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ARTICLES

Bodies that Speak. Traumatic Corporeal Spatiality in Doris Lessing's *novella* "The Eye of God in Paradise"

Cuerpos que hablan. La espacialidad corporal traumática en la novela de Doris Lessing "El ojo de Dios en el paraíso"

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Abstract

The present article examines the treatment of spatial corporeality in Doris Lessing's *novella* "The Eye of God in Paradise" (1957) set in Germany in the aftermath of the Second World War. Even though Lessing's works have been studied from different perspectives—as the abundant critical studies show—, spatial corporeality has not been analysed before. This paper argues that the characters' bodies, insofar as physical spaces of flesh and blood that are lived and where power is exerted, represent the trauma encountered by countless anonymous people who suffered due to the horrors of the war and who have only been made visible by the author's skilled pen. By highlighting the corporeal spatiality in its physical, psychological, and sociohistorical division, Lessing has brought to the fore the intense suffering of unknown people, to give them identity as well as visibility and transform them into a locus of contesting power relations.

Keywords: space, literature, body, war, trauma.

Resumen

El presente artículo examina el tratamiento de la espacialidad corporal en la novela corta de Doris Lessing "El ojo de Dios en el paraíso" (1957),

ambientada en la Alemania posterior a la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Aunque las obras de Lessing han sido estudiadas desde diferentes perspectivas—como demuestran los abundantes estudios críticos—, la espacialidad corporal no ha sido analizada antes. En este trabajo se argumenta que los cuerpos de los personajes, en cuanto espacios físicos de carne y hueso que se viven y donde se ejerce el poder, representan el trauma sufrido por innumerables personas anónimas que padecieron los horrores de la guerra y que sólo han sido visibilizados por la hábil pluma de la autora. Al resaltar la espacialidad corpórea en su división física, psicológica y sociohistórica, Lessing ha puesto en primer plano el intenso sufrimiento de personas desconocidas, para darles identidad y visibilidad y transformarlas en un locus de impugnación de las relaciones de poder.

Palabras clave: espacio, literatura, cuerpo, guerra, trauma.

[T]he body becomes the testing ground of human endurance.
(Laurie Vickroy 168)

Modernity has come to be understood under the sign of the wound: the modern subject has become inseparable from the categories of shock and trauma.
(M. Seltzer 18)

1. Introduction

"Our skin is a big blank page; the body, a book,"[1] Irene Vallejo (79) states, a space in which life ordeals are inscribed. Therefore, literature has the potential to unveil the way ordinary people live and endure particular historical events and, sometimes, challenge their hegemonic versions. To write involves an attempt to come to terms with hidden old wounds and traumas, hence, to work them through, the writer constructs different worlds, spaces, and characters that will enable him/her to speak about what has been hurting for a long time as well as to give visibility to political and social wrongdoings. Space, as a living and active entity created by the people who inhabit a particular place, is produced within the geographical boundaries and in the atmosphere created by the participants, in the bodies of its people, "the outer covering[s] of the sel[ves]" (Sprague 99) and in the texts that narrate the events. In so doing, the literary text becomes the memory site that bears witness to the individual and communal suffering which has been a "permanent dialectics

in [Doris]Lessing's works" (Sprague 8). Therefore, the characters' bodies in the *novella* "The Eyes of God in Paradise"— first published in *The Habit of Loving* (1957)—, insofar as physical spaces of flesh and blood that are lived and where power is exerted (Lefebvre, Soja), represent the trauma encountered by countless anonymous people who suffered due to the horrors of the war and who have only been made visible by the author's skilled pen. From this perspective, my objective is to foreground those people excluded from the official history, the ordinary men and women who populate Europe carrying the war wounds on their bodies. This *novella* has been analysed from a different point of view by Mona Knapp and Margaret Drabble gives an account of its plot in the Introduction to Lessing's *Stories* (2008), therefore, my approach is innovative within Lessing's critical studies.

Fiona Becket argues that Doris Lessing has always had "an interest in what might be called selective cultural amnesia" (134) so, by being a transgressor, as Alice Ridout and Susan Watkins have called her, she has affirmed her strong commitment to the individual and the collective in her entire *oeuvre*. Moreover, Elizabeth Maslen claims that Lessing "has always been drawn, from her earliest writings to commitment literature, witness literature, whether in her fiction or her non-fiction" (152), even though the topics she addresses are controversial, "always aware of those whose voices go unheard, always urging her readers to question" (153). Her childhood recollections of the First World War with the gruesome images of maimed war veterans in Rhodesia and her experiences of the Second and its aftermath made her include literature and history into a symbiotic relationship which allowed her to acquire a different way of seeing the world. The wars are omnipresent in her works, oscillating between an open presence or a hidden existence, but always focused on the way victims and their traumas influence the society where they live or return to, as in the case of the veteran soldiers. Therefore, the social context, the collective, and in sum, the space, suffer from a two-fold situation: the influence the victims exert on the societal fabric and the considerable impact that affects the perception of events and their possibility of recovery.

The present article focuses on Lessing's full exposure to common people's bodies and the way they recount their sorrows and narrate their position in the world after the horrors endured in the Second World War. The study is based on the works of academics such as Henri Lefebvre (1991), Yi-Fu Tuan (1977), Ali Madanipour (2003) as well as Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (1992), Cathy Caruth (1995), Ruth Leys (2000) and Roger Luckhurst (2008), to mention just a few, who have devoted their studies to

space, the former, and trauma, the latter. Literary critics like Susan Watkins (2006), Roberta Rubenstein (1979), Clare Sprague (1987), and Elizabeth Maslen (2018), among others, also improve this paper with their findings on Lessing's use of bodies to get her message across.

Among Lessing's works, there are quite a few in which spatial corporeality is given prominence; examples of these, among others, are "The Nuisance" (1953), in which the body of the old black wife found in the whites' well acquires visibility and 'speaks' of years of humiliation and harassment, and "Our Friend Judith" (1960) where Lessing addresses the duality of the feminine body which, at the same time, hides and reveals according to the spatial circumstances. In the same vein, "England vs England" (1963) presents the protagonist's body that narrates the collapse suffered after years of dealing with the power exerted on him by the University of Oxford's environment. By the same token, her novels, *The Diary of a Good Neighbour* (1983) and *The Grass is Singing* (1950) are examples of her use of corporeality since they depict bodies that have been made invisible by age and illness, the former, "a subject which has until recently received little serious treatment in fiction" (Watkins 76) and by the appalling hardships of an African farm that have exacted a toll on the protagonist's anatomy, the latter.

2. Corporeal Spaces in the *Novella*

2.1. Historical and Geographical Background

The story takes place in February 1951,[2] six years after the end of the Second World War, during the American occupation of the southern part of Germany, according to the arrangements agreed at the Potsdam Conference in July/August 1945. The protagonists, the British doctors Hamish Anderson and Mary Parrish, are on holiday in Germany because it is the cheapest site they can afford to visit given the fact that they only rely on their travel allowances. The physical place is a small skiing village in the Bavarian Alps where the couple intends to spend almost a month skiing and relaxing. Lessing does not provide the name of the town, only the first letter of its name "O," but using the different markers left purposefully by the author, the reader can discover that the city's name might be Oberstdorf, where the couple will go through an epiphanic and unforgettable experience that would change their lives. Bearing in mind Paul Virilio's statement that people live in a constant state of total war and that the so-called 'normality' and re-establishment of order is almost an impossible task (18), Lessing, with her literary expertise,

has managed to devise very well-defined spaces in the story in which this assertion can be confirmed and, among them, the corporeal space I will study in this article.

2.2. War Survivors

Doris Lessing has based the *novella* on opposite pairs, some of them overtly noticeable while others represent spatial manifestations hidden within the text. Among them, body spaces stand out as a binary opposition between war survivors who do not manifest any physical or visible disorder and disabled or maimed war veterans and hospital inmates. However, a closer analysis invites a reconsideration based on trauma studies which will reveal that, within the boundaries of the physical places, a broad range of human life spatiality is developed. Moreover, Henri Lefebvre's arguments that "[b]odies themselves generate spaces which are produced by and for their gestures" (216) and that "the total body constitutes, and produces, the space in which messages, codes, the coded and the decoded [...] will subsequently emerge" (200) open the scope for exploration within the realm of corporeality and the signs exhibited by the survivors to vividly convey the experiences of war.

Ali Madanipour explains the relationship between body and mind,[3] being the former the boundary that separates the "inner space of consciousness" from the "outer space of the world" and the latter the set of faculties that not only "understands the world through bodily senses" but also "communicates with others through gestures, patterns of behaviour and language" (6, 19); that is to say, through the physical body. He also states that the body does not finish in its physicality, but includes its surrounding space, its personal space which is defined by Edward T. Hall as that "small but invisible protective sphere or bubble that individuals maintain around them" (119). It acts as an extension of the body itself and is also charged with emotions that control the person's spatial relationships with other human beings.

2.2.1. Survivors without Physical or Visible Disorders

Bodies are spaces that speak; they turn into texts that inform the outside world about them. They are places that tell stories and on which power is exercised. Moreover, Henri Lefebvre highlights the importance body gestures assume in this corporeal dialectic and states that they "constitute a language in which expressiveness (that of the body) and signification (for others - other consciousnesses, other bodies) are not further apart"

(214). Several scholars have also approached the topic of corporeality from different perspectives. On the one hand, Kathleen Lennon argues that "the philosophy of embodiment" is not old since, historically, "the body has been conceptualised as simply one biological object among others." It was considered "part of a biological nature which our rational faculties set us apart from". In addition, it was regarded as "an instrument to be directed and a possible source of disruption to be controlled" (n.p.); in sum, the body is a site where acts of extreme violence can be perpetrated. By the same token, Barbara Hooper, echoing Lefebvre, states that "the space of the human body is perhaps the most critical site to watch the production and reproduction of power". On the other hand, following this train of thought, she claims that the human body "is a concrete physical space of flesh, bone, of chemistries and electricities; it is a highly mediated space, a space transformed by cultural interpretations and representations." She also emphasises that the human body is "a lived space, a volatile space of conscious and unconscious desires and motivations [. . .] a social space, a complexity involving the workings of power and knowledge" (qtd. in Soja 114), which corresponds with Merleau-Ponty's propositions of the "experience of the body" and the "spatiality of the body" insofar as they are related to and linked with the space they inhabit (161). Given these assertions and since bodies exist in time and space, hence history is written in them because forces exerted onto bodies turn them into a locus of contesting power relations. Furthermore, Michel Foucault claims that "the materiality of power" can be seen "operating on the very bodies of individuals" since the human body has been, for ages, the site where power has been exercised either to legitimise authority or to administer punishments to set an example to the community (56).

Henri Lefebvre explains that "when [a person] arrives in an unknown country or city [he/she] first experiences it through every part of [his/her] body—through [their] legs and feet" (162). Hamish and Mary first experience the German space through their senses; they see, hear, touch, smell and taste what Germany is offering them. It is through their bodies that they perceive, live, and produce their own space. But it is also with their bodies that they are confronted with the fact that they are also participants, witnesses, and survivors of the past armed conflict despite not having visible marks on their anatomies. During their stay in the village, they encounter many bodies similar to theirs—war survivors—that speak to them. They tell their stories and everything they want to know about the physical place they are visiting through words and gestures, but mostly through their bodies

because, as Laura Di Prete states, the body stands out as "a medium of self-expression and—crucially—textual working through" (vi) in which the survivors, through their corporeality, can make themselves heard and take control of their own lives despite the emotional burden they carry.

Cathy Caruth explores the key theme of survivor and guilt that emerges from the strong feeling of disloyalty traumatised people experience for having been spared from a tragic outcome unlike their comrades (9). Hamish and Mary experience it when they visit a mental hospital and are confronted with the director's, Dr. Kroll, paintings. Immediately, Hamish and Mary recognise the intense suffering caused not only by the disappearance of their partners but also by the horrors they witnessed during the war which have left indelible, but unacknowledged, marks in their psyches. Therefore, they have to face the fact that, for years, they have been numbed with grief due to the protective shields with which their bodies have equipped them but that were destroyed before Dr. Kroll's art which acted as a mirror for them to 'see' and recognise what they had been trying to remove from their minds. The space of their bodies has turned into a space of war where their emotional sensitivity has been intensified by the powerful and disturbing images of the war shown in the paintings. Their awakening starts in that very minute when the space of joy and relaxation they are looking for becomes one of war (Lessing 109). All their memories and hidden traumas are brought back for them to confront, and they are reluctant to do it, they prefer to continue in denial, numbing, and silence because, as Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub state, they fear that the tragedy lived may reappear if they talk about it or acknowledge the emotional effect produced on their lives (67). They are not ready for a working-through yet, but their ghosts have been awakened and will haunt their corporeal space to such an extent that they cannot get to sleep (Lessing 130). This sleep deprivation is felt in the space of their bodies affecting their emotional states.

Likewise, Hamish and Mary consider that the personal space that surrounds and protects their bodies has also been violated; their privacy disturbed. Ali Madanipour provides a definition of privacy: "an interpersonal boundary-control process which paces and regulates interaction with others" (qtd. in Madanipour 20), hence people can manage their interplay in social situations so as not to feel subjugated by unwanted strangers. Moreover, he claims that the significance attached to personal space "lies mainly in how it marks out a personal territory" which allows the person "to develop a sense of identity and engage in the rituals of communication and recognition"

(30). Therefore, given the fact that Hamish and Mary's personal spaces have been invaded when Dr. Schröder approaches them to share their table at the restaurant, they have not only been deprived of performing those rituals but also regulating their social interactions. However, to maintain a degree of civility, they accept his company and relegate their intrinsic rights. This invasion of their personal space might have led them to react defensively and negatively but, as their bodies are also conditioned by the physical place as well as by the atmosphere created within its boundaries, they choose not to confront the intruder.

Another character who does not manifest visible disorders in her body is Frau Stohr, Hamish, and Mary's first landlady, since her anatomy, appearance, and behaviour not only epitomise everything correct within a world that has been turned upside down by the war, but her corporeality has also become into a text in which the old Germany is inscribed. She is described as a "thin and elderly lady, her white hair drawn back into a tight knot [...] stuck through with utilitarian pins" who wore "a long woollen skirt [...] [a] long sleeved striped blouse fastened high at the throat with a gold brooch" (131, 132). By contrast, Frau Länge, their second landlady, even though her anatomy does not signal any physical disorder, expresses her emotional vulnerability through her body. She has been badly hurt by the war and her body language sends the message that she is eager to please—as if by smiling constantly and adopting a sympathetic attitude, she would erase her sorrows—, with the hidden intention of not being left alone once more. Edward T. Hall speaks of "the silent language" which stands for "an entire universe of behavior" that "functions outside conscious awareness *in juxtaposition to words*" (xi, italics in the original); hence, without even noticing what her body is doing, she is communicating to her lodgers what she cannot utter. Her choice of clothes is another subtle hint she drops to reclaim her womanhood, "a tight scarlet sweater and a tight, bright blue skirt" (134). Michael Argyle states that "most people, some of the time, use their appearance to send information to others" (233); therefore, by donning this type of garments, she is affirming her femininity and her desire to be seen.

Regarding the trauma experienced by both ladies, it must have produced analogous reactions concerning the severe deprivations they suffered during the war, as well as the fear they felt but, at the same time, dissimilar concerning family losses. The narrator does not expand on Frau Stohr's husband's death but she does about Frau Länge's loss of sons and husband. Her family life was destroyed by the armed conflict and feelings of emptiness

and an unimaginable void may have arisen producing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder with which she has to subsist and manage to go on living for the sake of her teenage daughter. Cathy Caruth states that "the problem of trauma is not simply a problem of destruction but also, fundamentally, an enigma of survival" (24), i.e., how to rebuild one's life after having faced such a terrible catastrophe. Both landladies seem to have come to terms with the trauma produced by the trail of devastation left by the war in their lives and struggled for their survival, nevertheless, reading between the lines, it appears that they keep their sorrows to themselves and try to move on to comply with the defining spirit of the period, the "conspiracy of silence" (Bessel and Schumann 10) but that exacts a toll on their corporeality.

Within the range of war survivors, there also appears a family in the restaurant whose bodies, apart from showing remarkable beauty, act with such naturalness that the message they convey is that for them the world and their lives are the same as one or two decades before as if the last war had not taken place at all. Their corporeality not only corresponds exactly with the Aryan supremacy established by the Nazi ideology, not showing any visible reminders of their struggle against the horrors of the war, but they also act as if they consider themselves superior to most of the other diners. Their corporeality exudes the confidence acquired through the economic success achieved during and after the years of the armed conflict. Nevertheless, their bodies must be hiding the trauma that the war left on them and the way they have found for denying it is to put on an act as if they were in the theatre showing the world not only all their beauty and best qualities but also that they are not beaten. They make their grand entrance once all the diners are seated as if the curtain has been lifted for them to make their appearance on stage (Lessing 112). Notwithstanding, their bodies, the boundaries that separate their inner selves and the outer world, are also shouting and crying on the inside. They are showing to society that they have moved on with their lives but, in their interior, they must be feeling the intense humiliation of having lost the war and with it everything they believed in (Lessing 127). Ali Madanipour draws on the notion of "masks" human beings depend on to face society and that "are made of socially mediated suppression of impulses to stage a stable, relatively consistent performance." He pinpoints the precise form they adopt: "normal routines" that change according to the places human beings are in as well as their encounter with individuals, but all of them involve a degree of corporeality from "shaving or putting make up, to changing vocabulary, accent, and forms of expression" or "adopting

a more polite, careful manner" to confront everyday situations. Moreover, he maintains that this way of "manipulation in response to the social world" is a form of "theatrical performance" human beings put on with their corporeality to struggle for survival (103-106). This family, despite their wealth and beauty, is fighting for their lives like all the people in the village and in post-war Europe. As well as all their compatriots, they "[had]plunged [...] into the edge-of-disaster hunger-bitten condition" (Lessing 114), and are now struggling to rebuild their lives, apparently, more successfully than others.

Hamish and Mary also encounter people who, to the naked eye, seem to have moved on with their lives since they go out, work, and perform ordinary everyday activities. Nevertheless, inside their bodies the intense agony produced by years of suffering still goes through, their cries of pain are audible as they silently walk the streets. At the station, the past war can be seen not only in its remnants but also in the people who are waiting for the bus and the workmen who "[look] like black and energetic insects" reconstructing the village. The gloomy space created is increased by the "silence [that] locked the air" (145, 146) which, at the same time and in an oxymoronic way, is shouting that its soil not only bears traces of the blood spilt by the bodies of soldiers and civilians alike in the past war but also that there exist vestiges of its infamous past as well as the invisible presence of the unforgettable dead.

Rose Chambers defines the aftermath society, like the one depicted in the story, as a community filled with melancholy and who are prevented from mourning their dead because of the trauma that affects them. She also emphasises the fact that even though some years have passed since the traumatic events took place, the trauma is "never over" and, in so doing, the dividing line between individual and collective trauma fades (qtd. in Luckhurst 125-126). Lessing describes the ordinary people of the town: "[they wait ... wait] eternally, huddled up, silent, patient [...] listening to the silence, under which seem[s] to throb from the depths of the earth the memory of the sound of marching feet, of heavy black-booted, marching feet" (162). Therefore, beneath the surface of the village, the blood spilt from the bodies of thousands of people who gave their lives in the war will stay forever. The trauma experienced by soldiers and survivors is present in the shadowy eyes of the workers who have to go on with their lives carrying with them the pains and sorrows experienced during the years of terror. The deadly silence that falls over the place brings about the everlasting and deafening sounds of black-booted marching soldiers.

2.2.2. Disabled and Maimed by the War

Likewise, Hamish and Mary find other bodies; maimed, disfigured, and crippled that narrate their own stories of suffering, pain, disillusion, and marginality. Firstly, at the restaurant when they first meet Dr. Schröder, they tolerate his presence out of politeness because he has been injured in the war: "the surface of his face was a skin-graft; [...] the whole highly-coloured, shiny, patchy surface, while an extraordinarily skilful reconstruction of a face, was nothing but a mask, and what the face had been before must be guessed at" (116). They feel pity for the man, but they cannot avoid the thought that the past war was everywhere; it was not only on the streets but also in a bourgeois restaurant. The space of the village is filled with war, but the response from the people to these bodies, telling their truths, making them visible lest they forget, was different. On the one hand, Hamish and Mary decide to leave the country so as not to have to look at them (109); on the other hand, Dr. Schröder, a wounded soldier himself, refers to the men on the street with aggressive remarks, "[i]t's a disgrace that these people should be allowed to behave like this. It makes a bad impression on our visitors" (121). This character, who stands out as a liminal persona in the story, an in-between in this society of survivors, shows a cynical disregard for his comrades in arms who have been less fortunate than him who could have his face reconstructed. Not for a moment does he think what his reality would have been if he had not been lucky enough to get the expert medical assistance that "moulded" a new face "for him [...] covered with skin taken from his thighs" (135). Regarding Dr. Schröder's behaviour towards his less favoured comrades in arms, I contend that, as Yi-Fu Tuan argues, he must have acted with such carelessness due to what he experienced in the war concerning his body and the relationships with other people (34). He must have organised his space in such a way that it adapts to his corporeal necessities and the social connections he is willing to establish. His demeanour suggests that he is transferring to the wounded soldiers his fears of what his present reality might have been. He is conscious that his body, in particular his face, speaks, it is a "locus of remembering and suffering," as Corinne Bigot states (123). Thus, to counteract the feeling, he displays a sense of superiority that acts as a cover under which he hides the trauma he has not dared to acknowledge yet. Like Hamish and Mary, he is in the phase of denial and numbing in which silence is the holy place of comfort.

Secondly, Hamish and Mary find some maimed and crippled war veterans begging on the streets. They are the 'other'; the outcasts of society.

Janet Wolff states that "[t]he anonymity of the crowd provides an asylum for the person on the margins of society" (145), but it is not the case with the soldiers in the village who are a powerful and constant reminder of the atrocities committed in the last war bringing to the fore years of suffering which pollute the collective space. On their arrival, Hamish and Mary meet two men at the train station, "hacked and amputated by war almost out of humanity, one without arms, his legs cut off at the knee, one whose face was a great scarred eyeless hollow" (109). From the very beginning of their journey, they have to face the space of war represented by the bodies of veteran soldiers who are carrying history on their anatomies and whose eloquent silence acts as a slap in the faces of the British couple. In the wounded veterans, the production and reproduction of power are obvious. It is in the concrete physical space of their bodies that the atrocities committed during the last war have perennial existence; their bodies shout their truth. But these men are not the only ones the protagonists encounter during their holidays. They also find a "queer hopping figure [...] It was a man whose legs had been amputated and who was hopping over the snow like a frog, his body swinging and jerking between his heavy arms like the body of some kind of insect" (109). These people stand for what is out of place in society because they do not conform to what is expected from them as members of a community, they do not count, they are excluded, and they are pushed to the margins. This communal space is the one they have been forced to relinquish due to their situation as outcasts. Emile Durkheim coined the term 'anomie' to describe a state of precariousness and vulnerability because of a breakdown of social norms and values in a society (Britannica, n.p) which echoes the political, social, and emotional instability of post-war Europe. This situation produces such a psychological disturbance that many of its members decide to take their own lives, destroying their corporeal space, due to a feeling of an outright rejection by their community. Antonius Robben and Marcelo Suarez-Orozco argue that the "collective violence exerted on [war veterans] cannot be reduced to a single level of analysis because it targets the body, the psyche, as well as the socio-cultural order." These people have not only been deprived of their privacy but also their safety, they are no longer in control of their bodies, and they are not able to defend themselves against any attack. Furthermore, the scholars add that "we can always do a body count, discern the patterns in the amputation of limbs or explore a torturer's agenda by the marks he leaves in his victim's body" which emphasises the textual and palimpsestic quality of the human body where everything it has to endure

stays there for the observer to "read the wounds" (Hartman 537), and decode the message engraved in its corporeality. By foregrounding their suffering and presenting the unsavoury, gruesome images of maimed bodies, Lessing has committed herself to giving visibility to those outcasts of society who have been erased and forgotten for being Germans, "the archetype of evil" for the time (Lessing, qtd. in Maslen 160) showing total indifference towards their fate. Regarding the issue, Elizabeth Maslen asserts that Lessing has always been "aware of those whose voices go unheard" (153) and Roberta Rubenstein reinforces the concept by reminding readers that "the dissolution of the subject/object dichotomy, between the self and the world, inner and outer, becomes the deepest expression of the unconventional consciousness of Lessing's fiction" (40). The barrier that should have protected the wounded soldiers from the outside world has been broken and they find themselves under the scrutiny of unknown people who feel entitled to pass subjective judgements about them and how they would have to solve or escape from the predicament they find themselves in. Hamish and Mary cannot bear the sight of these men, they do not allow themselves to decipher the message these bodies are conveying and their immediate response is to leave the country, to run as far as possible from these spectres, "for God's sake, let's get out of here" (109). The crippled veterans are no more than subjects in space whose empowerment or disempowerment depends on external laws passed by men who claim to be doing what is best for them. To further the understanding of the previous scene, Henri Lefebvre enlightens the topic by saying that gestures and I add attitudes as well, "embody ideology and bind it into practice" and not only do they "connect representations of space with representational spaces"—insofar as the space designed with a purpose and that dominates society, the former, and, the space that is lived by human beings, the latter—, but also "the micro-gestural realm generates its own spaces" (215, 216). The interrelation of these two notions is established through the masks human beings wear on their bodies which act as boundaries between their private space whose centre is the body and the public space as well as about their position of power: perpetrator or victim. In Nazi Germany, under the concept of racial hygiene, many crippled veterans were sent to hospitals where they were killed or had to endure institutional violence. Together with prisoners, as Robert Proctor states, they were injected with "known diseases to test vaccines or possible cures" (25) among other unbelievable atrocities performed on their bodies. Dagmar Herzog expands on the topic:

> [a] key aspect of National Socialism was the concept of racial hygiene and it was elevated to the primary philosophy of the German medical community, first by activist physicians within the medical profession, particularly among psychiatrists. That was later codified and institutionalized during and after the Nazi's rise to power in 1933, during the process of *Gleichschaltung* ("coordination" or "unification"), which streamlined the medical and mental hygiene (mental health) profession into a rigid hierarchy with National Socialist-sanctioned leadership at the top. (167)

In a similar vein, Robert Proctor mentions some other experiments that were used to "further the German's war strategy by putting prisoners in vacuum chambers to see what could happen to pilots' bodies if they were ejected at a high altitude or immerse prisoners in ice water" to measure "how long they would survive and what materials could be used to prolong life if worn by German pilots shot down over the English Channel" (25-26). By carrying out these types of tests on prisoners of war, the authorities transformed them into powerless human beings deprived of their human dignity because their bodies would no longer belong to them; they were dehumanised, and their corporal space was violated. What is more, these tests reinforce the idea that some bodies matter more than others. This issue may not have passed unnoticed by Lessing's sharp eye since, as Roberta Rubenstein states, one of her "consistent strengths" lies in "her ability to document the actual current social history of the times." Moreover, she perceives them "through a strong sense of detail, event, psychological insight, dialogue and the felt texture of social experience" (218) as can be observed in the detailed depiction of the mutilated and disfigured corporeality of some characters to compel the reader to face the horrors left by the war in people's physicality.

During their stay in the village, Hamish and Mary visit a mental hospital and become acquainted with Dr. Kroll. His body, at first sight, does not show any anomaly that prevents him from leading a normal life and performing his medical duties. His mental illness is hidden behind his elegance and attractiveness: "a handsome man of late middle-age [...] extremely distinguished [...] an aristocrat" (148) which evinces that the war has taken a huge toll on his mind rather than on his physicality. His trauma must have its roots in the horrors and trail of devastation he not only witnessed but was part of when he worked "under Hitler" (158), hence the way he finds to overcome his sorrow, guilt, and, perhaps, shame is through

painting. Through his art he fulfils the need to communicate with others, to narrate what he has seen, but he is misunderstood by critics, only the hospital inmates grasp the meaning of his artistic production (154). His body is eager to speak, to find a listener who understands the message he wants to convey, but, at the same time, when he is overwhelmed by reality and memories to such an extent that his psyche is compromised, his corporeality tells him that he needs help, that he has also been wounded by the armed conflict so, due to his expertise in the medical realm, he humbly relieves himself from duty and is hospitalised (152). On the other hand, when he can return to his functions as director, his mind seems to have changed and he adheres to the way of thinking his compatriots support, like when he utters "the gentlemen of the Nazi regime had sensible ideas" (159), evincing the manipulation he has suffered disguised in medical treatment.

Regarding his art, Dr. Kroll's paintings embody the true essence of the past war emphasising the bodies of the casualties, their blood spilt everywhere, their skulls denoting the passing of time without being acknowledged, their corpses that must be in an advanced state of decomposition, the bodies of ordinary people who, in their desperation to escape, decide to throw themselves out of the windows rather than to feel their flesh burnt by the flames (152). In sum, a powerful and vivid image of war corporeality. This pictorial process assists him with the unlocking of the "dissociated or repressed traumatic memories" as Bassel Van der Kolk and Mark Greenberg explain (qtd. in Leys 49) because not only has he given prominence to hidden deeds but also awoken the dead of the recent conflict making them visible. He has also prompted a dialogic exchange about the facts recreating a historical context that cannot be forgotten and, in so doing, by signifying the space of war, he has encouraged people's awareness of their past and present situations transforming the paintings into spaces of resistance in which corporeality plays a crucial role since it is in the bodies of the soldiers and ordinary people that the destruction brought by the armed conflict is mostly felt and seen.

The last and devastating blow for Hamish and Mary comes during their visit to the patients' quarters in the hospital. There, not only do they see big groups of inmates—men and women—separated by a wire fence according to their sex, deprived of their humanity and "reduced [...] [to] complete identity with each other" (156), but also little children. The gruesome sight they are faced with shocks them: "[i]n the centre of the room a five-year-old child stood upright against the bars of a cot. His arms were confined by a

straitjacket, [...] he was tied upright against the bars with a cord" (157). This boy is not the only one in the room, "a dozen children aged between a year and six years—armless children, limbless children, children with enormous misshapen heads, children with tiny heads and monstrous bodies" (158) are also there. The explanation the doctor gives the protagonists makes the reader believe that these children's deformed bodies are the result of new experiments: "[m]odern drugs are a terrible thing. Now these horrors are kept alive. Before, they died of pneumonia" (158) because of the simple fact that they were left to die. The brutal reality the protagonists face in that room evokes horrific memories of Dr. Joseph Mengele's use of children to try new drugs and tests during the war. The experiments conducted in Auschwitz by the 'Angel of Death,' as he was called, "included surgeries without anaesthesia, transfusion of blood from one twin to the other, injections of lethal germs, sex-change operations, removal of organs and limbs, incestuous impregnations and chemical injections in the eyes to change the colour among others" (history.com, n.p.). The horrors committed by this physician on children's bodies unveil the lack of consideration for their corporeality due to their condition as prisoners of war because of their race or ethnicity, a situation they are neither conscious of nor do they know what it entails.

What is worse in Hamish and Mary's views is that doctor Kroll seems to agree with these earlier practices when he comments: "there are many people in this hospital who would be no worse for a quick and painless death" (158)—referring to Aktion T4 program by which at Hitler´s orders the mentally-ill patients were executed "by euthanasia under the cover of deaths from strokes and illnesses" (Proctor 17-31)—and that "on certain questions, the gentlemen of the Nazi regime had sensible ideas. [. . .] one could call them questions of social hygiene" (159, 160) what makes me agree with Robben and Suarez-Orozco's statement that "social institutions provide the tools, the know-how and the psychological support for the conduction of systematic atrocities" (9). In the story, the space of war, portrayed not only by the bodies with the emerging messages from the little cots but also by the Nazi ideology represented by the physician, surrounds the protagonists.

3. Conclusion

The present analysis of the *novella* from the perspective of corporeal spatiality has brought to the fore some interesting findings. Firstly, Doris Lessing, a visionary, a woman who is ahead of her time in countless controversial issues,

constructs her story around bodily opposite pairs—survivors without physical or visible disorders and disabled and maimed by the war—in a time in which the body was considered only in its biological nature. In addition, she has displayed in her narrative actual bodies with visible or hidden marks left by the past war and in so doing show the world the ugliest and most brutal reality of the atrocities committed by the belligerent parties. By paying close attention to the language used to produce the desired effect on the readers, she not only makes the opposite pairs converge in the trauma suffered by both parties but also allows them to speak thus turning them into texts. She achieves her objective of representing trauma through corporeal spatiality and transforms the bodies into a locus of contesting power relations. Secondly, the trauma affecting the characters is represented in the survivor's guilt, their feelings of loneliness, solitude, and absence and its manifestations of denial, numbing and belatedness as well as in the melancholy and silence of the people on the streets and in the body of war veterans that stand as a perennial reminder of the past events. In so doing, she has constructed a broad range of human spatiality in which the bodies assume the position of boundaries between the inner selves of the characters and the outer space of the world and in which corporeal and traumatic spatialities are blended. Finally, Doris Lessing, talking about her historical time, generates a descriptive voice in the literary field that resignifies the historical events through the hidden trauma of her characters. Her commitment to the suffering produced by the war, and evident in the survivor's bodies, is revealed in the *novella*. She becomes the voice of the voiceless whose desperate plight deserves to be heard and recognised; hence she crosses the boundaries between the public and the private spheres to unveil and decode the facts that are written in the bodies of her characters. By exposing their corporeality, she challenges the acceptable level of behaviour of the times, puts the ethical and moral standards upside down, and presents them to the public from a different perspective and, in so doing, creates her Poetics of Corporeal Space.

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Notes

1. My translation

2. All the subsequent references to the novella in analysis are from Doris Lessing's book Stories cited in the bibliography and are quoted parenthetically in the text.

3. See Chapter II: Personal Space of the Body.

THE USE OF *WAIT* AS A DISCOURSE-PRAGMATIC MARKER IN SPOKEN BRITISH ENGLISH: A CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS

EL USO DE WAIT COMO MARCADOR PRAGMÁTICO DISCURSIVO EN EL INGLÉS ORAL BRITÁNICO: UN ANÁLISIS BASADO EN CORPUS

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Abstract

Discourse-pragmatic markers—DPMs—have attracted much scholarly attention over the years since they play an important role in our daily lives. Most of them have been analysed by scholars. However, in this paper, I focus on one of these units, *wait*, a DPM which, with the exception of Tagliamonte (*Wait, It's a Discourse Marker)* in the Canadian context, has been largely neglected. I follow a corpus-based approach, examining data from spoken British English extracted from the BNC2014. The study offers new light on the uses and functions of this DPM in the British English context and allows a comparison with the Canadian English data examined by Tagliamonte (*Wait, It's a Discourse Marker)*.

Keywords: Discourse-pragmatic Marker, Speech, *Wait* as a Discourse-pragmatic Marker, Canadian Context, British Context, Corpus-based Study

Resumen

Los marcadores pragmáticos discursivos—MPDs—han atraído mucha atención investigadora a lo largo de los años, ya que desempeñan un papel importante en nuestras vidas cotidianas. La mayoría de ellos han sido

analizados por los académicos. Sin embargo, en este trabajo, me centro en una de estas unidades, *wait*, un MPD que, con la excepción de Tagliamonte (*Wait, It's a Discourse Marker)* en el contexto canadiense, no ha sido suficientemente estudiado. Mediante un enfoque basado en corpus, he examinado datos del inglés británico oral extraídos del BNC2014. El presente estudio ofrece una nueva visión sobre los usos y funciones de este MPD en el contexto del inglés británico y permite una comparación con los datos del inglés canadiense examinados por Tagliamonte (*Wait, It's a Discourse Marker).*

Palabras claves: Marcador Pragmático Discursivo, Discurso, *Wait* como Marcador Pragmático Discursivo, Contexto Canadiense, Contexto Británico, Estudio basado en Corpus

1. Introduction

Discourse-pragmatic markers—henceforth DPMs—play an important role "in making our speech coherent and in establishing or maintaining our relations with interlocutors in conversation" (Archer et al. 74). Many discourse-pragmatic markers, namely *well*, *you know*, *I mean*, along with others, have widely been analysed by scholars such as Schiffrin, Brinton (*The development of discourse markers in English*), Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen, Bolden and Beeching (*Pragmatic Markers in British English: Meaning in Social Interaction*), among others. However, *wait* has not received much attention in its use as a discourse-pragmatic marker, illustrated in example (1) below. An exception to this is Tagliamonte who analysed the use of *wait* in a corpus of Canadian English. Complementing Tagliamonte's study, this paper offers a corpus-based analysis on *wait* in British English, allowing a comparison between the two varieties of English (*Wait, It's a Discourse Marker).*

> I haven't seen her yet. No **wait**. Yes, I have (Tagliamonte, *Wait, It's a Discourse Marker* 424)[1].

Following this introduction, Section 2 offers a discussion of prior research on discourse-pragmatic markers. This section is divided into four parts: Section 2.1 defines discourse-pragmatic markers and discusses the terms proposed by different authors to address these units; Section 2.2 deals with the development of these units; Section 2.3 shows the characteristics of these terms; and Section 2.4 is concerned with the use of *wait* as a DPM. Section

3 explains the corpus and methodology used, specifically, 3.1 describes the BNC2014 corpus and 3.2 details the methodology followed. Section 4 provides the findings resulting from the corpus study on *wait*. The fourth section comprises four subdivisions; 4.1 dealing with the frequency and lexical variants; 4.2 examining position; 4.3 analysing gender; 4.4 exploring age; and 4.5 addressing functions. Section 5 offers a discussion of the findings and compares the results from my corpus study on British English with those by Tagliamonte on Canadian English (*Wait, It's a Discourse Marker*). Finally, Section 6 closes the paper with some concluding remarks.

2. Prior research on DPMs

2.1. What is a DPM?

DPMs started to attract scholarly attention in the 1980s, with Schiffrin's seminal work on the topic. In particular, this interest started with *well* and *I mean* in conversations (Schiffrin), as illustrated in examples (2) and (3).

2. **Well** when can I talk to you then? (Schiffrin 122).

3. **I mean** what's your opinion? (Schiffrin 305).

The units object of study in this paper have been labelled as: *discourse markers* (Schiffrin; Fraser (*Contrastive discourse markers in English*); Brinton (*Discourse Markers*); Blakemore; Tagliamonte; Fischer; Lansari), *pragmatic markers* (Fisher; Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen; Beeching (*Pragmatic Markers in British English: Meaning in Social Interaction*), *discourse particles* (Aijmer (*English discourse particles: Evidence from a corpus*); Fischer) and *pragmatic particles* (Beeching (*Gender, politeness and pragmatic particles in French*). This shows that despite the scholarly interest that these constructions have received, there is little consensus on the choice of terminology to refer to these units. In this paper, I will treat these elements as discourse-pragmatic markers—DPMs—, a fusion of the terms "discourse markers" and "pragmatic markers". Despite this term not being the most widely used—exceptions to this include Wiltschko et al.; Pichler; Tagliamonte (*Wait, It's a Discourse Marker*), among others—, I consider that DPMs is the most comprehensive label to refer to the units we are concerned with and the one that best defines them, carrying all the nuances of meaning proposed by most of the aforementioned terms.

In this paper, the term "discourse-pragmatic marker" will be used, since it compasses both the discursive and pragmatic richness of these elements.

Indeed, Tagliamonte embraces this term in her research (*Wait, It's a Discourse Marker*), in support of what Pichler claims. Then, Pichler defines this term as an optional unit because its meaning is not linked to the grammatical meaning of the sentence, but, at the same time, its use may be crucial to its meaning (Pichler 4).

To begin with, we will deal with the definition of DPM which is not a unanimous one, thus we will consider how different authors have treated these constructions. Some authors consider DPMs as parts of discourse. Along these lines, Schiffrin (31) argues that discourse markers are "sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk". Blakemore (152) supports a similar idea and identifies DPMs as terms whose function is to mark a relationship between the different segments of discourse.

In addition, Brinton argues that DPMs are empty expressions that occur in spoken conversations and represent different pragmatic functions (*Pragmatic Markers in English* 30). In fact, Fraser claims that these kinds of lexical expressions are part of discourse, but do not form part of the content of the message conveyed since they are added to clarify or give a clue about the idea which the speaker wants to transmit (*What are discourse markers?* 295).

However, for other linguists, DPMs are part of the speaker's mental process. In this respect, there are authors such as Aijmer who considers that "pragmatic markers are 'surface phenomena'" (*Understanding Pragmatic Markers. A Variational Pragmatic Approach* 4). Furthermore, Fischer shows something similar by mentioning that the use of these elements is part of the speaker's attitudes towards the different ideas which they want to express in the conversation (43). Müller also argues that DPMs contribute to the pragmatic meaning in utterances in addition to being important for the speaker's pragmatic competence (20).

On the contrary, there are also authors who consider DPMs to be a mixture of both, that is, parts of speech and part of the reflection of the mental process of the speakers. For Lauwers et al. pragmatic markers are discussed as adverbial sentences that affect the speaker and the message as well as the relationship between the speaker and the hearer (2).

In a nutshell, DPMs are context-dependent elements with the function of interpreting the speaker's intentions and connecting a previous utterance with the next one. These units are used in conversations and have a pragmatic function which prevails over their semantic meaning.

It is important to bear in mind that not all DPMs have received the same attention. The most analysed are the following ones: *well* (Schiffrin; Fraser

(*An approach to discourse markers*); Brinton (*Discourse Markers*); Blakemore; Fuller; Müller; Beeching (*Pragmatic Markers in British English: Meaning in Social Interaction)*; Aijmer (*Contrastive Pragmatics and Corpora*), *oh* (Schiffrin; Brinton; (*The development of discourse markers in English*); Fraser (*What are discourse markers?*); Fuller; Tagliamonte (*Wait, It's a Discourse Marker*); Müller), *so* (Fraser (*Types of English Discourse Markers*); Schiffrin; Blakemore; Müller), *like* (Schiffrin; Fuller; Miller; Beeching (*Pragmatic Markers in British English: Meaning in Social Interaction*); Tagliamonte (*So who? Like how? Just what? Discourse markers in the conversations of Young Canadians*), and *you know* (Schiffrin; Fraser (*Pragmatic markers*); Fuller; Müller; Tagliamonte (*Wait, It's a Discourse Marker*); Miller; Brinton (*The development of discourse markers in English*); Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen; Beeching (*Pragmatic Markers in British English: Meaning in Social Interaction*). Examples of all these discourse markers are provided in (4) to (8).

> 4. **Well**, how can I help you? (Aijmer, *Understanding Prgmatic Markers: A Variational Pragmatic Approach* 36).
>
> 5. A: your dad and I went over to Joan's last night to talk to her about this land...
>
> B: **Oh**, you did go over there (Fuller 29).
>
> 6. [Grandmother to granddaughter] **So** tell me about this wonderful young man you're seeing. (Fraser, *An approach to discourse markers* 393).
>
> 7. But **like** it was at night and like the gates were closed and barred down and it was all dark and stuff. (Tagliamonte, *Wait, It's a Discourse Marker* 426).
>
> 8. A: It's not like she was some svelte beauty, you know
>
> B: oh, **you know**, the svelte thing is in the mind (Fuller 27).

It is also relevant to mention those that have not received much attention such as: *now* (Schiffrin; Fraser (*What are discourse markers?*), *but* (Schiffrin; Blakemore), and *then* (Schiffrin). Also, *wait* was just analysed by Tagliamonte (*Wait, It's a Discourse Marker)*. In section 2.4, I will discuss in detail the aforementioned DPM since my corpus research is based on *wait*. An example of *wait* is provided in (9).

> 9. I want to see Calum's Chewbacca. **Wait** is that how it's even spelt? (Tagliamonte, *Wait, It's a Discourse Marker* 429).

2.2. The development of DPMs

As mentioned in the previous section, DPMs are neutral terms that adapt to the context according to the speaker's illocutionary force to make sense of it. These units have been classified into different types by the linguists who have explored them. Not all of them classify them in the same way, and, therefore, they consider different functions.

As Lauwers et al. state the units under analysis have become DPMs because they have lost propositional meaning over time through their use. Some authors have treated this process as "grammaticalisation" or "pragmaticalisation".

To start with these two terms, many scholars have considered their change from a grammatical category to a DPM as being part of the process of "grammaticalisation" (Brinton, *The development of discourse markers in English* 54; Lauwers et al. 7). In particular, Brinton discusses this term in her study in connection with the "loss of meaning" that these elements undergo (*The development of discourse markers in English* 54).

In addition, Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen discuss this concept as well, but in relation to polysemy, due to the fact that this makes possible the change from a purely grammatical category to the acquisition of pragmatic functions (Aijmer et al. 228). The term polysemy refers to words that have different meanings. Its meaning varies depending on the function which this word develops in the utterances. It can function as an adjective, as an adverb or, in a pragmatic sense, as a DPM.

In fact, Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen present another example, *like*, which has also undergone a process of "grammaticalisation" (234), from its use as a verb, illustrated in example (10), to also function as a DPM, in (11). In these examples we can appreciate how *like* has developed its function as a DPM over time, working in other different grammatical contexts which were not possible in earlier English.

10. "I **like** Pat and I was just thinking of." (Hudson 26).

11. But everybody's always **like**, what're you gonna do with an English degree other than teach? And I'm **like**, there's lots of stuff you could do. (Fuller 28).

2.3. Characteristics of DPMs

In this section, I will deal with the multifunctionality of DPMs. Once these units lose their propositional meaning, they acquire other functions

in discourse, which are all interpersonal and textual functions (Fraser, *Pragmatic markers* 322-323). In other words, they do not contribute to the propositional content of the utterance. This is the reason why they are not syntactically integrated into the rest of the utterance (Fraser, *Pragmatic markers* 322-323).

In what follows, I will present a list of features of prototypical DPMs, following (Brinton, *Historical discourse analysis* 224; Jucker and Ziv 3). In terms of phonology, DPMs are phonologically reduced and integrated prosodically in a tone group. Second, syntactically, in terms of position DPMs can occur in sentence initially, outside of the syntactic structure or attached to the syntactic structure. In fact, they are optional and can be omitted without provoking any change in the message. That is, they are typically characterised by their initial position rather than medial in addition to depending on both the type of speech event and the speaker. Third, from a semantic point of view, these units have little or have no propositional meaning. Fourth, from a functional perspective, DPMs are multifunctional, that is, they have access to plenty of linguistic levels and may express a wide range of functions in discourse. Finally, in terms of sociolinguistics and stylistics, they are characterised by occurring more in oral discourse than in writing and are stylistically stigmatised. Sometimes, they are associated with nonfluency and are considered to be gender-specific, being more typical in the speech of women (Brinton, *Historical discourse analysis* 224; Jucker and Ziv 3).

DPMs are at a higher level as they present different linguistic domains or different functional-semantic components. The vast majority of linguists distinguish two macro-functions, which are the "textual function" and the "interpersonal function" (Brinton, *Historical discourse analysis* 224-225).

The "textual function" deals with the process of structuring discourse. According to Brinton, this type of DPMs with textual function provides a signal in the discourse about the information to be produced or the information that precedes it, as well as connects both sentences (*Historical discourse analysis* 224-225). The most relevant textual functions are their use to initiate or close the discourse, to be as a turn-holding device, to mark the boundary in the conversation, to signal the change from one element to another or, to repair the speech (Brinton, *Historical discourse analysis* 224).

In contrast, the interpersonal function refers to epistemic modality, that is, these DPMs express the attitude or reaction of a speaker to the hearer. In addition, they express shared knowledge, politeness, or tentativeness

(Brinton, *Historical discourse analysis* 224-225). As I mentioned before, Brinton presents a distinction in terms of the functions of DPMs: (i) "Propositional", which is about the speaker's experience, including the environment, participants, circumstances, and so on, (ii) "Interpersonal", which expresses the speaker's expressions and attitudes, and the role assigned to the speaker and the hearer, and (iii) "Textual" which deals with how the speaker structures the discourse to make it cohesive (*Historical discourse analysis* 224-225).

In sum, DPMs are part of the message but not part of the content. In other words, the propositional content of the utterance is meaningful without the presence of the DPM. However, they bring plenty of meaning to the message conveyed. Its presence depends on the idea the speaker wants to convey and how he or she wants to convey the message.

2.4. *Wait*

This section concentrates on *wait*, which is the DPM on which I will focus for the corpus-based analysis presented in Section 4. The use of *wait* as a DPM has only recently started to attract scholarly attention. In particular, the work of Tagliamonte on *wait* in Canadian English is pioneer in this respect (*Wait, It's a Discourse Marker*). An example of *wait* functioning as a DPM is provided in (12).

> 12. Im standing up, near the exit.

> **Wait** are u at my wymilwood or burwash? im at burwash (Tagliamonte, *Wait, It's a Discourse Marker* 425).

The DPM *wait* also shows lexical variants, such as *wait a minute*, *wait a second* or *wait now*. Thus, *wait* occurs with an "adverbial specification" and these variants are rarely alternated in the same conversation. Despite the existence of all these different forms, the most dominant one is *wait* alone (Tagliamonte, *Wait, It's a Discourse Marker* 435-438). An example of one of the variants is shown in (13).

> 13. 1930 **Wait a minute**,' said Mr. Knapp. 'Wait for it... That is just exactly wot I do know. (Tagliamonte, *Wait, It's a Discourse Marker* 429).

Tagliamonte found that the major use of this unit in discourse is carried out by people who have a lower level of education. Tagliamonte indicates

through her study, by recording people in spontaneous conversations in their daily lives, that the young population made the most use of *wait* (*Wait, It's a Discourse Marker*). Thus, the register and context are noticeably informal. On account of this, the register of the language is not formal, but colloquial (Tagliamonte, *Wait, It's a Discourse Marker* 434).

However, older people— >60—make more use of the lexical variants, such as *wait a minute*. In contrast, people between the ages of 30-59 also prefer to use the lexical variants such as *wait a second*. Finally, young people—17-29—employ *wait now* or *wait* alone. In fact, younger people are the ones who use the DPM *wait* more and they prefer to use the shorter form instead of one of the variants (Tagliamonte, *Wait, It's a Discourse Marker* 434-437).

In addition, concerning gender, women are the ones who tend to use this DPM more frequently (Tagliamonte, *Wait, It's a Discourse Marker* 434-437). And, regarding its position in the context, *wait* and its lexical variants mainly occur in an initial position, at the beginning of the main clause (Tagliamonte, *Wait, It's a Discourse Marker* 438-439).

Tagliamonte provides a functional classification of *wait* which includes three types: "correction", "commentary" and "interruption" (*Wait, It's a Discourse Marker*). The first one indicates that something needs to be corrected. This is frequent among the youngest speakers, as can be seen in (14). The second one is used to give an additional commentary as example (15) illustrates. Finally, the third one has the purpose of interrupting the discourse, as shown in (16) (Tagliamonte, *Wait, It's a Discourse Marker* 438-440).

14. One of my cousins, she uh- she got lost. No **wait** she ran away herself, right? Because then, I don't know, she got mad at me. (Tagliamonte, *Wait, It's a Discourse Marker* 438).

15. Whenever we had a tournament, we'd get a new spy equipment (laughs). And we'd try it out at the tournament, and our brothers would be playing mini-sticks in the conference room and we'd be spying around, like, "Oh did you see that?" And talking to each other. **Wait**, the coolest thing I had was- it was a headpiece (Tagliamonte. *Wait, It's a Discourse Marker* 439).

16. And Mr. Haskin. **Wait**, did you know Mr. Haskin? (Tagliamonte, *Wait, It's a Discourse Marker* 439).

To conclude, in addition to its use as a verb, *wait* is also employed as a DPM in discourse, especially among young people. Building on prior research, in Section 4, I will explore the use of *wait* as a DPM in contemporary spoken English, based on data extracted from the BNC 2014.

3. Corpus and methodology

3.1. Corpus description: the BNC 2014

This paper follows a corpus-based approach to examine the use of *wait* as a DPM. The data are extracted from the British National Corpus 2014. Released in 2017, this is a new corpus on contemporary English language and contains data from different spoken registers.

The British National Corpus 2014[2] offers the orthographic transcriptions of conversations from British English native speakers, recorded from 2012 to 2016 (Love et al. 320). The corpus was compiled at Lancaster University and Cambridge Press University and totals 11.5 million words.

The spoken component of the BNC2014 is the only one freely available nowadays, but there are plans to release a comparable written corpus, which is currently in the final stages of its compilation.

3.2. Methodology

In this section, I will discuss the methodology followed to carry out the corpus-based study. Given the large size of the corpus, I have reduced my analysis to a sample of 300 tokens of *wait*. The data were extracted directly from the corpus interface searching for *wait*. I have used the randomized sample option to select my sample of 300 tokens, in order to prevent that all the cases of *wait* were taken from just a few texts. The data were then manually annotated in an Excel database according to the five variables shown in Table 1.

Following Tagliamonte, I manually disambiguated cases of *wait* as a verb, as illustrated in example (17) and cases of *wait* as a DPM, as shown in example (18) *(Wait, It's a Discourse Marker)*. In (17) it can clearly be seen that *wait* works as a verb since the meaning involves a period of time in which a person has to hang up for something, whereas in example (18) *wait* functions as a DPM which is used to rectify the previous sentence that has been said with wrong information.

17. S0391: well the thing is they can easily **wait** it 's not like you 've got a registry office spot is it ? it 's less pressure [BNC14, SWLR 14].

18. S0018: plus four point eight (.) plus nought point nought eight (.) plus nought point three seven (.) plus nought point three eight (.) equals five pounds sixty-eight (.) is that how much it costs? **Wait** there (.) no we 've done it wrong [BNC14, SBVQ 1061].

DPMs have received attention concerning their analysis and have been classified according to the following variables: type, position, function, gender and age. On the right-hand side, Table 1 shows the different values for the variables. Thus, for type, the possible values are verb or DPM; for the position, we distinguish between initial, middle or final; for gender, female or male; for age, we consider the following values: 7-9, 10-19, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-74, and unknown; for function, the possible values are: correction, commentary, interruption, alarming and mirativity.

VARIABLES	VALUES
Type	Verb / DPM
Position	Initial / Middle / Final
Gender	Female / Male
Age	7-9 / 10-19 / 20-29 / 30-39 / 40-49 / 50-59 / 60-74 / Unknown
Function	Correction / Commentary / Interruption / Alarming / Mirativity

Table 1. Variables analysed

4. Results

4.1. Frequency and lexical variants

As mentioned above, the corpus analysis consisted of 300 cases of *wait*. Specifically, the purpose was to determine the cases of *wait* in which it functions as a DPM. The manual analysis of the corpus reveals that 146 of the tokens are DPMs, and the rest, 154 are verbs. Figure 1 illustrates the proportion of both the DPM and the verb *wait*.
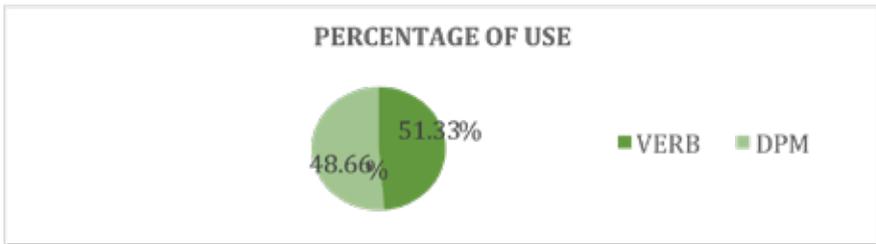
Figure 1. Percentage of wait as a DPM and verb

The findings reveal that in addition to *wait*, other lexical variants also operate as similar DPMs. These variants are the following ones: *oh wait*, *just wait*, *so wait/wait so*, *oh wait no/wait no*, *(no) wait a minute*, *wait now*, *no wait/oh no wait*, and *wait for it*. Examples of these variants are illustrated from (19) to (26).

19. S0543: >>**oh wait** yeah it depends like it depends where DS gave it like cos they only have the older one well not the ol---UNCLEARWORD [BNC2014, STH5 1529].

20. S0275: listen to the whole story

S0276: >>what? what? what? but you

S0275: **just wait**

S0276: but you (.) why ? (.) no (.) understand you [BNC2014, S3S6 305].

21. S0328: **so wait** what is it? it 's like is it a game? [BNC2014, SDJA 179].

22. S0012: **wait no** I 'm saying we have to wait for an invitation we do n't just say we 're coming round to dinner [BNC2014, SH4V 707].

23. S0024: so I was like hang on a minute **wait a minute** I 'm gon na call my husband and just check that this is the right thing [BNC2014, SFRX 124].

24. S0556: **wai- now wait wait wait wait now now wait wait wait wait wait wait** just give it a minute to calm down [BNC2014, SMRV 1401].

25. S0603: to baby Jesus (.) **oh no wait** (.) which one was this? [BNC2014, S78P 1909].

26. S0198: **wait for it** wait for it what 's that erm hat he 's wearing? Is that military? [BNC2014, S78E 288].

In the contexts analysed, the DPM *wait* was not used alone in 40.41% of the utterances. In some cases, different lexical variants have been detected, which have been previously mentioned. The data on the frequency and percentages of these variants are provided in Table 2. In particular, *oh wait* is found in 9 cases; *just wait* in 3 contexts; *so wait / wait so* in 6 cases; *oh wait no / wait no* appears 7 times; *(no) wait a minute* occurs in 15 tokens; *wait now* in 3 cases; *no wait / oh no wait* is used in 9 contexts; *what wait / wait what* or *wait how wait* is found 7 times; and the last, *wait for it* in 2 contexts.

VARIANTS	NUMBER OF TOKENS	PERCENTAGES
Wait	94	64.4%
(No) wait a minute	15	10.3%
Oh wait	9	6.16%
No wait / Oh no wait	9	6.16%
Oh wait no / Wait no	7	4.79%
So wait / Wait so	6	4.10%
Just wait	3	2.05%
Wait now	3	2.05%
TOTAL	**146**	**100%**

Table 2. Frequency of the lexical variants of wait in discourse

4.2. Position

Regarding the position of *wait* in the 146 DPMs, I have found three positions: initial, middle and final. A total of 92 *wait* were found in initial position. The other two positions are much less frequent. The use of the DPM *wait* in middle position decreases, only occurring in 43 of the utterances. Finally, the final position is rarely used since only 11 tokens have been found in this position. Thus, the initial position is the most commonly used in this context. In Table 3, the distribution of the different positions of *wait* as a DPM is presented.

POSITION	NUMBER OF TOKENS	PERCENTAGES
Initial	92	63.02%
Middle	43	29.45%
Final	11	7.53%
Total	**146**	**100%**

Table 3. Position in the discourse analysed

4.3. Gender

In this subsection, I examine whether the gender variable plays a role in the use of *wait* as a DPM. In the results of the corpus study, it has been observed that 88 cases of *wait* are used by females, while the remaining 58 are employed by men. Thus, this DPM is predominant in women's discourse. Table 4 shows the distribution of this variable.

GENDER	NUMBER OF TOKENS	FREQUENCY
Female	88	60.27%
Male	58	39.73%
Total	**146**	**100%**

Table 4. Frequency by gender

4.4. Age

As explained before, the ages have been classified by decades. However, in the BNC2014, participants are from 7 years old, so there is also a first category from 7 to 9. In this category, 7 to 9, there are 11 cases of *wait* as a DPM, where the predominant gender is male. From 10-19, there are 42 tokens mostly by males as well. Then, from 20-29, 50 cases are found with higher use among women. From 30-39, the frequency decreases to 10 cases and they are used equally by females and males. From 40-49, the number of cases remains almost the same, with only 9 tokens, but this time mostly by men. From 50-59, 5 cases of *wait* as a DPM occur among women. Finally, from 60 to 74, there are 7 cases, mostly by males. Indeed, there are 12 cases of *wait* in which the age is not specified in the corpus. This group has been removed from the analysis of the age variable. Table 5 shows the distribution of the data according to age.

AGES	NUMBER OF TOKENS	PREDOMINANT GENDER
7-9	11	Male
10-19	42	Male
20-29	50	Female
30-39	10	Female and Male—in the same proportion—
40-49	9	Male
50-59	5	Female
60-74	7	Male
TOTAL	134	MALE

Table 5. Number of tokens and predominant gender by ages

4.5. Function

Following Tagliamonte, three main functions of *wait* as a DPM have been identified *(Wait, It's a Discourse Marker)*. These three types have been mentioned in Section 2.4 and they are correction, whose function is to correct something that has been said previously. That is, it deals with rectifying a mistake made in the speech. Generally, the speaker tries to self-correct and the DPM *wait* is preceded by a "no". The use of this "no" indicates that there is something wrong that needs to be corrected. An example is shown in (27) where the speaker is correcting himself/herself since he/she cannot remember how many modules of English he/she did in the past, so he rectified by self-correcting.

> 27. S0472: you just do n't remember them erm
>
> S0434: but see that 's the funny thing I do n't feel like I did anything at uni I had to cram for and I still do n't remember it
>
> S0472: yeah
>
> S0434: I remember bits but so much of it just like and I did two modules of English no er **wait** tw- yeah two modules of English in my first year and I could n't even tell you what they were
>
> S0472: yeah

S0434: I know we did Shakespeare something because that 's when I first ever read erm (.) winter something Winter [BNC2014, S5YY 563].

The next function is commentary whose aim is to add information to the discourse. This function is about adding an extra information which has not been mentioned before to give more context to the addressee. The example illustrated in (28) shows how the speaker includes a piece of new information about how she wants to do the chocolate egg. That is, she would like to cook a big round egg with the decoration of a chick.

28. S0653: I keep meaning to try and make chocolate s- eggs you know big ones like get a mould

S0654: mama ?

S0653: cos that 'd be great fun

S0654: >>mama ?

S0653: yeah ?

S0654: we should do a big round egg with a teeny chi- chi-

S0655: **wait** I see a big round egg with a teeny teeny chick I see a big round egg with a teeny chick [BNC2014, SQPH 342].

And, the last function, interruption, which is based on the interruption of the speech, mainly to ask a question. In other words, interruption approaches to make a pause by asking a question to clarify the information received. An example is provided in (29) where it can be noticed how the speaker asks to the interlocutor if he takes just two subjects since the speaker wants to know more information about the school course.

29. S0592: I think every time erm (.) four biology modules (.) we have four weeks of teaching and then the last week is where we have our end of module tests

S0599: mm

S0592: and so we do n't have lectures then but I still have to go to psychology so it does n't really feel like time off but (.) I do n't have to get up as much so

S0599: **wait** do you do two subjects ?

S0592: yeah we have to do erm in our first year we have to do a minor [BNC2014, SUVL 2054].

In addition, two further functions, absent in Tagliamonte's study, were taken into account in the analysis of the BNC2014 in cases of *wait (Wait, It's a Discourse Marker)*. These two functions would not fall into any of these categories since they show different purposes in the discourse and have its own characteristics that distinguish them from others. One of these functions is alarming, used to warn someone of something to alert a possible hazard situation to the interlocutor so that they become aware of what is about to happen. In other words, it disrupts the discourse to alarm someone about a perilous moment by repeating sequentially the DPM *wait* in the context to emphasize this warning event that the speaker is addressing. An example is shown in (30), where the speaker is trying to perturb the interlocutor by telling him/her that he/she should wait to talk to this person later until he/she feels less angry.

30. S0555: look at all the dirt like getting into the bottle

S0405: there 's no oh

S0556: >>it 's not in the bottle cos it 's not open yet

S0555: come on --ANONnameM you can do it

S0405: my hand hurts

S0555: maybe just throw the bottle at the tree

S0556: **wai- now wait wait wait wait now now wait wait wait wait wait wait** just give it a minute to calm down

S0405: why ?

S0556: it 's angry at you

S0405: what the fuck are you doing ? I 'll do –UNCLEARWORD [BNC2014, SMRV 1401].

The second new function is mirativity, which is defined by Hengeveld and Olbertz as "a linguistic category that characterizes a proposition as newsworthy, unexpected, or surprising" (488). That is, this function expresses surprise for a new information unexpectedly received in the conversation. In this case, there is no always a repetition of DPM *wait* as it occurs with

alarming function. In fact, this function can be consistently seen with a preceded or followed word, which is "what" with a question mark, with the purpose of emphasizing this surprise in the context. An example is seen in (31) where the speaker is surprised when he/she finds out an unexpected piece of information, in this case, number of litres of vodka that the addressee admits to drink.

31. S0041: what 's happened here ? I mean she 's in a bit of a something over there (.) hang on (.) we 're not there yet

S0084: mm

S0041: er (.) du du du du du (.) now here I was a year later (.) it was pure vodka that ran in my blood

S0084: huh

S0041: Three litres was my standard binge

S0084: what ? **Wait**

S0041: three litres of vodka

S0084: not per day ? Surely ?

S0041: standard binge (.) I 'd simply lie down on the sofa in my pyjamas (.) sick bucket at my side [BNC2014, SJG5 656].

These two new functions, alarming and mirativity, found in my study, are different from the aforementioned three proposed by Tagliamonte (*Wait, It's a Discourse Marker*). They have been classified independently since they fulfil different functions in discourse. On the one hand, in the case of alarming function, *wait* is used with the aim of perturbing someone about a possible threatening situation. This danger perceived by the speaker can be appreciated in the sequential repetition of *wait*, which alarms the interlocutor about something potentially dangerous happening. On the other hand, in the mirativity function, wait is used when the speaker receives unexpected information and she/he expresses surprise to the addressee. It is characteristic of this function that wait is accompanied by "what?", before or after it.

TYPE OF FUNCTION	NUMBER OF TOKENS	FREQUENCY
Interruption	55	37.68%
Commentary	36	24.66%
Alarming	31	21.24%
Correction	16	10.95%
Mirativity	8	5.47%
TOTAL	**146**	**100%**

Table 6. Frequency by function

The different functions of *wait* mentioned in Table 6 have also been analysed in relation to their position in the clause. The first type, which is correction, has been observed in 16 of the tokens, mainly used by women and predominantly in the middle position. The second one, commentary, which occurs in 36 cases, is also mainly produced by women. Its most frequent position is the initial one. The third function is interruption, which is widely used, with 55 tokens. In fact, it is also mostly females who use this function of the DPM. It is dominant in the initial position. The fourth function is alarming, in which 31 cases are found, mostly in males. Its position is more common at the beginning and in the middle, less at the end. Finally, the last one, mirativity, is used in 8 contexts, mainly by women, whose main position is initial or middle, never in final position.

Regarding the function of *wait* used by individuals, results indicate that the population of 7-39 make a greater use of *wait* in the interruption function. In contrast, individuals aged 40-49 prefer the commentary function. In people aged 50-59 years, the most common function is interruption, as it happened with young speakers. However, in the older population, 60-74, the most frequent function of *wait* is to express correction. The alarming and mirativity functions are not predominant in any of the age groups, although they are present across the different ages in low proportions. A summary of the most frequent functions according to age is provided in Table 7.

AGE OF POPULATION	TYPE OF FUNCTION MOST USED
7-39	Interruption
40-49	Commentary
50-59	Interruption
60-74	Correction

Table 7. Function used in regard to age

5. Discussion

This piece of research, based on the contemporary usage of *wait* in British English speech, has analysed the uses and functions of *wait* as a DPM. In terms of position, the most frequent is the initial one, with 92% of the cases showing a preference for this position, followed by the middle position and final one. Additionally, it has been observed that the use of *wait* is more common among the female population—60.27%—. It is also interesting to note that the use of *wait* as a DPM is significantly high among young people— <29—. Indeed, 92 of the 146 DPM were uttered by people below the age of 30. Furthermore, *wait* fulfils five functions in British English conversation; the most frequent function in British English is to employ *wait* to interrupt the addressee, usually with the aim that the interlocutor makes a pause that allows the speaker to ask something.

The results by Tagliamonte on the DPM *wait* in Canadian English and the findings obtained from my corpus-based study in British English present some similarities and differences. First, *wait* as a DPM seems to have mostly entered into discourse through the youngest generation of speakers, both in the Canadian and British varieties. The lexical variants that Tagliamonte finds in her study of the DPM *wait* in Canadian English are similar to the ones I attested in my corpus analysis of British English. Second, among the lexical variants in Canadian English, Tagliamonte finds *wait a minute*, *wait a second*, *wait now*, *hold on*, and *hang on*, whereas the analysis of British English unveils some further others, namely *oh wait*, *just wait*, *so wait/wait so*, *oh wait no/wait no*, *(no) wait a minute*, *wait now*, *no wait/oh no wait*, and *wait for it*, suggesting that British English may display a wider range of lexical variants than Canadian English. It should be noted, however, that Tagliamonte considers *hang on* and *hold on* as variants given that they fulfil the same functions as *wait* (*Wait, It's a Discourse Marker*). However, I have disregarded these variants in my study of British English, given that they arise from verbs other than *wait*.

Regarding the position of *wait* in the sentence, the preferred position in Canadian English is the initial one. My data on British English are similar in this respect since the initial position is also the dominant one.

In terms of function, the results have shown that the DPM *wait* is multifunctional, serving different functions in discourse, such as correction, commentary, interruption, alarming or mirativity. Tagliamonte's results on Canadian English show that correction and commentary are the most frequent functions in her data (*Wait, It's a Discourse Marker*). This tendency is not maintained in my corpus data, which shows different frequency results with respect to function, with interruption being the dominant function in British English. Although my corpus data are reduced and, therefore, results should be confirmed against larger samples of language, this suggests different cross-varietal functional preferences that are worth exploring in further research.

6. Conclusion

This paper focuses on the use of *wait* as a DPM in British English. Despite the wide scholarly interest that DPMs have received, *wait* remains, except for Tagliamonte's study, a largely neglected DPM (*Wait, It's a Discourse Marker*). This pilot study has provided evidence to fill this gap, by analysing the use of *wait* in contemporary spoken English in the BNC2014 corpus. The study, thus, allows us to examine the use of *wait* in British English as well as to explore inter-variety differences by comparing the data obtained here with the findings reported by Tagliamonte on Canadian English (*Wait, It's a Discourse Marker*).

For my corpus-based analysis, I examined a total of 300 tokens of *wait* to detect in how many contexts it was used as a DPM as opposed to a verb. My results show that 146 of the cases are DPMs. Following Tagliamonte, a wide range of functions has been identified for this DPM: correction, commentary and interruption. In addition, this study has unveiled two other functions that *wait* fulfils in British English: alarming and mirativity. These two last functions would be classified as different functions from Tagliamonte's ones since they serve other purposes in discourse (*Wait, It's a Discourse Marker*). In other words, alarming is about to warn someone about a situation that is perceived as being unsafe, whereas mirativity deals with someone's surprising reaction when hearing a piece of information that he/she did not expect.

The corpus findings suggest that the most frequent function of *wait* in discourse is interruption and that when *wait* is employed for this function it

usually appears in initial position. In addition, the DPM *wait* is mostly used by young speakers, especially women.

My results from British English are similar to those reported by Tagliamonte in her study on Canadian English (*Wait, It's a Discourse Marker*). Initial position is the most frequent in both varieties and it is typically used by young speakers, especially by women. Interestingly, however, the most frequent function of this DPM is correction and commentary in Canadian English, whereas the interruption function is dominant in British English. These results should, however, be confirmed by further research.

Given the differences in function reported in these two varieties of English, it is possible that *wait* fulfils a different range of functions in other varieties of English, which would also be worth exploring in future research. Similarly, it would be interesting that further research explores the counterparts of *wait* in other languages, to examine whether the preliminary results reported here are exclusive of English or could also be extended to other languages.

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Notes

1. DPMs are highlighted in bold in the examples.

2. For further details about the spoken BNC2014, see also http://corpora.lancs.ac.uk/bnc2014/

STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL CONTEXTUAL VARIABLES IN MITIGATING EMAIL REQUESTS

LA PERCEPCIÓN DE LOS ESTUDIANTES SOBRE LAS VARIABLES CONTEXTUALES SOCIALES AL MITIGAR LAS PETICIONES POR CORREO ELECTRÓNICO

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Abstract

Given the power imbalance between students and faculty members, many studies on email communication have focused on how email requests are performed in an academic setting. Research has illustrated that power-incongruent emails can lead to pragmatic failure and cause a negative effect on the email recipient. The present study explores how contextual variables, such as social distance, power and imposition are perceived by EFL students in three different situations in an academic context. Moreover, the study examines the degree of request mitigation performed by learners to adjust to these social contextual variables. Findings reveal that learners seem to be aware of social contextual variables, but they do not appear to mitigate email requests accordingly.

Keywords: email requests, imposition, mitigation, perception, power, social distance.

Resumen

Dado el desequilibrio de poder entre estudiantes y profesores, muchos estudios sobre la comunicación por correo electrónico se han centrado en cómo se realizan las peticiones en un entorno académico. La investigación

ha señalado que los correos electrónicos que no son congruentes con las relaciones de poder de los participantes pueden conducir a una situación de descortesía y causar un efecto negativo en el destinatario. El presente estudio explora en qué medida las variables contextuales, como el poder, la distancia y la imposición son percibidas por los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera en tres situaciones diferentes en un contexto académico. Además, el estudio examina el grado de mitigación de las peticiones que realizan los alumnos para adaptarse a estas variables socio-contextuales. Los resultados revelan que los estudiantes parecen conocer las características sociales, pero las peticiones no están en concordancia, en lo que se refiere a la mitigación, con la distancia social y poder del destinatario.

Palabras clave: peticiones por correo electrónico, imposición, mitigación, percepción, poder, distancia social.

1. Introduction

Email has become the most common way of communication in many professional and academic contexts. Unlike face-to-face interaction, one of the advantages of communicating via email is its asynchronous nature, which gives the sender time to plan and revise his/her message (Herring 115), and the recipient the possibility of reading it and responding at his/her convenience. However, in many instances, especially in university contexts, students do not seem to benefit from the asynchrony of communication and write messages that faculty members tend to consider inappropriate given the power-unequal relationship of the interactants (Economidou-Kogetsidis *Please answer me as soon as possible* 3194).

On the one hand, student-professor interactions have become more casual over time, and this informality also transpires in email communication. On the one hand, it seems that, since an email is a written message, it should comply with the rules of written language rather than portraying the characteristics of more informal language use as a result of the immediacy of communication. Actually, part of this controversy is determined by how email writing is perceived, that is, "a replacement of the traditional letter or as an extension of informal spoken conversation" (Lewin-Jones and Mason 76).

Since most of the emails to faculty members in academic settings involve requests, many of the issues as to the (in)formality, (in)appropriateness, (in)directness of these exchanges encompass issues of politeness. In this line, the purpose of the present study is to explore how EFL students' perceptions

of social contextual factors—i.e., social distance, power, and imposition—affect email request performance.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Social contextual variables and mitigation in requests

When a request email is sent, most likely, the sender expects the receiver to comply with his/her demands. However, as requests have been described as face-threatening speech acts (Brown and Levinson 313), lack of politeness strategies, especially when addressing superiors, may unwillingly lead to pragmatic failure. The recipient's negative face may be jeopardized by issues such as the degree of imposition the request exerts on him/her. Other variables that may affect request performance are social distance—i.e., the degree of familiarity between the interlocutors—and power distance—i.e., the social superiority of one of the interlocutors over the other—. In this respect, the addresser should appraise the contextual situation in which the request is conveyed and save the recipient's face so as not to compromise their interaction. Sociopragmatic competence requires how the interactants perceive and interpret their social communicative interaction by the degree of imposition involved, and the social distance and power differences between the interlocutors. In email communication, sender's perception of these social variables may influence the degree of mitigation of email requests—i.e., greater mitigation in power-asymmetrical relationships, for example—. In order to minimize the threat a request may impinge on the receiver; the addresser can resort to a series of mitigation devices to minimize the impositive force of the request.

A request comprises the head act, which actually performs the action of asking and the peripheral modifiers, which can soften—i.e., mitigators—or intensify—i.e., aggravators—the imposition of the request either internally or externally (Márquez Reiter 36; Sifianou 158). Two types of internal modifiers, lexical and syntactic, have been commonly distinguished—see Faerch and Kasper; Sifianou; Trosborg among others—. The internal modifications, realized as lexical additions and syntactic choices, although non-essential in the request head-act, serve to soften—i.e., downgraders—or intensify—i.e., upgraders—the coercive nature of the request. Lexical modification devices include *subjectivizers*—i.e., the requester expresses his/her opinion—, *polite markers*—e.g., *please*—, *understatements*—e.g., *a bit*, *a little*—, *downtoners*, which minimize the force of the request and offer the possibility of not complying with the request—e.g., *if possible,*

perhaps—, among others. Syntactic modifications include the use of past tense, progressive, conditional, subjunctive, embedded- and if-clauses, among the most frequently used—see, for example, Trosborg 209-212, for an exhaustive description of syntactic downgraders—. The external modifiers that accompany the request head act—i.e., supportive moves—can either precede or follow the request act and have also the function of mitigating or emphasizing the force of the request. Some of the supportive moves commonly described in the literature—see Cohen and Shively 208-209; Márquez Reiter 92-93; Pan 145; among others—include: *Grounders*—i.e., expressing a reason for the request—, *preparators*—i.e., preparing the recipient for the immediate request—, *precommitments*—i.e., attempting to get the receiver to agree to comply beforehand—, *offer of reward*—i.e., the promise of a reward to increase the recipient's compliance with the request—, among many other categories.

2.2. Research on mitigation in email requests

Research on requests is extensive, but an area that has received a lot of interest for some years now is how requests are performed in email communication. Given the potential threat to the receiver's negative face, special attention has been placed on the use of mitigation devices. How mitigation is conducted has been widely researched within the scope of politeness research. Most studies on mitigation in emails have focused on examining the linguistic patterns and frequency of downgraders and how the use of these devices affects the interaction between the interactants. Although many studies on mitigation in email requests have analyzed the frequency of internal and/or external modification (Economidou-Kogetsidis *Please answer me as soon as possible* 3202-3203; Pan 139, 143,146; Zarei and Mohammadi 10-11; to name a few), other issues tackled in the study of mitigation are: (1) the effect of instruction (Alcón-Soler *Instruction and pragmatic change*; Chen; Eslami, Mirzaei and Dini), (2) gender differences (Chen, Yang, Chang and Eslami; Rahmani and Rahmany), or (3) the effect of language proficiency (Tseng). Many studies are comparative and have examined email requests by native—NSs—and non-native speakers—NNSs—of English (Alcón-Soler *Mitigating email requests in teenagers*; Biesenbach-Lucas; Deveci and Hmida; Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig; Woodfield and Economidou-Kogetsidis) or explored differences in email requests in the L1 and L2 (Codina-Espurz and Salazar-Campillo; Félix-Brasdefer).

Research discrepancies in pragmatic performance are mainly due to methodological issues regarding type of data and data collection: elicited vs. spontaneously produced data, different requests types analyzed—i.e., appointment, action, etc.—or L2 proficiency level of the participants, thus, making comparability of results more challenging. However, despite the heterogeneity of data collection and research procedures, much of the literature on email interaction has revealed differences between NSs and NNSs. Requests, especially by NNSs, include a considerable number of pragmatic infelicities, namely a deficient or inadequate use of mitigation devices, which are not congruent with the higher status of the receiver (Economidou-Kogetsidis *Please answer me as soon as possible* 3195; Shim 186; Zarei and Mohammadi, 20). Internal modification appears to be more frequent among NSs (Deveci and Hmida 202) and although NNSs also make use of lexical and syntactic modifiers, studies concur that, due to their limited pragmalinguistic competence, NNSs tend to resort to external modifications more frequently (Pan 155). In short, research has quite consistently found that internal and external modification of email requests by NNSs is insufficient and inadequate when writing an email to an authority figure, and that NSs produce a wider variety of modifiers. In this respect, a similar outcome has also been observed among learners with a higher proficiency level, who were able to produce a wider variety of internal and external mitigators in comparison to less proficient learners (Tseng 23).

Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig conducted one of the earliest studies on email requests. The authors compared how NSs and NNSs of English differed in the emails sent to faculty. Their findings revealed that NNSs ignored the power difference with the professor and used fewer mitigators than their American counterparts when sending a request. Degree of imposition in requests to faculty was addressed by Biesenbach-Lucas. In comparison to native English speakers, this author found that NNSs showed an "inability to select appropriate lexical modification" (74) due to their limited resources for creating polite email requests to faculty. Overall, both groups of students showed a preference for syntactic over lexical modification, and both groups exhibited a preference for past tense as a syntactic mitigating device, but differed in the use of lexical mitigation. While the NS group relied on *subjectivizers*, NNSs preferred the polite marker *please*. The preference of this polite marker as a way of internally modifying the request head-act has been reported by many researchers (Economidou-Kogetsidis *Please answer me as soon as possible* 3207; Shim 186; Tseng 20; Zarei and Mohammadi 10, to name a few).

In a study of elicited and spontaneously produced emails in an academic context, Chen, Yang, Chang and Eslami (82) found differences with regard to length—i.e., elicited emails tended to be shorter—, but similarities in supportive moves, as *grounders* were commonly found in both types of data. These authors further argued that the differences in writing style—i.e., email length—could be due to the vested interest students had when producing an authentic email, and recommended to further explore how attitude may influence email writing. An over-dependence on *grounders* has also been reported in other studies (Chen 143; Deveci and Hmida 203; Economidou-Kogetsidis *Please answer me as soon as possible* 3208; Tseng 21; Woodfield and Economidou-Kogetsidis 98). In a comparative study of email requests produced by female and male EFL learners, Rahmani and Rahmany (60) claimed that *subjectivizers* were the preferred lexical politeness marker whereas *embedding* was the syntactic politeness device most frequently used in both groups, and concluded that there were no gender differences in politeness strategies.

Perception has mainly been evaluated from the recipient's point of view—see, for example, Economidou-Kogetsidis *Variations in evaluations of the (im)politeness of emails*—. In this respect, studies seemed to agree that pragmatic failure portrays a poor image of the sender (Economidou-Kogetsidis *Variations in evaluations of the (im)politeness of emails* 14). Especially in power-unequal situations, inadequate or inappropriate politeness renders email requests as being impolite towards the recipient, who may be reluctant to comply with the request. Therefore, learners, predominantly NNS students, need to be aware of how faculty perceive requestive emails to be able to communicate with them appropriately (Hashemian and Farhang-Ju 146).

Not many studies, though, have been conducted from the sender's perspective. One of the few studies on evaluation of social variables and mitigation in email requests was carried out by Alcón-Soler (*Mitigating email requests in teenagers*). She examined how perceptions of social distance and degree of imposition in requests affected request mitigation in academic cyber-consultation. In particular, this author analyzed differences in internal and external mitigation between international and British teenagers as well as the perception of degree of imposition in the email requests addressed to the students' mentor. No relevant differences were found with regard to the production of internal modification; in general, students showed a preference for the lexical marker *please*. However, with regard to syntactic modification,

whereas international students relied heavily on the conditional *could*, British students opted for a combination of multiple syntactic modifiers. As for externally-modified email requests, both groups showed a preference for the use of *grounders*, but overall production of external modifiers was greater in the international group. As regards perception, Alcón-Soler (*Mitigating email requests in teenagers* 793) reported that, although teenagers did not judge the student-mentor relationship as distant—+social distance—, international students perceived a higher degree of imposition when having to send an email to their mentor.

Some studies, although not in email communication, have investigated how perception of social contextual variables affect request realizations—e.g., Shahrokhi—. In a study on requests collected by means of Discourse Completion Task—DCT—with Persian males, Shahrokhi examined the influence of contextual variables such as imposition of the request—i.e., a context-internal variable—and social dominance and distance—i.e., context-external variables—on request performance, and pointed out that the production of request strategies was culturally specific as a new request strategy—i.e., *Challenging Ability*—emerged in the data provided. The author claimed that participants used this strategy "especially when the speaker is dominating the hearer, they know one another well, and the imposition of the request is low" (685).

The studies presented above discussed mitigation realizations and/or perception of imposition when mitigating an email request; however, to our knowledge, not much attention has been paid to how addressers adjust email performance to these perceived social variables. Thus, the present study intends to explore if the sender's perceived degree of imposition of a request is actually reflected in the actual performance of the email request. Specifically, the purpose is to examine whether the use of mitigation devices in email requests is related to the degree of imposition, social distance and power that students detect and assess when sending a requestive email in an academic context.

In short, the issues addressed in the study are subsumed in the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent is students' perception of imposition of a request via email affected by social distance and power?

RQ2: To what extent do students mitigate requests to adjust the degree of imposition that they perceive and write power-congruent emails?

3. The study

3.1. Participants and Data collection

Data were collected from 20 female Spanish university students, who voluntarily participated in the study. Half of the participants were about to complete their undergraduate university degree while the other half had already started their MA in English Language Teaching. They all had at least an upper intermediate level of English (B2) according to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR).

Participants were asked to write an email request in English in three different scenarios, which were devised taking into consideration the social contextual variables of social distance, power and imposition, and depicted tasks commonly conducted in their academic context. The email requests consisted of asking (1) a faculty member to sign a learning agreement, (2) a classmate to revise a paper, and (3) the head of a school to grant the student permission to conduct a placement in her school. The tasks were controlled for gender as both email senders and recipients were female subjects, and level of imposition was considered similar and moderately high in each situation as students' emails required to perform a *request for action*. Thus, level of imposition was neutralized by asking receivers to perform an action, which initially was thought to be similar in terms of being quite demanding in each situation. However, context-external variables varied among the three scenarios. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the scenarios in the present study.

Situation	1. Professor	2. Classmate	3. Head of school
Request	Sign a learning agreement	Proofread a paper	Acceptance for school placement
Addresser	Female student	Female student	Female student
Addressee	Female professor	Female student	Female head of school
Social distance	Close (known person)	Close (known person)	Distant (unknown person)
Power distance	Power asymmetry (Addresser<Addressee)	Power-equal	Power asymmetry (Addresser<Addressee)

Table 1. Scenario features

Participants were also asked to rate the imposition of their requests in a scale from 1 (low imposition) to 5 (high imposition) and provide feedback for their rating in each situation. Although the emails were to be written in

English, in an attempt to elicit elaborative input, students' feedback about their ratings were accepted in English as well as in the student's L1 (Spanish or Catalan) as the feedback language was not germane to the study.

3.2. Data analysis

Internal and external modifications to the request head acts were identified and quantified. Internal request modifiers were analyzed following Faerch and Kasper (224). With respect to the analysis of syntactic modifiers, these syntactic choices were considered marked and coded as a way of downgrading the request head act if they could be replaced by a simpler syntactic form (e.g., *Could* you sign the learning agreement? vs. *Can* you sign the learning agreement?).

Cohen and Shively's (208-209) framework was adapted to analyze supportive moves to the email requests in this study. However, a new category, *offer for non-compliance*, was added to the coding scheme to fit the data in the study. The addresser used this new external move as a way of facilitating the addressee a way out and avoiding complying with the request, by providing an option to refuse to do so and, in turn, enhance positive face with the addressee. Table 2 displays examples of the data in the present study.

Supporting move	Examples
Preparator	*I have not received the learning agreement*. Could you please sign it and send it to me? (to professor)
Precommitment	*Have you finished your master's projects? I'm a little overwhelmed with them and I need help.* (to classmate)
Grounder	I need your signature *in order to start the practicum.* (to professor)
Acknowledgement of imposition	*I know I'm asking for a lot.* (to classmate)
Importance	*It is very important for me.* (to head of school)
Appreciation	*Your help would be extremely helpful.* (to classmate)
Expectation	*I will be waiting for your answer or for the email notifying that the agreement has been signed.* (to professor)
Appeal	*I need some help and I thought of you.* (to classmate)
Promise of reward	*I owe you a beer.* (to classmate)
Offer of non-compliance	*If you haven't time or you don't want to do that, don't worry; feel free to let me know.* (to classmate)

Table 2. External modifiers in the current study

Uncertainties that could arise when coding the data were discussed with a colleague until agreement was reached. Frequency of occurrence of internal and external modifiers was taken as an indicator of the degree of mitigation students used in response to the perceived degree of imposition in each situation. As for examining how students perceived degree of imposition in each scenario, their ratings were quantified. Their judgments also offered valuable qualitative information about the choices they made.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Perception of degree of imposition in email requests

With regard to level of imposition, the analysis of the ratings provided by the students revealed that it varied across the three situations, but at the same time, not everybody perceived the same situation as having the same degree of imposition. As figure 1 illustrates, on average, learners indicated the lowest degree of imposition in email requests to a classmate, and the highest rating to the head of school. Requests to the faculty member were evaluated as slightly lower in imposition in comparison to those to the head of school. Despite the power difference with a faculty member, learners evaluated asking the professor to do something as more coercive and face threatening than asking a classmate, but not as much as asking a head of school, with whom they maintain a greater social distance.

Figure 1. Means of students' perceptions of degree of imposition
in the three scenarios

The analysis of each situation offers a more comprehensive account of students' perceptions of email requests. In the professor scenario—see fig. 2—almost half of the students—45%—rated the situation as having a degree of medium imposition. The rest of the students appeared to be more antagonistic in their ratings and see the request as low/medium-low—20%— or at the higher end of the scale—35% of the participants—.
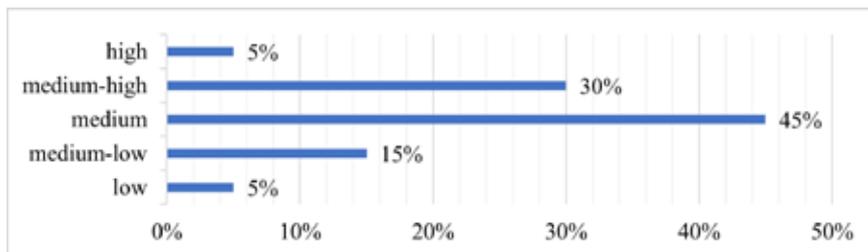
Figure 2. Students' perception of degree of imposition in requests to professor

A further analysis of the students' feedback offered a deeper insight on the choices they made regarding the degree of imposition of the requests. In the first scenario, most of the students who rated this situation as medium-high/high referred to the urgency of the situation and the requirement of having the learning agreement signed prior to starting their placement, as the following example illustrates:

1. I think it is urgent, since the fact of not receiving the document signed could postpone the beginning of the internship, which is important. I am trying to ask politely that I am waiting for the tutor's signature—high—.

It is interesting to note, though, that some did not appraise the situation as urgent and even viewed it as inconsequential:

2. It is not a big deal for me, so it can be fixed before starting or along the first week—medium —.

3. Si no puedo empezar el lunes que viene, empezaré otro día—medium-low—.
[If I can't start next Monday, I'll start another day]

A low rating of imposition was explained by assigning other causes—e.g., technological problems—for not having a signed learning agreement, in which case this was perceived as a legitimate reminder:

4. La intención del mensaje no es imponer, sino que el mensaje es más bien de estilo recordatorio y cauteloso. Puede que haya habido algún problema tecnológico—medium-low—.

[The intention of the message is not to impose, but rather the message is of a reminder and cautious style. There may have been a technological problem]

5. The reasons why it is not signed may be totally unrelated to the tutor and depend on other factors—medium—.

When asking a classmate to proofread a paper that has to be submitted promptly, the tendency was quite different, and only 20% of the students felt that imposition was high or medium-high in this situation. As figure 3 depicts, most students—80%—provided an imposition rating of medium or lower in this situation.
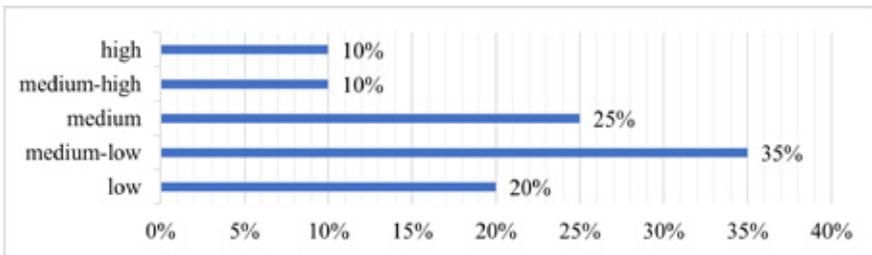
Figure 3. Students' perception of degree of imposition in requests to classmate

Despite this general sense of low imposition of the requested act, some students appraised the situation as highly burdensome as the example below shows:

6. Honestly, I believe that this situation puts the other person in a huge commitment. If I were Susi [the addressee], I would end up checking the project even if that meant an overload of work, since if not, I could be considered a bad classmate—high—.

The above example uncovers the high concern the addresser has about how the request may affect her personal relationship with her classmate and, therefore, her comradery and self-image are at high stakes, which may affect the sender's vulnerability. In this respect, as Czerwionka (1169) argues, mitigation may be understood as a way of diminishing the feeling of being emotionally vulnerable. This author explored how mitigation is affected by the interaction between imposition and certitude, which she defined as "the speaker's degree of conviction related to a set of communicated information" (1164). By means of data elicited in role-plays situations, she found that

speaker uncertainty together with imposition increased the degree of mitigation only in highly demanding situations, which contributed to illustrate "the pluridimensionality of mitigation" (1164).

However, most of the students appraised the situation as simply asking a favor to a friend, who had the right to refuse and assessed the situation as low in imposition, as the following examples illustrate:

7. Considero que no hay ningún tipo de imposición. Amablemente se le pide un favor a una compañera de clase—low—.

[I consider that there is no imposition. A classmate is kindly asked a favor]

8. It is not mandatory for her to check—low—.

9. El correo va dirigido a una amiga y no hay obligación por su parte—medium-low—.

    [The email is addressed to a friend and there is no obligation on her part]

In these instances, students seem to perfectly understand that compliance with the request will depend on the recipient's willingness to do so. Independently of whether the situation had been rated as high or low, the comments revealed a feeling of empathy towards the recipient of the email. The addresser is able to put herself in the situation of the addressee and comprehends that friendship outweighs non-compliance of the request.

As for asking the head of school's permission to conduct a placement in her school, which was a requirement to complete their university degree, the majority of students rated this situation as being of high—35%—or moderately-high—30%—in level of imposition—see fig. 4—.
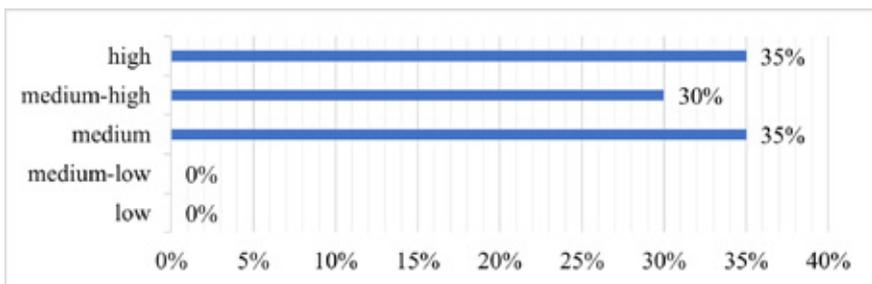
Figure 4. Students' perception of degree of imposition in requests to head of school

In their comments, students acknowledged the social distance with the addressee, and were aware that they had to write emails congruent with her status as shown in the following examples:

10. I do not know Jane [the head of school] and I have to show her more respect than ever—high —.

11. You do not know the receiver of this email, so that the writing must be more formal using the appropriate words and structures for this specific context—medium-high—.

12. De este email depende que se acepte mi petición—medium-high—.
[It depends on this email if my request is accepted]

A medium-imposition rating was usually explained by the receiver's lack of obligation about compliance, or the addresser having an alternative of considering another school for their placement:

13. I believe I am just presenting my case and asking for the possibility, without any pressure or obligation to accept my proposal—medium—.

In light of the students' ratings, the three scenarios have been assessed as varying in degree of imposition—see fig. 5—; the highest being the email addressed to the head of school—+ distance, + power—and the least imposing being the request addressed to a classmate— - distance, power equal—. Given the characteristics of the second scenario— - distance, + power—, email requests towards the professor have been perceived as of medium imposition; not too high due to the close relationship with the professor, but not too low either due to the power-asymmetry of their relationship. As expected, students seemed to be aware of the social contextual variables of social status and distance when judging the degree of imposition of a request and rated the situations accordingly. These results indicated that social distance and status may influence the sender's perceptions about the degree of imposition of an email request—see fig. 5—and, in turn, affect the type of mitigating strategies senders use in email requests.
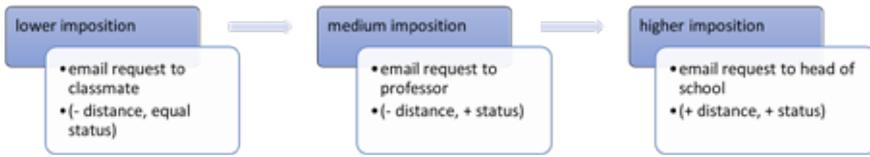
Figure 5. Level of imposition in email requests

Thus, in response to the first research question of this study—i.e., To what extent is students' perception of imposition of an email request affected by social distance and power?—, the findings indicate that students pay attention to contextual variables such as social distance and power, and rate degree of imposition of an email request accordingly—i.e., the greater the distance and/or power, the higher the imposition—.

4.2. Degree of mitigation in email requests

As internal and external modifications contribute to saving face and soften the imposition of a request, students' perceptions about level of imposition should be reflected in the level of mitigation used to soften request imposition. With regard to internal modification, two issues are worth noting from the results. On the one hand, the preference for syntactic modifiers—75 instances—and, on the other hand, a greater degree of mitigation in the email requests addressed to the classmate, as illustrated in table 3.

A similar number of lexical modifiers was used in the three situations. That is, almost a third of the total number of lexical modifiers were used in each situation; however, there are differences regarding the types of lexical modifiers used in each scenario. As table 3 shows, *subjectivizers* were the only lexical softener used in the requests to the head of school—100%—, and the most frequent—63.6%—in emails addressed to the classmate. The polite marker *please*, which was hardly used in these two scenarios, was the preferred mitigation device in email requests to the professor—40%—. Actually, when writing to the faculty member, it is interesting to note that the second highest lexical modifier was an *aggravator*—30%—. The fact that it was the professor's responsibility to sign the learning agreement, and that having her signature was a prerequisite to start the placement could have prompted students to intensify the illocutionary force of the request and express the urgency of compliance. In line with previous research (Biesenbach-Lucas 71; Economidou-Kogetsidis *Please answer me as soon as possible* 3202;

Rahmani and Rahmany 60; Shim 185-186; Zarei and Mohammadi 10), the participants in this study also favored *subjectivizers* and the polite marker, *please*, as lexical mitigating devices.

		Professor	Classmate	Head of school
Lexical Modifiers (Total 30)	Total percentage	33%	36%	30%
Downgraders (Total 27)	Subjectivizer	10%	63.6%	100%
	Understatement		9.1%	
	Downtoner	20%	18.2%	
	Politeness marker *please*	40%	9.1%	
Upgraders (Total 3)	Upgrader	(30%)		
Syntactic Modifiers (Total 75)	Total percentage	16%	46.6%	37.3%
	Past tense		14.3%	10.7%
	Past modal	50%	22.8%	7.1%
	Conditional	16.6%	17.1%	32.1%
	Subjunctive	16.6%	8.6%	10.7%
	Embedding/if clause	16.6%	20%	32.1%
	Progressive aspect		17.7%	7.1%
Internal modification: Lexical+ Syntactic (Total 105)		20.9%	43.8%	35.2%

Table 3. Internal modification of email requests
in the present study

As for syntactic modification, *past tense modal* was frequently used as a syntactic modifier of the request head act. Although most studies included modals in the past tense category—see for example Biesenbach-Lucas 69—, given the high production of *past tense modals*, mainly in scenario 1—50%—, following Pan (138), *past tense* and *past tense modal* were established as two distinct categories in the present study. In line with this author, our

students made a frequent use of modals in the past tense, but *past tense* modifications do not seem to be common in their repertoire of modifiers yet. *Subjunctives* were frequently used preceded by an expression of gratitude— e.g., *I would be incredibly grateful if you could sign it digitally*—. Overall, students produced a greater variety and number of mitigation devices with their classmates—43.8%—than with the professor—20.9%—or the head of school—35.2%—, which could indicate a higher concern for saving face with the person of equal status.

Students appeared to have a similar preference for external modification—100 instances—, as the total number of these devices was alike to the production of internal mitigators—105 instances—. The results of our study revealed a greater use of supportive moves in email requests to the classmate—see table 4—. In this context, some students included almost every type of external mitigator possible, which resulted in unusually long emails, causing a verbose effect (Hassall 261; Pan 122). In the professor scenario, most students opted for a *preparator*—65%—or *precommitment*—20%—. These two moves were also the preferred ones in email requests to the head of school. The former may indicate a sense of carefulness towards the recipient by trying to anticipate the situation, whereas the latter attempts to obtain the addressee's binding agreement in advance.

Supportive moves (Total 100)	Professor 20% of total	Classmate 50% of total	Head of school 30% of total
Preparator	65%	10%	40%
Precommitment	20%	16%	40%
Grounder	10%	14%	
Acknowledgement of imposition		18%	6.6%
Importance			3.3%
Appreciation		12%	6.6%
Expectation	5%		3.3%
Appeal		6%	
Offer of reward		6%	
Offer of non-compliance		18%	

Table 4. External modification of email requests in the present study

As for the second research question—i.e., To what extent do students mitigate requests according to the perceived degree of imposition and write power-congruent emails?—, the greater number of mitigating devices used towards a classmate seemed to indicate that students overlooked these social variables in favor of either a vested interest in obtaining compliance—i.e., getting their paper revised—, or a sense on empathy towards the recipient and put more effort in mitigating the request towards a peer than a superior.

In this particular study, contrary to what it was expected, the higher number of politeness devices used in emails addressed to the classmate seemed to indicate that students were more concerned with minimizing the threat to the classmate's negative face than that of their professor or the head of school. Surprisingly, students manifested a greater concern for deference towards a classmate than a higher-up. Although the three scenarios depicted a *request for action*, in view of these results, students probably did not regard the three situations as having the same degree of imposition. The fewer mitigation devices used in emails to the faculty member indicated that the request was perceived as low in imposition. To sign the learning agreement is a mere academic transaction within the student's right, which could explain the lower interest in softening the email request and in enhancing politeness in this situation. Assuming that the amount of mitigation could be an indication of degree of imposition, then, it appears, that the degree of imposition was greater towards a classmate than asking the head of school's permission to have their placement experience in her school or requesting the faculty member to fulfil one of her obligations and sign the learning agreement.

Moreover, the results on mitigation appear to contradict students' ratings. The initial evaluation of imposition changes when learners actually perform the email request. As observed in the present study, the situation that was initially rated as the least imposing becomes the one that prompts more mitigating devices, therefore indicating that the sender feels she is being very demanding. Students are able to assess degree of imposition attending social contextual variables of power and distance, and rate the degree of imposition of the situations from lower to higher—classmate<professor<head of school—. However, when writing the email, their actual performance appears to be influenced by a sense of vulnerability in front of peers, which affects degree of mitigation—professor<head of school<classmate—. If a situation of equal power and social distance between the interlocutors is perceived as the least imposing—i.e., classmate situation—, one would not expect a

preference for mitigation towards peers. Although there is no social distance between sender and receiver in this situation, and both interactants share the same power, the higher incidence of downgraders used may indicate that the sender's email request bears a higher degree of imposition than the request addressed to the professor or head of school—i.e., an interactant of greater power distance—. Therefore, although social contextual variables play a role, we cannot disregard the nature of the request performed.

As these findings suggest, students seemed to be aware of the role contextual variables play in determining the degree of imposition of an email request as their ratings indicated. Nevertheless, a desire to avoid confrontation with a classmate may motivate learners to mitigate more. It is interesting to note that on some occasions, students understood "degree of imposition" in terms of how the request affected them rather than how demanding the action was for the receiver. Perception may change when the addresser actually needs to perform the email request.

5. Conclusion

The findings in the present study reveal that students acknowledge the difference in status of the participants; however, in line with Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (61), students appear to overlook these differences between the participants and do not downgrade their requests accordingly. A lower degree of mitigation in—+power, +distance—situations could be explained in terms of students' miscalculations regarding the rights and obligations of both interlocutors (Economidou-Kogetsidis *Mr Paul, please inform me accordingly* 508). As this author states, degree of imposition depends on factors such as "time, effort and psychological burden on the addressee" (508). Perhaps in the classmate scenario, students perceive that compliance with the request requires a greater effort than in the other two situations.

In view of these results, it seems that students are aware of the relevance of contextual variables and how to write to a person of greater social distance and dominance. However, when writing to an equal, they are probably able to put themselves in the receiver's place, empathize with an equal, and understand the degree of imposition better. Equals may be afraid to risk their interpersonal relationship and compensate by over-mitigating their requests. Mitigation should be understood in interaction, as appraisal of an event may be related to "the acceptability of the event, the responsibility of the parties, the shared knowledge among interlocutors, and the vulnerability of the interlocutors" (Czerwionka 1169).

This study is not exempt from limitations. First of all, the number of participants is modest. Although the three scenarios were devised taking into consideration feasible request actions that students would carry out in a real academic setting, other requests for action could yield different results; therefore, the findings presented here should be taken as preliminary. Considering that research evaluating emails requests from the sender's perspective is scarce, more studies are needed. Moreover, it would have been interesting to interview students about the judgments and choices they made, which may open new venues for further research.

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THE LUCKY FORM OF TRUTH: MARK STRAND READS EDWARD HOPPER'S PAINTINGS

LA AFORTUNADA FORMA DE LA VERDAD: MARK STRAND LEE LAS PINTURAS DE EDWARD HOPPER

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Abstract

This article explores poet Mark Strand's facet as an art critic and, more specifically, the way in which the pictorial universe of American painter Edward Hopper influenced his own poetry, both thematically and stylistically. Reading Hopper's well-known oil on canvas *House by the Railroad* (1925) in a *New York Times* article entitled "Crossing the Tracks to Hopper's World," published on 17 October 1971, Strand dwells on "Hopper's fascination with *passage*" (340). Years later, he would expand his critical exegesis of *House by the Railroad* and other canvasses by the American painter in a book-length essay titled *Hopper* (1994) in ways that are expressive of his own poetics. Both Strand and Hopper look at the world with an inquisitive gaze and capture moments in time with utter clarity to show that the self is a mystery and humans are transients yearning for a moment of revelation, a momentary stay against confusion.

Keywords: Mark Strand, Edward Hopper, self, matter, non-human world, nothingness.

Resumen

El presente artículo indaga en la faceta del poeta Mark Strand como crítico de arte y, más concretamente, el modo como el universo pictórico del pintor

norteamericano Edward Hopper influyó en su poesía, tanto temática como estilísticamente. Leyendo el conocido óleo de Hopper *Casa junto a las vías* (1925) en un artículo del *New York Times* titulado "Crossing the Tracks to Hopper's World", publicado el 17 de octubre de 1971, Strand medita sobre "la fascinación de Hopper por el *paso*" (340). Años después, ampliaría su exégesis crítica de *Casa junto a las vías* y otros lienzos del pintor norteamericano en el libro titulado *Hopper* (1994) en unos términos que evocan su propia poética. Strand y Hopper contemplan el mundo con una mirada inquisitiva y atrapan momentos con absoluta claridad para demostrar que el *yo* es un misterio y que los seres humanos somos criaturas efímeras que anhelan un momento de revelación, una fugaz protección ante la confusión.

Palabras clave: Mark Strand, Edward Hopper, ser, materia, mundo no humano, nada.

1. *Ut pictura poesis*

A prolific poet, translator, anthologist, and essayist, Mark Strand (1934-2014) is, according to Harold Bloom, one of the most revered American poets of the second half of the twentieth century. In Bloom's view, his contribution to American poetry has been vast: "it is as a poet that he is most influential, attacking throughout his poetry the question of the self and its divisions and tensions, and the place of the poet and poetry in the contemporary world" (16). Strand's poetry collections comprise well over a dozen titles: *Sleeping with One Eye Open* (1964), *Reasons for Moving* (1968), *Darker* (1970), *The Story of Our Lives* (1973), *The Late Hour* (1978), *Selected Poems* (1980), *The Continuous Life* (1990), *Dark Harbor* (1993), *Blizzard of One* (1998), *89 Clouds* (1999), *Chicken, Shadow, Moon & More* (2000), *Man and Camel* (2006), *New Selected Poems* (2009), *Almost Invisible* (2012), and *Collected Poems* (2014). His main prose works include *The Sargentville Notebook* (1973), *The Monument* (1978), the short story collection *Mr. and Mrs. Baby* (1985), the collected essays on literature entitled *The Weather of Words: Poetic Invention* (2000), as well three art books entitled *Art of the Real* (1983), *William Bailey* (1987) and *Hopper* (1994, 2001). Over the years, Strand also produced translations from the Spanish of García Lorca, Rafael Alberti, and Octavio Paz, from the Portuguese of Carlos Drummond de Andrade, and from the Latin of Virgil's *Aeneid*, among others.

This article explores Strand's facet as an art critic and, more specifically, how the pictorial universe of American painter Edward Hopper (1880-

1967) influenced his own poetry, both thematically and stylistically. Strand does not overtly acknowledge Hopper's influence in his poetry, but it is no surprise that he should have turned to him rather than to any other painter for inspiration. As Strand explains in his introduction to *Hopper*, the world depicted by the American painter is similar to the one he saw as a child in the 1940s. As suggested by Laima Kardokas, Strand "recognizes the painter to be his aesthetic doppelgänger or 'double'" (120), and the basis for the poet's fascination with painter is "the recognition of the uncanny" or the "twilight zone of experience" (Kardokas 120). Dwelling on "the ekphrastic relationship" (113) and "creative symbiosis" (117) between Strand and Hopper, Kardokas has noted that "[b]oth artists make use of a highly similar iconography" and that "their work engenders a feeling of stillness caught in an artificially constructed space; both create an experience of personal reality difficult to describe or represent" (111). Most importantly, both artists display a special affinity for "the evocation of the *unheimlich* or uncanniness" (Kardokas 112), as they turn to familiar objects and places and transform them "from the comfortably familiar into the strangely unfamiliar" (112). The result is "an art that creates the experience of a personal inner reality of the Sublime" (Kardokas 119) and that "attempts to make a hidden dimension of existence tangible" (120). In this regard, "calling up quotidian images that suggest the normalcy of every life" (Kardokas 123), Strand "succeeds in subverting their familiarity into alienation" (123) through the deployment of "recurring images of the psyche" and "by storytelling that refuses to adhere to the tradition of beginning, middle, and end, where characters can never be identified or counted on, and time refuses to move linearly" (Kardokas 124).

A painter himself by training, Strand could not but turn to Hopper's captivating canvases to better understand his own artistic agenda and his vocation as a poet. Reading Hopper's well-known oil on canvas *House by the Railroad* (1925) in an early *New York Times* article entitled "Crossing the Tracks to Hopper's World," published on 17 October 1971, Strand dwells on "Hopper's fascination with *passage*" (340) in words that are expressive of his own poetics and the concerns of a lifetime devoted to poetry. *Tempus fugit*: the tracks stand for the passage of time, for the ephemerality of human existence. The poet writes thus: "while looking at his [Hopper's] work, we are made to feel like transients, momentary visitors to a scene that will endure without us and that suffers our presence with aggressive reticence" ("Crossing the Tracks" 340-41). The empty house on the other side of the tracks ultimately speaks of time and mortality: "When we look at his paintings we are made

to feel, more than we care to, like time's creatures. [...] Hopper's ability to use space convincingly as a metaphor for time is extraordinary" (341), claims Strand. And yet Hopper's (and Strand's) message is not nihilist. Both artists celebrate life—the persistence and flourishing of life despite the absence of the human. Where Hopper evokes the sense of human absence through geometrical figures strategically placed on the canvas with utmost dexterity in paintings like *Rooms by the Sea* (1951) and *Sun in an Empty Room* (1963), Strand resorts to common words, composes lines devoid of ornamentation, marked by simple repetition and austerity, to convey the same message. As he claimed in a *Paris Review* interview published in the late 1970s, he was writing in "a new international style that has a lot to do with plainness of fiction, a certain reliance on surrealistic techniques, and a strong narrative element" (quoted in Salter, 206). Disdainful of artifice and superfluous ornament, he makes use of a limited lexical repertoire of elemental words (stone, air, trees, sky, stone, nothing) that are repeated time and again in his poems.

The evocation of presence and absence out of which life itself is woven is a pervasive theme addressed by Strand in his own poems. Thus, "Keeping Things Whole," his most well-known and anthologised poem, published in his first book, *Sleeping with One Eye Open* (1964), captures with great mastery this sense of absence (i.e., the feeling of a world stripped of the self) and constitutes a magnificent gloss on Hopper's paintings *Rooms by the Sea* (1951) and *Sun in an Empty Room* (1963). The poem consists of three short stanzas that interrogate the nature of the self with a language that is transparent to the point of dissolution. The poetic persona perceives itself as an absence: "In a field / I am the absence / of field" (*Reasons for Moving* 40). Moving in space is tantamount to parting the air only to let it claim its own territory back. The atoms of the walking body make room for themselves in the air, but then air occupies the very same space again:

> When I walk
> I part the air
> and always the air
> moves in
> to fill the spaces
> where my body's been. (40)

The moment of revelation comes at the end of the poem, where the poetic voice observes that everyone has their reasons for moving. "I move / to keep things whole" (40), it confesses, as if moving in space were of the essence to

keep a cosmic equilibrium. Oftentimes, in Strand's poetics the self becomes a blank space, a void, an *other*, a vortex where both time and space converge into a point of maximum intensity. This is just one instance of the ways in which both artists—the poet and the painter—resemble each other in their pursuit of fleeting moments of epiphany. In what follows, this paper seeks to elucidate the aesthetic affinities that bring the painter and the poet together. It argues that that "two imperatives—the one that urges us to continue and the other that compels us to stay—creat[ing] a tension that is constant in Hopper's work" (*Hopper* 3), which Strand himself identifies in Hopper's paintings, are also discernible in his poetry. The mesmerising effect his poems have on readers often resides in this conflict. It is their task "to discover both a place to go and a reason to remain" (Childs 131).

2. Two Rhyming Sensibilities

In an opening statement to the Conference on Poetry and Philosophy held at the University of Warwick on 26 October 2007, Canadian poet Robert Bringhurst thinks deeply about the nature of poetry in words that have the texture of transcendence. He thinks that *poetry* is "a word with several related senses" and "a name for a characteristic or condition of reality" (198). Most importantly, he believes that poetry is "the lucky form of reality, not just the lucky form of language—in the same way that music is the lucky form of truth, not just the lucky form of sound" (198). Not only is poetry the name of an aspect of reality, but also "the name of a corresponding kind of linguistic and intellectual behaviour" (199) whereby poets compose poems, both in speaking and in writing. Poetry is thus a form of craftsmanship. Poets (from the Greek verb ποιέω, meaning 'to make' or 'to do') make poems out of words to respond to something in reality that is not easily captured. To Bringhurst's mind, this happens "because mind and language are trying to answer to the poetry of the real" (199). In this regard, French philosopher Alain Badiou (1999) has convincingly argued that philosophy, science, art, and politics are indeed forms of producing new truths. Poetry is no exception. If poetry is thus an attribute or property of what-is, then painting, like philosophy or music, might also be a way of responding to the *poetry of the real*. Drawing on Bringhurst's analogy, it could be argued that painting may well be the lucky form of truth, not just the lucky form of lines, textures and colour. Painting also seeks to respond to the poetry of the real in the best way it can. It is probably not a happy coincidence that the first of the three books Strand ever devoted to art criticism was precisely entitled *Art of the Real* (1983). The

other books were *William Bailey* (1987) and *Hopper* (1994, 2001), the latter of which shows Strand reading the American painter's oeuvre, or, to honour accuracy, a selection of 30 of his most well-known paintings. Reading a painting might be not very different from reading a poem. Both painting and poetry are forms of communication and vessels of meaning that capture and preserve precious moments of illumination for posterity. In other words, both paintings and poems are inexhaustible artefacts made by the human hand and imagination that seek to persist in time for coming generations.

Edward Hopper is the best-known American realist painter of the inter-war period. Though he agreed he was a realist, he said that he was "not a realist who imitates nature" (Goodrich 161), but rather an artist "interested primarily in the vast field of experience and sensation which neither literature nor a purely plastic art deals with" (Goodrich 163). His work is intensely private and is pervaded by a strong sense of solitude and psychological introspection, crucial themes in his paintings. In "Hopper's Polluted Silence," a perceptive essay published in *The New York Review of Books* in 1995, the novelist John Updike described his best canvasses as "calm, silent, stoic, luminous, classic" (np). After a long apprenticeship period in New York and a formative journey to Paris in 1906, where he studied works by European artists at first hand, educating himself by visiting museums and exhibitions, from 1910 onwards Hopper started earning a living as an illustrator, producing prints and watercolours that sold well. He settled in Greenwich Village, which was to be his base for the rest of his life, though he spent his summers painting in rural New England, in Gloucester and Cape Anne, and in Ogunquit and Monhegan Island. In 1923, at 42, he married Josephine Nivison, a former fellow student and a painter herself, who modelled for all the female figures in his paintings. Success, popularity, and widespread recognition would come two years later, for 1925 was a real *annus mirabilis* in his career. Hopper painted what is now generally acknowledged to be his first fully mature picture, *House by the Railroad*, which incidentally became the first painting by any artist to be acquired for the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York (Lucie-Smith and Levin np). With its deliberate, disciplined sparseness and simplicity, it is typical of the paintings he was to produce in subsequent years. The canvas shows a solitary 19th-century Second Empire-style house, standing starkly alone against the railway tracks, and it evokes the relentless passage of time and the loneliness of travel. Though realist in style, Hopper's paintings often make use of covert symbolism. The tracks are thus a synecdoche standing for the train

as a symbol of speed and modernity, whereas the Victorian house appears to nostalgically evoke a paradise of communal life closer to the rhythms of the seasons and the natural world now lost under the pressure of modern life.

In his maturity as a painter in the 1930s and 1940s, in the inter-war period, Hopper excelled in landscape painting. At this point, he turned to the geographies of his native America for inspiration. Prototypically, his canvases show natural landscapes and seascapes expressive of a world untainted by human presence, or cityscapes that convey the loneliness, vacuity, and stagnation of town life in the first half of the twentieth century. Hopper is more an urban painter than a painter of landscapes. Quite often "to look at a Hopper is often to be participating in a portrait of aloneness" (Saulter 203) of individuals drifting in urban settings typical of big cities. Thus, alongside paintings of lighthouses or harsh New England landscapes, there are cityscapes of New York, showing not only deserted streets at night, hotels, motels, trains and highways, but also the public and semi-public places where people gathered to combat loneliness: restaurants, cafés, theatres, cinemas and offices. Fascinated as he was by space, motion and the new possibilities offered by travel and the car, his canvasses appear to offer a frozen moment, a glimpse of life as if viewed in passing from a moving elevated train or nearby street corner. Most importantly, human figures in Hopper's paintings appear to be terribly solitary, non-communicating beings, adrift amid the anonymity and boredom of big metropolises. He thus captured the starkness and vastness of America, as well as the sense of human hopelessness and disillusion that swept across America following the Great Depression in the 1930s. A superb colorist, he used different hues and geometric shapes to structure his landscapes, buildings, and interiors with great dexterity. In his own words, his artistic ideal was to paint "with such simple honesty and effacement of the mechanics of art as to give almost the shock of reality itself" (Doherty 78).

Strand's fascination with Hopper's pictorial universe may well be accounted for by several reasons. First, Strand had an academic training in this art form. He studied at Antioch College, where he took a BA, but he also received a BFA from Yale, where he studied painting under Josef Albers, and an MA at the University of Iowa, where he worked closely with poet Donald Justice. Ever since, the art of painting held endless fascinations for him, till the very end of his life, excelling in the collage technique. Second, there seem to be clear aesthetic and stylistic affinities between Strand and Hopper. As Jay Parini lucidly observes, "Strand's poetry is known for a clarity reminiscent of

the paintings of Edward Hopper, and for a deeply inward sense of language" (473). Both strive after clarity in their own manner. As a result, there might be a painterly dimension to Strand's poems and a poetic dimension to Hopper's paintings. And third, there are striking thematic parallelisms between Strand's poems and Hopper's paintings. Time and again, they offer images of the world or bites of reality devoid of human presence, with no human figures in them. A world without *us*, seemingly uncontaminated or untouched by our species, is what Hopper is best at capturing through his deft brush stroke. The focus is first and foremost on place and space: space as a fundamental axis containing life and experience alongside time; place as domesticated space or space made familiar by human standards, as Tuan and Schoff contend in *Two Essays on a Sense of Place* (1988). But the focus is also on time and what it does to the human and nonhuman world, as exemplified by the motions of daylight across the surfaces of the objects populating the world. As argued by Jane Bennet, matter is not "raw, brute, or inert" (vii), but vibrant and alive instead, as things have the capacity "to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own" (viii). Far from being inert, the objects painted by Hopper gesture to the thing-power that is pervasive on earth and betray a world of communicative entities that are part of a vast material-semiotic web.

3. Space as a Metaphor for Time

It is precisely geometry and light, motion and stasis, that Strand dwells on in his lucid reading of Hopper's paintings in his book-length essay entitled *Hopper* (1994), where he performs a kind of incisive pictorial hermeneutics and describes Hopper's paintings as "short isolated moments of figuration" (23). As already pointed out, Strand's interest in Hopper might be traced back to as early as October 1971, when he published "Crossing the Tracks to Hopper's World." In the spring of 1985, he would publish yet another article titled "Hopper: The Loneliness Factor," where the poet argued that loneliness is less a result of "narrative elements" (257) than of "certain repeated structural motifs" (257) associated not with the human figures represented in his works, but with "certain geometrical imperatives having to do with missing or sealed-off vanishing points" (257). In 1994, he would further elaborate on his discussion of *House by the Railroad* in *Hopper* in terms that denote a rare intellectual alertness to every single detail in this particular canvas, as well as to "the geometric rhetoric of the paintings" (Childs 131). The house "seems out of place yet self-possessed, even

dignified, a survivor" (*Hopper* 16) from a time now gone, yet it resists all attempts at reductive interpretation: "It stands in the sun but is inaccessible. Its hiddenness is illuminated but not revealed" (16). Furthermore, the house is "emblematic of a kind of separateness [...] which, because of its arresting surface, is unassailable" (Childs 135). Strand is intent on underlining the impenetrability of the house, even if it is readily accessible to the naked eye in the sunlight that illuminates it. Time and again, he highlights "its posture of denial" (16) and its "harsh air of refusal" (17), the fact that the house is simply "beyond us" (16), as if erected in a province of no-time. The poet-as-critic writes thus on the elegance and mystery surrounding the house:

> Standing apart, a relic of another time, the house is a piece of doomed architecture, a place with a history we cannot know. It has been passed by, and the grandeur of its containment doubles as an image of refusal. We cannot tell if it is inhabited or not. [...] It defines, with the simplest, most straightforward means, an attitude of resistance, of hierarchical disregard, and at the same time a dignified submission to the inevitable. (*Hopper* 17)

House by the Railroad is a powerful elegy as well as a profound meditation on what vanishes for good and on what persists despite the passage of time, on the transitory and on the timeless, and on space as inhabited by humans. It is a canvas that ultimately pays homage to the persistence of the nonhuman world despite changes in the outward appearances of communal life, often brought about by technological progress. Let us remember that in the 1920s the number of cars sold in the US tripled and the face of rural America was dramatically metamorphosed, which resulted in a change in humans' perception of space. Looking at landscapes from within vehicles gave people a new perspective on the fast-vanishing landscapes around them. In Hopper's painting, the solitary and isolated image of the house by the railroad evokes the inexorable development of technology (humans' instrumental manipulation of and dominion over the world) and the sudden intromission of the human into a hitherto sylvan, unperturbed landscape in the green world. In Strand's exegesis of the painting, he refuses to make it into a symbol of the loneliness and alienation that human progress brings about, though. The contrast is intriguing, to say the least. On the one hand, there is an old, self-contained and dignified house, frozen for posterity by Hopper's art, a treasure-house of stories that it is impossible for spectators to decipher or reconstruct now, and, on the other hand, there is the railroad, pointing to something

beyond the canvas itself—i.e., modernity, city life, the promise of motion and travel. Nevertheless, Strand's exegesis is purely formal and descriptive of its "geometric properties" (16); it discards any kind of sentimentalism. The poet's focus is thus on the characteristic isosceles trapezoid at the core of the canvas formed by the tracks and the cornice of the house, on the contrast between the verticality of the house and the horizontality of the railroad, and on the effects of the morning daylight travelling across the façade, as if to enhance the vitality intrinsic to a world of vibrant matter where entities form creative assemblages. The house resists "the temporal pull of light or the pull of progress or our own continuousness" (17) and its dignity is further enhanced by the symmetry of doors and windows, as well as Hopper's masterful use of colour.

Point of view is also eloquent in *House by the Railroad*. Spectators look at the house from the other side of the railroad, from a lower position in relation to that of the house location. The house stands unperturbed and imperturbable in the present, surrounded by a halo of calm and quiet, serenity and resistance to change and to the velocity of modern life as represented by the railroad. It somehow harmonises both domestic and sylvan spaces. Of this painting Strand wrote in 1971 that "Hopper's ability to use space convincingly as a metaphor for time is extraordinary" ("Crossing the Tracks" 341). Humans are vulnerable, transitory, mortal beings, but life as such will go on in spite of our absence. As Strand notes, Hopper manages to convey this powerful message by means of a dexterous arrangement of purely formal elements on the canvas. In "A Poet's Alphabet," an essay included in *The Weather of Words*, Strand dwells on time and writes yet another perfect gloss on Hopper's painting:

> *P* is for the passage of time. It is also for the secret passage that leads out of time into the stillness of what has not yet been named into being, the passage that leads to the birthplace of poems. It is for the passage that is the route of my passing, my having been, and for the passage of places into history, and through history into forgottenness. (12)

Presence and absence are two of the fundamental threads woven into Strand's poetic universe, if only because humans are temporal creatures, earthly beings whose lives unfold and come into full bloom in time. Like in Hopper's paintings, there are houses in Strand's poetry, observed as if from the distance, described with a certain degree of emotional detachment and

objectivity. Such is the case of "The Tunnel," a poem from *Reasons for Moving* (1968), which opens thus:

> A man has been standing
> in front of my house
> for days. I peek at him
> from the living room
> window and at night,
> unable to sleep,
> I shine my flashlight
> down on the lawn.
> He is always there. (*Reasons for Moving* 31)

The image offered by the poem is disturbing, as subsequent stanzas reveal that the poetic persona is being watched by a sort of *doppelgänger*. Having made up his mind to "dig a tunnel / to a neighbouring yard" (31) with pick and shovel, the lyrical subject comes out in front of a house that happens to be his own house. Standing there, exhausted after the physical strain of tunnel digging and hoping someone might come to his rescue, he experiences a sense of estrangement and the sudden revelation that he is being observed. Strand's poems often convey the sense that there is no end to understanding one's own self, which is conceived of as an unassailable enigma:

> I feel I'm being watched
> and sometimes I hear
> a man's voice,
> but nothing is done
> and I have been waiting for days. (32)

The interplay of presence and absence as the recurrent pattern on the carpet of human existence is also discernible in "The Guardian," a poem from *Darker* where the lyrical subject dwells on vanishing things with nostalgia: "The sun setting. The lawns on fire. / The lost day, the lost light. / Why do I love what fades?" (*Reasons for Moving* 73). What fades has been, but is no more. Yet mourning the departure of the dying day, the lyrical subject will not give up on his determination to bear witness to the world and preserve a record of the last rays of sunlight on the lawns. By the end of the poem, the poetic persona embraces its own absence as an inextricable part of its own identity:

> You who left, who were leaving,
> what dark rooms do you inhabit?
> Guardian of my death,
> preserve my absence. I am alive. (73)

"Snowfall," a poem from *The Late Hour*, offers these eloquent lines enacting space as a metaphor for time:

> Watching snow cover the ground, cover itself,
> cover everything that is not you, you see
> it is the downward drift of light
> upon the sound of air sweeping away the air,
> it is the fall of moments into moments, the burial
> of sleep, the down of winter, the negative of night. (*The Story of Our Lives* 152)

According to creativity theorist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "the poet's responsibility to be a witness, a recorder of experience, is part of the broader responsibility we all have for keeping the universe ordered through our consciousness" (231). In words reminiscent of Rilke's awareness of the transience of human existence, Strand writes that we are a cosmic accident, which precisely fuels creative work and our compulsion to capture nuances of reality the best way we can: "It's such a lucky accident, having been born, that we're almost obliged to pay attention" (Csikszentmihalyi 231), the poet admits in his interview with Csikszentmihalyi. Most importantly, he recognises that we are "the only part of the universe that's self-conscious" (Csikszentmihalyi 231) and that there is a deep sense of kinship beneath the vibrant matter of the more-than-human world as envisioned by Karen Barad in her landmark *Meeting the Universe Halfway*: "we're made of the same stuff that stars are made of, or that floats around in space. [...] Most of our experience is that of being a witness. We see and hear and smell other things. I think being alive is responding" (Csikszentmihalyi 231). Watching snow fall and cover everything that is not the self ("everything that is not you")— and yet a prolongation of the self into the more-than-human world—, the lyrical subject in "Snow" finds out that falling snow, traversing space, is another apt metaphor for the passage of time, "the fall of moments into moments" (*The Story of Our Lives* 152). Reality is in a state of permanent flux that denotes time inexorably passing by; the poet's, like the painter's, self-imposed mission and vocation is to respond and bear witness to this

boundless metamorphosis, which is to say to the more-than-human world changing from one second to the next. Like in some of Hopper's paintings, "an instant has been frozen" (*Hopper* 63), assuming not "the monumental shape of a geometrical figure" (*Hopper* 63), but that of a poem titled "Snow." As Saulter claims, in Strand's view "the artist or the writer looks out to the world, to the "plain obdurate existence" of subjects out there in the world, to find a way to make it coincide with his imagination. And yet, once the art object—the painting or the poem—has been made from the subject, that objects is entirely self-enclosed" (205). A poem or a painting becomes a inexhaustible artefact.

4. Light and Geometry in Hopper's Interiors

Light and geometry are central to the whole conception beneath Hopper's paintings of landscapes and outdoor spaces. But Hopper's canvases also offer images of domesticity and interiors—public, semiprivate or private spaces such as rooms in houses or hotels, cafés and restaurants, cinemas and bars. In his later work these rooms are often devoid of human presence, which is a deliberate decision. All one gets to see is "interiors without people, walls blazoned with chunks of sunlight" (*Hopper* 63), space defined by light and an interplay between interior and exterior space, as if to suggest that there is bound to be some form of harmony between human-made rooms and the natural world as represented by the sea and sunlight. *Rooms by the Sea* (1951) and *Sun in an Empty Room* (1963) are a case in point. They are very similar, yet the former shows an austerity which is "much more congenial" (*Hopper* 63) than that of the latter. This is an excerpt from Strand's reading of Hopper's *Rooms by the Sea*, a canvas that shows sunlight, sky and sea literally flooding two rooms with a breathtaking view:

> The water seems to come right up to the door, as if there were no middle ground or shore, as if, in fact, it had been stolen from Magritte. It is a view of nature, unembellished and extreme. On the left side of the painting is a narrow, crowded view of nature's opposite—a room furnished with a couch or chair, a bureau, and a painting—the selected accoutrements of domestic life. (*Hopper* 63)

Rooms by the Sea is a moving celebration of the natural world. In other Hoppers, nature is conceptualised as being the opposite of the order and measure embodied by culture and civilisation. Nature in such paintings as *Cape Cod Evening* (1939) or *Gas* (1940) is a disquieting, almost hostile

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presence. By contrast, in *Rooms by the Sea* nature is evoked by the presence of a dark blue sea that reaches up to the very door threshold and by the benign, warm sunlight. The intensity of the sunlight illuminating the canvas is the kind of diaphanous, calming, and balsamic light one might experience at midday or in mid-morning. As Strand observes, the ubiquitous isosceles trapezoid so characteristic of Hopper's paintings is present twice in this work: there is a striking parallelism between the trapezoid drawn by sunlight in the room in the foreground and the one in the background room. The room in the background stands for a human-made world or civilisation. What is moving about the painting as a whole is that it appears to affirm with rotundity that there is bound to be some form of harmony between nature and civilisation, that the world is one and the same despite human-made distinctions. Hence the intensity of the colours used by Hopper, the superb transition from the dark blue sea, through the white sunlight on the wall and yellow on the entrance floor, to the interior room in the background, displaying complementary colours (red sofa and green floor). Outside of the rooms, the blue sky is a pale echo of the dark blue sea. The sky is clear, with no signs of birds, unperturbed by the flight of seagulls or albatrosses. The overall impression is one of peace and quiet, while the open window in the adjoining room invites the spectator to go outdoors and enjoy the pleasure of being alive amid so much exuberance and beauty. There are no people in this painting, but the canvas is tremendously human in that it highlights this invitation to enjoy the pleasures of the natural world. It ultimately conveys the sense of being alive in a physical world, a part of the larger mesh of things.

Painted 12 years later, *Sun in an Empty Room* is quite a different painting. This is an excerpt from Strand's penetrating reading of Hopper's work:

> [T]here is nothing calming about the light. It comes in a window and falls twice in the same room—on a wall close to the window and on a lightly recessed wall. That is all the action there is. [...] The light strikes two places at once, and we feel its terminal character instead of anything that hints of continuation. [...] [I]t is Hopper's last great painting, *a vision of the world without us; not merely a place that excludes us, but a place emptied of us*. (*Hopper* 65; italics ours)

Sun in an Empty Room sees the light of day four years before Hopper's death, in the last stage of his career. It offers a view of a presumably human world with no trace of human presence at all. It is as if he had determined to embrace a posthumanist view of the world and a non-anthropocentric

conception of what-is. The elimination of furniture suggests "a shift in his focus from the manner in which we occupy or inhabit a space to a more radical questioning of the conditions or possibilities of habitation as such" (Childs 141). As Kranzfelder notes, the elimination of furniture in *Sun in an Empty Room* is expressive of the elimination of human presence; it lacks "even a trace of the requisites that would indicate human presence" (Kranzfelder 192). A sinister light coming through the open window creates a space of chiaroscuro areas which are perfectly well delineated in geometric terms. The rhythm implicit in the canvas is precisely made possible by the alternating illuminated and dark spaces within the empty room. Not much happens in this painting, except nothingness itself. The projection of sunlight across the interior of the room follows its course unimpeded except for the edge of the protruding wall and strikes two places in this dehumanised interior. Strand's reading of this painting highlights the geometric figures that shape the canvas. Geometry in Hopper's hands has the solidity of a triple series of parallelograms: the two chunks of sunlight on the room wall and the window itself through which the sunlight comes in from the outside. In the interior of the room the light leads to nowhere, just to an empty corner devoid of humanity. Light persists, the implicit message appears to emphasise, while human life is transient and ephemeral. This is a stark *vision of the world without us*, a *place emptied of us*. The tree boughs we get a glimpse of through the window might hide the singing of songbirds, but their very appearance looks sinister. The final impression is one of utter nakedness, silence, emptiness, nothingness. In his essay titled "A Poet's Alphabet," a propos nothing, Strand writes words that might be an excellent gloss for *Sun in an Empty Room*:

> N is also for nothing, which, in its all-embracing modesty, is the manageable sister of everything. Ah, nothing! About which anything can be said, and is. An absence that knows no bounds. The climax of inaction. It has been perhaps the central influence on my writing. It is the original of sleep and the end of life. (*Weather of Words* 10)

The same sense of emptiness—a vision of our life without us—is conveyed by Strand in many of his poems, where he dwells on the nothingness that the self is and on the emptiness of one's own life. Thus, in "The Story of Our Lives," the title poem of *The Story of Our Lives* (1973), we read these lines in the opening section:

> We are reading the story of our lives
> which takes place in a room.
> The room looks out on a street.
> There is no one there,
> no sound of anything.
> The trees are heavy with leaves,
> the parked cars never move.
> We keep turning the pages,
> hoping for something,
> something like mercy or change,
> a black line that would bind us
> or keep us apart.
> The way it is, it would seem
> the book of our lives is empty. (*The Story of Our Lives* 27)

Twenty-five years later, in "The Night, the Porch," a poem from *Blizzard of One* (1998), we read lines that convey a similar message:

> To stare at nothing is to learn by heart
> What all of us will be swept into, and baring oneself
> To the wind is feeling the ungraspable somewhere close by.
> Trees can sway or be still. Day or night can be what they wish.
> What we desire, more than a season or weather, is the comfort
> Of being strangers, at least to ourselves. This is the crux
> Of the matter, which is why even now we seem to be waiting
> For something whose appearance would be its vanishing—
> The sound, say, of a few leaves falling, or just one leaf,
> Or less. There is no end to what we can learn. The book out there
> Tells us as much, and was never written with us in mind. (10)

What both poems appear to have in common is that they suggest the story of our lives is written beforehand, maybe as part of a chapter in a huge book that contains the world in its entirety. The self remains a stranger to itself, a bit of living matter adrift in the world, and Strand expresses so with extreme verbal austerity, which makes the poems all the more moving for that. They compel the reader to stop and listen again, and also to move on. Waiting for a momentous event in the story of one's life, "turning the pages / hoping for something" to happen, life passes by, and, all of a sudden, the poetic persona has intimations not of immortality, but of "the ungraspable

somewhere close by" (10), of ticking clocks, of impending death. The wind, trees and falling leaves are an apt reminder of human transience as well, such are the irresistible fascinations vanishing things still keep on holding for the poet. It takes a lifetime to start interpreting and understanding the characters the book of nature is written in, appears to imply the poetic persona: "There is no end to what we can learn" (10), about the world and about ourselves. The lines just quoted close with a sober reminder that the book of the world "was never written with us in mind" (10), which recalls Strand's hunch that we humans are a cosmic accident, even though we like to think, self-conceited as we are, that we are the centre of the universe in our deeply-ingrained anthropocentric mindset. As Saulter has observed, "[s]ubmergence and transcendence (in the first case, the dark descent into one's own unacknowledged experience, and in the second case, the illuminated ascent to what's outside one's own experience): these are Mark Strand's subjects" (195).

5. A Momentary Stay Against Confusion

Strand's fascination with Hopper lasted until the end of his life. Mary Jo Saulter, his literary executor, explains how she transcribed and typed on her laptop a handwritten draft of one of his last essays, "a review commissioned by the *New York Review of Books* of a 2013 exhibit of Edward Hopper's work" (198), about his favourite painter. "[W]ritten in pencil in a remarkably clear, somewhat large cursive" (199), the draft gave the impression that Strand "was *drawing* his ideas about Hopper's process of drawing and painting" (199). Dwelling on the difference between vision and realization in the genesis of a work of art, this is how the essay opens:

> Paints and scrapes, paints and scrapes to get something right, the something that is not there at the outset but reveals itself slowly, and then completely, having travelled an arduous route during which vision and image come together, for a while, until dissatisfaction sets in, and the painting and scraping begin again. (Saulter 200)

As Saulter notes, "[w]hat the painter and poet do is discover, by sketching their subject again and again and again, the unknown content" (202). Strand turned to Hopper's paintings time and again throughout his life, "trying to pinpoint the family resemblances among the paintings that so haunted him" (Saulter 202). The "two imperatives—the one that urges us to continue and the other that compels us to stay" (*Hopper* 3) which Strand sensed in Hopper's

paintings appear to be pervasive in his work as well. The poet and the painter felt the irresistible compulsion to create, each in a different medium, and in so doing they unveiled to readers and viewers nuances of reality that go unnoticed most of the time. Both seem to embrace a posthumanist view of the world—one where the human and nonhuman are part and parcel of a symposium of the whole of vibrant entities.

In interpreting Strand's reading of Hopper's paintings, we are reading *a reading of paintings*, so we are at least twice removed from the original works, to say nothing of the act of translating the art of painting into words or of having language mediating our critical appreciation of Hopper's canvases. And yet it seems there is a discernible aesthetic core common to both Hopper's and Strand's art if we care to look and listen to their paintings and poems attentively, with open eyes and ears. Both share an apparent simplicity in style, a tendency to give themselves over to the perception of the real (but the real as seen through the looking-glass of *estrangement*), a calm geometric virtuosity, which is to be found in quotidian existence and in everyday objects. There is a timeless quality to Hopper's and Strand's work, a sense of utter calm, unperturbed tranquillity and yet of fragile equilibrium amid chaos, usually in an urban setting, that of the anonymous cityscape, or in a natural setting impinged on by the oblique presence of the human. As Robert Frost put it in "The Figure a Poem Makes," the figure Strand's poems and Hopper's paintings make constitute "a momentary stay against confusion" (vi). Frost expresses it thus:

> The figure a poem makes. It begins in delight and ends in wisdom. The figure is the same as for love. No one can really hold that the ecstasy should be static and stand still in one place. It begins in delight, it inclines to the impulse, it assumes direction with the first line laid down, it runs a course of lucky events, and ends in a clarification of life—not necessarily a great clarification, such as sects and cults are founded on, but in a momentary stay against confusion. (vi)

Strand's and Hopper's work is marked by a deceptive simplicity that hides a wealth of meaning and profundity of thought. Their aesthetics is of ascetic clarity and deliberate austerity—a poor man's art. Their concern is the acutely perceived real and their method consists in offering their fellow human beings a blunt statement about reality, the well-defined outline of things one is faced with upon perceiving the real. From their intimation that people live in time and space is their art born, an art that emphasises the isolation and

loneliness of humanity. A clarification of life, a little moment of epiphany, the sudden luminous detail: these are possibly Strand's and Hopper's gifts. Their poems and their paintings, firmly grounded in the physical world, are possibly yet another lucky form of truth.

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LOOKING FOR WILLIAM: BARDOLATROUS TOURISM

TURISMO LITERARIO: BUSCANDO EL BARDO DE AVON

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Abstract

Literary tourism has recently emerged as a lively field of research, especially in nineteenth-century studies. As a cultural phenomenon it has proved to be particularly popular in the British Isles, where its origins can be traced back to the eighteenth century. This essay analyses literary tourism in relation to one of England's most renowned authors: Shakespeare. Garrick's 1769 Jubilee is explored to explain how this well-orchestrated commemorative event paved the way for the earliest pilgrimages to Stratford-upon-Avon. Secondly, the Shakespeare family homes, especially the Birthplace, are analysed as historical national icons that have elicited ideas of Englishness. Finally, there is a discussion on authenticity in relation to the Birthplace and The Globe. Using theoretical terminology coined by Lacan and Baudrillard, the essay seeks to demonstrate the inability to fully experience authenticity, as it is impossible to access a reality—Shakespeare's past—that has ceased to exist.

Keywords: Literary tourism, Shakespeare, Cultural Materialism, Cultural Studies, Lacan, Baudrillard

Resumen

Recientemente, el turismo literario ha emergido como un bullicioso campo de estudio, sobre todo entre estudiosos del siglo XIX. Entendido como fenómeno cultural, ha sido especialmente popular en las Islas Británicas, donde sus orígenes se remontan al siglo XVIII. El artículo analiza el turismo

literario en relación con uno de los autores ingleses de mayor renombre: Shakespeare. El Jubileo de Garrick de 1769 se examina para explicar cómo este evento conmemorativo, sumamente bien orquestado, dio pie a las primeras peregrinaciones a Stratford-upon-Avon. A continuación, se analizan las propiedades de los familiares de Shakespeare, especialmente el Birthplace, como iconos históricos y nacionales que generan ideas de Englishness. Finalmente, se debate la cuestión de autenticidad en relación con el Birthplace y el Globe Theatre. Empleando terminología de Lacan y Baudrillard, se pretende demostrar la incapacidad de experimentar la sensación de autenticidad, dado que es imposible acceder a una realidad—el pasado de Shakespeare—que ha dejado de existir.

Palabras clave: turismo literario, Shakespeare, materialismo cultural, estudios culturales, Lacan, Baudrillard

1. Introduction

Literary tourism understood as a cultural practice is a relatively recent phenomenon. Even though examples of tourists visiting locations associated with well-known writers can be traced back to the eighteenth century, it is often considered that it was not until the following century when literary tourism achieved its maximum refinement, by becoming an industry and establishing itself as a cultural commonplace. The United Kingdom is often regarded as the pioneer in this highly pleasant and popular literary practice. Indeed, this cultural phenomenon has been particularly popular in the British Isles where, as Watson quotes in her influential work *The Literary Tourist*: Readers and Places in Romantic and Victorian Britain: "Eighteenth-century culture saw the rise of this new phenomenon, and the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries its heyday" (5).

First and foremost, it is important to clarify what is understood by the concept 'literary tourism'. Devashish describes the term as follows: "literary tourism concerns itself with the places and events cited in fictional texts, as well as the life of the author" (256). Hence, this practice is not solely concerned with visiting places which appear in or which have inspired literary works, it also refers to visits made to locations strongly connected with the lives of writers. It is this second notion of literary tourism that is of interest to an essay that explores literary tourism, as a cultural phenomenon, in relation to the figure of William Shakespeare. His native town, the picturesque village of Stratford-upon-Avon, continues to attract, year after year, thousands of

curious travellers, but also quasi-religious devotees of the playwright, who wish to gain close access to the life of one of England's most renowned—yet highly enigmatic—literary figures.

The first aim of this essay is to explore the origins and gradual development of the phenomenon of literary tourism in Shakespeare's hometown: Stratford-upon-Avon. Another aim that this essay has is to explore how the Shakespearean properties located in Stratford have been employed to elicit and convey ideas of 'Englishness'. Finally, the essay also seeks to explore the problematic implications that the concept of 'authenticity' has in the literary tourist industry, by taking a closer look at the Birthplace and Shakespeare's Globe. Making reference to Lacan and to Baudrillard's theory of the three orders of simulation will reveal that there is no convincing manner of having access to the 'real' Shakespeare or to his reality (Homer; Lane).

2. Bardolatrous pilgrimage: Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon

Nowadays, the five properties connected with Shakespeare in his native hometown of Stratford-upon-Avon—the Birthplace, Anne Hathaway's Cottage, Hall's Croft, Nash's House, and Mary Arden's House—rank high in the list of most visited properties in Britain. The earliest visits to Stratford date back to the mid-eighteenth century. During this period, the type of tourism that existed in the town was dominated by forgery and the opportunism shown by local entrepreneurs, who initiated the tourist industry by selling relics and souvenirs from the wood of the mulberry tree which supposedly had been planted by Shakespeare himself at his own home (Holderness, *Cultural Shakespeare* 126-27). Nonetheless, it is the great Shakespearean actor David Garrick who is often credited with turning Stratford-upon-Avon into a must-see location after the organisation of the 1769 Jubilee, which was held in order to celebrate Shakespeare's 200th birthday (Watson, *Literary Tourist* 56).

Currently, tourists visiting Stratford would probably follow a biographical itinerary in their tour around Shakespeare's hometown and, thus, start their journey by visiting one of the most famous Shakespearean sites in Stratford: the Birthplace. This is the property located in Henley Street where the playwright is said to have been born. It was not until the 1769 Jubilee that the Birthplace gained importance since, as Virgili Viudes stresses, "Garrick's Jubilee placed the Birthplace as the principal site of Shakespearean memory in Stratford" (30). Garrick was the first to

incorporate the house where Shakespeare was born into the prototypical tourist itinerary. One of the activities included for the commemoration of Shakespeare's birthday was the organisation of a highly elaborate procession which was planned to stop at the Birthplace, so as to hang from the room regarded by Garrick as "the birthroom", an allegorical banner depicting the sun bursting out from behind the clouds to enlighten the world (Watson, "Shakespeare" 206). Even though the persistent rain forced Garrick to cancel the procession, the attempt to compare the Bard with the sun shows the Jubilee's efforts to elevate the status of Shakespeare by portraying him as the poet who illuminated the nation. This idealisation of the playwright displays a distinctive feature in the tourist industry related to Shakespeare, and that is the language of religious devotion used by some of the visitors that travel to Stratford. For instance, in 1793 the traveller Edward Daniel Clarke described his experience in Stratford employing images and expressions akin to religious worship: "STRATFORD! All hail to thee! When I tread thy hallowed walks; when I pass over the same mould that has been pressed by the feet of SHAKESPEARE, I feel inclined to kiss the earth itself" (cited in Watson, "Shakespeare" 208). Hence, at the time, many visits to Stratford could be considered examples of a literary pilgrimage, that is, a journey which models the pilgrimages that took place during the Middle Ages to visit the tombs of saints. It comes as no surprise, thus, that the eighteenth century in the British Isles coincides with the rise of bardolatry, described by Holderness as "a religion", characterised by "the worship of Shakespeare" (*Cultural Shakespeare* 126).

In the 1800s Victorians visiting the Birthplace—which functioned at the time both as an inn and as a butcher's shop—would have found themselves caught in the middle of a war between two widows: Widow Hornby, and a rival widow who was the legitimate owner of the property. The former had taken advantage of the Shakespeare trade by selling relics and pieces of a chair, which she claimed had belonged to the famous Swan of Avon until she was evicted by the true owner, who took over the bardolatrous trade (Holderness, *Cultural Shakespeare* 128-29). Once more, as it happened during the eighteenth century with the mulberry tree, tourism in Stratford was dominated by the interests of local inhabitants who were solely concerned with making a profit and, thus, often manipulated the internal appearance of the properties by adding so-called relics which apparently had belonged to Shakespeare.

One of the major attractions that the Birthplace has preserved up to this day is the famous window located in the room often referred to as the

birthroom. This window still holds on display the signatures of celebrated visitors, including, to name but a few: Lord Byron, Friedrich Schiller, Walter Scott, Robert Browning, and the Duke of Wellington. Nevertheless, Mary Hornby—the aforementioned Widow Hornby—chose to whitewash some of these early examples of graffiti (Zemgulys 245-57). What would nowadays be viewed as a clear example of—historical—vandalism, in the past, as Reid explains, "was seen as a mark of pilgrimage or veneration" (2016). The act of leaving one's personal mark at the place where Shakespeare was born is a clear indicator of the sacred status that the Birthplace had acquired since the final decades of the eighteenth century. Therefore, by writing their names, by leaving their own personal imprint, visitors were willingly associating themselves with a place that had achieved a mythical status, like Shakespeare himself.

The second most visited property in Stratford is Anne Hathaway's Cottage in the village of Shottery. The thatched farmhouse did not feature as a prominent element in Garrick's Jubilee, as the house was simply used as a location for horse-races (Watson, "Shakespeare" 211). As a matter of fact, it was not until the Victorians took an interest in the property that Anne Hathaway's Cottage gained the importance that it has today. The Victorian public, with its strong emphasis on the idea of virtuous behaviour, was dissatisfied with the image of the adulterous man that the Sonnets offered, and thus turned to Anne's Cottage in order to search for an image of, as Watson observes, "a sober and domestic Bard" ("Shakespeare" 211). The interest in connecting Shakespeare with images associated with domesticity can be found in literary works of the period in which Shakespeare features as a character. One example is Emma Severn's three-volume novel Anne Hathaway, or, Shakespeare in Love—1845—, which depicts an ideal relationship between the famous writer and his wife Anne. As Watson highlights, the novel "expends a great deal of time and effort upon describing the cottage interiors" ("Shakespeare" 211). The English author William Howitt, who travelled to Stratford in 1839, exemplifies the nineteenth-century interest in pursuing the image of a domestic Shakespeare, as he decided not to visit the Birthplace in order to direct instead his steps towards Anne's Cottage, which he found "authentic and unchanged, testimony to a newly domestic, marital, and retired Bard" (Watson, "Shakespeare" 212).

There are other Shakespearean properties which have elicited less interest amongst scholars analysing the phenomenon of Shakespearean tourism in Stratford. These houses are Nash's House—the house of Thomas Nash and

Elizabeth Hall, Shakespeare's granddaughter—, Hall's Croft—the home of Dr. John Hall and Susanna, Shakespeare's daughter—, and Mary Arden's House—home of Shakespeare's mother—. Out of the three properties, the one which probably attracts a higher number of visitors is Nash's House, owing to the fact that it is situated next to New Place, the house bought by Shakespeare in 1597, and the one in which he lived permanently after his retirement. As it is well known, the playwright's last home no longer exists. In 1759 Reverend William Gastrell, tired of the increasing number of travellers who recurrently knocked on his door asking for permission to enter the house, demolished the property entirely. At the present, only the garden remains. It is worth highlighting that in the mid-eighteenth century, before its disappearance, New Place—rather than the Birthplace—was regarded by the English public as "our Shakespeare's House" (Schoch 188). There are different factors that explain why the house in which Shakespeare was born exercised at the time little interest among tourists. The Birthplace was the property of the descendants of Shakespeare's sister—not his own—, it had a gloomy appearance, and it was a house to which the writer probably had not returned after his marriage to Anne Hathaway (Schoch 188).

3. The properties understood as national icons

Visiting present-day Stratford still evokes a journey to a past time in the history of Britain. In the case of Shakespeare, the past could refer to either Elizabethan England or the Jacobean period. Nevertheless, as Calvo points out, Shakespeare is "often memorialized through his association with Elizabethan England and only rarely through his mature life as an artist in Jacobean London" (222). The fact that the vast majority of Shakespeare's monuments link the playwright with the reign of Elizabeth I evidences that history is a social construction, and that each nation decides which periods of their history they choose to highlight because they are worth remembering. Hence, in the case of the Bard, the British public prefers to connect their illustrious author with the Golden Age of the reign of Elizabeth I.

In an analysis of the phenomenon of literary tourism, it is useful to take into consideration Crang's conception of the industry as a semiotic system (111). This idea helps to understand how tourists and heritage managers such as the Birthplace Shakespeare Trust assign specific meanings to each of the properties. In the case of Shakespeare, these meanings inevitably have a dose of idealisation and nostalgia for the Golden Age of the Elizabethan Era. Indeed, since the eighteenth century, Shakespeare's homes—especially the

ones inhabited by the writer—have been regarded as emblems of a shared national identity that invokes a "traditional England", what some critics have termed "Englishness". No other property has attracted more interest than the Birthplace in terms of its conception as a national emblem. The significance that this building has had in shaping the English public's identity is exemplified by David Garrick's opinion of the Birthplace:

> The humble shed, in which the immortal bard first drew that breath which gladdened all the isle, is still existing; and all who have a heart to feel, and a mind to admire the truth of nature and the splendor of genius, will rush thither to behold it, as a pilgrim would to the shrine of some beloved saint; will deem it holy ground, and dwell with sweet though pensive rapture on the natal habitation of the poet (cited in Holderness, *Cultural Shakespeare* 98).

Garrick's words demonstrate the way in which the image of Shakespeare as the national poet, "the immortal bard", is projected onto his childhood home which, in turn, also becomes a site that embodies England's national identity. The Victorian period is of utter importance to fully understand why the Birthplace is regarded as an icon of England's core identity. During the nineteenth century the rising number of Americans who travelled to Stratford was provoking the annoyance of several English citizens. Most tourists from the United States went to Shakespeare's hometown because they considered that Britain's history was also part of their history. Such was the interest that Shakespeare elicited at the time that some American citizens even donated money for memorial projects (Zemgulys 247). Nonetheless, as Zemgulys explains, "American appreciation was often understood not as Anglophilic featly but as bald acquisitiveness. Americans were depicted as aggressively and alarmingly repossessive of what is not (or no longer) theirs" (248). The increasing presence of Americans in Stratford reached its point of maximum tension when it was rumoured that an American businessman known as P. T. Barnum was planning to, as Lanier remarks, "buy the Birthplace at auction, ship it to America, and make it into a mobile tourist attraction" (152).

Barnum's desire to purchase Shakespeare's Birthplace for the American public arouse during his first European tour in 1844 (Adams 200). Nowadays, it sounds shocking that someone would want to remove the Birthplace from its original site, and rebuild it in The States so as to transform the building into a park attraction. Nevertheless, one ought to understand that Phineas Taylor Barnum was not merely a businessman, but also a showman, founder

of Barnum and Bailey Circus (Joynes). Barnum's role as showman explains his questionable attempt to turn the Birthplace into a public spectacle. The performative aspect of this highly ambitious enterprise is explained by Teague, who believes that the attempt to purchase the Birthplace was "a performance of national and social identity, as a well as a metaperformance in which Barnum calls attention to himself as the master showman who eschews the immortality of performance, simultaneously the trickster and the honest exhibitor" (51).

Above all, Barnum's intentions raised awareness amongst the Victorian public of the importance of the Birthplace as a crucial and valuable emblem of England's cultural heritage. Meetings were arranged to raise public funds. Concerns were voiced in the contemporary press. For instance, on 21 July 1847 the editor of *The Times* urged its readers to secure the property in order to "prevent [...] the house being moved from the country by passing into the hands of some foreign showman" (cited in Sturgess 185). Eventually, Barnum failed in his attempt to appropriate such an important English national icon, as he himself recorded in his autobiography, first published in 1855: "I obtained verbally through a friend the refusal of the house in which Shakespeare was born, [...] but the project leaked out, British pride was touched, and several English gentlemen interfered and purchased the premises for a Shakespeare Association" (cited in Sturgess 183). Indeed, as Barnum asserts, the final move to block his attempt was the foundation of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in September 1847. The fact that the fear of losing the Birthplace prompted the creation of the Trust clearly demonstrates that the building was, and still is, a powerful symbol of English national identity, as evidenced by the official website of the Trust, which affirms that "the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust was formed in 1847 following the purchase of Shakespeare's Birthplace as a national memorial".

One of the main reasons that explains why Shakespeare's Elizabethan England has been idealised is because it precedes the Industrial Revolution. The arrival of industrialisation has often been interpreted throughout history as a negative presence in English culture, since it disrupted the blissful tranquillity, and especially, the beauty of the past. An idealisation of the period prior to industrialisation also implies an idealised vision of the "common" people who lived during Shakespeare's time. Consequently, the population that inhabited England during the early modern period can be regarded as examples of what the Leavises called "organic folk communities". F. R. and Q. D. Leavis had an elitist and distorted perception of the British

culture that preceded the advent of the Industrial Revolution, owing to the fact that they believed that common people at the time— "country folk" —had a way of living that obeyed the natural rhythm of nature, and that the general public spent their time engaged in the Bible, country arts, traditional crafts, games and singing (Walton 33).

This idealisation can be said to have been projected onto the Shakespeare family homes and it explains, for instance, the pastoral and aesthetically pleasant setting surrounding Anne Hathaway's Cottage. Since the eighteenth century, and partly motivated by the strong interest that the Romantics took in nature, the garden and the country house have been two quintessential features of rural England and of English culture in general. This fact explains one of the reasons why an American guidebook of the 1890s described Anne Hathaway's Cottage as a "perfectly representative and thoroughly characteristic bit of genuine English rustic scenery" (Watson, "Shakespeare" 212). The current managers of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust have decorated the gardens with Tudor plants and traditional herbs to make it look "authentically" Elizabethan.

4. Literary tourism and the issue of authenticity

The notion of authenticity is a term that frequently appears in discussions on the industry of literary tourism. Travellers, especially those who regard themselves as literary pilgrims embarked on a journey towards a "sacred" place, would feel the need to visit locations connected with a particular writer in order to gain insight into the life of a particular author. This idea explains why in the late nineteenth century F. J. Furnivall affirmed, as is often quoted, that "Stratford will help you to understand Shakespeare" (cited in Holderness, *Cultural Shakespeare* 125). Nevertheless, this belief in the ability to fully understand Shakespeare from taking a tour around his hometown and family homes is not unique to the past nor to bardolatrous tourism. One need only take a look at literary tourism in relation to the figure of Jane Austen, another example of highly popular sights on the British literary tourist trail. In 2008 tour organiser Mary Lou White asserted the following: "the ideal Jane Austen tour is to see the places where she lived and the places she visited, the authentic places [...] The imagination is fuelled when you see the reality of what it was even though it was two hundred years before" (Adams et al. 97-98). The aforementioned words evidence the importance that heritage managers and tour managers attach to the act of visiting authentic locations, so that one can experience "the reality of what it was".

Nonetheless, it is impossible to have actual access to a time that has already passed. Employing Jacques Lacan's terminology, in simplified terms, can be useful to understand this idea. One could argue that the realm of what the psychoanalyst calls the Real—in this case, Shakespeare's or Austen's time—is lost once that the individual enters into the realm of the Symbolic—the world we live in—and, automatically, is forced to submit to the law of language. In other words, Lacan would insist on the idea that there is no way that society can truly experience reality—whether it refers to the past or to the present—owing to the fact that everything is mediated through language. This argument can be applied to an analysis of literary tourism because travellers are constantly told that when they visit the homes of writers, they are being confronted with authenticity, that is, with the same reality that the writer would have experienced in the past. Nonetheless, it is not truly possible in the twenty-first century to experience Shakespeare's Elizabethan England or the Regency period—in the case of Austen—.

Regarding Shakespearean tourism, the family property which has attracted the highest amount of interest in terms of its value as an example of "authenticity" is the Birthplace since, after the unfortunate disappearance of New Place, it seems to be the only remaining location where one can feel as close as possible to the 'real' Shakespeare. As Ommundsen observes, "serious guides to Stratford all stress that most sites and stories are only 'traditionally' associated with the writer's life, but that doesn't prevent tour leaders from lowering their voices when they approach the 'Birth Room'" (79). Showing reverential respect for the Bard together with adding a touch of mythical aura function as strategic and commercial strategies to attract a larger number of visitors since, as Holderness stresses, "tourists are still lured to Stratford by the deployment of an overtly religious language of pilgrimage and worship" (*Shakespeare Myth* 6).

Indeed, thousands of tourists, attracted by the mystic atmosphere which revolves around Stratford, travel to Shakespeare's hometown in an attempt to understand the author. This is definitely what Al Pacino and the scriptwriter Frederick Kimball had in mind when they visited the Birthplace, so as to comprehend Richard III, the play that they were producing back in 1996. As the documentary that they recorded evidences, the two Americans, especially Kimball, left the house feeling extremely disappointed after visiting the birth room and discovering that there was actually nothing inside it that allowed them to feel close to Shakespeare. The words that Kimball utters, immediately after entering the designated location, are the following: "You've got to

be kidding. Somehow it's a very very small bed. I was expecting to have an epiphany" (Al Pacino). Kimball's reaction probably resembles similar feelings experienced by present-day tourists eager to be taken back in time to Shakespeare's world once they enter into the place where Shakespeare first lived.

During the late Victorian period, observers were confronted with issues concerning the authenticity of the Birthplace, after the house had been renovated and turned into a museum. As Zemgulys explains: "with rooms dedicated to dubious relics and exhibited by fee-charging custodians, the Birthplace was felt to allow no room for any genuine act of pilgrimage and no room for the genuine Shakespeare" (247-48). As a result, during the Victorian and Edwardian periods, and partly motivated by the opportunism and lack of authenticity which characterised the Stratford tourist industry, the English public had the feeling that "the real Shakespeare, the real birthplace, the real English past, could not possibly be located in Stratford. [...] the Stratford Shakespeare was [...] far from gentlemanly ideal" (Zemgulys 246). Stratford was viewed simply as a market town and, hence, not as the ideal place to find the genius of one of England's greatest writers. This idea is exemplified in the Shakespeare Memorial located in Holy Trinity Church, which does not present the writer as a man of letters, but rather "as a contented, well-fed Jacobean landowner" (Calvo 216). In point of fact, Shakespeare's major achievements had taken place in London, where his plays were performed. In the nineteenth century, the city's importance was enhanced because London was the grand metropolis, the centre of the British Empire; consequently, it seemed reasonable to place and discover Shakespeare in London. According to Watson, the Victorians wanted to see Shakespeare in London as "a writer among writers, a writer moving in the highest circles" ("Shakespeare" 215).

Undoubtedly, the building situated in London which holds the strongest connection with the dramatist and, thus, is visited yearly by thousands of citizens from all over the world is The Globe. Amongst all the buildings associated with Shakespeare, The Globe is the one which poses the highest number of questions regarding the issue of authenticity, owing to the fact that it is a reconstruction of the original Globe, not even located at the original site where the former theatre stood. As a cultural artifact, the 1997 Globe must be considered a product of postmodern culture. As a matter fact, it adjusts to Lane's definition of postmodern products: "a postmodern text, building, performance, and so on, is casually a mixture of styles, drawing upon different historical movements and features to produce a hybrid form"

(85). The current Globe construction was built based on available evidence obtained from the former Globe theatres erected in 1599 and 1614. Inevitably, its construction involved a blending of past and present, as it was built with present-day materials, but "using historical techniques of carpentry, finishing and thatching" (Lanier 161). In this sense, the building which currently stands overlooking the river Thames could be regarded as a hybrid form.

The American actor Sam Wanamaker—responsible for the project behind the reconstruction of Shakespeare's Globe—defended the building's status as a replica, in an interview conducted in January 1986 by Holderness: "To visit a replica or reconstruction is not quite the same, yet such places can acquire the patina of the original [...] and a reconstructed Globe, genuinely and carefully researched, and constructed with fidelity to the known facts, will absorb the spirit of the original theatre. People who come to it [...] will experience something of the past" (Shakespeare Myth 16-23). Wanamaker's assertion that a tourist visiting the reconstructed Globe "will experience something of the past" reveals how difficult it is for a reconstruction to provide an accurate and relatively authentic image that will allow the visitor to experience a time period that no longer exists. The Globe can be considered an example of what Baudrillard calls third-order simulation or 'hyperreal'. According to the French post-structuralist critic, third-order simulation produces "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality" (cited in Lane 86). Third-order simulation implies the loss of contact with reality. This loss of contact with a past reality, in this particular case, constitutes, to a certain extent, the experience that a twenty-first century observer can get, as the original Globe theatre has ceased to exist. Therefore, it is not possible to truly measure the degree of fidelity with the former early modern building. This idea evidences that the major consequence of 'hyperreality', the dominant form of postmodern cultures according to Baudrillard, is that the boundaries between reality and representation become blurred, and one is simply left with the simulacrum. One of Baudrillard's main concerns with third-order simulation includes the fear that postmodern societies are constantly confronted with simulacra—imitations of reality—, and not with reality itself. Hyperreality also implies that "the model precedes the real" (Lane 86). This idea is precisely what comes to one's mind from Wanamaker's reference to the fact that the new reconstructed Globe "will absorb the spirit of the original theatre". In other words, by trying to provide a 'faithful' reconstruction of the original Globe, Wanamaker intended visitors to forget about the inexistence of Shakespeare's Renaissance theatre—'the real'—, in

order to project onto the new building—'the model'—the feeling of being present at Shakespeare's original Globe.

5. Conclusions

The industry of literary tourism functions as a complex semiotic system, as such it allows tourists and heritage managers alike to attach different meanings to the various elements that are part of the tourist trail. This essay has focused on one particular instance of this thriving industry: bardolatrous tourism. As an example of a semiotic system, the relationship that exists between the signifier—the Shakespeare family homes—and the signified—the meanings assigned to the properties—is arbitrary; hence, the idealised images that the houses have evoked in the minds of curious beholders since the latter decades of the eighteenth century. The different properties located around Stratford-upon-Avon have often elicited, particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, ideas of Englishness which, in turn, denote a deep nostalgia for a bygone era in the history of England, Shakespeare's Elizabethan England. The property which throughout history has acquired the highest degree of prestige and affection amongst travellers is Shakespeare's Birthplace. The old timber framed Tudor house can be considered a national icon because it is the place that gave birth to one of the nation's most celebrated literary geniuses.

An intrinsic aspect of literary tourism is the desire that many travellers have to embark on such a journey, so as to gain insight into the life of a given author. In point of fact, there are—and have been—tourists that visit Stratford-upon-Avon with the deepest—perhaps even desperate—wish to gain access into the real and authentic Shakespeare. Nevertheless, does a visit to the Shakespeare family properties convey a feeling of truly experiencing authenticity? Do travellers truly get to experience Shakespeare's reality? Heritage managers and tour guides often do insist on the "authentic" value of the properties. However, each of the Shakespeare family homes have undergone processes of reconstruction and/or restoration throughout time. This inevitably implies that none of these buildings have remained intact since the Tudor era. Less so in the case of the reconstructed Globe Theatre, a replica of an early modern building built as late as 1997. Taking into consideration Lacan's and Baudrillard's suggestions (cited in Homer; cited in Lane) on the impossibility to truly access the past, as pleasant an experience as it is, a visit to these quintessentially Shakespearean buildings cannot truly allow the viewer to genuinely and authentically experience Shakespeare's reality, or to gain further insight into his persona.

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IN WHOSE CUSTODY? – A STUDY OF CULTURE IN CRISIS WITH REFERENCE TO THE NOVEL AND THE FILM

¿EN CUSTODIA DE QUIÉN? – UN ESTUDIO DE LA CULTURA EN CRISIS CON REFERENCIA A LA NOVELA Y EL CINE

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Abstract

In Custody is a novel by Anita Desai that studies the extinction of Urdu culture in post-partition India. The film adaptation of the novel has been done by Merchant Ivory Production in an attempt to not only convert the narrative from one art form to another, but also to use cinematic techniques to explore the socio-culture of India with the Urdu language being the central theme. This paper tries to explore the diminished Urdu culture and tries to analyze the question of its preservation in the modern world using technologies that have also been put forward in both art forms. The verses of Urdu poets and Faiz Ahmad Faiz used in the novel and in the film along with the progressive writers' thought have also been dealt with. Hence, the theme of Urdu culture playing centrally, this paper studies various other aspects that have been presented in the film adaptation.

Keywords: Culture, Urdu, India, partition, Urdu poetry, language.

Resumen

In Custody es una novela de Anita Desai que estudia la extinción de la cultura urdu en la India posterior a la partición. La adaptación cinematográfica de la novela ha sido realizada por Merchant Ivory Production en un intento no solo de convertir la narrativa de una forma de arte a otra, sino también de

utilizar técnicas cinematográficas para explorar la sociocultura de la India con el urdu como lengua central. tema. Este artículo intenta explorar la cultura urdu disminuida y trata de analizar la cuestión de su preservación en el mundo moderno utilizando tecnologías que también se han propuesto en ambas formas de arte. También se han tratado los versos de los poetas urdu y Faiz Ahmad Faiz utilizados en la novela y en la película junto con el pensamiento de los escritores progresistas. Por lo tanto, el tema de la cultura urdu juega un papel central, este artículo estudia varios otros aspectos que se han presentado en la adaptación cinematográfica.

Palabras clave: Cultura, Urdu, India, partición, poema, idioma.

1. Introduction

Anita Desai is the author of the famous novel *In Custody*, published in 1984. Being a quintessential diasporic writer, Desai beautifully blends the cultural richness of India with its modern picture. She is one of the remarkable women writers whose novels provide a satire on the changes that post-independence India went through and how these effects impacted the larger context.

Nominated for the Booker Prize in 1984, *In Custody* is a novel that brings out different themes reflecting on the larger realities of society. The setting of the novel is Delhi, in India, bringing out the historical context of the place which also plays the dominant theme in it. According to Inder Jit Lal (1976), Urdu is the language said to have flourished in 12th century India and was the amalgamation of the vernacular language and Persian. The stature of Urdu present today is the result of years of transformation. Desai has highlighted in the novel the declining culture of the Urdu language, which was the result of the change in the socio-political scenario in post-independence India. Originated in the Indian subcontinent as a language of the locals, Persian became the language of courts while Urdu was used by the common population. Poets like Amir Khusrau (1253-1325) and Mushafi (1748-1824) made Urdu poetry and *ghazals*[1] reach their zenith. They were then followed by various other writers. Under the influence of Siraj Aurangabadi (1715-1763), Mirza Galib (1797-1869), etc. Delhi became the center for the Urdu language. It was after the First War of Independence in 1857 and the fall of Delhi to the British that Lucknow became the hub for Urdu. Thus, having flourished in India as a language, a communalization of language happened which followed the gradual decline in the usage of the Urdu language after partition. Hence, through

this novel, Anita Desai is trying to revisit her life experiences and explore the reasons for the extinction of Urdu and how it can sustain modernity. She said,

> I was trying to portray the world of Urdu poets. Living in Delhi I was always surrounded by the sound of Urdu poetry, which is mostly recited. Nobody reads it, but one goes to recitations. It was very much the voice of North India. But although there is such a reverence for Urdu poetry, the fact that most Muslims left India to go to Pakistan meant that most schools and universities of Urdu were closed. So it's a language I don't think is going to survive in India.... There are many Muslims and they do write in Urdu; but it has a kind of very artificial existence. People are not going to study Urdu in school and college anymore, so who are going to be their readers? Where is the audience? (qtd. by Yaqin 3-4)

2. Exploration of the novel *In Custody*, by Anita Desai

This novel explores the cultural significance of the last surviving popular Urdu poet Nur Shahjehanabadi. His prolific poetry is known to people, yet he is deprived of admirers and has deteriorating health. The concept of identity is infused with language and as Urdu is on the verge of extinction in the place it was born, the poet is also on his death bed trying to protect the remains of his loved language. The condition of Urdu is akin to the character of Nur in the novel: although the irreplaceable beauty of expression is there, the search for admirers continues. Nur is known to be a prolific poet. Yet, his writing is struggling to be recognized, like it used to be in older times. Hence, the title *In Custody* signifies this concept of the Urdu language being in the custody of the poet as he is the most deserving human.

The novel throws light on the status of Urdu in the opening chapters per se as Deven is met by his friend Murad and they discuss an attractive topic to be covered in the magazine. While for Murad matters have shifted from contributing to Urdu to making money for his expenses through his journal—as he expresses when he says 'Who reads Urdu anymore?' (Desai 4)—Deven, on the other hand, is trying to keep the tradition of Urdu alive. This struggle faced by Murad to keep intact the popularity of his magazine is the fact that puts forward the dominance of the Hindi language post-independence. Hence, Desai introduces the declining condition of Urdu through Murad's magazine and how difficult it is to get some good Urdu

writers. She also comments on the historical aspect of Urdu being the language of the locals and Hindi becoming the administrative language. This change of scenario in the language is also remarkably highlighted by Desai through the background of Deven. Being a firm admirer of Urdu poems he ends up being the professor of Hindi in a college. Earning sufficient livelihood for the family becomes his reason to put Urdu on a lower pedestal as, according to him, following his passion for Urdu would not have resulted in good monetary possessions. Hence, Urdu becoming a mere hobby for Deven explains how people had to search for alternatives while the former lost its grasp over society. This conversation between Murad and Deven pops up the idea of interviewing Nur, the only famous Urdu poet alive, in order to attract more admirers.

The thought of writing about Nur is also driven by the thought that Murad's magazine should reach more people and gain more attention. Desai takes us on the journey to post-independence Delhi through the lenses of Deven, who is able to mark the changes after revisiting the place years later. The description of forgotten towns and unappreciated historical buildings is brought to focus so as to beautify our history and all that remains unseen. Desai writes, "history had scattered a few marks and imprints here and there but no one in Mirpore thought much of them and certainly gave them no honor in the form of special signs, space or protection" (7). The effects of modernity on the sculptures, which remind us of our past, are highlighted. Thus, Desai makes a subtle remark on the effects that followed independence and how people forgot their heritage. The division area between Hindu and Muslim population is also giving the impression of the policies of colonialists which resulted in the communalization of language as well. Partition of the Indian subcontinent not only separated people into communities but also divided them in terms of language and culture. Desai is trying to explore the beauty of the past that eventually degraded in the covering of modernism. The acknowledgment of our roots is an important aspect to keep our heritage safe.

Nur, in Deven's imagination, held a God-like stature. He describes him as "if God had leaned over a cloud and called for him to come up, and angels might have been drawing him up these ancient splintered stairs to meet the deity: so jubilantly, so timorously, so gratefully did he rise" (Desai 13). The contrast between this image of Nur and reality was quite astonishing. Nur lying in a darkened room seemed to have abandoned society. He calls himself to be the corpse of a dead Urdu language and is astonished to know that people still value his writings. Nur's admirers are the representation of the

modern sensibility where the recitation of Urdu poetry is done only for the sake of entertainment accompanied by alcohol and food. Deven's fantasy of experiencing legit Urdu culture around Nur is distorted after seeing the crowd of drunkards reciting verses of Urdu poetry. Though it appeared to Deven that Nur must be having the magnitude like a God surrounded by literates reciting their poetry inculcating splendid beauty, the reality was the polar opposite. The sparkling lights of the city have definitely put rural areas in dark, signifying the loss of grassroots in the wind of modernity. This demeaning position of Nur was the result of the same darkness that the Urdu language faced while the country moved towards independence. Nur expresses his hurt sentiments about how post-independence times have considered Urdu not to be a valuable asset. Post-partition, while Pakistan took Urdu as the official language, Indian poets of Urdu had to struggle to keep the tradition alive.

Deven's idea of interviewing Nur makes them meet again and this time he witnesses Nur's wife, Imtiaz Begum, attracting all the eyes while reciting the verses. Nur can be seen keeping distance from these gatherings where the false idea of poetry takes hype. His bad health is one reason for his disinterest, while another could be his love for poetry which, when used for shows, becomes saddening for him. Hence, while through the character of Nur we get to know the rich culture of Urdu, Desai is also trying to emphasize how post-independence led to its downfall. Nur considers the interview to be a loot which people did with him along with his wife. Using his verses to gather audiences while the poet himself lies unnoticed is the kind of loot that Nur is scared of.

Eventually, Nur's agreement to get his poetry recorded leads Deven to put more effort into preserving the last surviving beauty of Urdu. The less monetary help people are willing to invest in this process hints at the status of Urdu in society and questions its admirers. The conflict between husband and wife is also prevalent in the novel, which reflects on the professional stature of an individual: women shoving off their dreams because of the household burden is portrayed through the characters of Sarla and Imtiaz Begum. Even Nur's first wife asks for money in order to help his husband gain admiration. On the other hand, Deven and Nur portray how the economic challenges in life take away their dreams, and then family pressure snatches away their individuality as well. According to N.R. Gopal, "Desai is concerned with 'human condition' and also shows profound skill in exploring the 'emotional life' of the people in the stories" (10).

This process of recording has a lot of hindrances, like the behavior of Imtiaz Begum, funding, etc. but Deven eventually manages to get Nur to recite his verses for the recording. The seriousness of the recording is nowhere to be seen as Nur starts demanding drinks and eatables before he begins. The disturbances from the admirers along with the glitches in the tape recorder turned out to give a disastrous result. Deven was held responsible for all the expenses, which eventually highlights the fact that the preservation of Urdu became difficult even for true admirers. Even the authorities of the Urdu department backed off to accept the recording as one of the last surviving manuscripts of an Urdu poet.

Desai, while subtly highlighting the disinterest of people to contribute to this great work, also brings in the feminist perspective in the form of letters received by Deven from Imtiaz Begum. She calls herself to be a poetess as worthy as Nur, if not more, and is not merely a dancing girl like everyone perceives of her. She attaches her writings with the letter, challenging Deven to have a look. This idea of Imtiaz Begum showcasing the poetess in her is the fact that might be highlighting those female writers who remained unrecognized. Enclosing her manuscript to prove her talent, in a letter to Deven, Imtiaz Begum writes, "I am a woman and have had no education but what I have found and seized for myself [...] Let me see if you are strong enough to face them (poetries) and admit to their merit. Or if they fill you with fear and insecurity because they threaten you with danger—danger that your superiority to women may become questionable" (Desai 65.) Desai has not failed in highlighting the smaller themes like the condition of women in the Indian household, and with Imtiaz's efforts to gain admiration through her writings it also signifies how most of the women writers felt short of admirers and remained oppressed in the patriarchal society. It is only through dancing and attracting Nur's admirers that she gets to live her dreams.

The novel ends with Deven having custody of not only the last manuscript of Urdu poetry but also of Nur's genius. This responsibility gets heavy on him but he feels content having experienced the brilliance of a poet. Although there might be a lot of debt that can come over him, having kept safe the finest extract of Urdu poetry satisfies him. Hence, the novel shows the difficulties under which people who try to contribute to Urdu are put, and this might have been the reason for its extinction.

3. Film Adaptation - *Muhafiz*

The film adaptation of the novel was done in 1993 by Merchant Ivory productions. It was also titled *Muhafiz,* which means one who keeps

something safe. Directed by Ismail Merchant, this film not only adapts the images as they are presented in the novel but also brings a wider concept using the tools of cinema. While the novel allows the readers to form their own imagination as the story proceeds, through a film the imagination of the director is put through visual images, giving the audience a clearer image of the storyline. Hence, the novel and the film have their own beauty in narrating a story and an individual cannot place one form over the other.

The film opens with the images of famous monuments like Jama Masjid, invoking its historical and cultural importance, instantly introducing the central theme. It also uses Faiz Ahmad Faiz's poem about a writer's search for a perfect word whereas the novel mentions the encounter of Deven with his old friend Murad. Unlike the novel, the setting of the film is Bhopal. This setting is used in the film to bring into light its story. Bhopal flourished in terms of culture and art under the female rulers known as Begums. Hence, this intentional change of setting is used by the director to highlight historical facts of pre-independence India and how it declined after partition. The importance of women along with the essence of Urdu culture is symbolized using the architectural images of Bhopal in the film. As the novel mentions, "At least Deven had his poetry; she (Sarla) had nothing, and so there was an added accusation and bitterness in her look" (Desai 22). This aspect has also been inculcated in the film. In the introductory shot, we see the household chores of Deven's wife Sarla. She is always bound with these activities and serves her husband and son entirely. Thus, the director's understanding of the minor themes in this novel, like women's condition, deteriorating architectural history, shifted attention of people from their cultural richness to modernity, etc. has not gone missing in this adaptation. The film explores and offers to the audience the chance to study these minor themes and how they add up to larger reality.

The novel uses an extensive description of the friendship between Murad and Deven by throwing light on their childhood memories as well, but this is only showcased in the film through their conversation. The film does not talk about Deven's background along with Murad, rather it gradually gives an idea while following the storyline. An extensive description of the Delhi region is given by Desai, presenting a contrast between the pre-independent India and the modern one, while in the film it is done through visuals of the town. It is also the beauty of adaptation and its techniques that Merchant has used in the depiction of Nur as a poet using Godlike imagery. Deven's journey to Nur's house is also used to show the architecture of Bhopal being

similar to that of Delhi. According to the novelist, Nur's house is located in Chandni Chowk while in the film it is set near Moti Masjid in Bhopal. The modernity of the place is also overlapped with Deven's struggle to find Nur's house, which also portrays the fact that the core of Urdu language is only found somewhere surviving barely. The old house, which had not so well maintained infrastructure, also shows the monetary condition of the poet, symbolizing the struggle Urdu poets had to go through. Hence, one can interpret various ideas in one shot which the director has shown openly. Deven has to take stairs to meet the poet, which is brilliantly shown through the camera to consider him the one equivalent to God. The dark and light shadow is used to show the contrast of how a talented poet has to stay in the dark, unrecognized by society. The technique of parallelism is used to show the childhood of Deven when he talks about his father introducing him to Urdu poetry. The use of open and closed spaces is portrayed in the film to show freedom. Nur is fond of open space and shows Deven his pigeons while sitting on the terrace in the evening. As his admirers take him inside the house and recite their verses, Nur also expresses his views on the beauty of Urdu. As soon as he dislikes his admirers reciting poems, he moves to the open space again watching the sky, symbolizing his suffocation and want for the original essence of poetry.

The financial condition of Deven is described elaborately in the novel but the film uses the setting of an Indian household to show the small rooms and space which he could afford. Deven's monetary condition could only be fulfilled through teaching Hindi, which again points out the value of Urdu and its extinction post-independence. Nur invites Deven for the celebration at his house but it is followed by Imtiaz Begum's performance. The verses recited by Imtiaz Begum are given a creative turn by adding music to show her singing and dancing skills in the film. The beauty of expression is used in the film to highlight the fact of how Begum is living her dreams by reciting Nur's poetry while he is seated in the corner disliking his admirers following her. Nur's expressions are passive; he is disheartened to see this scenario while a smile on Imtiaz Begum's face shows her contentment by getting all the attention. The concept of family problems is also highlighted with the shot where Nur cries while his two wives fight after the celebration. Though the mention of Nur's relation with his wife is not expressed in the novel, it can be known from the behavior of Imtiaz Begum and how she doesn't want the process of recording to happen while, on the other hand, Safiya Begum helps Deven for the same but only for financial benefits. Though Deven put all the

effort into arranging things for the recording, Nur simply feels disinterested and lost. Even Nur's family issues act as a hindrance, which again explains the sense of identity of a true poet which his family doesn't recognize. His first wife's concern lies in the financial benefits while the second wife exploits him by reciting his verses and stopping him to give an interview. Hence, the film has not failed in depicting how family issues act as a declining factor in people's life.

The process of recording is held in the room reserved in the prostitutes' society and it is shown in the film. Deven's efforts to record Nur's verses show the contrast between technology and books. While Deven makes multiple attempts to make the recording successful, he eventually turns to write them down. Towards the end of the film, Deven receives a letter followed by the manuscript of Nur's verses while in the novel he takes a walk at night and thinks of Nur moving to another world. The destruction of Urdu culture is shown in the film through the house of Mr. Siddiqui, which he gets rid of by breaking it. Deven is seen standing holding the manuscript of Nur while the ruins of the house of Mr. Siddiqui forms mist in front of him. This beautiful use of camera angle depicts how Deven holds the last surviving essence of the Urdu language while others are happily getting rid of their inheritance. The film ends with the death of the poet and while he is being taken for cremation, it is also the cremation of Urdu poetry. Deven attends the ceremony holding the verses of Nur symbolizing the fact that in his custody lies the last remains of Urdu language and the poet as well.

4. Study of Urdu poetry and its relevance in the film adaptation

While we analyze the poems of Nur given in the novel and in the film, most of them have been taken from the works of the famous poets Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Mirza Galib, and some others. The film opens with the poem of Faiz *Aaj ik harf ko phir dhoondta phirta hai khayaal* "My mind is groping for a word" (*In Custody* 0:00-1:00). This poem talks about the poet's search for a word that is sweet, poisonous, full of rage, has passion in it and feels like the comfort of the lover, etc. The poet's mind is eagerly looking for a word "that could forever annihilate a city of torment" (Dalvi, *Aaj ik harf* 2). This poem is a spectacular way used by Merchant to open the film, which searches for the literature that is lost in its own birthplace. While this poem is sung in the background, the director has overlapped it with the images of monuments that give us the idea of the historical background where Urdu flourished.

While the film continues, the next *sher* used in it is of Mirza Galib titled *Na-Karda Gunahon Ki Bhi Hasrat* which says, "Applaud the uncommitted sins, O Lord If punishments await those sins I have committed" (*In Custody* 20:29-20:41). This famous verse is recited by Deven to prove his love for Urdu to Nur. This is continued by another poem of Faiz, *Aaye kuch abr kuch sharaab aaye*: "Some clouds and wine should be here and then, let any agony come to me" (*In Custody* 24:32-24:43) which is recited by Nur's admirers while they are trying to impress Nur. This poem is mentioned only in the film to cleverly showcase how Nur's admirers are drunk and using these famous poems to enjoy their time. The purpose of choosing these lines signifies that their prior need for wine and rest of the things is secondary. They call themselves the lovers of Urdu but the contrast is presented when Nur dislikes the way they present it by calling them cowards. Hence, these poems by Faiz are used accurately in the film by Merchant to make an impact on the particular shot. The fact that they resemble the emotion which the film wants to present, shows the beauty of Faiz's poetry.

The song used for Imtiaz Begum's performance on her birthday is a poem by Behzad Lakhnawi, *Ae jazba-e-dil gar main chahoon*. He was a famous Urdu poet who moved to Pakistan post-partition and was known for his exceptional writing in Urdu. His *ghazal* "O Desire of my heart if I so wanted All things would appear before me" (*In Custody* 35:20-39:13) is used to portray the intentions of Imtiaz Begum, who succeeded in enjoying Nur's fame. Her desire of being called a poetess used to be fulfilled when she recited Nur's poetry shamelessly in front of his admirers. The lines by Lakhnawi "If you face troubles in this path of love, I'll be there for you" (1) hint at her desire to seek attention from others. This *ghazal* is another brilliant representation used by Merchant to show how things can be achieved when desired by a willing heart.

The director uses another enchanting *ghazal* of Faiz Ahmad Faiz *Nasib aazmane ke din aa rahe hain*: "It is time to test my fate" (*In Custody* 1:03:07-1:03:37) while Deven is trying his luck to get some funds from the college for the interview. This is sung by a boy at Mr. Siddiqui's house in the background while Deven and Siddiqui are having a conversation. This poem revolves around the theme of the willingness which the poet has in order to meet his lover. Hence, the use of this *ghazal* shows Deven's eagerness to arrange things in order to meet his idol Nur. This is followed by two more poems by Faiz used in the writings of Nur which are yet other beautiful poems used to represent how lovers of Urdu are waiting for its revival. The decline of

the Urdu language is compared with the dawn and how things have reached the end of an era. Nur's poetry reflects on the aspect of how the beauty of Urdu culture came to an end leaving its admirers alone, barely surviving. Faiz's poem *Gham na kar* "Do not grieve, do not grieve" (*In Custody* 1:47:48-1:47:49) may have been used as a song at the end of the film to comfort those who have lost their dreams because of the declining Urdu. The lines of the poem, "The heart will be calmed, do not grieve, do not grieve, Wounds will find balm, do not grieve, do not grieve" (Dalvi, *Gham na kar* 2) suggest that sadness by this pain should not be there as things will change.

The ending poem in the film is from *Na ganwao nawak-e-nim-kash dil-e-reza-reza ganwa diya* by Faiz, which signifies Nur's death and the walk from this world of all the poets who have contributed to Urdu: "Once I was steady as a mountain but now I leave life behind me" (*In Custody* 1:53:15-1:53:29). Deven reads this poem in Nur's memoir symbolizing that his life has contributed a lot so that Urdu never dies. At last, Faiz's poem *Aaj bazaar main pa ba jolan chalo* "Walk through the market today with feet in chains" (*In Custody* 1:53:45-1:57:07) is used as a song to give tribute to all those poets who devoted their life to Urdu. Hence, the director has chosen a kind of ethos at the end of the film in order for people to feel optimism when it comes to the Urdu language: "Go as the city of my beloved is waiting" (1). He is also trying to give a message through the poems that the revival of Urdu can only be achieved if all the admirers put effort together.

Faiz Ahmad Faiz was a member of the progressive writers who became famous for their contribution to Urdu literature in the 1930s. They forwarded a movement in the literature field with a belief that it should inculcate the issues of society. Moving away from the conventions of highly stylized writing, it was the social awareness and reality that manifested literature. In the words of Tagore, "To-day our country is like a vast desert which does not have a trace of greenery and life...it must be a writer's duty to instill new life into the country, to sing the songs of awakening and valor, to carry the message of hope and happiness..." (qtd. by Sahni 181). They kept man at the center and all their writings were expected to be a mirror of society.

Around 1916, progressive thought began losing its grasp on people. With the occurrence of World War I, the loss of center was felt among people which brought with them the sense of oblivion. The horrendous effects of the war were felt, which led to the gradual decline of the progressive thoughts taking along with it the cultural manifestation of the Urdu language as well. Hence,

as the gradual decline in the Urdu language was felt in post-independence India, there came a need for revolutionary zeal to revive its stature in the land it was born. Faiz was a revolutionary poet as his views dealt with all aspects of society. His poetry blends love with that of life and its sorrows, adding avidity of thoughts in the youth. His poems not only dealt with a handful of themes to be read in the times when they were written, rather they have the perpetual issue which can be related with the themes in the modern world.

5. Conclusion

Ismail Merchant and Anita Desai used Faiz Ahmad Faiz's poetry to bring about a revolution in the diminishing Urdu language so that the beauty of Urdu never loses its essence. Faiz's poetry dealt with ageless concerns and he was a voice to the voiceless, making his writing universally acknowledged. Faiz's poems not only inspire people to walk back and attain what was theirs: rather he also talks about how culture is nothing without its admirers. This is just similar to Nur's feeling of a void in the world without his admirers. No matter what instruments were used to record his poetry, his writings could be kept alive only by the admirers. Therefore, as the culture of Urdu started to lose its fire, progressive thought was needed to resuscitate its place and Faiz's poetry had the spark. The poetry used in the novel and the film remind the Indian readers and viewers of the dying culture in post-colonial India in which languages have wrongly been associated with communities. Communalization of language—i.e. Urdu for Muslims and Hindi for Hindus—is a grave setback to the *Hindustani tehzeeb* of India. Both Desai and Merchant raise the question at different times through their respective medium of expression. Desai has used Delhi as the setting of the novel while Bhopal has been used in the film adaptation to emphasize the expansion of boundaries where Urdu was acknowledged. The culture of Urdu was not restricted to regions like Delhi, Lucknow, etc. rather it was widely popular at other places as well where it flourished. Hence, by choosing different settings in the film, Merchant is trying to expand the horizons where the admirers of Urdu reside. The concern is to preserve the syncretic culture of India, which can be safeguarded only through its practitioners. Dependence on technology is, thus, questioned in both the artistic forms—the novel and the film. Therefore, the question remains regarding the true custodian, whether it is the people or technology.

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Notes

1. Ghazal is a traditional form of poetry in Persian or Urdu usually set to music with a fixed number of verses.

Guy Butler's *Demea*: A South African Princess against Apartheid

demea, de guy butler: una princesa sudafricana contra el apartheid

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Abstract

While the relation between classical mythology and postcolonialism may appear as an inconsistency, many postcolonial writers identify postcolonial issues in the literary reception of the classics, and look back to classical mythology and their own precolonial myths to gain a better understanding of their present. In the intersection of myth criticism and postcolonialism, this article discusses Guy Butler's *Demea*, a postcolonial drama written in the 1960s but, due to political reasons, not published or performed until 1990. Butler's play blends the classical myth of Medea with South African precolonial mythology, to raise awareness of the apartheid political situation, along with gender and racial issues.

Keywords: Postcolonial drama, myth criticism, *Medea*, *Demea*, Guy Butler, apartheid.

Resumen

Pese a que la relación entre la mitología clásica y el poscolonialismo pudiera parecer contradictoria, muchos escritores postcoloniales lidian con temas postcoloniales en la recepción de los clásicos y acuden a los mitos clásicos y a sus propios mitos precoloniales para comprender mejor su presente. En la intersección de la mitocrítica y el poscolonialismo, este artículo analiza la obra *Demea* de Guy Butler, un drama postcolonial escrito en

los años 60 del siglo pasado, pero que por razones políticas no pudo ser publicado ni representado hasta 1990. La obra de Butler fusiona el mito clásico de la Medea de Eurípides con mitología precolonial sudafricana, para denunciar la política del apartheid así como la discriminación racial y de género.

Palabras clave: drama poscolonial, mitocrítica, *Medea*, *Demea*, Guy Butler, apartheid.

1. Introduction

In recent times, postcolonial literary studies have explored the intersection between classical literature and the postcolonial world, thereby opening new creative ways to challenge the colonial discourse, a concern widely studied in some works, such as that of Barbara Goff or Lorna Hardwick. This approach provides innovative techniques to explore and identify postcolonial concerns in the literary reception of the classics and ultimately, to offer support to those who, to a different extent and manner, suffered the consequences of colonisation. The blend of local and classical myths may help convey the postcolonial writers' messages and somehow recover some of their own folklore and precolonial identity. Many examples of postcolonial drama use the Euripidean *Medea* as a fascinating classical myth that represents the subjugated subaltern. For instance, Medea fights extreme forms of patriarchal domination in Cherríe Moraga's *The Hungry Woman* (2001) and alcoholism and gender violence in Wesley Enoch's *Black Medea* (2007), which focuses on the situation of Australia's indigenous peoples. In these postcolonial texts, the story of Medea's filicide blends with local myth; these postcolonial rewritings enable the playwrights to question different colonial structures and attempt to recover their own cultures and traditions through the reworking of the classical story. Medea embodies the female other who subverts all traditional views of passivity. She exemplifies agency and gathers both racial and gender concerns; she is doubly colonised but wins over the colonial male, mostly represented by Jason, a practical and ambitious man. This is one of the main reasons why she still captivates the imagination of contemporary playwrights, especially postcolonial dramatists who appropriate Medea's figure and her story for what appears to be their common concern: the fight against oppression and injustice.

Among these postcolonial dramas, Guy Butler's *Demea*, written in the 1960s yet not published or performed until 1990, stands out as a politically driven work to fight racism in Apartheid South Africa. Yet, Butler (1918-2001) does it from a different position since he is not a postcolonial African subject, but a WESSA (White-English-speaking South African), a fact that first captured my attention. Considering that a WESSA postcolonial dramatist could contribute to a different perception of apartheid, this paper conducts an in-depth reading of Guy Butler's *Demea* to show how a white settler succeeds in creating an allegorical play that portrays the racial conflict in South Africa, in both local and classical terms, to attempt an outline of possible solutions.

Research on postcolonial drama has been somewhat neglected in favour of poetry or narrative, and particularly *Demea* has been largely overlooked in comparison to other South African dramas—for instance, it does not feature in *The Methuen Drama Guide to Contemporary South African Theatre* (2015), or in Loren Kruger's two major books *The Drama of South Africa* (1999) or *A Century of South African Theatre* (2019). Therefore this paper also aims to make new contributions to postcolonial theatrical approaches and to shed some light on Butler's drama, an author who was better known as a poet and advocate of English South African culture.

The classical and the precolonial worlds may appear to be two cultures and traditions that are absolutely strange to each other, yet the reading of *Demea* proves that traditions and myths replicate themselves throughout the centuries because human traits remain the same, regardless of age, ethnicity or the environment. To illustrate apartheid situation, Butler "turned Medea into a political allegory of the South African situation as [he] saw it at the height of the Verwoerdian mania" (preface). As Wertheim puts it, *Demea* functions on "several levels of meaning: it looks back to Euripides' elemental Jason and Medea tragedy, it presents the beginnings and the hardening of South African racialist thinking in the later 1820's, it refers clearly to the institution of apartheid at the time of its actual staging in 1990 and it heralds the end of apartheid and the beginning of new social freedom in South Africa" (336). In addition, as I argue, the play offers a deep understanding of the hybrid position of a determined woman—as seen in both, Medea and Demea—who fights against a xenophobic and patriarchal environment and escapes unpunished, with the help of mythical figures that stand for justice. In the case of the Euripidean Medea, with the help of her barbarian gods, in the case of Demea, with the help of her mythical tribes.

2. The background of apartheid

Demea is set in South Africa in the beginning of the nineteenth century, a time when the first settlers, the Afrikaners— descendants of Dutch colonisers—were fighting against the British for the territory. As a matter of fact, both imperial powers colonised South Africa in different periods: the Dutch roughly from 1652 to 1806 and the British from 1806 to 1910. Previously, Portuguese explorers had arrived and explored the country in their alternative route to the silk road.

The Dutch colonists or Afrikaners, traditionally farmers and Calvinists, started out on what is known as the Great Trek, their actual diaspora. As Roger Beck explains, around 15,000 Afrikaners—men, women and children—travelled to the interior of southern Africa in the 1830s. They sought to escape from the British rule and in several groups, crossed the Orange River, seeking their own homeland (68). They did it on ingeniously designed wagons that could carry an impressive weight of household goods and were organised in various treks under different leaders. The courage of these so-called pioneers has become an important element in the folk memory of Afrikaner Nationalism. However, they caused a tremendous upheaval in the interior of the country for at least half a century, confronting and annihilating many African tribes. In the early 1840s, the British, who had never recognised the Afrikaners' independence, intervened to subdue them. In 1843, the first Afrikaner Republic came to an end (Beck 68). In this turmoil, the Tembus, a native African tribe to which the character Demea belongs, also fought against the Afrikaners, seeking independence and the protection of their own land.

As explained by Butler, "I decided for various reasons to invent a trek run on Verwoerdian principles, and to place it in the late 1820s" (preface), though he wrote it in the 1960s, at the height of apartheid. *Demea* is set in the beginning of the nineteenth century, but it clearly refers to the apartheid system, a regime of racial segregation that lasted from 1948 to 1991. It was enforced through legislation by the National Party government—like the anti-miscegenation laws, particularly the Immorality Act (1927, amended in 1950 and again later)—under which Afrikaner minority rule was maintained and the rights of the majority black inhabitants were curtailed. This legislation classified inhabitants into four racial groups: "black," "white," "coloured" (mix-raced) and "Indian," with Indian including Chinese and Malay. From 1960 to 1983, more than three and a half million non-white

South Africans, marginalised by the laws and by the white society, displaced from their homes and forced into segregated neighbourhoods in one of the largest mass removals in modern history (Beck 126). As noted by Cohen "fear of black South Africans was given 'form, mythology, and religious mystery' by the Afrikaners' Great Trek narrative" (548) and black violence was the inevitable result against such a deconstruction of reality.

The coloured people—following South African terminology—had to face not only their subaltern condition but also psychological identity issues. They were socially more relegated than other racial groups, including the blacks, who were considered purer, and for this reason, had the right to a place in apartheid society, which sought a total racial separation. Somehow simplifying the complex net of original South African tribes, Steven Myers explains that the black majority in South Africa consists of more than ten major tribal groups (which helps explain the country's eleven official languages), of which the Zulu, Xhosa, Sesotho and Tswana are the largest ones (652). Myers adds that currently, racial prejudice against the coloured people is not totally eradicated because "today, as they did under apartheid, this group occupies an uncomfortable middle ground, actively participating in the life of the nation, but with little or no influence over the direction of that life" (652). Thus, the categories of whites, blacks and coloureds, although vestiges of the apartheid era, still shape South African society and its economic, social, and cultural restructuring today, having left "a legacy of obstacles yet to be surmounted in order to allow a new sense of identity to emerge" (651).

It was not until 2 February 1990 that President Frederik Willem De Klerk unexpectedly announced the disbanding of the African National Congress and the release of Nelson Mandela, opening a period of transition to democracy. The 1994 elections and the introduction of a democratic state in South Africa opened up new possibilities for the country's drama. As emphasised by Gilbert and Tompkins, for at least "the two or three decades leading up to Nelson Mandela's 1990 release from prison, a vast majority of the country's plays were structured by a binary opposition of apartheid and "freedom"" (295).

Demea is a remarkable example of a South African play opposing apartheid. Butler wrote the play in the 1960s but could not produce it until the 1990s, due to obvious political pressures, as explained by the author himself: "as the play calls for a multiracial cast it could not be produced until the laws against which it is a protest began to loosen their hold in our theatre"

(vi). Christopher Thurman, one of Guy Butler's biographers, explains that the dramatist was a politician who fought apartheid legislation, and privately, a performer of different literary roles: professor, poet, playwright, biographer, and historian with a deep knowledge of Shakespearian and Greek tragedy (ii).

Butler is said to have promoted indigenous literature with great passion fostering its inclusion in educational syllabi and bookshops (Thurman 348), but at the same time, he was a firm supporter of the great English texts and the classics, not only because the canonical English works "were fundamental to Butler's heritage and sense of identity, but also because literature is a trans-national as much as a national phenomenon" (351). In his blend of art and politics Butler thought and rethought the racial conflict in South Africa in both local and classical terms, gathering aesthetics and contemporary conflicts. Such interplay "makes Butler a key figure in assessments of literature-under-apartheid" (349).

Albeit prolific in all genres, Butler's abundant dramatic output remains linked to history. *Demea* is a powerful work entrenched in his deep knowledge of Greek tragedy as well as in his involvement with the history of the Eastern Cape. He revisits *Medea* to denounce and raise awareness of his socio-political situation, picturing the devastating effects of colonialism. The dramatist creates a Black princess Demea, in love with Jonas, an English trader who fought the Napoleonic Wars. Jonas abandons her to marry the white daughter of Kroon, a Boer Trek leader and herald of racism. Demea and Jonas' children are coloured people, the most rejected human beings under the apartheid system; living proofs of the forbidden sexual intercourse between the white and black, both of whom were compelled to keep their purity and to be apart. The children's destiny is doomed by a regime that despises mixed-race persons and, therefore, are to be segregated and marginalised.

3. Reading the play: the blend of Medea and Demea

Demea is a black Tembu princess. The Tembu tribe, also spelled Thembu, comprises the Xhosa-speaking people who inhabit the northern boundaries of the Mzimvubu River in Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. In the mid-nineteenth century, they were defeated militarily by the whites' armies and forced to move to Gcalekaland; those who cooperated with the whites were called "Emigrant Thembu," those who did not were labelled "True Thembu" (Olson 556). It is not by chance that the late Nelson Mandela, a symbol against

apartheid, is one of the most famous and iconic Tembu members. Hence, Demea embodies the original South African black people whose land was invaded and who were deprived of their culture and traditions. Paradoxically, she also stands for the other, a stranger among the Western colonisers and somehow also amid the blacks. From the very beginning, she is at odds with both cultures—the indigenous and the imperialist. She is an orphan educated at a Western Mission Station but still in contact with her tribe, governed by her uncle. Before meeting Jonas, she lived in between two worlds, not at ease in either of them. Obviously, the protagonist is drawn from the character of the classic *Medea*, with whom she has many traits in common. In particular, they are both outsiders, strong-willed women, aristocrats in their own lands, reputed for their medical and even supernatural skills, very intelligent and manipulative. Both are also to be feared, rejected, and banned.

The play opens with a *parodos* or entrance song of the chorus, in imitation of the Greek classical tragedies, which serves to contextualise the play in time and space and simultaneously to comment on the social and political events. Two black men and a coloured one—the elderly (1820s), the mature (1950s) and the young (1990s), who symbolise the past, the present and the future—open the play, stating respectively, "something has happened […] is happening [and] has got to happen" (Butler 1).[1] In the opening scene, there stands a stone that will acquire further significance; the play, with its circular structure, closes using the same setting. It winds up with the political winner seated on that rock, a symbolic throne.

The chorus allows two types of voices to emerge: the individual voice, which offers different views of socio-political issues, and the collective voice, which emphasises the idea of the mythical rainbow, namely that South Africa could "act harmoniously in choral unity" (Wertheim 341). In this unity, the chorus repeats the nurse's well-known opening speech in classical *Medea*: "How I wish the Argo's sails had never swept through the dark blue Clashing Rocks into the land of the Colchians" (ll.1-2), conveniently adapted to the South African story: "I wish his wagon had never outspanned at the mission" (41).

Jonas and Demea's love story is introduced by Fitz, the children's tutor (mirroring *Medea*'s pedagogue), a well-educated alcoholic Englishman who looks back to tell, in a long flashback, the circumstances of this encounter. Jonas visited the mission where Demea stayed as an orphan and was asked to take the rebellious girl back to her tribe. On their way back, they fell in love with each other; Jonas surrendered to her beauty, and Demea enchanted by

his European charm that opened a new world for her. Later, echoing Jason's charm in Euripides' version, she says: "'Your fine words promised me the world of which I had seen a little at the Mission Station: a new way between men and women, a way of the head and the heart that made my tribes seem dumb and blind'" (54).

The tutor thus keeps the unity of action, time, and place typical of Greek tragedies. His speech is also a clear example of intertextuality, inserting meaningful literary references, such as the Bible and *Ivanhoe*, in a clear allusion to nationalist fights. Both colonisers' factions, the British and the Boers, are respectively embodied by Jonas, the English trader (paralleling Jason in the original play), and Kroon, the Dutch descendant (mirroring Creon, King of Corinth). Kroon is a radical thinker, an intellectual, who demagogically and fanatically defends the separation of races. Jonas is an adventurer who, instead of the Golden Fleece, has the mission of procuring some cattle from the Tembus. Demea helps him out, causing the death of her own brother and thus displaying her strong personality and firm determination to not be stopped by anything or anyone. The fortitude, pride and overwhelming personality of Euripides' heroine are faithfully reproduced in Butler's version.

The first scene also serves as an introduction to the focal conflict— Jonas' betrayal. As in the original, this play starts in *medias res*: Jonas the British soldier, a hero in the Napoleonic Wars fought in Spain, has already decided to leave Demea—after twelve years and two sons—to marry Kroon's blonde daughter. His ambition is to succeed Kroon as the ruler of South Africa. Demea and Jonas, wedded in a tribal rite, have two coloured sons—specifically *Griquas*—George and Charles who, unlike Medea's sons, have a voice and express their opinions.

Jonas does not initially share apartheid principles, as signified by the multiracial trek that he is running. Heide Breede claims that Butler depicts two colonial ideologies, the "imaginary trek, led by Jonas, mirrors the Greek Archaic colonial ideology in much the same way that Kroon's trek (a historically accurate trek, composed of Voortrekkers) exemplifies European colonialism" (1). The latter was focused on power and the embodiment of apartheid ideology, while Jonas' trek is composed of multiracial people, representing a possible future to South Africa. However, as if anticipating somehow what happened in the transition between the Archaic period (700-480 B.C) and the Greek Classical Age (480- 323 B.C), racism emerges in Jonas' trek. As Edith Hall elaborates, although the presence of a Hellenic self-consciousness can be traced as far back as the archaic period, it was

the fifth century that saw the development of the barbarian stereotype as opposed to the civilised Greek (54). In the Classical Age, Euripides pictured this opposition in his *Medea* (431 B.C.), who fled from Colchis following Jason to Corinth, Greece. Medea will be rejected as a barbarian by the xenophobic Greeks and postcolonial remakings of the mythical heroine, like *Demea*, exploit the dramatic potential of Medea's barbaric origins.

Despite Jonas' initial love for Demea and his multiracial trek, his ambition prevails over any other concern. Jonas' betrayal can be read at two levels: certainly as a betrayal of love but more specifically, similar to oath breaker Jason's, as a betrayal of basic moral principles, more specifically still, as an English South African accepting the "Afrikaans" ideology of apartheid for the sake of economic expediency and advancement.

The racial question arises from the first time in Jonas' trek at the end of scene II. A Dutch couple, the Van Niekerks, has been expelled from Kroon's trek because they have given birth to a black son, presumably due to their ancestry. To avoid contact with black people, they do not even want to keep their child; instead, they ask Jonas to shelter him in the trek. However, Jonas has already decided to dissolve his trek and dismisses them. The following discussion between Demea and Jonas takes place:

> JONAS. I can honestly say I have no colour feeling myself, but after fifteen years I have given up. One man can't fight the prejudices of a continent. They are the toughest things this land produces, tougher than aloes and desert shrubs, deep rooted and covered in thorns. I'm a practical man, who faces facts. Respect facts, don't attempt the impossible.
>
> DEMEA. You are surrendering before the battle has begun. Listen all. Cobus, are you listening? We get hurt easily, frightened easily, because we think we are a few, but there are thousands of others like you, from here all the way to the Cape. And there are more like Jonas and me. We need to stand together, to give each other courage; that is all. Think, Jonas: a big trek, a trek with two hundred wagons, you in command; a trek for the sake of this child, for our children; all children. (25)

The antagonism between Jonas' trek, a vision of multiracial Africa, and Kroon's trek, a racist and Aryan-like Africa soon fades away. Kroon is the epitome of a demagogue who persuades Jonas with power. Butler sharpens

his pen to show how easily one can construct apparently sensible arguments that gradually indoctrinate Jonas' pragmatic mind. In their first discussion, Jonas argues, "the black people must be converted from their pagan ways and become Westerners" (11), to which Kroon quickly replies, "no, let them be Christians, but not Westerners. That would only lead to mixing of black and white" (11).

Through Kroon's character and specifically, the speech reproduced below, Butler illustrates two historical episodes: on one hand, the Boers' historical Great Trek, which headed to the north of the country, seeking their own place, and causing bloodshed and disrupting thousands of natives' lives (Campbell 22), and on the other hand, the rise of apartheid, which occurred more than a century later. Kroon, with clear Nazi traits, says to Jonas:

> I tell you Captain, if the British continue with their policy and listen to nobody but the missionaries, I shall sell my farm, this beautiful farm and trek to the north, and with me will go all I can find who share my vision: a state for white people only, who will not be spoilt or bastardise as we are being now. And what would become of the coloureds, the Griquas—these many white mistakes of a hundred and fifty years, there will be a separate land for them too. (11)

For Kroon, black and coloured people are obviously "the others." He calls them "undisciplined savages" or "bastards" (28). For example, he says, "'[w]hose shameless woman walk with their breasts bare?'" (30). In another instance, Kroon addresses Demea, telling her that they are the chosen ones: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (30). He reasons that God created different races to set them apart, to which Demea ironically replies, "And white is God's favourite colour?" (32). As Wertheim puts it, "[i]n Kroon, Butler has drawn a stunning portrait of Afrikaner thinking in which fears of alterity, xenophobia, the belief that whites are the chosen race, and the assertion that apartheid is divinely inspired are all of a piece. As in Medea, the colonizer's superiority depends on depicting the other as savage, barbaric, immoral and pagan" (343). Likewise, the Euripidean Medea is a barbarian Colchian, a "transgressive' woman [whose] overbearing nature cannot be fully understood without reference to her barbarian provenance" (Hall 203).

The issue of hybridity is clearly exemplified by the *Griquas*—the coloured people. In colonial discourse, hybridity was first a term of abuse applied to those who were not of a "pure race," but due to a clear anti-racist evolution of human thought and specifically, Homi Bhabha's development of the concept,

hybridity is now perceived as a positive concept, as an ability to negotiate the difference, to negotiate one's subjectivity. Bhabha even mentions the coloured South African subject as a clear example of this positive in-betweenness, of the difference "within:"

> This is the moment of aesthetic distance that provides the narrative with a double edge, which like the coloured South African subject represents a hybridity, a difference "within," a subject that inhabits the rim of an "in-between" reality. And the inscription of this borderline existence inhabits a stillness of time and a strangeness of framing that creates the discursive "image" at the crossroads of history and literature, bridging the home and the world. (*The Location* 13)

Bhabha argues that the social management of the difference for the minority is a complex ongoing negotiation that should allow cultural hybridities to emerge in those moments when society and the world are open to historical transformation. He thinks that the power of these minorities must rely "on the 'rethought' of tradition rather than on the persistence of tradition" ("Signs Taken" 2). Demea's agency, in her double status of an outsider and a woman, fractures the old traditions, and in all these scenarios, achieves an alternation in the conventional hierarchies.

After betrayal, when Kroon tells Demea the news that not only will she be abandoned by Jonas, but due to new racial separation rules, her sons will also be segregated from her, she is first infuriated. However, in a quick theatrical transition, she appears absolutely devastated, resorting to an imagery of torture and agony, as when she whispers, "as a girl at the Mission Station, I saw a picture in a book. A group of Christian men, believing their act was the will of heaven, were tearing a man apart with ropes and nails [...] they told me that Christians no longer did such things. They lied" (33).

Her overwhelming wretchedness moves Kroon. The reader/audience is also sympathetic of Demea's suffering. Despite her genuine grief, she is also manipulative; similar to her classical predecessor, she wants to gain some extra time from Kroon. Demea adulates his manly audacity, saying coquettishly, "what are twelve hours granted to two boys, to a man who is remaking Africa" (37), and using her seductive charms, she recalls how men like Jonas could only touch her with lust, not with love, prompting Kroon, "touch me then; prove I am wrong" (32). This machination works its magic on Kroon, who starts to tremble, accepting in fear and under her spell, the deferral of

Demea's departure and that of her sons. Although this will eventually lead Kroon to his death, for the time being, he thinks that he is under control, asserting, "all the chiefs have signed the treaties [...] even old Agaan, the most intelligent [...] tomorrow everyone will gather round our laager to celebrate the birth of our new world" (36). However, without delay, Demea is plotting her revenge, devising it step-by-step while reflectively repeating word for word Kroon's instructions for their departure.

Drums play a very important role throughout the play. As pointed out, African theatre is characterised by the use of dance, rhythms, and drumming; these performative tools, together with costumes and tribal rituals, are used throughout the tragedy. Drums in *Demea* are essential to planning her revenge. While she is with Kroon, the stage directions indicate that "*a high-pitched drum starts beating in the distance. Demea raises her head to listen*" (36); then again, "*another drum, deep slow, starts beating [; later,] a third drum starts beating rapidly, in erratic bursts. Demea rises to her feet. The third drum stops*" (36). Kroon can recognise the first two drumming tribes (the Baharutsi and the Batlakari) but not the third, which he cannot even hear. There, he says, only live "a handful of bush men" (37), who shall be influential in Demea's success. She has indeed heard the drums, and her plans are taking shape in her head; she will use this drumming tribe to suit her purposes, these unknown mythological tribes will help her out.

The conflict between Demea and Jonas soon explodes. She quarrels with him, echoing exactly the same bitterness expressed by the classical Medea, accusing him of lack of manliness and likewise reproaching him for his ingratitude: "It was I who made you rich and powerful. I. And what is my reward?" (54). Subsequently, providence intervenes to assist her. Paralleling Euripides' episode about Aegean (the visit of the King of Athens who provides her exit plan), Demea receives a visit from Agaan, a black chief who desperately craves a son and seeks Demea's medical skills. In exchange, she immediately asks for shelter in his kingdom. This episode is relevant for reasons related to childbearing. On one hand, it evokes the mythical imagery of the reproductive demons. This legend from Mediterranean culture portrays a type of haunting demons, generally dead women who died childless, probably the origin of the myth surrounding Medea (Johnston 45). On the other hand, Agaan (resembling Aegean in the classic) is sterile and bound to die childless, as shown in the following dialogue. His visit might be the trigger of Demea's appalling decision to murder her own children:

AGAAN. Not to have sons is bad. The end of a family is a track that runs dead in the sand.
DEMEA. Some families should never have been begun.
AGAAN. To die childless, Demea, with no living son or daughter to keep one alive beyond the grave; it is dying a second time.
DEMEA. So to take a strong revenge upon a man, you would kill his children first; make him die a double death? (58)

Butler does not identify or label the African myths and folklore that he intermingles with the ancient Medea. However, every African tribe has its own body of myths, stories and legends. Oral history and women and children constitute a crucial part of it. John Mbiti lists some of the multiple sayings and proverbs that underline the importance of motherhood in African culture:

The childless woman goes through deep sorrows in African society. So it is said, for example: "The woman who has children does not desert her home." This means that bearing children gives the woman the security and joy of a family, of being taken care of in her old age, of being respected by the husband and the wider society. Consequently, people say: "A barren wife never gives thanks"—nothing else is as valuable as children. If a woman has everything else, except children, she would have no cause or joy to give thanks. (70)

Although the only apparent reason for Demea's infanticide is to take revenge on Jonas, in fact, when exploring the ultimate motive behind her acts of murder, the decisive cause, the symbolic one, is related to a just cause. As Kekis remarks, she kills them "because she does not want them to suffer like her, living on the brink of the white world" (41). She does not want them to live without an "acceptable" identity, being neither black nor white; she wants to spare them from the humiliation of racial prejudice. Her infanticide therefore becomes a radical act of love, not of revenge. Likewise Medea kills her children to save them from a crueller death in the hands of her enemies. As Medea reasons in a given instance, "I have determined to do the deed at once,/ to kill my children and leave this land,/ and not to falter or give my children/ over to let a hand more hostile murder them" (Euripides 1236-39). As an example that humankind story is replicated, Medea and Demea approach to infanticide evokes Magda Goebbels's murder of her six children after Hitler's defeat in WWII seeking to save them from retaliation.

Demea wants to spare her children from racist attacks such as being treated as animals, specifically as dogs. She would try to save them, as shown in the following warning to Jonas: "'Without us, without his trek, what hope is there for them? I can see them already: Charlie will be like Kleinboy, George like Cobus; not men mongrels! If you had any love in you, you would shoot them first!'" (52).

The canine references are constant, as illustrated by the chorus, composed of the coloured servants of Jonas' trek: "Are you a dog? Get up." "I am a dog myself. Two mongrels: you whine, I bite" (52). Wertheim concludes, "Kroon's philosophy destroys a notion of harmonious civilisation and realizes an energy that will metamorphose human beings into animals—more specifically into howling scrapping dogs" (344). When Demea sends her children to death, she says, "My sons! Why am I killing you? It is to save your flesh from being torn as mine is now. You will not turn into dogs" (80). Unlike the hypotext, Demea does not kill her children directly but leads them to certain death by sending them to Jonas and his new bride's wedding celebration with barrels full of sand instead of gunpowder, thus incurring Kroon's wrath and plunging them into the massacre. She has arranged with Agaan and other tribes to sabotage the wedding, resulting in massive deaths and chaos that end up with the whites' winning power. Despite her determination, Demea's farewell to Jonas is meaningful. She says, "The game is over, Jonas; won and lost" (73). For Demea means her own defeat; in all versions of *Medea*, the heroine suffers and inflicts suffering on others, but most importantly. her victory is always a defeat as she takes the lives that she gave, the dearest lives to her.

Jonas does not die but survives as a puppet without a will of his own, to be flogged and humiliated by Demea—the new authority seated on the rock throne—in a closing circular ending. In the final scene, she cries, "We have won! They thought to shape their world their way but I have shaped it mine! Now then my clothes!" (74). As the stage directions indicate, "*Throughout the following speech she is visually changed*" (74). Emphasising the symbolic oppression of the clothing, she then says: "'Help me out of these slave's clothes! Come my skins! Ha, the faint smell of woodsmoke clings to them still. My beads: Kantoni, I made these when I was sixteen, when the only whites I had seen were the gentle Missionary and his quiet wife'" (74).

This change of clothes is linked with one of the most relevant postcolonial issues treated in the play, the loss of identity. Demea's genuine self had been fading away during the twelve years when she was living with Jonas. This

altered identity is symbolically shown through the change of costumes and ornaments: "She came out of the Mission House in her tribal dress, to show she had finished with them. But the closer we got to her uncle's kraal, the less she wore her tribal dress, and the more the white woman's dress" (13).

The imitation of the whites' garments also illustrates the postcolonial concepts of ambivalence and mimicry developed by Bhabha. As he argues, the coloniser's authority renders the colonial presence ambivalent and in so doing, transforms the colonial space into an agonistic place: "despite the 'imitation' and 'mimicry' with which colonised peoples cope with the imperial presence, the relationship becomes one of constant, if implicit, contestation and opposition" ("Signs Taken" 35). In other words, ambivalence enables uncertainty and thus a form of subversion, which allows such opposition to emerge. As Bhabha remarks, the discourse on colonialism always pulls in two opposite directions. For the coloniser, the colonised are both fascinating and frightening; the feelings towards them are full of contradictions—fear and admiration or contempt and desire. This applies inversely to the colonised; they hate but admire and try to emulate the coloniser. These notions are clearly illustrated in the following dialogue between Agaan and Demea:

> AGAAN. They are not wholly evil. I have seen what the missionaries have done round Kuruman; turned the desert from brown to green; set up a school; and people our doctors had left to die are alive and happy. If I had sons, they should go there to be taught.
> DEMEA. I should curse you Agaan, but I can only laugh. You have caught the same disease as I did: you have glimpsed a wonder of gentleness and care and respect for people shining, like grass after a storm, behind their cantering horses and blazing guns. How can I blame you? But believe me, that wonder is a lie […]. You are already their slave, because of their guns and their gentleness. Do what I say and free yourself. Remember your oath. (61)

Moral values, and more specifically, oaths and commitments, are crucial to understanding any of *Medea*'s rewritings, especially *Demea*. Medea and Demea, the first a descendant of the gods, the second a proud princess, elicit the audience's sympathy for reasons that are found in their elevated moral standards. In fact, Jason and Jonas are oath breakers who, according to Greek mythology, deserve to die childless (Luschnig 32). Actually, the core

reason for the audience's identification with both Demea and Medea, despite their terrible crimes, is that they are idealists who steadfastly comply with their own ethics. In marked contrast, Jonas (similar to Jason) is a practical man, whose pragmatism corrupts and transforms him into a man without principles, a puppet, as illustrated in the final scene: "'you are right, a puppet, half of whose strings were in Kroon's big fist, the rest in yours. Suddenly all strings are cut. I have collapsed into myself, just alive enough to know my own disgrace: true to nothing'" (84).

Racial prejudice is the pivot of the whole drama. Marginalisation is exercised not only by the white settlers but also many times, by the locals themselves, showing how productively the colonial discourse can manipulate the masses. This is made obvious in the following episode concerning Demea's sons. Their racial awareness is already so deeply rooted that when the time has come to depart, they go with the *Griquas*, rather than with their own mother, because of her blackness. Demea says, "Are you so ashamed of your mother and her people?" Charles replies, "It is not our fault that we are like this." George says, "I'm not white, and I don't want to be black." Demea retorts, "And what am I? Nothing to white father or brown sons, because I'm black. Helpless. Nothing. Black" (69). Even the two children have rivalries. Charles boasts of his fairer complexion, which enrages George. The *Griqua* servant Cobus also notices the class distinction: "Your son Charles will be high-class there, because his hair is straight; but not George" (54).

This play serves to denounce this outrageous South African historical period to a 'rainbow' audience who must listen attentively to a chorus of black people who are wearing tribal dresses, *toyi-toyi-ing* [Southern tribal dance] and performing other traditional African dance movements, while singing these meaningful words:

AIA. I want a land where a girl does not dread.
That her labour pains will bring her to shame
A babe with the wrong sort of hair on his head.
CAROLLUS. I want a land where no father abandons his child
Because his great forgotten grandfather
Was a mahogany slave.
COBUS. We want, we will fight for a land
Where thickness of lips and colour of skin
Are not the same as original sin. (27)

4. Conclusion

Demea is a play about politics and racism, against apartheid. The appropriation of the classical figure of Medea in the 1960s, at the height of apartheid, is very brave, even more so considering that Butler was a white scholar who struggled to recover South African culture. The play encourages a criticism that makes visible an appalling colonial situation in which the settlers consider the original South African people, or even more so, the people they engendered with them, almost like animals. The play addresses identity concerns, the ambivalence of feelings between coloniser and colonised, and challenges the hegemonic, unfair white power. Considering themselves "the chosen" by God, the whites felt authorised to commit one of the most awful atrocities of modern times—banning and rejecting the righteous occupants, "the others," just because of their physical appearance, while conquering their lands and robbing them of their resources.

Demea builds an allegory of apartheid, together with the obnoxious liaison between the Afrikaners and the British, who are portrayed after quarrelling over a land that they acquired only under the unfair laws of physical coercion and war. Butler makes use of Euripides' conventions for an interplay between the classics and a highly upsetting society that emerged from a colonial situation, where the colonisers' ever-present sense of superiority repressed and despised the indigenous people, in this case, reaching the extreme of a radical separation of races. *Demea* symbolises the agency of the "female other" who, located in her motherland, South Africa, has also been hybridised, raised in a white mission, yet she will gradually recover her Tembu black identity to free her people from oppression. The killing of her coloured children adds a dramatic gesture to the tragedy but does not undermine her heroic acts. She wants to spare them from humiliation. As she says, she wins and loses but achieves her justice.

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Notes

1. Further references to the play will include the page number only.

REVIEW

CHRISTOPHER ROLLANSON, *'READ BOOKS, REPEAT QUOTATIONS': THE LITERARY BOB DYLAN*. TWO RIDERS/THE BRIDGE, 2021

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Oddly enough, it seems as if the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, had, in paralysing the world at large, in a sense, resuscitated the literary Bob Dylan. Considered today as much a part of the canon as T.S. Eliot, Samuel Beckett, or Toni Morrison, in the Anglophone sphere, Bob Dylan quite literally continues to roar in the present twenties. As of November 1, 2022, he published *The Philosophy of Modern Song*, the first work in prose he has released after being awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, and second in line to the *Rough and Rowdy Ways* album, a multimodal masterpiece of his usual remarkable music and superior poetic writing. The latter was released two years prior, in his own mystical, celebratory glorification of the ill-fated year's Midsummer's Eve.[1] A self-proclaimed prophet, considering the themes and topics in his last album, the illuminatingly awakened Bob Dylan attempted to warn the population of what was —or still is— to come. However, it was Dr Christopher Rollason, independent scholar and prominent and pioneering dylanologist who since the mid-1980s had been foreseeing a future for scholarly studies in Bob Dylan.

Throughout his more than seventy publications (in English, Spanish, and Portuguese), Dr Rollason has managed to shed light onto a topic in popular culture that would have, otherwise, been neglected. It may well definitely be due to his, as well as other devout Dylanist scholars' tireless efforts, that Dylan grew to eventually become a recognised author in academia. As a matter of fact, the most academically oriented works of analysis on Bob

Dylan started being published after Rollason's 2021 book; see, for example the collection of essays by renowned scholars in *Dylan at 80: It used to go like that, and now it goes like this*, released only a few months after *'Read Books, Repeat Quotations': The Literary Bob Dylan* by Christopher Rollason.

To be sure, it may be argued that Rollason was one of the first scholars to take Dylan seriously. Only a few of them were at the time considering Dylan an authority in his own right, but merely contained within the scope of music. Andrew Muir, for example, compared Dylan and Shakespeare in his *Bob Dylan & William Shakespeare: The True Performing of It* (2019), but, in my opinion, in what appears to be an unnecessary limitation of their *personas* to their relations with the public. While Muir's study provides a thorough comparison of the "more popular," lowly backgrounds of the two Bards, and their rise as audience favourites, Rollason endows us, Dylan scholars, with proper and traditionally academic pieces of pure literary studies of a select few of the Minnesota author's multiple masterful creations. In this collection of essays and articles, some of them published—in particular, we are proud to have featured the opening chapter "Dylan and the Nobel" in a recent number from *The Grove*—Rollason, in a most skilful manner, explains the literature of Dylan with different approaches (line-by-lines, stanza in-depths, more broadly, song contextual and literary analyses, etc.) as well as with varied perspectives, alternating between the author reviewed alone and the author in transtextual relation to another. This reaches its peak in the chapter entitled "Dylan and Edgar Allan Poe" (pp.143-64) where the love of the gothic the two of them share becomes evident as Rollason—not newly nor surprisingly, since he had already compared his two favourites a few times back—encompasses nearly every single direct allusion by Dylan to the works of Poe.

Over and above the confines of intertextuality, it is one aspect of the chapters relating Dylan to Poe that is seldom noticed, that I found remarkable, for it is true that Dylan's conversion to Christianity can potentially be seen as misleading, as it (most of the time) effectively casts a shadow over the darkness lurking in his songs. Rollason unveils Dylan's 'Kingdom of Shadows'[2] brick by brick and presents it as something to be made sense of, mainly, allegorically. In the chapters discussing the songs 'Bob Dylan's Dream,' 'Every Grain of Sand,' 'Dignity,' 'Red River Shore,' and 'Man in the Long Black Coat,' Chris Rollason, very cleverly, manages to give tangible examples of what Milton described as "darkness visible" (*Paradise Lost*, 'Book 1') in Dylan.

The North-American author's mastery over the subtleties of language come in handy as his poetic voice narrates in all the beauty and glory, the

gloomy state of the world. 'Desolation Row' already pointed at this reality, and Rollason analyses each stanza according to Dylan's utterly pessimistic poetic voice's ruminations. This is, likely, the other chapter that deals the most with intertextuality, displaying evident similarities between the Dylan classic and Eliot's *The Waste Land*. It leaves the reader wondering whether it was always Dylan's intention to recreate the Modernist centrepiece. In this sense, the Bard of Hibbing does a little more than explicitly allude to his contemporaries and the authors from the past that helped shape his roots, as, Rollason states (pp. 57-77), he borrows with the sole intention of making his art unique. The premise that Dylan takes, or even steals, from others merely limps, as one notices the extreme intricacy and evolution within Dylan's writing process, where he ends up owning the amalgamation of literatures as one unified *magnum opus*. This, non-coincidentally, rings true to Eliot's interpretation of his own poem as a "heap of broken images" (*WL*, l.22), which only the better versed in the writings of a particular writer, in this case, Rollason with Dylan, can dissect with true accuracy.

As a conclusive note, I would like to draw the attention towards the analyses of Dylanian verses as narrative. Once again, this is yet another instance of Rollason's depth of insight into the world of Bob Dylan. After all, the singer-songwriter was only awarded the Nobel Prize "for having created new poetic expressions [...]",[3] when as a matter of fact most of his songs are, in technical terms, closer to narrative than to poetry. Chris Rollason draws upon this divide to classify some of the pieces as poems and others as narratives. The amount of detail, descriptive passages, and accounts of events in certain songs can, at times, compare to Dickensian classics (as well as, of course, Poe's short fiction). 'Lily, Rosemary and the Jack of Hearts,' 'Man in the Long Black Coat,' 'Tangled Up in Blue,' 'Isis,' 'Hurricane,' 'Black Diamond Bay' and 'Joey,' to mention a few, are songs that could bear the status of full-on narratives. It is thus that Christopher Rollason instigates in the scholarly reader the urge to further investigate into topics the likes of these, which he never fails to bring on. It is in hope only that the careful crafting of this book, as well as the comprehensiveness of the literary analyses have been properly honoured in my review. Clearly, Rollason's *The Literary Bob Dylan* has proven to contain multitudes, much like the author he examines throughout the thirteen decidedly insightful essays. The prolific scholar Chris Rollason has managed to, firstly, lead the forward path towards uncharted territory in Dylanian studies, and, secondly, to establish himself, in a re-formulation of the Nietzschean saying, as 'not a man, but *dylanite*.'

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Notes

1. In 'Changing of the Guards' (from the album *Street-Legal*, 1978), the Summer Solstice, both as a festivity and as a day of pagan symbolism, is rendered as synonymous of the notions of rebirth transfiguration that permeate the majority of Dylan's *oeuvre*.

2. This is a reference to his *on-live* (online and live) performance entitled *Shadow Kingdom*, which took place during the pandemic.

3. https://archive.ph/20170920010410/https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2016/press.pdf

POEMS

SCORING RULES

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She is like reticence... incomplete,
Enigmatic, implied.
She is like an exclamation point,
Occasionally necessary, emphatically striking,
Hyperbolically exciting and
Ironically humorous.
As a question mark, she is a frowning face,
Curious, rhetorical, thought-provoking,
Goaded, humbly sarcastic and unbelievingly shameless.
As a final point,
She is enough.
She is like two dots: future.
Unknown.
She is a comma when she wants to be methodical;
She is a semicolon when she wants to be indomitable.
As a parenthesis, she has two equals
But inverted faces.
As square brackets, she is closed,
Locked,
Passworldess.
She is like braces, with flourishes
On the borders of expression.
As an apostrophe, she is rare, imported, unnoticed.
She is like a bar: when alone, she is alternative,

She separates verses,
She becomes multicolored;
When accompanied, she puts an end to the music,
She keeps the notes company
To the letter.
She is like quotes,
Polyphonically composed.
She is filled.
As a dash, she is direct, open,
Bluntly.
She is punctuation from head to toe.
Breathing,
Intonation,
Silence,
Time,
Sense,
Interior,
Exterior,
Beginning,
"End".

A LUCID GOTHIC DREAM

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On that night of funereal mists, my stomach rumbled as I wandered alone through the darkness of the city, looking for a prey. That's when I saw, in the distance, the apparently perfect creature to revitalize me. It possessed a robust figure and its bearing was that of healthy young being with fresh blood. I camouflaged myself among the trees and waited patiently for it to approach; when I heard its footsteps, I grabbed it like a stray cat grabs a mouse. I wanted to be possessed by its hunger for life, to be its god to whom it would beg for freedom from my sharp teeth. My desires faded, however, the next instant when I saw its eyes close. It was seized by a perverse lucidity, fighting back with extreme force the weight of my body on its. He gripped my neck with one hand, its eyes alight with a disturbing scarcity of any humanity, and it lifted me into the air, my feet a head above the ground. For the first time, I felt a thick dread and beginnings of weeping similar to the one I had before my own transformation, hundreds of years ago. Then I realized what king of creature I was dealing with: it was a spirit of darkness, incarnated in the body of a mortal. That was the only entity capable of defeating someone like me. When I realized that I was approaching death diluted in the blood I had just drunk, I chocked on my own hatred as the hand that strangled me clenched tighter and tighter. The idea of handing my soul over to that beast to be enslaved for eternity echoed in my final thoughts, mixed with the repugnance of seeing myself as defeated, me, who conquered everyone and snatched from them their most precious possession, as the legitimate Lord I called myself to be. Intoxicated by this fury, I looked around, already quite dizzy, and found a white oak stake by the side of the cobblestone road. With a swipe at the creature's eyes, delivered with my arm suddenly transformed into a bat's wing, I managed to free myself from the fingers around my neck

and reach for the stake. I would never allow myself to be beaten so cowardly. As the entity composed itself, I knelt on the lawn and raised the wooden stake over my head. "Better the darkness of the afterlife, than giving my freedom to the demon thirsting for the sacred secular blood", I said, before burying the weapon in my own heart.

CABEZA DE GARDENIA

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A Jane Auer Bowles

"Soy judía, coja, lesbiana". Así se presentaba Jane Auer Bowles (NY 1917-Málaga 1973). "Cabeza de Gardenia", dicen que la llamaba Truman Capote. Escritora. Autora de pocas páginas, no más de 400, pero fundamentales y escasamente referidas en la literatura de mujeres. Casó con Paul Bowles en 1938 y desde entonces lo acompañó en muchos de sus viajes. Sobre todo vivió Tánger, ese Tánger-ciudad internacional y puerta de África, donde casi todo era posible. En 1957 Jane Bowles sufre un derrame cerebral. Fue quedándose ciega y perdiendo la capacidad de leer, de escribir, de discernir. Confusa y loca, peregrina de psiquiátricos, en el 68 ingresa en una clínica de reposo en Málaga. Sobrevive (o antemuere*) entre electrochoques, monjas, palabras perdidas, visitas escasas. Entre sus dolores eternos está el haber escrito muy poco. Convertida al catolicismo, murió en Málaga en 1973. Allí quedó, bajo su cruz, que es hoy losa de mármol muy negro. Unos dicen que la mató el alcohol, otros que el veneno y la magia negra de Cherifa, su amante mora.*

Estas líneas —de fuga— componen mi breve homenaje a la intensa Jane que en el intenso Tánger encontraron y perdieron los intensos Beat.

*

El amor de hermana es una de las pocas alegrías de la vida.
Rhoda, en "Una Pareja en Discordia", de Jane Bowles

—1—

Antes. Antes de antes. Antes de Tánger. Anterior a mí: allí fue mi carne. Previa al frío, al polvo soy bajo tierra de Málaga, previa a esta nada de nada. Pero anterior, también, mi carne, a la cojera y al miedo en los autobuses, a las marcas en la piel que dejaban los vestidos que me compró mi madre, al destacamento de labios como los de Cherifa o Helvetia o Martha o qué más da, labios de mujeres al filo, de aliento y reproche.

El cuerpo sucedió antes de todo. La carne es plena consciencia.

También mi palabra.

—2—

> *Lo que no se vive*
> *se escribe.*
> Isabel Escudero

Sudo sintaxis, me clavo el verbo, dilato hasta dar a luz la palabra *hermana*. Así hasta 400 páginas. Sólo eso. 400 páginas son mi dolor, fueron mi dicha.

No sé si fui una escritora. Así Truman Capote o Tennessee Williams me abrazaran. Amiga de, señora de, tu niñita prodigiosa, la ocurrente, la de la pinta de golfillo. La coja, la judía, la lesbiana. La mal amada, la bien follada. O mejor, Cabeza de Gardenia. Eso fui.

Viví de vivir.

La vida o la escritura, a ver si me decido. No hay opción. No vivir es el único inconveniente que tiene escribir con sangre. No escribir es el precio, demasiado alto, de toda una vida. Ahí, contra el párrafo. Las líneas no escritas ensartan mi columna vertebral. Me duele aquí, mucho.

Sin embargo y sin amor escribir es mi vida.

Dicen, madre, que vendrá un viento y me arrancará el sintagma y, con él, la cordura. ¿O era al contrario? Ya casi ni me acuerdo.

—3—

Don't you care how you look? Are you
trying to get back at your mother?
Claire Auer

Jane está en la bañera con una amiga. Sabe que su madre está tras la cortina, en silencio, escuchando lamer. Al pronto, mamá habla, fuerte, y Martha se asusta. Sale el agua fría.

Janie no puede más. Sin parar de llorar, golpea y golpea a la madre en la espalda.

Esta noche he tenido una horrible pesadilla.

—4—

Circulan por esta vía
trenes sin parada.
Cartel en la estación de tren de Lebrija, Sevilla

Hay gente que siempre es extranjera. Sea de donde sea, vaya donde vaya, donde quiera que esté: extranjera. Ése era el caso Jane Bowles, la forastera. Extraña en Nuevo México, guiri en Málaga, recién llegada a Panamá, indiferente al cielo de Ceilán.

Nunca fue refugiada, deportada, ni inmigrante o polizón de barco. Dicen que Miriam Levy visitó a Jane para hablarle de los judíos que urgía sacar de Alemania antes de la Segunda Gran Guerra. Ella no entendió. Desconocía los otros mundos y sus otros errantes.

Fue en Nueva York, cuando ya el ictus, los electrochoques y los ojos vueltos para adentro, cuando se supo más extranjera.

Ella soñó sus casas: la Casa de Febrero, en Brooklyn, donde charlarse de nuevo con Auden, la casita de verano, donde esconderse de su madre, una buhardilla en París donde volver a cocinar para Truman Capote y Tánger, Tánger como una casa, una casa como Tánger.

Se resignó al hotel. Su recuerdo deambula por los pasillos del Miramar.

Se resignó a rezar. Apóstata del kifi, desde la clínica de reposo en Málaga, escribe: "Queridísimo Paul: [...] Me gustaría vivir en mi casa, cocinar, etc.", "En realidad no hay nada que analizar más que el hecho de que no estoy en casa y me gustaría estar ahí lo antes posible".

Una sin-casa que quiere volver. El cielo no es tan protector.

Extranjera en su propia mortaja, casi extraviada. Bajo este suelo, en la fosa 453F de un cementerio andaluz: aquí yace, eterna en mutación.

Que la tierra que te cubre, de levísima, te sea ajena.

—5—

> *El verdadero artista es el que revienta.*
> Tadeusz Kantor

Maletas, montones de maletas. Camisas de lino, lápices, pamelas, cornucopias. Libros, relojes, el bastón. Collares, pañoletas, pipas, batines. Toallas, teteras, loros, gente. El inmueble Itesa, la isla en Ceilán.

Turistas no. Viajeros somos, decía Paul. Y al pronto una tapia de cacharros nos envolvía. Me senté sobre las cosas a pensar. Yo no sé si es por esta maldita ceguera o si es que he conseguido escapar de mi clase media. El caso es que me cuesta mirar

cada día menos.

He regalado las joyas por las calles de Tánger, he extendido un cheque a nombre del hombre de barro, he dado el dinero que me quedaba. ¿Para qué lo quiero? He perdido la llave. Paul se va a enfadar.

Me queda el bolso. Camino las calles amarrada a él. Un bolso es la víscera al aire que le cuelga a la mujer. La costilla de Eva.

—6—

Campanario de Mombuey, Zamora

Cuando bajaron a la cigüeña enferma, encontraron en su nido un cartón seco de vino, un dado, óxido de lata, una muñeca rota.

Frente al Café Claridge, Tánger

Jane llora en la calle, agarrada a su bolso, aquí y ausente, lejos y ahora. La llave —dice— he perdido la llave de casa. Está en el bolso, tal vez. Pero no se atreve a mirar dentro. Emilio Sanz de Soto la ayuda. Pasan juntos al fondo del *Claridge.* Sobre una mesa Emilio abre el bolso, vuelca aquello. Caen: la llave, algo de dinero, un montón de lentejas, un espejo roto, un pajarillo muerto.

—7—

Paul, dame un pañuelo,

voy a reír.

—8—

Allen Ginsberg habla por teléfono con un tornado. Jane Auer Bowles habla por teléfono con un tornado. Es la misma conversación. No entienden nada.

Allen dice Philip Lamantia, dice Charles Ford, dice no sé quien, dice peyote, catolicismo, dice zen. Quiere conocerla. Está puesto hasta el culo.

Janie baja por la calleja que da al mar. Gingsberg *is coming.* Tánger tiene esta noche el calor cargado de aguasal.

—9—

Como para no verlas. Todos llevabais cámara de fotos, parecéis de ahora, coño, o peor. ¿Qué era eso, una fiesta o un fotomatón? ¿Para qué, siendo el ahora lo único, decís, posáis para mí, que vivo en vuestra posteridad? Claro, cosas de la risa, del kif, de la conversación.

Instantes de grupo: Paul Bowles, su cámara, Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, su cámara, Michael Portman, William Burroughs, su cámara. Fotos de fotos de las fotos.

Bill, el yonqui, destaca entre todos. Sobre el dandi de Paul, incluso, o sobre ese jovencito, Ian se llamaba ¿no?, me lo comería a besos. Bill Burroughs, cómo decirlo, sobresale para adentro, da la anti-luz de un agujero negro. Y es por eso. O por la napia, o el sombrero a lo mejor, no sé. Tal vez sea, a secas, por su manera de agarrar la cámara: como una pistola, como una pistola...

—10—

Entre ellos. Me escurro, me enredo, merodeo. Paso por debajo, rodeo, sobrevuelo. Camino, cojeo.

Tánger se ha llenado de escritores. Pero no sé si los escritores se han llenado de Tánger.

Mis hombres escriben.

Mis mujeres hablan.

La palabra dicha es más fuerte que la palabra escrita. Las maldiciones no son materia, no son de tinta ni están en las páginas, se sacan de la boca. Yo he visto a una mujer, con varios labios, contar mi historia.

—11—

Ella era, por dentro, de color verde brillante. De hoja de datura y esmeralda. Mucha yerba, demasiado alcohol.

Dicen que esa mujer del mercado de Tánger, Cherifa se llama, le echó un conjuro de palabra y bebedizo. Yo he visto plumas de pájaro herido sobre el lecho.

Si la droga es sustancia y la palabra *best seller*, te juro que me vuelvo a Nueva York.

Si la droga es vuelo y la palabra aliento, si intuyo la magia rifeña, tenme por tuya.

Muere el tiempo norteamericano.

—y 12—

Duro, eterno subsur solar...
Fernando Quiñones

Se lo dijo Rafael Pérez Estrada. Va a morirse. Avisó a Emilio Sanz de Soto. Va a morirse. Que lo sepa Truman. Va a morirse. Escribe a Paul. Va a morirse. Dile a madre. Va a morirse.

Que le traigan una almohada o un embuste. Que le aparten del pecho la cruz. Que hagan una hoguera bajo su cama. Vengan todos a reír.

Ahora y en la hora. Que alguien pronuncie, por caridad, la palabra *hermana*.

Note

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