by a Caribbean sea" (Smith 541) comes true, this will simply mean a chosen journey to one's family land, sometimes sweet and inevitably, sometimes sour, but chosen at any rate.

In the last passage of *White Teeth*, after Archie Jones has been hurt to save Marcus and the glass box containing the victim of the Future Mouse experiment breaks into pieces, Smith divides the onlookers into two groups: "those whose eyes fell upon a bleeding man […] and those who watched the getaway of a small brown rebel mouse" (541). There is no doubt Smith and her second generation protagonist is in the second group pushing "the bleeding man" into the background.

NOTES

[1] Peter Childs extracts these characteristics that define the concept of *Englishness* from Easthope 1999.

[2] Second generation migrant Faith Campbell in Andrea Levy's *Fruit of the Lemon* feels the need to fill the void of her colonial past in order to acquire her individual sense of identity in modern Britain. For her, her physical trip to her parents' Jamaica becomes "a movement from rootlessness to belonging" (Machado 2) and a positive way through which she can re-assert an Afro-Caribbean and Black British subjectivity.

[3] Lord Tebbit suggested in April 1990 that immigrants and their children could not show loyalty to Britain until they supported the England team at cricket: "A large proportion of Britain's Asian population fail to pass the cricket test. Which side do they cheer for? It's an interesting test. Are you still harking back to where you came from or where you are?" he said in an interview with the *Los Angeles Times* (Carvel 2004).

[4] Report by the *Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* published on 11 October 2000. This commission is composed of 23 distinctive members belonging to the fields of cultural and social studies with the purpose of analyzing the current situation of Britain as a multi-ethnic country and eradicating racial discrimination in order to live in a multicultural society in agreement with its ethnic diversity.

[5] Quotation extracted from Moss, who cites an article by an unnamed reviewer in *The Economist*: 'Pulling Teeth'. *The Economist Review* 354.8185 (February 19, 2000): 5.

[6] Definition of "determinism" extracted from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

[7] "She is not *in-between* Britain and the Caribbean", she argues, "she just *is* British. She doesn't need to *re-*invent anything" (Boyce 47).

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S *MACBETH*:
TO BE OR NOT TO BE AN ARISTOTELIAN TRAGEDY

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Abstract

Among his great tragedies like *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Julius Caesar*, etc. his last tragedy, *Macbeth*, probably written in 1605/1606 and performed in 1611, is the most popular because it is not only the bloodiest, but also the shortest and the most traditional. It certainly is also the best well-known because it is widely read in school education and frequently performed in theatre-houses. Since its appearance it has raised many doubts in terms of authorship and in genre criticism about the border-lines along which the listing of a certain play under the category of tragedy is valid or not. Since all his plays were categorized along the genres used in Renaissance times in the First Folio of 1623, one is confronted with these classifications although Shakespeare surely ignored these listings and composed his plays according to his likings and his inspirations. This essay tries to apply the definition and the characteristics which we can identify in the *Poetics*, written about 350 B.C. by Aristotle, in order to answer the pervasive question propounded by Tom McAlindon in his 2002 paper "What Is a Shakespearean Tragedy?". In a careful re-reading of the play we will try to determine whether Shakespeare consciously or unconsciously observed the rules set forth by Aristotle concerning the plot, the characters, the main character's moral flaw (*hamartia*), the *catharsis* and the diction of the play. Although the understanding of the play in many ways comes close to what the theoretician Aristotle had in mind when abstracting from the great Greek tradition of tragedies, the cathartic effects on the modern reader and spectator remain doubtful and dependent on the individual's responses. As Stephen Greenblatt suggests, this play being so evil cannot protect us from evil deeds.

Keywords: Aristotelian poetics, Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, plot, structure, diction, hamartia, catharsis, catastrophe, tragedy, feminism.

Resumen

De entre las grandes tragedias de Shakespeare como *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Julius Caesar*, etc., su última tragedia, *Macbeth*, escrita probablemente en 1605/1606 y puesta en escena en 1611, es la más popular no sólo por ser la más sangrienta, sino también por ser la más corta y la más tradicional. Ciertamente, es también la más conocida porque ha sido la más leída en las instituciones educativas y se ha puesto en escena con mucha frecuencia en los teatros. Desde su aparición, esta tragedia ha suscitado muchas dudas en lo referente a temas como autoría y género y un debate en torno a la validez de la inclusión de determinadas obras dentro de la categoría de tragedia. Puesto que todas sus tragedias fueron categorizadas en el Primer Folio de 1623 conforme a la tipología de géneros renacentista, tenemos que partir de esta clasificación, aunque, con seguridad, Shakespeare desconocía estas categorías y compuso sus obras conforme a sus gustos y su inspiración. Este ensayo trabaja con la definición y las características de tragedia contenidas en la *Poética* de Aristóteles, (escrita en torno al año 350 A.C.) con vistas a responder la penetrante pregunta formulada por Tom McAlindon en su artículo "What Is a Shakespearean Tragedy?" (2002). A partir de una cuidadosa re-lectura de la obra intentaremos determinar si, consciente o inconscientemente, Shakespeare siguió las reglas marcadas por Aristóteles en lo concerniente al argumento, los personajes, la imperfección moral del personaje principal (*hamartia*), la *catarsis* y la dicción de la obra. Aunque la comprensión del mensaje de la obra, entraña, en gran medida, un acercamiento a las ideas que el teórico Aristóteles extrajo de la gran tradición griega de tragedias, los efectos catárticos en el lector y el espectador moderno siguen siendo imprevisibles y dependen de la respuesta de cada individuo. Como Stephen Greenblatt sugiere, esta obra, a pesar de ser tan malvada, no puede protegernos de actos malvados.

Palabras clave: Poética aristotélica, Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, argumento, estructura, dicción, hamartia, catarsis, catástrofe, tragedia, feminismo.

I. Introduction

William Shakespeare wrote great tragedies, the last of which was probably written in 1605/1606 and titled *Macbeth.* The list of tragedies is quite long and comprises ten plays which we are used to consider as tragedies: *Titus Andronicus*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus,* and *Timon of Athens.* In genre criticism there are of course many doubts about definitions and about the border-lines along which the listing of a certain play under this category is valid or not. Since all his plays were categorised along the genres used in Renaissance times in the First Folio of 1623, one is confronted with these classifications although Shakespeare surely ignored these listings and composed his plays according to his likings and his inspirations. Here this tragedy is listed under the heading of *The Tragedy of Macbeth*. The editors of this first edition of the complete works, John Heminge and Henry Condell, subdivided the complete works of the playwright into comedies, histories and tragedies, a categorisation which raised many an argument in the subsequent centuries. They also included *Cymbeline* in the list of tragedies, which later was eliminated again. Tom McAlindon expresses these uncertainties in his essay "What is a Shakespearean tragedy?" when saying:

> Uneasiness with definitions of Shakespearean tragedy is of a kind with the uneasiness generated by definitions of tragedy itself; these often give a static impression of the genre and incline towards prescriptiveness, ignoring the fact that 'genres are in a constant state of transmutation'. There is, however, a simple argument to be made in defence of genre criticism, namely that full understanding and appreciation of any piece of literature requires knowledge of its contexts, literary as well as intellectual and socio-political: in its relation to the author and his work, context informs, assists, stimulates, provokes. Thus knowledge of generic context helps us recognize not only what authors inherit but also what they invent and intend. So, too, familiarity with Shakespeare's tragedies as a whole enhances understanding of the meanings and the special nature of any one of them.[1] (1-2)

In this rather lengthy quotation the main points of the ongoing debate are included. Genre criticism is part of the meta-fictional discourse and of the intellectual context in which a writer produces his work of art. It also provides an orientation and a recognizable

point of reference for the reader in the diachronic evolution of literary production. It tells the reader about the departure which a writer has in mind and about his intentions which he pursues with his text. However, we have to keep in mind that Shakespeare's intentions are not at all clear and that he composed his texts on the spur of the moment without any clear notion of the traditional generic system in which he worked. Even worse, as criticism has shown in many instances, many a play is a conglomerate of many authors' pens so that we cannot clearly distinguish which parts of a play are from Shakespeare's or from any other contemporary's pen.

The "final" version of *Macbeth*, which might be the abridged form of a longer and more elaborate play-script with a long list of discrepancies and emendations, was performed in the Globe Theatre in 1611. So with these dates in mind, we might deduct any kind of reference to the political situation under James I. This tragedy, as social critics of yesterday's literary world consider, scrutinizes the evil dimension of conflict, offering a dark and gloomy atmosphere of a world dominated by the powers of darkness.[2] Macbeth, more so than any of Shakespeare's other tragic protagonists, has to face these powers and decide: Should he succumb or should he resist? Macbeth understands the reasons for resisting evil and yet he proceeds with a disastrous plan instigated by the prophecies of the three Weird Sisters or Witches, as they are called in the play. Thus one must ask the question: If Macbeth is acting on the impulses stimulated by the prophecies of his fate, is this Shakespearean work of art really a tragedy?

Aristotle, who lived from 384 until 321 B.C., was a disciple of Plato and one of the greatest philosophers in the history of human thought. About 350 B.C. he composed his *Poetics*, which became the source of critical thought in the Western World. Therefore the European dimension becomes very manifest in his philosophical as well as in his critical writings. He set the standards in so many areas of knowledge as he is a fixed point of reference in very many academic and scholarly debates.

Aristotle considered epic poetry, tragedy, comedy, dithyrambic poetry and music to be imitative, each varying in imitation by media, object, and manner. For example, music imitates with the media of rhythm and harmony, whereas dance imitates with rhythm alone, and poetry with

language. The forms also differ in their object of imitation. Comedy, for instance, is a dramatic imitation of men worse than average; whereas tragedy imitates men slightly better than average. Lastly, the forms differ in their manner of imitation—through narrative or character, through change or no change, and through drama or no drama. Aristotle believed that imitation is natural to mankind and constitutes one of mankind's advantages over animals.

While it is believed that Aristotle's *Poetics* comprised two books—one on comedy and one on tragedy—only the portion that focuses on tragedy has survived. Aristotle taught that tragedy is composed of six elements: plot-structure, character, style, spectacle, and lyric poetry. The characters in a tragedy are merely a means of driving the story; and the plot, not the characters, is the chief focus of tragedy. Tragedy is the imitation of action arousing pity and fear, and is meant to effect the *catharsis* of those same emotions. Aristotle concludes *Poetics* with a discussion on which, if either, is superior: epic or tragic *mimesis*. He suggests that because tragedy possesses all the attributes of an epic and possibly additional attributes such as spectacle and music, is more unified, and achieves the aim of its *mimesis* in shorter scope, it can be considered superior to epic. Also he interprets tragedy as a genre aimed to present a heightened and harmonious imitation of nature, and, in particular, those aspects of nature that touch most closely upon human life.

The ensuing essay therefore asks—on the basis of the literary work of *Macbeth*—how closely it is linked to the Aristotelian tragedy, *i.e*. is the tragedy of *Macbeth* written by Shakespeare, based on the Aristotelian guidelines, or did Shakespeare create his own?[3] So the main components appointed by Aristotle as parts of the tragedy will serve as the starting features and make a comparison as often as possible with the play *Macbeth*, hoping to find similarities and distinctions in the course of our argument.[4]

II. The Definition of Tragedy

Aristotle gives us the following definition:

> Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is admirable, complete and possesses magni-tude; in a language made pleasurable, each

of its species separated in different parts; performed by actors, not
through narration; effecting through pity and fear the purification
of such emotions. (10)

This definition is of course a resume. But it defines tragedy in its
essence. Tragedy is therefore an imitation of life in its whole plenitude,
with a distinctive language, brought to life by actors and its aim is
to cause the so-called *catharsis*, i.e. the purification of the audience
through pity and fear.

But an Aristotelian tragedy has, obviously, much more to it than
this brief definition. It has constituents, basic rules, foundations
in which the author should settle his work. To be categorized as an
Aristotelian tragedy there have to be particular characteristics to take
into account. To begin with the analysis, we should therefore verify
what the component parts of a tragedy are.

Plot

Plot comes first. It is, in fact, the most important component of a
tragedy to Aristotle:

> Tragedy is not an imitation of persons but of actions and life. Well-
> being and ill-being reside in action, and the goal of life is an activitiy,
> not a quality; people possess certain qualities in accordance with
> their character, but they achieve well-being or its opposite on the
> basis of how they fare. So the imitation of character is included along
> with and on account of the actions. So the events, i.e. plot, are what
> tragedy is for, and that is the most important thing of all. (11)

Plot is so distinct in this set of tragedy characteristics that it is also
said in the *Poetics* that "there could not be a tragedy without action, but
there could be one without characters" (11). This sentence is not going
to be discussed here, but there are, of course, analyses that are going to
fundament it. With this in mind, we can clearly learn that plot is in fact
above all other component parts of tragedy. Within the plot there are
also some basic concepts. A truthful plot should contain **completeness**:
a beginning, a middle, and an end. Although it seems fairly logical, this
sequence is referring to an "ordered structure", the plot consists of a
"connected and self-contained series of events" that come to a definite
end. It should also have **magnitude**, "a magnitude in which a series of
events occurring sequentially in accordance with probability or necessity
gives rise to a change from good fortune to bad fortune, or from bad

fortune to good fortune" (14). In order to achieve **unity and cohesion** it should imply unity of time, space, and action. These three unities apply only partly to *Macbeth*, because only the action is maintained as a singular series of events, which are dominated and tied together by the protagonist. No sub-plot or any parallel action distracts the reader or spectator from the main action, although Lady Macbeth and Malcolm offer some kind of distraction but not wholly. The main character provides also the magnitude to the plot, which deals with the highest social ranks in the state of Scotland. When in the end Macbeth perishes in his struggle against his rival Macduff, his death marks the fall from the highest social position to his end and thus establishes himself as part of the "*de casibus*"-tradition, which dates back to Boccaccio's *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium.* His destiny lives on in the tradition of the "rise and fall" of princes, which was renewed by Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* (1431-1438) and by the *Mirror for Magistrates*, a collection of "tragedies" compiled by William Baldwin, which became one of the most popular books of the 16th century.[5] His "fall" symbolizes the tragic loss of life and the abyss for the victims of the final catastrophe. Macbeth's tragic flaw becomes obvious when he refuses any surrender to Macduff to give way to his successor Malcolm:

> I will not yield
> To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet
> And to be baited with the rabble's curse.
> Though Birnam Wood be come to Dunsinane,
> And thou opposed being of no woman born,
> Yet I will try the last. Before my body
> I throw my warlike shield. Lay on, Macduff,
> And damned be him that first cries 'Hold, enough!'
> (V, 10, 28-34)

Macbeth, we might say, follows this structure of plot. It has **completeness, magnitude** and a **determined structure** with a definite change from good fortune to bad fortune, conceivable in the decline of Macbeth from a noble man and a successful officer in the beginning of the play to a manifold murderer. In fact, the cohesion of the play is emphasized by the serious repercussions which are created by any event in the run of the plot. There is not one only moment of comedy although there are several of dramatic irony. All the events fit in the structure and could not be removed, unless the play would become meaningless.

The play begins with the three Witches arranging to meet Macbeth, who is introduced as a very courageous soldier for he killed the main enemy of the re-bellious troups in the won war. He is praised in front of King Duncan and his peers by a captain for his valour and bravery:

> For brave Macbeth—well he deserves that name!—
> Disdaining fortune, with his brandished steel
> Which smoked with bloody execution,
> Like valour's minion
> Carved out his passage till he faced the slave,
> Which ne'er shook hands nor bade farewell to him
> till he unseamed him from the nave to th' chops
> And fixed his head upon our battlements.
> (I, 2, 16-23)

In the next scene when Macbeth together with his friend Banquo is confronted by these supernatural beings, they foretell that Macbeth, now Thane of Glamis, is going to follow a path of blood that is going to lead him to his own death, but not before he will have murdered the King, his best friend Banquo, Macduff's family, and will have lost his own wife. So this tragedy conveys a universal truth about human life, which is in jeopardy by too great an ambition of man. According to Aristotle literature (or poetry) is superior to all the other kinds of knowledge because of its **universality**:

> Poetry is more philosophical and more serious than history. Poetry tends to express universals, and history particulars. The *universal* is the kind of speech or action which is consonant with a person of a given kind in accordance with probability or necessity; this is what poetry aims at, even though it applies individual names. (16)

Richard Janko translates this passage in plain language as follows:

> It is also obvious from what we have said that it is the function of a poet to relate not things that have happened, but things that may happen, i.e. that are possible in accordance with probability or necessity. For the historian and the poet do not differ according to whether they write in verse or without verse – the writings of Herodotus could be put into verse, but they would be no less a sort of history in verse than they are without verse. But the difference is that the former relates things that have happened, the latter things that may happen. For this reason poetry is a more philosophical and more serious thing than history; poetry tends to speak of universals, history of particulars. (12)

The universality of *Macbeth* is directly intelligible on the basis of these differentialisations and on the contents of the play itself. What persists through the subsequent centuries up to Sir Philip Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* (1595) and to Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* (1821), which resume these distinctions in their respective essays, is the high position of literature (poetry) in relation to history and philosophy because it succeeds in combining the two, *i.e.* the universal and the particular, which provides more functional significance to literature than it does to the other two disciplines of history and philosophy.[6]

Character

Back to Aristotle's *Poetics* we are now moving to the second important part of a tragedy, which is character. This part has also some particular aspects to it, namely four: *goodness, appropriateness, likeness*, and *consistency*. Richard Janko translates the corresponding passages as follows:

> 1. First and foremost, the characters should be good. [The tragedy] will have character if, as we said, the speech or the action makes obvious a decision of whatever sort; it will have a good character, if it makes obvious a good decision.
> 2. Second, [they should be] appropriate. It is possible to be manly in character, but it is not appropriate for a woman to be so manly or clever.
> 3. Third, [the character should be life-] like. This is different from making the character good and appropriate in the way already stated.
> 4. Fourth, [the character should be] consistent. If the model for the representation is somebody inconsistent, and such a character is intended, even so it should be con-sistently inconsistent. (19)

Concerning character, Aristotle also settles that the one portrayed should not be extremely bad, nor extremely good. The character must be able to carry a tragic flaw that is going to lead him to his down-fall. If the character is extremely good, there is no possibility of any flaw of character; if he is extremely bad, there is of course no tragic flaw, only evil. The tragic flaw to be able to exist must not do so in a character that is in between the two extremes, good or bad.

When considering Macbeth as a character, we can hardly say that he comes up to these definitions. A.C. Bradley in his seminal book

Shakespearean Tragedy, which was first published in 1904 and which launched a long series of psycho-analytical studies of Shakespeare's plays, focusses more on Lady Mac-beth and on Banquo, because he considers Macbeth to be rather simple and ambitious. When looking at *Macbeth* as a play he calls it certainly a mistake. But Shakespeare himself is in a measure responsible for it, because the first half of *Macbeth* is greater than the second, and in the first half Lady Macbeth not only appears more than in the second but exerts the ultimate deciding influence on the action.

Later in his argument Bradley considers the play "more simple than the other tragedies, and broader and more massive in effect" (Bradley 307, 329). Surely Macbeth as a character does not come up to the Aristotelian guidelines. Even in our times the critical assessment of Macbeth's character has not fundamentally formed this impression, if we look at Robert N. Watson's characterisation:

> [...], the portrayal of Macbeth's fate as poetic justice falls far short of tragic complexity. He is not caught between conflicting imperatives: all he has to do is ignore some obviously sinister advice and he will be able to settle into the sociable contented old age he envisions (V, 3, 24-26). [...] This play has remained compelling, because (as so often in Shakespeare's work) it also harbours a contrary morality, a re-visionist fairy tale which turns into a horror movie, because the face of dear old Mother Nature melts into a blur and reshapes itself as an ugly witch who promised us glory, but in fact always had us trapped in a deterministic labyrinth. (177)

At the very outset Macbeth is presented to us as an honourable man with valour and courage. So King Duncan praises him with a view of the Norwegian King Sweno: "What he hath lost, noble Macbeth has won" (I, 2, 67). The reasons for this man to become a manifold murderer and the impersonation of unlimited ambition could lie in the prophecies told by the witches and in the instigations of his wife. The enchanting witches recount to *Macbeth* three prophecies:

> First Witch: All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis.
> Second Witch: All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor.
> Third Witch: All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter!
> (I, 3, 46-48)

They could be the ones to blame at least for instigating Macbeth to become ambitious, but one takes care of one's destiny and actions,

therefore the prophecy and the Witches could have been sent by the devil and mean the beginning of the end.

Lady Macbeth was a considerable influence on Macbeth's behaviour; she definitely contributed to his degeneration. As soon as she reads the letter sent by her husband, immediately she asks for the help of the spirits to seduce Macbeth into whatever is necessary to achieve the royal throne:

> Lady Macbeth: [...] The raven himself is hoarse
> That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
> Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
> That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
> And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
> Of direst cruelty. Make thick my blood,
> Stop up th'access and passage to remorse, [...]
> (I, 5, 36-42)

It is even her that arranges the plan to murder King Duncan, but on the last moment she cannot perpetuate the crime, for the resemblance between the King and her own father is unbearable. Thus Macbeth has to commit the murder himself. Even though, from a certain point on, Macbeth no longer makes Lady Macbeth a part of his schemes. Eventually later in the play Lady Macbeth succumbs to the weight of the deeds which both were plotting to achieve and maintain the position of King, and falls sick with grieve and remorse. She dies leaving Macbeth alone. The support of his wife, though at the very beginning this support was no other than a power of seduction and control, assists Macbeth in his intentions, and it even pressures him towards the murder of the King. But since Macbeth was the one who had to commit the killing, he could have stopped at any time. Furthermore the deaths of Banquo and Macduff's family are not directly influenced by Lady Macbeth's existence.

Finally, ambition and his ambiguous attitude towards the prophecies of the witches are most likely the most powerful reasons for Macbeth's degeneration. Ambition is also appointed as being the hero's tragic flaw. Thus, once a man of honour and courage, due to his ambition Macbeth is going to fight a moral war between good and evil. He is aware of what he is doing, and often inner conflicts feed on his guilt contrasting with his ambition. Perhaps the most remarkable fact of this tragedy is that we readers, or we audience, are able to see the inner struggle of

Macbeth via his strong monologues with a sympathetic compassion.[7] The other elements we can all recognize as being powerful so that his behaviour becomes excusable and understandable to a certain extent. His ambition is his death and his struggle his destruction.

Hamartia (Moral Flaw)

In Aristotle's *Poetics* it is acknowledgeable that this term is a rather complicated one to explain. This moral flaw is not to be related to wickedness, but rather to misjudgement. When talking about the right tragic character, Aristotle says:

> There remains, then, the intermediate kind of personage, a man not pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice and depravity but by some error of judgement, of the number of those in the enjoyment of great reputation and prosperity.[...] The perfect Plot, accordingly, must have a single, and not (as some tell us) a double issue; the change in the hero's fortunes must be not from misery to happiness, but on the contrary from happiness to misery; and the cause of it must lie not in any depravity, but in some great error on his part; the man himself being either such as we have described, or better, not worse, than that. (*Poetics* chapt. 13, 1453)[8]

This passage very neatly describes Macbeth's downfall from success and happiness to misery, a development caused by his judgment mainly of the prophecies of the witches. The crucial point here however is his likely propensity towards evil, which makes him listen attentively to his likely career as a leader of state. So the "great error" is going to allow the tragic hero's downfall to take place. The main character will have to succumb to this flaw, his ambition. This one should be common to all humans, therefore it allows the identification of the audience with the character, or at least makes his path believable, in a sense that is going to allow the catharsis in the final part of the play. The audience is supposed to achieve a state of pity and fear in order to experience the ultimate purpose of the tragedy.

Catharsis

Aristotle defines the most perfect form of tragedy by its cathartic function:

> We assume that, for the finest form of Tragedy, the Plot must be not simple but complex; and further, that it must imitate actions arousing pity and fear, since that is the distinctive function of this kind of imitation. (*Poetics*, chapt. 13)

Aristotle does not think that emotions are bad. One should feel the right amount of emotion in the right circumstances. The difference between emotions and *catharsis* is that the last embodies an excess of emotions and that it helps the audience to get rid of them by the performance. From this point of view any process that restores one to a natural or healthy state is pleasurable. This process could also be called a healing process, because through the experience of excessive feelings one tends to get out of the situation more relieved and balanced.

The effect of *catharsis* is closely linked to the concept of *philos* that is of the relationship between characters. The tragic effect is enlarged when the harm that is going to be inflicted falls upon those who are intimately related to the one that is performing the harming. *Philos* would normally be translated as 'friend', but it means much more because it implies those who are connected to each other through ties of mutual obligation. This aspect is connected to the *catharsis* because according to Aristotle a tragic plot is more likely to evoke fear and pity if a person inflicts harm on a *philos.*

In *Macbeth* this concept of harming a *philos* is the most shocking aspect of the play. As we know, Macbeth kills King Duncan after inviting him to come to his castle and, furthermore, kills Banquo, his closest friend.

Diction

Diction appears in the third place after plot and character, as far as component parts are concerned. It is given low priority because the choice of the action to be imitated is more crucial to achieve tragedy's effect than the way in which the imitation is realized in words. Aristotle, nevertheless, says:

> The Diction viewed as a whole is made up of the following parts: the Letter (or ultimate element), the Syllable, the Conjunction, the Article, the Noun, the Verb, the Case, and the Speech. (*Poetics*, chapt. 20)

About diction there would not be much to say, for the writer of this play is after all William Shakespeare, the inventor of a perfect diction adequate to the gravity and the seriousness of the tragedy. Nevertheless Shakespeare's use of dramatic irony is perhaps the most remarkable component that brings this play so close to the Aristotelian definition of tragedy. Diction when it comes to dramatic irony plays an important role, as said before. But it tells us that Shakespeare is the master of diction. The very essence of dramatic irony is presented to us when the audience knows something the characters, or some of the characters, do not. When Duncan and his party arrive at Macbeth's castle, they are unaware of the wicked plans that are being made by their hosts. Their light-hearted, joking mood is ironic to us, since we know what they are really walking into. King Duncan chooses the right words to express his delight when greeted by Lady Macbeth:

> King Duncan: This castle hath a pleasant seat. The air
> Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
> Unto our gentle senses.
> [...]
> See, see, our honoured hostess!
> The love that follows us sometime is our trouble,
> Which still we thank as love. Herein I teach you
> How you shall bid God 'ield us for your pains,
> And thank us for your trouble.
> Lady Macbeth: All our service
> In every point twice done, and then done double,
> Were poor and single business to contend
> Against those honours deep and broad wherewith
> Your majesty loads our house. For those of old,
> And the late dignities heaped up to them,
> We rest your hermits.
> (I, 6, 1-19)

These lines underscore Sharespeare's artful way of diction in order to express the double meanings of language being used by the respective characters. Following diction there are of course thought and spectacle which the poet has the duty to ensure so that the text can be performed without visual absurdity. These are minor components which will enlarge the greatness and purpose of the play and provide its emotional attraction. This play is so dense and intense because it is compressed by many highly dramatical scenes: the appearance of three Witches and the obscure power that they embody, King Duncan's murder, Macbeth's considerations about his actions, his recognition of guilt but inability

to control his ambition. Almost every scene in *Macbeth* is intense, full of insecurity, and a constant fight between good and evil, or at least an internal fight that Macbeth is carrying out between his conscience and his immeasurable ambition.

III. Conclusions

Concerning the structure, we might say that *Macbeth* is a tragedy of Aristotelian standard. The relevance of Aristotle's *Poetics* to Shakespeare's play defines the making of a dramatic tragedy and presents the general principles of the construction of this literary genre. Although he neglects the unities of place and time, Shakespeare provides in *Macbeth* a complete action, one with beginning, middle and end. The ideal arrangement of action into a play would be Exposition, Inciting Action, Rising Action, Turning Point (Climax), Falling Action and Dénouement (Catastrophe). *Macbeth* follows each of these steps while introducing a new question every moment that keeps our interest. This dramatic structure of action is of course extremely important because it maintains the suspense of the audience at all times.

To make *Macbeth's* a complete action according to Aristotle, the story must contain an activating circumstance, a disclosure, and a reversal of action. The activating circumstance is when Macbeth meets the three Witches, whose prophecies stimulate Macbeth's desire for Kingship and intensify his ambition, which is the characteristic feature that leads to his downfall. The disclosure is the moment in the play in which the audience finds out something they did not know before. By combining the pieces of the tragedy they reach its realization. The last guideline of an Aristotelian complete action is the reversal of the action, and this occurs, of course, when Macduff kills Macbeth.

The main aim of tragedy according to Aristotle is the *catharsis*, *i.e.* the purifications of emotions like pity and fear by showing such like emotions and by stimulating the audience to think and react in order to liberate itself from such strong feelings. Many critics deem this aim dangerous because it relies on the rational capacity of the audience to make sound judgements on the action and to draw the right conclusions from what has been going on in the play. To display such brutality on stage and to shock the audience by a series of murders is not the right

way to make the audience reject any kind of cruelty in real life. The role of Lady Macbeth too may raise questions and doubts about the role of women in marriage and in society at large. So Stephen Greenblatt asks:

> Why shouldn't we say the same thing about Shakespeare's *Macbeth*? Why shouldn't we say that the play, with immeasurably greater literary force, undertakes to re-enchant the world, to shape misogyny to political ends, to counteract the corrosive scepticism that had called into question both the existence of witches and the sacredness of royal authority? Recent criticism has come close to saying this: *Macbeth*, writes Peter Stallybrass, "mobilises the patriarchal fear of unsubordinated woman, the unstable element to which Kramer and Sprenger attributed the overthrow of ´nearly all the kingdoms of the world". (115-116)

And in a compelling analysis of the play's fantasies of masculine vulnerability to women, Janet Adelman has suggested that "the final solution, both for Macbeth and for the play itself, though in differing ways, is ... [a] radical excision of the female". "The play that begins by unleashing the terrible threat of maternal power and demonstrates the helplessness of its central male figure before that power", Adelman argues, "ends by consolidating male power, in effect solving the problem of masculinity by eliminating the female". Why shouldn't we say then that *Macbeth*, with its staging of witches and its final solution, probably contributed, in an indirect but powerful way, to the popular fear of demonic agency and the official persecution and killing of women? Why shouldn't we say that this play about evil is evil?[9]

The question which Stephen Greenblatt, the father of New Historicism, puts forward, does not lie in the scope of Aristotle's *Poetics*, but it raises the problem of cathartic effects being opened up by the text on the modern audience. Maybe evil really is not apt to heal evil and to protect us from evil deeds.

NOTES

[1] The reference is to Fowler (7). Cf. also Kullmann (2005) and Suerbaum (1996, 2nd ed. 2001).

[2] With regard to the Grand Mechanism, which operates in the Histories as the cyclic structure of the rise and fall of princes, Jan Kott in his seminal book *Shakespeare – Our Contemporary* relates *Macbeth* also to the Histories: "The plot of *Macbeth* does not differ from those of the Histories. [...] It is shown as a nightmare. Mechanism and nightmare are just different metaphors to depict the same struggle for power and the crown" (68).

[3] References to the play are given in brackets (act, scene, lines) according to St. Greenblatt's edition (1997).

[4] All references to Aristotle's *Poetics* are taken from the Penguin edition (1996). Additional quotations follow the edition and translation by Richard Janko (1987). Cf. also Aristoteles' *Poetik* (2008).

[5] This understanding of tragedy determines the literary production of the Elizabethan Age and therefore Shakespeare's as well. Cf. Dieter Mehl (1983).

[6] Cf. Rüdiger Ahrens (2004).

[7] "Indem das Publikum unmittelbar Anteil an Macbeths Gedanken und Gefühlen erhält, erlebt es den Verbrecher nicht als gefühllosen Tatmenschen, sondern leidend und um Mitgefühl heischend, wie er von inneren und äußeren Anstößen hin und her gerissen wird" (Lengeler 57).

[8] Aristotle, *On the Art of Poetry* (1909), translated and edited by Ingram Bywater. This edition is referred to as *Poetics* after the quotations.

[9] Cf. Stephen Greenblatt, 112.

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CONCEPTUAL TRANSFER REGARDING LOCATIVE PREPOSITIONS: THE CASES OF *IN*, *ON* AND *AT*[1]

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Abstract

This paper presents an example with real data on how *Conceptual Transfer* works when it is applied to the use of the English locative prepositions *in*, *on* and *at* and the corresponding preposition in Spanish, *en*. The main purpose of this study is to test whether Spanish students of English simplify the English locative prepositional paradigm due to their misunderstanding of the English three-dimensional conception of space. The study comprises three different exercises: translations, giving answers to specific questions and a composition. These have all been used with a group of Spanish secondary school students. The results have shown that Jarvis' *Conceptual Transfer Hypothesis* can be applied to Spanish students of English regarding locative prepositions.

Key words: conceptual transfer, locative prepositions, Thinking for Speaking, cross-linguistic influence, Transfer to Somewhere, three-dimensional conception of space.

Resumen

Este trabajo presenta un ejemplo con documentación real centrado en la *Transferencia Conceptual* aplicada a la utilización de las preposiciones locativas inglesas *in*, *on* y *at*, y la preposición correspondiente en español, *en*. El objetivo principal de este estudio es probar si los estudiantes españoles de inglés simplifican el paradigma inglés para las preposiciones locativas a causa de la falta de conocimiento de la concepción tridimensional del espacio en inglés. El estudio está compuesto de tres ejercicios diferentes: traducciones; respuestas a preguntas concretas y una redacción. Estos ejercicios han sido utilizados

con un grupo de estudiantes españoles de educación secundaria. Los resultados demuestran que la *Hipótesis de Transferencia Conceptual* de Jarvis se puede aplicar a los estudiantes españoles de inglés en relación con las preposiciones locativas.

Palabras clave: transferencia conceptual, preposiciones locativas, pensar-para-hablar, influencia cross-lingüística, concepción tridimensional del espacio.

1. Introduction

This study has as a starting point Odlin and Jarvis' works on *Conceptual Transfer* that suggest that a person will apply to a target language a series of conceptual patterns characteristic of their source language. The *Conceptual Transfer Hypothesis* (Jarvis 2007) is the result of an interesting controversy that took place during the last century between Relativists and Universalists which later developed into the different studies that established the roots of this investigation. Even so, most of the works that are mentioned in this paper were carried out during the last decades, like that presented by Slobin (1996) in which it is indicated that language is not only a shaper of thought but also a filter. This idea is very important to clarify the meaning of *Thinking for Speaking*, which is a basic notion to understand the English three-dimensional conception of space.

Indeed, one of the most common mistakes made by Spanish students of English is the one corresponding to locative prepositions. English uses three different prepositions to establish a relationship between objects, which differentiates the three specific spatial references: place, surface and volume. The difficulty for Spanish students arises from the fact that Spanish has a single equivalent for those prepositions due to the simplification of the prepositional paradigm into a one-dimensional conception of space.

This paper will start with a brief revision of the theoretical background concerning prepositions of space and some of the goals achieved over the last decades regarding *Conceptual Transfer*. The next focus of attention will be on the differences between the prepositions to establish the hypotheses that will later be tested with real data. In the section devoted to the discussion of the data analysis this paper will

show that Spanish students of English do not perceive the structural locative relationship between their source language and the target language. Finally, we will suggest some possible approaches to this topic in order to develop new studies to design a suitable methodology which can be applied in the classroom.

2. Theoretical framework

Early works published during the first half of the last century already showed a general agreement on the close connection between language and conceptual structures. In his article "From 'Thought and Language' to 'Thinking for Speaking'" (1996), Slobin mentions the influence of authors like Von Humboldt, Whorf or Boas, who stated that language conditions the way we perceive and analyse the world and, what is more, can even determine which aspects of our experiences must be expressed. Taking into account some linguistic theories that can be considered the first step towards *Conceptual Transfer*, we shall focus our attention for a while on the controversy that took place between Universalists and Relativists. On the one hand, Relativists like Sapir and Whorf considered that language shapes the speaker's thought and therefore, every language represents a different conceptual experience depending on its own features because, as Whorf (1956) suggests, language influences beliefs and behaviours. On the other hand, with the advance of cognitive sciences in the second half of the last century, Universalists considered that thought was crucial to shape the way in which speakers use language due to the importance given to socio-cultural aspects and to the attention given to meaning and discourse. This rich intellectual climate propitiated the rise of a great number of studies that, eventually, brought together different theories that gave birth to the idea of *Conceptual Transfer*.

In an article published in 2007, Jarvis revises the meaning and scope of the Conceptual Transfer Hypothesis, which is the starting point for this paper. In his study, he makes a distinction between two different types of conceptual transfer: *Concept Transfer* and *Conceptualization Transfer*. The former "results from the nature of a person's stored conceptual inventory" and the latter "occurs during the processing of that knowledge" (Jarvis 52). Therefore, conceptual transfer can occur due to the differences in the way that learners of a target language use their own conceptual registers or the way in which they process their own conceptual knowledge.

Jarvis' interest departs from different theories that started to develop in the last quarter of the last century when Slobin went back to the Relativist Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis to establish his *Thinking for Speaking* thesis. He considered that "experiences are filtered through language into verbalized events" (Slobin, "Verbalized events" 107), that is to say, that language is not a shaper but a filter. Therefore, in linguistic terms, all the devices that speakers use to encode their experiences constitute *Thinking for Speaking*. This idea implies that, if people learn particular ways of *Thinking for Speaking* in their native language, learning a foreign language does not only imply that they have a sound knowledge of its grammar rules and a rich vocabulary but also involves learning an appropriate *Thinking for Speaking* in that target language. The main idea behind *Conceptual Transfer* is that the learners of a target language will conceptualise this language according to the mental structure inherited from their source language. Hence, the learners' mother tongue will determine the degree of conceptual implication that they will achieve in the target language. This is the reason why apart from grammar and vocabulary it is important to include Slobin's *Thinking for Speaking* in the classroom, in order to guide students to accomplish the conceptual map that is implied in certain languages.

Without any doubt, transfer is an important phenomenon to take into account in *Second Language Acquisition* and Andersen regards it as a filter "that governs the learner's perception and retention of specific features of the second language (L2) input" (177). He considers that the natural processes that a student of a target language acquires, together with the perception of the target language's structural relationship with the source language, serves as a "catalyst for transfer to operate" (178). This phenomenon gave way to what he called *Transfer to Somewhere Principle*, so to say:

> A grammatical form or structure will occur consistently and to a significant extent in interlanguage as a result of transfer *if and only if* (1) natural acquisitional principles are consistent with the L1 structure *or* (2) there already exists within the L2 input the potential for (mis-) generalization from the input to produce the same form or structure. (182)

Andersen's works gave way to further investigations into cross-linguistic influence, also called transfer, to analyse to what extent the source language determines the learning process of a target language.

Kellerman stated later on that, if the *Transfer to Somewhere Principle* suggests that input from the target language provides a generalisation of structures from the source language, there can also be "transfer which is not licensed by similarity to the L2, and where the way the L2 works may be very largely go unheeded" (137). This is what we know as the *Transfer to Nowhere Principle*.

We will now focus on Kellerman's idea that, instead of using the target language's perspective to encode experiences linguistically, many learners tend to maintain their native language's perspective. Kellerman highlights the fact that there are some grammatical or pragmatic characteristics of the target language to which learners of that language have no access, which is the reason why "*Transfer to Nowhere* supposes that most of what falls under [Slobin's] *Thinking for Speaking* is usually inaccessible to meta-awareness" (141). Hence, learners will find difficulties in finding exact correspondences of the code in their mother tongue with the target language because "some types of *Thinking for Speaking* may be beyond individual awareness" (143), so learners will fail in trying to use in the target language a specific meaning category that exists in their mother tongue.

Therefore, many of the studies carried out during the last years have focused on determining the degree of influence of the source language on the target language by means of *Conceptual Transfer*. A good example of the attention given to this issue is the article on cross-linguistic influence published by Odlin in 2005. He warns about the need to realise that there is a strong connection between transfer and relativity because, as he says, "all conceptual transfer involves meaning transfer but not all meaning transfer involves conceptual transfer" (6). This is due to the fact that there are semantic and pragmatic representations behind all languages. He focuses part of his research on spatial meanings which are of great importance for this research on prepositions. He includes in his article Whorf's distinction between *Apprehension of Space* and *Conception of Space* to apply it to different conclusions found by investigations carried out on spatial *Conceptual Transfer*.

Jarvis himself urges the need for more empirical evidence to test the different areas where *Conceptual Transfer* is involved (65). The present work represents an attempt to discuss whether learners of

English that have Spanish as their source language will transfer their spatial references into English, or to put it another way, will use the typological framework in the target language.

3. Prepositions and space

As Parkinson de Saz highlights, the English prepositions *at*, *in* and *on* are the ones most frequently misused by Spanish students of English because they commonly have a single equivalent in Spanish, which is *en* (213). But, why does this happen? What lies behind spatial or locative prepositions that make them so difficult to be understood by Spanish students of English?

It is generally agreed that children already conceptualise space at a very early age. Universalists and Relativists consider that locative understanding is probably the first great intellectual effort with which a child has to deal. Space has, as Levinson points out, properties that go in correlation with human perception such as sight and psycho-mathematical abilities (179). Indeed, in her article "The Origin of Children's Spatial Semantic Categories: Cognitive versus Linguistic Determinants" (1996), Bowerman affirms that English pre-linguistic children acquire a specific mental organisation for space in an easier way than other children that are not English native speakers. She reached this conclusion after having called into question Slobin's general precept that:

> Children discover principles of grammatical marking according to their own categories [and] the language-specific use of particular functors will train the child to conceive of grammaticizable notions in conformity with the speech community. (Bowerman, "The Origin of Children's Spatial Semantic Categories" 160)

This does not mean that children do not tend to conceptualise space early in age, what Bowerman highlights is the fact that English has a dimensional conceptualisation for space which is different from other languages, such as Spanish. Moreover, in another article entitled "Learning How to Structure Space for Language: A Crosslinguistic Perspective", she specifies that "locatives begin to come in during the second year of life" (388) and the ones that make reference to notions of containment, such as *in*, are the first ones to be acquired followed by the ones corresponding to support and contiguity, like *on*.

Locative mental organisation or conceptual representation does not always find a specific and exact correspondent from one language to another. Even though space is a concept present in every single language in the world, spatial perception is adapted through language to different cultures.

In this particular case, although there are also other specific dimensional prepositions in Spanish that would probably be more accurate to the real meaning of their English equivalents, it is grammatically correct in Spanish to use *en* in all the cases. Therefore, the first hypothesis would correspond to what Andersen refers to as *Transfer to Somewhere* (178) because we assume that Spanish students of English will tend to simplify the English paradigm in their early interlanguage in order to assist acquisition. Thus, students will probably translate the preposition *en* for the English *in* in all cases because this is the most commonly used preposition in English and the one with more correspondences in the target language. Furthermore, as Andersen points out, there is a clear phonetic similarity between *in* and *en*. Even though this could be considered a positive transfer because it aids the early acquisition of the preposition in English, the fact is that the close and continuous correspondence of the Spanish *en* for the English *in* will delay the acquisition and the distinction of other prepositions such as *on* or *at*. Therefore, we agree with Andersen on considering this phenomenon as an example of negative transfer.

Space is understood as the relationships that exist between objects and that is the reason why some concepts involved in any locative relation tend to be selected for attention more often than others. These concepts are what Svorou calls *regions*, that is to say, "conceptual structures which are determined by our knowledge about physical, perceptual, interactional, and functional attributes of entities" (15). Spatial representations are, therefore, based on a set of locations that Bierwisch (44) related according to three orthogonal dimensions and with a topological and metrical structure imposed on this set, or in other words, spatial properties are inherent to the structure imposed on a set of locations. Certainly, the learning strategy that most students use is to memorise lexicalised structures such as *preposition + place* instead of understanding the logic behind locative prepositions. But the English three-dimensional conception of space is so important that if it is compared with the one-dimensional Spanish, a spatial representation

"draws on different systems of mental organization" (Bierwisch 46) and it is this mental organisation that should be applied to second language teaching.

Parkinson de Saz establishes a clear differentiation between the use of *in*, *on* and *at* that will serve as a basic grammatical classification for this study (214). In the first place, *at* is used to refer to a specific place or space. For example, in the sentence *The boy stood at the gate*, the *gate* is simply a place because we are not giving any kind of information about the dimensions of the gate. The main confusion, though, comes from the dimensional relationship between *on* and *in*. For instance, in the sentence *The notice was hung on the gate*, the *gate* is not just a spatial reference but an object with a two-dimensional surface on which there is a notice hung. Moreover, *on* can also refer to an imaginary line on the space, as in *They live on the coast* (if we consider the coast as a line in the cartography of the geography of a space). Finally, *in* is the preposition that is frequently used by Spanish speakers of English. This is due to the fact that *in* is used to refer to volume, that is to say, to three-dimensional objects that contain something inside them, as in the case of *The apples are in the bowl*. Therefore, to sum up, we can emphasise the fact that *at* is usually used to refer to places, *on* to surfaces and *in* to volumes. The most difficult aspect for Spanish students of English is the fact that the Spanish preposition *en* is often used to translate the three English locative prepositions under study. For this reason, it is especially important to understand the concepts of space and volume behind locative prepositions in order to choose the correct one.

The fact that students prefer to translate *en* for *in* even though they know the existence of *on* and *at* seems to be a clear case of *Transfer to Somewhere*. This simplification is inherent to language learning because in early stages students do not acquire Slobin's concept of *Thinking for Speaking* in the English language, which has, as it has already been explained, a dimensional conception of space.

There is probably a great deal of confusion between these three prepositions in all stages of the interlanguage due to the lack of understanding of the English three-dimensional conception of space. The fact that Spanish students of English might not acquire certain concepts which are characteristic of the target language will delay the correct use of the prepositions *on* and *at*. Finally, this confusion might

eventually develop into the possible fossilisation of erroneous structures due to the overgeneralisation of the prepositional paradigm for space over a long period of time.

Therefore, after the aforementioned statements, the hypotheses that give form to this study could be summarised in two main points:

1. Spanish students of English will tend to simplify the English prepositional paradigm for spatial uses into the preposition *in*.
2. The simplification of the prepositional paradigm for spatial uses will delay the acquisition of and distinction among the prepositions *in*, *on* and *at*.

4. Methodology

4.1. Subjects

The students belong to an intermediate level group of a state high school. This state school, called 'IES Ricardo Mella', is located in Vigo, a diglossic area where two official languages, Spanish and Galician, coexist. Even so, the ten students that have been selected for this study consider Spanish as their mother tongue. Most of the students' ages range from fifteen to seventeen. Therefore, most of them have been studying English for nine years according to the requirements established in the Royal Decree 1631/2006, of December 29, that establishes English as part of the academic curriculum of primary and secondary education. Even though English classes are given in Spanish due to the difficulties that the teachers have found to communicate with the students in the target language, they also have two sessions per month with a native teacher who only uses English in the classroom. In addition to this, none of the students has ever been to England or any other English speaking country for long or even short stays. Students with the same profile have been carefully selected in order to have a homogeneous group and avoid differences in the academic levels of the subjects.

4.2. Materials

Three different exercises have been used to test the hypotheses. After a short questionnaire asking about the subject's age, gender and for how long they have been studying English, the students have done a direct translation of a set of sentences from Spanish into

English. Distractors have been placed among the sentences to make sure that the students do not realise that they are being tested on prepositions. There are six sentences that have served the purpose of testing the way Spanish students use locative prepositions. The correct translation of these sentences would correspond to the use of the prepositions *in*, *on* and *at*, including an ambiguous sentence (*El niño estaba en la puerta*) that could be translated using either the preposition *at* or *by*. The second exercise has corresponded to a list of twelve questions accompanied by pictures, among which there are six sentences in which we expected them to use locative prepositions. Once again, distractors using *Wh-* words have been placed within the exercise in order to divert the students' attention from the purpose of this study. Here, the students have answered the questions according to the picture that they have seen: for example, the first picture has corresponded to a bowl full of apples and the question is *Where are the apples?*, so we expected the students to answer either *In the bowl* or *The apples are in the bowl*. Before starting the exercise, we emphasised the importance of giving full answers including subject, verb and complements because, otherwise, we could find answers such as *bowl* without the preposition that is being tested. In the third and last exercise, the students have been asked to describe a picture of a bedroom using ten sentences. Finally, it is important to highlight the fact that the three exercises have been handed out separately. For this reason the students have not been able to start the next exercise before having finished the previous one.

Procedures

The students have had thirty minutes to execute the test, or to be more precise, they have had ten minutes to carry out each exercise. In addition to this, we have included the questionnaire previously described on the first page. At the beginning of the test, students have been given two minutes to answer these questions.

The reason why three exercises have been handed in separately is that they would try to find the easiest one and start with it instead of following the order that had been stipulated. The order has been based on the level of complexity. The first exercise, which has consisted in translating a series of sentences from Spanish into English, is probably the one that has been the most complex for them. The last one has

been a creative exercise in which they have described the picture of a bedroom using the strategies and structures that they have considered appropriate.

Data analysis

Figures 1 and 2 show the results corresponding to the first and second exercises that were designed to test locative prepositions. Figure 3 shows the results from the third exercise that will not be included in the general analysis that corresponds to figures 4, 5 and 6 depending on the prepositions.

Graphs corresponding to the three different exercises

First exercise
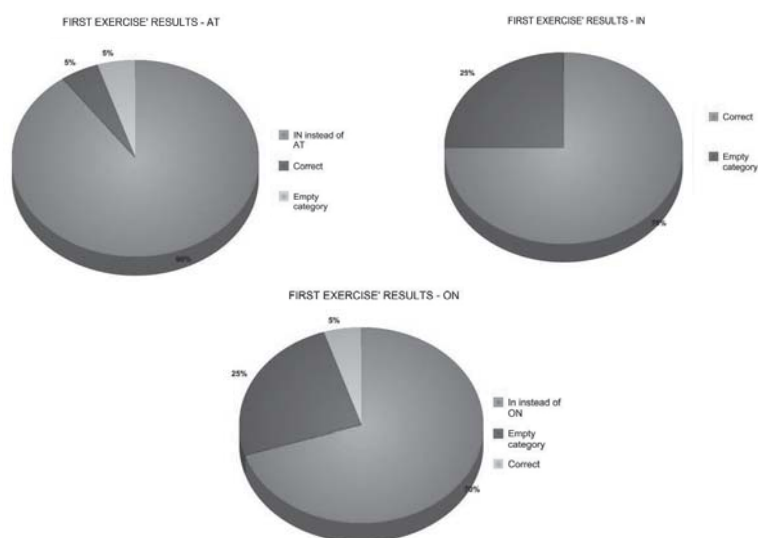
Fig. 1: Results corresponding to the first exercise.

The graphs represent the cases in which the subjects used the preposition *in* correctly and also the cases in which they used this preposition instead of *at* and *on*.

Second exercise
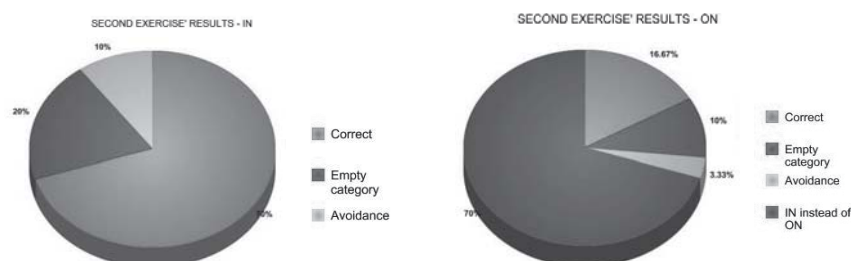
Fig. 2: Results corresponding to the second exercise.

The responses to the second exercise are similar to the previous one but with the particularity of the creation of empty categories and cases of avoidance. The results from the preposition *at* have not been included because, even though there were some questions that were designed to test this preposition, all the students used the preposition *in* in those cases in which it was grammatically correct and, therefore, these answers could not be considered incorrect.

Third exercise
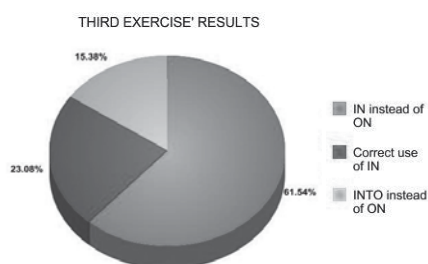
Fig. 3: Results corresponding to the third exercise.

In this case, 13 sentences include a preposition. *On*: 8 of the samples include *in* instead of *on*. *In*: 3 of the samples use *in* correctly. *Into*: 2 of the samples include *into* instead of *on* (*the book is into the table*).

The results from the third exercise were not conclusive due to the fact that it was a creative exercise and most students used simple constructions without prepositions. A maximum of 100 sentences with a preposition were expected as a result of all the responses from this exercise but, unfortunately, most students used sentences without prepositions. All in all, there were only 13 sentences that included a preposition. Therefore, even though we will make some comments in the conclusions about these results, we have decided not to take into account this exercise in the general results of the data analysis.

General results from the first and second exercises
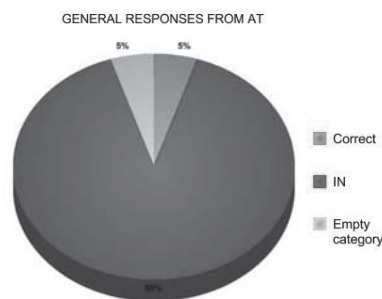
Fig. 4: General results corresponding to *at*.

Only 5% of the subjects' responses included the preposition *at* correctly, whereas 90% of the occurrences contained the preposition *in* instead of *at* and another 5% created an empty category.
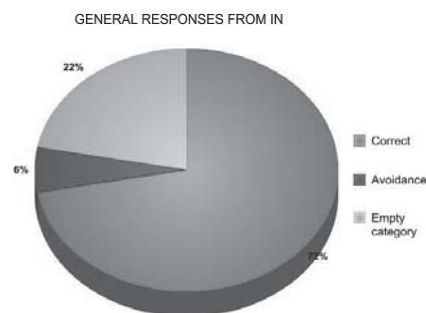
Fig. 5: General results corresponding to *in*.

The preposition *in* was used correctly in 72% of the cases but 22% of the subjects' responses corresponded to empty categories in some cases and 6% offered alternative answers without a preposition to questions that specifically required the use of one.
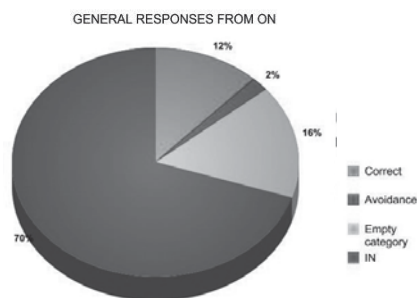
Fig. 6: General results corresponding to *on*.

Only 12% of the subjects' responses used the preposition *on* accurately, whereas 2% of them avoided the use of any preposition and 16% created an empty category. Finally, in 70% of the cases, the subjects used the preposition *in* instead of *on*.

4.5. Discussion

The results of the data analysis seem to be really enlightening and supportive regarding *Conceptual Transfer*. They show that the first of the two hypotheses was wholly correct and that there are also several reasons to consider equally correct the second hypothesis though further research is required. Indeed, the data show that locative prepositions are a really complex paradigm to put into practice for Spanish students of English.

The first preposition that will be discussed is *at*, which is probably one of the most difficult to conceptualise for the subjects. It is interesting to highlight the case of two subjects who, in the first exercise, used different prepositions in the samples where the preposition *at* was being tested. One of the subjects used *at* correctly in sample number 1, but s/he used the preposition *in* in sample number 2. This means that this student knows the existence of this preposition but s/he does not know how to use it correctly. The fact that the sentence in exercise 1 refers to a public institution such as the University of Vigo, makes us consider whether the subject is using the preposition *at* as part of a lexicalised structure such as *I study at + public institution* instead of realising that *at* is here applied to refer to a place. Another student, on the other hand, used *in* in sample number 1, but s/he created an empty category in sample number 2. This is probably due to the fact that this subject does not even know the existence of the preposition *at* for places, and is also unsure about the use of *in* or any other preposition for the same purpose. In spite of this, what seems to be clear is that, very often, Spanish students of English do not know the existence of *at* to refer to places and for this reason they are not able to use it when required. What is more, the results shown by the graphs support the first hypothesis that stated that Spanish students of English will use the preposition *in* instead of *at*.

The case of the preposition *on* is quite similar to the aforementioned with the exception of a new phenomenon which is the appearance of samples of avoidance. The results show a great deal of confusion in the subjects' responses to the preposition. None of them used *on* correctly

in all the samples that required its use and only 12% of the responses included this preposition correctly in some samples, but the same subjects used other strategies in the same context that demanded this preposition. This is undoubtedly the preposition that shows more complexity because 2% of the times, the subjects avoided its use by means of alternative answers to specific questions. Thus, for example, the question *Where are the pictures?* was answered by the sentence *There are twenty pictures*. Moreover, 16% of the subjects' occurrences corresponded to empty categories using sentences such as *The fly is … the window*. Finally, 70% of the subjects' responses included the preposition *in* instead of *on*, which supports again the aforementioned first hypothesis. The fact that the graphs show a great deal of confusion about the correct use of the preposition *on*, including empty categories and avoidance, suggests that they probably know that the preposition *in* is not the correct preposition to use in certain contexts but they do not know what preposition to use.

The last preposition that is going to be discussed is *in.* Even though less confusion regarding the use of this preposition would be expected, there are subjects that show great variation when they use the preposition *in*. Thus, for instance, there are cases in which an empty category and avoidance are used in the same exercise in the different samples which were specifically designed to analyse the use of this preposition. It should be highlighted that none of the subjects used other prepositions in the contexts where *in* was required. They might create an empty category or avoid a sentence with a preposition but none of them has used either *at* or *on*.

Finally, as has been previously mentioned, even though it has been decided not to use the third exercise, it is important to discuss some of the results because they support the first hypothesis. On the one hand, only 3 of the students that used an expression with a preposition applied the correct one, which was, surprisingly, the preposition *in*. On the other hand, 8 of them used the preposition *in* wrongly when the preposition *on* was required. The results of this last exercise include sentences in which one of the subjects used the preposition *into* twice instead of the preposition *on*.

The results of the data seem to show that most subjects apply the source language's perspective (in this case Spanish) instead of acquiring what Slobin calls *Thinking for Speaking* in the target language. This is why transfer occurs in this context, because students do not perceive

the structural relationship between L1 and L2. It was stated at the beginning of this paper that the main idea behind *Conceptual Transfer* is the fact that Spanish students of English will conceptualise locative prepositions according to the mental structure inherited from their native language. If this is true, then instead of applying the English conceptual structure, most of them will fail to use locative prepositions in English correctly. Our results show that this is indeed the case.

Furthermore, our data also show that Kellerman's *Transfer to Nowhere Principle* (1995) is probably applicable in this case, due to the fact that these results represent a clear generalisation of structures from the source language into the target language. The fact that *in* is the preposition that most students use instead of *on* and *at*, shows that there is an absolute overgeneralisation of structures at this point of their interlanguage.

Students apparently do not realise that English has a dimensional conceptualisation for space which is different from Spanish and, therefore, different strategies for communication are needed. This is the reason why it seems quite accurate to affirm that the first hypothesis, which referred to Andersen's *Transfer to Somewhere* (1983), appears to be right because our data show that a high percentage of the students simplified the English prepositional paradigm for locative uses in their interlanguage in order to assist acquisition. The continuous confusion that the subjects showed over the three exercises that had been designed to test their conceptual acquisition of spatial structures in English suggests that none of them fully understands the three-dimensional conception of space that is characteristic of the English language.

This lack of understanding might imply that the simplification of the prepositional paradigm for spatial uses will delay the acquisition and distinction among the prepositions *in*, *on* and *at*, which was the second hypothesis. The results from this study seem to support this statement because the subjects belong to an intermediate level and they are not still able to apply accurately any of the three prepositions under study for locative purposes. The total confusion of most of the students and the lack of knowledge about the existence of other prepositions apart from *in* seem to reinforce the statement that the distinction between locative prepositions (or the lack of knowledge) will eventually delay the acquisition of the prepositional paradigm in English. Even so, further studies must be carried out on this topic to test whether this might be a case of fossilisation or, rather, a case of stabilisation.

5. Conclusion

This paper started from the premise that *Conceptual   Transfer* takes place at certain stages of the interlanguage of Spanish students of English and, specifically, when this approach to locative prepositions is applied. Moreover, it was accurately stated from the outset that Spanish students of English would simplify the English paradigm into a single preposition which is *in*, due to the phonetic similarity between it and the Spanish correspondent *en* and also because this preposition is the most frequently used in English for spatial referents.

The results of this study seem to show that the main reason for *Conceptual Transfer* from the source language to the target language is the lack of understanding of the English three-dimensional conceptualisation of space by Spanish students. The simplification that most of the students did of the prepositional English paradigm is mainly caused by the conceptual simplification which they do with spatial perception. Therefore, simplification appears at two different levels, both practical and conceptual. The fact that *Conceptual Transfer* takes place in most stages of second language acquisition, specifically regarding locative prepositions, is a symptom of a deficient attitude towards this procedure. This study stresses the importance of introducing new concepts into the classroom such as Slobin's *Thinking for Speaking* because it is an essential step for the correct acquisition of spatial dimensions.

This investigation suggests that Jarvis' *Conceptual Transfer Hypothesis* (2007) can be applied to Spanish students of English, especially regarding locative prepositions. Moreover, this paper agrees with Jarvis on the fact that more theoretical and methodological work is needed on this topic.

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"CERTAIN THINGS HAVE BECOME UNPLEASANT": *PLEASANTVILLE*, *FAR FROM HEAVEN* AND AMERICAN SOCIETY IN THE FIFTIES

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Abstract

The fifties have often been revisited in a number of novels, television shows, plays, and movies as a period when traditional values prevailed. Both *Pleasantville* and *Far from Heaven* are set in the fifties, but given that they were filmed in 1998 and 2002 respectively, they approach this period from completely different perspectives. Beyond the pervasive idyllic, pink-colored vision of the fifties and the nuclear family, far from traditional depictions of the fifties, these two movies present underlying currents that do not match this conventional vision of the fifties such as interracial friendship (maybe even love), homosexuality, sexual desire, housewives' dissatisfaction with their lifestyle... This essay explores how *Pleasantville* and *Far from Heaven* portray the fifties and how this portrayal differs from the mainstream vision of the fifties.

Keywords: Douglas Sirk, the fifties, the nineties, Hays Code, nuclear family, traditional values.

Resumen

Los años cincuenta en Estados Unidos han sido recreados en un sinfín de novelas, programas de televisión, obras teatrales y películas que mostraban esta época como un periodo en el que los valores tradicionales imperaban. Tanto *Pleasantville* como *Lejos del cielo* (*Far from Heaven*) están ambientadas en los años cincuenta pero el que fueran rodadas en 1998 y en 2002 respectivamente hace que se acerquen a este periodo desde una perspectiva distinta. Más allá de la predominante visión idílica

y de color de rosa de los cincuenta, en estas dos películas se muestran corrientes subterráneas que no encajan con la visión convencional de los cincuenta como puedan ser las relaciones interraciales (puede que incluso amor), la homosexualidad, el deseo sexual, la insatisfacción de las amas de casa con sus vidas... Este ensayo explora cómo *Pleasantville* y *Lejos del cielo* muestran los años cincuenta y cómo se diferencian de la visión tradicional de los cincuenta.

Palabras clave: Douglas Sirk, años cincuenta, años noventa, código Hays, familia nuclear, valores tradicionales.

Probably more than any other period in recent American history, the fifties have often been revisited in a number of novels, television shows, plays, and movies that have recreated it as a period when traditional family values prevailed. Both *Pleasantville* and *Far from Heaven* are set in the fifties, but given that they were filmed in 1998 and 2002 respectively, they approach this period from completely different perspectives. Both movies expose the tensions lying behind this seemingly peaceful, long-established surface, deconstructing the image of the fifties as a golden age. Beyond the pervasive idyllic, pink-colored vision of the fifties and the nuclear family, far from traditional depictions of the fifties, in these two movies there are underlying currents that do not match this conventional vision of the fifties such as interracial friendship (maybe even love), homosexuality, sexual desire, housewives' dissatisfaction with their lifestyle... In their portrayal of the fifties, *Pleasantville* and *Far from Heaven* go beyond the stereotypical image of the fifties, challenging and subverting it.

The fifties have been sentimentalized and idealized by later generations as a time when life was placid, traditional values prevailed, and family life was idyllic.[1] Television shows such as *Father Knows Best* or *I Love Lucy* largely contributed to creating and perpetuating that placid picture of the fifties in American society, creating what Henry calls "the idealized images of family life depicted by traditional domestic sitcoms" (225). The fifties are generally depicted as a golden age of community, stability, prosperity and peace in American society. After the horror and the penuries of the Second World War and its aftermath, by

the fifties American society had gotten its past optimism back, economy was skyrocketing and people were starting to learn about the benefits of living in a consumer society, with "the television set as a central object and consumer icon" (Willis 140).[2] Consuming not only provided them with desirable goods but, in contrast to Communist Soviets,[3] buying more and more made them more patriotically American;[4] not surprisingly, "the most popular [TV] programs were often built on the most inane premises and on the marketing of personal comfort and instant gratification" (Quart and Auster 44).

Still, despite the modernity of new electric appliances, the fifties were not so far from what were regarded as traditional American values: the father was the breadwinner and the mother was a dutiful housewife. Actually, regarding women's role, in the fifties,

> women seemed to have been catapulted back in time to the nineteenth century, to the cult of the True Woman and the corset that went with it. They dropped out of college, married early, and read women's magazines that urged them to hold on to their husband's love by pretending to be dumbs and helpless. They were isolated in the suburbs, marooned in a world of women and children while their husbands drove off every day to careers in the city. (Collins 398-399)

Dozens of books were published to promote women's role as housewives and to alert them of the undesirable consequences of working mothers. For instance, the best-selling *Modern Women: The Lost Sex* by Marynia Farnham and Ferdinand Lundgrem saw the origin of a range of social problems (including alcoholism and even war) in career women who refused to be housewives and mothers ("Women and the Families in the 1950s").[5] In short, in the popular mind, in the fifties "life was simple because the problems which plague us now were, in our imagination, absent. Conflicts regarding race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, and class lines simply did not exist" (Joseph 620).

Pleasantville (1998) and *Far from Heaven* (2002) offer a new perspective with their reinterpretation of the fifties, challenging the stereotypical image held of the fifties from a turn-of-the-century perspective.[6] Both *Pleasantville* and *Far from Heaven* are set in the fifties but were filmed in 1998 and 2002, respectively, which shapes their portrayal of the fifties.[7] *Pleasantville* is a literal revisitation of the

fifties from a 1990s perspective, evidenced in the "visit" 1990s siblings David and Jennifer pay to the 1950s; *Far from Heaven* re-reads the 1950s melodrama using a 1980s and 1990s feminist approach (Willis 134). In the midst of this generalized and idealized vision of the fifties, *Pleasantville* and *Far from Heaven* are moved by the "what if?" premise. What if the fifties were not as idyllic as we think? What if seemingly happy housewives were not satisfied with their lives and wanted to get out of the "comfortable concentration camp" Betty Friedan called the suburban home in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963)? What if husbands did not love their wives but felt attracted to other men? What if people had physical needs such as sex? What if despite this commodified society some people aspired to less conventional existences? What if people were driven by inner needs (be it homosexual impulses or artistic aspirations) they unsuccessfully strove to suppress or, at least, conceal?

Pleasantville and *Far from Heaven* show that, beneath the idyllic and placid aspect of American society in the fifties (one idealized by subsequent movies, television shows, and in the popular American imagination), there were underlying secrets that would disturb this perfect image. As these movies present it, the secrets that the fifties hid were plenty: interracial friendship (maybe even love), homosexuality, housewives' dissatisfaction with their lifestyle, repressed artistic aspirations, censorship and authoritative Big-Brother-like government disguised as a benevolent, paternalistic regime[8]... and could destroy society as it was understood in the fifties.

Part of this vision of the fifties is inevitably tied to the not less perfect image of the nuclear family living in a suburban neighborhood[9] that was depicted in television shows.[10] For David, the protagonist of *Pleasantville*, and for viewers of the fictional "Pleasantville"[11] or the real *I Love Lucy*,[12] the fifties seem to be an idyllic world. In contrast, David cannot see any "perfect" (according to the moral and social standards of the fifties) families in his real life. His own family is far from perfect: his parents are divorced and whereas his mother dates a man ten years her junior, his father fails to show up for his scheduled visits. If his father won't visit them as scheduled, at least he can find some comfort in "Pleasantville", a show where the parents return home earlier than planned from their weekend just because they got worried when the son did not answer the phone. Even worse, David cannot even watch

perfect families on contemporary television shows any more since the
ideal family roles, as seen in television shows from previous decades,
are now obsolete and absent (Pérez Jiménez 99). Because "from the
role of the family to that of the woman, from sexual relationships to
violent acts, everything finds its reflection in film and television" (Pérez
Jiménez 93), 1990s television shows reflect a completely different type
of family. The family in *The Waltons* hardly has anything to do with the
families in shows like *Married With Children*, *The Simpsons*, *Roseanne*,
to name just a few 1990s shows.[13] A lot of attention in the nineties
focused on television and family representations on television:

> 'family values', which became the catch phrase of the 1990s, is a
> concept that has had increasingly strong cultural purchase since
> the 1992 presidential debates, during which George Bush made his
> infamous call for 'a nation closer to the Waltons than the Simpsons'.
> (Henry 225)

Pleasantville is the response to this conservative climate, advocating
for a past that never was but which 1990s American right-wing groups
called forth a return to (Templeton).[14]

As a reviewer put it, in this "suburban Disneyland" (Taylor), David
can find the role models lacking in 1990s television shows. One of the
main functions of fairy tales is to help children come to terms with
society and the values that rule it:

> fairy tales voice the culture's most cherished convictions about
> the forms that both male and female subjectivity should adopt as
> they become insert within a given social structure. They further
> illustrate how modern power is subtly and cynically wielded on
> individual behavior but, especially, on feminine performance of
> language and observance of social norms. (Martín González 10)

This is exactly what "Pleasantville" does for David. Traditional
fairy tales such as the Grimm Brothers' cannot appeal to David,
being a twentieth-century teenager. Thus, "Pleasantville" becomes his
particular fairy tale. Similar to the civilizing function of fairy tales,

> the culture industry, and television in particular, performs two
> functions with regard to identity formation today. First, television
> furnishes consumers with explicit identity models, models not of
> who to be but *how to be*. Viewers learn to fashion their identities
> by watching popular characters fashion theirs. Second, television
> furnishes consumers with the symbolic resources—the actual
> cultural bricks—with which to (re)construct identity. (Ott 58)

David, the son of divorced parents living in a commodified society, can find roles to aspire to in a fifties television show.[15] In a twentieth— or a twentieth-first—century society, given that we watch television for longer than read books, the fifties shows have become in some way our contemporary fairy tales.

When David and his twin sister Jennifer get into "Pleasantville" by means of a magic remote control, Pleasantville is literally visited by the nineties. Topics that could not be dealt with (or, at least, not openly) in movies or television shows filmed in the fifties, are openly seen in *Pleasantville* and *Far from Heaven*, which pay homage to the fifties from the point of view of the nineties. Jennifer and David bring their turn-of-the-century sensibility with them, despite David's willingness to comply wholeheartedly with the fifties' social and family values.[16]

At the beginning of *Pleasantville* characters are flat stereotypes, as one might expect from a fifties show. They are the dutiful wife, the breadwinning father, the perfect children (a son and a daughter, of course)… Robert McDaniel described the town as the perfect place: "it never rains, the highs and lows rest at 72 degrees, the fire department exists only to rescue treed cats, and the basketball team never misses the hoop" (quoted in "Pleasantville (film)"). But as the tagline for *Pleasantville* goes, "nothing is as simple as black and white". The undertows that are behind this vision of the fifties will be seen thanks to catalysts. Jennifer and David, representatives of the nineties, are the ones who provoke the first changes, which would not have come along without them. The materials for bringing up a social rebellion were already present in the conformist society of the fifties (as evidenced by the willingness with which young people accept the new airs brought on by Jennifer and David) but they needed a spark, an outer force to come provoke it, and these were Jennifer and David. Up to a certain extent, Jennifer and David could be seen as representatives of the changes that were about to come in the sixties.[17]

"Sexual desire has always been one of the central driving forces in narrative films, especially in Hollywood cinema" (Deleyto 29) and so it is in *Pleasantville*. In *Pleasantville* Jennifer is the one who brings about the changes by means of sexual activity. Jennifer's name, when she becomes a *Pleasantville* character, changes to Mary Sue. Fan fiction fans will immediately associate her name with the role she plays in

the society of Pleasantville since in fan fiction, characters named Mary Sue are usually a *persona* for the author (especially for female authors), a *persona* who helps characters by solving their problems. First, Jennifer introduces her boyfriend to sex and then tells her girl friends, who readily follow her example, turning Lovers' Lane into the most popular place in town. But whereas her classmates immediately become colorful, she remains in black and white.[18] More importantly, Mary Sue also tells her Pleasantville mother, Betty Parker, who after her first sexual experience (masturbation), also becomes colored.

Betty Parker's naïvete about sex in particular or life in general is representative of the situation of women in the fifties, when women were to be inexperienced even to the verge of ignorance as well as decorative. Women were also expected to be perfect, with clothes[19] and make up being an important part of this image.[20] When she becomes colored, David has to help her conceal her coloredness from her husband and society. When Betty refuses to wear any grey make up and thus no longer conceal her being colored, this represents her break with social conventions and her decision to be free since "shame exists only in monochrome world which symbolizes the repression of self-actualization" (Miller 2008). Make up is a symbol of social propriety, of acceptability and conformity to moral standards. Betty's need to wear make up and her latter refusal to conceal her "coloredness" signifies her conformity (or attempt to conform, at least externally) to social rules at first and then her refusal to go by hypocritical values or appearances she no longer endorses.

In the contemporary fairy tale that *Pleasantville* is, the relationship between Jennifer and Betty is highly subversive. The traditional relationship mother-daughter has been distorted because in this instance mother does not know best: it is the daughter who knows best. With this, Jennifer subverts one of the basic assumptions at the core of parenthood: that a parent knows better and more than the child about what is good or bad. Jennifer evidences that parents do not always know it all, thus challenging traditional family order. Betty's acknowledgment of her sexuality and her decision to free herself from social constraints[21] (at first by refusing to wear make up and let her colors be seen and later by beginning an affair with the soda shop owner) provoke that her home, a place that in America is given much more importance than in any other place in the world (Oltra Puigdomenech 147), is disrupted.

Wives are no longer there to cook dinner and husbands' happy greeting ("Honey! I'm home!") as they return home is replied only by silence, representing "the changing family atmosphere of baby boomers after the *Father Knows Best* years" (Maslin). It is the end of the "subservient 'slave-women' who subverts all her personal needs in order to please" her husband (Saltz). The traditional gender situation existing since the nineteenth century—"to men belonged the public sphere of business and politics; to middle and upper class ladies the home and the store were natural spaces for their biologically determined destinies" (Elmalhe and Guerlain 67)—and replicated in the fifties is therefore challenged. All in all, it is very telling of the way in which *Pleasantville* approaches the fifties that in *Pleasantville*, in contrast to fifties movies, going beyond moral propriety (i.e., Betty Parker committing adultery) results in a positive outcome (sexual satisfaction).[22]

Those who resist the changes, such as the Pleasantville mayor, Big Bob and try to preserve the pleasant society of earlier on ("up until now everything around here has been, well, pleasant. Recently certain things have become unpleasant. Now, it seems to me that the first thing we have to do is separate out the things that are pleasant from the things that are unpleasant", he addresses the city), bring about "a dark side – with shades of McCarthyism and racial segregation, erupting into book burning and ugly hate crimes" (Templeton). As director, screenwriter and producer Gary Ross remarked,

> this movie is about the fact that personal repression gives rise to larger political oppression. [...] That when we're afraid of certain things in ourselves or we're afraid of change, we project those fears on to other things, and a lot of very ugly social situations can develop. (quoted in Johnson-Ott)[23]

With this,

> Ross wants the smooth unruffled surface of '50s sitcoms to stand for America's fantasy image of itself during that decade, a place that had banished even the admission that real life contained dirt and messy complications. (Taylor)

New developments are to be quashed, as the mayor's emergency laws reflect because

> the 'threat' of deviance may be perceived to be particularly serious when the 'deviant' claims to be part of the community itself. [...] The community must either change, or bring the deviant back into

conformity, or expel the deviant from membership in the community. (Joseph 623)

In contrast, *Far from Heaven* is a movie depicting the fifties as it would have been had it been filmed in the fifties, even to the point of using similar lenses and techniques ("Far from Heaven"). The difference is that it deals with topics that directors and producers in the fifties would not have dare to come near to, much less openly discuss such as interracial relationships and homosexuality. *Far from Heaven* claims connections with German director Douglas Sirk's movies *All that Heaven Allows* (1955) and *Imitation to Life* (1959), which Todd Haynes, director of *Far from Heaven*, defines as the "screen versions of *Ladies Home Journal* sort of stories" (*Far from Heaven* website). Critics such as Joyrich have also connected *Far from Heaven* to another Sirk movie, filmed in between the other two, *Written in the Wind* (1956) (189).[24] Sirk made his name by

> his subversive knack for tucking social criticism and psychological insight into stories governed by the constraints of the Production [Hays] Code and the conventions of the tear-jerker. (Scott)

Thus,

> by alluding to Sirk's films, style, and stars, *Far from Heaven* thus reminds its viewers of the history of Hollywood and melodramatic entertainment in addition to, or as it is interwoven with, the history of various social and identity struggles. (Joyrich 189)

As its tagline went, *Far from Heaven* set out to explore the question of "what imprisons desires of the heart?"

During Hollywood's golden age, what movies could deal with or not was determined by the Hays Code.[25] In 1934 William H. Hays, former advisor to President William Harding, drafted the code that would bear his name. The code (a nineteen-page pamphlet, modified and reissued every year until 1968) imposed a number of limitations on the kind of material that directors could deal with in their movies. Among other instructions, it required that wrongdoers be punished at the end of the movie, flesh could not be exposed, men and women could not be seen in bed together (therefore married couples slept in twin beds), and swearwords could not be used at all.[26] Issues such as abortion or homosexuality could not be discussed and interracial relationships were forbidden and would not be seen on the screen until well into the fifties (Pando 252).[27] More

importantly, the PCA could veto any script, suggesting more or less massive changes from 1934 to 1968 (Eldridge 1).

Far from Heaven[28] starts in an idyllic tone that does not take long to vanish. Despite the idyllic tone, from the very beginning there is a disturbing element in *Far from Heaven*, secrets underlying the surface of things.[29] The Whitakers are a model family:[30] they have a son and a daughter, they have a maid, they live in a beautiful house… They are so perfect that they are the models for the advertising campaigns of the Magnatech electric appliances produced by the company the husband works for, and even the local newspaper publishes an article about Cathy. Secrets do not seem to exist (since the family is exposed to the public eye via the media). And indeed they do look like a happy family in a normal day at the beginning of the movie: the well-behaved children are ready to go to bed, the mother is getting ready for attending one of their many social engagements, they are waiting for the father to come home from his job…

But the father, Frank, will not come home but phone from the police station where he is under arrest. We never know why he was arrested, only his vague excuse that he was confounded with the man who really did it, a beggar, but he never fully explains what the action was. It will be only much later, once we have more information about him, when we may suspect it was for an indecent exposure-related charge. The same can be said about his refusal to have sex with his wife after his arrest (claiming that he is too tired after work). It does not seem unusual or suspicious at first but it will definitely be once we learn that he is homosexual or when we watch his night errands to an all-male cinema and an all-male night club.

As she is losing her husband, Cathy gets closer to her African-American gardener, Mr. Deagan. Although she has an African-American maid, their relationship is just on a professional basis. However, Cathy realizes that Mr. Deagan is different: he is a cultivated man, not just a gardener. Like in *All That Heaven Allows*, he is a gardener and Cathy, having a homosexual husband (*i.e.*, one who cannot fulfill her needs), is, metaphorically, a widow. Thus, social class and age difference in the original Sirkian movie are transformed into interracial relations in *Far from Heaven*.[31] However, their friendship is discovered and suspected, becoming a topic of gossip for her friends and neighbors.

In the case of *Far from Heaven*, sexuality is not a question of women accepting their sexuality but of men's accepting their homosexuality. It is Cathy's husband, Frank, who, being homosexual, challenges gender barriers. For his neighbours, that makes him not an "all man",[32] somebody who transgresses gender barriers, subverting the dominant order. If Mr. Parker saw with growing concern his wife trespassing barriers about sexuality, social propriety, and conventionalisms in *Pleasantville*, in *Far from Heaven* it is Cathy the one who sees her husband trespassing social and moral conventions to embrace his homosexuality. By the end of the movie, Frank has left Cathy to move in with his gay lover.

Contrary to her husband's boldness in his defying society and living more or less openly with his male lover, for Cathy and Mr. Deagan it is not possible to be friends in the public eye. Raymond is always black, always watched by society, whereas Frank is not always homosexual in the public eye, he can escape from the public gaze when he goes to gay clubs (Willis 160). Cathy and Raymond's friendship, discovered by Cathy's so-called friends,[33] is disapproved by conservative moral standards about the unsuitability of white women being anything other than employers to African-American men.[34] Thus,

> interracial romance or homosexuality doubles back and comments on the other, although these twin themes rarely occupy the same scene visually. Instead, they are tied through match-dissolves, cross-cuts, and inference. (Scherr)

Far from Heaven says that both homosexuality and interracial relationships are socially unacceptable, but, yet, they are not quite the same.

If Cathy's husband succeeds in breaking society's rules, Cathy and Mr. Deagan evidence that this is not possible for everybody and that sometimes, and people must conform to social rules, even though it might mean ignoring their own needs and feelings. Cathy cannot continue her friendship with Mr. Deagan, constrained as she is by social rules.[35] In *All that Heaven Allows*, for the wealthy widow to eventually find happiness by marrying her much younger gardener, both social class difference and age difference had to be overlooked (her children's approval works as the social sanction necessary for their disruption of social conventions). In order to have a happy ending, social constraints were eventually overcome; if audiences were to be given the customary

happy ending, small social transgressions had to be performed. But the ending in *Far from Heaven* is not a happy one and Cathy and Mr. Deagan feel all the pressure of society and its demands and conventions, to which they eventually yield. *Far from Heaven* tells us that the happy ending at the end of movies is not always feasible in real life. Cathy herself is a disbeliever in movies' portrayal of love and she claims in the movie:

> that was the day I stopped believing in the wild ardour of things. Perhaps in love, as well. That kind of love. The love in books and films. The love that tells us to abandon our lives and plans, all for one brief touch of Venus. So often we fail at that kind of love. The world just seems too fragile a place for it.

In contrast to happy endings, this is a "story of thwarted desire and soul-killing pretense" (Scott).[36]

The main difference between the two movies is that if in *Pleasantville* changes are exposed by outsiders who made characters realize either secret longings they did not dare express or they did not even know they had (the mother's dissatisfaction with her role as housewife, their non-existent sexual needs…), in *Far from Heaven* society remains still and blind to the changes provoked from the forces coming from within themselves. These are inner forces that are spurting out: the husband's homosexuality, the friendship with African-Americans… In *Far from Heaven*, the secrets that the characters hide are exposed when their inner needs, longings, and desires are brought to the surface. The revealing of their true, inner selves, those they have kept hidden for so long, brings about at the same time the revealing of their secrets. Contrary to the outer forces that reveal underlying tensions in *Pleasantville*, in *Far from Heaven*, these secrets are revealed by means of inner forces (mainly, homosexuality and interracial friendship).

If in *Far from Heaven* characters eventually yield to the pressure of social conventions (*i.e.*, they accept the rules of the society and the times they live in), in *Pleasantville* changes are here to stay and nothing will be the same any more, thus advancing the far-reaching changes that would rock American society in the following decade. In *Far from Heaven*

> they are not interested in exploring the politics of their otherness, they do not question the foundation of the dominant society that

designates their otherness, and they are not interested in occupying the margins of intelligibility. (Scherr)

In *Pleasantville*, however, these social and sexual changes do have a political repercussion, as shown in the town meeting to discuss the situation of the colored people. Even those who will not accept change and regard it as something undesirable (that is, unpleasant), are forced to eventually accept it when they become colored themselves. *Pleasantville* pre-dates and advances changes about to come in the American society in the sixties and seventies—the sexual revolution, women's emancipation,…All these changes are not revolutionary from a nineties perspective, but they certainly were for the fifties. Characters in *Far from Heaven*, in contrast, behave according to the fifties' moral standards. In *Pleasantville* secrets are fully exposed, revealed as the colors characters start seeing for the very first time and cannot be hidden again. Once the truth has been revealed, nothing will be the same any more and unfulfilled desires can no longer be kept hidden. For Ross, *Pleasantville* is "a wonderful metaphor to express what it means to come alive" (quoted in Wallace). The changes cannot be reversed, just as the characters cannot recover their black-and-white aspect. Pleasantville has changed, it has become something else, so different that even modern Jennifer feels at home and therefore chooses to stay. Recalling the idea of "Pleasantville" being David's own fairy tale, the "deligitimation of the known tale", as DuPlessis calls it (108), has been completed.

For all their vindication of sexuality or personal freedom or interracial relations, what *Pleasantville* and *Far from Heaven* further do is exposing that the fifties were not like our mental image of the fifties. As author Clyde Edgerton, one of whose novels, *Where Trouble Sleeps*, denounced 1950s provincialism and the changes brought up by a stranger in a small town, reminds us,

> we talk about the way the world was in the '50s and the way it is now. … But when we think of the '50s, we can't really remember what the '50s were like. We remember the way the '50s were in some *movie* or some *TV* show or in photographs. Politicians say that the '50s were such a wonderful time, a time of family values and goodness. That's true – but it's also *not* true. In my life, when I was growing up in the '50s, there was no discussion of sex, certainly, but there was no discussion of *any* new ways of thinking. (quoted in Templeton)

The 1950s were thus a time when "racial segregation, repression of women, and suppression of alternative ideas and lifestyles are all central to sustaining traditional power structures" (Joseph 636). This certainly flies in the face of 1990s conservative politicians' views of the fifties. As Ross mentioned, "Bob Dale wanted to build a bridge to the past, and many people are in love with a past that I don't think ever existed – one that was devoid of conflict or poverty or strife" (quoted in Wallace). In Pleasantville it never rained, temperature was always pleasant, there were no homeless people,[37] but Pleasantville also was racist,[38] sexist, and intellectually and sexually repressive (Joseph 632-634). As one reviewer put it,

> *Pleasantville* is the kind of parable that encourages us to re-evaluate the good old days and take a fresh look at the new world we so easily dismiss as decadent. Yes, we have more problems. But also more solutions, more opportunities and more freedom. (Ebert)

"Nothing went wrong. People change", David tells Mr. Parker when he cannot make sense of why his wife has abandoned him (or why her life no longer satisfies her). This is a lesson that both men in the fifties, confounded by their wives' sudden independence, and women in the nineties who need to find a new role for themselves once their "right" families are no longer "right", have to assume and learn to live with. The notion that life cannot be like "Pleasantville" any more, as George Parker is forced to realize after his wife's desertion, is one some late nineties women still have to learn, as David's mom evidences. Even David's real-life mother,[39] an adult and no longer a teenager looking for role models, finds the same values about the perfect family desirable, an aspiration surely born out of watching the same old television shows her son adores. David's mom still thinks that "when your father was here, I used to think, 'this was it this is the way it was always going to be. I had the right house. I had the right car. I had the right life'".

> The purported naturalness of the divisions of the spheres … that so thoroughly pervades fairy tales, testifies to the efficacy of this culture procedure, which women internalize and tacitly assume as a truthful dispenser of womanhood. (Martín González 12)

And this could well be applied to *Pleasantville* and the traditional family values conveyed by television shows. David, however, has learned his lesson and knows that "there is no right house. There is no right car". These two dialogues between David and his fictional father and his real

mother are also useful to see that, again, parents are outsmarted by their children.

Characters in *Far from Heaven* know that there are limits that cannot be trespassed—or at least Cathy and Mr. Deagan know. In *Far from Heaven*, unconventional behavior is to remain hidden though they have been more or less guessed by society. These social improprieties are so horrible to the fifties moral standards that they are to be buried in the thickest silence once more even after they have already been told or revealed. The fifties would not tolerate that an African-American gardener is more than a gardener for a white, middle-class woman and any sort of relationship between them is prevented. The husband is "forgiven" up to a certain extent, for he ends up with a new lover embracing his homosexuality, or at least he is tolerated to live his homosexuality, with society looking the other way. In contrast, Cathy ends up alone for committing the socially censored and reprieved activity of being in friendly terms with her African-American gardener. Cathy's plight is part of two larger trends in Hollywood movies. On the one hand,

> any attempt by screen women—until the 1970s—to deviate from their prescribed, stereotypical roles has been consistently and continuously punished. Strong-willed, determined heroines have not only been depicted as deviants, but have also been oppressed if their conducts were considered a threat to the status quo of male dominance. These forms of punishment have ranged from the most extreme sanction, death, to lesser sanctions, such as humiliation, ostracization, and relegation to domestic life. (Levy 198)

On the other, "Hollywood's traditional message about interracial sex has been that it is tragic, that it will not work" (bell hooks quoted in Leverette).[40] When compared to *All That Heaven Allows*, we can say that an important gap age and different social classes are eventually acceptable but racial division is insurmountable. Although her husband actually engages in inappropriate sexual activity and is allowed to continue doing so but she never does and, yet, her punishment is greater and more lasting.

In short, despite depicting an unusual love story (one that would not have been given the green light in the fifties' rigid studio system), *Far from Heaven* endorses classical Hollywood morality, portraying and exposing the "dark" undertow beneath the idyllic image but only

to eventually endorse Hollywood's moral principles. *Pleasantville* is not only a critique of American society of the fifties (or, rather, of the pink-colored image of that decade that has come down to the present day) but of Hollywood's morality and censorship as well as of 1990s calls for a return to the fifties. By exposing the secrets lying behind this seemingly peaceful surface, these movies contribute to deconstructing the image of the fifties as a golden age by showing that the past is more often than not what we want it to be.

NOTES

[1] "Nostalgia was, and still remains, a continuous undercurrent of American life, as compelling perhaps for the masses of people as any visionary glimpses of progress. A simple dictionary definition for nostalgia is *homesickness*. Yet there is more to homesickness that pining for home and far-away places. Homesickness is an emotional longing for the earlier conditions of one's existence, including undoubtedly a remorse at the loss of youth and vitality. … By contrast with the state of things as they are, there comes beseechingly to mind a preference for things as they once were, or, more importantly, *a preference for things as they are believed to have been*" (Dudden 517).

[2] "Television was the single greatest cultural influence of the postwar era, and it invaded the country almost overnight. In 1946, there were only 7,000 TVs in use in the country, but by 1950, there were 4.4 million, and Americans were buying 5 million new sets every year" (Collins 410).

[3] In 1959 U.S. Vicepresident Richard Nixon told Soviet leader Nikita Khruschek that social progress meant kitchen appliances in the course of what came to be known as "the kitchen debate".

[4] "We are frequently, of course, told in a media-laden landscape that identity is closely tied to the active consumption of products offered by the media and leisure industries" (Ott 56).

[5] Coontz notes that "women who could not walk the fine line between nurturing motherhood and castring 'momism', or who had trouble adjusting to 'creative homemaking', were labeled neurotic, perverted, or schizophrenic. A recent study of hospitalized 'schizophrenic' women in the San Francisco Bay Area during the 1950s concludes that institutionalization and sometimes electric shock treatments were used to force women to accept their domestic roles and their husbands' dictates" (quoted in Joseph 638). It is revealing that during the 1950s "not only there were fewers films about independent women than in the thirties or forties, but there were fewer films dealing with women at all. […] Though the characters Doris Day played may have held down jobs, most women in the 1950's films were housewives or women seeking to avoid spinsterhood" (Quart and Auster 58-59).

[6] Despite the recent release of *Revolutionary Road*, I have chosen not to include either the original novel (1961) nor the movie (2008) because the novel was begun to be written in 1956, and thence constitutes a fifties-sixties vision of the fifties, not a twentieth (or twenty-first) century one. Still, the filming and release of the film in the twenty-first century is, up to a certain extent, representative of this phenomenon that *Pleasantville* and *Far from Heaven* illustrate: that now we seem to be ready or, at least, willing to watch movies dealing with a far less conventional and idyllic portrayal of the fifties. In the fifties, "critics, both liberal and conservative, poked fun at the mass media, advertising, the automobile culture, and the anxiety-laden drive for social status and material goods. However, though the banality and tastelessness of much of what appeared on television and the blandness of suburban life were criticized, there was no attempt by these critics

to break from the political and social consensus of the fifties" (Quart and Auster 44). Thus, this task seems to have been left up to the 1990s and 2000s.

[7] *Pleasantville* is set in 1958; *Far from Heaven* in 1957.

[8] Because of space constraints, in this essay I will only focus on marriage, family, and sexuality.

[9] "By 1950, 40 to 50 million Americans lived in the suburbs" (Quart and Auster 45).

[10] Even nostalgic recreations of the sixties such as *The Wonder Years* served to reinforce the image of the fifties in contrast to the changes going on in American society in the sixties.

[11] In order to avoid confusion, by *Pleasantville* I mean the 1998 movie, by Pleasantville the fictional setting of the movie, and by "Pleasantville" the fictional television show.

[12] The fictional channel that broadcasts the "Pleasantville" marathon also has reruns of *Harriet and Ozzy*, *I Married Joan* and *I Love Lucy*.

[13] In contrast to the changes undergone in terms of family composition or family values in America, "Leonard Wallock and William Sharpe argue that suburbs have not changed very much since the days of 'Father Knows Best' and 'Leave it to Beaver'" (Marsh 40). However, *Desperate Housewives* has recently proved that suburban life in America is neither conventional nor excitement-free.

[14] As Robert Beuka points out in his book *SuburbiaNation*, "Pleasantville is a morality tale concerning the values of contemporary suburban American by holding that social landscape up against both the Utopian and the dystopian visions of suburbia that emerged in the 1950's" (14-15).

[15] "Cultural homesickness or nostalgia implies a certain dissatisfaction with present circumstances, and very likely also a dissatisfaction with the apparent direction of trends leading into the future" (Dudden 517).

[16] Jennifer, with her open attitude towards sexual relations, soon subverts and alters high schoolers' sexual mores, much to David's dismay.

[17] For Corliss, "the ultimate irony of *Pleasantville* is that it is less a '60s movie than a '50s one; it has the didacticism and sentimentality of the serious Hollywood product of that earlier time".

[18] Note that what for some means sexual blindness or unawareness, for others is cultural blindness. Jennifer's distress at not being in color, although she is much more sexually active than all the colored other girls ("I've had, like, ten times as much sex as the rest of these girls, and I still look like this. I mean, they spend, like, an hour in the back seat of some car and all of a sudden they're in Technicolor?"), is solved once she reads a whole book (curiously enough, she reads a book about adultery—*Lady Chatterley's Lover* by D. H. Lawrence) and becomes colored. Hers is not a sexual awareness or experience; becoming colored is not so much a question of what you actually do but of doing something you had never done before (be it having sex or reading a book). Ironically, the two books whose plots David tells his friends are *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Catcher in the Rye*, which have often made it to the list of banned books in U.S. schools. In 1950s U.S. schools, a sign "of the anti-intellectual taste of the time was that 'about four times the expenditures on public libraries were paid out for comic books'" (Quart and Auster 44). For actress Reese Witherspoon, who played Jennifer, "when the kids in the movie] start reading and learning more about themselves and becoming more self-actualized, their insides fill in and start to turn to color and sort of bring their insides out. [...] It's about finding individuality and identity" (quoted in Kahlenberg).

[19] "It's easy to see the clothes as a metaphor for everything else that happened to women in postwar America" (Collins 398).

[20] The importance of make up has been analyzed by Sandra L. Bartky, whose "concern is to show the psychological tension women experience in the belief that undergoing these daily tortures (having to make up and dress properly, to walk and talk nicely, smiling and condescending to men's wishes, etc.) is a voluntary action will turn them into 'correct' or 'right' women" (Martín González 11). Though in a very cruel way, in *Far from Heaven*, Frank Whitaker acknowledges that women do go through a lot of work to look the way they do: "it's all smoke and mirrors, fellas. That's all it is. You should see her without her face on", he tells everybody at a meeting at his home.

[21] Ross modelled Betty Parker after his own mother, whom he defined as "a housewife who struggled to find an identity in midlife" (quoted in Wallace).

[22] Because of this as well as highschoolers' sexual activity, some religious leaders, when the movie was released, denounced it for promoting care-free sex (Miller 2008).

[23] Ross's father, screenwriter Arthur Ross, was blacklisted during the McCarthy era (Wallace).

[24] In *All That Heaven Allows* a middle-aged widow (Jane Wyman) falls in love with her younger gardener (Rock Hudson), much to the horror of her grown-up children, who try and separate their mother from him. For Joyrich, *Written on the Wind* emphasized "frustrated sexuality and appropriate class, gender, and familial performance" whereas *Imitation of Life* concentrates on "tensions of race and, once again, appropriate class, gender, and familial performance" (189).

[25] "While PCA guidelines were not exactly law, they functioned in a similarly prohibitionary manner, as the PCA scrutinized and censored Hollywood films. Haynes, whose film cites 1950s Sirkian melodrama that was under the direct and indirect power of the PCA, structures *Far from Heaven* on the discursive interconnections between sexuality, race, and desire that the PCA itself did not analyze but nonetheless treated as a matter of common knowledge" (Scherr).

[26] The Hays code was so prude that it determined that toilets could not be seen in movies. As Joseph L. Mankiewicz ironically pointed out, non-American audiences must have thought that there were no toilets in America until 1955 (Pando 251). In *Pleasantville*, Jennifer discovers that there are no toilets in the soda shop restroom.

[27] In 1967, the year when the *Love vs. Virginia* case put an end to miscegenation laws in the United States, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* was a pioneer movie depicting interracial relationships depicting a "love story of today", as the tagline announced. Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy portrayed a wealthy San Franciscan married couple who met their daughter's African-American fiancé, much to their distress. The novelty about the movie was that "although interracial relationships had occurred throughout the history of the United States, public representations of them were uncommon and were not likely to be positive portrayals of love and commitment" (Leverette). What is more, even nowadays, "although contemporary representations of interracial romance may appear, on the surface, progressive, they share elements of what Patricia Hill Collins has called 'past in present' racism; that is, although the films no longer portray interracial romance as taboo, their presentations obscure deeper messages that perpetuate traditional views of interracial romance, race, and gender" (Leverette).

[28] If Sirk used color "to evoke a middle-class world dominated by gleaning surfaces and appearances and to catch the heroine's feelings of imprisonment" (Quart and Auster 59), color also plays a major role in *Far from Heaven* in that the vividness of the colors of the movie is contrasted with the repressive atmosphere: "all of the wild, unruly feeling that the characters must repress pops to life around them" (Scott). At Haynes' suggestion, actress Julianne Moore, playing the leading role, dyed her natural red hair blonde.

[29] "The Surface of Things" was originally considered for the title of *Far from Heaven*.

[30] They are rather stereotypical and "Cathy is almost a caricature of domestic fulfillment" (Scott).

[31] Like Mr. Deagan, Ron Kirby, the gardener in *All That Heaven Allows*, is also college-educated. Rainer-Werner Fassbinden's remake of *All That Heaven Allows, Angst essen Selle auf* (1974), also dealt with interracial love, depicting the love story of a German woman and a younger Arab man.

[32] Cathy's friend, Eleanor, puts forth her distaste for homosexuality in the following way: "call me old fashioned, I just like all the men I'm around to be all men".

[33] Female friends were a central tenet in 1950's suburban life for "the 1950s suburbs gave birth to a new community of women. […] The housewives looked after each other's children, fed each other's dog, talked endlessly over coffee in the afternoons or highballs at the end of the day, and entertained each other at neighborhood backyeard barbecues or more formal cocktail parties" (Collins 401). Yet, not everybody was happy in the suburbs

and "for the excluded or unsociable, the enforced sameness of the suburbs could be mind-bending" (Collins 401).

[34] It is very significant about social values that "Eleanor displays much more receptivity and understanding when Cathy reveals Frank's homosexuality, but Cathy is soundly rejected by Eleanor regarding the issue of Raymond" (Scherr).

[35] As a curiosity, in 2002 Julianne Moore also starred in *The Hours* (based on Michael Cunningham's rewriting of *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf), where she played another housewife in the fifties who, dissatisfied with her life, considered suicide and eventually abandoned her family to live freely.

[36] This is consistent with the view of love posed in Sirk's movies: "in Douglas Sirk's world, romantic love doesn't play much of a part. His characters are boxed into ruts which are ever-deepening; they cannot understand themselves or their desperate predicaments, let alone successfully reach out to others. But they do reach out, attempting through an oft-professed love to stave off the lonely alternative implicit in Sirk's vision. An acute awareness of pain, failure, and death permeates Sirk's films, and in such a vision romantic love can only take its place as a delusionary refuge from the inevitability of being ultimately alone" (Smith).

[37] David explains a friend of his about a character in "Pleasantville" that "well, he's not homeless, Howard, they just don't say where he lives–Well, it's a silly question!–, because nobody's homeless in Pleasantville. 'Cause that's just not what it's like".

[38] Note that there are no African Americans in Pleasantville, a reflection of the 1950s racially homogeneity of suburbs.

[39] Played by Jane Kaczmarek, she is credited as "David's mom". Kaczmarek also played an unconventional and far from perfect mother in the television show *Malcolm in the Middle* (2000-2006).

[40] Additionally, "when Hollywood explores interracial love relationships, it is almost always from the perspective of the white male with an exotic woman of color, not the other way around" (Guerrero quoted in Leverette).

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THE AUTHOR'S PROCESS OF SELF-CONSTRUCTION ON TRIPS INTO HELL: ON HOW CUMMINGS USES DANTE'S *THE DIVINE COMEDY* TO WRITE *EIMI*

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Abstract

One of the most remarkable features of *Eimi*, published by E.E. Cummings in 1933, is the intense parallelism that we can draw with other works such as Dante Allighieri's *The Divine Comedy*. With *Eimi*, Cummings recycles Dante's work and provides us with an updated version. The goal of this article is twofold. First, to demonstrate how authors collaborate through history to complete former literary works which become a way to comprehend new ones and attract a new readership. And second, to prove how Cummings used travel writing as a strategy to show a brave attitude toward the pro-socialist feelings of the thirties, his love for individualism and his respect for self-dependency. As a conclusion, I would like to show, on the one hand, how Cummings used *Eimi* and *The Divine Comedy* to foretell the decline and fall of extreme left-wing regimes in Europe, and, on the other hand, to prove that, despite the political failure, there was still hope in the people who populated these countries.

Key words: travel writing, individualism, self-determination, socialism, typographical tricks and grammatical distortions.

Resumen

Una de las características más destacables de *Eimi*, publicada por E. E. Cummings en 1933, es el intenso paralelismo que podemos establecer con otras obras tales como *La Divina Comedia* de Dante Allighieri. Con *Eimi*, Cummings recicla la obra de Dante y nos ofrece una

versión actualizada. Este artículo tiene un doble objetivo. En primer lugar, demostrar cómo los autores colaboran a lo largo de la historia para completar obras literarias anteriores, que ayudan a comprender otras nuevas y atraen a un nuevo público. En segundo lugar, probar cómo Cummings empleó la literatura de viajes como estrategia para mostrar una actitud valiente hacia los sentimientos pro-socialistas de los años treinta, su amor por el individualismo y su respeto por la autodependencia. Como conclusión queremos mostrar, por una parte, cómo Cummings utilizó *Eimi* y *La Divina Comedia* para predecir el declive y caída de los regímenes de extrema izquierda en Europa, y por otra, evidenciar que, a pesar de la decepción política, todavía había esperanza en las personas que habitaban estos países.

Palabras clave: literatura de viajes, individualismo, autodeterminación, socialismo, trucos tipográficos y distorsiones gramaticales.

There is the facile assumption about travel writing that it is just "a factual, first personal account of a journey undertaken by the author" but, in fact, it interacts "with a broad number of historical periods, disciplines and perspectives" and constitutes "a relatively open-ended and versatile form" of literature (Youngs and Hooper 2, 3). For centuries, writers' and adventurers' travel experiences have cast a light on the unknown, discovered enigmas, scrutinized countries, and, above all, explored people's identities helping their creators to construct their own.[1]

This is certainly true of E. E. Cummings, who travelled to the former Soviet Union in one of the most interesting periods of its history—the third year of Stalin's long and strict leadership—and one of the hardest but most creative periods of his own life. Boarding a second class-compartment of a train from Paris to Moscow, Cummings visited the Soviet Union for thirty-six days from May to June in 1931 keeping a secret diary meanwhile. In the late spring of 1932 Covici, Friede, Inc. asked Cummings for "any sort of book" (Sawyer-Lauçanno 353). Consequently, the writer expanded his Russian notes ten times and in 1933 *Eimi*—an extremely critical journal of his trip—was published.[2] The book, later defined by Francis Fergusson and Norman

Friedman both as "a travel book in the grand manner" (58) and "a travel-journal or travel diary, where the life experience of the writer is the primary organizing principle" (122), describes a period of change in both Cummings' ideas and the world's.

Apart from the particularly challenging and imaginative use of linguistic devices, one of the most remarkable features of Cummings' longest work is the intense parallelism that we can draw with *The Divine Comedy*—Dante Allighieri's trip to hell.[3] With *Eimi*, Cummings recycles Dante's best known work and provides us with an updated version. My goal in this paper is twofold. First, I want to demonstrate how some authors collaborate through history to complete literary works which become a way to comprehend new ones and attract a new readership. And second, I would like to prove how Cummings used travel writing as a strategy to show a brave attitude toward the pro-socialist feelings of the thirties, his love for individualism and his respect for self-dependency.

It was well-known that a young American writer in the thirties should be a supporter of the left. By the 1920s Cummings had already praised the red flag or exhibited his fondness of Communist demonstrators in such poems as "Let's live suddenly without thinking" (*Complete Poems*) and "16 heures" (*Complete Poems*).[4] In those years the Soviet state manipulated public opinion by contrasting the promise of socialism with the failure of the Western culture. Cummings went to the Soviet Union because he was eager to discover what the Socialist movement was doing to help man toward feeling more alive. Social observation under the Communist regime was very restricted and not many people had been to the Soviet Union in the 1920s and the early 1930s. Cummings was influenced in his decision by a course on History of Russian Literature at Harvard, his friend John Dos Passos' enthusiastic comments when he returned from the Soviet Union in 1928, the mirage drawn for him by the members of the circle of Louis Aragon and Elsa Triolet and the propaganda disseminated by the Soviet Union and the Communist Party in the United States.[5]

Eimi means *I am* in Greek. This *I* is Cummings' voice, the Poundian poetic persona who addresses the reader in the whole book.[6] Not a very popular publication in the 1930s because of its peculiar style and satirical view of ardent Communists, *Eimi* was reviewed, although very

negatively, in over sixty prestigious newspapers and magazines such as *The New York Herald Tribune*, *The Nation* or *The New Republic*.[7] However, such eminent writers as Marianne Moore or Ezra Pound lauded the book. By far the most favourable comments about it came from Ezra Pound who compared the book to those of Stein and Joyce (Sawyer-Lauçanno 368). Sometimes difficult to decode, *Eimi* contains as many strange typographical tricks, thoughtful syntactical shifts, and bizarre grammatical distortions as Cummings' poems. Similarly to most travellers' tales the book alternates humorous passages with pages in which the author expresses anger, desperation and fear. If the diary is cryptic, with actual feelings often suppressed, possibly out of fear that it might be confiscated by the authorities, the book is filled with judgements and observations.

Cummings divides his thirty-six day journey into three parts, which cover Moscow, Kiev, Odessa, Istanbul and his return to Paris. Like his poems, the book offers an immediate vision of what the author perceives moment by moment. It is similar to a Cubist painting composed of fragments which may be seen from different angles as if to embody Cummings' sense of timelessness in the middle of time. When he crossed the Russian border, his train was stopped and the passengers' belongings searched. At that moment, he suddenly became aware of the enormous change in the atmosphere:

> So,in dream moving,precede by trifles,through very gate of
> inexorably has a magic wand been waved;miraculously did
> reality disintegrate:where am I?
> in a world of Was—everything shoddy;everywhere dirt and
> cracked fingernails—guarded by I helplessly handsome
> implausibly immaculate soldier. Look! A rickety train,cen-
> turies BC. (*Eimi* 15)

The absence of spaces between the punctuation marks and the omission of some verbal forms increase the feeling of fragmentation. He felt as distressed in the "world of Was" as he had been in the concentration camp where he was imprisoned in his first novel *The Enormous Room* (1922). By creating different projections of the same view the author wanted to establish a Cummingsesque order which reflected the situation of the new Soviet Russia and the chaotic world of the early thirties in his own voice and that of his travel companions (60).

Cummings had certainly been warned before going to the Soviet Union that, due to his lack of political training, he would not be prepared to understand the country. Cummings had not even read *The Communist Manifesto*, and, very typical of him, had not bothered to find out anything about Russia prior to his visit. The American journalist Lincoln Steffens's short-lived enthusiastic reports on Communism that, later, soured when he published his memoirs in 1931 should have been a good opportunity for Cummings to obtain information.[8] Antonio Ruiz remarks that Cummings' main concern when he wrote *Eimi* was not politics but selfhood (24). At first, his only interest was in the new type of democracy that the socialist experiment had carried out, but, when he arrived there, he was shocked by Russians' precarious living conditions and housing problems, the government's control and rigidity, the lack of freedom, the strain and tension, the inhuman practices of the secret police, the lack of communication between cities, the suppression of religion, and the attack on individualism. Unfortunately his stinging denunciation of the workers' paradise lost him a good many supporters among the left-leaning critics. Even his friends Edmund Wilson, Malcolm Cowley and Muriel Draper broke away with him.

Eimi is afforded such mythical proportions through its use of Dante's *The Divine Comedy* as a framework on which to pin the narrative of his trip that Cummings seems to be responsible for the salvation of the whole human race. Although he does not follow the exact allegorical details, there are a series of similarities that give an extra dimension to the text.[9] *Eimi*, in the same way as *The Divine Comedy*, is in essence peopled by real characters although Cummings takes artistic license with their nicknames. He does so not only to protect their identities in fear of the police, but to emphasize how individuals are alienated, fragmented and blurred in the hands of collectivism. He is *Comrade Kem-min-kz*, *Comrade K*, *K*, *Peesahtel* (the Russian word for "writer"), *Hoodozhnik* (Russian for "painter") and *Poietes* (Greek for "poet"); Professor Charles Malamuth becomes *Turk*, *the Assyrian*, and *That Bourgeois Face*; and his wife Joan London is *Turkess*, *Harem*, and, of course, Dante's beautiful *Beatrice*. Both Charles and Joan were not absolutely enthralled with Stalin's Russia and provided Cummings with "an island of sanity" as they thought that the price of the Communist experiment was far greater than its rewards (Friedman 122).[10] Dante chooses the poet Virgil as a guide through Hell and Purgatory.

Cummings' first guide and mentor in Moscow is also Virgil, the hidden identity of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana, an acquaintance from Cambridge, the professor-journalist-travelling theatre critic who takes him to many representative parts of the city. However, *Eimi's* Virgil is not simply the poet who accompanies Cummings but a disintegrator who leads his descent into Moscow and reduces the city to its essence by presenting it in pieces.

Dante's greatest work comprises *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, and Cummings follows the same pattern. Lisa Nunn remarks how Cummings utilizes Dante's *Inferno* as scaffolding, providing structure and techniques as well as a controlling metaphor: Moscow 1931 is Hell in all its circles (132-140). According to Richard Kennedy, "the time spent in Moscow corresponds to the *Inferno*. The time spent in Istanbul is *Purgatory*, and France is *Paradise*, where at the end of the book, Cummings has a mystical identification with the Spirit of Creativity" (86-87). I would suggest that Kiev and Odessa could be considered as a Pre-Purgatory and as the trigger that made him think over the traditional values of New England. If Moscow impressed Cummings as a place where everything was grey, out-of-date, filthy and dilapidated, when he reached Kiev and Odessa, he felt that he recovered the Old Russia to, eventually, reconsider his Yankee origins.[11]

The first circle of *Eimi's* Hell is situated in "Volks", a prison for youngsters ironically defined by Charles Malamuth as "a blossoming branch of the socialist soviet society for prevention of cruelty to criminals" (*Eimi* 149). The euphemistic name of the correctional institution is significant in itself. *Volks* means people in German, but it has a nationalistic connotation applied to those who are free and have the power. However, all hope of freedom is lost for those who enter this place. "Now all we enter(lasciate ogni" (*Eimi* 151) writes Cummings evoking Dante's verses "lasciate ogni speranza voi ch'entrate". The same thunder storm of the first lines of *The Divine Comedy* also salutes the writer and the Malamuths when they definitively go into the conical funnel. There, in the equivalent to Dante's *Limbo*, the unbaptized dwell. Cummings can observe "boyghosts, childghosts" (*Eimi* 151) and, terrified by the young faces of these supposed criminals, asks if the oldest are just fifteen. Meanwhile, floods of teenagers pull at his jacket and ask in Russian what his name is. One more reference to Dante's *Inferno* appears in the visit to this jail: the prisoners are not divided

by crimes, the noisiest regions are not reserved for the most violent offenders, but all suffer equally.

Cummings penetrates the second circle of Hell when he discovers that an American citizen cannot marry a Russian woman and leave the country together. The story of Paolo and Francesca Da Rimini, who weep together as they are punished for their illicit love in Canto V of *The Divine Comedy*, is reproduced in *Eimi* on Monday 25th May, when in one of the rooms of the Museum of Modern Art a man and a woman enter crying over their impossible love. Unfortunately, nobody could solve their predicament as, at that time, there were no American diplomats in the Soviet Union to hear an appeal.

After returning to their Moscow apartment from a play by Stanislavsky, Cummings and his friends enter the third circle of Hell. They cannot get anything to eat at home because it is protected by Cerberus, the beast that guards the gluttonous in the third circle of Dante's *Inferno*. *Eimi's* Cerberus was released each night by a flatmate in order to keep the comrades away from the food. This angry dog played its role so efficiently that the whole group finally decided to go to an inn where there was a dead Christmas tree and a violinist who played gypsy tunes. Cummings remembered nostalgically New York restaurants and their joyful atmosphere.

At last, Cummings descends to what Paul Rosenfeld calls "scientific inferno" (74), the ultimate depth where the writer finds Dante's glimpse of Satan himself: Lenin's tomb. In no more than four pages Cummings describes in his own particular way the horror of a man who was never alive but idolized. The close relationship between Cummings' prose and poetry in theme and technique emerges at the beginning of this passage.[12] Its especially controversial lines are defined by Fergusson as "a sleepwalking death-rite" (59) in which a ridiculous never-ending line of men and women are waiting to see an embalmed body:

> facefacefaceface
> facefaceface
> faceface
> face
> Face
>   :all(of whom-which move-do-not-move numberlessly) Toward
> the
>   Tomb

Crypt
                Shrine
    Grave.
      The grave.
      Toward the (grave
      All toward the grave)of himself(all toward the grave of
    themselves)all toward the grave of the Self.
            Move(with dirt's dirt dirty)unmoving move un(some from
    nowhere)
      Moving more unmoving(eachotherish)
        :face
        Our-not-their
        , faceface ; Our-not-
        her
        , facefaceface Our-
        not-his
                    —toward
        Vladimir our life!Ulianov our sweetness!Lenin our hope!
        all—
        (hand-
                fin-
         claw
         foot-
      hoof
         tovarich)
         es (to number of numberless ; un
    —smiling)
        with dirt's dirt dirtier with others' dirt with dirt of themselves
    dirtiest
        waistband dirtily never smile shufflebudge dirty pausehalt
            Smilingless. (*Eimi* 240)

On occasions, full stops, commas and spaces between words have
been pulled out in order to reproduce the tedious movements of the
people endlessly waiting on the queue. Some other times, punctuation
marks remind us of modern emoticons, although parentheses do not
precisely symbolise smiles in this context but instantaneous glimpses.
Word repetition increases the sensation of boredom and nothingness
perceived by the writer but not by the Russian citizens. As Eve Triem
states, in this passage Cummings performs a new experiment based
on an arrangement of thoughts and sensations which isolates the
instantaneous (28). Every single term is positioned strategically to
establish the real physical impact of viewing Lenin's tomb. This central

part is controlled by few scattered words, as if something magnificent for the Soviets were simple and puerile for Cummings. *Face*, *grave*, *dirty*, *number*, *move*, and *smile* are, sometimes adorned with affixation, the key words in almost two pages. For Cummings, Lenin means the acceptance of lifelessness for the new Russians and is the responsible for the failure of the Soviet revolution.

The appalling world of the Soviets is contrasted with Kiev when Cummings departs to Odessa. At last, he could find that beautiful spring landscape that Natalya Gontcharova had told him about in Paris when she learnt of Cummings' interest in visiting her homeland.[13] Cummings admires that kingdom of churches and sodafountains, walks on its streets and, above all, sees the flowers tremble and breathes "most sweet air" (*Eimi* 265). In Odessa, away from the previous "grey landscape of somnambulists" (Friedman 124), the green colour—Cummings' favourite—appears and evokes synaesthetic effects on his way to the beach, presumably the same as the one where Dante and Virgil emerge near the island mountain of Purgatory. In such a controlled system as the Soviet regime, it is only the connections of man with nature that cannot be monitored by the state. Nature, in fact, induces a freer world outside the country borders.

As the writer approaches Purgatory, the book begins to look more and more like one of his poems. On June 10th Cummings arrives in Istanbul. The blue sky, and the green leaves decorate the minarets. Veils had been strictly forbidden, and the Arab language was not permitted on any street, in any tram, or on any menu in classy restaurants. But in Purgatory, there were trees and bird cages hanging above chatty people sitting in the shade. The birds were not free but, unlike the ones in Moscow, they moved because they were alive. After "a month of hell" (*Eimi* 402) in the Soviet Union's capital city, Cummings could laugh again watching the stars above him. Having spent a day in Turkey, the writer ascends to Paradise on the Orient Express. On his way back to the western world, Bulgaria means "pink", the Danube is "very blue", and, Paris, his final destination, symbolizes luminosity, flowers in bloom and "a silence made of voice" far from darkness and error (*Eimi* 416, 419, 431).

The world lived a period of change and so did Cummings' personal life. While in Moscow, his second wife, the unfaithful Anne Barton,

informed him in a letter from Paris that she was pregnant with his child and going back to New York to have an abortion. Some months later they separated and finally divorced in 1934. A ladies' man, Cummings enjoyed the company of beautiful girls.[14] During his trip to the Soviet Union he was extremely surprised by the lack of femininity of women. In a letter to Anne he writes that in Russia the feminine simply does not exist, and females smoke, wear too short skirts and are huge or dumpy or both (Kennedy 311). Apart from Joan Malamuth ("the best looking female I never quite expected to see in that little bit of Eaven on Hearth, Marxland"—*Eimi* 92—) only three women are considered as real ones in the novel. The great poet Vladimir Mayakovski's long-time lover Lili Brik, who is referred to as "Madame Potiphar" (*Eimi* 97-99), is one of them. In Odessa two young girls, one of them nude to the waist and bathing on the beach, are depicted as "2 alias flowers in-the-crannied lassies" (*Eimi* 319). According to Barry Marks, the description of the semi-nude girls is one of the few affirmative moments in the novel (66). A Soviet woman for Cummings is an *unhe*, a *nonmale*, or a *nonman*. The writer does not seem to recognize as positive the state protection to prospective mothers and the special advantages in their jobs that he recounts in the novel because he was not so sure that these apparently good regulations were really carried out (*Eimi* 86).

Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno puts an emphasis on Cummings' quick return to Paris and reproduces the words of a famous French newspaper. On June 14th 1931 *Paris Tribune* writes:

> E. E. Cummings has already left Russia. Cummings went to the land of the Soviets about a month ago, with the announced intention of staying there for many weeks, months or even years [...] Why, then, did he leave so soon? Is the supply of inspiration smaller than he foresaw? (347)

On June 20th, a front page interview with Cummings allowed him to answer the question posed a week earlier. The traveller focussed his answer on the Soviet population's feelings:

> It is nothing to that in Moscow. If you said "boo" to some of those people they might drop dead. If they are supposed to work 24 hours a day, they try to work 25. If it's 36 they try to make it 37. They are in a peculiarly nervous condition. (347)

Travel books offer multiple visions that readers may process in their minds. *The Divine Comedy* shows Dante's penetrating and

comprehensive analysis of contemporary political, historical and philosophical controversies. Dante's creation is a profound Christian vision of man's temporal and eternal destiny which draws on the poet's own experience of exile from his native city Florence. In *Eimi* we see a pro-communist Cummings converted to the cause of individual liberty in opposition to the oppressing state. *Eimi* and *The Divine Comedy* do not provide a neutral vision of events. Cummings and Dante responded to what they saw, heard, and felt in two epic journeys and inform the reader about themselves and their travel experiences. By choosing to write his poem in Italian rather than in Latin, Dante decisively influenced the course of literary development, making Italian become the literary language in Western Europe for centuries. If travel writing has been considered as "inherently conservative both in its politics and its form" (Youngs 59), in his love affair with English Cummings makes the reader not only able to witness marvellous sights and sounds but offers an innovative experimental prose that surpasses mere description.

Sawyer-Lauçanno remarks that there is not a dull page in the book (353), maybe because *Eimi* is neither an objective account of a tour to a foreign country nor capitalist propaganda, but a witty instrument to warn other *visitors* on how to defend their own integrity. The only propaganda in the book appears when Cummings tries to champion the importance of the individual over the masses. Cummings was not a right winger but a ferocious anti-authoritarian individualist who had become more complex with the years and hardly accepted any dogma.[15] He represents the Western World in Russia as one of its most revolutionary subjects, because he distrusts his own civilization with its commercialism, materialism and extreme patriotism but, at the same time, he does not really like what he has discovered in the country of the Soviets. For him the west was not a model of liberty and fairness either. In fact, in many of his writings such as "THANKSGIVING (1956)" (*Complete Poems*)—a poem which attacks the indifference of the Eisenhower-Dulles government towards the Hungarian crisis— he denounces the excesses of the United States. The letter Cummings writes to Ezra Pound in 1946 portrays America as identical to the Soviet Union: "And why is 'America' sold on 'Russia'? Well,if thous asket me:R represents everything A really is-without-daring-to-be. Such as? 'Fascist'" (Ahearn 182).

Now in the beginning years of the twenty-first century, we have contemplated the 1991 breakup of the Soviet state and appreciated the sometimes catastrophic desire for self-determination and individualism of other nations. *Eimi* was the perfect tool to foretell the decline and fall of extreme left-wing regimes in Europe. Before travelling to Russia, Cummings was convinced that socialism could offer a viable option for the manifest failure of capitalism but, as an individual, he thought he had the power to choose and his anti-Soviet position had a clear impact on him. We do not know if Dante's divine light was completely revealed to Cummings at the end of his journey. The lifeless Soviet Union of the 1930s made a draconian effort to reconstruct itself as a country but was not the epitome of freedom and justice. However, Cummings certainly thought there was hope in its people. That is why he leaves a door open at the end of the narration, as "OPENS" is the final word of his travel diary (452).

NOTES

[1] In Francis Fergusson's words travel writing "gives the writer something to write about" (61).

[2] A second printing was subsequently issued in the same year also by Covici Friede. The Grove Press edition came out in 1958. The fourth edition of *Eimi* edited by the late George James Firmage, who kindly informed me about the editing process in long telephone conversations between London and Madrid, is scheduled to be published by Liveright in the autumn of 2007.

[3] *Eimi* must not be read as a narrative but in small doses unified by Cummings' voice. Francis Fergusson compares its style to Pound's Cantos: "pastiche plus voice" (60).

[4] Although it might be a way to content Cummings' own father Reverend Edward Cummings, we cannot obviate some funny lines that he addressed to him from New York in which his affinities with the new dominant political class in Russia were not so clear:

the bolsheveeks have bearded cheeks

their leader he is Trotski

we're glad we're not in Petrograd

where youski would be shotski. (Ahearn 107)

[5] Elsa Triolet packed Cummings with gifts for her older sister, Lili Brik. Brik was delighted with the capitalist gifts her Communist sister had sent her—magazines, a toothbrush, neckties, perfume, and lanolin.

[6] The title is a transliteration of the Greek *eimi*.

[7] The socialist printers had ferociously objected to Cummings' accusation of the Stalinist Soviet Union. Maybe that was the reason why in mid-1935 Covici-Friede had only sold one copy of *Eimi. No Thanks* (1935) was Cummings' most difficult book to publish. This might seem strange for a poet who had thirteen books behind him. But the radical politization of literature since the end of the twenties and the publication of *Eimi* made many publishers turn their backs to him.

[8] Lincoln Steffens had travelled to the Soviet Union in 1919 and came back in 1921 disappointed with Communism.

[9] Rajeev Kumar Kinra says that Cummings dismantles and eventually reshapes epic conventions which will be the predominant aesthetic device of *Eimi* (125).

[10] Joan was the daughter of Jack London who was still extremely popular in the Soviet Union although he had died in 1916. Joan was married to Charles Malamuth, a Slavic languages professor from the University of California who was working as a journalist in Moscow.

[11] Cummings' friend John Dos Passos called him "the last of the New Englanders" (87).

[12] Paul Rosenfeld describes the book as "a new literary genre" (Sawyer-Lauçanno 368).

[13] Natalya Gontcharova was the wife of Mikhail Larionov, a Russian painter who also designed Diaghilev's *Les Balles Russes.*

[14] In 1924 Cummings married Elaine Orr but they divorced in 1925. In 1932 he met Marion Morehouse, a well-known fashion model with whom he remains for the rest of his life although they never married.

[15] There are a half-dozen positive references in Cummings' *Selected Letters* to Russia and Communism between 1919 and 1923 although it should be noted that they refer to the pre-Stalin period. However, by 1953, Cummings wrote in a letter to his sister that he "wouldn't like 'communism' if 'communism' were good" (Dupee 223).

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THE REVISION AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE AUTHORIAL SELF WITHIN POSTMODERN SHORT FICTION[1]

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the way in which several American short story writers, such as Barth and Barthelme, not only display the problematics of the postmodern authorial self in their texts but also turn it into their subject matter. Contemporary critical theory rejects the idea of an indivisible, distinct authorial self who confers meaning and coherence to the literary work. The postmodern short story seems to address the problematics of the authorial self in terms of Barthesian and Foucaldian criticism, since, by dissolving "work" into "text", it subverts the notion of the author as a discrete entity prior and exterior to any fiction. This means that the authorial self has now become a fictitious entity, an intertextual construct composed of a plurality of other texts. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to explore how postmodern short story writers seem to use their creative powers as a self-effacing and self-creating strategy, how the notion of the self is subverted as well as resisted, and also to expose that the authorial text does not disappear completely from the text but remains a subtle presence.

Key words: postmodernism, intertextuality, authorial self, ontological, diegetic, embedded narrative.

Resumen

Este artículo se centra en el modo en que algunos autores norteamericanos del relato corto como Barth y Barthelme muestran en su obra la problemática del yo autorial y la convierten en la temática de

sus relatos. El relato corto postmoderno trata la problemática del autor utilizando los postulados de Barthes y Foucault ya que, al convertir la obra en texto, subvierten la noción del autor como entidad distinta que precede al texto. El autor se convierte así en una entidad ficticia, en una estructura intertextual formada por otros textos. El objetivo de este trabajo es analizar el modo en que los autores del relato corto utilizan su fuerza creativa como una estrategia de ocultación y creación del yo autorial de forma que el autor no sólo no desaparece del texto sino que permanece como una presencia sutil.

Palabras clave: postmodernismo, intertextualidad, identidad autorial, ontológico, diegético, narrativa encastrada.

Contemporary critical theory has deprived the authorial self of its ontological status by converting it into a textual entity dispersed in language. The romantic author conceived as a source of meaning has been obliterated from the text, but his position of discursive authority has become the focus of contemporary metafiction. "The Death of the Author" by Roland Barthes (1990) changed the traditional notion of the author because, in his view, writing implied the destruction of any voice and origin. In his article "From Work to Text" (1979) Barthes replaces the concept of author as a principle of causality and origin of a text with that of intertextuality, which conceives the text as an impersonal intersection of other texts. The concept of intertextuality, coined by Julia Kristeva (1986), promotes a new vision of meaning and authorship that challenges previous notions of originality, objectivity and autonomy. The meaning of a text has ceased to be traced back to the author's intention, since any text is supposed to be constructed as a collage of quotations, that is, as non-original rewriting of what has already been said (Genette 1982). As a result, traditional concepts of the authorial self and the book are subverted. Since an individual text cannot be distinguished from its intertextual fabric, the authorial self becomes a plural, anonymous entity which cannot be identified with an individual consciousness. Thus, the concept of authority is undermined by the transformation of the authorial self into a textual self created by fiction. In the same vein, Foucault's work "What is an Author?" (1979) argues that the author is considered an ideological function which must

disappear from the text in order to create a discursive space where the writing subject's individuality get dissolved. For Charles Caramello,

> such a 'textual' self [...] can tailor neither its own self-image nor that image's nurturing environment as anything other than a *bricolage* of other images and environments, a *bricolage* [...] with no discrete, fixable *bricoleur*. (22)

The author embodies an empty space where other selves intermingle, a construct consisting of a collage of other selves and intertextual images. From this perspective, intertextuality challenges the notion of the author as an ontological being and obliges us to restructure our notion of subjectivity. In the postmodern short story, the authorial self/voice seems to be a rhetorical construct, a function to be interpreted, rather than an objective authority. Hence when we talk about the authorial self we are not referring to the controlling and authoritative figure of the conventional author but rather to a textualized figure derived from accumulated conventions. In this paper the term author refers to the "paper author" or "fictional author" which becomes the narrator of the text. He is considered to be an additional element which complicates the structure of postmodern stories by inserting his presence in the narrative.

Due to the dissolution of the notion of the subject as the origin of discourse, the text becomes the intertextual meeting place in which the author seems to be a "guest" not its creator. We can see in American postmodern short fiction ways that exemplify the notion of the author as a "textual strategy", a fictional self deprived of any ontological status. In the stories of Barth and Barthelme the author is less an authoritative entity who displays the meanings of the text than a construct of discursive conventions. Siegle (1983) aptly remarks that the authorial voice is less a personal presence than a confluence of conventions and considers that literary conventions are the authoritative delimiters of the text. It seems obvious that the ontological author as a distinct self disappears in order to become an intertextual construct whose only function is to transmit and retell repeated stories. Thus, no single authorial consciousness seems to control the narrative. This authorial absence invites a more active collaboration on the part of the reader. But American short-story writers, while acknowledging the notion of the text as an intertextual web, still want to emphasize the importance of the author. Therefore, some American short stories embody the paradox

of postmodern writers who, even if they accept the notion of the author as an intertextual construct, refuse Barthes' notion of anonymity and try to reconstruct the authorial self in their texts. These writers seem to corroborate Foucault's opinion when he states that

> the subject should not be entirely abandoned. It should be reconsidered, not to restore the theme of an originating subject, but to seize its functions, its interventions in discourse, and its system of dependencies. (*Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* 137)

These authors are not only eager to explore authorial self-awareness, but also insist on making the reader aware of their presence. In fact, in some fictions the story itself is quite irrelevant and the authorial persona becomes the centre of the narrative. For Molesworth,

> This self-consciousness claims that the author is only reporting what is there; by dropping the pretence of total authorial power of invention, the fiction writer becomes merely a reflector, or to apply the argument to Barthelme, a paster-up of pictures cut out of the thoroughly, indisputably real. (63-64)

Authorial self-reflection is also tied up with the strategies of metafiction, whose self-conscious preoccupation about the origin of a text seems to demand the reinstating of the act and responsibility of enunciation. Linda Hutcheon (1991) states that metafiction subverts our notions of unified, coherent subjectivity and she aptly remarks that it stresses the textual and intertextual nature of fiction not as a means to eradicate the producer but just to change his/her status. Postmodern metafiction rejects the notion of the author as a source of meaning and, by reflecting upon itself, it reveals the mechanisms of fiction construction. Furthermore, this self-reflective fiction suggests that the author's imagination is not unlimited, but that he parodies and appropriates the medium of representation that has been used to construct meaning. This type of fiction simultaneously creates a fictional world and unveils the mechanics of fiction construction (Waugh 1990). By calling attention to its own techniques, metafictional writers not only demystify the process of writing conceived as "the effect of the real", but also refuse to represent reality mimetically. Thus, it could be said that the concept of metafiction is central to the study of the postmodern writer. Metafiction is not only concerned about authorial intent, but also its parodic form overtly points to the act of writing and meaning construction.

It seems obvious that postmodern metafiction deals with language and narrativity rather than coherent subjectivity. In other words, this fiction conceives the world not as constructed in subjectivity, but as constructed through language. As Linda Hutcheon points out, "the strategy of such fiction is to focus not on the author and the reader as individual historical agents, but on the enunciatory processes of production and reception of language, of discourse" (40). The work of many postmodern short story writers like Barth and Barthelme calls attention to authority structures in order to challenge the myth of originality. The author is no longer the source of meaning but a position to be filled in the text. In these postmodern short stories the act of writing originally gives way to the act of rewriting and to metafictional intertextuality. Thus, their self-reflective fictions illustrate the relationship between representation and identity taking into account some postmodern characteristics, such as metafictional self-consciousness, and a conception of a collective and fragmented identity. This awareness of the shift from a distinct and indivisible self to a fluid, plural and indivisible one has led writers to reflect a structure of fragmentation which represents the postmodern way of shaping identity and self. These writers attempt to explore how the chosen mode of representation is linked to the way the self is constructed in fiction.

In Barth's short stories the authorial self is never a stable entity but a discursive construct exploring the realm of postmodern selfhood. The stories which form *Lost in the Funhouse* are all concerned with the search for the narrator's identity. In this sense *Lost in the Funhouse* becomes a metafictional reflection upon the problematics of selfhood and subjectivity. However, far from privileging authorial discourse, these fictions become ironical explorations of subjectivity and authority. In this collection of stories the narrators are so self-conscious that they cannot avoid inserting themselves into the narratives. Driven by postmodern anxieties, Barth's narrators are self-affirming, self-denying constructs wandering through the labyrinthine funhouse of fiction vacillating among the provisional reflections of themselves. These narrators are fictionalized in successive narrative levels as implied authors, authorial authors or authorial characters in order to depict the postmodern disintegration of subjectivity. In Kaylor's words, "the uniqueness of the ego or the 'myth' of the autonomy of the 'subject self' of both characters and authors is thus seriously questioned, revised or

even undermined" (250). In these short stories Barth underlines the narrative crisis of the contemporary author who presents his texts in the process of construction. For example, the story called "Autobiography: A Self-recorded Fiction" openly recognizes the postmodern narrator's identity crisis by stating "I must compose myself" (*Lost in the Funhouse* 36). Later on, this disembodied printed voice acknowledges: "Being an ideal warped image, my fancy's own twist figure, is what undoes me […] I wonder if I repeat myself" (38). It is obvious that this story intends to represent the textualization of the authorial self, a disintegrated self deprived of any ontological status. Indeed, "Autobiography" depicts a postmodern writing subject in search for self-definition. In another story called "Title" this crisis is corroborated by emphasizing the narrator's loss of authority and control over the narrative:

> Do you know, declared the narrator, one has no idea, especially nowadays, how close the end may be, nor will one necessarily be aware of it when it occurs. Who can say how near this universe has come to mere cessation? (108)

This metafictional self-analysis turns narrative into a game of affirmation and negation of the author's control over the universe of his fiction. Here, the reader has been made into a fiction, a textual strategy, and is invited by the narrator to join the game of narrative discourse. This is part of the metafictional enterprise aiming at reproducing the enunciatory context of fiction writing, that is, the production and reception of the text. As most metafiction, this story becomes an allegory of the enunciative act since it includes the representation of the writing subject and presupposes the reader's presence. Moreover, in this story the distinctions between author and narrator are blurred in spite of the narrator's insistence on his not being Barth, that is, the real author. In fact, the reader is confused about the author's intention. Does he really intend to blur these distinctions or is he rather underlining them? For Beverly Gross,

> such insistence on the mask actually strengthens the reader's sense that the real Barth has finally stepped forward and is presenting himself more or less straight: a writer sick of his own cleverness, bored with his own self-consciousness, and desperate. (108)

Barth resorts to metafiction in order to question and examine his own position as discursive authority. The narrator of "Life-Story" is very much concerned with postmodern self-consciousness in fiction and with

the way in which it affects the role of the author. He tries to convince himself of his own reality wondering if he is not a character in someone else's fiction and creating constructed identities as projections of himself. Obsessed with the idea of being himself a fiction, this narrator imagines story frames which multiply the embedded narratives of other authorial selves possessed by the same fancy. The other authors, belonging to different diegetic levels, are designated by alphabet letters as a means of emphasizing that identity is only a linguistic construct. In order to underline the paralyzing impasse reached by postmodern authorial self-reflectiveness, the author resorts to multiple *mises en abyme*, thus depicting the narrator's various representations of himself reflected at different levels of consciousness:

> D comes to suspect that the world is a novel, himself a fictional personage [...] since D is writing a fictional account of this conviction he has indisputably a fictional existence in his account, replicating what he suspects to be his own situation. Moreover E, hero of D's account, is said to be writing a similar account [...] et cetera. (Barth, *Lost in the Funhouse* 117)

The use of the *mise en abyme* produces replications in different ontological directions since they point at an external or extra-diegetic author who seems as unreal as the intra-diegetic ones. The authorial self has become an integral part of the story and he seems to be involved in a kind of literary schizophrenia since "as the narrator he is reduced to a simple character in the fiction and as the author he finds himself relegated to an unstable, uncontrollable, and eminently visible presence not wholly outside the fiction" (Kiernan 378).

In "Echo" there are three author's surrogates—Tiresias, Narcissus and Echo—each representing different aspects of the postmodern authorial self. Since the self is not a unified and stable entity anymore, this story embodies the authorial persona's fragmented self. For, while Tiresias is the impersonal, detached voice which counterbalances extreme subjectivity and Narcissus the egocentric, self-reflexive narrator, Echo embodies the intertextual subjectivity that rejects the myth of originality. Echo was a beautiful nymph who, after falling in love with Narcissus and being rebuffed by him, hides in the woods and grieves away until nothing is left of her except her voice. The nymph represents the efforts of the author to eliminate the authorial presence in the text. Following the myth, the multiple narrator of the story attempts to

become a disembodied voice reproducing the stories of others. The lack of selfhood implied by Echo seems to be connected with the postmodern writer's assumption that fiction is a playful repetition of a reality that does not seem to exist. However, in this tale Echo remains a sign of presence since she never repeats other voices but "edits, heightens, mutes, turns others' words to her end" (Barth, *Lost in the Funhouse* 100). She, who was punished by Zeus's wife and condemned to repeat the words of others, is the paradigm of the postmodern narrator since

> she is doomed [...] to wrestle with another problem that all storytellers are faced with: how to say what has already been said [...] and yet say it in a fresh and new and valid way. (Morrell 93)

The tale is told from an authorial point of view which remains deliberately ambiguous and prevents the reader from distinguishing the narrating voice. More often than not, we never know who is speaking. In an interview, Barth acknowledged that the plot of this story was conceived to mislead the reader. Thus, it is virtually impossible to know "whether it's Echo telling the story in Tiresias' voice [...] or in Narcissus' voice, or whether Narcissus is telling the story about Echo, et cetera" (Bellamy 9). The three voices representing the plural identity of the author blend and clash in repetitive, narcissistic self-reflections. The act of narration becomes self-referential and the plot is reduced to a matter of voice. The narrators of this story remind the reader of their own fictionality based on constructed identities which draw on the author's projections. These voices fashion a split, distorted authorial self who is looking for self-definition. The juxtaposition of conflicting authorial personae reflects the postmodern author's condition which makes him "linger forever on the autognostic verge" (Barth, *Lost in the Funhouse* 103). The problematics of authorship become thus the subject matter of the story contributing to the inexhaustible narrative process.

Most postmodern writers believe that the concept of the self exists only while it is being created through fiction. For example, in Barth's "Anonymiad" a minstrel narrates his quest for self-definition. He acknowledges that each new narrative starts the process of reinventing himself. Thus, the narrator becomes aware that he can only create replications of a self-reflective consciousness during the fiction-making process. The writing subject is viewed as an intertextual "palimpsestic" self in the process of definition. Barth's narrators are aware that the act

of writing is what gives them any sense of selfhood. For their existence depends on their commitment to storytelling. In an era of exhaustion the postmodern writer's only choice consists in recycling stories and writing infinite variations which perpetuate the narrative *ad infinitum*. These writers know that narrativity is their salvation since, by allowing their characters to assume a protean authorial role, they can challenge a fixed concept of self and identity.

On the other hand, the narrator's replacement of history by myth results in a new concept of identity as an inter-subjective, undetermined and multiform reality. Consequently, any attempt to reconstruct the self is frustrated by the impossibility of tracing an individual consciousness in the intertextual fabric of his fiction. In this story, writing seems to be a voluntary effacement of the self which eliminates any traces of individuality. For,

> if narrativity is to become authorial salvation, it must find some means for ceasing to be a one-directional movement into an ever-receding future and become, at least as a model, a cyclical or double-helix looping on itself so that the author ceases to be the causative agent and becomes part of an inexhaustible process. (Vickery 427)

In postmodern short stories competing narrative voices threaten to destabilize the narrator's speaking position. In "Menelaiad" Barth evidences the importance of analyzing the different pronouns that the narrator uses to designate himself by making the plot hinge upon the determination of the narrator's identity. This story oscillates between different narrative positions which prevent a rigid separation of self and other. The construction of the self by the juxtaposition of first- and third-person narration depicts the representation of the inter-subjective, fluid self and poses existential questions about the elusive referents implied. In this story, the narrator points at the multiple layers of narrative and reality by constant self-questioning. What we hear is a self-conscious, anonymous voice eager to draw attention to the dynamics of his artistic production. Here, storytelling seems to preserve the narrator's protean fluidity and narration becomes self-referential. This story uses the *mise en abyme* to mask the authorial presence behind the narrative layers and rhizomatic structure. Yet its complex structure betrays the presence of an author. Paradoxically, the author's attempts at self-effacement emphasize his presence. It could be said that "a text that thematizes a self-conscious awareness of the processes of its own

construction unavoidably thematizes the importance of its constructor" (Worthington 118). However, this foregrounding of the compositional process means that the author as a metaphysical entity in control of the universe of his fiction has been replaced by a self-ironical entity concerned with authority and representation.

In his essay "The Self in Fiction" (1997) Barth expressed his concerns with the postmodern authorial self that his fiction displays. Here he analyzes the anxiety contemporary authors go through while searching for their role in fiction. For him, postmodern fiction should focus on the quest for a "performing self", even when this creative subjectivity craves for self-effacement. In "Title" the author's surrogate complains that, in our self-conscious era, "the narrator has narrated himself into a corner" (Barth, *Lost in the Funhouse* 112). Yet, by thematizing the writing process, Barth emphasizes the importance of the narrator's functional presence in the narrative.

While Barth's authorial self is exclusively concerned with the process of constructing fictional worlds, Barthelme's short stories deal with the manner in which reality's chaotic experience is filtered by the author's consciousness. However, there is not a centre of consciousness in control of narrative discourse, since in his stories consciousness has been replaced by an intertextual mixture of discourses. His depersonalized prose is a collage of clichés, intertextual borrowings, and mass media messages characterized by the absence of a subjectivized ego in the narrative voice. Thus, Barthelme's short stories refuse the presence of authoritative points of view and that is the reason why he uses an amalgam of voices from different sources in order to conceal and contain his own voice. Barthelme's stories are fragments of reality which represent a textualized authorial self constructed as a collage of voices, surrogates and intertextual images drawn from contemporary culture. The author in his short stories is the ventriloquist that disembodies himself in order to let other voices and discourses be heard. The narrators depicted in his fiction lack a structured ego and conceive the postmodern concept of identity as a mere focalization of existence. And "by the very act of speaking or observing or reflecting on the disparate and inconclusive fragments of their lives", those speakers or focal characters impose, as Davis remarks, "the form of the quest for Barthelme's grail substitute" (278).

"The Rise of Capitalism", included in a collection entitled *Sadness* and also in *Sixty Stories*, is a short story made up of scattered fragments which resist the authorial self as the articulating force of the text. Barthelme's ambitious task is to explore how the consumer society and the media bring about the disintegration of subjectivity. Barthelme seems to explore the problematics of selfhood and subjectivity within the frame of a polyphonic discourse which acknowledges the plural identity of the postmodern author. The writing subject is displaced from the first fragments, narrated by a first-person voice, to an impersonal mode of narration where narrative is deprived of a subjectivity functioning as a compositional medium. As narrative progresses the narrator's subjectivity seems to fade away until it is cancelled out by a collective consciousness as a result of the rise of capitalism. The last kaleidoscopic fragments depict how capitalism extends to virtually all realms of social and personal life, disintegrating individual selfhood. Indeed, Barthelme, by emphasizing the social construction of subjectivity, makes the reader aware of the dissolving of the self in contemporary culture. He turns this story into a thorough analysis of collective postmodern selfhood by incorporating the dissolution of the individual consciousness into the fabric of the story. Thus, this verbal collage gives an image of an attenuated or alienated subjectivity, a consciousness that can only be revealed by means of fragmented feelings, desires and fantasies. Therefore, while it seems impossible to avoid the presence of an organizing consciousness, Barthelme avoids the focalization of his reflections of reality through a coherent, stable and fixed subjectivity. For Barthelme, writing is conceived as a voluntary self-effacement activity which cancels any traces of individuality. Indeed, this author is in the position of a ventriloquist for, as Catherine Bernard says, "the ventriloquist does not so much construct himself as other, as disembody himself, lingering thus as the empty echo of a once authentic voice which he however needs in order to flaunt his own emptiness" (17).

In another story from the same collection entitled "The Party" a disembodied narrator recounts in a detached, impersonal tone his fragmented experience at a party. This narrator, as most of Barthelme's narrators, seems deprived of an ontological status inside or outside the text giving the story a depersonalized texture. He occupies "that neutral space where all identity is lost" (Barthes, "The Death of the Author" 142). In this fiction the collective sentiments of postmodern society

are explored by a disintegrated consciousness. The impersonality of the writing subject gives the impression that the free play of language has removed the author from the centre of the narrative. Barthelme uses the technique of collage, using bits and quotations from other texts and discourses, displaying his originality in the way in which those appropriated fragments are pasted up. He refuses providing an absolute world-view by presenting fragments, disconnected realities and conflicting discourses and thus he admits his inability to express a transcendent and stable subjectivity. As a result, using Foucault's words, "we must locate the space left empty by the author's disappearance, follow the distribution of gaps and breaches, and watch for the openings that this disappearance uncovers" ("From Work to Text" 145).

"Daumier", a rather interesting and self-conscious short story evoking Alexandre Dumas's *The Three Musketeers*, expresses self-reflexively Barthelme's concern with the fluidity and provisionality of the postmodern self. The author shows his hand by exploring metafictionally the problem of representation and authority in fiction. Here a fictional author reflects on his construction of surrogates of himself in fiction "which will slay and bother and push out and put to all types of trouble the original, authentic self, which is a dirty great villain" (Barthelme 214). The narrative voice of the story is a metafictional, self-conscious writer who creates embedded narratives in which the author's surrogates get involved in absurd adventures parodying Dumas' novel. His fictional versions of himself reject the notion of a stable and definite subjectivity as the origin of narrative. Alluding to Valery's assumption that the contemplation of the self is the root of alienation, he tries to avoid self-absortion by creating different surrogates which will distract the author from his narcissistic self-exploration. The narrator conceives himself as an intertextual construct through which ideas, voices, and cultural messages are recycled. The plot and the characters are as fractured as the narrator of the story. Thus, the fragmented structure of the text—divided into twenty sections—reflects the self in a moment of dispersal and embodies the authorial persona's attempts to reconstruct himself. This metafictional technique of reducing the author to a textual strategy may be linked to the necessity of pointing at the mechanics of storytelling. The act of writing the story becomes the subject matter of the fiction, which is narrated by a fictionalized self. Moreover, in the conclusion of the

story the textualized author enters the narrative only to draw attention to the fictional existence of his characters: "I […] wrapped them in a tissue paper and put them carefully in a drawer along with the king, the queen, and the cardinal" (Barthelme 230). Once again, the author becomes a self-ironic voice oscillating between his complete control of his characters and his lack of authority. These words underline textual reflexivity and call attention to the narrator's insistence on the playful and provisional nature of his fictions. As Marilyn Edelstein claims:

> the provisional reality of self-conscious fiction is like the provisional reality of the 'postmodern' self, prone to self-questioning, constituted by process rather than substance, multiple, changeable, perhaps even illusory. (99)

In this metafiction the narrator becomes a function of his own text and a rhetorical construct to be analyzed. Barthelme emphasizes the narrator's fictional status—"the two surrogates, the third-person Daumier and the second-person Daumier, were wrapped in tissue paper and placed in the drawer" (230)—in order to draw attention to his position as discourse. This corroborates Barthelme's premise that the postmodern writer can only repeat himself. By revealing the play of representation, Barthelme's intention seems to be to remind the reader of the author's presence masked behind different constructed identities. Thus, the myth of the autonomy of the subject self is revised, deconstructed and undermined. Yet, while different ontological levels are displayed, we become aware of the existence of an external author who, like his surrogates, creates fictional worlds as a form of self-creation and self-definition. Paradoxically, the author's desire to dismantle his own authority and intention seems to demand the recognition of his creative enterprise.

Furthermore, the presence of the author in his own work is a strategy used by postmodern writers in order to dissolve the ontological boundaries between fiction and reality and to subvert the very notion of "selfhood". The real artist projects his fictional self onto the text, but this projected author belongs to an inferior ontological level than the real self. By inserting himself into his fiction, he undermines our distinction between art and reality and thus the concept of mimetic realism is redefined. Since the author makes himself visible in his fictional world, both creator and creation corroborate their status of artificial constructs. As Brian McHale says,

> No longer content with invisibly exercising his freedom to create worlds, the artist makes his freedom visible by thrusting himself into the foreground of his work. There is a catch, of course: the represented in the act of creation or destruction is himself a fiction. (30)

The narrators of American postmodern short stories are protean, faceless narrators who explore the problematics of authorship by converting it into new narrative possibilities. For it is the act of writing what gives them any sense of self. It could be said that postmodern narrators are very close to Barthesian assumptions in the sense that they do not consider their existence prior to language, and think rather that language can help them construct their authorial selves. These narrators, trapped within the labyrinth of self-consciousness, analyze their concept of the authorial self and, finally, decentre the origin of the text by immersing themselves in an intertextual field. The stories analyzed here seem to be self-generating texts exempt from a distinct subjectivity which imposes a final meaning. Moreover, they avoid an interpretive synthesis and reveal the decentring and disintegration of the creating subject.

However, both Barth and Barthelme, though admitting the inter-subjective nature of the authorial self, still maintain an ambivalent stance towards the authorial function. For this reason, they use their creative powers as a self-effacing and self-creating strategy which traces the signs of the authorial presence in the text. In fact, postmodern writers overcome the literature of exhaustion by converting their concerns about the authorial self into possibilities for narrativity. By exploring techniques such as point of view, multiple narrators and authority in fiction, both writers draw our attention to the inexhaustibility of storytelling.

NOTES

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AN EVALUATION OF KIRAN DESAI'S *THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS*[1]

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Abstract

The universe is at a crossroads with the adders of subversive and nefarious thought marauding the sublime dignity of man. It is in this spirit that this paper proposes to analyze Kiran Desai's Man Booker award winning novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*. It is a novel which discusses several tangling international social and cultural issues, giving rise to a seething feeling of despair in the hearts of the readers. This paper attempts to analyze some of these world problems, which have a direct effect on the psyche of Desai's characters such as the Judge, Biju, Sai and Gyan. The issues of diaspora, racial prejudice, and the narrowness of the human heart have been presented in the novel. Pankaj Mishra, while reviewing the novel for *The New York Times* comments thus about it, "Although it focuses on the fate of a few powerless individuals, Kiran Desai's extraordinary new novel manages to explore, with intimacy and insight, just about every contemporary international issue: globalization, multiculturalism, economic inequality, fundamentalism and terrorist violence. Despite being set in the mid-1980's, it seems the best kind of post-9/11 novel". Thus, the objective of the paper is to interpret Desai's novel vis-à-vis these Post-colonial topics. The paper also traces the fact that the novel is slightly marred by its synthetic treatment of the subject.

Keywords: diaspora, nostalgia, pedophilia, marginalized, the cultural contrast, globalization, multiculturalism, economic inequality, fundamentalism.

Resumen

El universo se encuentra en una encrucijada frente a las víboras de pensamiento subversivo y nefario que saquean la sublime dignidad del hombre. En este espíritu, el presente artículo se propone analizar la novela de Kiran Desai *The Inheritance of Loss*, ganadora del Man Booker Award. Es ésta una novela que discute complicados aspectos sociales y culturales que despiertan en los corazones de sus lectores un profundo sentimiento de desesperanza. Este artículo trata de analizar el efecto ocasionado por estos problemas mundiales en la psique de personajes de Desai como Judge, Biju, Sai y Gyan. Temas como la diáspora, los prejuicios raciales y la estrechez del corazón humano han sido presentados en la novela. Como Pankaj Mistra señala en una reseña sobre la misma publicada en el *New York Times*, "although it focuses on the fate of a few powerless individuals, Kiran Desai's extraordinary new novel manages to explore, with intimacy and insight, just about every contemporary international issue: globalization, multiculturalism, economic inequality, fundamentalism and terrorist violence. Despite being set in the mid-1980's, it seems the best kind of post-9/11 novel". Por lo tanto, el objetivo del presente artículo es analizar la novela de Desai teniendo en cuenta estos temas postcoloniales. También discute si la novela puede considerarse ligeramente estropeada por su sintético tratamiento de los mismos.

Palabras clave: diáspora, nostalgia, pedofilia, los marginados, contraste cultural, globalización, multiculturalidad, desigualdad económica, fundamentalismo.

The pangs of despised agony rule the roost in the world. At the very outset of this paper, I am reminded of the following lines from Coleridge's "The Rime of Ancient Mariner":

> There passed a weary time. Each throat
> Was parched, and glazed each eye.
> A weary time! A weary time!
> How glazed each weary eye... (10)

On the surface level, the world appears to have the glittering sparkle of light, colours, fun, mirth and wild ecstasy. To the inexperienced, it

is full of "Dance, Provincial Song and sunburnt mirth". But, a closer scrutiny of the world affairs presents a diametrically diverse picture of the universe, which has "nor fame, nor power, nor love, nor leisure". Here, it will not be inappropriate to say that Lord Buddha had also envisioned an image of the world full of grief and anxiety. Explaining Lord Buddha's first noble truth, C.D. Sharma writes:

> There is suffering (duhkha): Life is full of misery and pain. Even the so-called pleasures are really fraught with pain. There is always fear lest we may lose the so-called pleasures and their loss involves pain. Indulgence also results in pain. That there is suffering in this world is a fact of common experience. Poverty, disease, old age, death, selfishness, meanness, greed, anger, hatred, quarrels, bickerings, conflicts, exploitation are rampant in this world. That life is full of suffering none can deny. (71)

The universe is at a crossroads with the adders of subversive and nefarious thought marauding the sublime dignity of man. It is in this spirit that I propose to analyze Kiran Desai's Man Booker award winning novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, about which Pankaj Mishra comments thus,

> Although it focuses on the fate of a few powerless individuals, Kiran Desai's extraordinary new novel manages to explore, with intimacy and insight, just about every contemporary international issue: globalization, multiculturalism, economic inequality, fundamentalism and terrorist violence. Despite being set in the mid-1980's, it seems the best kind of post-9/11 novel.

The Evening Standard briefly describes the novel as "The Man Booker Prize-winning story of a retired judge, his grand-daughter and cook in the Himalayas, and the cook's son forging a life in America" ("Novel in Broken English" NA). *The Daily Mail* also elaborates its plot:

> This was the unlikely winner of last year's Man Booker Prize, but it turns out to be a very worthy one. In a dilapidated mansion, high in the Himalayas on the border of Nepal, live a bitter and broken judge whose Cambridge education has ruined him for the messiness of India; his orphaned teenage granddaughter, Sai, who is on the brink of discovering love; and their cook whose hopes reside in his son, Biju, who has escaped to America to work in fast-food restaurants. Two narratives run in parallel: there is mid-Eighties India, a land of broken dreams and civil unrest, where the rich cling on to the last vestiges of colonialism and the poor either escape to America

or get swept along in the tide of rising nationalism and revolution. Alongside this is the world of Biju, who, with hundreds of other illegally employed immigrants, toils fruitlessly in Manhattan kitchens and dreams of India. This is a bittersweet, beautifully written and bleakly comic take on two cultures and the concept of dislocation. ("Paperbacks" NA)

Natasha Walter also comments about the theme of the novel:

A young Indian girl, Sai, lives with her grandfather, a retired judge, in a damp and crumbling house. Sai has started a relationship with her Nepalese maths tutor, Gyan. But, unknown to her, Gyan has become seduced by a group of Nepalese insurgents…

It is a novel which discusses several tangling international social and cultural issues, giving rise to a seething feeling of despair in the hearts of the readers. In this paper, I attempt to analyze some of these world problems, which have a direct effect on the psyche of Desai's characters. About this presence of anxiety in the lives of Desai's character, Roger Soder writes:

Set in the Himalayas amidst social and political conflict, Desai's book describes the lives of several different characters who are struggling to survive and make sense out of life. They barely accomplish the former and fail to achieve the latter.

The first bewildering problem raised by Desai is that of the immigrant and diasporic sensibility. The disturbed mental condition of the displaced immigrants has caught the imagination of several Postcolonial novelists and Desai is no exception. Stephen Gill, India-born Canadian poet and novelist, has remarked thus about the diasporic sensibility:

Diaspora essentially is a bitter experience of dislocation that leads to alienation, a sense of loss and nostalgic desires. It refers to that particular class of immigrants who are unable to go back… Usually, Diasporans are not happy anywhere, and suffer silently… (54)

V.S. Naipaul in *The Enigma of Arrival*, a hauntingly brilliant novel, talks about the theme of exile. In the aforesaid novel of Naipaul, the nervousness of the speaker is evident in the following expression:

After all my time in England, I still had that nervousness in a new place, that rawness of response, still felt myself to be in the other man's country, felt my strangeness, my solitude. And every excursion into a new part of the country—what for others

> might have been an adventure—was for me like a tearing at an
> old scab. (13)

In the aforesaid statement of Naipaul, the role of memory is stressed. The authors are generally experiencing the psychological turbulence because of their displacement and nostalgia. Diasporic authors emotionally harbour the memories of their past and are not completely acclimatized to new culture. This sense of alienation among the immigrants caught the attention of Desai and she created the diasporic characters like Biju and Saeed, who, to borrow an expression of Stephen Gill, have the psychologically disturbing elements of "alienation, loss... memories of the past and dream to return to the land of birth" (Agarwal 6). These characters experience displacement and nostalgia in the alien land. In a way, the memory of the imaginary homelands always haunts the diaspora. Pramod K. Nayar has explained this theme of diasporic sensibility in the following manner:

> Exile and displacement narratives frequently combine a sense of
> disquiet with their nostalgia and longing. Atwood recreates the
> world of Susanna Moodi, who migrated from Scotland to Canada
> in the 1830s, as a world in which the migrant is homeless and
> foreign. Such a migrant does not see the 'new world' as a land of
> opportunity. [...] Here Moodie finds herself 'foreign', while others
> see the new world as a site of freedom. The sense of homelessness
> is accentuated by the recognition that one has not found a new
> home in the adopted country. Much of diasporic writing explores
> the theme of an original home. This original home as now lost—due
> to their exile—is constantly worked into the imagination and myth
> of the displaced individual/ community. Nostalgia is therefore a key
> theme in diasporic writing. (191)

Similarly Salman Rushdie, in his celebrated critical book *Imaginary Homelands*, emphasizes the importance of nostalgia for an author. In the introductory essay of the book, Rushdie has mentioned the dilemma of the authors in settling in alien countries. A feeling of guilt engulfs most of the immigrant authors, as they had left their homelands and the orthodox ideologies. They "straddle two cultures". However, this distance from the homeland is the source of tremendous fertility in an author. This longing for the homelands in alien lands is the genesis of artistic creativity for the authors. Salman Rushdie is one of the chief initiators of these nostalgic moods in his fiction and his critical book *Imaginary Homelands* is no exception. It is this obsessive affection

for the past homeland that encourages him to have the portrait of his ancestral house in his present room. *Imaginary Homelands* begins with the artistic description of the just-mentioned portrait:

> An old photograph in a cheap frame hangs on a wall of the room where I work. It's a picture dating from 1946 of a house into which, at the time of its taking, I had not yet been born. The house is rather peculiar—a three-storeyed gabled affair with tiled roofs and round towers in two corners, each wearing a pointy tiled hat. (9)

The same nostalgia motivates Rushdie to visit the house:

> I went to visit the house in the photograph and stood outside it, neither daring nor wishing to announce myself to its owners. (I didn't want to see how they'd ruined the interior.) I was overwhelmed. The photograph had naturally been taken in black and white; and my memory, feeding on such images as this, had begun to see my childhood in the same way, monochromatically. The colours of my history had seeped out of my mind's eye; now my other eyes were assaulted by colours, by the vividness of the red tiles, the yellow-edged green of cactus-leaves, the brilliance of bougainvillea creeper. (9)

Just like Rushdie, Desai also presents the several psychological shades of Biju, the son of the Judge's cook, who is "hopscotching from one gritty New York restaurant to another on an elusive search for a green card (backcover of *The Inheritance of Loss*)". Sandip Roy describes the precarious situation of Biju:

> the judge's cook's son Biju is falling through the cracks of the new Empire— America. While his father dreams of Biju making it big (toaster ovens, electric shavers, cameras), the son is trying to stay afloat in the underground economy of New York City, bobbing from job to job, sleeping among rats, screeching subway trains and undocumented immigrants.

The predicament of the boy experiencing nostalgia and cultural dislocation in the Western society is well described in these words: "The spirit of these men he worked with amazed Biju, terrified him, overjoyed him, then terrified him again" (15). After the day's work, his fellow workers visited the Domincian women in Washington Heights. But his distaste for these black women is evident, when he eloquently cries out, "How can you? Those, those women are dirty". He calls them "stinking bitches, sounding awkward" (16). His disgust for them is complete, when he utters: "Fucking bitches, fucking cheap women,

you'll get some disease;... smell bad...hubshi... all black and ugly... they make me sick..."(16).

While Biju finds it abnormal due to his orthodox Indian ethos (extra marital sex being a taboo in India), his colleague Ronny is quite candid and frank in his confession, "I could do it with a Dog" (16). The episode clearly indicates the cultural contrast—a contrast between the hesitant East and the over-indulgent West. This mocking of one's ideals and beliefs makes one a prey to feverish anxiety and deadening discomforts. Biju's problems are multiplied by his illegal immigrant status in the States.

Here, it will not be out of place to say that in the just-mentioned episode, Desai has made free use of sex terminology. This episode is not the only one in the novel, where the novelist has given free play of the forbidden fruit. Sometimes, the language borders on the pulp or cheap pornographic fiction. For example, mark the following titillating expression, where the cook saw a girl in the market: "she was a lonely girl, small and plump, a glimpse through nightie placket of breasts so buttery that even women who saw them were captivated" (86). Similarly, the love scene between Gyan and Sai is highly provocative:

> Gyan and Sai. At subsequent pauses in the rain they measured
> ears, shoulders, and the span of their rib cages.
> Collar bones, eyelashes, and chins.
> Knees, heels, arch of the feet.
> Flexibility of fingers and toes.
> …
> Just a week or two later, they were shameless as beggars, pleading
> for more.
> "Nose ?" He kissed it.
> "Eyes?" Eyes.
> "Ears?" Ears.
> "Cheek?" Cheek.
> "Fingers". One, two, three, four, five.
> "The other hand, please". Ten kisses (124-125).

What purpose is being served by literature of this type? It is merely to titillate the baser instincts of humankind. In the wake of Nithari[2] killings of the innocent children by the pedophiles, we must come forward to attack a literature which excites the sex instincts of the people. If the forbidden impulses are aroused by literature and to gratify (let us hope it does not happen in the future) the profane

desires, men turn pedophiles, as was reportedly done in Nithari, what is the utility of literature? Is it not merely becoming a plaything in the hands of the nasty people? Here, scholars believing in the worth of the 'art for art's sake' theory may argue that literature should have no social/ moral purpose. In the aftermath of the terrorist attack on WTC and most recently the seizure of Mumbai by the gunmen, no literature can be purely aesthetic. It has to be propagandist. To borrow an expression from Rushdie, we should make "as big a fuss, as noisy a complaint about the world as is humanly possible" (99). Rushdie adds: "[…] there is a genuine need for political fiction, for books that draw new and better maps of reality, and make new languages with which we can understand the world" (100). Thus, literature should focus on some social message. What reform is being done by Desai through this employment of a highly objectionable language—is beyond comprehension. We may also mark the following expression, where the judge Jemubhai is defecating:

> Mid morning he rose from his books, went to the lavatory for the daily trial of his digestion, where he sat straining upon the pot with pained and prolonged effort. As he heard others shuffling outside, waiting for their turn, he stuck a finger up the hole and excavated within, allowing a backed up load of scropulated goat pellets to rattle down loudly….His finger emerged covered in excrement and blood…(110-111)

By writing about such type of activity related to defecation, Desai goes beyond the normal in her narrative technique. Particularly, the expressions—'he sat straining upon the pot with pained and prolonged effort', 'he stuck a finger up the hole and excavated within' and 'His finger emerged covered in excrement and blood'—are indigestive and unpalatable.

For whom has the novelist produced such stuff? Who may be prospective readers of this type of fiction? What is the readership of her novel? Naturally, millions of Indians cannot be its readers, because of the ignorance of the natives about the intricacies of English language. Common Indians find difficulties in comprehending even English newspapers and magazines, let alone the masterpieces of the Indo Anglians. The supporters of Desai's novel may argue that her audience is outside India. Even here, there is a problem. The novel is imbued with Indian words and expressions. How will an outsider understand all this? For example, mark the following expression:

> In Stone Town they ate samosas and *chapatis*, *jalebis*, pilau rice…. Saeed and Saeed could sing like Amitabh Bachhan and Hema Malini. He sang, "*Mera joota hai japani...*" and "Bombay *se aaya mera dost*—oi!" (53)

The novel is filled with these Indian phrases and names. How will a foreigner follow the references to samosas, chapatis, jalebis, Amitabh Bachhan and Hema Malini and the songs from Bollywood?

So, for whom is this work produced? Of course, it is not for the masses. It is in written for the public school bred and English speaking pseudo-intellectuals of India. This novel caters to the tastes and moods of the drawing room idlers. For people from the higher strata of society, literature is not an emotional experience, rather a tool of social prestige. The classics of the great masters are not works of high imagination for them; they just consider that the mention of a particular work of literature in their conversation will make them smarter. A literary text is no better than a detective piece, as they are not *Sahridaya* Readers (connoisseurs of art and literature). Here, it will not be out of place to say that literature has two types of meanings—literal and figurative. Only the microscopic eye of a *Sahridaya* Reader can unearth the latent meaning. Kunjunni Raja, while discussing Anandavardhana's *Dhvanyaloka*, elaborates this idea thus:

> In the *Dhvanyaloka*, Anandavardhana establishes his theory that suggestion is the soul of poetry. He says that beautiful ideas in poetry are of two kinds: literal and implied. The latter is something like charm in girls which is distinct from the beauty of the various parts of the body; this implied sense is something more than the literal meaning… This suggested sense is not understood by those who merely know grammar and lexicon; it is understood only by men of taste who know the essence of poetry. This suggested sense is the most important element in poetry; in fact it is the soul of poetry. (287-288)

Thus, a genuine reader derives pleasure out of literature by exploring the inner meaning of a work of literature, while the ordinary and uninspired people go through the primary meaning. The people of the elite class take literature at the primary level of understanding, as they discuss literature to exhibit their awareness of the culture and civilization. At this juncture, I am reminded of T.S. Eliot's expression in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock":

> In the room the women come and go
> Talking of Michelangelo. (3)

What I mean to say is that this novel is just for the elite classes and not for the masses.

Leaving aside this issue of the readership of the novel, I come back to theme of diasporic sensibility in the novel. It is not only Biju, who experiences the racial prejudice; Judge is also the victim of this hydra-headed animosity of the West towards the East. Mark the predicament of the Judge in the following expression:

> Thus Jemubhai's mind had begun to warp; he grew stranger to himself than he was to those around him, found his skin odd-coloured, his own accent peculiar. He forgot how to laugh, could barely manage to lift his lips in a smile, and if he ever did, he held his hand over his mouth, because he could barely let anyone see his gums, his teeth. They seemed too private.... He began to wash obsessively, concerned he would be accused of smelling, and each morning he scrubbed off the thick milky scent of sleep, the barnyard smell that wreathed him when he woke and impregnated the fabric of his pajamas. To the end of his life, he would never be seen without socks and shoes and would prefer shadow to light, faded days to sunny, for he was suspicious that sunlight might reveal him, in his hideousness, all too clearly. (40)

At the very outset of this paper, I had mentioned that the novel traces the element of tragic agony in the universe. Another cause of despair in the novel is the non-fulfillment of the demands of the Gorkha Liberation movement. One of the agitators cries out the woes of the Gorkhas thus:

> At that time, in April of 1947, the Communist Party of India demanded a Gorkhasthan, but the request was ignored... We are laborers on the tea plantations, coolies dragging heavy loads, soldiers. And are we allowed to become doctors and government workers, owners of the tea plantations? No! We are kept at the level of servants. We fought on behalf of the British for two hundred years. We fought in World War One. We went to East Africa, to Egypt, to the Persian Gulf. We were moved from here to there as it suited them....We are soldiers, loyal, brave. India or England, they never had cause to doubt our loyalty. In the wars with Pakistan we fought our former comrades on the other side of the border. How our spirit cried. But we are Gorkhas. We are soldiers. Our character has never been in doubt. And have

> we been rewarded?? Have we been given compensation?? Are we
> given respect?? (158)

Similarly, the love between Gyan and Sai is also not without the ill-effects of the time. Chaotic surrounding situations have robbed the true lovers of the emotional bond and the love between the two is dwindling. Mark the below-mentioned conversation between the two lovers:

> "Well, if you're so clever", she said, "how come you can't even find a
> proper job? Fail, fail, fail. Every single interview".
> "Because of people like you!"
> "Oh, because of me... and you're telling me that I am stupid? Who
> is stupid? Go put it before a judge and we'll see who says is the
> stupid one". (164)

Thus the novel traces the history of despair and agony in human lives; in a way all the characters of the novel have inherited a sense of loss. Now, the question is—whether the grief painted by Desai in the novel is real or synthetic. Does not novel present an outsider's response to the problems of the suffering humanity? Kiran Desai, the daughter of Anita Desai, spent the early years of her life in Pune and Mumbai. When she was around nine years old, her family shifted to Delhi. By the time, she turned fourteen, the family moved to England. A year later, they shifted to the United States. Kiran completed her schooling in Massachusetts. She did her graduation from Columbia University.[3] Is a member of the higher strata of life suitable enough to write about the experiences, which he or she has never experienced? Being a member of upper class society, it is very difficult for her to experience the pains of the marginalized. Her response to the predicament of the poor Indians in the West appears out of place, as she has not possibly felt the same pain, which Biju in her novel feels. Only a person, who has gone through the pain, can describe the intensity of that injury, as human experience is opaque. Most of the Dalit writers hold the same opinion. They believe that the upper class people, even if they have emotional bond with the Dalits, cannot delineate the age old scar of caste-oppression, as they have not felt it. The notable Dalit writer J.P. Kardam told me in an interview:

> I would like to quote here the words of Dr. Manager Pandey, a
> renowned Hindi critic, who wrote in the preface to a collection of
> Dalit short stories edited by Ramnika Gupta that "Only ash knows
> the experience of burning". This indicates that Dalits know the
> experience of burning—in the fire of sorrows, hatred, disrespect,

injustice, inequality and untouchablity. Non-Dalits do not have this experience. Dalits have specific experiences of life, which non-dalits do not have. Only Dalit writers can express their experiences in an authentic manner but not others. Non-Dalit writers may be sympathetic to the Dalits, they may be their well-wishers but their experiences about Dalits are not their self-experiences. They are the observers of torture and exploitation of Dalits, they are not sufferers. (6-7)

To be very honest, the feelings of Kiran Desai for the proletariat sections of the society are synthetic. They are not from the core within, as she was born with a silver spoon in her mouth. She has not experienced the pain, anxiety and grief, which an ordinary human-being encounters. Therefore, in the end it can be asserted that though the novel has won Man-Booker prize, it is not without defects. Despite several accolades, won by Desai for the novel, it is slightly marred by its synthetic treatment of the subject. Some of its defects were outlined by Fiona Pryor:

> From the start it is hard to engage with the characters as Desai chooses not to 'formally' introduce them to the reader. She also constantly introduces minor characters with whom the reader may struggle to engage. The pace is fairly fast and Desai draws on the different characters' stories, sometimes going back in time and then bringing the reader back to the present day of the book. It demands the reader's full attention as it can be easy to lose details of the plot.

In Bharti Kirchner's view, "The writing style has a detached quality, leaving the reader feeling less than fully engaged with the characters. And the chapters are broken into short episodes, interrupting the flow of the story". According to Aamer Hussein, "*The Inheritance of Loss* is perhaps overlong, and on occasion digressive; its vividly painted backdrops and multiple motifs sometimes overshadow its characters".

NOTES

[1] The abridged version of this paper was presented at the 53rd All India English Teachers' Conference (2008), held at Gurukul Kangri University, Haridwar.

[2] Nithari is a place in India, where a number of innocent children were killed by certain heartless killers. The information about this incident may be seen by clicking the following link: <http://www.nitharifacts.com>.

[3] The biographical information about Desai is taken from the following source: <http://www.iloveindia.com/indian-heroes/kiran-desai.html>.

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"I DREW HER GAZE IN AS SIMPLY AS MY BREATH": THE INFLUENCE OF EDGAR ALLAN POE'S REVENANTS UPON DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI'S MYSTICAL MAIDEN PROFILE

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Abstract

Carried out in 1848, Rossetti's *The Raven* and *Ulalume* cannot be regarded exclusively as tokens of his early fascination towards Poe's writings. Both visual works allowed the Pre-Raphaelite artist to develop a revisionist perspective upon the female revenant and her attachment to a male referent in order to serve his own aesthetic programme and to examine the relation between the creative mind and the transcendent. Certain critical accounts, though, tend to disregard these notions in order to promote a morbid equation between Rossetti's creative modes and the succubic pattern in Poe's *The Oval Portrait* (1842)—especially regarding the importance to his art of his wife and main muse, Elizabeth Eleanor Siddal. Our article will adopt as a basis Rossetti's interpretation of Poe in order to illustrate that the essential bond between both authors actually refers to the role that the female holds within the road to self-definition and artistic enlightenment.

Keywords: Pre-Raphaelitism, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edgar Allan Poe, Elizabeth Eleanor Siddal, Virginia Clemm, interdisciplinary studies, woman and the gothic, mystical female, male creativity and the female soul.

Resumen

Las obras visuales *The Raven* y *Ulalume*, ejecutadas en 1848, no pueden considerarse meras muestras de la admiración que su autor, Dante

Gabriel Rossetti, sentía hacia Edgar Allan Poe. Ambas representaciones permitieron al artista Prerrafaelista no sólo revisar el perfil de la reviniente o su vinculación a un referente masculino, sino también poner todo este material al servicio de un programa estético propio que también examinaba la relación entre la mente creativa y la trascendencia. Sin embargo, estas nociones suelen dejarse a un lado en algunos estudios críticos que persiguen promover una ecuación mórbida entre el estilo artístico Rossettiano y el patrón sucúbico que Poe plasmó en *The Oval Portrait* (1842)—sobre todo en lo tocante a la importancia que Elizabeth Eleanor Siddal, esposa y musa principal de Rossetti, guardaba para el corpus creativo de su marido. El presente artículo adopta como base la manera en que el pintor y poeta decimonónico interpretó estas obras de Poe para apuntar que el vínculo esencial entre estos autores realmente alude al papel que sus perfiles femeninos detentan en el camino hacia la definición personal y la iluminación estética.

Palabras clave: Prerrafaelismo, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edgar Allan Poe, Elizabeth Eleanor Siddal, Virginie Clemm, estudios interdisciplinares, la mujer y lo gótico, la doncella mística, la creatividad masculina y el alma femenina.

1. Rossettian Criticism and the Danger of Stereotypes

In recent years, the academic sphere has experienced a new surge of interest in the visual and literary works by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, materialized in critical volumes such as Bullen's *The Pre-Raphaelite Body* (1998), Marsh's *DGR: Painter and Poet* (1999) or McGann's *DGR and the Game that Must Be Lost* (2000). For the most part of the twentieth century, despite the critical importance of Doughty's massive *DGR: Victorian Romantic* (1949) or Riede's *DGR and the Limits of Victorian Vision* (1983), Rossetti's figure and works seemed condemned either to abuse or oblivion, thus setting a clear contrast with the enthusiastic appraisal received from John Ruskin and Walter Pater back in the days of Victorianism. Nowadays, Rossetti's style is mostly remembered for the female types he produced between 1860 and 1882, during the third period of his career. Further comments about his formative (1848-1855) and medievalist (1857-1864) periods are often left

aside. Consequently, Rossettian female profiles have been dramatically reduced, in popular conscience to a set of "beautiful women with floral adjuncts" (Treuherz, Prettejohn & Becker 51), sensuously displaying their ruby lips, corn-like tresses, elongated necks and dreamy gazes. The apparent prevalence of sensuality, which plagued the assessment of his literary works during the age of Modernism, has also extended to the evaluation of his canvases. In addition, the iconicity of these women and the recurrence of these traits along pictorial works such as *Venus Verticordia* (1863-1868), *Lady Lilith* (1868), *Beata Beatrix* (1863-1870) or *Proserpine* (1871-1882) have propitiated a set of superficial readings attempting to confirm these females as mere objects sprung from a masculine mind driven by infatuation and raw desire. So, in a sense, their uniqueness, one of their main values, has also fostered a sequence of misapprehension. But this, we may add, has to do as well with their appropriation and manipulation as the apparent bases of different critical discourses.

Various accounts of Victorian and *fin-de-siècle* art such as Dijkstra's *Idols of Perversity* (1986), Bronfen's *Over Her Dead Body* (1992), or Bornay's *Las Hijas de Lilith* (1995), usually select and analyze a restricted spectrum of Rossettian canvases basically basted into a wider theoretical wireframe attempting to employ a partial view of tradition as a legitimizing tool. However, this sort of approach does not always take into account the variety of female representations in Rossetti's corpus and the ways in which these images interact with each other, in terms of differences and continuity. In our view, nevertheless, the routine of distortion that some of these volumes partake of derives not only from particular interests, but also from a perspective inherited from the past: after Rossetti's death in 1882, many of the visual works produced within the last section of his career were promoted as a luxurious set of canvases which had remained secluded from public view for a long time. Indeed, since the early 1850s, the artist had consistently avoided official art exhibitions due to the large amount of negative reviews received by the Pre-Raphaelite brethren at the time. Thus, he usually worked under the patronage of various art collectors, which surrounded his creations with a certain degree of mystery and elitism. Outside his most immediate circle, the Victorian painter-poet was mostly remembered for his ballad *The Blessed Damozel* (1847, revised 1869) and the Buchanan affair, which developed almost a year after the publication of *Poems*

(1870) as part of a personal vengeance which attempted to stereotype Rossetti as an unmitigated sensualist. So, in a sense, the gradual misconstruction of his figure may also rest upon the way in which he conducted himself and his works. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that, while his poetry was the main source of popular interest during the 19th century, our times have definitely focused on a fragmentary assessment of his visual works, most times leaving aside the fact that some of his poems and pictures are intertwined, even though he did not create some of them at the same time. Judging from these facts, we may assert that Rossettian studies have long suffered from a certain one-sidedness determined by transmission and promotion procedures. We cannot forget, though, that some attitudes on part of the Rossetti family, such as the destruction of some of the painter's personal letters, have also fostered different accounts of gossip about him as the last ingredient seasoning our modern view, sometimes without a sound foundation.

After Rossetti's death, different friends, relatives and acquaintances considered it necessary to carry out a set of retrospective works, and so were published several volumes by W. Sharp (1882), W. M. Rossetti (1889), F. G. Stephens (1894) and H. C. Marillier (1899). Together with this, his canvases, which had long been secluded from the public eye, were brought into the open by some who recognised their intrinsic potential as consumer products under the form of art prints, photographs and platinotypes. This value was enhanced by drawing to public attention a set of sensationalistic accounts about Rossetti's personal life, mainly related to his wife and muse Elizabeth Siddal, who had died in 1862 out of a laudanum overdose. Unfortunately, despite the availability of volumes such as Marsh's *The Legend of Elizabeth Siddal* (1992) or Hawksley's *Lizzie Siddal: Face of the Pre-Raphaelites* (2004), the lack of specific material evidences does not allow us to decide on whether she committed suicide deliberately or out of the depression she had been suffering from since having given birth to a stillborn child a few months before. Since these events remained a sore spot for Rossetti, different approaches to his figure and work have often capitalized on his image as a husband tormented by guilt and loss. For instance, as early as 1883, at the Burlington Fine Arts Club Exhibition, his first oil version of *Beata Beatrix* was "misdated 1863, strongly suggesting a memorial of conjugal grief and piety" (Marsh, *The Legend of Elizabeth*

Siddal 25). Even though the canvas, actually carried out between 1863 and 1870, acquired special significance after Miss Siddal's death, it was not originally intended as a *memento mori*, as can be derived from the existence of a previous study from the mid-1850s, now at the William Morris Gallery. A fact often disregarded, the *Beata Beatrix* project also functioned as the culmination of a set of works bearing a Dantean inspiration, which Rossetti had been producing since his formative period, such as *The Salutation of Beatrice* (1849-1850), *The First Anniversary of the Death of Beatrice* (1853) or *The Meeting of Dante and Beatrice in Paradise* (1853-1854).

Undoubtedly, the sudden loss of Elizabeth Siddal left a profound mark on Rossetti. In time, he would confess to his friend William Bell Scott that "for two whole years he saw Lizzie every night upon the bed as she died" (Marsh, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* 302). His initial shock proved devastating, insofar as it led him to bury with her a set of manuscripts upon which he had been working recently. In a sense, this gesture betokens how Rossetti had been wondering whether he could have saved his wife had he not been writing his compositions or working at his easel. About six years later, he told some of the couple's closest friends, such as Algernon C. Swinburne, that he had no copies of the poems in Elizabeth's coffin and could not recall them from memory, either. After much deliberation, Rossetti came to understand that his wife would have not requested such act of self-renunciation from him, especially under the light of their fruitful artistic companionship in the past.[1] But, although he signed the necessary permits to carry out the whole process, it was not Rossetti, but C. A. Howell, who performed the exhumation, for obvious reasons. After the inclusion of the poetic pieces in his famous volume *Poems* (1870), Rossetti left behind, at least temporarily, his previous feelings of guilt. In our view, the development of the original *Beata Beatrix* painting between 1863 and 1870 also contributed to this shift of perspective, since the creative process allowed him not only to render an echo of his deceased wife but also to carry through a therapeutic process leading to a much needed image of calm, especially after having witnessed her agony. By projecting the features of Dante's Beatrice over his wife's, or vice-versa, Rossetti was also paying a certain homage to the latter by confirming her status as a main source of inspiration and insight within his aesthetic programme.

However, due to the fascination that they usually give rise to among a receptive audience, the formulation of these morbid biographical 'assets' often takes up a main position in various accounts about Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Most importantly, maybe because of their commercial appeal, they often push out further references to his creative motivations and programmatic tenets. As a result, this sort of perspectives often represent some events of his life in brusquely literary terms or interpret his creations in an excessively autobiographical manner: the summoning of the dead beloved as a vengeful revenant derives from a direct application to the Rossetti couple of a Gothicist pattern previously implemented in Poe studies, which regard some of his characters as faithful representations of himself and his wife. This profitable link between Elizabeth Siddal and Virginia Clemm basically holds upon their sudden death, weak health and the effects that their loss caused upon their husbands. However, apart from these biographical coincidences, the comparison between both marriages does not seem to be based on actual similarities, but rather on external projections. For instance, Bronfen conceptualizes the Graham version of *Beata Beatrix* (1871-1872), commissioned after the aforementioned exhumation, as "a sign of remorse for a second form of betrayal of the dead woman" (176-177). Together with this, her analysis of Rossetti's dramatic monologue *The Portrait* (composed in 1847 and revised towards 1870) implicitly equates Rossetti's artistic course of action with that of the painter in Poe's *The Oval Portrait* (1842). Accordingly, readers may assume that Rossetti adopts the role of an exploitative tyrant while Elizabeth Siddal performs that of the vanishing female sacrificed to the powers of art. This pattern, at times, also involves a Dantean reflection which builds up a diachronic masculine bond of destruction, still leaving artistic signification aside:

> The young Rossetti not only translated Dante but also took from the *Vita Nuova* the idealisation of love, the fascination for a poet's continuing relation to a dead beloved and rewrote them in *The House of Life* (1881).[2] It is remarkable that Rossetti was possessed by the notion of a dead beloved while his chosen muse was still alive, indeed even before he had met her. It seems as if Elizabeth Siddal had to die so that he could fulfil the role he had designed for her in his imagination [...] Elizabeth's deanimation into an image invoking Dante Gabriel Rossetti's reanimation, and his desire for a fully absent idealised, adored beloved as fulfilment of his fantasised image. (Bronfen 171, 174)

These appreciations, nevertheless, seem to obviate that the features in the second *Beata Beatrix* do not exactly recall Elizabeth Siddal's but rather grow into "a synthetic figura in which we also discern the features of Jane Morris, Alexa Wilding, and perhaps others as well" (McGann, *Game* 100), thus stressing the role of various models in neatly artistic terms, as intermediaries within Rossetti's pattern of interaction with transcendent beauty, clearly tinted with Neoplatonist implications. This idea surfaces in similar terms as we read through the dramatic monologue *The Portrait*: adopting as a main reference the iconic *donna angelicata* in Stilnovist tradition, the poetic piece tells the story of an artist who renders a portrait of his beloved shortly before her death takes place: against the notion of transience bound to physical matter, the poetic voice reflects upon art's capacity to recall the features of the lady once the original referent is no more, so that the oil work apparently becomes beauty's ultimate haven on earth. This basic argumentation, however, does not allow for equation with the course of action seen in Poe's *Oval Portrait* as Bronfen seems to indicate:[3] On the one hand, the execution of the oil work does not imply the succubic destruction of the female model, but the preservation of an approximate image of her features. On the other, the poetic voice still puts forward the following objection:

> This is her picture as she was:
> It seems a thing to wonder on,
> As though mine image in the glass
> Should tarry when myself am gone.
> I gaze until she seems to stir […]
> 'Tis she: though of herself, alas!
> Less than her shadow on the grass
> Or than her image in the stream.
> (McGann, ed. *DGR Collected* "The Portrait" 69-70, lines 1-5, 34-36)

It is in this sense that certain inconsistencies surface up within the morbid characterization of the Siddal-Rossetti couple, transferred from the pattern applied to Poe and his wife, Virginia Clemm. Adopting as a banner the case of *Beata Beatrix*, preconceived reliance upon the artist's exploitative profile has somewhat managed to distort the American writer's influence upon Rossetti as a macabre re-enactment, in real life, of the contents poured in his gothic stories. Besides, in categorizing the Rossettian female as a victim in equal terms, on the basis of a discourse external to the creative corpus which she belongs to, this point of view

does not seem to take into account the expansive value that she holds within the painter-poet's aesthetic scheme. By avoiding any reference to the artistic value of the death trance as a transitional stage between the sensible and the intelligible, which affects both the guiding maiden and the inspired artist, we would be leaving aside a basic programmatic foundation; it is in this sense that the aesthetic object's motivation, message and results may be accordingly distorted in terms of form and content. In this respect, our analysis proves consonant with Auerbach's assumptions on the Beatricean canvas:

> Seemingly helpless in the grip of her hyperconscious male oppressor, she is fully understood only in her translation to majesty. Her trance is not passivity but an ominous gathering of power as she transfigures herself from humanity to beatitude. (40)

The characterization of Dante Gabriel Rossetti as an obsessed subject often finds further apparent support in the various sketches and drawings of Elizabeth Siddal that he carried out during the early and mid 1850s: by interpreting them exclusively as convenient examples of Miss Siddal's passive objectification, these critical accounts seem to ignore the existence of other drawings from this same period such as *Elizabeth Siddal Painting at an Easel*, *Love's Mirror* or *Rossetti Sitting to Elizabeth Siddal*, which reflect her status to Rossetti not only as an inspiring motif, but also as a creative subject. We should not forget, in addition, that even though Elizabeth Siddal is popularly recognized as the main muse of the original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, she herself was a painter as well as a poet, and that her husband collaborated with her in works such as the watercolour *The Quest of the Holy Grail* (circa 1855).

However, commercial critical approaches still adopt the idea of Rossetti's essentially obsessive portrait at face value and attempt to characterize him further as an artist cruelly capitalizing upon the image of his dead wife: a particular emphasis falls upon the replicas of *Beata Beatrix* which, nonetheless, were also rendered by his assistants Edward Coley Burne-Jones and Henry Treffy Dunn. Furthermore, these works were not sold at the time essentially as portraits of Elizabeth Siddal, but mainly as representations of the closing scene in Dante's *Vita Nuova*. It proves revealing, in this respect, the way in which William Graham requested his own replica, which Rossetti executed between 1871 and 1872:

> I know the labour of repeating, apart from the delight of invention
> and the surprise of your discovery, is especially hard to your
> temperament […] the Beatrice, from the first day I saw it, has
> appealed to my feeling altogether above and beyond any picture I
> ever saw, and the love for it has only deepened. (Ash 30)

Insofar as they also refer to his perception of the original work, the commissioner's words may show that Rossetti was not offering *Beata Beatrix* as a *memento mori*, but rather as a Dantean oil. Most interestingly, one of the artist's letters to Ellen Heaton, dated 1863, shows no reference to his deceased wife, but rather to the Stilnovist inspiration of the painting:

> I thought of a Dantesque subject which I have long meant to do, but
> which did not occur to me when speaking to you […] This would be
> Beatrice sitting by a sundial, the shadow of which would be falling
> on the hour of nine. You probably remember the singular way in
> which Dante dwells on the number nine in connection with her […]
> He meets her at nine years of age, she dies at nine o'clock on the 9th
> of June, 1290 […] He declares her to have been herself 'a nine', that
> is the perfect number, or symbol of perfection. (Surtees 94)

Considering that the image of *Beata Beatrix* as a memorial was set in more explicit terms after 1883, we could venture the idea that modern belief in Rossetti's image as an artist merely capitalizing on his wife's figure rather derives from the merchandising machinery set in motion after his death in 1882.

> The promotion of Rossetti as high priest of Pre-Raphaelitism
> continued. Another exhibition of his work was held at the New Gallery
> during the winter of 1897-1898 when platinotype reproductions of
> eighty seven paintings were put on sale […] widely available images
> of Elizabeth Siddal, comparable to posters of movie stars like Marilyn
> Monroe in a later age. Of these, *Beata Beatrix* formed a particularly
> powerful element in the growing legend of a beautiful woman discovered
> and indeed created by art, first transfigured and then destroyed. (Marsh,
> *The Legend of Elizabeth Siddal* 56)

After highlighting this exegetic contrast and the distortive apparatus rendering the Rossetti-Siddal couple as a tableau of the extreme in Poe's *Oval Portrait*, we will leave aside the popular stereotypes in this contextualizing basis in order to assess the American writer's artistic influence over Rossetti. To do so, we will adopt as a reference a series

of practical examples which will be unveiled in the next epigraph. Our main concern in this article is to note that these morbid projections, normally based on discourses and sources external to the Rossettian corpus, have somewhat averted their gaze from Rossetti's assimilation of Poe into his programmatic scheme, initially formalized through his drawings on *The Raven* and *Ulalume*. We will also note how his perception proved paramount for the definition of one of his primary types, the so-called "mystical maiden", a key female construct within his scheme of aesthetic revelation.

2. Defining and Understanding Rossetti's 'Mystical Maiden'

In our view, Edgar Allan Poe's influence over Dante Gabriel Rossetti's personality proves intimately linked to the latter's self-definition and evolution as an artist. Despite the morbid examples noted before, essentially bound to the (dead) figure of Elizabeth Siddal, we must note well that the first contact between Rossetti and the writings of the American author took place at a time previous to the foundation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and even to Rossetti's first meeting with his future wife.[4] Our account starts in 1846, a time when young Rossetti already expressed his unease about the teaching methods in most art academies, based on the plain, soulless imitation of the 'old masters'. Despite his dissatisfaction, he was well aware of the need he had to channel his inspiration and techniques into a style of his own. Besides, he still had to decide on whether he would devote his life to painting or poetry, two aspects of his identity that would bring about his dual personality as a painter-poet later on, quite in a Blakean manner.

Already facing these personal and professional dilemmas, Rossetti was also affected by the almost sudden emotional concerns and financial instability of the Rossetti household, contrariwise to previous years. His father, due to his tottering health, had to quit his job as teacher at King's College, and so his mother Frances Polidori, his sister Christina and his brother William Michael had to step forward to support the family. Not without a certain anxiety, Dante Gabriel Rossetti could hear responsibility knocking at his door. However, his disposition during the mid and late 1840s was that of cloistering himself in readings of gothic, supernatural and visionary kinds. This movement seemed determined not simply by a certain fascination towards the occult, the bizarre or

the extreme: insofar as this genre may be read as "a way of relating to the real, to historical and psychological facts" (Punter 13), we may put forward that it also allowed Rossetti to tackle with his personal, familiar and professional worries: Goethe, Bürger,[5] Blake, Shelley and Coleridge were his favourite authors by then. Within this context, his contact with Edgar Allan Poe's writings seemingly took place thanks to Tom Doughty, one of his acquaintances; according to Marsh, he "introduced him to a quick-witted compatriot named Charley Ware, whose literary likings centred on (Poe's) macabre tales and spooky, grotesque poems" (*Dante Gabriel Rossetti* 22). Rossetti's subsequent course of action suggests how deep an impression these writings made on him: only in this way may we understand his carrying out six different drawings based on works such as *The Raven*, *The Sleeper* and *Ulalume* between 1846 and 1848, shortly after these had been published in the United States. In a manner similar to his defence of William Blake when his work and figure were ostracized by critics and public alike, Rossetti's praise of Edgar Allan Poe's works turns him not only into "one of his first European admirers" (Treuherz, Prettejohn & Becker 16) but maybe into the first English author to promote his works—two decades before the American writer and critic began to be more widely accepted. Even as early as 1850, during a meal with James Hannay and William Holman Hunt, he forwarded the idea of printing an illustrated edition of Poe. Although this project would soon prove unviable, it spoke (and speaks) up aloud about Rossetti's intention and devotion towards the American writer.

The first drawing of the 'Raven series',[6] dated June 1846, proves different from the subsequent ones which Rossetti produced in structural and compositive terms: it seems to front with full energy the cluster of sensations and thoughts that bulged in the artist's mind after his first readings of the poem. The image strikes us instantly due to its narrow verticality and the acute contrast between curvilinear and rectilinear tendencies. In the upper left, the raven asserts its influence through a diagonal line leading to the centre of the image where the tormented speaker, who has just leapt from his chair, gets surrounded by a myriad of female figures spiralling around and reinforcing a sinuous 'S'-like pattern which, according to Riede (26), remains from Rossetti's formation on traditional art academies. Meanwhile, behind him, a winged maiden "with a skeleton on either side" (Surtees 4) offers

a sombre contrastive instance between physical decay and spiritual majesty. In the background stands a bookcase with three busts. Below the third shelf appear two unidentified figures which may allude to a sense of compromise, for they go hand in hand. Rossetti shows us a condensation of ideas from the poem by means of contrast: routine within the straight walls of his stay cannot protect the speaker from the inner turmoil affecting the very depths of his self. His mind bursts while reflecting on absence, the thin line between life and death and the nature of the maiden cut down on her prime. Although some motifs—such as the censer—seen in this first painting also appear in the subsequent renderings, we consider this first one a compendium of topics derived from Rossetti's first readings of *The Raven*, as said above. The others could be regarded, in our view, as three slight variations of the scene depicted in lines 79 and 80 in Poe's work:

> Then methought the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer
> Swung by Seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled at the tufted floor.
> (Coryel, ed. 2469)

These renditions prove important not only as evocations of Poe's poem, but also inasmuch as they show Rossetti's assimilation of contents and subsequent application to his own artistic programme. The second drawing, for example, features a female figure whose gaze pierces into the speaker, so that the emphasis is laid on the analysis of his own self,[7] not just on the ideas bound to Lenore's absence, which prevailed in the previous drawing. Furthermore, the Italian style of the two angels in the foreground and the attitude of characters seem to prefigure the structure in the watercolour *Beatrice Meeting Dante at a Marriage Feast* (1855).[8] This proves interesting in the sense that Rossetti had already got in contact with Dante in the late 1840s, and so he seems to apply a Beatricean parallel to his representation of Poe's work. These similarities surface again in his third rendering of *The Raven*,[9] which appears to be a rehearsal for the fourth—finally made between 1847 and 1848. In the latter, the 'angelic parade' is finally turned into a line of female spectres carrying censers. In the third version, the speaker is clearly shocked by the scene; meanwhile, his posture in the fourth apparently points at the adoption of a defensive attitude.[10]

In the course of these visual representations, Rossetti moves from 'derivative response' to 'assimilation' and focuses on the rendering of an

unstable identity attempting to tackle the events recently assailing his
existence. Besides, instead of an image of physical retirement, he gets
gradually closer to a representation of inner crisis and retirement. The
surrounding area stops pointing outside and shows what lies inside.
Female presences, a constant throughout these four renditions, undergo
a parallel process of interpretation linking the image of a lost beloved
with a set of angels or spirits relating to the speaker's self.[11] This,
together with the Beatricean elements that would be absorbed soon
into Rossetti's art, provided a fruitful breeding ground for his 'mystical
damsel' profiles.[12] To illustrate this, we should consider his short story
Hand and Soul (1850), one of his first representations of this 'ethereal
maiden' and, for sure, one of Rossetti's seminal works. It acquaints us
with Chiaro dell' Erma, an aspiring painter who travels from Arezzo
to Pisa in order to point his aesthetic interests in the right direction.
However, once there, neither the links with a preceding tradition
surpassing his own art nor the teachings of his admired Giunta Pisano
prove enough to soothe his anxiety for personal and professional self-
definition. Similarities with young Rossetti seem much more than
apparent. Furthermore, in a manner close to that of the speaker in *The
Raven*, Chiaro's crisis is described while cloistered within the walls of
his stay. Curiously enough, self-definition and artistic inspiration are
finally triggered thanks to the influence of a supernatural presence
looming in his chamber from thin air, as Rossetti's tale explains:

> A woman was present in his room, clad to the hands and feet with
> a green and grey raiment, fashioned to that time. It seemed that
> the first thoughts he had ever known were given him as at first
> from her eyes, and he knew her hair to be the golden veil through
> which he beheld his dreams […] And as he looked, Chiaro's spirit
> appeared abashed of its own intimate presence […] He felt her to
> be as much with him as his breath. He was like one who, scaling
> a great steepness, hears his own voice echoed in some place much
> higher than he can see. (McGann, ed. *DGR Collected* "Hand and
> Soul" 314)

This sort of anxiety appears as well in the short story *Saint Agnes
of Intercession* (1850), which echoes the weight of the past also explored
in Poe's *Ulalume* (1847). Rossetti extrapolates the love relationship
and the dialogue with Psyche to a context of artistic progress and
communication with the mystical damsel. These ideas were already
hinted at in the visual rendition of the poem, made in 1848.[13] His

treatment of truncated communication among characters proves especially revealing: in the background, the speaker, alone with his thoughts, does not pay attention to Psyche. In the foreground his gaze does not look to his soul either, but to the surrounding woodland, which puts him in contact with his lost beloved Ulalume. In creative terms, the relation with female characters represents and stresses the artist's need for coming to terms with the past and also for finding his own position between this tradition and his own project, intimately related to the presence of Psyche as a materialization of his creative soul and the mystical lady profile.

Saint Agnes of Intercession (1850) also uses a journey motif (both outer and inner) as a basis to express a pseudo-Ligeian feeling of being haunted by the past. The protagonist, a young painter who travels to Italy to behold the works of Bucciolo Angiolieri, experiences a traumatic blow at noticing that the models of two of the paintings of the 15th century artist resemble in all respects his own features and those of his beloved:

> A woman had then lived four hundred years since, of whom that picture was the portrait; and my own eyes bore me witness that it was also the surpassingly perfect resemblance of a woman now living and breathing—of my own affianced bride!—I stooped over the rail to look closely at it, and was face to face with myself! I can recall my feeling at that moment, only as one of the most lively and exquisite fear. (McGann, ed. *DGR Collected* "Saint Agnes of Intercession" 328-329)

The artist, attempting to define a style of his own, feels that tradition has anticipated his movements, thus restricting his aspirations to uniqueness. It is understood that, in order to progress towards a style of his own, he must come to terms with tradition and conciliate it with his present and future. Rossetti's creative scheme adopts this view and adds it to a sense of 'lifelong quest' in order to unveil the mysteries of beauty. The mystical maiden would in time occupy a central position in this Rossettian universe: adopting the mystery of Poe's heroines and the linkage of life, art and devotion in Dante's Beatrice, this female type proved especially recurrent to Rossetti from the 1860s onwards. Of course, some previous manifestations exist, but they actually anticipate the style and programmatic bases that Rossetti had been still attempting to define in previous years. Once acknowledging himself a painter and poet, he employed images and words in different double works featuring his popular female profiles (1860-1882).

Rossetti's art finally moved towards the apprehension of the transcendent and focused itself on the representation of a dialectics of beauty, which, being understood as the artist's main objective could also be considered art's *anima* or soul. Within this scheme, the mystical maiden fulfils a threefold function: she is an interceding presence between realities, a projection of transcendent beauty and a representation of the creative soul. By approaching her, the artist enters a revealing 'communion of souls'. However, his inferior nature does not allow him to keep this contact for long or to get a whole picture of beauty at once; this explains his constant return to it and the variety of faces and facets related to beauty seen in his works. Furthermore, judging from their contents, we may notice Rossetti's particular interest in how the sense of balance and integrity in beauty holds upon a constant tension of forces. Most interestingly, his pictures and poems also explore how this pattern from ideal reality could be extrapolated to the conciliation of the conflictive forces and apparently irreconcilable terms within individuals. Even though he thought art had nothing to do with morals, in following this pattern he pointed at inner growth through self-knowledge and a studied combination of the forces within individuals. Consequently, both artist and audience walk in parallel paths towards identification with beauty.

In a manner close to his second drawing on *The Raven*, Rossetti sometimes describes this process of analysis and assimilation in terms of visual contact, a feature which will be mentioned some years later in the poem *Soul's Beauty* (1866), a companion to the painting *Sibylla Palmifera* (1864-1870):[14]

> Under the arch of life, where love and death,
> Terror and mystery, guard her shrine, I saw
> Beauty enthroned; and though her gaze struck awe,
> I drew it in as simply as my breath […]
> This is that Lady Beauty in whose praise
> Thy voice and hand shake still
> (McGann, ed. *DRG Collected* 161, lines 1-4, 9-10)

The assimilation of some traits from Poe and their subsequent insertion within this creative scheme may also be perceived in Rossetti's most celebrated poem, *The Blessed Damozel*.[15] Originally composed in 1847, shortly after reading *The Raven*, it attempted, in Rossetti's words to "give utterance to the yearning of the loved one in heaven" (Marsh,

Dante Gabriel Rossetti 23) thus allowing us to experience a perspective shift when assessing the example of another couple of lovers dramatically torn by death.[16] His female speaker combines previous influences with further traces derived from Bürger's *Lenore* (1776) and the functions of Dante's *Madonna Beatrice*. Nevertheless, the issue of separation proves once more a useful means to deal with identity matters: the emparadised maiden keeps remembering her male beloved and dreams about their future meeting in heaven making their lives as complete as they were once on earth. However, her wish-expressing reverie allows Rossetti to promote a clarifying contrast with her actual situation of powerlessness and seclusion in a strictly spiritual ambience.[17] Her apparently naïve thoughts and dependent disposition may distract some from the fact that hers is a much more profound analysis of human identity as she muses upon the theory of soul mates, the correspondence between the earthly and heavenly realms and, most importantly, upon the need for balance between the spiritual and bodily sides of individuals. Some of these concepts, related to Swedenborgian thought, had also permeated Poe's and Coleridge's works. Rossetti dealt once more with the topic of lovers separated by death in his visual rendition of *Ulalume* (1847), which he made in 1848, again shortly after it had been published in the States. The drawing focuses on two precise excerpts from the poem:[18]

Here once, through an alley Titanic Of cypress, I roamed with my Soul– Of cypress, with Psyche, my Soul. (Coryel, ed. 2471, lines 10-12)	In terror she spoke, letting sink her Wings until they trailed in the dust, In agony sobbed, letting sink her Plumes till they trailed in the dust, Till they sorrowfully trailed in the dust. (Coryel, ed. 2472, lines, 56-60)

The poem influenced Rossetti in two different ways: first of all, it allowed him to establish further connections between the speaker, his soul and his beloved. Secondly, in more literal terms, Poe's plot prefigures the one in Rossetti's dramatic monologue *The Portrait*, which also sets the poetic voice on a mental journey to the groves where he painted his beloved. Quite in a Romantic manner, sadness and desolation find an echo in the natural images described. Rather than a balm for the grief-stricken artist, remembrance becomes a constant reminder of his beloved's absence, just like the work of art, as a pale reflection of her greatness, relates to the degraded nature of the sensible world she left behind. It is in this sense that the comparison with *The Oval*

Portrait expounded in our previous section becomes further invalidated through (likeness to) *Ulalume*. Both poetry and painting become parallel reflections of a transcending beauty related to the maiden; this link is made manifest not just in art's inferior capacities to synthesise her features but also in the lady's interaction with death. Sometimes regarded as the destruction of the female on part of a male author, this event actually represents a translation towards the sublime surrounding the maiden with power, both as a *mediatrix* between the different layers of reality and sound referent of permanence against the ephemeral nature of the sensible world.

This scheme surfaces again, together with the prevailing influences of Dante and Boccaccio, in the double work *(A Vision of) Fiammetta* (1878):[19] it shows a flaming female beauty about to be engulfed by the darkness of Azrael, the angel of death. However, the damsel does not despair in this trance. Instead, her self-confidence allows her to express the unbeatable and eternal character of beauty as a basic principle of experience and reality. Very much like Poe, Rossetti finds an answer to the transience of earthly beauty in a world that lies beyond or rather in something like 'essential permanence'; contrariwise to him, he asserts beauty's power in terms of brightness, luminosity and even Messianic overtones. However, maybe playing again an echo of Ligeia's features, Rossetti stresses Fiammetta's self-assertion before the threatening shroud:

> All stirs with change. Her garments beat the air:
> The angel circling round her aureole
> Shimmers in flight against the tree's grey bole:
> While she, with reassuring eyes most fair,
> A presage and a promise stands; as 'twere
> On Death's dark storm the rainbow of the Soul
> (McGann, ed. *DRG Collected* "Fiammetta" 193, lines 9-14)

All these examples seem to point only to 'balance' and 'integration'. However, as said before, Rossetti was also interested in portraying the destabilizing forces within beauty—and within every single individual, too. Some of his double works, such as *Lady Lilith*, *Venus Verticordia*, *Pandora* or *A Sea-Spell* refer to the destructive potential in overflowing passion. His chalk drawing *Ligeia Siren* (1873) also fits within this category: it displays an apparently harmonic—but inwardly corrupted—icon which drags the individual into chaos, thus thwarting any possibility

of balance between flesh and spirit. According to Marsh (*Dante Gabriel Rossetti* 469), the sense of 'haunted harmony' in the visual work was inspired by Poe's *Ligeia*:[20] music becomes a bewitching referent of beauty and majesty which pervades the observer completely. However, inasmuch as that concept of beauty may be corrupted, it also carries devastating consequences with it. To this, Rossetti adds an etymological trace, inasmuch as the name Ligeia "has its root in the Homeric adjective *ligys*, meaning canorous, high sounding, clear toned or shrill" (McLeod 92). The maiden is finally turned into a siren for programmatic reasons and also through the influence of Milton's *Comus*, whose character 'Ligeia' is also rendered a sea-creature.[21] All these moves manage to reinforce the links between tradition, Rossetti's message and the maiden's functionality in respect to the various forces in beauty.

It is in this sense that we may say assert that the influence of Poe and his female presences took root into Rossetti's formative period and was brought to further eclosion—under Rossetti's eclectic regard—within the artistic project that the painter-poet would develop between 1860 and 1882 through his double works: these consist on a dialectics of beauty revealed to the sensible soul thanks to the function of the mystical damsel; this allowed Rossetti to approach and assess the tense balance of forces within beauty, as we have previously said. In this respect, the female presences who appear in the resulting pictorial and literary works are manifestations of the artist's creative soul—attempting to rise above his earthly limitations and reach, in an alchemic manner, a new level of conscience. In this process, the maiden is a guide, a referent and even a part of the self. Within Rossetti's professional structure, she is a part of the transcendent who descends from above and allows him to partake, through a variety of visions, of a 'divine revelation', which is no other than the nature of sublime beauty, a concept that Dante Gabriel Rossetti insistently attempts to show to the world through his creations. Thus, we may understand how the poem *In an Artist's Studio*, which his sister Christina composed about 1856, did not really refer to Elizabeth Siddal's influence over her brother's creative scheme, but rather, to his mystical maiden and the way in which she interacted with him and his works, thus stressing the links between life, art and love, which were a main motto of Rossetti's career. Hence, we may regard this as another example of the critical attempts to (mis)interpret Rossetti's works exclusively on the basis of autobiographical inspiration.

> One face looks out from all his canvases
> One selfsame figure sits or walks or leans
> [...] Fair as the moon and joyful as the light:
> Not wan with waiting, not with sorrow dim;
> Not as she is, but as when hope shone bright;
> Not as she is but as she fills his dream.
> (Abrams, ed. "In an Artist's Studio" 1586, lines 1-2, 11-14)

3. Conclusion

The examples mentioned so far in our article allow us to conclude that Rossetti's fascination for Poe's works was not limited to his formative period, but rather lasted throughout his lifetime.[22] Leaving behind literal and derivative positions, Rossetti managed to assimilate many of these traces into a style of his own and reorganize them according to his own artistic bases. Poe's revenants did not just provide Rossettian females with an echo of mystery, but also contributed to build up a part of their features within the whole artistic structure drawn to apprehend the various faces of beauty. We may say, nonetheless, that Poe's influence was not as central as Dante's, for example, to Rossetti's career, but we could also claim that he contributed to reinforce certain expressiveness nuances, some thematic bases, communication routines between female and male characters, the artist's process of self-discovery and growth and the outlining of his mystical maidens' features and functions. Maybe not a corner stone in the Rossettian building, the shadow of Poe and his revenants is definitely present in its flying buttresses.

NOTES

[1] William (Michael Rossetti), who had indeed, already heard of the exhumation from (William Bell) Scott, approved his action. "Under the pressure of a great sorrow," William replied, "you performed an act of self-sacrifice: it did you honour, but was clearly a work of supererogation [...] for it has taken actual effect in you being bereaved of due poetic fame [...] there is no reason why the self-sacrifice should have no term" [...] At any rate, the reasons Gabriel now gave Swinburne for his recent action, differed widely from those to which William alluded: "The truth is [...] that no one so much as herself (Elizabeth), would have approved of my doing this. Art was the only thing for which she felt seriously. Had it been possible to her, I should have found the book on my pillow the night she was buried" [...] Even Swinburne, despite his adoration of Lizzie, not merely approved, but enthusiastically applauded Gabriel's recovery of the poems as absolutely and admirably right (Doughty 419).

[2] As the Rossetti Archivists have noted down, "no definitive version of this sonnet sequence can be presented", even though the 1881 version might be the best-known one. In fact, many of those sonnets were composed between 1869 and 1881, and so were pub-

lished in *Sonnets and Songs: Towards a Work to be Called 'The House of Life'* (1870), *The Kelmscott Love Sonnets* (1874), and *Of Love, Life and Death: Sixteen Sonnets* (1869). See http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/22-1881.raw.html.

[3] The pleasure representation affords […] is never severed from some form of death. The question remains, however, as to why the exchanged position, the aesthetic victims and blood donors, whose destruction and substitution is the starting point and the condition for the creation of the new, should be gendered feminine. If an eroticised narcissistic self-contemplation in some sense always implies an absent body […] then it finds its most superlative form when the body used for self-projection is a body absent due to death (Bronfen 120).

[4] Actually, Walter Deverell introduced them in 1850.

[5] He translated his *Lenore* (1773) into English about 1846.

[6] Surtees cat. no. 19 and Treuherz, Prettejohn & Becker cat.2.

[7] Riede puts this notion in relation with the *doppelganger* motif which Rossetti also employed in works such as *How They Met Themselves* (1860): "not only do the female angels look curiously like one another, and like the man, but behind them are two spectral males, who are plainly doubles of the startled man" (27, 30).

[8] Surtees cat. no. 50 and Treuherz, Prettejohn & Becker cat. 39.

[9] Treuherz, Prettejohn & Becker cat. 3.

[10] Surtees cat. no. 19B and Treuherz, Prettejohn & Becker cat. 4.

[11] Our view proves consonant with Riede's insofar as these angelic bodies can be interpreted as "secular manifestations of the soul" and "external images of interiority" (30).

[12] The maiden's function and importance within the Rossettian artistic scheme also relates effectively to the bulk of esoteric research that the painter-poet's father, Gabriele Pasquale Giuseppe Rossetti, was developing at that time into the figures of Dante and Beatrice. We might perceive that the transformation the maiden experiences in Rossetti's works is clearly related to the following bases and is clearly influenced by his father's studies together with the 'hidden knowledge' in many of his readings of youth: these tend to display a series of Gnostic, Rosycrucian, esoteric, Swedenborgian and alchemic overtones that finally crystallised in Rossetti's own (but still somewhat eclectic) portrayal of women. The lady becomes a referent of excellence and balance that can be easily associated to his *Daena*, a beautiful young woman who may be identified as his 'celestial I' (Cirlot 79).

[13] Surtees cat. no. 30 and Treuherz, Prettejohn & Becker cat. 6.

[14] Surtees cat. no. 193 and Treuherz, Prettejohn & Becker cat. 108.

[15] The poem would be revised later on before being published in the second issue of the Pre-Raphaelite magazine *The Germ* and also before being included in Rossetti's *Poems* (1870). As said before, the latter volume contained many poems retrieved in the 1869 exhumation episode.

[16] In reworking the theme of the longing of one lover for another after death, Rossetti reveals his continued reliance on the works of Edgar Allan Poe, whose poem *The Raven* was, according to Hall Caine, Rossetti's admitted model for *The Blessed Damozel* (Macleod 95)

[17] This fact also makes Rossetti's damozel close to the picture of Poe's Nesace in *Al Aaraaf* (1829), inasmuch as both women remain in a context between heaven and earth and allow the speaker to introduce a set of Swedenborgian overtones. Rossetti also seems to have adopted from Poe's work the initial notion of Ligeia as a presence related to music and the Pythagorean concept of the 'music of the spheres'. He would later on change this image in his chalk drawing *Ligeia Siren* (1873).

[18] The picture is an early example of Rossetti's efforts to overcome the limitations of his medium, which Lessing had said was incapable of expressing movement in time (Riede 30).

[19] Surtees cat. no. 252.

[20] Rossetti placed his placed Ligeia before an ocean background, fingering 'an extraordinary lute' (in fact an Indian sarinda) with hollowed-out sections that mirror the

roundness of her breasts [...] Bearing the same name as Poe's allegory of music, who uses the beauty of music to entrance and destroy men, and as such a symbolic depiction also of the sensual force of physical and aesthetic beauty in the Swinburnean or Paterian mode (Marsh, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* 469).

[21] Furthermore, the very same name would be ascribed to a siren in Rossetti's lyrical tragedy *The Doom of the Sirens* (see Macleod 89-95 and McGann, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Collected Poetry* 365-369).

[22] According to Oswald Doughty (659), during his stay at Birchington-on-Sea, Rossetti enjoyed reciting "Poe's *Raven*, in his still rich voice, with much dramatic energy, pouring a sinister emotion into the raven's 'Nevermore.'—Quoting Thomas Hall Caine, Dianne McLeod adds the recitation of *Ulalume* (85) to lighten the spirit in these dull evenings at Birchington, which Rossetti somewhat disliked. In our opinion, another proof of the long lasting effect that the raven's refrain left in Rossetti may be found in his poem *Proserpine* (1872), especially in the contrast between past and present existence and in the tone shown in lines 1 to 3: "Afar away the light that brings cold cheer / Unto this wall, -one instant and no more / Admitted at my distant palace door".

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FROM CHAINS TO CHANGE: SEXUALITY AND SALVATION IN CHRISTINA ROSSETTI'S *GOBLIN MARKET*

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Abstract

As the title intimates, this essay examines a painful journey through acute sexuality to gleeful redemption in Rossetti's *Goblin Market*, a symbolic representation of a Victorian society that seems insidiously hostile to female fulfillment. Having volunteered for ten years as a worker in the house of former prostitutes striving to be reintegrated into society, Rossetti seems to suggest that fallen women must be protected, supported, and reintegrated into their communities, for their cataclysmic choices are consequent on a yearn for survival in a harsh, thwarting Victorian patriarchal system, and not on lust.

Key words: Sexuality, seduction, lesbianism, chains, patriarchy, redemption, salvation.

Resumen

Como el título insinúa, este ensayo analiza el doloroso viaje desde la sexualidad profunda a la redención jubilosa en el poema de Rossetti *Goblin Market*, representación simbólica de una sociedad victoriana que se muestra insidiosamente hostil a la realización femenina. Habiendo trabajado durante diez años como voluntaria en una institución para la reinserción de prostitutas, Rossetti parece sugerir que las mujeres caídas deben ser protegidas, apoyadas y reintegradas en sus comunidades, puesto que sus catastróficas decisiones no son consecuencia de la lujuria, sino de un anhelo por sobrevivir dentro de un severo y frustrante sistema patriarcal victoriano.

Palabras   clave: Sexualidad,   seducción,   lesbianismo,   cadenas, patriarcado, redención, salvación.

Christina   Rossetti's   renowned   five-hundred   and   sixty-seven-line poem, *Goblin Market*, displays, with seemingly telling finality, a shift from bondage to liberation as maidens vacillate between avid sexuality and strict Victorian moral propriety. Fenced on all sides by strong barriers of Victorian moral decorum, which, ironically, is interspersed with lustful rustics, Rossetti's maidens experience brutal and raw sexuality that hurts, but also helps them to establish a vibrant sisterly love and to shape the rectitude of posterity. Being the youngest daughter of Frances Mary Lavinia Polidori, who selflessly ingrained moral rectitude in her children,[1] Rossetti displayed similar traits in her life. Having for ten years served as a volunteer worker at the home ("House of Charity") for former prostitutes, aimed at reintegrating fallen women into society, Rossetti laced her life with the daunting task of exposing and rescuing women that fell from the revered Victorian qualities of earnestness, moral responsibility and domestic propriety.

Rossetti's *Goblin Market* starts with saturated, fused sensual imagery. The description of the goblin men's "forbidden fruit" is exceedingly detailed, appealing to the senses of taste, sight and feeling. "The profusion of enticing fruits with which the poem opens […]. speaks immediately to this hunger as well as setting up a paradigm of temptation" (Hill 455-472). Indeed, one can almost taste the sweetness of the "wild free born cranberries" (11) and the "pomegranates full and find" (21). Goblins are evil or mischievous creatures of folklore that are often described as disfigured, flawed or phantom-like beings. Certainly, the sweet and juicy fruits that the goblin men offer the two sisters, Laura and Lizzie, are dangerous; they nearly destroy Laura after she tastes their sweetness, and it is only through braving the depravities of the goblin men herself that Lizzie is able to save her sister from meeting the same fate as Jeanie, who "dwindled and drew grey; / Then fell with the first snow" (155-156). Yet, these tempting fruits and the lustful creatures who hawk them to innocent maidens are "like honey to the throat/But poison in the blood" (554-555).

Rossetti's life of stringent religious principles would suggest a refrain from erotic poetry. Indeed, she "was assured of her Anglican Catholic faith; to it she gave up her life, with love and its promise of earthly happiness" (Moody and Lovett 332). But her entire poem is a metaphor for sexuality, a carnal feast in which vulnerable maidens are ruined and abandoned by resolute lechers. Although it may not always be easy for one to ultimately, absolutely harness strong drives or urges, one, however, may raise eyebrows that irrespective of Rossetti's life of moral tenacity, she would write a poem so loaded with sexual metaphors and lusty descriptions, especially as she consistently "governed herself by strict religious principles" (Greenblatt and Abrams 1459-1460). Irrespective of the multi-layered and complex nature of *Goblin Market*, some critics have taken Rossetti's religiosity as the sole nexus of her poem.

Kirsten Escobar compares the garden of delights which the goblin men offer up to the unsuspecting Laura to the "doomed pursuit of worldly pleasure" (129) demonstrated in the biblical story of the prodigal Son. In such a view, the feasts take on a symbolic, recondite view; Laura eating the fruits of goblin men becomes a symbol for Eve eating the fruit of the Tree of knowledge, while Lizzie's sacrifice is tantamount to that of Christ, saving and redeeming her sister through a process similar to communion (Merchant 72). However, one can also take a far more subversive view of Rossetti's poem, one that concentrates on its sexual aspects. Indeed, feminist critics since Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar have framed Rossetti's poetry in a "paradigm of power and subversion", littered with repressed images that overcome her religiosity (Choi 481). The fruits are referred to as "joys brides hope to have" (313), the indulgence of which before marriage was tantamount to a social taboo. A woman's respectability to Victorian morality was "hinged upon her unblemished virtue" (Escobar 130). Contrary to such revered virtue, Jeanie, "who should have been a bride" (312), withers away and dies. Her virtue is destroyed along with her physical chastity. Laura is prone to similar fate before her sister rescues her from the jaws of perpetual shame and imminent death. Yet, one cannot simply describe Lizzie's redemption of her sister in religious or social terms given that erotic scenes abound in the poem. Upon taking a closer look, including the illustration for the cover of Rossetti's *Goblin Market and Other Poems* that reveals two females in bed, holding each other in a

seemingly passionate manner, one must wonder if Laura and Lizzie are in fact sisters at all or if Rossetti feared backlash for writing so openly about lesbian love and attempting to disguise their relationship as one of familial relation. In his review of Sharon Marcus' *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England*, entitled "Female Friendship and Lesbianism in Victorian England", Isaac Yue holds a similar view, "Sharon Marcus's *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* [...] attempts to re-institutionalize our entire understanding of the intricacy of Victorian society where lesbianism existed not as an uncommon novelty, but a social phenomenon that was decidedly more widespread than meets the eye".

The poem begins with the goblins, going about their task of tempting maidens to eat their luscious and deadly fruit. It is important to note that only "maids" hear "the goblins cry" (2); men with dignity are completely absent from the poem, but their power or influence is everyway evident in a world they tailor for their selfish taste. John Stoltenberg in his article, "Toward Gender Justice", says:

> Under patriarchy, men are the arbiters of identity for both males and females, because the cultural norm of human identity is, by definition, male identity-masculinity. And, under patriarchy, the cultural norm of male identity consists in power, prestige, privilege, and prerogative as over and against the gender class women. (41)

So, Rossetti's men stretch their bossy disposition and misogynic attitude beyond breaking-point, especially as "the male figures are a different species of being, the grotesque, bestial and mercantile goblins" (Campbell 399). Goblins direct their calls to "maid", which implies that the goblins are only interested in peddling their wares to young, virginal girls, a fact that makes it highly suspicious of what they are actually selling. They then belt off a long list of many delightful fruits they offer, which is a replete of sexual metaphors; "plump unpecked cherries" (7) and "wild free-born cranberries" "all ripe together" (15) and "sweet tongue and sound to eye" (30). While the term "cherry" by then might not have had the vulgar usage that is associated with it today, its color is still indicative of blood, the hymen and virginity. These sexual images are intended to lure young women into their embrace, especially since women of the middle and lower classes in Rossetti's time were supposed to be so ignorant of sexual desire that they would not recognize the goblin men's true intentions (Escobar 130).

After the goblins' entreaties to "come buy, come buy" (31), we are told the two sisters (Lizzie and Laura) are "couching close together/ with tingling cheeks and finger tips" (36-39). From the start of the poem, one suspects the "sisters" of having more than sisterly affection towards one another. Their extreme closeness and the descriptions of their lips, cheeks and fingers suggest a relationship that goes beyond the ordinary. Such a situation was not at all unheard of in Victorian society, indeed, there were many woman who lived together in long-term "romantic friendships" (Shadow songs). Lizzie encourages Laura to "lie close" and "not look at goblin men" (40-42). She wants her to stay with her sister/lover and not be tempted with the destruction of her virtue. She also suggests the unclean state and sexual promiscuity of the goblin men: "who knows upon what soil they fed/their hungry thirsty roots?" (44-45). The goblin men's "thirsty roots" are fairly clear metaphors for their genitalia, and given their rakish natures it is hard to say exactly what "soil" or say, female phallus such licentious men have planted themselves.

Lizzie, having warned Laura against the "evil gifts" (66) of the goblin men, turns and flees the scene. Laura, however, lingers and wonders in admiration, "How fair the vine must grow/Whose grapes are so luscious; /How warm the wind must blow/Thro' those fruit bushes" (60-63). Lizzie warns her against charm and harm, but the sight of the little men and the luscious sight of their fruits have deeply enchanted her. The animalistic features of the goblin men fascinate her: "one had a cat's face, /One whisked a tail, / [...]. One like a wombat prowled obtuse and furry, /One like rattle tumbled hurry skurry" (71-76). The foregoing animal imagery foreshadows the brutality and rawness of goblin men, even as Laura "heard a voice like voice of doves/Cooling all together: /They sounded kind and full of loves/In the pleasant weather" (77-80). Although mimicking doves and lurking in beautiful weather creates a false sense of gentility and comfort, there are two major symbols contained in the animalistic forms of goblin men. One is a reaction to Charles Darwin, whose *Origin of the Species* scandalized religious Victorians with the idea of "the convergence of animals and humans" (Merchant 71). The other is a continuation of the sexual theme; the animal-men that Rossetti describes reminisces the primary untamed power of sex which extremely terrified Victorian sensibility.

Laura, seeing goblin men and being fascinated with their animalistic sexuality, "stretched her gleaming neck/Like a rush-imbedded swan, / Like a lily from the beck, /Like a moonlit poplar branch, /Like a vessel at the launch /When its last restraint is gone" (86). The last qualms that Laura had about going to the goblin men and accepting their fruit has passed; she draws herself up, making herself as visible as possible so that the passing goblin horde will take notice of her. Like a beautiful flower in the bloom, she waits to be plucked by the goblin men. Yearning for their fruit/love, they stand around her, "leaning at each other, /Brother with queer brother, /Signaling each other, /Brother with sly brother" (93-96). One weaves her "a crown/ Of tendrils, leaves and rough nuts brown" (100). This crown seems to hearken to the crown of thorns of Jesus Christ, indicating the suffering, pain that lies in wait for Laura in a Victorian world where men wield power at whim.

Having been fooled by the lustrous malevolence of the goblin men, Laura longs for the fruits they present to her, but has no money to give them in exchange: "I have no copper in my purse, /I have no silver either, /And all my gold is on the furze" (118-120). In sorrow, she tells the goblin men that she has no money to pay them, even though their fruits have already captivated her. She, however, has gold in the form of her furze or say, her soft fine hair, which is, of course, a sexual reference. They answer her, "You have much gold upon your head, / […] Buy from us with a golden curl" (123-125). The curls of Laura's hair are indicative of her chastity and her woman's honor, which she must sacrifice in order to taste the forbidden fruit of the goblin men. We are told "she dropped a tear more rare than pearl" (127) as she gives up the "precious golden lock" (126) that symbolizes her pubic hair. In consonance with many Victorian women, who lived in abject poverty and resorted to prostitution for survival, Laura lacks money but possesses beauty which she uses as an endearment to goblin men. While goblin men seem relentless in their lust, Laura gives her body to them freely, willing to sacrifice her virtue for the lusty pleasure of the goblin fruit.

The scene of Laura eating the fruit is an intensely sexual one: "Clearer than water flowed that juice; / She never tasted such before, / How should it cloy with length of use?" (131-133). Laura is overwhelmed with pleasure, the like of which she has never tasted or even suspected of before. She is ravenous, losing herself in the primal lust of goblin fruit: "she sucked and sucked and sucked the more" (134). The repetition

of the verb, "sucked" emphasizes the hunger/passion with which Laura defiles herself with the attention of the goblin men. She does not stop until she is too sore to continue: "She sucked until her lips were sore" (136) and "knew not was it night or day/As she turned home alone" (139-140). Apparently, the foregoing points to the strong and long sexual activity Laura engages in, thus indicating her fall from the high moral pedestal established for Victorian women or maidens. She also gathers "one kernel-stone", (138) which is the seed the goblin men have left in her body and a symbol of pregnancy which recurs later in the poem.

As Laura returns home late at night, Lizzie berates her, telling her that "twilight is not good for maidens; /Should not loiter in the glen/In the haunts of goblin men" (144-146). Lizzie echoes the implied conventional wisdom of the Victorian era, that women should be kept out of danger and away from places where they may fall into temptation, as Laura has. Lizzie also reminds Laura of another girl, Jeanie, who also "took their gifts both choice and many", (149) allowing the goblin men to use her as Laura has been used. Jeanie's folly led her to pine away, and though she "sought them by night and day/, [she] found them no more but dwindled and grew grey" (155-156). After taking Jeanie's dignity, the goblin men abandon her, and with neither her virtue nor the goblin men who seize it, she dies a fallen woman. And as Cathleen Hickok points out, "it was understood among the middle classes at least-that society did not forget, and reclaim its fallen women" (qtd. in Escobar 130), thus, rejected both by her lover and by society, Jeanie has nothing left to live for, and dies as a result of pain and abandonment.

Irrespective of Lizzie's warning, Laura insists that she will not be like Jeanie and that her lovers will not abandon her, "I ate and ate my fill, /Yet my mouth waters still; /Tomorrow night I will/ Buy more'" (165-169). This statement shows that Laura, like goblin men, has developed insatiable passion for sex and is truly depraved, consumed with her lust for the goblin fruit. She then tries to tell her sister of the pleasure she has discovered, and promises to help Lizzie to discover the same ecstasy in losing herself to her passions. She kisses Lizzie, and as she begins to describe the fullness of the fruits her metaphor turns towards feminine imagery; "What melon icy-cold/Piled on a dish of gold/ Too huge for me to hold, /What peaches with a velvet nap" (175-178). Laura suggests, as it were, the disproportional sexual relationship between young girls and adult males. While this huge melon, if taking into account the

open melon that constitutes part of the cover illustration for the poem, symbolizes female genitals, it can as well serve as a metaphor for huge phallus that Laura experiences in her relationship with goblin men.

> Because the penis is 'proof' of masculinity, keeping it hidden from view maintains the mythology of masculine strength and power; revealing its small, flaccid, and vulnerable exposes the myth (Kibby and Costello 224-227),

and so the huge melon has a dual metaphor. Laura's depravity even transcends the frontiers of goblin men to her own house and sister. The two sisters lie down; "Golden head by golden head,/Like two pigeons in one nest/ Folded in each other's wings,/ They lay down in their curtained bed :/[…] Cheek to cheek and breast to breast/Locked together in one nest" (184-198). The description of this scene demonstrates a love scene. It seems hard to believe that Rossetti's "sisters" were only that. Indeed, if the two women are sisters, it shows even more scandalously how far Laura has fallen; her appetites have grown to the point where she is ready to make love to her own sister. This love affair between Lizzie and Laura reminisces lesbianism in the margin of Victorian society in which moral rectitude and adherence to traditional patterns of life were prevalent.

The next morning, "when the first cock crewed" (200), the two sisters arise together at dawn, "neat like bees, as sweet and busy" (201). The Victorian world believed that the ideal woman would be an early riser, to give her more time to take care of her house well-ordered; the two sisters' early rising shows their total accordance with the Victorian social order, "the beau ideal of cottage economy, reinforced and refreshed by the central precepts of up-to-the-minute domestic science" (Merchant 74). But, as the day goes on, while Lizzie remains contented with her daily chores as a typical Victorian woman, Laura floats "in an absent dream/ One content, one sick in part; /One warbling for the mere bright day's delight/One longing for the night" (211-214). These lines reveal the dichotomy that now exists between the two sisters; while Lizzie remains pure and finds joy in the old activities of the day, Laura's interest is in the lusty and sinful pleasures of the night.

To make Lizzie partake in her lascivious life style, Laura contrives to place her sister and herself close by a brook in the evening, where she can hear the goblin men coming. Lizzie grows worried at the darkening hour, but Laura is hearing-impaired to the danger her sister speaks of.

Indeed, she is literally deaf to chants of the goblin men when they arrive, as she realizes that Lizzie can hear "the fruit –call" (243) of the goblin men but she cannot. To her surprise and sadness, she, like Jeanie, can no longer taste the fruit of the goblin-men: "Must she then buy no more such dainty fruits? /Must she not more such succous [succulent] pasture find, /Gone deaf and blind?" (257-259). Having been used and discarded by cruel goblin men, Laura's world collapses before her watchful eyes: "Her tree of life drooped from the root" (260). As Escobar puts it, "The merchant who coaxed and wooed her, who welcomed and beckoned her now shun and evade her. […] In short, they do not want her curls" (141). Devastated by the rejection of her lovers, she returns home with Lizzie, but she finds no satisfaction in their shared bed. She waits until Lizzie is asleep, "then sat up in a passionate yearning, /And gnashed her teeth for baulked desire, and wept/ As if her heart would break" (266-268). Her brief taste of heterosexual love has given her an insatiable desire for sex, including lesbian sex as argued in this essay. She plunges into acute despair once the goblin men reject her, and directing her sexual passion toward her sisters seems the attendant consequence of her initiation into sex and her subsequent rejection by goblin men.

Laura's vigilance never pays off, and she begins to wither away as Jeanie did. It is here that the goblin men's seed comes back into play. She places the kernel-stone in the ground, waters it with her tears, and waits for it to grow. The kernel stone is a child from the goblin men that was planted in her womb, the sole reminder of the lovers that have forsaken her. However, the child is still born as she "watched for a waxing shoot, /But there came none; / It never saw the sun, /It never felt the trickling moisture run" (284-287). Thus, even the comfort she may have received from the child is denied her. Per the norms of her society, she is expected to rise,

> Early in the morning
> When the first cock crowed his warning,
> Neat like bees, as sweet and busy,
> Laura rose with Lizzie
> Fetched in honey, milked the cows,
> Aired and set to rights the house,
> Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,
> Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,
> Next churned butter, whipped up cream,
> Fed their poultry, sat and sewed; (99-208)

In anguish, Laura ceases to do the foregoing daily chores, or eat the food her sister makes; she has fallen completely outside of the social order, and having become disgraced, prepares to take the same path or death tract that Jeanie before her took.

However, while society and her lovers may have abandoned Laura, Lizzie remains a loyal sister/lover despite Laura's wretchedness. Like the biblical father in the parable of the prodigal son, Lizzie believes that despite Victorian propriety, Laura deserves to be forgiven, perhaps, because she is a victim of harsh, thwarting Victorian system in which women were playthings in the hands of their male counterparts. Lizzie, however, is at first restricted by her "stereotypically feminine" traits, lacking the "active intelligence and questioning behavior" of her sister (Choi 407). She "Longed to buy fruits to comfort her/But feared to pay too dear" (310-311). It is only when Laura is at the very verge of death that Lizzie "for the first time in her life/ Began to listen and look" (327-328). For the first time, she reveals herself to the goblin men, preparing to play their game of seduction to save a dying sister/lover.

Lizzie's beauty, charms must be stellar, for the goblin men come running with great enthusiasm when she reveals herself to them (329-347). When they reach her, they begin their seduction immediately: "Hugged her and kissed her/Squeezed and caressed her" (348-350). Their description of the fruit becomes suspiciously phallic: "Look at our apples/ Russet and dun/ Bob at our cherries/Bite at our peaches" (352-355). Lizzie, however, is "mindful" of the women who were seduced before her (364), and while she asks for "much and many" (365), she holds out her apron to hold the fruit so she can bear it back to save her sister. The sex she wants is not for her, but through her for her sister. Put differently, what she craves is not sex, but the power that sex provides, which, once distilled through her, will allow her to cure her sister's wretchedness (Campbell 408).

Though Lizzie offers the goblin men her money, she "refuses to play the market" (Choi 407) by eating with them. They tell her, "night yet is early, /Warm and dew-pearly, /Wakeful and starry" (372-373). The goblin men are promising great pleasure in their lusty embraces, and assures her that such pleasure cannot be transferred or born by any man, much less a woman; "Such fruits as these/No man can carry" (375-376). Such pleasure is only sweet if shared with the goblin men, they assert.

They tell her, "rest with us" (382), a phrase which only punctuates the sexuality of their language.

Steadfast in her unwillingness to be another fallen woman, Lizzie remains defiant, demanding her coin back if goblin men will not give her what she wants. The goblin men get angry at her frigidity; they give her the same insult that scorned men might, as "One called her proud, / Cross-grained, uncivil" (394-395). These goblin men are not one to take no for an answer. As Lizzie denies to have sex with these rustics, they try instead to rape her: "Barking, mewing, hissing, mocking/ Tore her gown and soiled her stocking" (402-403). Once she is disrobed, they "Held her hands and squeezed their fruits/ against her mouth to make her eat" (406-407). The metaphor of the fruit as the goblin men's penises have never been clearer than in this line, and her "mouth" is not Lizzie's face, but her vagina. However,

> white and golden Lizzie stood,
> Like a lily in a flood,-
> Like a rock of blue-veined stone
> Lashed by tides obstreperously,-
> Like a beacon left alone
> In a hoary roaring sea […]
> Like a royal virgin town
> Topped with golden dome and spire
> close beleaguered by a fleet mad to tug her standard down. (408-421)

These verses capture the brutality, ferocity of lustful goblin men that are used to ruining maidens that cross their path. They also demonstrate the determination and fortitude of Lizzie as she relentlessly resist the wrath and passion of goblin men.

The fight between Lizzie and goblin men becomes a conflict over rights and power. In *Money, Sex and Power: Toward a Feminist Historical Materialism*, Nancy Hartsock says, "Power can be defined as a relation between struggles and practices" (128), a fight that Lizzie must overcome to save her sister and herself from determined foes, goblin men. Lizzie, a metaphor for the struggling and steadfast Victorian women, must win the fight in order to save her gender from the chains of misogynists or patriarchal society. The goblin men cannot rape her as she "would not open lip to lip/ Lest they should cram a mouthful in" (431-423). Lizzie's success here may simply be a result of her ability to keep her legs closed. It may as well suggest that while the

goblin men are able to penetrate her, her refusal to go along with it or acknowledge their power over her destroys the pleasure of sex for the goblin men, thus making her a victor in the encounter.

The rape or attempted rape of Lizzie transforms her, granting her power that would sever Laura's chains of bondage, and, by extension, free maidens in her world from the abuse of men. As the goblin men spray her with their frustrated seed, unable to penetrate her, she "laughed in heart to feel the drip/Of juice that syruped all her face" (434-435). At last, the goblin men spend themselves and wander off, having succeeded in turning her outside filthy but failing in that Lizzie ultimately remains pure. Goblin men's display of unruly power, which Michel Foucault insists, "is essentially that which represses" (90), fails, even as Lizzie sustains "bruises" (465). At first Lizzie is as dazed as Laura, and "knew not was it night or day" (449). However, she soon regains her senses and runs home to her sister, having been granted the sexual power of goblin men to heal, rather than destroy. Lizzie exhibits bravery and resolve and, to use the words of P.F.D. Tennant, "takes her own destiny into her hands" (116) as she heads home with both pain and victory.

While Lizzie may represent women under the yoke of male chauvinistic subjugation, then and even now, she is also an icon for all the suppressed and resilient women in our world today. Females such as Lizzie are described by Toril Moi as "women [that] manage to counter patriarchal strategies despite the odds stacked against them" (298). Lizzie frees herself from those whose joy, liberty, and prosperity are randomly determined by the whims and caprices of men in the position of power. Montesquieu, the French philosopher, sums up the temptations of power in the following terms: "Experience in all ages has proved that everyman who possesses power is inclined to abuse it; he goes on exercising it until he comes up against the limits" (253). Lizzie leaves with the scares of the brutality of goblin men, but for the first time in her patriarchal system, she challenges those that have chained the female gender and empowers herself as she survives their bruises and returns with their fruits without yielding to their desires. After all, "Power is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which the probability rests" (Weber 39).

As soon as she is within earshot, she calls her sister/lover to "Come and kiss me/Never mind my bruises/Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices" (466-468), a request that suggests a more overt metaphor for lesbian sexuality in the poem. She announces that the gift she brings is "Squeezed from goblin fruits for you/Goblin pulp and goblin dew" (469-470). The reference here is clear: the sexual power of goblin men has been transferred to her through her resistance to their temptation and brutality. She offers her body as a kind of divine feast for her lover: "Eat me, drink me, love me; /Laura, make much of me" (471-472). Through lesbian sex and love, Lizzie hopes to undo what men have done, thus redeeming the fallen Laura. At first, Laura fears that Lizzie has defiled herself like she has, but she "kissed and kissed and kissed her" (486). Lizzie's sexual power overtakes her, and "shaking with anguish fear, and pain, / She kissed and kissed her with a hungry mouth" (491-492). Lizzie's victory over goblin men empowers her, and leads to the salvation or redemption of Laura, who was prone to death.

While the redemption process begins with passion and lesbian love, it then changes to pain. Laura "writing as one possessed she leaped and sung, / Rent all her robe, and wrung/ Her hands in lamentable haste, / And beat her breast" (496-99). Laura's pain reverberates, as it were, the collective experience of Victorian women. While Lizzie has made it possible for Laura to be redeemed, she must first be purified, an idea that lends itself to Rossetti's religious tendencies (Choi 407) Images of destruction, then, permeate the poem as "swift fire spread thro' her vein", (507)

> like the watch-tower of a town
> Which an earthquake shatters down,
> Like lightning-stricken mast,
> Like a wind-uprooted tree
> Spun about, like a foam-topped waterspout. (514-518)

However, at the end of this metaphor for destruction, she is finally reborn through baptism: "cast down headlong in sea, /She fell at last; / Pleasure past and anguish past, /Is it death or is it life?" (520-523).

At last, Laura emerges from her fever, chains or bondage, cured by her sister's steadfastness and restorative love. It is important to note, as does Escobar, that unlike Jeanie, "Laura is cared for and saved […]." (145). Jeanie's bondage killed her and Lizzie, in a timely manner, rescues Laura from the jaws of death. Stated differently, it is because

her fellow sister does not abandon her, but stays by her side that Laura is given a second chance at purity; here lies the subversive moral of the tale, coming as it does before the coda and "official" moral of the fable. If men will disdain and reject fallen women, who fall as a result of men's own actions and lusts, then, it is up to their fellow women to love and redeem them.

In the last stanza of the poem, we are told that Laura and Lizzie eventually marry and bear children, proving that Lizzie's braving of the goblin men has returned Laura's fecundity (543-544). However, the men themselves are never mentioned, which implies that it is love between women, rather than the love of men, which allows growth to resume its natural cycle. Laura lives a dim and almost lonely life in the human world; she spiritually dies and, finally, is reborn on a higher moral pedestal. As a new creature, she warns her children about the pursuit of men and their capricious natures: "their fruits like honey to the throat/ But poison in the blood" (554-555). Instead, she encourages her own children (presumably female as well) to find the love that their own sex can bring; "For there is no friend like a sister/[…] To fetch on if one goes astray, /To lift one if one totters down,/ To strengthen whilst one stands" (565-567).

In view of the details and discussion taken up in this essay, one can safely infer that Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* presents entrapped Victorian maidens that experience excruciating physical and psychological pain, but attain liberation and joy in a lustful Victorian world of misogynists and/or mischievous men. Laura and Lizzie are released from both the shackles of goblin men's raw sexuality and the bondage of lesbianism they share. Laura, whom Lizzie saves via a daring fight with violent goblin men warns children against the dangers of goblin men whose "fruits [genitalia are] like honey to the throat/But poison in the blood" (154-155). She does no longer "kiss", "suck", "eat", "drink" or hold Lizzie "cheek to cheek and breast to breast" (468-471, 197). Contrary to the foregoing sexual behavior, Laura instead "awoke as from a dream, /Laughed in the innocent old way, /Hugged Lizzie but not twice or thrice" (537-539). She is now liberated; redeemed and so are Lizzie and, perhaps, posterity. Although set in the dark, dangerous world of goblin men and filled with images of brutal sexuality, bestiality, pain, chaos and death, Rossetti's poem presents women, "a deprived and exploited majority" (Gelb 364), that yearn for freedom, even as

they are beset and menaced by traumas and acute pain their male counterparts inflict on them. By defying goblin men in their own turf with both courage and steadfastness, Lizzie tears down the walls of male perennial domination and severs the chains that bind her gender to the carnal passion of Victorian rustics, goblin men.

NOTES

[1] Frances Mary Lavinia Polidori's moral fervor impacted her children. Her two sons, Gabriel Charles Dante (later known as Dante Gabriel Rossetti) and William Michael were among the co-founders of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which aimed at instituting moral propriety in art by curbing what it viewed as the corrupt influence on the teaching of art in academia.

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BROKEN BONDS IN *TIMON OF ATHENS*

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Abstract

In *Timon of Athens* a man's word is no longer his bond. A mere promise of assistance does not necessarily ensure that help, including financial help, will be forthcoming in time of need. If words are no longer connected to meaning and truth, if they no longer signify fellowship between men, then it would seem that there is no reason for their continued existence. Language, the closest and most vital bond between men, has been broken.

Keywords: Solitude, misanthropy, community, bond, friendship, debt, usury, interest, language.

Resumen

En *Timons of Athens* la palabra de un hombre ha dejado de ser un vínculo. La mera promesa de asistencia no implica necesariamente que la ayuda, incluida la ayuda económica, llegue en tiempos de necesidad. Si las palabras ya no están conectadas ni a lo que representan ni a la verdad, si ya no significan fraternidad entre los hombres, parece que no hay razón para que sigan existiendo. El lenguaje, el más íntimo y vital vínculo entre los hombres, se ha roto.

Palabras clave: Soledad, misantropía, comunidad, vínculo, amistad, deuda, usura, interés, lenguaje.

Timon of Athens is the fourth and last play by Shakespeare which takes its inspiration from Plutarch's *The Lives of the Noble Grecians*

and Romans. In *The Life of Marcus Antonius*, we read that Mark Antony retired from the world, after his defeat at the battle of Actium, and lived "Timon's life" because

> he had the like wrong offered him, that was before offered unto Timon; and that for the unthankfulness of those he had done good unto and whom he took to be his friends he was angry with all men, and would trust no man. (Spencer 263)

Another possible source for Shakespeare's play is one of Lucian's dialogues entitled *Timon the Misanthrope*. This was not available in English at the beginning of the seventeenth century, but it may have been one of the texts which Shakespeare had studied at grammar school, either in the original Greek or in Latin translation. What is curious is that Shakespeare's sources treat Timon as a comic character. He is not the hate-driven outcast that Shakespeare portrays, but one rather to be mocked. In the source texts, he resembles the naïve young aristocrat to be found in Jacobean city comedies, who is roundly fleeced by practised swindlers. It should perhaps be remembered that Molière's *Misanthrope* was likewise written in the comic vein.

Timon of Athens was probably written between 1607 and 1608, at much the same time as *Coriolanus* and *King Lear* with which it bears many similarities. Like Lear, Timon takes at face value fulsome and false protestations of love; just as Lear rejects Cordelia's worth because of her unwillingness to flatter him, so Timon disregards the warnings of the unsociable and cynical Apemantus. Lear and Timon each have one true follower: Lear has the faithful Kent and Timon his humble steward, both of whom have to hear their protests against their masters' folly overruled. And the three protagonists all leave the city or the court for "a world elsewhere" (*Coriolanus* 3.3.136), either by choice or obligation.

Timon is an allegory of love and hate and has much of the fable or the morality play about it. It falls into two halves. In the first half, Timon is Fortune's favourite and in the second, Fortune's fool. The first three acts are devoted to Timon's life in Athens where he is surrounded by those whom he takes to be his friends and where he is assiduously courted by the rich and powerful. The last two acts of the play recount his self-enforced exile from the city. In the wilderness outside Athens, he lives as a recluse in a cave cut off from all human society. His universal love of mankind has been transmuted into hatred. For Timon, this

breaking of bonds with his fellow men is not a gradual process, it is sudden and final.

In the first half of the play, Timon keeps open house. The duty of hospitality is taken seriously. His table stands ready to receive guests at all times, as the sharing of meat and wine is the very symbol of communion between men. He lavishes extravagant gifts upon his friends. His generosity is boundless: "He pours it [gold] out" (1.1.275) as one lord states at the end of the first scene. Like Jupiter he showers gold upon his entourage, and "Plutus, the god of gold/ Is but his steward" (1.1.275-276). To those in need he opens his heart and his purse. In the first scene of the play he frees Ventidius from debtors' prison by paying off what the latter owes. He enables his servant Lucilius to marry the daughter of a rich Athenian by matching the dowry which her father intends to bestow upon her. For every trinket which is offered to him, he renders the giver several times its value. Should Timon therefore be considered as the prodigal who merits disapproval? Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* writes, "For we call those men prodigals who are incontinent and spend money on self-indulgence. Hence they are thought to be the poorest characters, for they combine more vices than one". However, he goes on to say that the prodigal gives more than he takes and therefore is thought not to have an evil character, "it is not the mark of a wicked or ignoble man to go to excess in giving and not taking, but only of a foolish one" (Book 4, 3). Timon himself seems to accept this definition of his own bounty, "unwisely, not ignobly, have I given", he states in 2.2.178. His generosity is not tainted with self-interest. It is not base. It is indissociable from his nature. Timon gives gold as he gives his affection, freely and without restraint. Is he then the Christ-like figure obeying the injunction of the gospels, to give without any hope of return?

> Give to everyman that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away
> thy goods ask them not again [...] for sinners also lend to sinners,
> to receive as much again. (Luke 6: 30-34)

Timon says much the same thing in the second act of the play:

> ... there's none
> Can truly say he gives, if he receives. (1.2. 10-11)

It seems naïve that Timon should seek to cement the bonds of friendship with gold and material goods. This is however his desire:

"Your lordship ever binds him" (1.1.107) says Ventidius' servant on reception of the sum of money which will free his master from debtor's prison. Paradoxically, Timon frees Ventidius, but binds him forever. But although Timon's motives in giving are selfless, those of the recipients of his largesse are not. His so-called friends seek out his company only for what they can glean from it. Even those who offer to repay Timon's generosity, like Ventidius and Lucilius, do so only in the hope of gaining even more in return.

Cicero and Aristotle had insisted that friendship should be free from petty calculation and hope of gain, for when questions of money arise, the perfect balance which should govern a loving relationship between friends finds itself invariably altered. In *Laelius or the Dialogue on Friendship* (*De Amicitia*), Cicero had banished all preoccupation with self-interest from friendship which should show itself pure and noble in its selflessness. He refutes the theses of those who claim otherwise:

> Another set of pretended philosophers [...] attempt to establish [...] that 'friendship is an affair of self-interest entirely, and that the proper motive for engaging in it is, not in order to gratify the kind and benevolent affections, but for the benefit of that assistance and support which is to be derived from the connection'. Accordingly they assert that those persons are most disposed to have recourse to auxiliary alliances of this kind who are least qualified by nature or fortune to depend upon their own strength and powers; the weaker sex, for instance, being more inclined to engage in friendships than the male part of our species; and those who are depressed by indigence, or labouring under misfortunes, than the wealthy and the prosperous. (11)

Aristotle in the eighth book of *Nicomachean Ethics* had insisted on the fact that friendship based only on material need, or greed, would necessarily be short-lived, for when circumstances change—when the one no longer needs money or perhaps more to the point, when the other has no more money to give— the bond will inevitably be severed. Friendship and money would appear then to be incompatible. "Howe many friends for money have bene mortall foes?" exclaims the Prologue of Thomas Lupton's play entitled *All for Money* (1578). "For money they will handle full cruelly their neighbour" says the character of Theology in the same play (sig. A2v-A3r).

However in the troubled times of the Renaissance with its social mutations, friends depended upon one another when faced with trials

which were often of a financial nature. In times of need a man could call upon his friend who would place his person and his purse at his brother's disposal. Friendship could become a kind of life insurance policy which would protect men against the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. The solitary man was exposed to danger, whereas the man with friends was ideally in possession of a treasure which would serve him as a rampart against adversity. Lorna Hutson in *The Usurer's Daughter* (46) evokes the example of Thomas Lupset in a book entitled *An Exhortation to yonge men, perswading them to walke in the patheway that leadeth to honeste and goodness* (1531). Lupset encourages his former pupil, Edmund Withypoll, to surround himself with many friends:

> Surely I reckon no possession of londes, nor yet of substance of marchandise, nor yet no abundance of money, to be comparable to a good frend. Therefore above all things in the world, procure to have plenty of frends, and make of them your compte, as of your best and most precious goods. Always your frende shall be more profitable to you, then any treasure or power beside can be. (250)

Timon too declares that he is "wealthy in his friends" (2.2.188) and that he is happy to be able to have recourse to them in his hour of need. Money and love, instead of being incompatible then would appear to go hand in hand. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Bassanio confides in his friend that "to you, Antonio/ I owe the most in money and love" (1.1.130-131) underlining the paradox whereby friendship can be both noble and selfless, and yet eminently practical.

Timon declares his belief in the value of friendship in the second scene of the first act of the play (l. 86-105). This value is expressed in monetary terms: friendship is "precious"; it is a source of "riches"; friends can share each other's "fortunes". Timon's *credo* is delivered during a banquet to which all of his friends have been invited. It follows the affected words of the First Lord: "Might we but have that happiness, my lord, that you would once use our hearts, whereby we might express some part of our zeals, we should think ourselves ever perfect" (l. 82-85). Timon has not the wisdom to see that those who say the most about their affection do not necessarily have the most, the parallel with *King Lear* is again apparent. Timon's questions throughout the speech are rhetorical, as if it goes without saying that his friends will respond to his call should the occasion warrant it. He expresses the idea that there is no point in having friends if they are never "used". "They were the

most needless creatures living should we ne'er have use for 'em" (l. 94-96). They would resemble a musical instrument which is never taken out of its case. But perhaps silence is preferable to the discordant music of the first lord's hypocritical and unctuous declaration of love, just as Cordelia's silence is preferable to her sisters' "large speeches" (*Lear* 1.1.185) protesting their affection for their father. The word "use" is however significant here. It is to be understood not only in the sense of "employment" or "utilization", but also in the sense of "interest" gained from money lent. Timon's friends have given him gifts and received greater gifts in exchange. In this they resemble usurers who lend money and expect to receive in return more than their original outlay. At the end of the first scene of the play the second lord says of Timon:

> No meed but he repays
> Seven-fold above itself: no gift to him
> But breeds the giver a return exceeding
> All use of quittance. (1.1.276-279)

Although the reference here is to presents given to supposed friends, the vocabulary used is that of a financial transaction in which the rate of interest would be 700% interest ("seven-fold above itself"), whereas the legal rate of interest in England at the beginning of the 17th century was 10%.[1] The words of the senator in the second act of the play reinforce this idea:

> If I want gold, steal but a beggar's dog
> And give it Timon, why the dog coins gold.
> If I would sell my horse and buy twenty more
> Better than he, why give my horse to Timon,
> Ask nothing, give it him, it foals me straight,
> And able horses. (2.1.5-10)

But more than this, Timon, in order to finance his gifts to his friends, had put himself in debt to those same friends who are now demanding to be repaid with interest:

> That what he speaks is all in debt; he owes for every word:
> He is so kind that he now pays interest for't; (1.2.196-197)

The bond then linking Timon to his "friends" is no longer an unwritten one, but a contract, a very formal written document stating the terms of the agreement between lender and borrower. This bond stipulated the amount of money borrowed, the rate of interest and the date when the money was to be reimbursed. Timon only hears of these bonds when the date for repayment has long passed:

> Pray you,
> How goes the world, that I am thus encounter'd
> With clamorous demands of debt, broken bonds,
> And the detention of long since due debts
> Against my honour? (2.2.41-45)

The time has come for Timon to test his friends and the result is predictable. His friends refuse their support. This refusal had been foreshadowed early in the play when the Poet had recounted to the Painter the work he intended to offer to Timon. His poem deals with the vagaries of Fortune, the goddess who "spurns down her late beloved" (1.1.87) who is abandoned by all "not one accompanying his declining foot" (1.1.90). The cynical Apemantus had also guessed the outcome. He says in 1.2.141: "Men shut their doors against the setting sun". The Fool in *Lear* had given the same advice to Kent: to abandon those from whom one can no longer profit.

> That sir which serves and seeks for gain,
> And follows but for form,
> Will pack when it begins to rain,
> And leave thee in the storm. (2.2.267-70)

Servants are however sent to Timon's friends to request money to pay off his debts. In three short consecutive scenes Shakespeare deals very economically with the friends' refusal of help. Different reasons are advanced: the first states that "this is no time to lend money, especially upon bare friendship, without security" (3.1.41-43). Indeed the mere word of a borrower promising to repay was no longer sufficient, stronger guarantees were required. The anonymous author of *Usurie Arraigned and Condemned*, a harsh critic of the practice, states this clearly:

> When a friend lendeth in love hee will foresee that it be to good purposes, giving with that kindnesse his best counsel. But doth not Usurie looke onely after her owne security [...] to the overthrowe of Debtors. (B1v-B2r)

The second declares that he has no ready cash available, and the third hypocritically takes umbrage because Timon did not come to him first.

Timon's doors had always been open to welcome and offer hospitality to his friends. Openness is indeed the very basis of friendship. Francis Bacon in his essay "On Friendship" writes:

> We know that diseases of stoppings and suffocations are most
> dangerous in the body; and it is not otherwise in the mind: you may
> take sarza to open the liver, steel to open the spleen, flower of sulphur
> for the lungs, castoreum for the brain; but no receipt openeth the
> heart, but a true friend, to whom you may impart griefs, joys, fears,
> hopes, suspicions, counsels, and whatsoever lieth upon the heart to
> oppress it, in a kind of civil shrift or confession. (68)

Any attempt to impede the exchange of mutual benefits between
sworn brothers would be harmful. The liberality of a friend is opposed
to the avarice of the professional money-lender. Where the one opens
his heart, his hand and his purse, the other is tight-fisted and money-
grubbing. Where the one gives generously, the other accumulates and
hoards. In the comedies of the Elizabethan period, the usurer often bears
a significant name like Greedy, Lucre, Hoord, Algripe or Avarice which
clearly reveals his vice. François Laroque points out in *Shakespeare's
Festive World* that the name Shy-*lock* betrays the character's desire
to keep all his possessions under lock and key (257). Before leaving
to dine with Antonio, he recommends his daughter to shut, lock and
make secure the doors and windows of his house: "Lock up my doors,
[...] Stop my house's ears [...] do as I bid, shut doors after you, / Fast
bind, fast find, - / A proverb never stale in thrifty mind" (2.5.29-54).
The watchword of the miser: "Fast bind, fast find" runs counter to the
principles of Antonio whose generosity is boundless:

> My purse, my person, my extremest means
> Lie all unlocked to your occasions. (1.1.138)

But the open doors in Timon's house, allowing free passage to all,
are now locked and bolted to keep his creditors out:

> Doors that were ne'er acquainted with their wards
> Many a bounteous year, must be employ'd
> Now to guard sure their master.
> And this is all a liberal course allows:
> Who cannot keep his wealth must keep his house. (3.3.39-43)

The open door had mirrored Timon's open-handed generosity, the
locked one suggests the fastened purse and the closed hand which
contain nothing after all has been given away.

Following the rejection of assistance, Timon once more invites all
the sycophants, parasites and general hangers-on to a final banquet
to which they all flock. The symbolic significance of the shared meal

is subverted. The finest wines are converted into warm water, thus reversing Christ's miracle at the wedding at Cana recounted in the gospels (John 2), and the richest metal, gold, is transformed into the meanest mineral, stone. After cursing his friends, he showers them with water and pelts them with stones. With the knowledge that he possesses at this point in the play he can look back to the first banquet and see that he was sharing his meat with those who would betray him. Apemantus had seen this: "the fellow that sits next him, now parts bread with him, pledges the breath of him in a divided draught, is the readiest man to kill him" (1.2.46-49). Christ's words to his disciples at the Last Supper come to mind:

> And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.
> And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began everyone of them to say unto him, "Lord, is it I?"
> And he answered and said, "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me". (Matthew 26: 21-23)

The proportions are however reversed: Christ, out of twelve disciples was betrayed by one, Timon by all but one.

Apemantus had also perceived that at the first banquet Timon was not eating, but was being eaten: "What a number of men eats Timon, and he sees 'em not! It grieves me to see so many dip their meat in one man's blood;" (1.2.39-41). His so-called friends are consuming not only Timon's material substance, but also his bodily substance, his flesh and blood, as if they were beasts of prey. The usurer was often referred to in such terms. The money lender was the vulture, the cormorant or the wolf: "the greedy and savadge beast,/ Who in cruelty rageth day and night" (Wappul 61). Francis Bacon had referred to the "tooth" of usury in his essay on the subject: "the tooth of usury [should] be grinded, that it bite not too much" (108). And as Timon's creditors clamour for their money, he cries out:

> Cut my heart in sums.
> [...]
> Tell out my blood.
> [...]
> Five thousand drops pays that (debt)
> [...]
> Tear me, take me... (3.4.91-98)

Timon thus gives himself as a sacrificial victim on which his gathered friends can feed, rather like Christ offering his body and his blood to his disciples at the Last Supper. Reference could be made to the well-known emblem which featured in many of the sixteenth and seventeenth century collections of emblems, depicting the pelican offering its own breast and blood to feed its offspring. This was an emblem of sacrifice, which often showed the crucifixion in the pictorial part of the emblem. The accompanying text made the allusion to Christ explicit. George Wither writes:

Looke here, and marke (her sickly birds to feed)

> How freely this kinde Pelican doth bleed.
> See, how (when other Salves could not be found)
> To cure their sorrowes, she, herselfe doth wound;
> And when this holy Emblem, thou shalt see,
> Lift up thy soule to him, who dy'd for thee. (Book 3, illustration 20)

This emblem also came to signify ingratitude.

Timon had dreamed of a community based on love, a kind of golden-age community in which men kept faith. But he had made this impossible by his own conduct. A community is based on exchange and reciprocity; it is made up of people who have mutual dealings and interact with each other. With Timon, relations had been entirely one-sided. He had given, and given to excess, and refused return, thus making communication impossible. The flow, and images of flowing abound in the play, had been exclusively in one direction. Because of his inability to accept reciprocal relations with his fellow man, exclusion from the city would appear to be his destiny, rather than the result of a choice on his part. Such a community as the one he had dreamt of does exist in the play, among his servants. As the household is disbanded, Timon's steward addresses the other servants in the following way:

> Good fellows all,
> The latest of my wealth I'll share amongst you.
> Wherever we shall meet, for Timon's sake
> Let's yet be fellows. Let's shake our heads, and say,
> As 'twere a knell unto our master's fortunes,
> 'We have seen better days'. Let each take some; (4.2.22-27)

The pronoun "we" and the reference to his "fellows" with whom he will "share" what little he has, bear witness to the fact that a community existed among Timon's retainers.

Like Coriolanus and Lear who turn their backs on the city or the court, Timon leaves Athens for the forest. As Jacques Lacan writes in the seventh book of his *Séminaire*, "Qui s'avance dans cette zone […] s'y avancera seul et trahi" (353). Indeed, Timon who has been betrayed ("trahi") by those whom he thought were his friends, leaves alone ("seul") and lives alone beyond the city walls. Solitude is not a natural state for man. Man is a social being, not meant to live in isolation. Francis Bacon at the beginning of his essay "On Friendship" writes: "Whosoever is delighted in solitude is either a wild beast or a god" (68). Timon has proved to be both: Plutus, the god of gold in the first half of the play, and a beast living in a cave in the second. As he leaves Athens, he flings at the city walls a curse which takes the form of a prayer to the unlistening gods, in which he hopes that all the bonds which link men together and order life in society may be broken (4.1.1-41). As Ulysses had said in *Troilus and Cressida*:

> Take but degree away, untune that string,
> And hark what discord follows. (1.3.109-110)

This is what Timon wishes upon Athens: discord and disorder through the breaking of bonds:

> Degrees, observances, customs and laws,
> Decline to your confounding contraries;
> And yet confusion live! (4.1.19-21)

He wishes that wife should no longer be faithful to husband, nor friend to friend, nor neighbour to neighbour. He desires that children should no longer obey their parents, nor servants their masters. He longs for slaves to govern the city in the place of venerable senators and for men's throats to be cut by those whom they had trusted. He hopes that the walls of the city will crumble and fall and that the confusion and savagery which are traditionally associated with the forest beyond the confines of civilisation will overrun Athens. Timon wishes that the city might rot, struck down by infection and sin. His imprecation is expressed in verse rendering it all the more solemn, and the three rhyming couplets which bring the speech to an end transform the curse into a prophesy which will become reality as Apemantus states later in the play: "the commonwealth of Athens is become a forest of beasts" (4.3.350). Instead of the Golden Age which Timon had dreamt of, the Iron Age has been established. The terms used by Timon recall Ovid's description of the fourth age of man in *Metamorphoses*:

> Brothers
> Who ought to love each other
> Prefer to loathe. The husband longs
> To bury his wife and she him.
> Stepmothers, for the sake of their stepsons,
> Study poisons. And sons grieve
> Over their father's obdurate good health. (Hughes 12)

But what makes George Steiner describe the play as "black on black" (194) is the disintegration of language which is the fundamental link between men. Timon's so-called friends are referred to as "mouth friends" (3.6.85), flatterers who use words dissociated from meaning in order to serve their own interests. The truth and substance behind the word has disappeared, "men are turned only into tongue, and trim ones too" (*Much Ado* 4.1.319-320). The notion of man's word as a bond which enjoins him to a certain course of action has ceased to exist. Promise has become divorced from performance: "To promise is most courtly and fashionable; performance is a kind of will or testament which argues a great sickness in his judgement that makes it" (*Timon*, 5.1.26-29). If words are no longer connected to meaning and truth, if they no longer prefigure fulfilment, then relations within the community collapse.

In the second half of the play, Timon uses language excessively, his rhetoric is abundant, but his words are not directed at anyone. They are hurled into the air, like those of Lear or Caliban, and receive no echo. While in the forest, Timon is visited by several characters who are, for the most part, attracted by the gold which he has discovered in the depths of his cave. Amongst his visitors is Apemantus, and their meeting, some two hundred lines long, takes place in 4.3. Exchange between them has become impossible. Language has become sterile, improductive of communication. Timon and Apemantus taunt and gibe at one another, casting insults back and forth: caitiff, knave, fool, beast, rogue, dog and toad. Words have become weapons which blister and burn the very root of the tongue (5.1.131-132) and serve to separate men rather than bind them together. Coriolanus uses language in the same brutal fashion. He speaks *at* others rather than *to* them. He spits out words expecting, and indeed receiving, no response. The logical conclusion therefore is that words should disappear. The play does not end with the death of Timon. He leaves the stage at the end of 5.1, but the play only reaches its conclusion in 5.4. Before leaving the

stage for the last time, he pronounces the end of language, "Lips, let four words go by and language end:" (5.1.219). As language no longer signifies communion between men, there is no reason for its continuing existence. And the few words which he will inscribe upon his epitaph will be washed away by the tide:

> But say to Athens,
> Timon hath made his everlasting mansion
> Upon the beached verge of the salt flood,
> Who once a day with his embossed froth
> The turbulent surge shall cover. Thither come,
> And let my grave stone be your oracle. (5.1.213-218)

For George Steiner, this is the only play in which a desire for the end of language is enunciated (194). It might seem paradoxical that Shakespeare, who had an incomparable mastery over the written and spoken word, should toll the knell of language in this way in *Timon of Athens*. But when this bond, which holds mankind together, is broken, then tragedy becomes absolute. By abolishing language, the human itself is abolished.

Alcibiades' final words in the play concern language. He is persuaded not to destroy Athens for the ingratitude shown both to himself and to Timon and tells the Senators high upon Athens' walls facing his beseiging army, "Descend and keep your words" (5.4.64). In similar fashion, Edgar, one of the few survivors at the end of *King Lear*, this bleakest of bleak plays, refers to language: "The weight of this sad time we must obey,/ Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say" (5.3.322-323). Both thus express a desire to inject substance back into words and thereby reestablish a sense of fellowship between men.

"The middle of humanity thou never knewest, but the extremity of both ends" (4.3.301-302), these are Apemantus' words to Timon who has indeed passed from boundless love to extremist hate, cutting himself off from the rest of humanity. At the play's conclusion, Alcibiades attempts to restore a semblance of order in Athens, calling upon each one to act for the other's good:

> Bring me into your city,
> And I will use the olive with my sword,
> Make war breed peace, make peace stint war, make each
> Prescribe to other, as each other's leech.
> Let our drums strike. (5.4.81-85)

The image is a medical one—of two physicians prescribing for each other's health and well-being. The rot and corruption of diseased Athens may thus be healed and community re-established. However the spectator may react here as he reacts at the end of *Hamlet* when another warrior, Fortinbras, takes over the reins of power in Denmark. One feels that the solution is far from ideal. What Peter Hall said during rehearsals while directing *Hamlet* for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1965 could be applied to Athens under Alcibiades: "I don't know about you, but I would not particularly like to live in Denmark under Fortinbras" (Davison 65).

NOTES

[1] In 1571, in the reign of Elizabeth I, the interest rate was established by law at 10%. In 1624, in the reign of her successor, James I, the rate of interest on a loan was lowered to 8%.

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SHAKESPEARE, THE SECRET SERVICE AND SPAIN

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Abstract

For many years, traditional portraits of Shakespeare have depicted him as a full time actor and playwright who succeeded both artistically and financially in London from the late sixteenth century to the early years of the seventeenth century. These views also encouraged the opinion that the Bard from Stratford was a unique talent raised from home grown literary traditions, with perhaps a small debt towards Renaissance Italy and Classical Drama (Hodek viii-ix).[1] It is also believed that, out of all the English playwrights of his time, Shakespeare perhaps borrowed the least from foreign literature (Hume, *Spanish Influence* 266).[2] And, curiously enough for a poet so closely connected to the Court, as for the various groups of translators who belonged to English cultural life, Shakespeare was never thought to be associated with any of them (Underhill 363). If anyone ever suggested the possibility that some of Shakespeare's plays were inspired by Spanish drama of the XVI and XVII centuries (Klein, vol. 10: 347-348), this was promptly rebuffed by critics who branded the idea as fanciful, or even negligible (Underhill 363-364; cf. Schevill 628; cf. Fitzmaurice-Kelly 21). Nor was it considered possible that he would have made use of Spanish books to build his plots. These assertions, expressed by some of the most prominent men of letters of the XIX century, have been taken at face value by the world of Anglo-Saxon literary criticism, and to this day they have not been been sufficiently revised. It is the purpose of this paper to provide a general view on this matter and focus on Shakespeare's life and work in connection with Spain.

Keywords: Catholicism, English Court, Spain, Spanish literature, secret service, Shakespeare, Spanish theatre, tragicomedy.

Resumen

Durante mucho tiempo se ha considerado a Shakespeare como un genio literario único, cuya obra fue el resultado de mezclar la tradición literaria inglesa con algunas aportaciones del mundo clásico y de la Italia del Renacimiento. A lo largo de los años, la literatura española no ha sido considerada como un posible modelo para la obra del poeta y dramaturgo, tanto a nivel general como a nivel particular en lo que se refiere a determinadas obras de índole dramática, religiosa o narrativa. En este artículo se estudia la vinculación de Shakespeare con una corte inglesa en la que se estaba muy al tanto de la cultura española de la época, y dentro de la cual operaba un servicio secreto integrado por nombres muy conocidos, a quienes movía la determinación de frenar la creciente influencia política y religiosa de España en la Inglaterra de entonces. El escritor de Stratford-upon-Avon tuvo relación directa con todos ellos. Una vez establecido el panorama político y cultural de aquel tiempo, el artículo menciona todos aquellos casos de probable presencia española en la literatura de Shakespeare que la crítica ha recabado a lo largo de los años. Para finalizar, en la bibliografía se hace una extensa lista de publicaciones relevantes con respecto al tema que nos ocupa.

Palabras clave: Catolicismo, corte inglesa, España, literatura española, servicio secreto, Shakespeare, teatro español, tragicomedia.

1. Shakespeare's biography

To begin with, I should like to go over Shakespeare's official biography. Roughly speaking, it is as follows: William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564. He was a son of John Shakespeare, a successful businessman and a prominent member of the community, and Mary Arden. He was educated in his home town, and attended Grammar School. In 1582 he married Anne Hathaway, who remained his lifelong wife and gave him three children. But the fortunes of the Shakespeare family went from bad to worse following the bankruptcy of John Shakespeare. However, things were to change very soon. On the occasion of a visit of the company The Queen's Men, who performed a play in Stratford, their chief actor Richard Knell died, and William was offered a permanent position as an actor following an

excellent performance substituting the deceased artist. He spent his first years in London in the James Burbage theatre; since acting alone was not enough to cover his basic expenses, he also worked keeping the horses of the members of the playhouses audiences. His grace, wit and good manners caught the attention of important noblemen, such as the Earl of Southampton, and they helped him become a professional actor. From 1592 onwards, he tried his hand at poetry and drama, and started to be popular. He became so successful that his talent earned him a reputation and enough money to become wealthy. Thanks to this, he became one of the shareholders at The Globe theatre in Southwark. In 1603 came his finest hour: his company received the honour of being called The King's Men by James I himself. However, a terrible fire broke out in 1613, and although it was reopened the following year, in 1614 he retired to Stratford, where he died of a fever in his house, possibly caused by food poisoning. Many biographies about him depict him as a good-natured, witty, kind and generous man, who had no enemies and who was liked by almost everyone in and outside his trade. Moreover, he epitomizes the ascent in life of the family orientated and self-made man, which is so revered in the English speaking world, especially in the United States of America.

This is, more or less, the official version about the life of Shakespeare. There is a tendency to idealize all things concerning the Elizabethan era in England (Venuti 55-98), and, without a doubt, this tendency also includes Shakespeare, who is considered to be patron saint of English letters (Sinfield 134-157; *cf.* Philips & Keatman 6), accompanied by Chaucer and Milton in the Holy Trinity of English Literature.

However, Philips & Keatman propose a different view for the biography of the Bard. For a start, there is no written evidence of Shakespeare's attendance at Grammar School. Moreover, Shakespeare did not marry the woman he had intended to, because Anne Hathaway was not the lady who was registered in the Church for the original ceremony. This was going to be a certain Anne Whately, who was to wed Shakespeare on the 27th of November of 1582. The reason for the change of bride may have been the pregnancy of Anne Hathaway at the hands of the later poet, which would have prompted him to take the mother of his future child as his legitimate wife on the following day, thus abandoning the idea of marrying the lady of his choice. English critics have suscribed *en masse* the theory that the cleric of Stratford had made

yet one more of his accustomed slips in his copying: but the difference between Anne Whateley of Temple Grafton and Anne Hathaway of Stratford appears to me as a slip too many to be a mere mistake. The fact that there are no records of the life of Anne Whateley does not mean that she did not exist. Perhaps, Shakespeare's resentment about this episode would haunt him all through his life, and this is possibly why, in his will, he left his wife his second best bed, as a kind of cruel joke. Anne Hathaway was left behind when he went to London, and from then on, Shakespeare only visited her during intermittent visits to Stratford (Philips & Keatman 11-12, 24). There doesn't appear to have been much communication between them (Hodek ix).[3]

There is no evidence of his acting as a substitute for the aforementioned Richard Knell, nor of his elopement from the family home with a troupe of actors, working for them as a valet in charge of the attendants' horses. Instead, there is a strong possibility that he had to go to London as a result of John Shakespeare's debts, for the latter was very possibly a Catholic and a recusant, and as a consequence, he would have been subject to pay heavy fines to the English Crown (Halliday 31-32). The technical bankruptcy of his family forced William to seek his fortune in the Court, where he was possibly employed by Richard Field (Philips & Keatman 130-131).[4] Richard Field, a friend of Shakespeare's, was from Stratford, and he had just married a rich French widow, whose husband had left her a prosperous printing business, which Field took over after his marriage to become the most important humanist editor of England at the time (Ungerer 186). Therefore, Shakespeare must have been exposed to a good number of literary works from all over Europe, which would include Spanish books. Maybe Shakespeare entered the world of literature through printing, with a view to commercial success, thus having acquired enough literary and philosophical foundations to develop his later art. There is no evidence of Shakespeare working for Field, even though Field's name appears to have been inserted by Shakespeare in *Cymbeline*, as Imogen's master, called Richard Du Champ (IV, ii, 380) (Shapiro 150). But then there are very few written records about him elsewhere. The first mention of his presence is a reference to an arrogant "upstart crow" that the poet Robert Greene is supposed to have uttered concerning Shakespeare (Philips & Keatman 24-25). If this is the case, we can already infer that there was, at least, one person who did not like Shakespeare too much at the time.

Other obscure aspects highlighted by Keatman & Philips point to his involvement with Sir Walter Raleigh and his School of Night and the strange circumstances which sorrounded his own death in Stratford; I would rather leave these matters to the biographers who specialise in the playwright's life (Philips & Keatman 101-112, 194-196).

There is a very interesting theory in Keatman and Philips' book: the possibility that Shakespeare worked as a spy on the payroll of Francis and Thomas Walsingham and Lord Burghley (158-173). He had got involved somehow with Philip Marlowe, a notorious spy (77-89), and with whom he probably had an exchange of literary ideas (Park 186-196). Playwrights and actors were very useful as spies. They knew languages and could act. From this time, there is also evidence of a process against Shakespeare on the grounds of breaking the sureties of peace. The claimant is a certain William Wayte, a London citizen who declared that the poet had threatened to kill him (Hodek viii). Curiously enough, William Wayte is one of the men who appear to be on the payroll of William Cecil and the Walsinghams, the most prominent spymasters of the time (Philips & Keatman 159). Perhaps, William Shakespeare may have not been the quiet, peaceful man we have been led to believe. To be sure, there is no evidence of his name being in the records of the English Secret Service. But it is very strange that a simple poet and playwright could buy shares and get rich in London at the time, for it was the big businessmen like James Burbage and Philip Henslowe who got the profits from the theatre. To partake of the riches produced by the stage, one would have to produce enough money to buy shares of a given company. If this was so easy, why did so many playwrights die in poverty? On the other hand, the fees commanded by spies at that time were huge; surely, a man could become confident about his economic stability after a few years service within that environment. This could explain Shakespeare's successful career as a theatre enterpriser, and as a proficient purchaser of grain and land in Stratford, where he managed to clear his family's debts, and where he was most active in deals involving money lending practices, grain trade and the enclosure of lands (Hodek x), the latter practice having been so heavily criticised by many of the commoners of the time (Lipson vol. 1: 88-135). Shakespeare's possible activities as a spy may also justify the authorship of his sonnets. Spies at that time used to adopt an *alias* which comprised their first Christian name followed by the surname of

an illustrious family closely related to the agent through family links or very close friendship. For example, Anthony Munday, a notorious spy, was paid under the *alias* of George Grimes, since his godfather was called Matthew Grimes. William Shakespeare may have used the alias William Hall, as a tribute to the Hall family from Stratford, and one of whose members, the physician sir John Hall, married the poet's daughter Susanna (Philips & Keatman 159-160). Thus, we may have come across the solution to the question posed by the signature W. H. attached to Shakespeare's sonnets. When we examine the commendatory verses of the edition of these poems, we may see: "To the begetter of these verses / Mr. W. H., all happinesse…". If we join the H of W. H., and add the "all" of the next word, the final result is W. Hall. And there is evidence of important payments made by the Prime Minister's secretaries to a certain William Hall (Philips & Keatman 158-173). Whether this W. Hall is William Shakespeare himself remains to be seen; but we should not forget that most of his accepted biography is still shrouded in mystery. In any case, it is very possible that Shakespeare was in contact with Sir Philip Sidney, another prominent poet, patron and nobleman who was close to the Secret Service, since he may have introduced Christopher Marlowe to the spying underworld (Philips & Keatman 137). Secret Services are usually designed to take a close look at the enemy to understand how that foe operates and become aware of its ways and thought. The first task of a spymaster is to get as much information as possible about the enemy, its ideas, and its bulk of literary, religious and philosophical work. This is how the Secret Service was born at the instance of Lord Burghley and Francis Walsingham to fight whatever threats the emergent English state may have suffered from abroad. And the main foe for England at the time was, undoubtedly, Spain. This Secret Service established spying missions in Madrid (Ungerer 179-180), and encouraged a number of translations to spread knowledge of Spanish culture and thought (Underhill 246-289), and also prompted the writing of pamphlets against Spain (Ungerer 180). It is in this perspective that we have to understand the seizure of 15.000 volumes during Drake's raid in Cádiz in 1589 (Ungerer 197), and that Lord Burghley, the Prime Minister under Elizabeth I, was suspicious of conformity with the Catholic Church due to the amount of books written by Spanish Catholics and by inquisitors which were stored in his house Apart from Lord Burghley's personal interest in Spanish literature, to

the point of having taken the pains to translate the *Proverbs* by the Marqués de Santillana (Ungerer 228), those volumes must have been there to ensure that they had passed the censure of the Prime Minister himself; I would not be surprised if the English spies and translators were looking for ciphered messages inside Spanish books to encourage Catholic rebellion in England, given the animosity that presided over the relations between Protestant England and Catholic Spain at that time, as Hume proves in his work *Treason and Plot: Struggles for Catholic Supremacy in the Last Years of Queen Elizabeth* (1901). Friend or foe; enemy or ally, the fact is that Spain was a leading power at that time in the world. And that is why the Court was trying to arouse interest in Spain at that time (Underhill 208, 255).

Whether Shakespeare was a spy or not, he was living very close to the Court; therefore, it is difficult to imagine him as someone who was completely oblivious to all this political and intellectual activity concerning Spain.

2. The Court and Spain

Taking all these things into consideration, I would like to examine now the previous assertion by Underhill that Shakespeare had nothing to do with the translators from the court. Ungerer states that the Court tried at all times to arouse interest in Spanish Culture (208). It so happens that Philip Sidney, whose godfather was the very Philip II of Spain, translated two songs from *La Diana* by the Spanish poet Jorge de Montemayor, and that he was the patron of translators at the Court (238, 262; *cf.* Fitzmaurice-Kelly 13). Sidney may have been one of the first people to appreciate the poet's ability His own work may have influenced Shakespeare's early sonnets and his play *Romeo and Juliet* (Philips & Keatman 132). Sidney's sister, Mary Sidney (1561-1621), married Henry Herbert (1538?-1601), the second Earl of Pembroke. The Countess of Pembroke is thought to have been one of the most prominent figures of her time, especially in what concerns the propagation of Spanish culture (Underhill 241-277). And the Pembrokes were, to be sure, direct patrons of Shakespeare; hence the dedication of his first *Folio of Comedies, Histories and Tragedies* (published in 1623, after the poet's death) to their sons William and Philip.[5] But Underhill does not consider at any time the possibility that Shakespeare was close to that

circle in one way or another. And, strikingly, he does not acknowledge the fact that Shakespeare was linked to the Herbert family.

So we can safely say that Shakespeare knew Philip Sidney and Mary Pembroke. Let us now pay attention to yet another prominent man of letters of the time, Anthony Munday, who was a spy operating under the instructions of Walsingham (Philips & Keatman 148-149). He was associated to the group of translators operating under the guidelines of the Secret Service (Underhill 246), and he excelled in translating the *Palmerines*, a Spanish series of chivalric romances, including the titles *Palmerín de Oliva*, *Primaleón*, and *Palmerín de Inglaterra*.[6] Munday was also an active pamphleteer against the Spanish and their Catholicism (Underhill 270), and Shakespeare had already worked with him in *Sir Thomas More* in the early 1590's (Philips & Keatman 149). If we are to acknowledge Shakespeare's involvement with the Secret Service and with the Court, then we can surely add the name of Anthony Munday to the list of people who were acquainted with the playwright and who were involved with Spanish culture.

Nor does this association with translators and men close to Spanish culture end here. Leonard Digges, a close friend of Shakespeare in Stratford, owned a copy of the *Arte de Hacer Comedias*, the treaty in which the Spanish poet and playwright Lope de Vega (1562-1635) exposed the aesthetically innovative ideas which were to shape the stage in Golden Age Spain (Morgan 118-120; *cf.* Muir 239). Digges was almost certainly a spy in the house of sir John Digby, English Ambassador in Spain at the time. He could well have obtained the copy of Lope's work either in the course of one of his trips to Spain, or through the efforts of some of his diplomatic acquaintances.

We should now turn our attention to another hispanophile, James Mabbe, who in 1631 would become the first official translator of a full text from the Spanish book *La Celestina* (p. 1499), which, despite Underhill's dismissive remarks (65-66), was very popular in England in the 16th century (Hume, *Spanish Influence* 126). He was a friend of Digges, stayed in Madrid, very probably as a spy (1611-14), and possibly knew Shakespeare (Russell 75-84). Mabbe is yet another person who was close to the high circles of the Court, and who was involved in translating Spanish literary works. Moreover, he must have known Shakespeare personally.

As we can see, the involvement of English playwrights of the time with Spanish drama did not start, as Loftis states, after Prince Charles and Buckingham's trip to Madrid in 1623 (Loftis, *Renaissance Drama* 111-154, 238), since prominent figures in the world of English culture, such as Philip Sidney, Munday, Digges, Mabbe, Mary Sydney and very possibly Richard Field, were involved with Spanish literature, as well as with Shakespeare himself. As a result, we can safely conclude that Underhill's claim that Shakespeare was not associated to any of the groups of translators in Court can be questioned, if not dismissed.

3. Spanish literature and Shakespeare

> [...] to believe that the literature of Spain was widely read in the England of Elizabeth and James I is to labour under a double misapprehension [...] this statement is not inconsistent with the fact that directly or indirectly the influence of Spanish literature upon that of England has been very great. (Schevill 605)

Despite this assertion, which summarizes the traditional view on the matter, there are enough testimonies willing to prove otherwise. According to Underhill, the presence of Spanish literature from the early and late Renaissance was important through translations, thanks to the group of translators which operated at the Court (238-263). Some critics have used this idea to question the Spanish influence on Elizabethan England, but modern academics have overcome this attitude by stating that translations are still a direct reference to the original Spanish works (Erickson 102-103). For traditional critics, Spanish borrowings came mainly through plots (Schevill 127). And, as it has already been stated by them, Shakespeare was the author who borrowed the least from Spanish literature at that time (Hume, *Spanish Influence* 266-267).

As I have already mentioned before, James Mabbe translated *Celestina* into English in 1631. The awareness about that book had already been started by Luis Vives, the Spanish humanist who had been invited by Henry VIII in the 1520's to teach at Oxford and deliver talks at the court, at the instance of Erasmus (Hume, *Spanish Influence* 126). Vives became well known in England at that time, and his thought may have had an influence on Shakespeare (Watson 297-306). In his lectures, he spoke strongly against a Spanish book: *La Celestina*. Despite the attacks of the Spanish humanist against the book, it quickly became

popular in England (Fitzmaurice-Kelly 10-12). Martínez Lacalle believes that Mabbe's choice for his translation was not casual, and it implies a definite recognition of the value of Spanish literature at the time: "Mabbe's choice of works for translation indicates a serious awareness of the value of Spanish Literature" (90). In any case, it is accepted to this day that some of the roguish characters who appear in the play become the starting point for the genre of the Picaresque Novel in Spain, which would have a wide influence on English literature of the late 16th and early 17th centuries (Hume, *Spanish Influence* 157-158). The treatment of Falstaff is very similar to the rogue Centurio in the Spanish work; both characters evolve from the classical stereotype of the *miles gloriosus* (Rotschild 14-21).

As for the implications of Morgan's suggestion that Digges was in possession of a copy of Lope's *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias*, let us focus on a controversial issue that has confronted hispanophiles against the most traditional and conservative faction of ardent Shakespearian critics throughout many years. In the late 19th century, a German scholar named Klein, who focused on European drama, claimed for the first time, that a play by Lope, *Castelvines y Monteses*, was the source of *Romeo and Juliet* (Klein, vol. 10: 347-348). Despite the suggestion by Coleridge in the 19th century, according to which Spanish and English drama at that time presented several intimate similarities (Shedd, vol. 4: 204-209), the idea that Lope may have had any part to play in the making of the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama in England has been abruptly dismissed by traditional critics, sometimes even on the grounds that Spanish drama at that time was deficient (Frey 39). The refusal of these critics to admit any connection between Lope's play and *Romeo and Juliet* left Klein an embittered man to the end of his days. However, Villarejo claims that there was substantial ground for the claim of the German critic ("Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*" 95-104).

Fitzmaurice-Kelly stated that, in pointing out the similarities between the national dramas of Spain and England in Elizabethan and Jacobean times, Samuel T. Coleridge was confirming in this way the ideas of Schlegel (20). This idea has been supported in modern times by Loftis (1973), McCready (5-18) and Cohen (1985), thus contributing to overcome the vision of the most traditional critics, as it is the case of Fitzmaurice-Kelly (123-125) and Schevill (625-630). In this respect, it is important to take a wider look and examine the evolution of European

drama in the late 16th and early 17th century. If the reformation of the European stage involved a new dramatic genre which would later become the biggest innovation of drama in Europe at the time, this was certainly tragicomedy. Robortello was one of the theoricists who had already set the precepts for the new genre in Italy. The Italian critic had become the model for Lope's new dramatic pattern. However, in *Tragicomedy: its Origins and Development in Italy, France and England* (1955), M.T. Herrick regarded Spanish tragicomedy completely outside the scope of European tragicomedy, as though the genre in Madrid was some kind of second class invention which could not possibly be a part of the mainstream European drama in the same way as Italy, France and England. In doing so, he was confirming Waith's idea that it was several notions which were already in classical Greece and Rome, and not Guarini's ideas (another Italian theorist), let alone the Spanish stage, what ultimately prompted the modern notion of tragicomedy in Beaumont & Fletcher, the first true pioneers of the genre in England (Waith 46). The overcoming of the dichotomy between tragedy and comedy by adopting the new tragicomical genre is what marked the birth of the modern drama in 16th and 17th century Europe. Whatever the inspiration for the new tragicomical pattern in Europe, the concept was immediately adopted by dramatists in both Spain and England. Spain had already been producing tragicomedy since the last third of the sixteenth century onwards, whereas for Waith, the first clear example of tragicomedy in Beaumont & Fletcher in England was *A King and no King* (1611) (Waith 2-3). Despite the assertions by Herrick and Frey, Lope was a very respected playwright in his time, both in and outside Spain. Sir Aston Cockain wrote a few commendatory letters to Philip Massinger (1583-1639) on the event of the latter publishing his play *The Emperor of the East* (1633) which implied the prestige of the writer and of the Spanish language (Romero Cambra 310). Lope, in fact was known worldwide at that time, whereas Shakespeare had only but started to make his name in the London court (Villarejo, "Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*" 95). Moreover, Nicoll had already pointed out the similarities between the English stage at the time of John Fletcher and the Spanish plays, especially those by Lope de Vega (119-120); and more recently, Kenneth Muir has suggested certain parallelisms between the drama of both playwrights Lope & Shakespeare (239-254). Despite all this, Loftis insists that it was the trip taken by Charles and

Buckingham to Madrid in 1623 which marks the official date for the direct influence of Spanish drama in England (238). But other people are not so sure of that fact. Erickson dismisses the view that Spanish drama could not be influential simply because it was mainly used through French and Italian translations (102-119). McCready firmly believes that Spanish drama of that age produced important models for the rest of Europe (5-18), and Cohen questions Herrick's view that Spanish tragicomedy has to be outside the European tradition, for in saying so he is overlooking the most important corpus of tragicomedy in Europe at the time (Cohen, "The Politics of Golden Age Spanish Tragicomedy" 158). In this way, a new scope for the treatment of the Spanish literature in connection with other European literatures of the period has been opened. English and Spanish dramas were experimenting an organically similar development, stemming from a mixture of native and classical roots; it is the nature of their society which would ultimately mark their different evolution.

So, in general terms Shakespeare's drama cannot have been so alienated from Spanish literature and drama as traditional critics have suggested. Despite the reluctance of the traditional critics to acknowledge this strong possibility concerning Spanish literature, García García believes that it should not be discarded, even with regard to those Spanish works which had not been translated into English in Elizabethan times (115-116).

In poetry, the only evidence I have come across is the presence of the *Historia de Felismena*, which is inserted in Jorge de Montemayor's *Diana*, which could well be a reference for *The two Gentlemen of Verona* (Fitzmaurice-Kelly 17); this possibility is hardly surprising if we admit the relationship between Sidney and Shakespeare

With regard to Spanish prose and its possible influence on Shakespeare's work, Hume proposes don Juan Manuel's *El Conde Lucanor*, as a possible source for *The Taming of the Shrew* (*Spanish Influence* 266-267)*, even though Fitzmaurice-Kelly denies this last possibility (20). Hume also remarks some idiomatic expressions in Spanish used by the Bard (267), and Underhill proposes a Spanish source for the character of don Armado in *Love's Labour Lost* (363). This adds yet to an already interesting list of possible connections between Spanish prose fiction and Shakespeare. Let us remember

these possible sources: Pedro de Mexía and his *Silva de varia lección* could become a literary model for Thomas Fortescue, who may have passed certain aspects of the book to Philip Marlowe and his *Tambourlaine* (Fitzmaurice-Kelly 21); I have already mentioned the collaboration between Marlowe and Shakespeare. Moreover, a book by Antonio de Eslava may have been the source for Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, which was printed in Antwerp in 1610, and the Bard may have made use of another Spanish source in a play written alongside Fletcher entitled *The History of Cardenio* (Fitzmaurice-Kelly 21). It has to be said that John Fletcher frequently used Spanish material for his plays (Schelling, vol. 2: 214-216), and this influence can be probably traced in Shakespeare. According to McCready, *Cymbeline*, derives from *Eufemia*, a story which was written by Lope de Rueda, a popular Spanish playwright in the XVI century. The tale was edited by Juan Timoneda in his *Patrañuelo* in 1567, forty years before the publication of Shakespeare's play (McCready 7).[7]

In respect to Spanish plays and their relationship to Shakespeare's work, for Villarejo and Duque, Lope de Vega's plays *Castelvines y Monteses*, *La desdichada Estefanía* and *La española de Florencia* could have had a direct impact on *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello* and *Twelfth Night*, respectively. In the case of Lope's *Castelvines y Monteses* and their presence in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Duque thus confirms Klein's and Villarejo's view on this matter (Klein, vol. 10: 347-348). Hume, on the other hand, regards *Castelvines y Monteses* as a rather direct model for *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (*Spanish Influence* 266). He even comes close to suggesting that Fernando de Rojas' *La Celestina* is a possible source for *Romeo and Juliet*, but, true to the spirit of his age, he finally favours Italian models ahead of the Spanish play (126). It is, however, Fitzmaurice-Kelly who establishes a more or less direct basis for the relationship between both plays, describing in the former "the poignant pathos and impassioned exaltation which we meet later in *Romeo and Juliet*" (9). And this critic goes even further by suggesting that there might be some relationship between Lope de Vega's *Los engañados* and Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (20).

These proposals have yet to be complemented with the religious element contained in Shakespeare's works, and which may have been drawn from Spanish material, as we will see in the following epigraph.

4. The religious question

Some critics have argued that Shakespeare's religious allegiance could have been Catholic. Milford is convinced that Shakespeare died a Papist (vol. 2: 53). Let us remember John Shakespeare's troubles due to his being a Catholic and a recusant. There is, to be sure, not enough evidence to state this. In a period of religious confusion and political mayhem, it is only natural that works of art become ambiguous in their design, for two main reasons: in the first place, to avoid persecution of any kind, and in the second, for the works to reach as many people's hearts as possible. The first aspect would ensure personal safety for the artist, amidst the religious prosecutions of the time; the latter, would mean commercial success and popularity for the artist. The Sidneys and the Herberts, some of his most prominent protectors at the court, had traditionally held Catholic sympathies before turning to Protestantism (Underhill 247, 264).

There can be few doubts that Shakespeare knew personally the frustrated conspirators who, in 1605, tried to set the Parliament on fire and depose King James to help James' daughter, Elizabeth, to the throne, and reinstall Catholicism in England. Some of the key plotters, like Robert Catesby, Robert and Thomas Winter and Francis Tresham were related to Shakespeare through the marriage of his daughters (Philips & Keatman 182-183). It may be yet again another coincidence in the Bard's biography. Having said that, several of his contemporaries and followers of his trade were also connected with Catholicism at a time: Ben Jonson (1572-1537), Philip Massinger (1583-1639), and Shirley (1596-1666). Jonson is the clearest case (Bush 104-105). Massinger has a very divided wave of criticism, and he could be said to be above all a Christian who was very familiar with the uses of Roman Catholicism (Romero Cambra 172-181). Shirley is almost completely sure to have turned Romanist at a given moment of his life (García García 156-157). Even Marlowe could have been one at heart (Philips & Keatman 81). Shakespeare undoubtedly knew the first two,[8] and must have met Shirley at some point before retiring to Stratford.

Taking into account all this background, we should now turn our attention to other cases of plausible presence of Spanish books in the plays by Shakespeare with regards to religious matters. Religious writings in general were abundant in England at the time (Underhill

349). To illustrate this matter, we should mention Spanish heterodox thinkers who fled to England on being persecuted by the Spanish Inquisition, and who found shelter in England (Ungerer 184, 228). The role of Spanish heretic writers and thinkers in the shaping of the European Protestant domain at that time has not yet been sufficiently studied. There is no direct evidence of Shakespeare meeting them while they were given shelter and protection by the English court. But a recent work by Morón Arroyo ("*The Spanish Source of Hamlet*", 1980) points at a book written by one of them as yet another direct source of the Danish Tragedy. It seems that a book by one of the most famous Spanish writers at the time fell into the hands of Shakespeare before he wrote *Hamlet*: *A book on "The Arts of the Spanish Inquisition"* by Reginald Montanus. Mr. Morón Arroyo has successfully explained the Bard's debt with the Spanish book for his composition of *Hamlet*. This view is confirmed by Francisco Ruiz de Pablos, who in *Un protestante sevillano* (2000), also proposes the work of the Spanish heterodox writer as a model for the English play. In this particular case, Ruiz de Pablos uses the full Spanish name of the writer rather than the English adaptation used by Morón Arroyo, and gives away the full title in Latin as it appeared in the XVI century: Raimundo González de Montes and his criticism of the Inquisition entitled *Sanctae Inquisitionis Hispanicae Artes Aliquot Detectae, ac Palam Traductae*, which Ruiz de Pablos, adding to Morón Arroyo's idea, argues is an essential source of *Hamlet*. If such an issue is to be believed, we can see that there lies a strong connection between the Spanish Inquisition and the motives behind the composition of the play. In acquiring such a model, Shakespeare was partaking of a general distrust of the Spanish Inquisition in England at that time; but at the same time, he was bestowing on his play the kind of ambiguity that drama in Elizabethan and, especially in Jacobean times was to display in England; for it operated from a double perspective. On the one hand the Inquisition was dreaded by Anglicans, Puritans and, probably, many Catholics in England. On the other hand, some of its ideas were exposed in Hamlet. To add to this matter, Díaz-Solís proposes another Spanish source for this play, which is no other than Antonio de Guevara's *Familiar Letters*.[9] Guevara (1481-1545) was widely read in XVI century England. At a certain point of his life, Guevara had been associated with the Inquisition; not necessarily as a judge of the dreaded institution, but rather as a preacher in territories where new converts

to Catholicism were still privately exerting their Semitic beliefs. The Inquisition was regarded as an example of what religion in England should never be about. Thus, on the one hand, González de Montes was a protestant; that is: a potential ally in the fight against Spain. On the other, Guevara worked for the Spanish Inquisition; and as we have already stated, such an institution was regarded as a dangerous enemy to the English State; but his works were having some sort of influence over Shakespeare. However, it is not the aim of this paper to go into deep analysis of the moral and religious tribulations of the Danish Prince. The important thing is that there are no less than two Spanish sources mentioned in connection with the aforementioned tragedy, one of which is related to the Inquisition; exactly at a time in which this institution was subject to study and criticism at the English court. This leads me to believe that Shakespeare would have found it very difficult to detach himself from this stream of Spanish religious books which were, without a doubt, being read in London, some of which were considered dangerous and underwent censorship (Ungerer 198). The most prominent men of the court were studying the religious books produced by Spain in close detail; and Shakespeare was no exception to this tendency.

As a conclusion, the portrait of Shakespeare as an artist whose genius was raised from the grounds of an entirely native English literary tradition with, perhaps, a little debt to Renaissance Italy and to the Classical World is already a thing of the past. For Shakespeare's involvement with Spanish literature in this case, whether directly or indirectly, has become increasingly difficult to deny. It is only the obstinacy of the more traditional faction of Anglo-Saxon criticism that has prevented any more progress in this field over the past years. In these times of a globalized world, it is only natural to think of Europe in the 16th and early 17th centuries as a place of similar political and cultural traits, whose states had things in common and also remarkable differences. And what made them close to each other need not be necessarily less prominent than what differentiated them. Shakespeare paved the way for other English playwrights who also handled Spanish sources (fictional and devotional as well as dramatic) to write their theatrical corpus; most notably Beaumont & Fletcher (Schelling vol. 2: 214-217), Massinger (Romero Cambra 2007), and Shirley (García García 1998).

NOTES

[1] This stream of opinion started as far back as the late sixteenth century with Francis Meres' *Palladis Tamia: Wit's Treasury* (1597), in which he acknowledged that one of the purposes of his work was to compare his contemporary English poets (Shakespeare among them) with the classical Greek, Latin and Renaissance Italian poets, with a view to prove that they could rank together. See Hodek (viii-ix).

[2] On this page, Hume also states that the influence of French literature was bigger than the influence of Spanish works.

[3] Thomas Wittingham, a citizen from Stratford, mentions in his testament that Ann Shakespeare, "wyf unto Mr. Wylliam Shakespeare", owed him a total amount of forty shillings in 1600; but he pardoned the debt on the condition that she used the money to alleviate the poor of Stratford; see Hodek (ix). By that time, the poet surely was in a position to comfortably pay that amount off. It is a mystery how Shakespeare's wife could have been in debt.

[4] Shapiro thinks that Field certainly helped Shakespeare find his way in London; see Shapiro (150).

[5] For any information related to Shakespeare's social circle, see Dawkins (2004).

[6] Munday translated *Palmerín de Oliva* in 1588, and then proceeded to do the same with both parts of *Primaleón* in 1589 and 1596; he finally also translated *Palmerín de Inglaterra* in 1596. See Thomas (183-194).

[7] However, in his opinion, the translation is neither exact nor accurate, and took place throughout a considerable lapse of time between one work and the other.

[8] Shakespeare's friendship with Jonson is well known. Massinger collaborated with Shakespeare in the third act of *The Winter's Tale*; see Foss (x). *Cf.* Dunn (267, n. 5).

[9] A collection of these letters was translated from a French edition by Geoffrey Fenton in 1579, and they were reprinted two years later. See Díaz Solís (157-161).

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S. BYATT'S *POSSESSION: A ROMANCE* AND *THE BIOGRAPHER'S TALE* – SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVELS OR A ROMANCE AND A TALE?

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Abstract

The paper concerns the analysis of genre mixture in A.S. Byatt's *Possession: a Romance* (1990) and *The Biographer's Tale* (2000). It focuses on the main opposition between two fictional genres: the social-psychological novel and the romance in *Possession*, and the juxtaposition of a fictional genre, the tale and a quasi-documentary, or traditionally non-fictional, the biography in *The Biographer's Tale*. The opposition in *Possession* concerns the problem of the hierarchy of genres. The implied author of the novel stresses that the status of two fictional genres can differ in literary tradition—one of them, the social-psychological novel may be approved of; the other, the romance, may be despised. An indication of similarities between the non-fictional biography and the fictional social-psychological novel in *The Biographer's Tale* also questions the sense of treating some genres as higher than others.

Keywords: Byatt, genre, romance, biography, social-psychological novel.

Resumen

El presente artículo analiza la mezcla de géneros en las obras de A.S. Byatt *Possession: a Romance* (1990) y *The Biographer's Tale* (2000). Se centra en la oposición principal entre dos géneros de ficción: la novela socio-psicológica y el romance en *Possession*, y en la yuxtaposición de un género de ficción (el cuento) y uno cuasi-documental, o tradicionalmente no ficcional (la biografía) en *The Biographer's Tale*. El análisis de la

oposición en *Possession* se centra en el problema de la jerarquía de géneros. El autor implícito de esta novela subraya que el status de dos géneros de ficción puede diferir en la tradición literaria: puede que uno de ellos, la novela socio-psicológica, sea aceptado, mientras que el otro, el romance, rechazado. La indicación de las similitudes entre la biografía no ficcional y la novela socio-psicológica ficcional en *The Biographer's Tale* cuestiona la validez de considerar unos géneros superiores a otros.

Palabras clave: Byatt, género, romance, biografía, novela socio-psicológica.

Genre mixture has been present in the novel from its earliest days,[1] however, it is clear that this phenomenon became increasingly widespread in the twentieth century.[2] Critics recognize the presence of genre mixture in contemporary British female fiction though they do not discuss the problem in details. Lindsey Tucker notices that Iris Murdoch's *The Sea, The Sea* (1978) "consists of elements of the gothic novel" (278) and the diary (memoirs) of a retired theatre director (380). Gothic elements are present in Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body* (1992) as well as elements of a love story and letters (Vaux 20). Julia O' Faolain notices fragments of journals and musical compositions in Doris Lessing's *Love Again* (1996) (27). Lessing's celebrated feminist novel *The Golden Notebook* (1962) consists of a wide range of interwoven genres—psychological fiction, press reports, communist propaganda and journal entries.

Thus the phenomenon of genre mixture in contemporary British female fiction is frequently noticed by commentators, but it is not usually analysed in any substantial detail. This is true in the case of A. S. Byatt's novels. The presence of genre mixture in these texts is mentioned (for example Updike 219, Gotlieb 265, Seaman 547, Alfer 31, Hulbert 56, and Giobbi 41), but not enough attention is paid to it. This essay points to the presence of genre mixture in *Possession* (1990) and *The Biographer's Tale* (2000) and the function of genre mixture in these novels, as they are among Byatt's most generically mixed texts.

Possession: A Romance is the text in which the question of genre is underlined even in the title. Though the implied author suggests that

the book should primarily be read as a romance, it is interesting to investigate which features of the romance appear in the text and how they are juxtaposed with other genres. In many respects, *Possession* may be recognized as a romance. The novel, taking its epigraph from Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*, refers to the tradition of romance writing (Rifkind 77) and the nineteenth-century debate on the lower status of the romance as opposed to the social-psychological novel. Hawthorne created his works in the time when the romance was considered "an entertainment and form of escapist literature" (Cuddon 807). Mark Lund stresses the ambiguous status of the romance that

> like an overtly imaginative, insane sister [...] has been locked in the attic of literature for a century while her normal sibling, the novel, has entertained millions in the parlour. Of course, outside the estate of high culture, the clones of literary romance have run wild in the form of horror novels, detective stories, fantasies, and science fiction. (151)[3]

The excerpt Byatt chooses for her epigraph in *Possession* underlines the opposition between the conventions of writing the romance and the social-psychological novel.

As the novel proceeds, such typical features of the romance as an element of adventure (Kowalik 15) and "the hunt of love" (Kowalik 22) become apparent. Mark Lund points to the name of the protagonist, Roland, "who has been summoned to the threshold of adventure" when he discovers the existence of unknown letters written by his favourite poet, Randolph Henry Ash, to some mysterious lady (156). The adventure opens an opportunity to "perform his knightly duty of saving Lady Bailey in distress" and to "journey to the dark tower to bring the sleeping princess, Christabel LaMotte, back to life" (157). Finally, the adventure changes from quest into chase and race, leading Roland and Maud to love (Lund 157).

In addition, *Possession* reveals features of a genre related to the romance, the gothic novel. For example, Susanne Becker notices "excessive emotional experiences of desire, terror and pleasure" (18) which accompany the characters. The excess does not only concern the characters' emotions, but also the abundance of narrative forms, setting and the plot "covering two centuries, large estates and sublime landscapes, buried letters, concealing veils, adultery, a tragic suicide, an invalid with an important key, an illegitimate child (alive or murdered?)"

and finally the mystery of the relationship between LaMotte and Ash (Becker 20). Among other typically Gothic elements, Becker indicates the spider imagery that characterises Christabel (22) and dark, suspicious events such as Mortimmer Cropper's robbing of Ashe's grave in the middle of the night (26).

Possession, thus, presents features of the romance, or the gothic novel, but at the same time concentrates on one of the most seriously discussed scientific topics in the nineteenth century, the theory of evolution. Darwinian subject matter, which makes *Possession* closer to the conventions of the social-psychological novel, is explored in a detailed way on the level of its nineteenth-century setting. Randolph Henry Ash, his wife Ellen and Miss LaMotte are characters whose interest in Darwinian problems is evident. In 1859 Ash goes on his natural history expedition. The reader meets him on the train reading Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (274). He writes to his wife informing her about the details of his work (212, 214). The same letter shows Ash's strong dilemmas about religion and the theory of evolution.

> It is hard indeed, Ellen, not to imagine that some Intelligence did not design and construct these perfectly lovely and marvellously functioning creatures—and yet it is hard also not to believe the weight of evidence for the Development Theory, for the changes wrought in things, over unimaginable Time by the gradual action of ordinary causes. (214)

Another letter discusses valleys of the south and the study of the ancestors of contemporary man who inhabit them. Ash feels "nearness of these remotest men whose blood and bones made our blood and bones and live still in them" (263).

Ash's wife Ellen is influenced by his study of natural history and starts to read texts that deal with the subject. She has the same doubts about the origin of man but she is unable to abandon her faith (222-223). Ash's own uncertainty about the sense of human existence or the presence or absence of God is stressed in *Possession*, and it is connected with his interest in the theory of evolution. Ash is, at the same time, aware of the fact that his views presented in his writings can be interpreted in many different ways by his readers.

> Rangarök was written in all honesty in the days when I did not question Biblical certainties—or the faith handed down by my fathers and theirs before them. It was read differently by some—the

> lady who was to become my wife was included in the readers—and
> I was at the time startled and surprised that my Poem should have
> been constructed as any kind of infidelity—for I meant it rather
> as the reassertion of the Universal Truth of the living presence of
> Allfather. (163)

In his much later letter he struggles with the Biblical story of Lazarus and the questions of science.

> We live in an age of scientific history—we sift our evidence—we
> know somewhat about eyewitness accounts and how far it is
> prudent to entrust ourselves to them —and of what this living-
> dead man (I speak of Lazarus, not of his Saviour) saw, or reported
> or thought, or assured his loving family of what lay beyond the
> terrible bourn—not a word. (168)

The next indication of the interest in the natural history subject matter is the discussion of the word nature. Byatt presents the meaning of the word associated with natural history, but also wonders particularly about human nature, which differs—she indicates—from the nature of other species. LaMotte talks about female nature declaring that "she may also be Savage—it is her Nature— she Must—or die of Surfeit" (180). In a conversation with her cousin, she notices the doubleness of female nature presented in Romance. "She said, in romance, women's two natures can be reconciled. I asked, which two natures, and she said, men saw women as double beings, enchantresses and demons or innocent angels" (373). The same cousin, Sabine, comments on human nature in her diary (367). Ash himself finds his nature unable to resist the temptation of meeting Christabel (193).

Scholarly and Darwinian subject matter are one of the main topics of *Possession*. The presence of such serious subject matter distances the novel from the tradition of romance writing and makes it closer to the conventions of the social-psychological novel. The elements of these genres are indeed present in *Possession* on both the nineteenth- and the twentieth-century levels of the story material. For example, some scenes on the contemporary level present the psychological dilemmas of Roland and Maud who do not know how to understand their acquaintance when it begins (129), as well as when it changes into a closer relationship (421). The dilemmas of both characters are particularly strong and are described in detail when they have to decide whether to continue their relationship or to go back to their old academic life (421-425).

The novel touches upon the subject of the lot of an unemployed graduate in the society of literary scholars. Roland has to cooperate with scholars who, like Blackadder, come from families with great intellectual tradition as well as with those who, like Mortimmer Cropper "thought [themselves] the lord[s] and owner[s] of Ash" (25). On the other hand, his difficult financial situation is presented as opposed to that of other, more successful young scholars such as Maud Bailey (50).

The nineteenth-century plot describes the psychologically complex situation of Ash and La Motte during their love affair and the influence it has on life of other characters such as Ellen Ash, Blanche Glover, or even (in another century) Roland and Maud. Both characters (Ash and La Motte) suffer when they decide to go their separate ways (344-345; 285-286). LaMotte and Ash's affair causes pain also to other characters, above all to Blanche Glover who decides to commit suicide (309). Her final letter proves the psychological depth in which this character is presented. The reasons that she gives for her dramatic choice are pride and the fact that she "cannot again demean [her]self to enter anyone's home as a governess' and as she puts it 'failure of ideals" (307). At the same time, the letter draws attention to a socially complex situation of single women in Victorian society.

> I have tried, initially with Miss LaMotte, and also alone in this little house, to live according to certain beliefs about the possibility, for independent single women, of living useful and fully human lives, in each other's company, and without resource to help from the outside world, or men. (307)

The main opposition in *Possession* takes place between two fictional genres: the social-psychological novel and the romance. This juxtaposition draws attention to the different degree of fictionality traditionally associated with these genres. On one hand, the implied author of *Possession* presents the imagined world of adventure and love typical of the romance where the overt degree of fictionality is higher than in the case of the novel. On the other, she writes some sections in the convention of the social-psychological novel, a genre which exposes its interest in social, material, scholarly or economic questions. The implied author of *Possession*, however, does not favour the social-psychological novel because of the fact that it aspires to describe the world outside literature and has been treated more seriously than the romance. On the contrary, she draws attention to the positive aspects the perspective

of the romance offers such as the fascinating quest of Roland or the enchanted world of his and Maud's love. The academic world of the twentieth-century scholars described by the socio-psychological novel is, on the other hand, full of envy and competition.

The juxtaposition of the romance and the social-psychological novel, and the stress on valuable features of the romance, put into question the sense of treating the social-psychological novel as a genre which offers more truths about life than any other genre. The positively underlined fictionality of the romance forces the reader to look at the social-psychological novel not as at high genre, which can teach some undeniable truths about the world outside literature, but as a genre which belongs to the same fictional group of genres as the romance. An introduction of such extensive genre mixture in the novel also draws the reader's attention to its textuality and literariness and emphasizes the figure of the implied author (Malcolm, *That Impossible Thing* 115). The readers are confronted with purely literary questions such as the difference in thematic interests among certain genres, and in the points of view on social or psychological problems they present. Genre mixture questions the reliability of the implied author of these texts who decides to challenge the readers mixing various perspectives and presenting him/herself as someone familiar with various aspects of the literary world, for example the problem of the hierarchy of genres or the art of mixing literary conventions, rather than being authoritative in any questions concerned with the non-literary world.

As was the case with regard to *Possession*, the title of *The Biographer's Tale* draws attention to the issue of genre and introduces the opposition or tension that appears in the novel. On one hand, the text is named the tale, not even a novel, but in any case it is marked as a fictional genre. Głowinski defines the tale [*opowiesc*] as "a narrative work in prose, longer than the novella or the short story, but shorter than the novel" with "one thread of the plot" and "quite a casual structure" (Głowinski *et al*. 359) (My translation). It has to be admitted that *The Biographer's Tale* is a thematically simple work, which deals with Phineas Nanson's life and scholarly research, but the method of relating it which the implied author uses and the organization of the work is complex. The implied author introduces genre mixture, various intertextual allusions and quotations from scholarly articles or fragments of a drama. The question of the length of the text is also problematic. The book is 264

pages long, which is a length rather typical of the novel. The main aspect of the use of the word 'tale' in the title is therefore the fact that it indicates belonging to the world of fiction.

This connection with the world of fiction is juxtaposed with the world of facts present in the second part of the title. The tale is written by a biographer who is used to writing biographies rather than fiction. A biography is defined as "a resumé, a life history, in particular, of a famous person—which depending on the aim—is in its character historical source (documentary), laudatory [...], literary or popularizing" (Głowinski *et al*. 67) (My translation). Therefore, a biographer must be accustomed to taking into account facts from the world outside fiction, or documents that deal with the life of the described person, and not only literary texts. His/her work is not a document, but it differs from the work of a fiction writer who may use his or her imagination as much as he/she wishes, ignoring any information from the world outside fiction.[4]

The novel consists of biographical fragments that deal with the lives of Francis Galton, Henrik Ibsen and Carl Linnaeus and are written by Scholes Destry Scholes, another biographer in whose life Nanson, the protagonist, is interested (37-95). *The Biographer's Tale* includes photographs of Henrik Ibsen and Francis Galton taken after their death (181) as well as photographs of some women used by Galton in his studies (183). The presence of the photographs in *The Biographer's Tale* is a powerful indication that biography is present in the text. Mary Kaiser notices that

> Byatt reinforces the factual presence by including photographs of these men [Linnaeus, Ibsen and Galton] in the novel itself, thus giving *The Biographer's Tale* the look of a 'real' biography and suggesting that fact and fiction coexist in any narrative. (145)

The Biographer's Tale also presents some features of the social-psychological novel, just as was the case with *Possession*. The society of academics is not described here in detail but represented by Ormerod Goode and Fulla Befield. Goode is a respected "Anglo-Saxon and Ancient Norse expert, specializing in place names" (2) who has the habit of making "inscrutable notes in ancient runes" (2). Though he is perfectly educated, Goode is also presented as a boring character and a living evidence that success in the academic world does not require piercing

intelligence and may be the privilege of boring, ignorant individuals. The second representative of the academic world is an ecologist, Fulla Befield. She is opposed to Goode's inattentiveness and passivity. She is not concerned with literary studies but with taxonomy and natural history. Fulla is helpful and offers Nanson her translation of some Swedish documents which he finds during his research (121-122). Fulla is fascinated with her ecological studies and likes to share her observations with Nanson (120-121).

The novel presents the psychological situation of a character who is bored with literary studies, though he was once fascinated with Tolkien's characters and T.S. Eliot's poetry (2). Nanson is not certain what he wants to do in his life, but he is sure his aim is not the study of literature.

> I went on looking at the filthy window above his head and I thought, I must have *things*. I know a dirty window is an ancient, well-worn trope for intellectual dissatisfaction and scholarly blindness. The thing is, that the thing was also there. A real, very dirty window, shutting out the sun. A *thing*. (2)

Nanson abandons the study of literature and becomes aware of the uncertainty of his future (7). He starts reading the biography of Elmer Bole written by Destry-Scholes, and becomes "obsessed with the glittery fullness of the life of Elmer Bole" (180) and impressed by the way Destry-Scholes writes about it (19-20). The admiration leads him to the decision to write a biography himself (20). The decision does not make his future more certain, especially in terms of his financial situation, but he feels excited about his new project, as if he "was about to embark on new ways of working, new kinds of thought" (23). He aspires to find out as much as possible about Destry-Scholes and feels able to do it: "I would hunt down Destry-Scholes, I told myself, I would ferret out his secrets, I would penetrate his surface compartments and lay bare his true motives" (23).

Nanson, at least at first is not a psychologically complex character; his problems are centred on his research (30). At times Nanson feels discouraged, for example when Betty Middleton sends him copies of letters that various people wrote to Destry-Scholes (33). Nanson has nothing but problems concerned with his study, because his whole life is centered around the task of his research and writing a biography (30, 99-100). As the novel proceeds, however, a change in Nanson's attitude

to life and his biographical research comes and he becomes interested in other people. Nanson finds a job at Puck's Girdle and discovers that contact with people such as his employers, Erik and Christophe, can be valuable (124). The real breakthrough comes when Nanson starts his relationship with Vera Alphage. He feels that it is the moment of essential change in his life, though he still has problems with his identity (187). The last scenes of the novel confirm the psychological change in Nanson and his discovery of other people around him, as well as of a certain distance to his finally abandoned task of writing a biography. He is aware that he has failed to describe Destry-Scholes as "a whole individual, a multi faceted single man", and that instead of this he has created what he calls a "tale" (214). He does not break down because of the failure of his project. He decides to turn to people and chooses the relationship with Fulla Biefeld. The novel ends with an idyllic scene of Nanson observing nature around him and watching the approaching Fulla (258-260). During this scene Nanson is also writing what he this time calls his "notebook" (260), but his work no longer has any scholarly or biographical ambitions.

The Biographer's Tale, similarly to Possession, belongs to a specific kind of social-psychological novel, because it explores scholarly and scientific motifs[5] and stresses the fact that the psychological difficulties the main character faces are connected with his interest in the study of literature or his research in the field of biography. The combination of social-psychological novel with scholarly and scientific elements indicates that the book belongs to the world of fiction, but fiction paradoxically considered to be much more serious than biography, a non-fictional genre. In fact, it belongs to the genre of the social-psychological novel that has "worked its way [...] to the highest position of the generic hierarchy" (Fowler 109). The question that the novel asks is whether this genre, the social-psychological novel with serious ambitions, differs in a substantial way from biography, a despised genre in the text. As the readers can see in Nanson, both the study of literature and the study of writing a biography can be equally fascinating or disappointing. In both, certain truths as well as gossip or lies can be found. The novel does not favor any of these genres, the narrator uses both of them and proves that they can coexist.

The coexistence of both genres in this novel raises questions about the validity of the methods contemporary literary criticism uses, an

issue which is discussed by Erin O'Connor in "Reading *The Biographer's Tale*". O'Connor notices that nineteenth-century and Victorian literary criticism was based on a biographical approach, whereas contemporary criticism rejects "biographical background" and uses "critical framework" or textual theories (382).

> Practicing poststructuralists [...] do not trust 'facts', which we understand as ideological constructs that naturalize uneven social relations. And as a consequence we tend to discount anything that smacks of a truth claim—one obvious consequence of which is that biographical information (facts), not to mention biography proper (compilations of facts), must be held in stark, unrelenting suspicion by self-respecting literary critics. (O'Connor 382)

Byatt deliberately uses the scholarly social-psychological novel and the biography in order to stress the transformations of thinking about literature and the traps that are hidden in contemporary approaches such as the total rejection of the biographical perspective, which may be an over-simplification, and the treatment of the biography as a lower genre. The traditional social-psychological novel deals with events from the life of a character, his or her relations with other individuals and the society, as well as psychological problems that are possible in such situations. It shares these features with biography, which also deals with the description of somebody's life, his or her relations with other individuals and the society as well as various problems that are the consequence of such situation. The ambition of the social-psychological novel is the presentation of life in details by means of invented characters, but this ambition is not essentially different from the ambition of the biography.

Finally, Byatt in her scholarly social-psychological novel introduces Nanson, who for the most of his life concentrates on research, his own relation to books and scholarly problems, instead of on other individuals. In a sense, he ignores his own biography, meeting with other people, conversations or gossip. He does not even pay attention to these aspects of his existence whereas he spends much time thinking over his research. He behaves like a postmodern literary critic who ignores or despises the genre of biography. The novel, nevertheless, at certain moment comes back to its roots, leading its character to a change of attitude and the abandonment of his ignorance. It stresses the fact that Nanson's strictly theoretical approach is not the only possible and not necessarily the right one.

Possession: A Romance and *The Biographer's Tale* already raise the question of their generic status in their titles. Both novels show strong features of social-psychological fiction, but they are juxtaposed with features of other genres. The first novel juxtaposes two fictional genres: the social-psychological novel with the romance. The second juxtaposes the tale, a fictional genre, with the quasi-documentary one of biography. In both cases, the question of the fictionality of these genres is essential. The implied author of *Possession* stresses that the status of two fictional genres can differ in literary tradition—one of them, the social-psychological novel may be approved of; the other, the romance, may be despised. She puts into doubt the validity of such hierarchical understanding of genres showing that the perspective of the romance is equally valuable. The implied author of *The Biographer's Tale* concentrates on the opposition between the quasi-documentary, or traditionally non-fictional, biography with fictional genres. She indicates similarity between the non-fictional biography and the fictional social-psychological novel, once more putting into doubt the sense of treating some genres as higher than others. Therefore, an introduction of genre mixture in *Possession* and *The Biographer's Tale* raises questions about the nature of fiction and "foregrounds textuality and literariness" (Malcolm 115) of these novels.

NOTES

[1] See, for example Michael Rosenblum's comment on genre mixture in *Tristram Shandy* in his essay "The Sermon, the King of Bohemia and the Art of Interpolation in *Tristram   Shandy*".

[2] The question of genre mixture in twentieth-century novels is discussed in, for example Robert *Alter's Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-conscious Genre* or in David Malcolm's *That Impossible Thing: The British Novel 1978-1992*.

[3] One might suggest that the late eighteenth- and nineteenth- century opposition between the romance and the novel (represented by Hawthorne's comments above) is not really an opposition between the romance and the novel as such, but rather between the romance and certain types (or genres) of the novel, particularly the social-psychological novel, such as that written by Jane Austen or (predominantly) by George Eliot. The prose romance is really (certainly from the twentieth-century point of view) a type (or genre) of novel, very different from *Emma* or *Middlemarch*, but really a novel nonetheless.

[4] The complex status of biography and its relationship to truth and actuality have been widely discussed by scholars. Catherine N. Parke's study *Biography: Writing Lives* and John Batchelor's collection of essays *The Art of Literary Biography* are particularly useful texts. The ambiguities and difficulties of the biographer's task and the problematic epistemological status of his/her writing are discussed in Richard Holmes's essay "Biography: Inventing the Truth" (which is enclosed in Batchelor's collection).

[5] I discuss the use of scholarly and scientific subject matter in *The Biographer's Tale* in "A.S. Byatt's *The Biographer's Tale*: Scholarly and Scientific Motifs in Contemporary British Fiction".

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ANALYSING THE GROTESQUE IN APHRA BEHN'S
THE ROVER I AND *II*

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Abstract

Bakhtin's and Thomson's theories about the grotesque have been regarded as the most relevant throughout the twentieth century. Their perspectives are slightly different: according to Bakhtin, the grotesque lowers those who epitomize authority in society by drawing attention to the organic processes which take place in their bodies, which brings about amusement and delight; instead, Thomson contends that the grotesque is related to the frightening because, after having reached a certain degree of abnormality, amusement and delight turn into fear of the unknown. As this paper shows, in *The Rover I* (1677) and *The Rover II* (1681), Behn makes use of these two different perspectives in order to challenge certain patriarchal premises and practices.

Keywords: the grotesque, Restoration comedy, English women playwrights, humour.

Resumen

Las teorías de Bajtín y Thomson sobre lo grotesco se han considerado las más relevantes a lo largo del siglo XX. Sus puntos de vista son ligeramente diferentes: según Bajtín, lo grotesco rebaja a aquellos que personifican la autoridad en la sociedad, prestando atención a los procesos orgánicos que se producen en sus cuerpos, lo cual provoca diversión y placer; por el contrario, Thomson sostiene que lo grotesco mantiene una estrecha relación con lo aterrador porque, tras haber alcanzado cierto grado de abnormalidad, la diversión y el deleite se convierten en miedo hacia lo desconocido. Como muestra este artículo,

en *The Rover* (1677) y *The Rover II* (1681), Behn utiliza estos dos puntos de vista para desafiar ciertas prácticas y premisas patriarcales.

Palabras clave: lo grotesco, comedia de la Restauración, dramaturgas inglesas, humor

Originally, the term *grotesque* made reference to the ornamental style which was brought to light by late fifteenth-century excavations in Italy (Kayser 19-20; Harpham 461; Remshardt 4). According to Harpham, this ornamental style consisted of "graceful fantasies, symmetrical anatomical imposibilities, small beasts, human heads, and delicate, indeterminate vegetables" (29-32). Among others, the walls of Nero's *Domus Aurea* had been decorated by using this ornamental painting, which was first named grotesque in the Renaissance. This term derives from the Italian *grotta*, meaning "cave". The Latin form of *grotta* is *crypta*, which in turn proceeds from the Greek Κρυπτη, one of the cognates of Κρνπτειγ, *i.e.*, "to hide". It was used to designate this particular ornamental style more because of the setting where the designs were found than because of any qualities inherent in the designs themselves (see also Epps 42). According to Fingesten, with the passing of the years, the grotesque developed into

> the presence and clash, incongruity, or juxtaposition of two or more different or even contradictory elements within the same work that may result in a visual and/or psychological surprise or shock. (420)

Nevertheless, as Harpham points out, the grotesque depends not only on formal properties but also on "the elements of understanding and perception, and the factors of prejudice, assumptions, and expectations" (17) (see also Clark 19). During the sixteenth century, the term spread all over Europe and, as regards the use we are referring to, Kayser highlights "the first instance of such usage in the German language, [which] refers to the monstruous fusion of human and nonhuman elements as the most typical feature of the grotesque style" (24). The German meaning of the term was similar to others:

> [t]he same monstruous quality, constituted by the fusion of different realms as well as by a definite lack of proportion and organization, is also attested in an early French usage of the word. (Kayser 24)

Although the term developed with the passing of the years, its meaning is still connected to the Italian *grotta.* In fact, Russo points out that the grotesque is clearly related to *grotta* because both share the same features: "[l]ow, hidden, earthly, dark, material, immanent, visceral" (1). Furthermore, Harpham (463) considers an object grotesque only if it arouses three responses: laughter, astonishment, and either disgust or horror (see also Barasch 4). So, Harpham's statement, and above all the third compulsory element he makes reference to, entails the relationship between the grotesque and the qualities which characterize the *grotta*.

I certainly agree with Harpham when he contends that

> [o]ne of the most frequent ways for an artist to use the grotesque [...] is through the creation of grotesque characters. And the most obvious ways to effect this alienation is through physical deformity. (465)

Starting from this assumption, I intend to analyse the grotesque characters in Behn's *The Rover I* (1677) and *II* (1681). In the former, a male character is described in a grotesque way by a woman, whereas, in its sequel, there are two female characters who appear to be grotesque in the eyes of a man. This difference appears to be significant precisely because the grotesque description in *The Rover I* causes disgust and, on the contrary, the one in *The Rover II*, fear. After the analysis of both descriptions, I will explain the reason why, when described in a grotesque way, male characters are associated with disgust and female ones with fear in these comedies by Behn.

Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* (1965) is a useful theoretical reference for this analysis because it extensively deals with the grotesque body. According to Bakhtin, the grotesque focuses on those parts of the body

> within [*which*] [...] the confines between bodies and between the body and the world are overcome: there is an interchange and an interorientation. [...] Eating, drinking, defecation and other elimination [...], as well as copulation, pregnancy, dismemberment, swallowing up by another body – all these acts are performed on the confines of the body and the outer world, or on the confines of the old and new body. (233-234)

This is seen early in the impressive initial scene of *The Rover I*, when the witty, rebellious heroine, Hellena, ridicules the old suitor of

her sister Florinda with a description that highlights mostly those parts of the body Bakhtin refers to. For Hellena, Don Vincentio is a giant who "stretches it self; yawns and sighs a Belch or two, loud as a Musket, throws himself into Bed, and expects you in his foul sheets, and e're you can get yourself undrest, call's you with a snore or Two —and are not these fine Blessings to a young Lady?" (Behn, *The Rover I* 457). When Don Vincentio yawns, belches, or snores, the confines between his body and the world are overcome and, therefore, his becomes a grotesque body. Hellena ends her ludicrous portrayal with an ironical rhetorical question: "and are not these fine Blessings to a young Lady?" (457). This, obviously, intends to raise the audience or readers' aversion to Don Vincentio and to voice a critique against arranged marriage. Moreover, as a grotesque character, Don Vincentio cannot be considered the authoritative figure he should be in patriarchal society. In this first description, Hellena focuses on Don Vincentio's mouth but there are also other parts of the body through which the confines between the body and the world are overcome. Among them, one of the most characteristically grotesque is the phallus. Hellena also makes reference to this part of Don Vincentio's body: "*Don Vincentio*! *Don Indian*! He thinks he's trading to *Gambo* still, and wou'd *Barter* himself (that Bell and Bawble) for your Youth and Fortune" (Behn, *The Rover I* 457). According to Todd, Bell and Bawble are "trifles, but also a slighting and bawdy reference to Don Vincentio's useless penis" (558). Hellena thinks it unfair that her young sister has to marry such an old man who would be incapable of making her pregnant. In fact, at the beginning of her description of Don Vincentio, she had already remarked that "he may perhaps encrease her Baggs, but not her Family" (Behn, *The Rover I* 456), that is, they are not going to leave any descendants, who, in the seventeenth century, were considered important elements, above all in rich families, in order to keep the father's possessions. Hellena's comments on Don Vincentio's supposed sexual impotence endeavour to dissuade their brother from making Florinda marry this old man but also to debase Don Vincentio's image. Bakhtin points out that "debasement is the fundamental artistic principle of grotesque realism: all that is sacred and exalted is rethought on the level of the material bodily stratum or else combined and mixed with images" (239). Don Vincentio is regarded as a prominent person because he is wealthy, highborn and old. Nevertheless, Hellena dares to confront this social principle by debasing this old man and, therefore, the patriarchal conventions which award power and privileges to such

kind of men. This is clearly the most subversive grotesque description of a masculine body in a comedy written by a female playwright in the seventeenth century. Through Hellena's description of Don Vincentio, Behn makes other characters and the audience laugh at an authoritative figure. In order to explain the comic effect of Hellena's description, Hobbes's theory of laughter proves to be essential.[1] Portraying Don Vincentio as a grotesque character, Hellena not only becomes superior to him but also makes Florinda and the audience feel superior to Don Vincentio. Thanks to this sense of superiority, Hellena, Florinda and the audience are able to laugh at Don Vincentio. Apart from this feeling of superiority, incongruity also takes part in this situation.[2] As Don Vincentio is considered an authoritative figure in seventeenth-century society, he is supposed to be described in a respectful or even laudatory manner. Nevertheless, when Hellena describes him, there is a clash between our preconceived idea and Hellena's portrayal of Don Vincentio. Obviously, this clash also brings about laughter. So, concerning Don Vincentio's grotesque description, it is possible to conclude that, in *The Rover I* (1677), the grotesque provokes laughter. However, the grotesque does not always lead to disgust and, in order to prove that statement, I am going to analyse the grotesque descriptions of female characters in *The Rover II* (1681).

Thomson conceives the grotesque as both funny and fearsome:

> [d]elight in novelty and amusement at a divergence from the normal turns to fear of the unfamiliar and the unknown once a certain degree of abnormality is reached. Mirth at something which fails to conform to accepted standards and norms gives way to fear (and anger) when these norms are seen to be seriously threatened or attacked. (24)

In *The Rover I*, the degree of abnormality reached when Hellena mocks Don Vincentio is not enough to threaten either the accepted standards or norms seriously and, so, Don Vincentio's portrayal only reveals Hellena's disagreement with patriarchal precepts. Nevertheless, as it comes from a woman, regarded as imperfect in a patriarchal society, her disagreement just makes her brother angry because of her revolt and, finally, as Hutner maintains, she is brought back into the patriarchal fold because, finally, she regards marriage as a happy ending (103). On the contrary, in *The Rover II*, the greedy Fetherfool endeavours to marry one of the two Jewish women who have just arrived

from Mexico. Although he had never met them, Fetherfool is willing to marry because each is heir to one hundred thousand pounds. The grotesque portrayal Fetherfool provides us with when he beholds them for the first time proves that he is afraid of women who deviate from normality or expectation. Generally speaking, in Behn's comedies, the male characters who support patriarchal precepts are scared of women who do not fit the patriarchal concept of femininity. As Hutner points out, "Behn's presentation of the body of woman as a prelapsarian ideal––free from sociopolitical and ideological codes of honor and restraint––becomes a means to resist late-seventeenth-century repressions of feminine nature" (103). This resistance to repressions of feminine nature becomes the origin of the fear which patriarchal figures show when they become aware of the existence of a different world, where women do not appear to be subordinate beings. Precisely, Steig contends that "in the true grotesque we are kept aware of the connections between the alien world and our own" (253) and, in *The Rover II*, the alien world Steig makes reference to is represented by the bodies of these female monsters, which, for Pearson, also "suggest the monstruousness of a system of money marriages in which women attain significance only in terms of their financial value" (222-223).[3]

Looking at Giant, one of the two rich heiresses, Fetherfool utters the following statement:

> My heart begins to fail me plaguily ––– would I could see'em a little at a distance before they come slap dash upon a man, ––– hah! ––– Mercy upon us! ––– what's yonder! ––– Ah *Ned*, my Monster as big as the Whore of *Babylon* ––– Oh I'me in a cold sweat ––– (Behn, *The Rover II* 257)

Obviously, Fetherfool is frightened of the enormous woman he is beholding, so that he immediately identifies her with the Whore of Babylon. This is of course a reference to that character in the *Book of Revelation*.[4] This biblical figure is clearly described as a filthy, mysterious and monstruous being. In fact, the word *mystery* was written down on her forehead. The *Book of Revelation* provides the symbolic meaning for the elements by which this woman is surrounded: "[t]he seuen heads are seuen mountaines, on which the woman sitteth" and "the tenne hornes which thou sawest, are ten kings, which haue receiued no kingdom as yet: but receiue power as kings one houre with the beast" (17: 9, 12). This may mean that the woman has power over the mountains and the ten

kings. It is a threatening figure of a highly sexualised mighty woman on a monstruous beast, that works as a whole in the mind of Fetherfool, who feels intimidated by such a huge woman. The main reason why Giant appears grotesque is her size but, as "[t]he grotesque is more narrowly interested in the monstrosity that holds a warped mirror to humanity" (Remshardt 61), she scares Fetherfool mostly because she preserves her gender identity: femininity and power coalesce within the same being, and thus, she becomes monstruous. In seventeenth-century patriarchal society, women were not expected to be powerful and, therefore, when Fetherfool meets Giant, he fears the unknown, that is, the bizarre association between femininity and power. Furthermore, the grotesque image of this enormous female character is emphasised by the contrasting figure of her minute companion Dwarf. Thus, when Fetherfool sees them together, he compares them with St. Christopher and Jesus, as portrayed in a sculpture in Notre Dame Cathedral: "––– Oh *Lord*! She's as Tall as the St. *Christopher* in *Notre dam* at *Paris*, and the little one looks like the Christo upon his Shoulders" (Behn, *The Rover II* 257).[5] The difference in size between Giant and Dwarf is so noteworthy that Fetherfool identifies them with St. Christopher and Jesus because their size would allow Giant to carry Dwarf on her shoulders. It is also a way of magnifying the abnormality of their bodies, which assert an idealized and powerful feminine authority (see Hutner 105).

Nevertheless, after these identifications, the grotesque is enhanced by means of the intertextual references introduced by Fetherfool's allusion to the grotesque literary tradition. Having beheld these women, Fetherfool attempts to go away but, incapable of understanding his attitude, Blunt keeps him there: "What a Pox art thou afraid of a Woman ––– [?]" (Behn, *The Rover II* 257). Answering Blunt's question, Fetherfool explains: "Not of a Woman, *Ned*, but of a She *Gargantua*. I am a *Hercules* in Petticoats" (257). This time, he identifies Giant with Gargantua, the main grotesque character in the second volume of François Rabelais' famous work. As is well-known, Gargantua was a sweet-toothed giant who changed continuously, above all, into a dragon. Identifying Giant with Gargantua, Fetherfool intends to insist on her impressive large size, although he also places the personal pronoun *she* before the name Gargantua in order to give prominence to the fact that Giant is a woman. The association of femininity and strength becomes terrifying for him because it challenges the patriarchal principle which

justifies women's subordination to men on account of their supposed physical weakness. At the same time, Fetherfool identifies himself with Hercules when he was humiliated by Queen Omphale. As the Greek hero had slain Iphitus, the Oracle condemned him to slavery. Thus, for a year, Omphale forced him to do women's work and even wear women's clothes. It is a comic inversion of gender roles, which brings about Omphale's mockery of Hercules just because of the power this woman had over him. Curiously enough, in his *Apology for Poetry* (1595), Philip Sidney uses this episode of gender reversal in order to exemplify the possible concurrence of delight and laughter: "in Hercules, painted with his great beard and furious countenance, in woman's attire, spinning at Omphale's commandment, it breedeth both delight and laughter" (Sidney 112). In fact, in this comedy, the ridiculous Fetherfool breeds delight and laughter in the audience, who clearly feels superior to him.

In my opinion, in spite of this description Fetherfool offers while looking at Giant, the most shocking moment takes place when he meets her. Fetherfool says that she is "something Heroical and Masculine", "like the Royal Soveraign, and is as long a Tacking about" (Behn, *The Rover II* 259). This reinforces the reversal of gender roles that the magnified body of Giant implies. She acquires masculine traits that qualify her as heroic, and therefore is compared to a "man-of-war", an armed Royal Navy ship, and one as famous in the Restoration period as the "Royal Sovereign", which had fought in the Civil War and the three Dutch Wars. Throughout this description, Fetherfool provides us with an appropriate image of power and military heroism full of masculine connotations. Finally, it is worth noting that these women remain grotesque throughout the whole comedy and, therefore, according to Copeland, they represent "an extreme in the range of female bodies exhibited in the play" (36). Unlike in *The Rover I*, in this comedy the butts are not the characters which are described in a grotesque way but Fetherfool, because his grotesque description allows us to notice his fear. He is clearly frightened of these bizarre women because they appear to be more powerful than him. As men in seventeenth-century patriarchal society are supposed to be always in control of women and Fetherfool is not, his behaviour appears to be incongruous and, therefore, laughable.

To sum up, the grotesque descriptions in these two comedies could be divided into two kinds: on the one hand, female characters describe male

ones in order to ridicule them and, on the other hand, female characters are described by male ones, who show their insecurity through their descriptions of frightening, abnormal female bodies and, therefore, they expose themselves to public ridicule. Following Bakhtin's theory, we can assert that, in *The Rover I*, Hellena debases Don Vincentio through her grotesque description because, in the material acts and eliminations of the body she mentions, the object of that description approaches the earth, that is, the lower stratum. So, Don Vincentio, who as an old nobleman should occupy a distinguished position in the patriarchal society Behn depicts, is demeaned by Hellena, who highlights the earthly nature of his body and, in the process, corrupts his supposed dignity. Thomson's theory of the grotesque as fear of the unfamiliar and the unknown is exemplified by Fetherfool's characterization of Giant. Beyond doubt, Fetherfool's report of Giant proves that men fear the dangerous potential of unconventional female bodies. As we have already pointed out, Giant's is one of these frightening bodies because of her size, which makes her seem more powerful than Fetherfool and, hence, terrifying as it threatens the privileged position he as a man had in society, as well as in his relationship with her as a prospective husband. Thus, in both works, the gender hierarchy of patriarchal society is challenged by these grotesque descriptions which always mock men: in the first portrayal, a woman describes a male character in a grotesque way in order to ridicule him; whereas, in the second one, a man recounts his own perception of a frightening woman due to her huge size and, therefore, conveys a ridiculous image of himself as an emasculated man and a fool as his own name implies and, therefore, he himself brings about his own mockery.

This use of the grotesque is an effective tool for Behn's critique of mercenary marriage and gender stereotypes in her comedies. It is also another example of the transgressive attitude Behn struck when she infringed on the norm by appearing as a woman who chose to be a professional writer, and even one for the stage in seventeenth-century male-dominated England. Moreover, we should add that Behn opted for radical forms of humour in her comedies, as her use of the grotesque proves. Precisely, the comic situations we have just analysed in this paper verify that Behn's appropiation of comedy does not always produce light, likeable entertainment but a harsh challenge to certain patriarchal premises and practices.

NOTES

[1] According to Hobbes, "*Sudden Glory,* is the passion which maketh those *Grimaces* called LAUGHTER; and is caused either by some sudden act of their own, that pleaseth them; or by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves" (27).

[2] Regarding the theory of humour which is based on incongruity, see for example Kant (1790), Schopenhauer (1957) and Koestler (1994).

[3] As regards the monstruousness of money marriages, see also Owen (74).

[4] "[A] woman sit vpo a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, hauing seuen heads, and ten hornes. And the woman was arayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold, and precious stone & pearles, hauing a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthinesse of her fornication" (17: 3-5).

[5] According to tradition, initially, St. Christopher's name was Reprobus, although people referred to him as a giant because of his astounding size and strength. He became a Christian and, at the suggestion of a hermit, he began to assist people to cross the river. Among these people, a little boy also asked Reprobus to help him cross the river but, surprisingly enough, this was heavier than any of the others because, as the little boy revealed, he himself was Jesus Christ, who had to bear all the sins of the world. Then, Jesus called him Christopher, a Greek name which results from adding the base Χριστνς to φνρειν, whose meaning is "to carry".

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Book reviews

Gerardo Rodríguez Salas. *Katherine Mansfield:*
el posmodernismo incipiente de una modernista
renegada. **Madrid: Editorial Verbum, 2009.**
ISBN: 978-84-7962-456-9. 280 págs.

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La palabra *posmodernismo* sigue desatando hoy en día acalorados debates
en el campo de la crítica literaria y de la cultura en general. Rodeada de un
halo de negatividad, muchos la consideran vacía de significado. Otros ven
contenida en ella un nihilismo destructivo, subrayando que su dimensión
subversiva no está orientada a promover cambio social alguno y que sus
principales descriptores son "relativism, an appalling lack of ethics or a
pervasive cynicism" (Appleby *et al*. 390). Con su libro *Katherine Mansfield:*
el posmodernismo incipiente de una modernista renegada, el Dr. Gerardo
Rodríguez Salas toma partido y se inscribe con decisión en el grupo de
quienes ven en el posmodernismo un movimiento oposicional encaminado
a desestabilizar la centralidad de los *grands récits*, darle voz a los aspectos
marginales o periféricos y promover, a través de esta desestabilización,
una transformación social. Esta visión del posmodernismo, que vincula su
espíritu subversivo con la desconstrucción y no con la destrucción, permea
todas y cada una de las páginas del libro y se aplica con rigor al análisis
de la narrativa de la autora neozelandesa Katherine Mansfield. El libro
no es sólo valiente por el claro posicionamiento crítico de su autor, que
cuestiona la validez de muchos estudios apocalípticos sobre la negatividad
del posmodernismo, sino también por abordar el reto de poner de relieve
la sensibilidad posmoderna de una escritora que, tradicionalmente, ha
sido enmarcada dentro del modernismo. Rodríguez Salas desenmascara la
tiranía de la "cronología literaria canónica" (7) y demuestra que, más que
de períodos bien definidos y asépticos, puede hablarse de sensibilidades
literarias atemporales.

El riguroso conocimiento de la obra de Mansfield que el autor demuestra en este estudio viene avalado por una madura labor de investigación que ya dio su fruto en 2003 con la tesis doctoral *La marginalidad como opción en Katherine Mansfield. Posmodernismo, feminismo y relato corto* (2003). El presente volumen constituye, sin lugar a dudas, una valiosa adición al campo de la Anglística y de los estudios literarios en general por dos razones fundamentales: la primera, porque desde un punto de vista teórico se aplican al análisis de la narrativa de Mansfield conceptos cuya definición ha venido tradicionalmente revestida de complejidad y que Rodríguez Salas logra clarificar perfectamente haciendo gala de una gran erudición teórico-literaria. La segunda, porque se aborda un amplio estudio de la obra de Mansfield, incluyendo aquellos textos que, hasta ahora, no habían recibido suficiente atención crítica: el volumen viene, por lo tanto, a llenar ausencias notables en el campo de los estudios críticos sobre esta autora.

Es cierto que, con frecuencia, los textos de los críticos posmodernos están impregnados de un lenguaje filosófico cuya complejidad y sofisticación no incita a su lectura. No puedo dejar de mencionar que Rodríguez Salas nos ha legado un estudio en el que las teorías de Ihab Hassan, Linda Hutcheon, Jean François Lyotard o Jacques Lacan, entre otros, se muestran accesibles. A este afán por huir de una desmotivadora complejidad, hay que unir la existencia de una estructura extraordinariamente clara, que, tomando como base los rasgos fundamentales del posmodernismo propuestos por el teórico Ihab Hassan en *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture* (1987), vertebra razonada y coherentemente el volumen y emerge como totalmente adecuada para describir la sensibilidad posmoderna de Mansfield. El libro incluye, asimismo, detallados procedimientos de análisis textual mediante los cuales la significación de las imágenes, símbolos, metáforas y otros elementos del estilo de Mansfield es desentrañada en profundidad y comunicada al lector con un lenguaje que escapa a la frialdad de la prosa científica y abraza un lirismo que, junto con la claridad expositiva, hace que la lectura de este libro sea apta no sólo para filólogos, sino también para el público no especializado que ama la literatura y ve en ella, más allá del mero deleite estético, un poderoso instrumento para la denuncia social.

En la introducción, Rodríguez Salas justifica con suficiencia la idea de que más que como "un concepto cronológico" el posmodernismo puede

entenderse como un "espíritu o serie de valores" (20) que ya existían con anterioridad al nacimiento institucionalizado de este movimiento en la segunda mitad del siglo XX. Quienes hemos estudiado y descubierto una anticipación de rasgos posmodernos en escritores de otras épocas,[1] creemos que esta postura que considera las sensibilidades literarias como categorías "liquid, not solid" (Frye 160) hace más justicia a la dinámica que rige su movimiento que aquella que las encorseta en unas rígidas coordenadas temporales. Críticos como John Barth han reivindicado, en este sentido, la legitimidad de rastrear antecedentes de la estética postmoderna "through the great modernists of the first half of the century [...] through their nineteenth-century predecessors [...] back to Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1767) and Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote (1615)*" (23). Junto con Rodríguez Salas, podemos afirmar, por tanto, que la obra de Katherine Mansfield está impregnada de rasgos fundamentales de la sensibilidad posmoderna.

Muy acertadamente, la definición de *posmodernismo*, necesaria por la oscuridad que rodea a dicho término, ocupa buena parte de las páginas introductorias del volumen. El autor presenta las diferentes perspectivas desde las que ha sido analizado para decantarse por aquella que ve en su dimensión subversiva una proyección político-social que se cifra en "un ataque serio contra el sistema dominante" (31) y no en un mero experimentalismo lúdico. Mediante una rigurosa caracterización de este "posmodernismo de resistencia", Rodríguez Salas demuestra que "el supuesto irracionalismo de las corrientes postmodernas pertenece tan sólo a su versión light y vulgarizada" (Rodríguez Mazda 115). Concluye la introducción con una pormenorizada presentación y discusión de los rasgos fundamentales del posmodernismo esbozados por Hassan en *The Postmodern Turn* (1987), cuya presencia en la obra de Mansfield es justificada con rigor a lo largo de cuatro capítulos. Este proceso de justificación está guiado por la idea de revalorizar la marginalidad. Magistralmente, el autor logra presentar este rasgo posmoderno como el que envuelve a todos los demás y les da sentido. La centralidad que el autor confiere a la puesta en valor de los *petits récits* obedece a un deseo de buscar la perspectiva más adecuada desde la que entender y comunicar la significación de la obra de Mansfield, una autora que por ser una "figura colonial, femenina, infantil [e] [...] incluso bisexual" (29), viene a estar indisolublemente asociada a la 'periferia' cultural.

El capítulo primero, titulado "El sujeto escindido" es, junto con el capítulo tercero, uno de los más interesantes del libro. Sus párrafos naturalizan la demonizada fragmentación del sujeto humano, demostrando que el "distanciamiento del individuo cartesiano, canónico y coherente" da oportunidades para que el "sujeto fragmentado y caótico, donde tienen cabida tanto rasgos considerados canónicos como marginales" (29), muestre y ejerza un potencial vital y creativo del que Mansfield es depositaria. Haciendo gala de una originalidad terminológica que es seña de identidad del volumen, el Dr. Rodríguez Salas acuña tres sencillas etiquetas para describir la compleja aproximación posmoderna al debate sobre la esencia humana: la postura "apocalíptica", con su concepción nihilista del sujeto, la "demasiado optimista", o aquella que "a pesar de reconocer la fragmentación del sujeto, parece dar por sentada la existencia de una interioridad humana, sin cuestionarla" (45) y, finalmente, la "conciliadora", que presenta "una actitud positiva ante la aparente ausencia de esencia humana" (46).

El capítulo nos descubre un proceso de evolución ideológica con respecto al debate sobre la esencia en la obra de Mansfield: desde la postura optimista de sus cartas, donde la autora adopta una "máscara parcial", refugiándose en la ficción de la existencia de una esencia humana, hasta la postura conciliadora reflejada en su diario, en el que consolida la que será la tónica dominante en su narrativa posterior: la visión de la esencia como una "máscara total" que oculta la realidad de la fragmentación del sujeto. Dicha visión, sin embargo, deja abierta "la posibilidad de rastrear una esencia humana que transcienda los límites impuestos por la sociedad" (73). Esos mecanismos de rastreo, que se abrazan al poder desdogmatizador de la literatura, son desentrañados mediante un brillante análisis de relatos cortos como "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" y "The Garden Party". El autor presenta las estrategias empleadas por Mansfield para denunciar la hegemonía de un poder patriarcal que obliga a sus personajes femeninos a adoptar un rol social que las reduce a "meros fantoches" (63) y asfixia su identidad.

Una de las tesis centrales del posmodernismo, que el lenguaje no es una herramienta inocente de representación mimética de la realidad, sino un instrumento con clara "intención dogmática y constructivista" (87), permea los contenidos del capítulo segundo, titulado "Lenguaje, dogmatismo y estrategias subversivas". Apoyándose en las teorías de críticos como Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser y Julia Kristeva,

el Dr. Rodríguez Salas nos descubre las estrategias subversivas de desdogmatización del lenguaje empleadas por Mansfield, que cifra en el silencio y la paraliterariedad. La discusión del valor del silencio como herramienta desestabilizadora es, sin duda, uno de los componentes más atractivos del volumen. El autor argumenta con maestría que, como antídoto a la ausencia de la mujer en el lenguaje, Mansfield propone un silencio desafiante usado estratégicamente como "alternativa inteligente a la ignorancia patriarcal" (108). El análisis de la presencia de este elemento en el relato corto "Weak Heart" empapa las páginas del capítulo de un lirismo que suaviza el lenguaje científico empleado en la rigurosa precisión terminológica que el autor hace de conceptos complejos como el de *metaficción historiográfica*. Asimismo, la dimensión subversiva de la paraliterariedad como elemento destructor de la ilusión de realidad comunicada por la obra literaria se pone de manifiesto con brillantez en su discusión de "Miss Brill".

Abre el capítulo tercero con una definición, comprensiva a la vez que rigurosa y detallada, del concepto de intertextualidad, que Rodríguez Salas relaciona muy adecuadamente con los de dialogismo, polifonía y heteroglosia. Señala el autor que la crítica no ha concedido importancia al uso de la intertextualidad en la obra de Mansfield. Sin embargo, tras leer el capítulo, se constata que la alusión a textos anteriores con una finalidad crítica y subversiva es uno de los rasgos posmodernos fundamentales de su narrativa. Por lo tanto, Rodríguez Salas contribuye a llenar un vacío: no sólo porque la significación de las referencias intertextuales en la obra de Mansfield no ha sido subrayada, sino también porque para poner de manifiesto su relevancia, el autor se centra en el análisis de sus "cuentos de hadas modernos", que no han recibido atención crítica al ser considerados obras menores. Dichos cuentos, publicados por vez primera en 1997 por Margaret Scott en dos volúmenes bajo el título *The Katherine Mansfield Notebooks*, subvierten el componente mágico e inocente que tradicionalmente se ha vinculado al género para convertirse en instrumentos de denuncia social.

El listado de las influencias literarias "involuntarias" que pudieron absorber las obras de Mansfield (cuya inclusión demuestra, una vez más, la erudición del autor) sirve de introducción al uso voluntario o consciente del cuento de hadas como herramienta desestabilizadora de la opresión patriarcal. La anatomía de este carácter desestabilizador, que entronca con el rasgo posmoderno fundamental en torno al que se

articula el libro, la marginalidad, se rastrea en los cuentos tempranos y adultos, desde "In Summer" a "The Tiredness of Rosabel". Incluye el autor una descripción pormenorizada de los procedimientos textuales e ideológicos a través de los cuales se presenta a los niños como figuras que, a pesar de estar dotadas de una sensibilidad especial, son incomprendidas e infravaloradas. Del mismo modo, se detallan con precisión los mecanismos empleados por la autora para animalizar a los adultos y desconstruir el binomio "adultos-madurez / niños-inmadurez" (182). Concluye el capítulo con una discusión de la subversión consciente que realiza Mansfield de la literatura sentimental, denunciando "el automatismo de las mujeres, que repiten compulsiva y mecánicamente" (206) los valores de este género. Estimo que hubiera sido conveniente incluir una exégesis detallada del concepto de literatura sentimental, puesto que no podemos olvidar que en el siglo XVIII este género emergió con un claro carácter subversivo contra la tiranía del racionalismo dogmático y un afán por democratizar la cultura. Como Markman Ellis señala en *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (1996), a través de la literatura sentimental las escritoras tuvieron acceso a un mercado editorial dominado por los hombres, se comenzó a reclamar el valor de los elementos culturales marginales y a denunciar prácticas como la esclavitud y la demonización de las prostitutas. No obstante, desde la rigurosidad que caracteriza al presente volumen, el Dr. Rodríguez Salas advierte que la definición de literatura sentimental es compleja y se presta al eclecticismo (230): de hecho, de la lectura de este capítulo se desprende con claridad que el género que Mansfield ataca hunde sus raíces en una de las perversiones de la filosofía sentimental: su asociación con la mera *sensiblerie* (Siebert 353). No puedo concluir mis reflexiones sobre el tercer capítulo sin alabar la brillante aplicación de las teorías propuestas por el formalista ruso Vladimir Propp al análisis de los cuentos de Mansfield: en este punto, el libro adquiere un especial carácter didáctico. Considero que este capítulo en su conjunto se presta especialmente al trabajo de las técnicas de comentario de texto en las asignaturas dedicadas al estudio de la literatura inglesa.

El cuarto y último capítulo, "Ironía, parodia y pastiche", tiene un valor fundamental: el Dr. Rodríguez Salas incluye una explicación rigurosa de estos conceptos encaminada a establecer una clara diferenciación entre los mismos sin ignorar sus nexos de enlace, subrayando su carácter

desdogmatizador de los valores canónicos y su vinculación a la cultura popular, a la periferia. Asimismo, el autor enfatiza, por una parte, el carácter suspensivo de la ironía posmodernista (que a diferencia de la modernista, no busca una verdad unívoca tras la fragmentación, sino la aceptación de la multiplicidad) y, por otra, el carácter desfamiliarizador de la parodia, cuestionando su tradicional inscripción en la mera comicidad. En armonía con el patrón estructurador del resto de capítulos, el autor discute con brillantez la evolución ideológica perceptible en la textualidad de Mansfield en lo concerniente al uso de la ironía, logrando demostrar que "la proyección simplista y lúdica de la burla" (227) jamás se da en esta autora. Es de destacar su análisis del pastiche de la novela sentimental en relatos como "Taking the Veil", donde Mansfield denuncia la "castración que ejerce sobre las mujeres la mentalidad romántica femenina" (234), que las despoja de "las armas necesarias para luchar en un sistema donde [...] no significa[n] nada" (249). El capítulo transciende los límites del discurso filológico para mostrarnos a un Gerardo Rodríguez comprometido que comparte con Mansfield el afán por restaurar la voz femenina a esas regiones culturales 'centrales' de las que determinadas "divinidades culturales" (Lotman 27) las han venido expulsando sistemáticamente.

Las conclusiones, permeadas de la claridad expositiva que impregna la totalidad libro, ofrecen una buena visión de conjunto de los aspectos más relevantes discutidos a lo largo de casi trescientas intensas páginas. Revisando el apartado destinado a las referencias bibliográficas se corrobora, asimismo, la intuición que, desde la primera página, nos sugiere que éste es un trabajo extraordinariamente bien documentado surgido de una labor de investigación ávida por encontrar, desentrañar y comunicar cualquier tipo de información que ayude a la comprensión y revalorización de la figura de Katherine Mansfield. Surgido de una simbiosis perfecta entre rigor científico, didacticismo y, como se ha sugerido anteriormente, compromiso y lirismo, *Katherine Mansfield: el posmodernismo incipiente de una modernista renegada* está predestinado a convertirse no sólo en un valioso objeto de estudio dentro del campo de la crítica aplicada a la literatura inglesa, sino también en un vehículo para la reflexión sobre la dimensión socio-política del posmodernismo y el ejercicio de una lectura relajada guiada por el mero placer de descubrir cómo Mansfield hizo suya la máxima de que la vida y la literatura son inseparables.

NOTAS

[1] En "Postmodern Literary Sensibility: an Eighteenth-Century Antecedent and its Contemporary Significance" (2006) señalé la posibilidad de rastrear antecedentes de la estética posmoderna en las obras de Laurence Sterne (1713-1768).

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María Jesús Lorenzo Modia and Roy C. Boland Osegueda, eds. *Australia and Galicia: Defeating the Tyranny of Distance. Australia e Galicia: Vencendo a Tiranía do Afastamento.* **Sydney: Antipodas Monographs, 2008. xiv + 355 pp. xiv + 373 pp. ISBN: 0-9775868-1-2**

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Strange as it may sound, Australia and Galicia have proved to be, as stated by the title of the project by María José Rodríguez Galdo and Abel Losada Álvarez, "old friends". Their joint work—"Galicia-Australia: Vellos Amigos" [Galicia-Australia: Old Friends]—, as part of an exhibition opened in Sydney in 1999 by the President of Galicia and the Governor of New South Wales is germane to this review in order to enhance the importance of a line of research that points out to a relatively recent (mainly in the last twenty-five years) but strong interest towards the always surprising "proximity" of two places situated in their respective antipodes.

Close scrutiny on the works that explored, evaluated and, consequently, "promoted" the approach between Australia and Galicia reveals a major interest on the historical perspective up to the year 2008. These works sometimes focused on an individual, mainly vindicating the figure of the monk Rosendo Salvado and his sensitivity. Some examples are Antonio Linage Conde's *Rosendo Salvado or the Odyssey of a Galician in Australia* (1998), R.M. Berndt's *Salvado: A Man of and before his Time* (1977). Salvado's founding of New Norcia, in the middle of the Australian jungle, has also been dealt with: George Russo's *Lord Abbot of the Wilderness. The Life and Times of Bishop Salvado* (1980) or the monk's own memories: Rosendo Salvado's *The Salvado Memoirs* (1851), among others.

Galicia's reading as a land of emigration will, of course, not fail to be inscribed within the list of topics relating the two worlds under discussion. With this aim in mind, other authors as Federico Pomar de la Iglesia with *Xuventude na galeguidade* [Youth and their Galician Identity] (1995) proceed from a set of socio-economical elements that integrate such reality, but it will be Carlos Sixirei Paredes in *Asociacionismo galego no exterior II* [Galician Associationism Abroad II] the one to include a decissive and detailed report, by Xosé Ramón Campos Álvarez, of Sydney's Galician Center (559-563).

The book under review is a monographical and bilingual volume of the Australian periodical *Antipodas*, an international refereed journal of Hispanic and Galician Studies that, meeting the highest scholarly criterion, is directed by Prof. Roy C. Boland Osegueda. Divided into three sections, it is the first time that the relationships between Galicia and Australia are studied in such a complete way. The first section, under the title "Retrospective Views", provides a historical and cultural vision of Galicia, Spain and Australia's interaction by means of the six different articles it contains. The first one, "The Search for Paradise. Reflections on Historical and Cultural Relations between Spain, Galicia and Australia", by Roy C. Boland, runs smoothly parting from a deep insight and a scholarly overview. The general editor of *Antipodas* includes here a revision of the Spanish expeditions to the "Terra Incognita" over a period of four hundred years, bringing up legends about the "encounter" of the two lands that still today rise curiosity and interest. Professor Boland's research on Mario Vargas Llosa, with works as *Una rara comedia. Visión y revisión de las novelas de Mario Vargas Llosa* confirms his position as Honorary Professor in the School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies at the University of Queensland (appointed in 2005). With this article, the expert on scholarly international relations transmits his idea of Australia and Spain being an ethnic melting pot imbued with a quixotic soul.

The three next essays focus on the Galician monk from Tui, Rosendo Salvado. "Circulating Correspondence: Rosendo Salvado's Letters in Galicia and Andalusia" by David Barry, is a detailed account of the unpublished correspondence between Bishop Rosendo Salvado, his brother Fr. Santos and Fr. Juan Espinosa, who wanted to join New Norcia, but ended as missionary in Mozambique. Avelino Bouzón's article, "Bishop Salvado, Founder of New Norcia: between Acculturation

and Colonization", draws Rosendo Salvado's picture combining strokes of origins, musical talent, exclaustration and exile in Italy, missionary vocation, and enterprise vision. The last essay on Friar Rosendo Salvado, is "The Diaries of the Galician Rosendo Salvado. Chronicle of a Spanish Mission in Western Australia". Here, Roberto H. Esposto, from the University of Queensland, plays the role of a chronist of daily life in New Norcia Mission through the transcription, modernization and English translation of Rosendo Salvado's unpublished diaries. Esposto also explains Western utopian tradition discourse and how Christian social-utopianism wrapped Salvado's enterprise. Words like "nostalgia", "periphery" and "prelapsarian natives", full of post-modern winks and meaning, bring up the idea of identity, lost in part through Christian humanism and modernization, despite Salvado's attempt to balance "conversion" and his fierce fight for Aboriginal rights.

The fifth article in this section, "Early Links between Galicia and the Pacific: The House of the Maluccas in Corunna", studies the great importance of the project to place the Spice Trading House in A Coruña by the historian Vítor Migués (Universidade de Santiago de Compostela). Filled with humour and intelligence, this article helps the reader to understand the death of an illusion, inspiring a rethinking of the historical structure of the world, leading to the welcome of Langdom's "Hispano-Polynesian Dynasty's" hypotheses, and foreseeing today's renewed research on the subject. Rodríguez and Losada's "A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Relations between Galicia and Australia. Migration and the Labour Market" closes this section offering, as already done in their previous works, an extremely well researched study. This time it focuses on the Spanish Galician migration to Australia and its historical, cultural and economic consequences nowadays and in the future.

The second part of the book, "Contemporary Views", is a wide view of today's Australian and Galician contributions in the fields of media, language and cultural aspects in general, once again contained in six articles. The first of them, by Elena Alfaya, deals in detail with the presence of Australia in the newspaper *La Voz de Galicia* during a twelve month period (January-December 2005). The goal of social change, by means of giving voice to those who fail to have it, comprises the next three essays. Susan Ballyn, from the Universitat de Barcelona and Executive Director of the Australian Studies Center, offers an interview

with an Australian writer, Alf Taylor, a child of the "Lost", now "Stolen Generation", thus victim of the White Australian Policy enforced for more than fifty years. Her [Ballyn's] research on the Convict History of Australia (in particular, the history of Spanish and Lusophone convicts) together with the sensitivity shown in works as "Ethical Approaches to Teaching Aboriginal Culture and Literature in Spain", enlighten a path to the past certainly not easy to tread on. Ballyn skilfully helps Alf Taylor to revise his memories. New Norcia mission is depicted as a place of cruelty, but, rather than dissociating disgust and attatchment, it is Taylor's need to reassure the child inside and the respect owed to the land and his ancestors which fuels the will to go back there.

The next essay, "From the Local to the Global: Feminist and Postcolonial Approaches to the Relationship between the Antipodes (Galicia and Australia)", contains a very interesting hypothesis. Olga Castro Vázquez (University of Vigo), intends to give voice to the "subaltern" (women, colonies, or minority languages such as Galician) using a powerful tool: a non-sexist language that can bring along social change. Finally, Peter Gerrand, fellow at the Spanish / Catalan / Galician and Media Studies at La Trobe University and Professional Faculty of Engineering (University of Melbourne), seeks social change following another direction exposed in his article "The Potential to Win a .gal Domain to Support Worldwide Galician Culture. A View from the Antipodes". Gerrand's experience as engineer, professor and researcher has proved decissive to obtain the ".cat" domain, the first-top-level internet domain and he is now working on the approval by the ICANN (the International Corporation for Addresses, Names and Numbers) of the ".gal" that would, as he pedagogically explains, enable Galicia and Galician to get a global recognition and prestige.

The last two essays deal with the binomial: globalization-identity. Paula Lojo (Galway University) and Lidia Montero (Dublin City University)'s joint and enjoyable article "How Close or Far are Australia and Galicia? *Neighbours* and *Mareas Vivas*: A Case Study" provides a portrayal of the two life-styles based on the way the long-term exposure to a serialized genre is likely to shape people's perception.Using press reports "imprinted" with a fast, personal rythm, Elizabeth Woodward (Universidade da Coruña) in "Mateship and Understanding Cultural Values" clarifies the Australian concept of "mateship", managing to show how cultural models and aspects as humour cannot be contained

in words, unless one transcends language and "translates" those words into the deep culture knowledge of oneself's identity and "the Other's".

Having coupled past and present's heretofore strong link between Australia and Galicia, the third section of the book follows the literary path, leading the reader by the hand of seven distinct contributions on contemporary Australian writers. The first two articles share identity and place as keywords. Elisa Armellino (Universitá di Torino), with "Many Spaces and Many Worlds. The Quest for a Place which is Home in David Malouf's *Fly Away Peter''* (1982) clearly shows how two characters—"wild" Jim Saddler and "civilized" Ashley Crowther—in progress to adulthood, seek the same: "identity" and "place". She also calls the reader's attention on the character of Imogen Hartcourt. Apart from an eco-feminist view (the idea of woman connected to nature), Armellino analyses Imogen's sense of dislocation. The notions of "identity" and "place" are nothing but new; however they undergo reformulations of their traditional meaning in Armellino's conclusion: the constant flux of nature and the non-existence of pure identities or traditions.

Again, place and identity, this time plenty of postmodern twists are the main issues of María Jesús Cabarcos Traseira (Universidade da Coruña)'s comparative study of two novels: "Heros and Mirrors: the Presence of Corunna in Murray Bail's *Eucalyptus* and Sally Morgan's *My Place*". Bail's *Eucalyptus* is an unusual novel, "a fairy tale", while Morgan's *My Place* is a personal story. She explains how, joined by the same signifier "Corunna", Bail's narrative offers a "happy end" blurred by an ecocritical perspective. On the contrary, Morgan's *My Place* suggests that the Aboriginal people's loss of "their place" is an affirmation of Sally Morgan's paying a tribute to her heritage in writing the story of the search for her own. It is evident that Cabarcos intelligently conjoins ecocriticism with a postcolonial point of view and leads the reader to the comprehension of the "absent things", and of non English writers longing for a perfection (England) that was not "theirs", thus being unable to look at the place they were from.

The article by David Clark: "Teenage Wasteland: 'Adolescents and Adolescence in M. J. Hyland's Novels'", also uses two novels by the Australian writer to study the deep meaning of adolescence and the ill-treatment given from society to this childhood to adulthood transition.

Clark's choice to transmit this particular point of view could not be more fortunate: in *How the Light Gets In*, Lou, an Australian exchange student in the States, is a teenager with a difficult past, aware of the mediocrity and hypocrisy of adults and whose vulnerability eventually leads her to a dependance on alcohol. *Carry Me Down* narrates a year in the life of the hyper-sensitive giant John Egan, who lives in a Dublin's new slum, the Ballymun tower blocks and who will end in an institution after trying to smother his mother. Clark stresses how the adolescent protagonists of both novels, portrayed as "ill", are in fact the symbol of an ill society who has neglected the positive importance of adolescence and of the "rites of passage", something the reader and the western society in general are invited to take into consideration.

Cristina Fernández Méndez writes the fourth essay, "Stories That Take Root Become Like Things, Misshapen Things". Murray Bail's *Eucalyptus*: Contesting Traditional Narratives about the Land and Women in Australia". Revisiting the colonialist and patriarchal systems, and the idea of passive land / woman, Cristina Fernández goes a step further and presents a female "awakening" conforming the beginning of a change. An awakening is also somehow present in Carmen María Fernández Rodríguez's essay "From Ireland to Australia: Gendered Illustrations of the Nation in Maria Edgeworth's *Ennui* and Rosa Praed's *Lady Bridget in the Never-Never Land*". There, she analyses the meaning of nation in the novels of two well-known female authors: the Anglo-Irish María Edgeworth and the Anglo-Australian Rosa Praed. Fernández clearly examines the "imposed story" of colonies, compared to the "imposed story" of women debated by Praed and Edgeworth. Profiting from the choice of unconventional female protagonists, the legitimacy of colonial rule and the artificiality of a culture, deprived of its own is questioned.

The sixth contribution is a joint essay by Mª Jesús Lorenzo Modia and José Miguel Alonso Giráldez: "Misfits in the Hands of Destiny: Peter Carey's Antipodean Conquest in *Oscar and Lucinda*". By confronting two opposed characters, they deal with colonization legitimacy, religious beliefs and the adaptation to a new reality in the Australian outback. As cleverly announced in the title (and precisely quoting Oscar's words), both, Oscar and Lucinda, are "misfits in the hands of destiny": a young Australian heiress fascinated with glassworks and a male character,

cursed by traumatic experiences and seeking a quixotic enterprise: founding a glass cathedral in Aboriginal territories.

No matter how profound the philosophical or psychological underpinnings of culture, providing terms in which the notion of fate can be apprehended is not an easy one. The authors of the essay emphasize the importance of destiny, with "gambling" as a central symbol within the novel, and the way Carey transmits the meaning of "bet". Hitherto, the possibilities of chance and destiny would be inscribed within a frame proceeding from religion and moving towards literary magical realism. Lorenzo and Giráldez take the latter and dive under Oscar and Lucinda's "love story"'s surface to explain the co-existence of opposites—eventually of reason and emotion—wrapped in a magical realism, capable of producing the aforementioned fusion of opponents.

A broadening of perspectives on Carey's unconventional vision little admits any restrictions; therefore, they analyse, not only the book, but also the cinematographic version of the novel, directed by Gillian Armstrong. Metaliterary references are used to help the "overnourished" receptor locate the text in a postmodern and postcolonial setting unified (as Lorenzo and Giráldez clearly explain) by means of a character-narrator. The story of the couple is wisely interpreted as parallel to the history of present-day Australia. The tension between center and periphery empire and colonies or, eventually, Oscar and Lucinda is considered as part of historical, cultural and literary points of view wherewith to accomplish a thorough reflection.

The very last essay of both the section and the book is "The Vital Cartography of Jennifer Strauss's poetry" by the actual president of AEDEAN [Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies], M. P. Socorro Suárez Lafuente (Universidad de Oviedo). From a formal perspective, the depth of analysis constitutes the core of Suárez's research and is present in this article on Jennifer Strauss's complex poetry. The reader is bravely led to a deconstruction of the genesic myths and the fairy tales that configure human mind from the cradle. Suárez uncovers the poet's deliberate ambiguity towards life and work's intertwining, without forgetting the more intimate tones, mainly on loss and death. Suarez's capacity for empathising with "distant" (in time and space) female writers already shown in "La literatura australiana de principios de siglo" and in "La mujer como tema intertextual en la

literatura contemporánea en la lengua inglesa" characterises her as a scholar that joins a balanced reactive and a proactive attitude towards women's adverse set of circumstances. This article reaffirms Suárez's determination to dismantle the control of those who have the power over the "have-nots".

This bilingual volume, with a title directly echoing Blainey's *The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History*, is a comprehensive work with a design by Cabarcos (Universidade da Coruña), which, in words of Lorenzo and Boland in the preface to the book, acts as symbol of "the symbiosis between Australia and Galicia. Taking different aspects of culture as reference, a successful attempt to approach two distant lands has been done, seeing to what extent the features they [the lands] share represent the dialogue between the individual and globality by means of constructing opportunities to allow one to activate and enliven the other.

Throughout the articles there are data remissions (in the format of words with superscript arabic numerals) to a list of "Notes", placed at the end of each article, which provide the information needed to complete those data. There is also a detailed bibliography, with both primary and secondary sources. The book reads well despite the diversity of its contents. It is neatly organized, with every page labelled with the author's name in capital letters in bold type on the right hand corner. In fact, the true value of the book dwells on the wide scope it covers: the lack of a unifying thematic principle should not be interpreted as a shortcoming but, quite on the contrary, as the first successful attempt to offer such an ample perspective on Australia's analysis.

In conclusion, this volume presents nineteen high-quality essays illustrating a variety of approaches that highlight a number of interesting topics for further investigation. The mediatic impact of the book, (from journalistic articles to TV programmes) means an ongoing and fast growing interest in the subject. Surely, this book will have a stimulating influence in those researchers who believe in "defeating the tyranny of distance" and will contribute to the advancement in the different fields studied.

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FAUSTIAN CHARACTERISTICS IN JOHN FOWLES´ *THE MAGUS*

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Abstract

The Magus is John Fowles´ youthful attempt at comprising his philosophy of life into a book. Due to the author´s many readings and liking for speculation, the novel contains a wealth of possibilities of interpretation, some of which are merely sketched – while many others are disseminated throughout the book and can be followed and assembled together. Most interesting is the fact that such dissemination allows us to read different itineraries and where they intersect and influence each other. *The Magus*, as a literary site, can be partly read as Eden, as Paradise Lost and later Regained, as Prospero´s island in *The Tempest*, and also as a contemporary version of Doctor Faustus. The structure, the main characters and several passages in Bourani fit in the Faustian tradition and add a contemporary sense to the myth: whether Nicholas is saved or not is not as important nowadays as the fact that he has to fight, even against himself, to deserve his Gretchen.

Keywords: intertextuality, dissemination, choice, free will, truth, love, play.

John Fowles spent twenty five years of his life writing and revising *The Magus*. It was his first attempt at writing a novel, although he first published *The Collector* in 1963, and, in 1965, a book of "ideas", *The Aristos: a self portrait* in ideas, thematically closely connected, thematically, with *The Magus*. *The Magus* was finally published in 1966, and a revised edition appeared in 1977. In spite of the time dedicated to this novel, Fowles was never satisfied with it, nor were many critics at the time of its publication. For some of them, it was an immature work, while others considered it too wordy or pretentious, and the novelist himself considered it "the only book I have deliberately *killed off* before it was truly ready. But at that time it was threatening to obsess me for years more, and it had to be exorcised" (Huffaker, 1980:44).

As a matter of fact, forty years after it first came out, The Magus is still around and alive. It has been the occasion of much critical speculation, and it has been analyzed from many angles: Fowles´s book has variously been found to depict the eternal fight of man against the gods, the re-enactment of the Garden of Eden, the re-writing of The Tempest or the doubts of *Hamlet*, apart from obvious influences from *Great Expectations* and *The Turn of the Screw*, among many other suggestions made by the critics. As Patricia Merivale put it: "Fowles´s wonderfully eclectic intertextuality will keep commentators busy for some time to come" (1984:159). In my opinion, those many readings of *The Magus* are good proof of its intrinsic value as "a classic" in contemporary English Literature. Perhaps its literary force resides, precisely, in its immaturity, its incompleteness – had Fowles worked on it till the end of his life with the intention of making a masterpiece of it, the chances are high that he would never have dared to make it public. *The Magus* is a book open to reflection, to options and to criticism, and I find it revealing that it appeals to my undergraduate students year after year since I first included it in the syllabus in 1980; it is a novel in which they discover either some of their own troubled thoughts and wishes, or the dubious forces that drive the society in which they are growing up.

It is commonly agreed that *The Magus* focuses on the Greek philosophical principle *Know thyself*, closely followed by the themes of free will and choice that will drive Nicholas to another Greek concept,

the fundamental distinction *hoi polloi / hoi aristoi*: the Few and the Many. These themes are so universal and so basic to human life that they alone might account for the success of *The Magus* throughout the last quarter of the 20th century and into the 21st. There is a sentence, ascribed to Michel Foucault, that can turn around the main arguments of the novel and open up a wealth of possibilities for new interpretations: "perhaps the aim nowadays is not to discover what we are, but to refute what we are"[1]. Be it a journey of self-discovery or a refusal to acknowledge any transcendental dimension in human nature, The Magus poses some of the recurrent questions that arise at some point in our lives. Conchis himself explains those coincidences in the following lines: "I am suggesting nothing. There was no connection between the events. No connection is possible. Or rather, I am the connection, I am whatever meaning the coincidence has" (311)[2].

One connection that springs easily to mind is that of the Faustian theme: we have two main characters of apparently opposite natures, contending on the border where fact and fiction and good and evil meet, and striving to fulfil their own wishes. Every few years a new Faustian character appears in the history of world literature - Nicholas Urfe being a good exponent in this chain - since the unbroken recurrence of this theme derives, no doubt, from the intrinsic Faustian / Mephistophelian nature of the human condition. Paul H. Lorenz quotes Fowles in *The Aristos* saying that "the dividing line between the Few and the Many must run through each individual, not between individuals" (Lorenz, 1996:1).

Many of the contemporary Faustian characters[3] worry about riches, beauty, power and fame, as it pertains to a society mostly given over to youth and success. Yet, John Fowles managed to perform the literary miracle of keeping Faust within his intellectual and transcendental boundaries. Paraphrasing Patricia Merivale (1984:158), John Fowles has returned, largely with the aid of Jung, to a more affirmative, less ironic and much more communal version of the Faustian quest.

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[1] "peut-étre qu´aujourd´hui, l´objectif n´est pas de découvrir ce que nous sommes mais refuser ce que nous sommes".

[2] I quote from the 1977 edition, Triad / Panther Books, London.

[3] To name but a few: Robert Nye: Faust, 1980; John Banville: *Mefisto* , 1989; Emma Tennant: *Faustine*, 1992; Fay Weldon: *Growing rich*, 1984.

By placing Nicholas in a cast-off island, far from the maddening crowd and contemporary material temptations, a location which could keep more universal aspirations at bay, Fowles constructed the ideal conditions for the Faustian hero. Nicholas Urfe is a lonely figure, unencumbered by familial ties or cares, curious about what life has to offer and aspiring to other "realities": "I didn´t know where I was going, but I knew what I needed. I needed a new land, a new race, a new language; and, although I couldn´t have put it into words then, I needed a new mystery" (10). Nicholas Urfe, a modern Everyman, carries also the burden of human frailties, a necessary condition to enter the Faustian Corpus: Urfe falls easily for female beauty and is ready to be fooled into a pleasurable life and, correspondingly, to deceive and be deceived.

But Faust would not be such without a Mephistopheles. They need each other to be completed, to recreate the myth, and to define their limits and their aspirations. Conchis, pointing to Everyman´s *conscience* from the very pronunciation of his name, takes on the Mephistotelian condition involved in the myth, but modernizes it into contemporary illusionism: he becomes the *impresario* of the twentieth century, the one that stages history to allow society to re-enact its role and see it from outside, realizing its futility. As Onega puts it,

> The combination of the formal alternation of elements from the masque with elements of the discourse and the metadiscourse, plus the polymorphous metaphorical expansions of meanings effected by the iconic tales and scenes, endlessly pointing to various, more complex levels of reading, is what has sometimes produced a *baffling* effect on the readers of *The Magus*. These readers feel, as it were, lost in a *centerless maze* which leads them nowhere. (1989:38; my italics)

The accumulation of words pointing to indecisiveness in the previous quotation, together with the listing of several critical devices in the first three lines, aptly define the problems a contemporary devil might have to successfully approach a Faustian personality. This transposition of thought is possible because what implied readers are meant to experience in *The Magus* equals what Nicholas, insofar as he is also a *narrateur*, is supposed to learn; not in vain is Fowles [like Conchis] "playing a godgame with the minds of his readers" (Lorenz,

1996:1).

Conchis also stages situations to push Nicholas to choose, in order to heal both his complexes and his mental shortcomings, thus becoming "Conchis the Great Psychoanalist" as well. This entertainer and healer is so essential to Nicholas, to society and to *The Magus*, that Fowles himself pointed out his importance in the 1977 "Foreword":

> If there was some central scheme beneath the stew of intuitions about the nature of human existence –and of fiction- it lies perhaps in the alternative title, whose rejection I still sometimes regret: *The Godgame*. I did intend Conchis to exhibit a series of masks representing human notions of God, from the supernatural to the jargon-ridden scientific; that is, a series of human illusions about something that does not exist in fact, absolute knowledge and absolute power. (10)

Since God and the Devil are so inextricably intertwined in human existence as Faust and Mephistopheles, Fowles´s admission of *The Godgame* as an appropriate title for his novel makes *The Devil´s Game* equally possible, and validates, therefore, a Faustian reading of *The Magus*. A reading that can also be based on the meaning of the main characters´ names: Conchis and Urfe represent the complementary elements of consciousness and earth, mind and body, to such an extent that W.H. Auden´s proposal that "Faust and Mephisto should be played by identical twins" (quoted in Merivale, 1984:152) is completely understandable. This duplicity can be extended to the polarity of myths, beliefs and thought at large: it is yin and yang, good and evil, ethics and aesthetics, and so on. We must also keep in mind that Mephistopheles is not The Devil itself, but a *devilish* figure that has become considerably humanized through the centuries, actually since Goethe´s version, to a point that he has turned into Faust´s companion and "friend", as it were, in contemporary works.

The concepts of will and freedom implicit in the argument are, again, basic to humanity. If freedom means the possibility of reaching self-definition, and will is self-definition turned into action, then we can conclude that neither Faust nor Mephistopheles are free, since they are subjected to their roles and tied to their eternal mythic nature, with no room for choice nor free will, less they subvert the archetype

and boycott the legendary tradition. Luckily for us, the very nature of literature, plus Fowles´s authorial power, allows both characters a wide scope of action, thanks to which they can meditate and act and construct their own selves, while fulfilling the essentials of the tradition the readers expect. There is no suspension of disbelief here, there is only human necessity and the recurrent oxymorons and tautologies that account for the survival of the human race: the hypotheses of true freedom, the will *to will*, and the future past and the past future. The fact that Conchis and Nicholas are embedded in each other accounts for Huffaker´s words that "Fowles has also strengthened his message that events occur by chance, in a universe where man must choose freely in the absence of an intervening god" (1980:45).

The Magus preserves the traditional themes and fulfils the essentials of the Faustian structure. If, as Schrirmer-Imhoff put it, "Jede Generation sucht ihren eigenen Faust"[4] (1951:170), then Nicholas Urfe is looking for answers to questions he does not know how to phrase: "The truth was I was not a cynic by nature; only by revolt. I had got away from what I hated, but I hadn´t found where I loved, and so I pretended that there was nowhere to love" (17). This pretence makes him unfit for feeling or loving, thus turning him into the archetypal "homme revolté" of that century of wars, violence and uncertainties. White magic or festive tricks are no longer the mystical food for a late twentieth-century Faust, deprived of encyclopaedic knowledge and intellectual esteem; what Nicholas needs is that experience of love and communal feeling which is indispensable to making this world a dwelling place. Barry Olshen points out Nicholas´ basic problem: "[he] understands little of the nature of love and freedom. For the former he substitutes sex and power; he confuses the latter with irresponsible escape from emotional entanglement" (Olshen, 1978:35).

The moment of supreme dejection, when Urfe proves ripe for a pact with other forces, comes with his staging of suicide and his rejection of death: it is the feeling of life and the sense of memory that he lacks, companionship, in a word, a "death to be remembered, not the true death of a true suicide, the death obliterate" (62). His

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[4] "Cada generación busca su propio Fausto"(my translation).

"rebelliousness" thus tamed through a fake suicide, and the Mephistophelian whiff already permeating his entourage (to witness: love unresolved, loneliness, doubt, disease, fear and anger, to say the least), Nicholas has only to abjure God to be ready for Conchis.

Conchis appears on the scene, mighty and secure in his own experience of hell[5], and he will be multiplied *ad infinitum* in a never-ending succession of battles and wars that will keep going the "mephitic stench" (129) that clogs our senses and our wills. As the good doctor / magus he is expected to be, he starts by diagnosing Urfe´s contemporary disease, and will give proof of his might and knowledge before applying the elaborate, but necessary, treatment that will constitute the bulk of *The Magus*. Urfe´s disease is

> the characteristic one of your contrasuggestible century: to disbelieve, to disprove. I see this very clearly underneath your politeness. You are like a porcupine. When that animal has its spines erect, it cannot eat. If you do not eat, you will starve. And your prickles will die with the rest of your body. (105)

Conchis, then, subjects Nicholas to the experience of narrated history, and of visual, auditory and olfactory stimuli his curiosity will not let him avoid. Thus enticed, he will be faced with the force of this *new historian* method of analysis, and, moved by circumstances, Nicholas will bend his prickles a little, and, accepting the world around, he will enter "The Domaine" and become Faust, our contemporary: a lonely, bored heroe embarking in an adventure, the consequences of which he cannot yet fathom.

Conchis lures Nicholas into his godgame by exciting his curiosity, another necessary ingredient in the Faustian Plot. Conchis first makes himself inaccessible and, later, cryptic; he shows himself as the master of time and history, of the art of narrating and the art of staging. He also declares his hatred for fiction, yet professes the impossibility of a univocal reality: no thing is only what we take it to be, no word points only to one message. All sensorial messages are crisscrossed in *The Magus* by unending possibilities, thus tossing Nicholas Urfe from fiction to reality as if he were a ball and the world a tennis court. At

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[5] "a place without the possibility of reason" (122).

one point, Conchis admonishes him: "Let me pass on an axiom about our species, Nicholas: never take another human being literally. Even when they are so ignorant that they do not know what *literally* means" (231). And Nicholas is prompt to reply: "There´s no danger of that. Here, anyway". Thus, Nicholas shows himself as a Faust aware of his predicament, one who knows that there are other worlds outside Bourani, if only he chose to open the gate never to come back. Actually, this is what Patricia Merivale concludes in her already classic study on the Modern Romantic Quest, namely, that *The Magus* is not wholly successful as a Gothic tale because Fowles wants to have the advantages of realism as well as those of a melodramatic, mythic fable. Nicholas is "too much" of a character to be a gothic hero, "not enough" of one to be Faust.

In Chapter Thirteen, Fowles depicts Conchis as the prescient Prospero, the beneficial magus that knows from experience what *is* and what *might be*. "I envy you [he tells Nicholas]. You have the one thing that matters. You have all your discoveries before you" (82). In so saying, Conchis places himself in the role of a Goethian Mephistopheles that leads, accompanies and helps Faust in his world pilgrimage. He plays the occasional magus when circumstances demand it, but he is more of an inducer than a doer. "There´s a card in the Tarot pack called the magus. The magician [and] conjuror" (477). The card appears on the table, by sheer chance, and the dealer has to interpret its meaning and relate it to the disposition and sequential appearance of the rest of the cards. Once Conchis has appeared in Nicholas´ life, it will be Nicholas´ task to react and act, not merely to stand up defensively and passively against the lashes of life as he had done up to that point.

In the Faustian tradition, something specific is expected of every Faust, in accordance with the philosophical and political principles of the age he lives in. As said above, the Nicholas of the 1960s is expected, to act, to participate, to judge, to decide, to do, to seek, never to "cease from exploration" (69) – not merely to enjoy the moment, to use and dispose of it, but to answer socially and personally for the life he leads. Mrs de Seitas warns him accordingly: "It is you who make our situation" (580), and Conchis tells him once and again that there is no previous script, that the different events are determined by Nicholas´ reactions and wishes. We hear Mrs de Seitas

again, saying that "my daughters were nothing but a personification of your own selfishness" (601).

   Nicholas´ task is defined very clearly in Raimon Panikkar´s "Novenario de prioridades", where philosophy is considered to be tri-dimensional, insofar knowledge is not possible without the concourse of feeling and action:

> Si la abstracción consigue "aislar" el conocimiento como si se tratara de un elemento químico, lo que resulta es quizás una constatación exacta, pero no un conocimiento verdadero. De modo similar, la acción sin el amor y sin el conocimiento equivale a ir a ciegas. Así como el amor, sin el conocimiento ni la acción, es sentimentalismo y narcisismo estéril (1992:236)[6].

   The common person, one of the Many according to John Fowles´s own terminology, usually finds a middle course through these vital organizers, or else adheres to one or the other and hope for the best. Conchis´ experiment is completely devoted to making its subject (Nicholas, on this occasion) one of the Few, one of the elect: one who is able to conjugate the right ethical choice with the excellence of performance in whatever s/he chooses and, furthermore, one who is ready to accept that her/his accomplishments are the product of a series of hazardous components for which society is to be thanked (James S. Hans: 1994). The elect must admit that good comes from society and will eventually go back to society as a seed for a further good to come.

   Therefore, and according to these premises, Nicholas´ affected rebelliousness is challenged to its core by Conchis´ experiment. Urfe is shaken out of his interested aestenia and taught to feel, while, at the same time, he is expected to control his feelings. Conchis points out "the very difficult, and delicate, role I am asking you to play" (229). Nicholas should emerge as "an elect" after having grasped the meaning of several concepts he has always used unconsciously. For instance, he must grasp the concept of Freedom (*eleutheria*) both as a

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   [6] "If abstraction succeeded in isolating knowledge as if it were a chemical element, the result might be an exact assertion, but never real knowledge. Similarly, action without love and without knowledge is the same as walking blindly. And love, without knowledge or action, is mere sentimentality and sterile narcissism." (My translation).

personal, but also as a social, supreme good, as part of "the apparently sadistic conspiracy against the individual we call evolution. Existence. History" (479). The implicit paradox, once again, is that one should feel *free* even when one´s wishes collude with those of others and it is us who must make concessions, or when so many considerations have to be taken into account that they counterweight any justification we may find to indulge in our wishes, and when, even so, we understand that, in denying ourselves as individuals, some kind of social good, some historical balance helps to conform our own concept of Freedom. This is, precisely, one of the axioms in *The Magus*: "the better you understand freedom, the less you possess it" (518).

Conchis exposes Nicholas to these complex processes mainly through the medium of history. Like his Faustian predecessors, Urfe "travels" through time and space to fulfil the stages of his pilgrimage, but while Marlowe´s and Goethe´s Fausts enjoyed their predicament without reserve, Urfe (a more sophisticated man, a man of the twentieth century) constantly feels that the dice of his Mephistopheles are loaded against him: he is submitted to momentous decisions on the spot, exposed to ridicule, given the means of killing in the form of a loaded gun, and confused into all sorts of extra-sensorial delusions. Yet, he comes back to Conchis every time; not in pursue of self-knowledge (although that is the aim of the godgame) but looking for sex, revenge, entertainment and answers.

Previous Fausts take their pleasure of Gretchen and Helena, trick the Pope and the church, and boast knowledge and power in front of their students and the world. Fowles´s Urfe, on the contrary, is himself the subject of all tricks and mockery, but while other Fausts are being snared into hell through a life of pleasure and self-indulging, Urfe is being shown the way to perfection and freedom. This significant change is the consequence of Fowles´s heaven and hell having been dispossessed of transcendental connotations from the very moment in which fiction and reality were turned into relative concepts; good and evil, angels and flames are translated into contemporary equivalents, less symbolic but equally forceful. What is important is that the initial Faustian thirst for knowledge, for determining and discerning True from False, remains. After one performance at Bourani, Nicholas confronts Conchis in the following terms:

> "I´d enjoy it all more if I knew what it meant."
> (…)
> "My dear Nicholas, man has been saying what you have just said
> for the last ten thousand years. And the one common feature of all
> the gods he has said it to is that not one of them has ever returned
> an answer."
> "Gods don´t exist to answer. You do."
> "I am not going to venture where even the gods are powerless.
> You must not think I know every answer. I do not." (185)

In his Faustian role as the contemporary Everyman, Nicholas
meets, without forewarning or foreknowledge, such ordeals as
choosing blindly out of a handful of pills, one of which contains deadly
poison; going through the excesses of a luxurious life, in the midst of
social penury; or being rejected by his chosen love after he has already
rejected the other alternative. But the most traumatic experience, and
probably the most common one, is to become aware of the futility of
war while in the midst of a battle. Nicholas "experiences" not only
World War I (the Great War, the War to end all wars) but also World
War II, in which Conchis was offered the chance to kill a comatose
guerrilla to save his life and that of eighty civilians, but was morally
incapable of doing it, largely because he could not understand the
potential goodness that could derive from it, nor could he see the
rationality implied in those butcheries. With this switch in the story, in
which the mighty Conchis doubts and suffers, we appreciate the more
humanly aspects of Mephistopheles.

Marlowe´s Faust knows good from evil, but fails to make the
ethical choice that society expects from him, while Goethe´s Faust,
who also knows the difference, opts for an aesthetic and humanist
choice to redeem himself. Thomas Mann´s Faust is not given the joys
of a humanist solution because his is an age of despairing
individualism, but one which, in turn, by definition, also offers
Leverkuhn the glory of a solely aesthetic answer. Urfe has, once more,
the difficult task of harmonizing contraries and contradictory
messages, while, at the same time, taking all possibilities into account.
His is the task of assuming "the good of it and the evil of it" (241)
within the same unique experience, and the task of finding the way out
of the very Faustian question: "Why should such complete pleasure be
evil?" (179). One year before the publication of the revised edition of

The Magus, Dwight Eddins blocked some of the false exits with the following words:

> Faced with his own recurrent gullibility, the reader [namely, Nicholas] is thus forced to admit his tendency to "collect," to seize upon convenient "solutions" that are nothing more than screens hiding the next mystery. (...) it is precisely Fowles´s larger context of hazard that raises the machinery of melodrama to self-consciousness and lends it thematic significance. The result is the active initiation of the reader into awareness of the provisional nature of his own constructs. (1976:212)

The Magus does provide an answer of sorts to atone for such choices and methods of trial and error, just before the book must, inevitably, come to its end. On page 641 we read:

> History has superseded the ten commandments of the Bible; for me they had never had any real meaning, that is, any other than a conformitant influence. But (...) I knew that at last I began to feel the force of this super-commandment, summary of them all; somewhere I knew I had to choose it, and every day afresh, even though I went on failing to keep it. Conchis had talked of points of fulcrum, moments when one met one´s future. I also knew it was all bound with Alison, with choosing Alison, and having to go on choosing her every day. Adulthood was like a mountain, and I stood at the foot of this cliff of ice, this impossible and unclimbable: *Thou shalt not inflict unnecessary pain*.

With this summary Nicholas proves that he has learned to accept himself, shortcomings included, and that he intends to go on living within the ordinariness of everyday life, even though (or maybe, because) he has been pronounced "an elect". As the Faust he represents, at one point in his life he did betray both his true self and those who loved him, as a consequence of the distractions derived from the Faustian pact. But the experience of good / evil, fiction / reality and individual / social good yield the doors of the contemporary holistic pattern of life open for him: "The mess of my life, the selfishness and false turnings and the treacheries, all these things could fall into place, they could become a source of construction rather than a source of chaos, and precisely because I had no other choice" (164).

This acceptance of life, past and future, verifies the end of the Faustian cycle, insofar as it completes the meaning of the lines marked in T.S. Eliot´s "Little Gidding", which constituted the first step in Nicholas´ enticement into the godgame. Nicholas does arrive where he started, but London is no longer a mere dwelling place, but a site full of meanings. His life in London after the period of exploration is hard and complex from a psychological point of view, but it also contains an element of hope, which is more than can be said of many a classic Faust.

The female roles in this journey of exploration are played by Alison and Julie, who fulfil the roles of Gretchen and Helena respectively. Alison is the down-to-earth impressionable girl that is ready to fall for Nicholas´ advances, and dreams of a lasting companionship in return for her love. But such an easy life is not possible for a Faust, and Alison´s expectations, like those of Gretchen, will be crudely thwarted. Nicholas´ opinion of Alison, in the first days in Bourani, leaves no room for doubt: "Pretty *enough* body, pretty *enough* clothes, a good walk, the *same old* wounded face and truth-seeking eyes. Alison might launch ten ships in me; but Julie launched a thousand" (246; my italics). In order to alleviate Nicholas´ behaviour, we could add that the bad deed is done with Mephistopheles´ concourse, because, in the end, it will be Alison / Gretchen that will save Nicholas by enriching his existence and rooting him to life.

Julie is Helena from the outset; to the point that her prolepsis in the novel is Greece itself: "The woman was Greece" (39), "so sensually provocative that I must fall physically and desperately in love with her, and at the same time so calmly aristocratic that I should never be able to approach her" (49). In fact, that is precisely how Nicholas will see Julie, as sensual, provocative, calm and unattainable; as unattainable as Helena is for the subsequent Fausts in history. Julie, like Greece, is many-faced and complex, a mixture of fiction and reality, a mixture of all that is good and pleasurable and all that is evil and still pleasurable too. To make matters still more confusing in *The Magus*, Julie has a twin sister, June, equally beautiful and equally enchanting, and an ideal Doppelgängerin: June provides relationships with the pinch of salt that Julie lacks, and seems to fill Julie´s apparent inconsistencies with some kind of logic.

Both Julie and June are assistants to Conchis and, as such, they

also receive the names of Lily and Rose, the traditional symbols that accompany the magician in the Tarot[7]. Julie / June, or Lily / Rose, act now as teachers now as actresses, as a Greek goddess or as Boticelli´s Venus, as a schizophrenic relation of Conchis or as an adventurous English girl. They alternate roles as they alternate names and supplant each other or Conchis´ long-dead only love, Lily Montgomery. Julie and June scan time and space with no apparent damage to themselves, thus proving to be literary personae and, as such, far less interesting than Alison.

In a process similar to that of the twins, the Faustian Nights (both the Walpurgisnacht and the classical night) expand and blend throughout the novel. Classical elements and apparent medieval witchcraft are mixed in several episodes taking place in Bourani. The war episodes, the mad spells, the nightmarish court session and its bizarre characters, followed by the flogging and the disintoxication mise-en-scene are examples that could easily fit within the Walpurgis Night; so are the peasant characters that epitomize misery, ignorance and disease, both in Greece and in the France of de Deukas. But every one of the elements in this Walpurgis list coexists with items relevant to classicism; such as order, stability, beauty and proportion, health, knowledge and the sense of transcending. *The Magus* may be said to have succeeded in maintaining the characteristics that make the Faustian experience a polyhedric and a multifarious one, and Nicholas a coherent *Faustian* character:

> As in all the eclectic allegories, Fowles´s narrative and dramatic structures are staged, episodic, theatrical, disjunct, held together by the hero´s character in its dynamic relationship with its Magus and dark double, who forces upon him visions which are lessons as well as tests. (Merivale 1984:161)

The third and last part of *The Magus* deals with the feeling *for* love, but not *with* Love, with the love that redeems, as in the classic

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[7] In connection with the symbolic flower names of the twin sisters, we should note that Alison is also the name of a flower, as the novel itself explains: "from the Greek a- (without), -lyssa (madness). In English: Sweet Alison" (566). So, given the equivocal nature of the twins and their role in the plot, a confirmed elect, as Nicholas is in the end, should not hesitate to choose Alison, "the one without madness", out of the three eligible young women in the book.

Faustian plot, because, in the twentieth century, there is no heaven to lose or to gain: "The godgame is over. (...) Because there is no God, and [life] is not a game" (625). The final evaluation or literary ending of every Faustian plot depends on the historical perspective of its time. Nicholas meets no decisive end, since Fowles, true to postwar English intellectual liberalism, passes no judgment on him; instead, Urfe is required to go on acting, deciding, pursuing, and his final outcome rests completely in his own hands. His is a life of continual activity in a postmodern world that enacts continuous change and exacts ethical and aesthetic positioning. The fact that at the beginning of the book[8] Nicholas Urfe had been unmistakenly placed as a category, as an example to mankind, makes his knowledge universal and what he has learnt useful to all. The quotation from T.S. Eliot used by Conchis as the matrix of his game also constitutes the guarantee of Fausts to come, since it enhances the recurrence of human frailty but also human stamina and resilience. And, as Merivale said (1984:161), if we work back from The Magus, like a quest-hero returning to his origins, we will arrive at [Goethe´s] *Faust*. As a link in the Faustian tradition, *The Magus* partakes of the paradox that ensures its continuation, as the novel itself highlights in the quotations displayed for the introduction to Nicholas´ experiment:

> Knowledge the shade of a shade,
> Yet must thou sail after knowledge.
> (Ezra Pound. *The Magus*: 70)

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[8] "I still felt that [Conchis] had no real interest in what I was saying. What interested him was something else, some syndrome I exhibited, some category I filled. I was not interesting in myself, but only as an example." (91)

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