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A Transcultural Approach to EIL Teaching and its Impact on Learners' National Identities

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This article reports on an initiative characterised by a transcultural approach to English Language Teaching (ELT) which may be seen as an instance of Internationalisation at Home (IAH). Participants were ninety-five learners of English from three secondary schools in Spain and Poland who stayed in touch throughout the project through Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). The article explores the impact of this particular IAH experience on the participants' national identities through a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. Data point to national identity discourses being perceived very differently by the Spanish and Polish participants in the sample, and show how the participants' positions with regard to such discourses change during the programme. The results challenge the notion that transcultural competence may result in the individual perceiving him/herself as culturally closer to members of other imagined communities. Instead, they point to the gradual erasure of national imagined communities as transcultural competence develops, thus opening up a new avenue of research.

Keywords: Internationalisation at Home; national identity; transcultural pedagogy; English as an International Language; Computer-Mediated Communication; ethnocentrism

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Un enfoque transcultural en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua internacional y su impacto en las identidades nacionales de los aprendices

Este artículo informa sobre una iniciativa caracterizada por una aproximación transcultural a la enseñanza del inglés que puede verse como un ejemplo de internacionalización en

casa (IeC). Los participantes fueron noventa y cinco estudiantes de inglés de tres escuelas secundarias en España y Polonia que se mantuvieron en contacto durante todo el proyecto a través de comunicación mediada por ordenador. El artículo explora el impacto de esta experiencia particular de IeC en las identidades nacionales de los participantes a través de una combinación de datos cualitativos y cuantitativos. Los datos dejan entrever diferencias sustanciales en la manera en que los participantes españoles y polacos de la muestra perciben los discursos de identidad nacional, y muestran cómo las posiciones de los participantes con respecto a tales discursos cambian durante el proyecto. Los resultados desafían la percepción de que la competencia transcultural puede hacer que el individuo se perciba a sí mismo como culturalmente más cercano a los miembros de otras comunidades imaginadas. Por contra, apuntan a la eliminación gradual de las comunidades nacionales imaginadas a medida que se desarrolla la competencia transcultural, abriendo así una nueva vía de investigación.

Palabras clave: internacionalización en casa; identidad nacional; pedagogía transcultural; inglés como lengua internacional; comunicación mediada por ordenador

1. Introduction

Language and identity discourses cannot be separated, since the latter are primarily disseminated through the former. Consequently, (first) language acquisition appears to be not only a cognitive process but also an ideological one—an avenue of research triggered by milestone publications like that by Alan Firth and Johannes Wagner (2007). The question as to what the consequences may be when one or more additional languages are added to the individual's linguistic repertoire remains unanswered. In order to address this issue, the Modern Language Association encourages practitioners to develop "effective translingual and transcultural competence" in the foreign language classroom (2007, 4).

Although often used as a synonym of intercultural competence, in this article transculturality will not refer simply to the individual's capacity to straddle two different cultures (one of them being their own) (Higgins 2011), but to more developed skills involving "a sense of multidirectional movement, flow and mixing" (Thompson 2011, 207) in complex communication contexts involving people with different first languages and using additional languages to communicate between them. The term *transcultural* seems to be all the more appropriate if English is to be discussed in contexts involving the teaching and acquisition not of a *foreign* but an *international* language (EIL). Thus, a transcultural approach to EIL teaching would introduce language learners to topics that are of universal significance in all cultures.

Despite the fact that very little actual classroom practice has so far been reflected in the literature (Byram, Holmes and Savvides 2013), different models have been put forward to theorise about the qualities of transcultural EIL speakers. Such models (Levy 2007; Baker 2009) refer to several features that can be subsumed under the concept of "perspective consciousness," i.e., "the ability to question constantly the source of one's cultural assumptions and ethical judgements, leading to the habit of seeing things through the minds and hearts of others" (Slimbach 2005, 206). This starts with the individual (re)examining their own national identity (Osler and Starkey 2005, 23), realising what it means to them, and discovering that it involves specific ways of looking at themselves—not necessarily experienced identically by all in the in-group—and equally specific ways of looking at people outside their "imagined community" (Anderson 1991).

Transcultural competence is at the base of Internationalisation at Home (IAH), a varied set of curricular, methodological and pedagogical measures that educational institutions can apply to foster cultural diversity. It includes "any internationally related activity with the exception of outbound student and staff mobility" (Wächter 2000, 6) and may involve—among other possibilities—"curricula in foreign languages or linguistics which explicitly address cross-cultural communication issues and provide training in intercultural [read *trans*cultural] skills" (Nilsson 2000, 22). IAH has been closely linked with the use of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) as a vehicle for "virtual mobility" and the creation of a "virtual international classroom" (Nilsson

2000, 24). Such virtual mobility should be a key ingredient in the transformation of the classroom into a "third space" (Bhabha 1994) where a variety of cultural practices meet, thus establishing a "sphere of [trans]culturality" (Kramsch 1993).

References to EIL and third spaces are essential in this article, which focuses on a specific case study showcasing the use of CMC between EIL learners from two different countries as an instance of IAH (namely, the international class, i.e., formal instruction with an international dimension) characterised by a transcultural approach to English Language Teaching (ELT). The article explores the possible impact of this particular IAH experience on the participants' national identities through two complementary research questions:

RQ1 Does this methodology have an impact on how participants see themselves and their own imagined communities?

RQ2 Does this methodology have an impact on how participants see members of other imagined communities?

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Participants were ninety-five English language learners from three secondary schools, two in Opole (Poland) and one in Bendinat (Calvià, Majorca, Spain), which implemented largely parallel transcultural ELT approaches over one school year (2010-2011). The Spanish participants (N = 42), aged fourteen-fifteen, attended IES Bendinat, a state secondary school, and 61.9% of them were female. The Polish students attended two different schools in Opole: participants from TAK (N = 20), a private school, were aged fourteen-fifteen and evenly distributed gender-wise, while those from VPLO (N = 33), a state-run school, were fifteen-sixteen, and females (84.85%) clearly outnumbered males (15.15%).

No substantial differences concerning the participants' competence in English were evident, although TAK participants also studied Spanish as a foreign language. In both countries, work on the project was initiated in the English language class with the teachers' collaboration.

2.2. Setting

In line with Bengt Nilsson (2000), the transcultural approach to the teaching of EIL behind this research set itself two main objectives. First, cognitive changes were expected in participants in the form of increasingly open worldviews. Cognitively, this could be described as the formation of new knowledge or the activation of a process of reconceptualisation of previous knowledge, typically associated with stereotypical

information concerning other cultures and ways of life, which was expected to result in diminished levels of ethnocentrism. Consequently, participants were also expected to undergo attitudinal changes (tolerance, open-mindedness, flexibility) resulting from their evolving emotional state due to their communication with people from another country, which could even have an impact on their very identities.

Methodologically, this approach is best described as content-based, since participants were introduced to a series of culturally-oriented units of work as part of their English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes, namely, (1) Cultural Stereotypes, (2) Africa, (3) Music with a Message and (4) Questions and Answers (where students could ask each other questions pertaining to a variety of cultural issues). Participants then exchanged comments on the work they had been doing in class in the virtual third space provided by the *EIL in Poland and Spain* blog, which was working alongside the class-based units throughout the year. One of the researchers acted as blog administrator, systematically stimulating debate at each stage. She was helped by the English teachers in the three participating schools, who agreed that their students' blog posts and comments would account for 10% of their final mark.

2.3. Research Design, Instruments and Data Collection

This study combines both qualitative and quantitative data, thus complying with methodological triangulation (Brown and Rodgers 2002, 244), which adds internal validity to the results. Qualitative data, drawn from the course's first didactic unit, Cultural Stereotypes, complemented the quantitative results, providing additional insight into the participants' cultural and national affiliations. Tasks from this unit involved the writing of a list of the five most important cultural artefacts that, according to the participants, symbolise their home countries. Additionally, they were also asked to obtain a similar list from their parents or carers. Participants also answered three questions on the blog concerning the lists and the persuasive (non)effectiveness of stereotypes.

Quantitative data were expected to help trace the development experienced by participants regarding their ethnocentric levels, specifically, how they saw (1) themselves and (2) other imagined communities. These were obtained from a Semantic Differential Test (SDT), administered to the students at the beginning of the academic year (T1), and then repeated when the course was drawing to a close (T2). The test was written and administered in English although instructions were provided in English, Spanish (in Spain) and Polish (in Poland). The English teachers from all three participating schools were available at all times to address any queries.

The SDT was based on a model successfully used by Michael Byram, Veronica Esarte-Sarries and Susan Taylor (1991). It featured a combination of the semantic differential scale (Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum 1975) and a social distance scale (Bogardus 1925), and incorporated elements from John H. Schumann's acculturation hypothesis (1986).

The SDT assessed the participants' attitudes towards the Other using a cultural/social distance continuum of eight cultural dimensions ranging from "I," "my friends" and one's fellow nationals ("the Spaniards" or "the Poles," as applicable) at one end, to "the Poles" (in the case of Spanish participants) and "the Spaniards" (in the case of Polish participants) at the other. In between, it also covered other Western cultural categories ("the Germans," "the French," "the British," "the people from North America" [USA and Canada]). The semantic differential scale for each social distance comprised six bipolar pairs of adjectives on a seven-point Likert scale: (1) friendly-unfriendly, (2) polite-rude, (3) honest-dishonest, (4) kind-cruel, (5) hardworking-lazy and (6) well-educated-poorly-educated. Participants circled the number on the scale that most represented their perception of the cultural dimension. An example of this test can be seen in figure 1.

Figure 1. Example of SDT

The Spanish are….								
Friendly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unfriendly
Polite	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Rude
Honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Dishonest

2.4. Data Management and Analysis

For anonymity's sake, participants were given codes. Each code is a combination of letters identifying the participant's school (BE for Bendinat, TA for TAK, and VP for VLPO) followed by their initials.

Atlas.ti7 was used to thematically analyse the qualitative data (i.e., all posts contributed to the blog by the participants, either as individual or group entries). Quantitative results were only considered when (1) participants had completed the SDT at both T1 and T2; (2) ninety-five percent of the SDT had been duly completed; and (3) evidence was not found that SDTs had been completed randomly. Consequently, twenty-two SDTs from Spain and forty-one from Poland were analysed.

SPSS 19 was used to handle the quantitative data. Individual participant scores were obtained for each cultural dimension by dividing the total sum for each of the six pairs of bi-polar adjectives by six. In order to obtain the mean group scores for each cultural dimension, the sum of these individual means was divided by the total number of students in the group. These means were interpreted as the overall levels of ethnocentrism/ethnorelativism for each group towards a specific group of people. The closer to zero the mean scores, the more positive the attitude is towards the cultural dimension being assessed.

In order to assess the ethnorelativity of the groups as a whole, the score for each dimension was added up for each participant and then divided by eight (the number of dimensions) to obtain a mean score. The sum of the individual means for each group were then added together and divided to obtain a group mean. Consequently, the closer to zero the overall mean is, the more ethnorelative (and less ethnocentric) the group is as a whole. Cronbach's alpha was used to ensure the reliability of the mean scores (with standard deviation) and Levine's test of equal variance was used for the ANOVA analyses.

3. Results

3.1. Qualitative Data

As a complement to the Cultural Stereotypes unit, participants had to answer three questions on the blog for their Christmas homework. Previously in class, students had drawn up lists of what they considered to be cultural symbols of their respective countries, and they had also elicited similar lists from their parents or carers. The first question was based on these lists:

> Q1. Were there any differences between the lists made by you and those made by your parents or carers concerning the cultural symbols of Spain/Poland?

Additionally, participants were asked to answer the following questions:

> Q2. Are cultural stereotypes a good way to learn about people from other nations or do you think they cause prejudice and can be harmful?
> Q3. Do cultural stereotypes motivate you or put you off wanting to visit a country or learn the language spoken there?

3.1.1. National Symbols for Participants and their Elders

The combined results of lists of national cultural symbols drawn up by the Bendinat participants and their parents or carers was uploaded onto the blog (table 1). Together with their answers to Q1, they provide interesting qualitative data concerning the way the participants themselves and their parents or carers perceive their respective imagined communities.

Although the list (table 1 below) was published on the blog, most Spanish participants tended to avoid Q1 by either not answering it or simply answering it with a monosyllabic "Yes" or "No." Most of the Spanish students who answered Q1 believe that there are differences between their lists and their parents', although the summary provided in table 1 seems to belie this and they choose not to explain what the perceived differences are.

Table 1. Cultural symbols for Spanish students and their parents

Cultural symbols for students		Cultural symbols for parents / carers	
Number of references	Most representative things of Spain	**Number of references**	Most representative things of Spain
15	Food *paella* (5), Spanish serrano ham and cold meats (5), food in general (3), *ensaïmada*[1] (1), olives (1)	22	Food *paella* (8), Spanish serrano ham and cold meats (5), food in general (9)
6	Sports football (5), sport in general (1)	12	Cultural traditions bullfighting (11) *San Fermín*[2] (1)
5	Cultural heritage monuments in general (3), Way of St James (2)	7	Sports football (4), sport in general (2), Rafael Nadal (1)
4	Bullfighting	6	Music and dance
3	Spanish women Spanish women/girls (2), Penélope Cruz (1)	6	Mediterranean beaches (2), Mediterranean Sea (2), temperature (2)
3	Beaches	5	Monuments *Puerta del Sol*[3] (3), *Sagrada Família*[4] (1), monuments in general (1)
3	Flamenco	4	Partying
		3	Wine
		2	Spanish language
		2	Crisis
	The following items were mentioned only once: crisis poorly educated people siesta partying speak loud and fast work in tertiary sector		The following items were mentioned only once: family Madrid – Barcelona *castellers*[5] patriotism culture Don Quixote army Spanish flag Andalusian Easter processions amusing people

[1] Local pastry speciality from Majorca.
[2] Festival held in Pamplona in July.
[3] Madrid's best-known square—crowds gather here to welcome in the New Year.
[4] Gaudí's masterpiece in Barcelona.
[5] People who form human towers, common in Catalan festivals.

For their part, due to time constraints and different classroom dynamics, the Polish students did not post a class list of Polish cultural symbols on the blog. However, they did publish some posts and comments reflecting their opinions. Polish participants generally did address Q1 and the answers available invariably referred to their perception that there were differences in the national symbols selected by the students and their parents or carers.

Especially detailed was a joint entry made by VPAGPE and VPEDMA providing abridged information from Wikipedia regarding what they considered the most representative Polish symbols, such as *Solidarność*, Lech Wałęsa, Chopin, Pope John Paul II and the widely popular (although unofficial) motto *Bóg, Honor, Ojczyzna* (God, Honour, Fatherland). An interesting feature of this entry is that, although apparently meant to cover whatever their elders consider symbolises Poland (the entry is titled "Symbols of Poland for our parents and grandparents"), the fact that they obtained the information themselves from Wikipedia seems to indicate that they also recognise themselves in the symbols listed. Their post triggered a comment by one Spanish participant (example 1), expressing her surprise at finding out that Pope John Paul II was Polish:

(1) I didn't know that the last pope was polish :O (BELAMU)[6]

3.1.2. How Participants See Members of Other Imagined Communities

Relevant qualitative information concerning how participants see members of other imagined communities at T1 can be obtained from their answers to Q2 and Q3. Q2 inquired into the perceived usefulness of cultural stereotypes as a source of information on people from other countries. This resulted in relatively short, not always coherently phrased answers. Answers to Q2 are summarised in table 2.

Table 2. Summary of results (Q2)

	BENDINAT	TAK	VPLO	TOTAL
Positive	9 (37.5%)	1 (10%)	0	10 (25%)
Negative	6 (25%)	9 (90%)	6 (100%)	21 (52.5%)
Mixed	9 (37.5%)	0	0	9 (22.5%)
TOTAL	24	10	6	40

Only ten out of forty contributions, nine of which were posted by Spanish participants, recognise the usefulness of stereotypes as a source of information, while

[6] All examples have been taken verbatim from the blog without any editing.

75% of posts express a substantially different opinion on stereotypes and their role. To start with, nine posts offer mixed views on the subject, hinting that there is a grain of truth to be found in stereotypes (example 2):

(2) Yes and no. Yes, because it can be helpful to know, more or less, how the people of the country thinks and are and you can link things with it [...]; and no, because the stereotypes can give to us a bad idea of the people of the country. (BEANMO)

These views are largely shared by BEJUSA (example 3), who insists that generalisations are dangerous and that ultimately no community is perfectly homogeneous:

(3) Everybody is different, so you can't say "everybody in Spain likes bull-fighting" or things like that because there will be people who like it and people who dislike it. [...] IN GENERAL, English people are quiet, don't have a surprise if you meet a fun English boy or girl). Conclusion: [...] remember that not everybody is equal, and some of them won't like you saying things like: "oh, I thought you Spanish people love the Siesta and Paella! D:". Generalize is bad >_> (BEJUSA)

Over half of the respondents (52.5%), however, flatly reject stereotypes as a valid source of information on other peoples and cultures. Such negative views are especially representative of the Polish participants, as illustrated in example 4:

(4) We think cultural stereotypes sometimes are obsolete and exaggerated. Stereotypes can hurt people. The best way to lern [sic] about foreign cultures is to travel and to meet people face-to-face. Then we can make own opinion about other nations. (VPAGRO)

Q3 inquired into whether stereotypes would play a role in decisions to visit a country or learn its language, and a summary of the results is provided in table 3.

Table 3. Summary of results (Q3)

		BENDINAT	TAK[7]	VPLO
Influence on decision to visit a foreign country	Positive	4 (12.5%)	2 (18.2%)	1 (14.28%)
	Negative	3 (9.4%)	3 (27.2%)	1 (14.28%)
	None	8 (25%)	1 (9.1%)	0

[7] Blog posts for TAK and VPLO were done in groups and so there are fewer entries.

		BENDINAT	TAK[7]	VPLO
Influence on decision to learn a foreign language	Positive	1 (3.1%)	1 (9.1%)	0
	Negative	1 (3.1%)	2 (18.2%)	1 (14.28%)
	None	10 (31.3%)	0	2 (28.6%)
Mixed influence on decision to visit a foreign country and learn a foreign language		5 (15.6%)	2 (18.2%)	2 (28.6%)
TOTAL		32 (100%)	11 (100%)	7 (100%)

Many of the Spanish participants that answered Q3 believe that cultural stereotypes do not influence the decision to learn a new language (31.3%) or visit a new country (25%) (example 5):

(5) So, the cultural stereotypes, in my oppinion [sic], haven't got any importance to impulse you to learn the language or putting you off wanting to visit it. (BEAIBE)

Some participants from Spain acknowledge that, far from producing a negative effect, cultural stereotypes make a country appear more interesting (example 6):

(6) Yes, because you know a little bit and you want to know more and more, it's like an interesting novel. (BEEDCA)

Nevertheless, there are opinions that stress the negative effect that stereotypes may hold over the students' interest in foreign languages and cultures. This can be appreciated in examples 7 and 8:

(7) We all think cultural stereotypes can put us off wanting to visit or hear the language spoken there. For example, I VPKIKO don't like China because of some cases and I don't want to hear the language nor visit their country. (VPALPA, VPKIPO, VPMIGI)
(8) For me stereotypes don't have any influence on learning a language. But they do have an influence that I would like go to visit a country. For example if a friend says to me that a land is horrible, I prefer to visit to another country. (BE1ALBE)

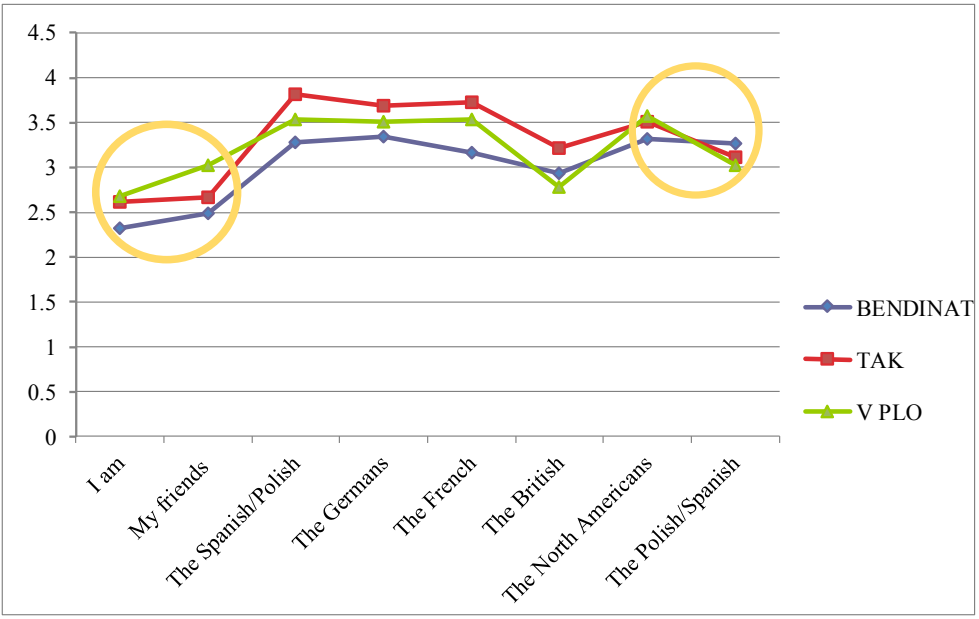
3.2. Quantitative Data

Quantitative data are drawn from the participants' performance on the SDT, designed to measure group levels of ethnocentrism/ethnorelativism towards various

cultural dimensions (figures 2 and 3) as well as their overall levels of ethnocentrism/ethnorelativism (table 4) at the beginning (T1) and end (T2) of the academic year.

T1 results are summarised in figure 2. The mean scores that are closer to zero reflect a more positive attitude towards a specific cultural dimension. In figures 2 and 3, "The Spanish/Polish" dimension means "The Spanish" for Spanish participants and "The Polish" for Polish participants. Conversely, "The Polish/Spanish" dimension means "The Polish" for Spanish participants and "The Spanish" for Polish participants.

FIGURE 2. Levels of ethnocentrism/ethnorelativism T1



The variables "I am" and "My friends are" have comparable levels of ethnorelativism, all within the 2.32 and 2.68 level, meaning that the three groups perceive themselves and their friends fairly positively (on the 1-7 Lickert scale). All three groups also position themselves very closely to the British dimension, more so than to their national counterparts (Spanish if in the Spanish group and Polish if in the Polish group), the widest gap being 0.61 for both Bendinat and TAK. On the other hand, there is a tendency to consider their national counterparts on a par with the North Americans and other European countries. Finally, the Spanish and Polish participants do not seem to perceive themselves as being especially different from each other. Having said this, TAK participants, who took Spanish as a second foreign language, did not perceive themselves to be closer to the Spanish than their VPLO peers.

Figure 3 shows the SDT results at T2. Here the Bendinat and VPLO participants tend to consider themselves closer to the British than to any other group, with TAK participants relating more closely to North America.

FIGURE 3. Levels of ethnocentrism/ethnorelativism T2

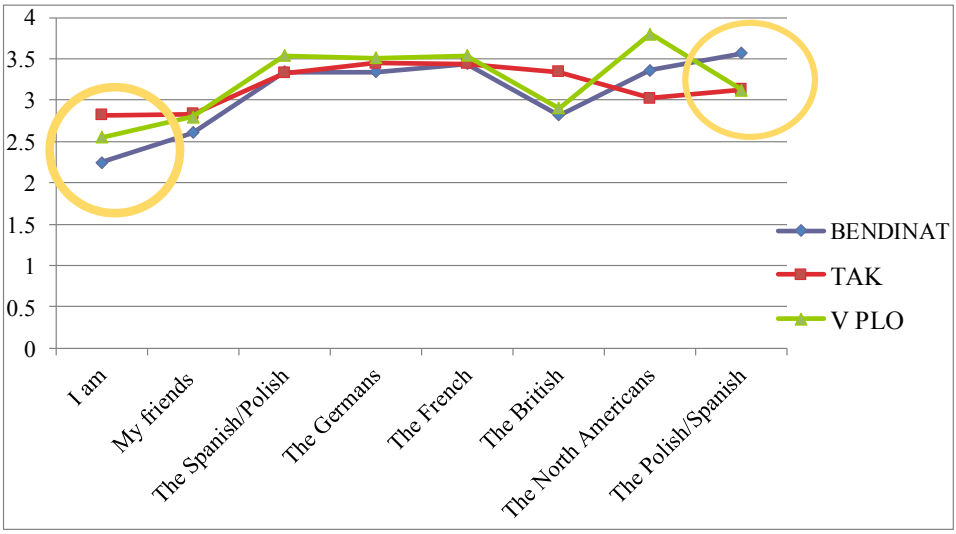


Table 4 offers a more complete picture of the participants' evolution throughout the study, detailing group means for each dimension at both collection times.

TABLE 4. Overall group means for cultural dimensions at T1 and T2

		BENDINAT	TAK	VPLO
Statement	**Time**			
I am ...	T1	2.32	2.61	2.68
	T2	2.25	2.82	2.55
My friends are ...	T1	2.49	2.67	3.03
	T2	2.60	2.83	2.80
The Spanish/Polish are[8]	T1	3.28	3.82	3.54
	T2	3.34	3.33	3.45

[8] Here read as "Spanish" for the Spanish students and "Polish" for the Polish students.

		BENDINAT	TAK	VPLO
Statement	**Time**			
The Germans are ...	T1	3.34	3.69	3.51
	T2	3.47	3.99	3.48
The French are ...	T1	3.16	3.73	3.54
	T2	3.44	3.44	3.51
The British are ...	T1	2.93	3.22	2.78
	T2	2.82	3.34	2.90
The North Americans are ...	T1	3.32	3.51	3.57
	T2	3.35	3.02	3.80
The Polish/Spanish are ...[9]	T1	3.27	3.12	3.03
	T2	3.57	3.13	3.12
Overall level of ethnorelativeness per group	T1	3.01	3.19	2.88
	T2	3.11	3.32	3.20

Participants from all three schools show fairly similar overall levels of ethnorelativism at both T1 (ranging from 2.88 to 3.19) and T2 (ranging from 3.11 to 3.32), clearly placing them at the ethnorelative end of an ethnorelative/ethnocentric continuum (with zero being ethnorelative and seven being ethnocentric). The data show a slight decrease in ethnorelativism at T2. However, the results of a paired t-test for each group at T1 and T2 found no significance. An ANOVA was conducted between groups to compare the overall effect of time between the Spanish and Polish participants at T2, the results of which bordered on significance ($p=0.09$).

Statistical significance aside, table 4 shows that the Spanish and Polish participants seem to behave somewhat differently in two specific fields. When it comes to how they see fellow nationals, values increase marginally over time in the case of the Spanish participants (+0.06), whereas they diminish for the Polish students both for VPLO (-0.09) and particularly for TAK (-0.49). This points to a tendency for Spanish participants to distance themselves from fellow nationals at T2 whereas closer cultural proximity is felt by the Polish participants with regards to fellow Poles.

Finally, as regards the Spanish and Polish participants' image of each other at T2, values increase in all cases (thus signalling the perception of greater social distance),

[9] Here read as "Polish" for the Spanish students and "Spanish" for the Polish students.

although this is less visible in the case of the view that the Polish participants have of the Spaniards (-0.01 for TAK, +0.09 for VLPO) than in the case of Spanish participants' view of Poles (+0.30).

4. Discussion

4.1. The Impact of the Transcultural Methodology on How Participants See Themselves

According to the quantitative data, participants do not demonstrate particularly high levels of cultural proximity towards fellow nationals at T1 and distance themselves further at T2. The qualitative information gathered may provide answers for this, as it provides some insight into the participants' feelings of national identity at T1.

As noted in section 3.1, participants did not always coherently discuss the lists of national symbols they had drawn up. This is highly indicative of the difficulty of the task posed: although participants were never asked directly about their national identity feelings, there was no way for them to reply to this question without carefully pondering this elusive construct. Intrinsic difficulties notwithstanding, the fact remains that answers are notoriously less numerous among Spanish participants. Their monosyllabic answers seem to suggest that this task was more demanding for them.

Qualitative data indicate that participants perceive that the meaning of national identity varies across generations—although it is difficult to spot clear-cut differences between the way Poland is perceived by the younger Poles and their elders. This may be indicative of the rapidly changing features of contemporary societies, which fosters the perception of identity as a "process" (Hall 1991, 47) as opposed to the images of continuity and sameness identity discourses traditionally convey (Hall 1991, 43).

Cross-generational perceptions aside, the lists of Spanish and Polish national symbols are substantially different in nature. Although both lists provide evidence of the status of food as a cultural signifier (Carter 2004), the Polish lists include numerous contributions to science, the arts, politics and even religion, typically presented in terms of "icons of affinity" (Ward 2001, 14), i.e., national deities, covering centuries of—what is perceived as—uninterrupted Polishness. Conversely, what characterises the list of Spanish symbols is its fragmentation: well-known personalities are mentioned, but never in relation with patriotism or national history; symbols sometimes appear to be mentioned in opposition to each other (e.g. Madrid vs. Barcelona); and Spanish participants seem to have mixed feelings about what defines Spaniards as a people, perceiving them as enjoying a good quality of life, whilst also seeing them as ill-mannered and ignorant.

Results therefore suggest that Spanish and Polish participants view national identity differently. On the one hand, contributions by the Polish participants point to the strongly Catholic-based sense of national identity that the Polish state fostered in the aftermath of the First World War (Sadkowski 2000, 175). On the other hand, the dearth

of national symbols mentioned by Spanish students points to the sore identity issues characterising contemporary Spain and, more specifically, how erstwhile hegemonic discourses that placed Castilianness at the centre of a wider notion of Spanishness are being contested by peripheral counterdiscourses (Jensen 2000). It should be noted that Majorca is one of Spain's Catalan-speaking territories. Consequently, although this has not yet resulted in a strong separatist movement on the island, the linguistic and cultural connections with Catalonia are strong, which has led to identity being felt in Majorca very differently from, say, central Spain (Mestre i Sureda 2002, 99).

Finally, the transcultural methodology participants were exposed to may also account for the Spanish participants distancing themselves further from fellow nationals at T2: it may have resulted in an increased awareness of the existence of different worldviews and alternative cultural values, and their distancing themselves even further from the complex discursive constructions that comprise contemporary Spain.

4.2. The Impact of the Transcultural Methodology on How Participants See Members of Other Imagined Communities

The qualitative data have provided valuable information concerning how participants see members of other imagined communities at the beginning of the study. The participants' young age may have played a role in their not always answering Q2 and Q3 coherently, questions which required conscious reflection on abstract concepts like identity. Nevertheless, their answers to Q2, which looked into participants' perceptions of stereotypes as a source of information on other nationalities, show that 52.5% of participants are fully aware of the dangers of stereotyping as a reliable source of information. Interestingly, the majority are Polish participants, which in turn implies that most Spanish participants either have mixed feelings about cultural stereotypes—i.e., they think that a grain of truth might be found in them (a position that no Polish participants adopt)—or else openly accept them as a useful source of information (which only one Polish participant agrees on). The results therefore indicate that oppositional views on the value of stereotypes are particularly representative of the Polish participants. This seems to suggest, at least initially, that Poles are more sensitive to the potentially damaging effects of the stereotyping that all national identity discourses involve. Additionally, several posts by Polish students also suggest that they regard themselves as largely impervious to the stereotyping of the Other that results from national identity discourses.

However, answers to Q3 provided new nuances. When it comes to visiting another country, stereotypes seem to play a greater role among Poles than among Spaniards (25% of the Spanish group felt that negative stereotypes would not influence them). This may suggest that Polish participants tend to associate cultural stereotypes with travel options, whereas Spanish participants tend to separate their views on other countries and their travel options. One possible explanation may be that, whereas

Calvià is the municipality that receives the greatest number of international tourists in Majorca (BOIB 2015), Opole is still unchartered territory on mainstream tourist maps, which might explain Bendinat and Opole participants' having different perceptions of the phenomenon of tourism and, more specifically, the motivational factors behind tourists' destination choices. The Spanish participants are well used to sharing their space with countless foreign tourists with very limited knowledge of Spanish and, especially, Majorcan culture. This is a plausible explanation as to why a relevant number of the Spanish participants may have dissociated cultural stereotypes from holiday decision-making.

In addition, according to their answers, stereotypes also play a very limited role for Spanish participants in their decision to learn a new language. Conversely, a greater number of Polish participants express the view that positive stereotypes might motivate them to learn a foreign language, while even more acknowledge that negative stereotypes may put them off. These different patterns may signal different foreign language learning cultures in Spain and Poland. Several studies have found low motivation levels among Spanish EFL learners in their teens (González García 2004). Whereas in Spain learning English is an obligation, the political changes in Poland in the wake of the fall of the Iron Curtain in the late 1980s led to changes in the country's foreign language learning policy. While previously Russian had dominated the foreign language market, the country reacted in the face of its newly found freedom by opening up to other foreign languages (Truchot 2002). It is within reason that the new generations of Poles would be far more motivated to learn such languages rather than Russian, which somehow came to represent Soviet oppression (Grave 2008). Consequently, sympathy towards the people associated with a foreign language may well play a far more important role among Poles than among Spaniards.

It is clear, therefore, that the topic under discussion is complex and conclusions should not be rushed into. When asked in general terms, Polish participants generally declare that they are aware of the power of stereotypes. However, when asked about a more specific dimension, many of them candidly acknowledge that, far from being impervious to stereotyped discourses, there are aspects of their lives which are largely affected by them. For their part, Spanish participants seem to be more practical in their foreign language choices. English—the world's most widely taught foreign language (Coleman 2006)—is universally taught across schools in Spain. As a result, their studying English at school may have little to do with motivation. Likewise, it seems that Spanish participants are not especially motivated to consider taking up additional foreign languages. As to how stereotypes may affect their choice of holiday destinations, they seemingly believe themselves to be less affected by stereotyped discourses than their Polish peers. As mentioned above, the status of Calvià as an international tourist destination may be behind this result. However, there may be more to it. Bernd Wächter (2000) suggests that national identity issues may have an impact on internationalisation programmes in education. In his own words,

> [...] strong regional identities often hinder the development of an international outlook. For example, an insistence on a rarely spoken regional language as the mode of tuition tends to act as an obstacle to international cooperation in some of these regions. (Wächter 2000, 7)

Accordingly, different national identity feelings may have also played a role in the different patterns shown by Polish and Spanish participants when answering Q2 and, especially, Q3. In fact, the link that Wächter detects between a strong regional identity and the impact of IAH is all the more relevant in light of the following. The national identity issues discussed above (see section 4.1) led to the 1978 Constitution turning Spain into a federal state in all but name, divided not into federated states but "autonomous communities" in an attempt to reconcile the concepts of "unity and diversity" (Moreno 1997, 65). This ambiguous state model has in turn fostered two antagonistic readings. The political centre and right tend to view autonomous communities as mere regions, whereas at least some of the latter view themselves as key components of a multinational state.

In Majorca, Spanish-centred discourses are likely to encounter major opposition if only because of (1) the territory's island status, and (2) the Catalan origin of its cultural and linguistic heritage. Overall, Majorcans have a strong sense of identity often resulting in ambivalent feelings not only towards a Castilian-centred vision of Spain but also Catalanness (Mestre i Sureda 2002, 99). This, in light of Wächter's comments above, may partly account for the Majorcan participants' different perceptions concerning national stereotypes and their influence.

As seen above, cultural stereotypes seem to be more widely accepted as valid or partly valid sources of information among Spanish than Polish participants, and such stereotypes seem to play a greater role in travel- and language learning-related decision-making among Polish participants. A possible identity-based explanation of this may be provided, and could involve Spaniards not taking into consideration stereotypes concerning foreign people since their feelings towards a, let us say, pan-Spanish identity are far more diverse, and possibly not quite so strongly felt, as the deeply-rooted, historically-based Polish identity expressed by the Polish participants. In a complementary manner, this strong Polish identity may well lead Polish participants to show themselves as more receptive to countries and languages associated to cultures they do not perceive as posing a threat to their conception of Polish identity. Such an explanation need not be incompatible with the more practical explanations provided above, namely the role of Russian in the Polish foreign language market and Majorca's status as a major tourism destination.

At any rate, this information—and most especially that related to the very different national identity discourses currently in force in Spain and Poland—may partly account for the quantitative ethnocentrism-related data from the SDT. The data show that, at T1, in relative terms, Spanish and Polish participants, surprisingly, do not have the perception of being dramatically distant from each other. Also somewhat unexpected was

the fact that the TAK participants, who were studying Spanish as a foreign language, did not position themselves closer to the Spanish on the SDT than their Polish peers. The relatively short social distance that the participants perceive to exist between the Spanish and Polish imagined communities may, then, be related to the high expectations the *EIL in Poland and Spain* blog project may have raised among them, as well as to the increased level of trust that CMC is known to result in (Feng, Lazar and Preece 2004, 104).

Another interesting result is that, among all the foreign imagined communities listed in the SDT, participants generally feel closest to Britain (something that is maintained at T2, although not in the case of TAK participants). The participants' perception of their closer cultural proximity to British people rather than to French or German citizens, for example, was perhaps to be expected, since they all are EFL learners and, as such, possibly predisposed to showing a more integrative disposition towards a community of speakers of this target language (Dörnyei 2010, 96). What cannot fail to surprise, however, is that the cultural proximity that participants report feeling with regard to the British is generally higher than they feel exists between their respective imagined communities and the US at a time when a globalised, US-led mediascape (Thussu 2000) should make it easier for EFL learners to feel closer to the US. The traditional dominance of British English (and British-produced materials such as textbooks) in the European EFL market (Graddol 2000, 56-57) may have played a role here.

The most striking results, however, concern the fact that the values attached to most cultural dimensions in the SDT are generally higher at T2. This is the case of the distance that the Spanish participants express they perceive between themselves and fellow Spaniards. A tentative explanation here could be that the critical thinking skills fostered by the methodological approach under study may have resulted in the Spanish participants looking at their own country more critically.

Potentially more problematic, however, is the fact that the overall levels of ethno-relativeness diminish for all participants, as mean values encompassing all the cultural dimensions tested in the SDT are higher at T2 than at T1, although this is not statistically significant. This could be interpreted as attrition effects resulting from the running of the project throughout one academic year. However, other readings are also possible. Learning about cultural diversity need not result in the realisation that different cultures are not that different but, rather, in the appreciation of—and respect for—cultural difference per se, an idea that the constricting format of the SDT may not have enabled participants to express. Somewhat connected with this line of reasoning is David Block's interesting use of David Held's concept of "cultural cosmopolitanism" (2002) versus John Urry's notion of "aesthetic cosmopolitanism" (1995). Whereas the latter refers to one of the many side-effects of globalisation, namely the accrual of social and cultural capital on the part of "those with sufficient economic capital to afford" it by visibly consuming the Other (cuisine, sight-seeing, music, cinema, etc.), cultural cosmopolitanism is "construed as the positive disposition to engage and mix with other cultures" in a far deeper way "above and beyond nation-state loyalties" (Block 2010, 296). Thus seen, cultural cosmopolitanism

may be part and parcel of transcultural competence and, consequently, the higher SDT values obtained at T2, far from being a failure, may be taken as an indication that the transcultural approach to EIL under review in this research did begin to bear fruit.

5. Conclusion

The evidence presented in this article points to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) as an ideological process, potentially altering the learner's discursive framework. Most importantly, it points to innovative, transcultural, IAH-inspired methodological approaches bringing to the fore the ideological dimension of SLA, thereby potentially reshaping the learner's identity.

The largely content-based approach reviewed here exposed participants to cultural facts and values well beyond those dominant in their respective imagined communities, arguably placing emphasis on the differences between their countries of origin, namely Spain and Poland. These were indeed the cognitive objectives of this internationalised EIL curriculum, which were complemented by the attitudinal objectives that this research has attempted to survey.

The triangular design ensured a rich combination of both qualitative and quantitative data, pointing to (1) the dramatically different perceptions of national identity discourses held by the Spanish and Polish participants, and (2) how the participants' position with regard to such discourses changed during the study with respect to both their own and other imagined communities.

The results challenged the commonly held perception that transcultural competence may result in the individual perceiving themselves as culturally closer to members of other imagined communities. In fact, the results point to the gradual erasure of national imagined communities as transcultural competence develops, which opens up a brand new research strand, the exploration of which must be carried out with research tools other than traditional, national imagined community-based utensils like the SDT used in this research. Further research should therefore take this into account by (1) using larger participant samples from more countries (the low number of SDTs analysed is a major limitation of this study), (2) lengthening the duration of the study, and (3) involving older participants with whom different research methodologies could be employed—e.g., narrative life interviews—so as to obtain more detailed and coherent identity-related statements.[10]

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Facework and Prosocial Teasing in a Synchronous Video Communication Exchange

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This study centres on the analysis of prosocial teasing during a videoconference (telecollaboration) exchange between mixed-gender adolescent secondary school students from Spain and Germany. We contend that the provocative elements present in prosocial teasing activate a play frame, in Gregory Bateson's terms, in which seemingly hostile face acts can be interpreted as playful behaviour. We argue that successful teasing can ultimately enhance the face of the teaser and that of the person being teased and thus build up rapport between them. Our analysis of the facework in the interaction during this telecollaboration exchange is based on Erwin Goffman's notions of face, demeanour and deference and stands in opposition to the dominant (im)politeness paradigm put forward by Jonathan Culpeper, which has its roots in Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson's seminal work.

Keywords: facework; teasing; telecollaboration; language learning

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La imagen pública y las burlas prosociales durante un intercambio mediante comunicación sincrónica por videoconferencia

Este estudio se centra en el análisis de las burlas solidarias durante un intercambio mediante videoconferencia (telecolaboración) entre estudiantes de secundaria de ambos sexos de España y Alemania. Argumentamos que los elementos provocativos presentes en las burlas amistosas activan lo que Gregory Bateson denomina un cuadro de juego, en el que los actos aparentemente hostiles contra la imagen pública del interlocutor pueden interpretarse como una conducta lúdica. De esta manera, las burlas solidarias pueden finalmente mejorar la

imagen pública de la persona que bromea y de la persona objeto de la burla para así construir una buena relación entre ellos. Nuestro análisis de la imagen pública durante la interacción durante este intercambio telecolaborativo se basa en las nociones de imagen pública, comportamiento y deferencia de Erwin Goffman y se opone al paradigma dominante de (des)cortesía formulado por Jonathan Culpeper, que tiene sus raíces en el trabajo pionero de Penelope Brown y Stephen C. Levinson.

Palabras clave: imagen pública; burlas; telecolaboración; aprendizaje de idiomas

1. Introduction

This study centres on the analysis of a telecollaboration exchange using videoconferencing software involving mixed-gender secondary school students from Spain and Germany. This interaction caught our attention because it seemed to be more aggressive than other telecollaboration exchanges we had analysed while, at the same time, containing numerous humorous episodes.

Our first hypothesis was that the aggressive speech acts in the exchange did not denote hostility but had playful intentions. We therefore turned to Gregory Bateson's (1976) concept of *play frame* for a way to explain what was happening in the exchanges. Thus, our first objective was to identify those cases in which play frames are activated and how this is achieved. Our second hypothesis was that the aggressive/playful interactions we identified were cases of teasing. Consequently, using a facework-oriented account of teasing based on Erwin Goffman's ([1955, 1956] 1967) notions of *face* and *facework*, our second objective was to show how such an approach can explicate the mechanisms involved in the teasing episodes we encountered.[1]

This research is unique in two ways. To our knowledge, it is the only study that focuses on teasing in such a secondary school telecollaboration context. Secondly, as far as we know, it is also the only one that analyses a complete exchange—around thirty-five minutes—that contains several teasing episodes. This contrasts with other studies that explore isolated examples of teasing but do not carry out an in-depth analysis of the build-up to the teasing episode and its consequences.

2. Teasing

Almost without exception, researchers agree that *teasing* is a combination of seemingly hostile and good-natured behaviour. Sarah L. Tragesser and Louis G. Lippman, for example, claim that teasing "has both a competitive purpose and a prosocial purpose" (2005, 255) while Dacher Keltner et al. describe it as simultaneously "aggressive" and "playful" (1998, 1232). Richard D. Alexander (1986) puts forward the idea that the main function of teasing is to elevate the teaser's status, while Cheryl J. Pawluk (1989) and Leslie A. Baxter (1992) both see it as a way of strengthening bonds. Jennifer Hay distinguishes between teaseS, where the emphasis is on solidarity, and teaseP, which puts the onus on power (2000, 720). The latter often involves physical and verbal aggression and, in much of the literature, is labelled *bullying*, defined by Peter K. Smith as "a form of aggressive behaviour—behaviour designed to hurt another" (2016, 519). Our stance is that conduct that is perceived by the target as causing pain, even if it involves humour, is bullying, while behaviour that is deemed to strengthen bonds, or involves well-intentioned playfulness, constitutes teasing. Nevertheless, due to its playful/aggressive nature, even

[1] The 1967 publication contains the original articles from 1955 and 1956. The page numbers refer to the 1967 publication.

well-intentioned prosocial teasing may sometimes be interpreted as hostile behaviour. This might explain why teasing occurs predominantly among friends (Carlson-Jones and Burrus-Newman 2005; Gorman and Jordan 2015; Van Vleet and Feeney 2015), as there is a lower probability of negative effects among people who know and like each other (Keltner et al. 1998, 2001). Consequently, the perception of prosocial intent is felt to be greater where friendship exists (Carlson-Jones and Burrus-Newman 2005).

Teasing is found in both same- and mixed-gender groups (for an overview of gender and teasing, see Carlson-Jones and Burrus-Newman 2005). Intergender teasing often involves flirting (Pawluk 1989; Keltner et al. 2001; Tragesser and Lippman 2005). In fact, in one of Jeffrey Hall and Xing Chong's five types of flirting, the "playful flirting style," teasing has a central role (2015, 44). Although explicit references to "'liking' the opposite sex" are common (Thorne and Luria 1986, 185), flirting, like teasing, can often be "inexplicit, deniable" (Eckert and McConnel-Ginet 2013, 107).

Many researchers see humour as a common and often essential component of teasing (Pawluk 1989; Baxter 1992; Whitesell and Harter 1996; Keltner et al. 2001). Tragesser and Lippman claim that during teasing episodes, humour is "commonly motivated by good intentions" (2005, 255) or, as John J. La Gaipa puts it, is delivered "in the spirit of fun rather than malice" (1977, 422). We distinguish here between teasing and *banter*, which are often used as synonyms in much of the literature. While both employ humour, the difference is that the humour in teasing is always directed at a person whereas banter, "aimed primarily at mutual entertainment" (Norrick 1993, 29), may involve humorous comments about third persons or the context. With regard to irony, although it is frequently mentioned in the literature on teasing, it can also be found in discourse that is not directed at the person being addressed. In spite of its importance, humour is not present in all types of teasing. For instance, leading questions are not necessarily accompanied by any overt verbal or nonverbal signals (Pawluk 1989, 160). They constitute a challenge because, by their very nature, they prompt the respondent to give an answer he/she may not want to give.

With teasing there is always some sense of play, a deviation from mere transactional discourse that starts with some kind of provocation, such as a humorous remark or a challenging question or statement directed at the target. Many researchers have turned to Bateson's explanation of this paradoxical juxtaposition of provocation and play, which came about while he was observing play-fighting among primates. He observed that during these activities, although a playful nip denoted a bite, it did not denote "what would be denoted by the bite" (1976, 69), that is, genuine hostility. The nip constitutes a metacommunicative signal that triggers what he calls a "play frame" (72). Teasing can thus be seen as the verbal counterpart of mock physical fighting. In this view, a verbal provocation denotes an attack on the target but does not denote real hostility towards him/her. The verbal nip can provoke a reaction in the target and initiate what we will call a *teasing frame*, that is, a subtype of play frame, during which verbal thrusts and parries can ensue without either participant taking offence.

2.1. Teasing among L2 Learners Online

We have found only seven studies that mention teasing in online language learning, five pertaining to written Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) and two that centre on oral CMC. Even though written CMC has obvious limitations compared to audiovisual communication, the presence of teasing was not uncommon in these five studies. In her enquiry into a written online chat in German for university students, Chantelle N. Warner's results showed that much of the interaction was rather playful and that the participants "developed a level of comfort that allowed for teasing and taunting" (2004, 76). Carl Meskill and Natasha Anthony discovered that the use of humour, teasing and puns in the online written communication of learners studying Russian was common, more so than in the "'serious' environment of the f2f classroom" (2007, 82). Similarly, Ilona Vandergriff (2013) highlighted the frequency of humour, play and teasing in the interactions between native and nonnative speakers of English in her text-chat corpus. Vandergriff and Carolin Fuchs (2012) also found teasing in one of their mixed-gender dyads during an online written advanced German course. Finally, Marta González-Lloret highlighted that "in spite of their lower linguistic proficiency," L2 learners were able to communicate emotions and engage in elaborate interaction including playful language and teasing (2016, 307). Regarding teasing during videoconferences, of the several dyads of nonnative speakers of English that Müge Satar analysed, only one had developed a relationship that allowed for reciprocal teasing and humorous banter (2015, 492). However, in another study of videoconferencing between Swedish and Spanish students using English as a lingua franca, Melinda Dooly and Nuriya Davitova provide evidence that teasing fosters "in-group solidarity" (2018, 231).

2.2. Teasing and Facework

One of the earliest and most influential studies on teasing and the role of face—a person's self-image—and facework—the strategies used to protect, maintain or enhance face—was carried out by a team of researchers led by the psychologist Dacher Keltner (Keltner et al., 1998). These authors turn to the seminal work on politeness by Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson (1987) to offer a face-threat perspective on teasing, which they define as "intentionally face-threatening verbal or nonverbal action directed at another that is accompanied by redressive humor and positive and negative politeness tactics that mitigate the face threat of the tease" (Keltner et al. 1998, 232). Mitigation can be achieved through "unusual vocalisations, singsong voice, formulaic utterances, elongated vowels and unusual facial expressions" (232).

We argue that while Brown and Levinson's approach is admirably suited for the identification of mitigation strategies, which make up one side of teasing, it was not designed to explain the deliberate use of face aggression or impoliteness (Locher and Watts 2005) such as the kind found in teasing. The dominant paradigm on face aggression, the (im)politeness approach, which builds on Brown and Levinson's work,

treats teasing as "mock impoliteness" (Culpeper 2011, 208), a term originally coined by Geoffrey Leech (1983). *Impoliteness* itself is defined as "a negative attitude towards specific behaviours occurring in specific contexts" (Culpeper 2011, 23). Thus, for an utterance to be identified as mock impoliteness, the target of the tease would first have to recognise it as embodying a specific behaviour towards which he/she has a negative attitude and then realise that said behaviour is being simulated. As recognition of intentions is normally post hoc, this is perfectly feasible. However, the greatest problem with both the concepts of impoliteness and even more so *mock impoliteness* arises due to the denotations and connotations of the lexeme *politeness* itself. As Janet Holmes and Stephanie Schnurr point out, "its everyday meaning constantly distorts discussion" (2005, 124). We would argue that it also affects the related terms impoliteness and *mock politeness*, which is actually a convoluted form of polite behaviour.

Due to the conceptual bias towards the politeness pole in human communication in Brown and Levinson and their successors (e.g., Eelen 2001, 87), we turned to Goffman's approach to facework, which includes accounts of both the reasons for face aggression and the mitigation of face threats. Goffman defines face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself [*sic*]" ([1955] 1967, 5). He does not divide face into positive or negative poles as Brown and Levinson do, nor does he ever use these terms to refer to face or face threats. We would argue that the positive/negative dichotomy is redundant, as whether one violates a person's desire for freedom of action—perpetrates a negative face threat according to Brown and Levinson (1987, 65)—or harms someone's need to be appreciated—which Brown and Levinson call a threat to positive face (1987, 66)—one ultimately threatens a person's face or "positive social value" ([1955] 1967, 5).

Regarding the term facework, although the strategies it entails are manifold, Goffman defines it simply as the actions taken by a person to make whatever he/she is doing consistent with face ([1955] 1967). Goffman divides facework into two main categories, *deference* and *demeanour*. Deference refers to the facework carried out to maintain, protect or enhance the face of others, while demeanour serves to defend, maintain or enhance the face of the speaker. Deference is implemented through two sets of behaviours. The first, "avoidance rituals" (Goffman [1956] 1967, 62)—the predecessor to Brown and Levinson's negative face strategies (1987, 129) —comprise acts which minimise imposition, such as avoiding sensitive topics or ignoring other people's embarrassing behaviour.[2] The second, "presentation rituals"—precursor to Brown and Levinson's positive face strategies (1987, 101)—are acts "through which the individual makes specific attestations to recipients concerning how he [*sic*] regards them and how he [*sic*] will treat them in the on-coming interaction" (Goffman [1956] 1967, 71). These avoidance and presentation strategies comprise the full range of

[2] In our approach, we will use the term *strategies* rather than the more dramaturgical expression, *rituals*, favoured by Goffman.

speech acts—such as compliments, requests, apologies—paralinguistic features—such as loudness and/or voice quality—nonverbal acts—such as laughter—and physical gestures—such as winks, bowing and averting eye contact. The other side of facework, demeanour, which is obviated by Brown and Levinson, serves mainly to protect the speaker's face, and involves individuals behaving according to societal norms of discretion, modesty and self-control (Goffman [1956] 1967, 77). It should be noted that, although deference is principally directed at the other(s) present in an interaction and demeanour focuses on the speaker, according to Goffman they frequently overlap ([1956] 1967, 491). As Joel L. Telles puts it, "proper demeanor can well be a form of deference to others" and vice-versa (1980, 328).

Goffman was the first to propose that facework can be used deliberately to create face threats. He calls one type of face aggression "making points," where a "threat will be willfully introduced for what can be safely gained by it" ([1955] 1967, 24). He suggests that one of the reasons for carrying out face aggression is to enhance one's own face. However, this does not imply that making points is necessarily at the expense of the target, and he differentiates making points from purposefully trying to insult someone or insulting someone accidentally through a faux pass. Indeed, the episodes he describes are compared to a "game" in which an initial "remark" may be countered by a "riposte" and the latter met with a "counterriposte" and so on (24-25).

Finally, following Goffman and using insights from Bateson, we here define teasing as the deliberate but nonserious use of face-threatening presentation strategies (FTPSs) to provoke the target of the tease and thus potentially create a teasing frame. In order for the target of the tease to react playfully to the provocation, playfulness needs to be metacommunicated in some way. This can be effected through unusual vocalisations, intonation, etc. (Keltner et al. 1988, 2001), but also through context—for instance, within an established jocular relationship (Radcliffe-Brown 1940, 195). Prosocial teasing, if the tease is successful, has the potential to enhance both the face of the teaser and the target of the tease.

3. Background to the Analysis: Data, Participants and Methodology

3.1. Selection of the Exchange

The exchange analysed here was recorded during the Telecollaboration for Intercultural Acquisition Project (TILA), funded by the European Union. The secondary schools participating in the project were located in France, Germany, Holland, Spain and the UK. The Spanish cluster, coordinated by the authors of this article, comprised schools from Germany, Spain and the UK and the target languages were English and Spanish. From this cluster, we obtained fourteen viable recordings of videoconferences within a classroom context. Twelve recordings featured English (ENG) and Spanish (SPA) students and two involved German (GER) and Spanish students.

Table 1. Information on the TILA project exchanges and videos

Exchange	Main participants	Length of Video	
GER/SPA1	SPA1, SPA2, GER1, GER3	Video 1:	35:12
GER/SPA2	SPA3, GER3	Video 2:	29:08
SPA/ENG1	SPA4, ENG1	Video 3:	14:45
SPA/ENG2	SPA5, ENG2	Video 4:	23:23
SPA/ENG3	SPA6, ENG3	Video 5:	06:43
	SPA6, ENG3	Video 6:	16:52
	SPA6, ENG3	Video 7:	13:50
SPA/ENG4	SPA7, ENG4	Video 8:	06:15
	SPA7, ENG4	Video 9:	29:37
	SPA7, ENG4	Video 10:	18:15
	SPA7, ENG4	Video 11:	17:13
SPA/ENG5	SPA8, ENG8, ENG10	Video 12:	26:42
	SPA8, ENG8	Video 13:	16:26
SPA/ENG6	SPA9, ENG10	Video 14:	26:20
		TOTAL:	05:07:23

After analysing the facework in all the videos, the German-Spanish exchange, which we will call GER/SPA1, struck the authors as being very different from GER/SPA2 and the six exchanges involving English and Spanish students due to its competitive yet playful nature. To discover whether this impression was shared by others, a questionnaire was administered to twelve British university students on a year-abroad stay in Spain as they were proficient in both of the languages used in the interaction, that is, English and Spanish. The questionnaire included Likert-scale questions on the level of competitiveness, aggressiveness and humour present in all fourteen videos and comment boxes for each of these parameters (see appendices 1 and 2). As the total duration of all the videos was over five hours and the students were only available for a maximum of two hours, the videos were divided into four groups which were seen by three informants each. The results for the average Likert-scale scores showed that the GER/SPA1 exchange indeed scored higher than the other thirteen videos for all three parameters.

Table 2. Average for parameters

Average	GER/SPA1	Other groups
Competitiveness	2.6	1.4
Aggressiveness	2.0	1.2
Humour	4.6	3.1

3.2. Participants

All eleven participants in the GER/SPA1 exchange were sixteen at the time of recording. Most of the interventions involved a Spanish male, SPA1, and two German females, GER2 and GER3. A second Spanish male, SPA2, is seen on screen throughout most of the exchange but only talks occasionally. Two other female German students are also visible on screen throughout the interaction (figure 1): GER1, who speaks fleetingly at the beginning, and GER4, who does not intervene verbally at all. Five more male Spanish students appear intermittently and are addressed several times by SPA1 and SPA2. The German teacher (GERT) intervenes on several occasions while the Spanish teacher (SPAT) only intervenes twice, each time very briefly. The Spanish and German students clearly know their respective classmates but the two national cohorts had never met previously.

Figure 1. Participants: (1) GER2, (2) GER4, (3) GER1, (4) GER3, (5) SPA2, (6) SPA1

3.3. Methodological Approach

We have adopted a qualitative approach to facework in teasing in this study for several reasons. The first is that, as Robyn Penman argues, "in any interpretation procedure

we must allow for multiple facework goals being served simultaneously and/or sequentially" (1990, 19) and hence absolute numbers or statistics are of very little use; this is especially true when applied to an exchange like this, which is composed of less than 1,800 words. Moreover, during teasing, one or more nonverbal semiotic modes may actually contradict the verbal message of an interactant completely (Sugawara 2009, 109). Finally, each interaction between the Spanish and German students has an impact on their relationship and affects the way the ensuing discourse develops. All of these reasons argue against the use of a quantitative approach.

Consequently, in the following analysis section, we provide a detailed and nuanced account of the buildup to the teasing episodes, with an emphasis on the demeanour of the participants. In order to locate FTPSs that may potentially have triggered the teasing episodes, we first identified any instances of verbal play, potentially provocative or ironic utterances and awkward leading questions taking into account any relevant interaction between the participants. We then identified any reactions to the FTPS when uptake was detected, including face-mitigating strategies and counter teases. At the end of the analysis section below, a table summarising the FTPSs and students' responses to them is provided.

4. Analysis

Unlike other kinds of online interaction, during this kind of telecollaboration exchange the students have no anonymity at all with regard to their international peers or their classmates, which means that any potential occurrence of face loss would be witnessed by both cohorts. The fact that the participants are teenagers elevates the importance of maintaining face, given that preoccupation with self-image is claimed to be at its greatest during this stage of development (Rosenberg 1965, 5; Harter, Stocker and Robinson 1996, 286). In this context, being properly demeaned, as Goffman states, is a way of protecting one's face (1967, 81). Demeanour is also an index of a participant's perceived attitude to what is going on, that is, whether he/she is interested, enthusiastic, bored, hostile and so on, and can affect the direction that an interaction takes. In this sense, the prosocial demeanour of the participants is evidenced at the beginning of the exchange when SPA1 enthusiastically apprises his friends of the arrival of one of the German students (GER4), at which point the other Spanish students approach the screen to look at the German ones, and smile and wave at them, after which GER4 waves back. SPAT also contributes to the relaxed atmosphere when he appears behind SPA1 and SPA2 and draws what look like halos over their heads with his hands in a friendly but ironic fashion. All this leads us to conclude that the students are motivated, relaxed and in a good mood and, more importantly, that this is transmitted to all involved.

Eight minutes into the recording, after the students come into the classroom, sit down and put on their headphones, the verbal exchange begins. The peers greet each

other in a friendly manner—a face-enhancing presentation strategy—and start the task "Getting to know you/Conociéndonos," requiring the students to elicit information about their peers, first in Spanish and then in English. Both German students laugh during the opening stage, conducted in Spanish, while SPA1 takes a more transactional approach and asks them their names, the school they attend, etc. Initially, the conversation is somewhat marred by technical problems, but roughly ten minutes into the exchange these are overcome and the participants start to complete the task in hand—also a sign of being well-demeaned (Goffman [1955] 1967, 55).

Throughout the telecollaboration exchange, interaction is predominantly symmetrical (Goffman [1956] 1967, 58), that is, between student peers. SPAT intercedes verbally only once to tell students to switch from Spanish to English. GERT, on the other hand, is a little more active during certain stages and can be seen moving around in the background helping the students to solve technical, linguistic and minor disciplinary problems (when the Spanish boys show an inappropriate image or make fun of the girls).

The mixed-gender configuration of the exchange, that is, the fact that all the Spanish students are boys and all the German students are girls, has a significant influence on the interactions. This is apparent from the start when SPA2, who only talks briefly during the exchange, shouts to SPA3 and the other off-camera male participants that the female German participants are very "hot":

(1)
24 <SPA2> Ey. Eusebio, Eusebio <SPA3>, están muy buenas. <09:03>[3]

In addition to this explicit example, the laughing, giggling and signs of animation that are often present during episodes of flirting (Whitty 2003, 343) are also found throughout this interaction. Indeed, the existence of flirting in the exchange is noted by British informant 3 (see appendices 1 and 2).

The task the students undertake requires many question-answer sequences and therefore can be described as transactional (Rees and Monrouxe 2010, 3385). The more than 150 questions in the exchange rarely include hedges, and the words *please*, *thank you* and *gracias* appear only once each in the whole exchange and *por favor* only twice. Unmitigated questions could constitute face threats but as the students are obliged to ask questions as part of their task, we do not consider them to be face threats at all nor do they seem to be treated as such by the interactants. The students' questions, in this context, can be seen as "politic" behaviour (Watts 2003, 19) or, following Goffman ([1956] 1967), simply the students acting in a well-demeaned fashion. Example (2), made up of direct questions, is typical of the exchange in general:

[3] Numbers on the left refer to the lines in the transcript. Participants' names have been changed.

(2)

51 <SPA1> Uhmm ... ¿Cuántos años tienes, Ingrid? Ingrid! <11:17>
(Uhmm ... How old are you, Ingrid? Ingrid!)

52 <GER2> ¿Sí?
(Yes?)

53 <SPA1> ¿Cuántos años tienes?
(How old are you?)

54 <GER2> Tengo diesciséis [*sic*] años. <11:24> [<SPA1> ¿Dieciséis?] ¿Y tú?
(I am sixten [*sic*] years old. <11:24> [<SPA1> Sixteen?] And you?)

55 <SPA1> Dieciséis también. Tenemos la misma edad ... dieciséis años.
(Sixteen too. We are the same age ... sixteen years old.)

In early parts of the exchange (example 3), we detect the first signs of verbal playfulness in SPA1's questions: (a) the repetition of words, (b) pronouncing each syllable separately, (c) code-switching, (d) using jargon and (e) onomatopoeia (white noise, line 250). We interpret that SPA1 is moving from a transactional, question/answer mode to a more interactional mode (Rees and Monrouxe 2010, 3385) that seeks to provoke a more emotional response from his interlocutors. The features he uses are similar to those found in "foreigner talk," the speech employed by native speakers when talking to nonnative speakers and which, according to Charles A. Ferguson, who coined the term, can often be perceived as condescending (1975, 10). In effect, SPA1 comes across as rather patronising and thus we would argue that these excerpts include playfully provocative word play and thus constitute a series of FTPSs:

(3)

36 <SPA1> ¿Se escucha bien? ¿Se escucha bien? ¿Se es-cu-cha bien? <10:13>
(Can you hear ok? Can you hear ok? Can you hear O-K?)

82 <SPA1> ¿En qué curso estás? ¿Qué estudias? ¿Curso? ¿level? (…) <13:29>
(What year are you in? What do you study?)

83 ... year ... level [in English]) Level of your studies.

155 <SPA1> ¿Cómo se llama tu profesor? ¿Cómo se lla-ma tu pro-fe-sor? <18.55>
(Ok, What is your teacher's name? Your teach-er's name?)

249 <SPA1> Ese es el equipo de fútbol de mi com-pa-ñero. Repito, –ñero. <25.54>
(That is the football team of my class-mate, I repeat, mate.)

250 <SPA1> <Makes white noise sound> Corto y cambio.
(Over and out)

In spite of his provocations, there is no reaction from the German students. This is probably because SPA1 speaks very quickly, as thirteen minutes into the exchange, GER2, who has already complained about this problem, informs her teacher and he

enjoins the boys to speak more slowly. In example (4), GER2 does seem to react to SPA1's provocation when she replies emphatically—"Sí, comprendo" (line 190)—to make clear that she has understood the question. The intonational contour of her reply seems to communicate a certain exasperation at the way SPA1 couches his questions, which may be construed as a face threat:

(4)

188 <SPA1> Vale pero bien. Ingrid, [<GER1> ¿Sí?] ¿cuántos años tiene cuántos años tiene
(OK but ok Ingrid, how old is your
189 tu hermano? Tu hermano edad. Años? <21.05>
brother? Your brother, age, years?)
190 <GER2> Sí, comprendo <laughing>. Tiene vientidós años.
(Yes, I do understand <laughing>. He is twenty two.)

Examples (5), (6) and (7) are very clear instances of teasing. In (5), there is a case of misnaming, an FTPS. SPA1 deliberately calls GER2 "Bond," possibly because her real name is the same as that of the main female character in the videogame *Blood Stone*. When she appears to go along with him, he shows his appreciation by exclaiming "Let's go to the party!" —part of which she repeats, although it is not clear whether GER2 fully understands SPA1's intent:

(5)

44 <GER2> Yo me llamo Ingrid y eso es Petra ... Petra. <10.47>
(My name is Ingrid and that is Petra … Petra.)
45 <SPA1> Bond y Petra, ¿no? Bond, Petra.
(Bond and Petra, no? Bond, Petra.)
46 <GER2> Sí.
(Yes)
47 <SPA1> Come on to the party! Let's go! <laughs> ¡Ha!
48 <GER2> Let's go! <laughs>
49 <SPA1> Let's go to the party! <laughs>

In example (6), in reaction to GER2's assertion that the German students study a lot, SPA1 employs an FTPS consisting of an ironic remark (line 135). There is no overt verbal reaction on the part of the German students, but GER2 smiles and looks at GER3 and the latter makes an inaudible comment in German to GER1. SPA1's quip is a reaction to GER2 having broken the unwritten rule of attributing importance to schoolwork (line 134). Helen Spencer-Oatey comments that students who "appear to be too clever and/or studious" will lose face as most students attribute more value to being cool than having an interest in schoolwork (2007, 644):

(6)
134 <GER2> Estudiamos mucho. <17.08>
(We study a lot.)
135 <SPA1> ¿Sí? Sois muy inteligentes.
(Yeah? You are very intelligent.)

Around two minutes later (example 7), combining teasing with flirting, SPA1 asks GER2 if she likes going to the cinema and when she answers affirmatively, he asks her whether she goes with [male] friends—"amigos." He does this while smiling and looking sideways at his friend. SPA1's question constitutes an FTPS as it could be construed as an intrusion into her privacy. Before he can finish his question, GER2 tells her teacher in German that the Spanish boys are laughing at them, proof that she feels she is being teased:

(7)
161 <SPA1> ¿Te gusta ir al cine? <19.11>
(Do you like going to the cinema?)
162 <GER3> Sí.
(Yes.)
163 <SPA1> Pero, ¿tú sola? ¿O con … <Smiles and looks around> o con tus amigos?
(But you on your own? Or with … or with your friends? [masculine ending])
164 [<GER2> They are laughing at us! <In German>]

Immediately after this, GERT light-heartedly reprimands SPA1 in Spanish for laughing at his students (example (8), line 165). SPA1 does not take the rebuke very seriously and defends himself by jokingly blaming his classmates (line 166):

(8)
165 <GERT> ¿Os estáis riendo de las chicas? ¡Qué malo! <19.32>
(Are you laughing at the girls? Such a bad person!)
166 <SPA1> No. Mis compañeros de aquí que son un poco traicioneros.
(No. My classmates here are a bit sneaky.)

Line 193 in example (9) constitutes an FTPS in the form of an ironic question—also noted by British informant 3. As soon as GER3 asks SPA1 to repeat the question, he backtracks. SPA1's motives appear to be simply to amuse himself at GER3's expense:

(9)
191 <SPA1> Uhmm, y tu hermana, ¿cuántos años tiene? Tu hermana. <21.13>
(Uhmm, and your sister, how old is she? Your sister.)
192 <GER3> Tiene diecinueve años.
(She's 19.)

193 <SPA1> ¿Seguro? <Laughs>
(Sure?)
194 <GER3> ¿Qué?
(What?)
195 <SPA1> Vale, nada, nada … uhmm.
(Ok, nothing, nothing ... uhmmm.)

We agree with British informant 3 that in example (10), lines 203 to 205, SPA1 is being facetious. Using hyperbole, he compares GER2's Spanish with SPA2's. GER2 reacts to his praise with embarrassment (line 206) as compliments can be face-threatening (Goffman 1967, 108). Simultaneously, SPA1's compliment also represents a friendly tongue-in-cheek dig at his classmate—another FTPS:

(10)
203 <SPA1> En mi opinión, estás hablando … [<GER2> Tenemos estudiar mucho. <22.09>]
(In my opinion you are speaking …[We have to study a lot.])
204 pero, en mi opinión, estáis hablando bien el, el español, lo habláis bien. Mejor
205 que mi compañero. <joins first finger and thumb to make an "o" to display praise>
(but in my opinion you are speaking Spanish well, you speak it well, better than my classmate.)
206 <GER2> <They laugh> Ne, ne <in German>, gracias! <22.21>
(No, no, thank you.)

SPA1 also employs light-hearted banter, a face-enhancing presentation strategy, and even clowns around by putting a cloth over his head as if it were a turban near the end of the exchange. SPA1's joking manner is picked up on by all three of the British informants who watched this exchange. One of the clearest examples of banter is SPA1's answer when asked if he has any pets:

(11)
228 <SPA1> Yo tampoco, pero tengo a mi hermana, que es suficiente. A ver. <24.10>
(Neither have I, but I have my sister and that is enough. Let's see.)
229 <GER2> <laughs> <GER2 to GER1 in German: He said that he doesn't have any
230 pets but he has a sister, which is almost the same.> <They all laugh>

SPA1's jocular commentary can be described as banter as there is no attempt to provoke the German students. It constitutes a presentation strategy that enhances both SPA1's face and that of the others as it creates a certain amount of common ground. The comment is received with laughter by GER2, who apprises the other German students of SPA1's comment, and they too laugh.

Twenty-six minutes into the interaction, SPA2 shows the German students an inappropriate photograph on his mobile, which is greeted with shock and laughter by the German students. GERT intervenes to tell them to be very careful as he is watching. The showing of the photograph can be interpreted as a kind of visual tease to provoke a reaction. Surprisingly, less than thirty seconds later SPA1 asks his interlocutors about their favourite day of the week and the incident is not mentioned again. Almost immediately after this, SPAT approaches them to tell them to switch from Spanish to English.

Example (12) starts with SPA1 asking whether GER2 has a boyfriend (line 280). This is a direct leading question as the two had only met less than twenty minutes before and it encroaches on GER2's personal rather than academic space. As such, it is an FTPS that simultaneously constitutes a threat which has been "willfully introduced," in Goffman's words ([1955] 1967, 24), and quite clearly eschews the avoidance strategy of discretion ([1955] 1967, 16):

(12)
280 <SPA1> Eh, eh, my friend has a question <SPA2 lifts finger> <28:08>
281 that is if you, uhmm, do you, do you have, uhmm, a boyfriend?
282 <GER2> Yes. <Smiles, pauses and GER3 looks at her> No, I don't.
283 <puts on fake glum face> <GER2 and GER3·smile>
284 <SPA1> No? Oh! Why?
285 <GER2> I [<SPA1> Why?] think I am not beautiful enough
286 <SPA1 and SPA2 laugh>.
287 <SPA1> Okay. <looks at friend>
288 <GER2> <German girls laugh loudly> Okay?
289 <SPA1> Uhmm, he thinks <points to friend> that you are beautiful.
290 <SPA2 opens mouth in disbelief and laughs while looking to the side>
291 <GER2> Thank you. That is what I wanted to hear <smiling>
292 <SPA1> Oh, oh <laughs> ¡Disco, disco! <28:45> <Moves hand in dancing
293 movement and makes rhythmic noise>
294 <GER2 laughs>

At first, GER2 answers SPA1's question with a rapid "Yes" and smiles, but after a very brief pause she says, "No, I don't," and puts on a fake glum face with a protruding bottom lip (line 282). Her antics seem to be a way of playing down the possibly embarrassing situation. Then SPA1 asks her, in a surprised tone (FTPS), why she has no boyfriend (line 284) and GER2 replies that she thinks she is "not beautiful enough" (line 285). Diana Boxer and Florencia Cortés-Conde state that self-effacing comments of this type serve to improve conversational rapport and enhance the subject's face (1997, 282). Goffman sees self-deprecation as a gambit that leaves others to "compliment and indulge" the speaker ([1955] 1967, 24). Following Schnurr and Angela Chan, we consider GER2's comment to be a case of "pseudo self-deprecation" (2011, 29)—a clear

sign that she is playing along with SPA1. When he responds with a simple "okay" (line 287), the German students laugh loudly and GER2 exclaims with a questioning tone "Okay?" (line 288), as if to reprimand him for agreeing with her so easily.

Possibly because of this reaction, after consulting with SPA2 for several seconds, SPA1 retorts that his friend thinks that GER2 is beautiful (line 289). This explicit expression of "liking" of the kind mentioned by Barrie Thorne and Zella Luria (1986) constitutes an FTPS, as it is potentially embarrassing for GER2. SPA2 reacts by opening his mouth in disbelief and leans to one side out of camera, implying that he did not know what was coming. GER2 replies, "that is what I wanted to hear" (line 291). British informant 3 regards this as a case of "fishing for compliments," but we see it as a clever riposte in the context of playful teasing and further evidence of her playing along. SPA1 laughs and utters, "Oh, oh," and ends the exchange chanting, "Disco, disco" (line 292), which is greeted with laughter by GER2.

In sum, in (12) SPA1 uses a series of FTPSs to provoke GER2 and score points, but she proves herself to be well-demeaned by showing "poise under pressure" (Goffman [1956] 1967, 77). By taking up the challenge, she also demonstrates that she is a "good sport," a positive characteristic in many cultures (Pawluk 1989, 160) and a sign of being well demeaned. Goffman's comment that "it is always a gamble to 'make a remark'" ([1955] 1967, 25) seems to be applicable to SPA1 in this instance, as he is "wittily outdone" (Dynel 2008, 244) by GER2. Nevertheless, we interpret SPA1's laughter and his chanting of the word "disco" at the end of the exchange as a sign of his approval of GER2's performance and consequently a face-enhancing presentation strategy. Moreover, it provides evidence that SPA1 is himself a well-demeaned person, a good sport. GER2's laughter at SPA1's antics can also be seen as face enhancing.

In example (13), the German students go on the offensive and, in what looks like a tit-for-tat exchange, GER3 asks SPA1 the same leading question twice (FTPSs), namely, whether *he* has a girlfriend or not (lines 317 to 319). He finally answers, "No. No way, no" (line 320). British informant 2 calls GER3's intervention "a micro aggression," but adds that it helps the development of the conversation. GER2 then replies with "that's good" (line 321) and she and GER3 smile at each other. GER3 then goes on to press him further—another FTPS—on why he does not have a girlfriend. His answer, that studying is more important than having a girlfriend, causes GER2 to laugh out loud and exclaim, "What?" (line 328), clearly questioning his motives—another FTPS. Immediately afterwards there is a follow-up question—"What's more important?" (line 329)—yet another FTPS. SPA1 repeats his reasoning and adds that he prefers to have a girlfriend after he has finished studying. Simultaneously, he looks around laughing, perhaps for support from his classmates. GER2 threatens his face once again through a further FTPS by asking why he thinks studying is more important than having a girlfriend (lines 332 to 334). Her tone is almost derisory and her words are greeted by laughter from her classmates. Then in German she says as an aside to her German classmates, "I mean, come on!" (line 334). It is SPA1 who

now seems to be breaking the unwritten rule of being too studious. Perhaps, for this reason, SPA1 defends his face by deflecting the blame for not having a girlfriend to the fickleness of Spanish girls (lines 335 and 336). When GER2 asks him if he dislikes this type of behaviour, SPA1, playing the victim, replies "they don't love me" in a tone of mock self-pity (line 338), causing GER2 to smile briefly. This reasoning seems to satisfy GER2 and both laugh:

(13)
317 <GER3> Do you have a girlfriend? <30:56>
318 <SPA1> What?
319 <GER3> Do you have girlfriend?
320 <SPA1> No. No way, no.
321 <GER2> That's good. <German girls look at each other and smile>
322 <SPA1> Yes, ok. Yeah.
323 <GER3> <unintelligible>
324 <SPA1> What? <holds headphones> <SPA1 to SPA2> ¿Eh?, Que si tengo novia.
325 <SPA1 to SPA2> What? If I have a girlfriend.
326 <GER3> Why don't you have a girlfriend?
327 <SPA1> Uhmm, because I think that the studies is more important that have girlfriend.
328 <GER2> <laughs> What?
329 <GER3> What's more important?
330 <SPA1> <Hears a noise, turns and laughs> I prefer study first, I prefer study
331 and after that the studies I prefer have girlfriend. Can you understand me?
332 <GER2> <looks puzzled> Why do you think school is more important than
333 a girlfriend? <almost sarcastic tone> <GER2 laughs and all her classmates
334 laugh out loud> <GER2 to classmates in German> I mean, come on!?
335 <SPA1> Because, because in Spain the girls are very, uhmm, cambian de novio,
336 change of the boyfriend very quickly.
337 <GER2> Ah, ok and you don't like this?
338 <SPA1> She … they don't love me. <SPA1 laughs and GER2 smiles>
339 <GER2> OK, uhmm, ok … <32:21>

In (12) and (13), the importance of an audience during teasing (Pawluk 1989, 156; Goffman, [1955] 1967, 25) becomes apparent—SPA2's reaction to a comment by SPA1 (290), the laughter from the German student onlookers (288, 334) and GER2's aside to them (334). This backs up Robin M. Kowalski's assertion that "the presence of an audience can affect a teasing episode" and "enhance the enjoyment and fun of the interaction" (2004, 332).

The only instance of what could be called authentic face aggression occurs in (14) when GER2 points out SPA2's misunderstanding of her previous question. British informant 374 remarks that the German students "come across slightly

aggressive" here and "laugh amongst themselves at the boy's misunderstanding of her [GER2] question":

(14)
366 <GER2 to SPA2> I asked how old are you. Not how are you. <laughs>. <34:29>

On hearing this, the other German students laugh openly at SPA2's inability to understand. There is no uptake from SPA2, who seems oblivious to what is happening and simply utters, "What?"

In spite of the uncharacteristically aggressive exchange in (14), a few seconds later (example 15), when SPAT tells his students the class is over, SPA1 ends the whole exchange with what seems like genuine gratitude for an enjoyable verbal exchange (line 374)—a face-enhancing presentation strategy:

(15)
372 <SPA1> Uhmm, sorry, uhmm, we leave this class. OK? Uhmm. <34:53>
373 <GER2> OK.
374 <SPA1> Uhmm, this moment were, was very very funny for me. OK? Goodbye.
375 <GER3> Yeah, nice to meet you.
376 <GER2 and GER3> Bye. <End of interaction>

SPA1's expression of gratitude is, in turn, reciprocated, which seems to prove that teasing has indeed contributed to creating some common ground between the participants in the exchange.

Finally, in order to provide an overview of the whole exchange we offer the following table, a summary of the FTPSs employed in our exchange in order to either trigger or extend teasing.

Table 3. FTPSs and responses to them, as well as the time when they occur in the video

Episode	Time	FTPS	Response to teasing
1	10:13	SPA1 patronising foreigner talk	No uptake
2	13:29	SPA1 patronising foreigner talk	No uptake
3	17:08	SPA1 irony (line 135)	Nonverbal reaction
4	18:55	SPA1 patronising foreigner talk	No uptake
5	19:11	SPA1 personal question	GER2 informs teacher of teasing
6	20:47	SPA1 misnaming	No uptake
7	21:05	SPA1 patronising foreigner talk	GER2 protests that she does understand
8	21:13	SPA1 irony	GER2 requests repetition

Episode	Time	FTPS	Response to teasing
9	22:09	SPA1 ironic compliment (line 5)	GER2 rejects compliment
10	25:54	SPA1 patronising foreigner talk	No uptake
11	26:21	SPA2 showing of inappropriate photo	GER2 and GER3 react with shock and laughter
12	28:06	SPA1 personal question	GER2 responds
	28:20	SPA1 asks for reasons for answer	GER2 self-deprecation
	28:28	SPA1 agreement with GER2's negative assessment of herself	GER2 responds with surprise and laughter
	28:36	SPA1 compliment	GER2 responds with mock agreement to which SPA1 responds enthusiastically
13	30:56	GER3 personal question	SPA1 repetition request
	31:01	GER3 repetition of personal question	SPA1 responds and GER2 acknowledges response and SPA1 acknowledges the acknowledgment
	30:16	GER3 personal question	SPA1 responds to which GER2 responds with laughter and surprise
	31:29	GER3 clarification request regarding previous question	SPA1 reformulates previous answer
	31:51	GER2 personal question related to previous questions (sarcastic tone)	SPA1 responds
	32:14	GER2 acknowledgment of SPA1's response followed by another personal question	SPA1 responds indirectly and GER2 acknowledges answer
14	34:29	GER3 face-threatening statement accompanied by laughter	SPA2 unattended reformulation request

5. Conclusions

We have argued that one of the salient characteristics of our exchange is prosocial teasing. The results from the questionnaire administered to twelve British students back this up, as the GER/SPA1 exchange scored higher than the other ones for competitiveness, aggressiveness and humour, the last two terms being mentioned in abundance in the literature on teasing. In their comments, the informants mention the presence of sarcasm and how SPA1 mocks GER2's intonation—two types of behaviour related to teasing. Moreover, the German students themselves complain to the teacher that their Spanish counterparts are laughing at them—an indication of teasing. Finally, our own analysis of the exchange provides several clear examples of teasing, such as SPA1's ironic remark in (6) that GER2 is very intelligent.

There is no doubt that flirting takes place in the exchange. The remark shared between the male Spanish students on the attractiveness of the female German students is an early indication that gender might play a role in the proceedings. This is confirmed when SPA1 asks whether GER2 goes to the cinema alone or with male friends and the boyfriend/girlfriend questions. Unlike using overt compliments, flirting through teasing provides SPA1 with the safeguard of deniability as he can always state that he is only asking questions. The fact that the exchange is online and between English L2 speakers does not seem to stop the participants from becoming involved in very sophisticated dialogue, especially in examples (12) and (13). In this sense, our analysis backs up research into written and oral L2 exchanges in CMC.

In our overview of why individuals indulge in teasing, we looked at the research carried out in the politeness tradition, the dominant paradigm for the analysis of teasing in the field of facework. We argue that Brown and Levinson's view of facework, under the rubric of politeness, exists exclusively to mitigate or redress face threats that already exist, not to provoke them. We, therefore, consider that it is simply not designed to analyse deliberate face threats, such as the type found in teasing. Even those who base their work on Brown and Levinson's classic study agree on this and provide their own (im)politeness approach to account for aggressive facework. We argue that the words *politeness* and *impoliteness* are loaded terms, and that the explanation Jonathan Culpeper (2011) offers for teasing, or mock impoliteness, only compounds the problem. We support an alternative view of why people tease, based on the concept of playfulness. We put forward that teasing is a type of playful activity designed, in part, to amuse the instigator. It is based on goading a target verbally in order to provoke a reaction. The words "you are very intelligent" are used to tease in example (6), but could also be used to convey sincere praise. Just as in the physical provocation found in play fighting, speech acts in teasing episodes can be interpreted as nonhostile. The question of whether a trigger is deemed to be hostile or not depends on contextual clues and/or knowledge of the participants and, as we have already proved, in the exchange we have analysed, the demeanour of all the participants was positive throughout.

Apart from a desire for playfulness, our contention is that individuals tease to enhance their face, since a successful tease can place the teaser in a favourable light. Regarding the mechanisms of teasing from a facework perspective, a tease normally starts with what we have called an FTPS. The face-threatening presentation strategies we have found in our analysis are made up of ironic remarks, misnaming, leading questions and word play.

Finally, our findings clearly show that telecollaboration, through the medium of videoconference software, gives students the opportunity to meet their peers online and engage in meaningful and occasionally very elaborate spoken communication that is similar to face-to-face communication between interlocutors situated in the same physical space.[4]

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Appendix 1

The tables below show which informants analysed which videos. The videos were divided into four groups to ensure that each group of informants had fewer than two hours of video to analyse. The duration of the videos assigned to each group is as follows: group 1, 01:04:28; group 2, 01:20:33; group 3, 01:11:20; group 4, 00:54:20. The numbers within these tables go from 5 "I strongly agree" to 1 "I strongly disagree."

Table 4. Is the interaction in general competitive?

		Informant 1	Informant 2	Informant 3	Average
Group 1	SPA/ENG1	3	3	1	2.34
	SPA/ENG2	1	2	1	1.34
	SPA/ENG7	1	2	1	1.34
Group 2	SPA/ENG3	1	1	1	1
	SPA/ENG3	1	1	2	1.34
	SPA/ENG3	1	1	1	1
	SPA/ENG5	1	1	3	1.67
	SPA/ENG6	1	1	1	1
Group 3	SPA/ENG4	1	1	2	1.34
	SPA/ENG4	1	1	4	2
	SPA/ENG4	1	2	1	1.34
	SPA/ENG4	1	1	2	1.34
Group 4	**GER/SPA1**	**3**	**2**	**3**	**2.67**
	GER/SPA2	3	1	2	2

Table 5. Is the interaction in general aggressive?

		Informant 1	Informant 2	Informant 3	Average
Group 1	SPA/ENG1	2	2	1	1.67
	SPA/ENG2	1	1	1	1
	SPA/ENG7	1	3	1	1.67
Group 2	SPA/ENG3	1	1	1	1
	SPA/ENG3	1	1	1	1
	SPA/ENG3	1	1	1	1
	SPA/ENG5	1	1	1	1
	SPA/ENG6	1	1	1	1

		Informant 1	Informant 2	Informant 3	Average
Group 3	SPA/ENG4	1	1	1	1
	SPA/ENG4	1	1	1	1
	SPA/ENG4	1	1	1	1
	SPA/ENG4	1	2	1	1.34
Group 4	**GER/SPA1**	**3**	**2**	**1**	**2**
	GER/SPA2	2	1	2	1.67

TABLE 6. Is the interaction in general humorous?

	Group & Video	Informant 1 Humour	Informant 2 Humour	Informant 3 Humour	Average
Group 1	SPA/ENG1	3	4	1	2.67
	SPA/ENG2	3	3	2	2.67
	SPA/ENG7	4	4	3	3.67
Group 2	SPA/ENG3	3	2	2	2.34
	SPA/ENG3	4	3	3	3.34
	SPA/ENG3	5	4	3	4
	SPA/ENG5	5	4	2	3.67
	SPA/ENG6	5	2	5	4
Group 3	SPA/ENG4	5	1	4	3.34
	SPA/ENG4	5	2	5	4
	SPA/ENG4	2	2	2	2
	SPA/ENG4	4	2	1	2.34
Group 4	**GER/SPA1**	**5**	**4**	**5**	**4.67**
	GER/SPA2	4	3	3	3.34

Appendix 2

The following table includes the comments of the three informants assigned to analyse the interaction in GER/SPA1.

Table 7. Comments made by the informants

Is the interaction in general competitive?
Informant 1: Not very competitive in general. However, the girls laugh when the boys do not understand a question which can be interpreted as the girls becoming slightly competitive.
Informant 2: SPA1 tends to dominate the conversation with no competition from GER speakers.
Informant 3: GER2 & GER3 were competing for the attention of SPA1 & SPA2. Both competing for the attention of SPA1. Once SPA1 asks GER2 & GER3 if they have boyfriends, GER2 becomes a lot more interested in answering his other questions and receiving his attention
Is the interaction, in general, aggressive?
Informant 1: The girls come across slightly aggressive towards the end when they say "I ask how old are you not how are you." They laugh amongst themselves at the boy`s misunderstanding of her question and this can come across as slightly aggressive.
Informant 2: SPA1 dominates the conversation and sometimes interrupts GER2 when she is talking, rather than having a little more patience while she tries to answer his questions.
Both parties seemed keen to strike up an amicable friendship. At one point he mocks the intonation of GER3 asking her "seguro?" when she says her sister's age (more in a humorous way than aggressive). He could also be seen as aggressively flirty as he is very complimentary and asks about their personal lives (boyfriends) without knowing how they will react. GER2 & GER3 are shown an inappropriate photo which shocks them and makes them laugh awkwardly.
Is the interaction, in general humorous?
Informant 1: There was lots of humour on both sides. Both parties display signs of sarcasm and humour—the girls seem to display signs of humour amongst themselves, whereas the boys are more direct with their humour and making jokes.
Informant 2: Both parties appear to enjoy interacting, responding to humorous topics of conversation. SPA1 tends to make jokes and gives a light-heartedness to the conversation, exclaiming "Come to the party!" and "Disco disco" nearer the start of the exchange.
Informant 3: Very lighthearted. There were jokes, relaxed body language and gesturing throughout. One of his very early lines to GER2 is "come on to the party! Let's go!" setting the tone of the conversation as very light-hearted. He uses a lot of gestures and relaxed body language throughout. Jokingly questions GER3 on whether she is sure about her sister's age due to her unsure intonation (most likely due to unconfidence in her language ability). He comments "En mi opinión, estáis hablando bien el español... mejor que mi compañero." When asked if he has a pet, he says "no" and "tengo a mi hermana, que es suficiente." At the end of the video, he appears with a scarf over his head.

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Mark-up and Annotation in the *Corpus of Historical English Law Reports* (CHELAR): Potential for Historical Genre Analysis

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Adding annotation and mark-up to linguistic corpora has become a standard practice in corpus building over the past few decades as a way to facilitate data extraction and at the same time guarantee that new corpora are compatible with existing and future tools. The purpose of this article is twofold. First, we provide an overview of the main forms of annotation and mark-up available to the research community and how they have been applied to the *Corpus of Historical English Law Reports 1535-1999* (CHELAR), a specialized corpus consisting of law reports or records of judicial decisions. Second, we give an account of preliminary research based on the annotated versions of CHELAR, which so far has been primarily aimed at identifying the distinctive linguistic characteristics of law reports, as well as at investigating how the language of law reports has evolved over a time span of almost five centuries. Our article illustrates the multiple advantages of applying a simple annotation schema to a corpus and how this can enhance the potential of a corpus for historical genre analysis.

Keywords: corpus annotation; corpus mark-up; law reports; TEI-XML; legal English

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Etiquetado y anotación lingüística en el *Corpus of Historical English Law Reports* (CHELAR): potencial para el análisis textual desde la perspectiva histórica

El etiquetado y anotación lingüística de un corpus se ha convertido en una práctica generalizada en las últimas décadas, con el objetivo de facilitar la extracción de datos del

propio corpus, así como garantizar que los corpus nuevos son compatibles con otros ya existentes o creados con posterioridad. El presente artículo tiene una doble finalidad. Por una parte, proporcionamos un análisis de las principales formas de etiquetado y anotación que están a nuestra disposición. Tomando como ejemplo el *Corpus of Historical English Law Reports 1535-1999* (CHELAR), un corpus especializado de decisiones judiciales, ilustraremos el modo en que estos etiquetados pueden implementarse de forma sencilla para su posterior aprovechamiento. En segunda instancia, presentamos un resumen de los trabajos de investigación que se han llevado a cabo hasta la fecha con CHELAR, y que se han centrado principalmente en identificar las características lingüísticas significativas de las decisiones judiciales, así como en investigar la evolución del lenguaje de estos documentos durante casi cinco siglos. Nuestro trabajo ilustra las múltiples ventajas de la implementación de un sistema de anotación simplificado y las mejoras que este supone para el análisis textual desde la perspectiva histórica.

Palabras clave: anotación de corpus; etiquetado de corpus; decisiones judiciales; TEI-XML; inglés legal

1. Introduction

Adding annotation and mark-up to linguistic corpora has become standard practice in corpus building over the past few decades as a way to facilitate data extraction and at the same time guarantee that new corpora are compatible with existing and future tools. In this article we provide an overview of the main forms of annotation and mark-up available to the research community and how they have been applied to the *Corpus of Historical English Law Reports 1535-1999* (CHELAR) (Rodríguez-Puente et al. 2016, 2018). Although they are closely related concepts, annotation here refers to the encoding of linguistic features, whereas mark-up is used for the code system that contains information about the text itself.

CHELAR is a specialized corpus consisting of law reports or records of judicial decisions (Fanego et al. 2017). The corpus was made available in 2016 as plain text and with part-of-speech (POS) annotation, and was continued in 2018 by CHELAR v.2, an extensively revised and enhanced second version of the corpus that has served as the basis for the creation of its TEI-XML edition. Although multiple forms of annotation are readily available to the research community, we have limited the annotation and mark-up of CHELAR to POS and TEI-XML for two main reasons: (1) they facilitate the extraction from the corpus of the data required to satisfy the needs of our initial research questions, some of which are briefly expounded in section 5 below; and (2), we wanted to avoid the addition of excessive tags which would be both time-consuming and might turn the corpus into a less readable and user-friendly tool.

In section 2 we describe the main types of linguistic annotation that have been applied to linguistic corpora over the past few decades together with some of the advantages and drawbacks of implementing them. Section 3 is concerned with corpus mark-up, focusing specifically on the TEI-XML schema and its applications in corpus linguistics. In section 4, we provide an overview of CHELAR and how the annotation and mark-up systems described previously have been applied to it. The article concludes with an overview of preliminary research based on CHELAR (section 5), and with some conclusions and suggestions for future work (section 6).

2. Corpus Annotation

A prototypical linguistic corpus is made up of a set of machine-readable (written or spoken) texts that aim to be representative of a particular language, dialect, register, medium of production or even speaker, and which comprise data produced in real-life communicative situations (Gries and Berez 2017, 380). Texts should also be selected to represent a balanced sample of speakers, registers, mediums and/or varieties, that is, the amount of material for one particular subsample—for example, spoken language—should reflect the importance of this category in the population. Besides including transcripts of original unprocessed language, most corpora nowadays contain information regarding the phonological, lexical, grammatical, semantic

or structural features of texts. The process whereby all this information is made explicit is called *annotation* and, even though annotating a corpus can be very time-consuming, the outcome of this process is a powerful tool for linguistic research that provides a corpus with "added value" (Leech 2005, section 1)—information can be easily retrieved, either manually or automatically, thus greatly facilitating the task of linguists when conducting their research, and the same set of annotations can be used by many different researchers with diverse interests and aims. In spite of this, corpus annotation also has detractors who argue that it produces cluttered corpora that impose a particular linguistic analysis and make corpora less accessible, updateable and expandable (see, for example, Hunston 2002, 91-95). Indeed, corpus annotation can only be useful if annotations are unambiguous as to their meanings and transparent, that is, with easily interpreted tags that are short enough to facilitate the task of reading an annotated text. As such, corpus builders may decide to include an untagged or raw version of the corpus to satisfy the needs of those who argue against any type of annotation.

The types of linguistic information that corpora can be annotated for are varied, since the motivations behind the compilation of corpora can also be extremely diverse. The following types of annotation are commonly added to corpora (Leech 2005, section 2; McEnery et al. 2006, 29-45; Gries and Berez 2017, 383-92):

- Lemmatization: the process of marking each word in the corpus for its lemma or base form stripping away inflectional morphology
- Part-of-speech annotation (POS): identification of the word class—noun, verb, preposition, etc.—of each word in the corpus
- Syntactic annotation: segmentation of the corpus into phrasal and clausal units
- Semantic annotation: addition of information about the specific sense in which words are used, their semantic category, issues such as the aspect, modality, polarity and factuality of constructions or, less frequently, metaphorical and metonymical phenomena
- Discourse annotation: signaling of anaphoric relations between elements in the corpus or the way in which information is presented and structured
- Stylistic annotation: identification of how speech and thought are represented in a text by means of direct discourse, indirect discourse or free indirect discourse

Additionally, spoken corpora can be annotated for phonetic, phonological and prosodic information and even pragmatic features such as illocutionary force or contextual information of the speech situation. Other more specialized kinds of annotation include gestures in multimodal corpora, signs in sign language corpora, translations of original texts into other languages in parallel corpora and errors in learner corpora.

Leech (2005, section 4) puts forward a series of recommendations for corpus annotators. First, and despite the fact that annotations are indeed useful for many

types of linguistic enquiries, the annotated version of the corpus should always be accompanied by the original unprocessed texts for those users whose research goals do not require, or could even be hindered by, the presence of annotations. Second, corpus compilers should provide comprehensive documentation including, among other things, the annotation and coding schemes used, the quality of annotations and information regarding where, when, by whom and by means of which tools the annotation process was carried out. Third, the set of categories on which the annotations are based should be sufficiently general to be compatible with most linguistic approaches and theories. Finally, newly compiled corpora should comply with de facto standards of linguistic annotation, that is, coding schemes, formats and practices in widespread use and with sufficient acceptance and recognition in the research community.

3. Corpus Mark-up

Annotation is but one part of corpus construction, which can contribute to the creation of powerful, flexible and accessible corpus resources. Corpus mark-up is closely related to corpus annotation but rather consists in providing a corpus with some degree of standardization to guarantee that it is compatible with both existing and future tools and that it can be extensively exploited by the research community. As defined by Tony McEnery et al., corpus mark-up "is a system of standard codes inserted into a document stored in electronic form to provide information *about* the text itself and govern formatting, printing or other processing" (2006, 22; italics in the original). In this section we describe one of the most widely used and recommended languages in encoding corpora, eXtensible Markup Language (XML) (Bray et al. 2008), along with its predecessors.

The first attempts at marking up corpus files followed COCOA references, which consisted of a set of attributes and values enclosed in angle brackets that were quite limited in terms of the number of features they could encode (McEnery and Wilson 2001, 34-35; McEnery et al. 2006, 23). More recently, some more ambitious mark-up schemes have emerged (for an overview, see McEnery et al. 2006, 23), but the Standard Generalized Markup Language (SGML) is considered to be the first fully systematized and flexible approach to encoding not only structural mark-up but also text-level and corpus-level metadata as well as analytic annotations (Hardie 2014, 74). The best-known application of SGML for corpus encoding is the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI), sponsored by three major academic associations—the Association for Computational Linguistics, the Association for Literary and Linguistic Computing and the Association for Computers and Humanities—the first edition of which was published in the 1990s (Sperberg-McQueen and Burnard 1990, iii-iv). The TEI Guidelines, aimed at facilitating data exchange by standardizing the mark-up of information stored electronically, have been published periodically ever since, the most recent version being the *TEI P5 Guidelines*, published in 2013, although the online edition is constantly being updated.

Even though SGML was a great step in marking up corpus files based on the use of angle brackets to delimit the tags from the actual corpus text, it was far from ideal. As a result, in the late 1990s XML came to be favored over SGML for most text-encoding purposes, and has now become the most widespread form of annotation. It enables structural annotations by means of tags, or elements, which represent information by virtue of their names and the attribute/value pairs associated with them (Carletta et al. 2004, 455).

In corpus linguistics the more user-friendly TEI-XML (Text Encoding Initiative-eXtensible Markup Language) mark-up language, used for storing and transporting data based on its inherent structure, has become the standard system adopted in digitally-based humanities for research on both historical and present-day English. It is, for instance, the system employed in *A Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers* 3.2, the *British National Corpus*, the *Helsinki Corpus*, the *Old Bailey Corpus*, the *Coruña Corpus of Early Scientific Writing* and the *Late Modern English Medical Texts 1700-1800* (Taavitsainen et al. 2014), among others. Elements in a body of data are marked with customizable tags that can be further defined using attributes (Gries and Berez 2017, 393). XML documents must adhere to proper syntax and are designed to be machine- and human-readable; additionally, they can be easily converted into other formats, such as databases (Carletta et al. 2004, 455-57; Gries and Berez 2017, 393-94).

In spite of the multiple benefits of adding TEI-XML mark-up to a corpus, it must be acknowledged that the accepted standards may be found "top-heavy" and "over-engineered" (Hardie 2014, 77) for three main reasons: (1) the complexity of the TEI standards; (2) the over-weighty level of mark-up suggested by those standards; and (3) the degree of technical knowledge required both to use and apply the TEI standards and to handle the software employed for that purpose (Hardie 2014, 77-78). Thus, Andrew Hardie suggests the use of a "modest" (2014, 82-103) XML schema for corpora in order to avoid becoming entangled with all the technical details of XML or the full weight of TEI encoding.

4. An Example of Modest Annotation and Mark-up: The *Corpus of Historical English Law Reports*

CHELAR is a specialized corpus consisting of law reports, records of judicial decisions that can be used as precedent in subsequent cases. It contains approximately half a million words and is structured into nine periods of fifty years each, running from 1535 to 1999 (Rodríguez-Puente 2011; Fanego et al. 2017).[1] Following Geoffrey Leech's assertion that "adding annotation to a corpus is giving 'added value'" to it (2005, section 1) and in order to take advantage of the multiple and varied forms of annotation at the

[1] The first subperiod is slightly larger, running from 1535 to 1599.

disposal of corpus builders, the initial version of the corpus (2016) was released in two different formats: (1) as raw text files, and (2) with part-of-speech (POS) annotation. The latter was implemented by means of CLAWS C7 (Garside 1987), with accuracy rates that ranged between 95.5% and 98.5% (Fanego et al. 2017, 66-69). The latest version of the corpus, CHELAR v.2 (2018), has been extensively revised and enhanced and differs from its predecessor in several respects. First, the word count is slightly higher in the second version, mostly due to the correction of typos encountered during the revision of the initial release as well as to the addition of further textual material in the case of some files. Second, the extralinguistic data of the texts has been enhanced by including information on who the reporters of the cases were and the exact date of the publication of the reprints from which the CHELAR texts were obtained. The revised texts of CHELAR v.2 have also served as the basis for the creation of the TEI-XML version of the corpus.

The TEI-XML edition of CHELAR follows the *TEI P5 Guidelines* developed by the Text Encoding Initiative Consortium (Bray et al. 2008). These were implemented by means of the software *Oxygen XML Editor*, which facilitated the insertion of the various tags and helped ensure that the texts in the corpus were well-formed and suited the XML standards. Although the annotation possibilities of the TEI-XML schema are infinite, priority was given to a type of annotation that satisfied the needs of the texts, yet at the same time facilitated a varied range of corpus analyses. In general, a modest XML tagging was advocated for, that is, "modesty at the level of corpus markup" and "modesty of scope arising from the avoidance of all advanced aspects of XML" (Hardie 2014, 80). Thus, the annotation system is rather minimalist in that it only includes some renditional and structural features, editorial corrections and conceptual characteristics, but avoids typical applications of heavyweight standards which are of little interest to corpus linguistics, such as, for example, peculiarities of the original appearance of the texts (Hardie 2014, 75). In the remainder of this section, we provide an account of how the TEI-XML schema was applied in CHELAR, the specific tags and attributes used and the problem-solving process followed during the annotation of the corpus.

4.1. The TEI Header

Being TEI-conformant, in every single CHELAR file the body of the text(s) is preceded by a TEI header that carries information about the text itself, its sources and its encoding. Although a TEI header can be a very large and complex element, the CHELAR headers have been simplified so as to include only the most relevant information, encoded in three major parts: the *file description* (fileDesc), the *encoding description* (encodingDesc) and the *profile description* (profileDesc).

The file description contains a full bibliographic account of every file in the corpus and is further subdivided into smaller sections following the schema below:

```
<fileDesc>
 <titleStmt>
       </titleStmt>
       <editionStmt>
       </editionStmt>
       <publicationStmt>
       </publicationStmt>
       <sourceDesc>
       </sourceDesc>
       <extent>
       </extent>
</fileDesc>
```

The *title statement* (titleStmt) carries information about the title, the author and publication date of the text. The *edition statement* describes the names of the corpus compilers and provides the full reference of the corpus and the source from which the texts were extracted, together with acknowledgment of the funding projects. Next, the *publication statement* (publicationStmt) gives the name of the file where the text was stored, information about the authorship of the corpus, its availability and date of release. The subsection *source description* (sourceDesc) includes a detailed account of the content of the particular text to which the header refers, namely its full title and reference, the court where the case reported was judged, the name of the case, the judges—only when this information could be retrieved—and the date(s) on which the case was heard. Finally, the last subitem of the file description refers to the *extent*, that is, the length of the text in number of words.

The encoding description documents the relationship between the electronic text and the source(s) from which it was obtained and is likewise subdivided into smaller sections structured as follows:

```
<encodingDesc>
       <projectDesc>
       </projectDesc>
       <samplingDecl>
       </samplingDecl>
       <editorialDecl>
       </editorialDecl>
</encodingDesc>
```

The *project description* (projectDesc) summarizes the different stages through which the compilation process went and the dates of completion of each of these phases. The *sampling declaration* (sampligDecl) gives details of the postediting process of the

samples selected for the corpus. In the CHELAR headers it refers to the noninclusion of footnotes (Rodríguez-Puente 2011, 111), the preservation of blank lines and spaces, as well as the correction of unclear or blurred punctuation (110). The last item in this section is the *editorial declaration* (editorialDecl), mostly concerned with clarifying how lettering size, special characters, quotation marks, text-alignment, indentation and hyphenation have been treated in the corpus documents.

The profile description is the last item of the TEI header and accounts for nonbibliographic aspects of the text. In CHELAR, this section is restricted to information about the language variety (British English) and the domain of the texts: Law Reports for those texts produced from 1865 onwards and English Reports for those produced before 1865 (Fanego et al. 2017, 56-60). Additionally, TEI headers may also include non-TEI metadata (xenoData) and a revision description (revisionDesc) summarizing the revision history of a file. These, however, are not part of the CHELAR headers.

4.2. The TEI Body

The item <body> contains the whole body of a single unitary text. In the case of CHELAR, the body of the text comprises one or more law report(s) produced in the same year. The texts are preceded by an XML ID that provides a unique identifier for the corresponding file. Our initial goal was to include samples of approximately 2,500 words in each of the files, but in many cases one single report would not suffice to reach that target, especially when dealing with the oldest reports (Fanego et al. 2017, 65). In cases where more than one law report had to be included in the XML file, a further identifier was added to mark the division of the different texts. This appears as `<div type="TEXT" n="1">`, where the attribute-value pair at the end of the tag (`n="1"`) refers to the number of the text in that file. In the earliest corpus subperiods, some files consist of up to twenty different texts, meaning that this label has to be repeated twenty times and the value of the number changes with every new text. Following these identifiers, the text itself is preceded by the tag <head>, which indicates the abbreviated title of the particular text (e.g., *Regina v. Woolin*).

As we did not wish to overload the texts with unnecessary mark-up, but rather advocated for a minimalist tagging system, the focus of our mark-up system was on renditional features, structural features, editorial corrections and conceptual features. Renditional features in CHELAR include italics, used for multiple purposes in law reports (Rodríguez-Puente 2011, 108-10), and superscript numbers. In both these cases, we employed the tag <hi>, normally used to mark graphically distinct words or phrases, followed by the appropriate attribute (rend) and its value—either "italics" or "superscript"— as in (1) and (2).

(1) `<hi rend="italics">the joint account of the above parties</hi>`
(2) `23<hi rend="superscript">1/2</hi>`

Structural features in CHELAR encompass titles (<head>), paragraphs (<p>), line breaks (<lb\>), page breaks (<pb>), as well as the text divisions mentioned earlier in this section with regard to those files which contain more than one report. For the sake of simplification, minor units such as sentences, utterances, words and the like were not marked in the corpus texts. Sample (3) shows an example of how paragraphs, line breaks and page breaks have been annotated.

(3)

```
<p>
 <lb/>APPEAL from <name type="person">Brandon J.</name>
 <lb/>By a writ dated <date when="18-06-1968">June 18, 1968</
date>, the plaintiffs, La Plata Cereal Co. S.A.,
 <lb/>of <place>Buenos Aires</place> ("shippers"), André &amp;
Cie. S.A. ("Swiss André"), of
 <lb/><place>Lausanne</place>, Comptoir Commercial André Cie.,
of <place>Marseilles</place> ("French
 <lb/>André") and Sorveglianza, of <place>Rome</place>
(collectively described as owners of
 <lb/>the <foreign lang="sp">cargo</foreign> lately laden on
board the vessel the <hi rend="italics">Annefield</hi>), began an
action
 <lb/><foreign lang="la">in rem</foreign> against the
vessel owned by a Liberian company, Asimarfield <choice
n="hyphenation"><orig>Ship-<lb break="no"/>ping</
orig><reg>Shipping
 <lb/></reg></choice> Corporation ("the shipowners") for damages
for breach of contract
 [...]
</p>
[...]
<pb n="171"/>
```

As can be seen in (3), unlike most XML tags, those for line breaks are self-closing—indicated by a bar before the closing tag—and are introduced at the beginning of every new line. The last tag in the example corresponds to the start of a new page in the original document; the attribute-value pair of the tag indicates the number of the new page. The extract in (3) also contains an example of a word that was split over two lines by means of a hyphen in the original source text (*Shipping*). Three tags were necessary to mark words like these. First, <choice>, which groups a number of alternative encodings for the same point in a text, specified by the attribute value "hyphenation"; then <orig>, indicating the original reading of the

word (*Ship-ping*); and, finally, <reg>, providing the regularized form. The latter tag was also necessary for the regularization of original page numbers. In CHELAR those reports produced before 1865 are reprints of original versions of reports (Fanego et al. 2017, 56-64). The tag <pb> in our texts refers to the page breaks in the new edited versions of the reports, whereas original page breaks appear in the body of the text (Rodríguez-Puente 2011, 112), occasionally splitting a word in two (e.g., re-[123]-nounce). These split words had to be regularized by placing the page number after the originally split word (see example 4), in order to facilitate corpus searches, as well as the addition of further annotation, either manually or automatically (e.g., POS).

(4) <reg orig="re-[123]-nounce">renounce [123]</reg>

Blank spaces and text omissions have likewise been marked in the XML files by means of the tag <gap>. These are quite frequent in the CHELAR texts, especially when anonymizing proper names, as in (5), or when the printing of the original source text was unclear, as in (6). As can be seen in examples (5) and (6), the specific attributes between quotation marks help identify the reason for the gap in the source text.

(5) <lb/>of his manor of <gap reason="blank space"/> in the county aforesaid
(6) <lb/>47, 48; <gap reason="unclear"/>

Similarly, typos in the original documents were corrected in the XML files using the tag <sic>, a very useful method of making clear that the error was already in the source text, rather than being committed in the transcription or manipulation of texts during the process of corpus building (see example 7).

(7) <sic corr="does">doe</sic>

Another important structural feature marked in the CHELAR files concerns the use of quotations and the transcription of direct speech. The most modern reports typically start with a short summary of the case and then proceed with a direct narration of the facts, that is, a record of the actual words of the participants in the case. Short-hand notation, stenographic transcription and tape recording have enabled reporters to gradually provide more accurate reproductions of what actually happened in court, so that these sections of direct speech, though recorded in writing, are meant to represent real conversations between the parties involved, between the parties and the judge(s), between the judges themselves—if more than one was present—between any of the former and the witnesses during questioning, and also the judges'

monologues produced in the process of presenting their arguments, their reasoning, the judgment they arrive at and the way they do it (Bhatia 1993, 119). These sections of direct speech, however, are far from constituting faithful representations of real speech and must have been subject to much editorial intervention and "correction" on the part of the judges themselves before publication (Mitchell 2015, 38-40), since they do not include features typical of spoken language, such as slips of the tongue, false starts, hesitations or bad language and insults, which are frequently present in other legal records, such as trial proceedings (Kytö and Walker 2003, 225; Widlitzki and Huber 2016). However, they constitute the most oral sections of the reports in CHELAR, which contrast with other primarily prescriptive sections that are plagued with cross-references to other precedent cases and other legal documents. Linguistically, the sections of direct speech in the law reports in CHELAR have already been shown to differ from the more prescriptive sections and from legal documents such as statutes, Acts of Parliament and proclamations as far as the use of personal pronouns is concerned (Rodríguez-Puente 2019). The most oral sections in law reports tend to be characterized by an extensive use of first and second person pronouns, which contrasts with the typical detached, impersonal style generally adopted in legal documents and confers on them a greater degree of subjectivity, involvement and interpersonality.

The TEI-XML system allows for various methods of marking direct speech. In the *Old Bailey Corpus*, for example, the selected tag for direct speech was <speech>, normally used for an individual speech in a performance text or a passage presented as such in a prose or verse text. Given that the so-called direct speech sections in CHELAR do not constitute real speech events but rather edited reproductions of them, we decided to mark those sections with the tag <q>, which contains material distinguished from the surrounding text by using quotation marks or a similar method to represent, among other possible features, direct speech. Quotation marks are not used for these exchanges in the reports of the CHELAR files; rather, these sections of direct speech are introduced by the name(s) of the person(s) speaking, as in example (8), which in XML would be rendered as shown in example (9).

(8)
J. A. Plowman Q.C. and *D. A. Thomas* for the defendant.
Jenkins L.J. held that the boundaries on the filed plan were only general boundaries...
[...]
D. A. Thomas following. No reliance can be placed on the transfer plan. It is only a rough plan and the measurements on it are inaccurate.
[...]

(9)

```
<lb/><name type="person"><hi rend="italics">J. A. Plowman Q.C.</
hi></name> and <name type="person"><hi rend="italics">D. A.
Thomas</hi></name> for the defendant.
    <lb/><q><name type="person">Jenkins L.J.</name> held that
the boundaries on the filed plan were only
    <lb/>general boundaries
[...]
<lb/><name type="person"><hi rend="italics">D. A. Thomas</hi></
name> following. <q>No reliance can be placed on the
    <lb/>transfer plan. It is only a rough plan and the
measurements
    <lb/>on it are inaccurate.</q>
[...]
```

In contrast, in order to mark those phrases or passages attributed to some agency external to the text marked by quotation marks in the source texts, we employed the tag <quote>. In our corpus, this tag normally reproduces quotes from books, laws, statutes, other reports, wills, letters, contracts or quotes of someone else's words, among other sources. Example (10) shows a quotation (<quote>) from a contract produced within direct speech (<q>).

(10)

```
<lb/><q>On the true construction of this covenant the tenant has
the
<lb/>right to use the demised premises for a restaurant,
<quote>"including
<lb/>the sale of tobacco, confectionery and other similar
produce,"</quote>
<lb/>and has an alternative right to use the whole premises as
<quote>"offices
<lb/>and showrooms for such business to be first approved by the
<lb/>landlord."</quote><q>
```

As far as conceptual features are concerned, we restricted tags to indicate names of persons and cases, place names and foreign words. For persons, we used the tag <name> with the corresponding attribute value "person", as shown in example (11). The tag <name> was also used for cases, this time with the attribute value "case", as shown in example (12). Place names, including names of cities, counties, villages, states, manors, streets, etc. were labelled as <place>, as in example (13).

(11) <name type="person">George II</name>
(12) <name type="case">Law Society v. United Service Bureau Ltd. 1 K.B. 343</name>
(13) [...] a dwelling house known as St. Leonard's, <place>The Street</place>, <place>Staple</place>, <place>Canterbury</place>, <place>Kent</place> [...]

For dates, we employed the tag <date> followed by the attribute "when" and the value of the date after the equal symbol with the schema dd-mm-yy. When information about day, month or year was not retrievable from the text, we completed the value of the attribute with the word *none* (see example 14).

(14) <date when="18-04-none">18th of April</date>

Finally, foreign words were marked as <foreign> further specified by the attribute value of the corresponding language of origin—"la" for Latin, "sp" for Spanish, "fr" for French, "AN" for Anglo-Norman, "ger" for German and "it" for Italian—as shown in (15).

(15)
<foreign lang="la">donatio mortis causa</foreign>
<foreign lang="sp">flotilla</foreign>
<foreign lang="fr">mesne</foreign>
<foreign lang="AN">succour</foreign>
<foreign lang="ger">Europaische</foreign>
<foreign lang="it">ditto</foreign>

The language of origin was ascertained by means of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), though not without difficulties. Deciding which words to include as foreign was a difficult task because it implied making decisions as to the degree of integration of those words into the language. Additionally, being a diachronic corpus, what might be regarded as foreign in the sixteenth century might not be considered foreign today. In order to be as consistent as possible, when a word was marked as foreign it was labelled as such throughout the whole corpus. As far as the degree of integration is concerned, the classification of words and expressions as foreign was mostly based on spelling: when words maintained the spelling of their language of origin in their English form, they were labelled as foreign. Thus, *memorandum*, *lieu* and *flotilla*, for example, were labelled as Latin, French and Spanish respectively, although all three words have been well integrated in the English language for a long time. Even though CHELAR is relatively small in size for lexical analysis, the <foreign> tags might be particularly

useful for the analysis of certain aspects, such as binomials, that is, coordinations of a native term or a well-integrated loan word and its foreign (near-)synonym—e.g., "bargain and sale" (Nevalainen 1999, 363)—so typical of legal language, as well as for investigation on the extent of use of specialist terms and expressions derived from Latin and Norman French, also common in legal documents.

5. Preliminary Research Based on Chelar

Interest in legal English has grown exponentially over the last decades, as the result of developments in (applied) linguistics and social sciences generally (Bhatia 1987, 227). Law-related fields of language study are manifold (for an overview, see Fanego and Rodríguez-Puente 2019, 2-5) and the creation of annotated diachronic corpora like CHELAR can help broaden the research scope of linguists by providing, as in our case, a balanced sample of a specific type of legal document extending over five centuries. Teresa Fanego et al. (2017, 69-72) outlined a number of broad research trajectories that can be explored by means of CHELAR. In the remainder of this section, we provide an account of how some of those trajectories have been pursued to date.

The law comprises a wide variety of activities, all of which must be recorded in written form, so that "legal documents are classified under a very large number of text types" (Görlach 1999, 145) with different structural, formal and linguistic features. As a text type, law reports can be characterized as "hybrid" in nature (Šarčević 2000, 11), because they fulfil both prescriptive (regulatory) and descriptive (informative) functions—for these labels, see Tiersma (1999, 139-41), Šarčević (2000, 11-12) and Williams (2007, 28-29), among others—and therefore their linguistic features and structural elements differ from those of other legal documents which are purely prescriptive and regulatory. Initial research with CHELAR has thus been primarily aimed at identifying differences between law reports and other legal and formal genres, as well as at investigating how the language of law reports has evolved over a time-span of almost five centuries.

In this connection, Paula Rodríguez-Puente's (2019) study of personal pronouns in CHELAR provides strong evidence that the language of law reports is indeed distinctive, as already mentioned in Section 4.2 above. Due to its overall function, the law tends to adopt an impersonal style, steering clear of markers of subjectivity and (inter)personal involvement, such as first and second person pronouns (Tiersma 1999, 67-68; Sancho-Guinda et al. 2014, 13). Yet first and second person pronouns are relatively common in law reports, especially in those sections that portray transcriptions of dialogues and monologues recorded in the trials (see section 4 above), and also as a resource through which judges assert their claim to speak as an authority (Rodríguez-Puente 2019, 186). In fact, most first-person pronouns in law reports correspond to the nominative singular form (*I*), a feature that makes this type of legal document stand out from other documents more prescriptive in character, such as Acts of Parliament, proclamations and statutes, where first-person singular pronouns are rare and first-

person plural pronouns are mostly used as majestic plurals (royal *we*), that is, referring to a single person holding a high office (2019, 182-88).

The findings in Rodríguez-Puente (2019) also challenge the common assumption that legal written texts are resistant to change (Tiersma 1999, 135) and "outside the 'ravages of time'" (Görlach 1999, 145), since substantial variation can be found when observing developments in the language of law reports from a diachronic perspective. As far as personal pronoun usage is concerned, law reports become more involved over time, with the most recent reports displaying statistically significant higher rates of first-person pronouns than the oldest reports sampled in CHELAR. Evidence for increasing rates of personal involvement in law reports over time is also supported by ongoing research on the active/passive alternation in this type of document (Rodríguez-Puente 2018a). Passives are typically associated with formal academic prose, as markers of a detached, impersonal style (Biber 1988, 228; Biber et al. 1999, 476; Seoane 2006a, 2006b, 2013), so that, as a formal written type of discourse, legal English is known to make extensive use of passive structures (Hiltunen 1990, 76-77; Tiersma 1999, 74-77; Williams 2004; Williams 2007, 35-36). However, although, as expected, passive clauses outnumber actives in CHELAR, from the nineteenth century onwards passives display a tendency to decrease in frequency, particularly from the second half of the twentieth century, probably as a response to the so-called Plain Language Movement, which recommends the avoidance of passive verb forms whenever possible (Seoane and Williams 2006, 124; Williams 2007, 177; Williams 2013).

The size and structure of CHELAR also render it suitable to address the analysis of the trend towards the increasing use of colloquial linguistic features that can be observed in written genres over the past two centuries, especially in the last decades of the twentieth century (see, among others, Biber and Finegan 1989, 1997; Mair 1997, 2006; Atkinson 1999; Hundt and Mair 1999; Leech et al. 2009; Rühlemann and Hilpert 2017). A recent study by Douglas Biber and Bethany Gray (2019) has examined this issue based on the law reports in CHELAR, and has compared the development of this genre over the period 1700 to 1999 to developments in three other registers: science research articles, newspaper articles and fiction. Newspaper articles and fictional texts are representative of popular written registers that are agile in the sense that they adopt colloquial innovations from spoken discourse. In contrast, law reports appear as a "relatively uptight register" (Biber and Grey 2019, 166) because, although they have adopted some colloquial innovations, their frequencies remain low. Linguistic features traditionally associated with literate discourse, such as nominalizations, attributive adjectives, relative clauses and noun complement clauses, have increased in law reports over time, according to Biber and Gray's findings.

Nominalizations were explored in greater depth, also on the basis of CHELAR, in Rodríguez Puente (2018b). They are a feature generally taken as characteristic of legal (Bhatia 1993; Tiersma 1999; Williams 2004; Mattiello 2010) as well as scientific genres (Halliday and Martin 1993; Atkinson 1999; Banks 2005; Tyrkkö and Hiltunen 2009),

both of which are representative of formal written discourse intended for a specific audience. Stanisław Goźdź-Roszkowski argues that "the dense use of nominalization [in legal writing] can be attributed to the highly specialist and informational nature of this text variety" (2011: 21), because nominalizations, like passives and prepositions, have the function of conveying highly abstract—as opposed to situated—information, and thus bear a positive load on Biber's Dimension 3, "Explicit vs. Situation-Dependent Reference" (1988).

Rodríguez-Puente's (2018b) analysis showed that, whereas the rates of nominalizations remain relatively similar between 1535 and 1799, their frequency increases significantly from 1800 onwards, peaking in the second half of the twentieth century. This is in agreement with the results of Biber and Gray's study mentioned earlier (2019), but is unexpected considering that excessive use of nominalization goes against the recommendations of the Plain Language Movement (Williams 2007, 177). However, given the considerable reduction in the use of the passive voice described by Rodríguez-Puente (2018a), the increased rates of nominalization in law reports seems to respond to the use of a different strategy to portray an impersonal kind of discourse, legal English being primarily "nouny" rather than "verby" (Williams 2013, 354).

In sum, initial research with CHELAR has already shown that law reports are a distinctive text type as far as their linguistic features and structure are concerned, both synchronically and diachronically. These preliminary studies are, however, far from providing a thorough account of the language typical of these documents. The research possibilities of an annotated tool like CHELAR are infinite and further research should aim at investigating the language of law reports from a broader variety of perspectives and trajectories.

6. Conclusions and Further Research

This article has put forward the manifold advantages of corpus annotation and mark-up. Multiple and complex forms of annotation are at our disposal nowadays, but an excess of superimposed tags on a raw corpus text can confound rather than facilitate the aims of a researcher. However, when applied sensibly and with a modest scope, the research possibilities of an initially raw corpus can be improved substantially. This was our primary goal when compiling CHELAR. Although relatively small in size, CHELAR can be employed for a wide range of research topics thanks in part to the enhancement provided by a simple annotation schema. It must be acknowledged that once the TEI-XML schema has been implemented in a corpus, adding other types of annotation becomes relatively easy, and that probably the CHELAR texts could be further enhanced by combining annotation and mark-up features, for example, embedding the POS annotated texts within the TEI-XML schema. Although we do not rule out this possibility in the future, for the time being we prefer to keep the different types of annotation separate so as not to end up producing a cluttered corpus, thereby

complying with our initial idea of applying a modest tagging system. As things stand, research based on CHELAR to date has consistently shown the solid potential uses and applications of the corpus for both diachronic and synchronic research.[2]

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Female Cycling and the Discourse of Moral Panic in Late Victorian Britain

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This article discusses the role of cycling in women's emancipation in late Victorian Britain and explores the attitudes of the middle-class public to women's pursuit of this recreational activity. The unique combination of healthy physical exercise, unrestrained mobility and sporting excitement that the bicycle offered elevated cycling into one of the epoch's most popular leisure activities. For women, the bicycle became an important instrument to break away from the constraints of the androcentric paternalistic culture that stereotyped them and cast them in the passive role of the *angel in the house*. The immense popularity of bicycling with middle- and upper-class women and the inevitable changes in patterns of female leisure, clothing and normative behaviour it involved, caused strong reaction from the bourgeois establishment. An analysis of opinions published in the British press at the time reveals a discourse marked by anxiety that cycling might become an avenue for women to claim more independence for themselves and even subvert the established social framework based on power relations and a clear delineation of gender roles.

Keywords: women; cycling; late Victorian period; gender roles; press; prejudice

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Mujeres, ciclismo y el discurso del pánico moral en la Gran Bretaña victoriana tardía

Este artículo analiza el papel del ciclismo en la emancipación de las mujeres en la Gran Bretaña victoriana tardía y las actitudes del público de clase media hacia el desempeño de esta actividad recreativa por parte de las mujeres. La combinación única de ejercicio

físico saludable, movilidad ilimitada y emoción deportiva que ofrecía la bicicleta convirtió el ciclismo en una de las actividades de ocio más populares de la época. Para las mujeres, la bicicleta se convirtió en un instrumento importante que les permitía romper las limitaciones de la cultura androcéntrica paternalista que las estereotipaba y las encasillaba en el papel pasivo del *ángel del hogar*. La inmensa popularidad de la que gozó pasear en bicicleta entre las mujeres de clase media y alta y los cambios inevitables que ello comportó en los patrones de ocio femenino, vestimenta y comportamiento normativo provocaron una fuerte reacción por parte del *establishment* burgués. El análisis de las opiniones publicadas en la prensa británica del momento pone de manifiesto un discurso marcado por la ansiedad de que el ciclismo pudiese convertirse en una vía para que las mujeres reclamasen más independencia e incluso subvirtiesen el marco social establecido, basado en las relaciones de poder y una clara delimitación de los roles de género.

Palabras clave: mujeres; ciclismo; época victoriana tardía; roles de género; prensa; prejuicio

1. Introduction

The role played by sport and recreation in the rise of feminism in Victorian Britain has been elucidated in numerous works written by such renowned scholars as Jennifer Hargreaves ([1987] 2006), Catriona Parratt (1989), James Anthony Mangan (2006a), Kathleen McCrone (2006), Sue Macy (2017), Roger Gilles (2018), Kat Jungnickel (2018), among others. Cycling features in these works as a recreational activity whose impact on the liberation of women from the constraints of nineteenth-century androcentric culture cannot be overestimated. Scholarly discussion of the topic has also been enriched by Patricia Marks's ([1990] 2015) analysis of satires and caricatures in British and American periodicals of the time, which focuses on the tension between the *womanly woman* and the *manly woman*, i.e., the bicycling New Woman. Relatedly, Lena Wånggren (2017) studies the New Woman cyclist that features in late Victorian popular fiction—short stories, plays and novels, including H. G. Wells's "bicycling" novel, *The Wheels of Chance* (1896).

Cycling and its social effects fascinated writers, satirists, cartoonists and journalists in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, and as such featured in numerous satirical cartoons published in *Punch* and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* as well as in the literature of the period. Supposedly, the first novel in which the bicycle appeared was Ben Hayward's *All Else of No Avail*, published in 1888 (Flanders 2007, 458). Among other writers who addressed the issue were George Gissing, Edith Nesbit, Grant Allen, Arthur Conan Doyle, Thomas Hardy and many of the so-called New Woman writers (Wånggren 2017, 67-100). Cycle mania also resulted in a proliferation of guide books, such as F. J. Erskine's *Lady Cycling: What to Wear and How to Ride* ([1897] 2014), and specialist journals addressing the ever-growing number of both male and female bicycle users, including *Wheel Life*, *CTC Gazette*, *Cyclist*, *Wheeling*, *Cycling Budget*, *Cycling*, *Lady Cyclist, Wheelwoman*, *Wheelwoman and Society News* and *Cycling World Illustrated.*

This article attempts to add to the discussion on the role of bicycling in raising women's self-awareness by reference to the newspapers of the period, which registered opinions and attitudes of the middle-class public to women's cycling. The choice of newspapers as material for analysis was dictated by the desire to find out to what extent a vigorous debate on various aspects of female cycling carried out in cycling journals penetrated into newspapers aimed not at the cycling enthusiast but at the general middle-class reader living in British provincial towns and cities. Nonetheless, in order to compare the coverage of the topic in the general press with the periodicals specifically addressing female cycling enthusiasts, some references will also be made to *The Girl's Own Paper* and *Wheelwoman*.

A close study of the news reports, editorials and letters sent by readers to local newspapers documents the scale of the initial prejudice against the adoption of cycling by women, a gradual shift in attitudes as it grew in popularity, and also women's perseverance in striving to break free from the constricting conventions of Victorian bourgeois culture. Cycling, like women's other sporting activities in that period, was

culturally mediated. Its progress was retarded by the deep prejudice or even hostility of a large section of the public, who gave credibility to their stance by appealing to scientific theories, medical opinions and moral arguments. In addition, popular Victorian ideologies on the social construction of gender contributed to the climate of moral panic surrounding women's pursuit of "manly" sports and recreations.

2. Two Spheres: The Social Construction of Gender in Victorian Britain

The middle class, which had gained economic and political power through the Industrial Revolution, used its position to become the leading moral and cultural force, shaping ethical norms and cultural standards in nineteenth-century Britain. Respectability was a central value in the moral system espoused by the Victorian bourgeoisie, which comprised a set of rigid codes of behaviour and public conduct (Huggins and Mangan 2004a, x-xi). The body, particularly the female one, was perceived as something that should be concealed from the opposite sex. Any visual or physical contact with naked bodies was considered immoral. Therefore, in respectable families children from an early age were taught to keep their bodies covered (Cook 2012, 488). Baring parts of the body, otherwise hidden under garments, during sporting or recreational pursuits was an act of defiance and could cost a woman her reputation. In middle-class culture, being respectable equalled appearing respectable (Cordery 1995, 37). Consequently, outward manifestations of reputability, such as the propriety of dress and public conduct, were attestations of uprightness and high moral stature.

Victorian society was distinguished by its clear delineation of the social roles attributed to the sexes, manifested in separate codes of normative behaviour, speech, dress and moral profile. The cultural markers of such a perception of gender were the concepts of masculinity and femininity, which became an organising principle of middle-class society. The notion of hegemonic bourgeois masculinity, defined by mental and physical qualities predestining men for public activity, was manifested in physical fitness, a strong work ethic, rationality, resilience and enterprise. On the other hand, womanhood, whose essential attributes were purity, frailty, nurturing capacity, emotionality and docility, was constructed as the complementary Other of the man. As is well known, this paradigm of femininity was often referred to as the *angel in the house*, following Coventry Patmore's immensely popular *The Angel in the House* ([1854] 1891), written as a tribute to the author's "perfect" wife. John Ruskin disseminated this idea of pure womanhood in his highly popular work *Sesame and Lilies* ([1865] 1998) by arguing that woman's moral superiority and intellectual qualities inclined her to be the "helpmate of man" and provide him with "gentle counsel" and "direction," as her "power is for rule, not for battle." The man, encountering daily challenges, tests and perils in his work in the open world, had an obligation to protect "the woman from all this; within his house, as ruled by her" ([1865] 1998, 35-42). Women were believed to be naturally predisposed to be consigned to the domestic and private sphere. Thus,

the idea of the sexes occupying separate spheres was a natural consequence of such a perception of the differences between them (Burstyn 1980, 131; Vickery 1993, 387; Tosh 2005, 331-36; McCrone 2014, 193). Separate spheres did not constitute a spatial category but rather the conceptual ground for the exercise of power relations that produced a hegemonic, paternalistic male-dominated system.

Victorian gender ideology stereotyping men and women into firmly cast social roles relied on philosophical and pseudoscientific theories infiltrating the opinions of medical practitioners and on presenting women as mentally and physically impaired by the demands of their reproductive apparatus and menstruation cycles (Vertinsky 1987, 7). The chief ideologue of the Victorian middle class was Herbert Spencer, whose theory of a finite amount of energy that every human being was born with was used as a compelling argument against women's emancipation. Spencer argued that in the process of evolution women had lost some of their physical energy, because they no longer needed to perform hard physical labour and, what is more, they expended the remaining quota faster than men to sustain their reproductive capacity. This "reproductive sacrifice" (Vertinsky 1987, 15) was the price women had to pay for the preservation of the nation. Maternity became women's "highest function" and obligation to society (Hargreaves [1987] 2006, 131); therefore, they should not engage in any energy-consuming mental or physical activities lest their potential for reproduction should suffer (Vertinsky 1987, 14-16; Mangan 2006a, 138).

Despite the lack of empirical evidence, myths about women's weak physical and mental constitution encouraged scientific and medical circles to proffer cautionary opinions about the debilitating effects of physical or intellectual exertion on their reproductive capacity and advice on the legitimate uses of the female body to enhance that capacity (McCrone 2014, 193-94; Waddington 2004, 414). Prominent medical authorities claimed that menstruation consumed so much energy that it made women "unfit for any great mental or physical labour. They suffer under a languor and depression which disqualify them for thought or action" (*British Medical Journal*, January 2, 1875). What is more, warnings were issued that the pursuit of masculine activities could physiologically unsex women. A belief in the instability of a person's biological sex was supported by scientific discoveries in the 1870s that led to a growing understanding of the role played by chromosomes in sex determination and the conviction that at the foetal stage, human beings showed potential for the development of both male and female features. By the 1880s, the theory of physiological sex reversal had found many exponents among British scientists, who argued that under specific circumstances such as diversion from gender-normative patterns of behaviour or activities, the biological sex of human beings, women in particular, could be reversed (Carstens 2011, 63-65).

Such theories fuelled the discourse on sexual differences, which was intensified in the last three decades of the nineteenth century by the improvements in women's legal and material standing, their educational and professional aspirations as well as the emergence of the New Woman, who contested Victorian conventions of gender. The

term *New Woman,* naming a new social phenomenon observable since the 1880s, was introduced by Sarah Grand in her essay "The New Aspect of the Woman Question," published in 1894, but it was Ouida's attack on female suffrage and her criticism of Grand's characterisation of the New Woman which popularised it (Nelson 2000a, 140). From the outset, the renegade New Woman openly defying the conventions of Victorian womanhood was the subject of attacks from the male bourgeois establishment and a ridiculing campaign in the periodical press. In the public discourse she was accredited with often contradictory features that placed her in opposition to the widely admired angel in the house. Averse to the institution of marriage and maternity, sexually licentious, decadent, mannish, asexual and masculinised by education, career ambitions and unfeminine clothing, the New Woman was perceived as a threat to the social fabric of Victorian society (Pykett 1992, 137-42; Ledger 1997, 9-17). Vocal in her claim to enjoy educational, employment and political rights equal to those of men, the New Woman was perceived as a continuator of Mary Wollstonecraft's early feminist agenda and its later espousal by John Stuart Mill.

The threat to masculine hegemony and prerogatives posed by women's encroachment into hitherto male-dominated areas produced an atmosphere of social anxiety and moral panic. It was further aggravated by the fears that Britain's economic and political dominance in the world could be threatened by the decline in fertility (Woods 2000, 18-20). In consequence, sexual polarisation became entrenched, and arguments asserting women's mental and physical incapacity to perform "manly" activities were used as a defensive response to the ongoing change in women's status, which was threatening to subvert established social roles and norms (Carstens 2011, 66; Tosh 2005, 337). In sum, the adoption of the bicycle by women caused a strong reaction from the conservative Victorian establishment. Their critical opinion, which, as noted earlier, they supported with religious, moral, medical and scientific arguments, penetrated public discourse on women's bicycling and was reflected in the tone of the coverage it received in the press. As such, press reports of the period are a testimony to the degree of prejudice with which late Victorian female cyclists had to contend.

3. Cycling Against the Odds

Production of the first bicycles began in Britain in 1868 and it quickly developed into a profitable industry fuelled by a rapidly growing market. Continuous technological advances, particularly the introduction of Dunlop's pneumatic tyres in 1888, and a growing market in cheaper second-hand bicycles (Flanders 2007, 454; Mackintosh and Norcliffe 2007, 157; Reid 2015, 247; Norcliffe 2016, 8) helped transform the bicycle from a costly fashionable sports item to a more universal utilitarian means of transport and recreation—one of the technological marvels of the Victorian era (Rubenstein 1977, 48). The first two decades of cycling had been marked by distinctive social and gender geographies, as the bicycle was not only class-associated

but also, like many other forms of recreation at that time, gender-related, and women were virtually excluded from bicycling. It was only in the late 1880s that women took to cycling in great numbers (Norcliffe 2016, 4-5). Conducive to the progress of female cycling was the inculcation of the ideal of female athleticism in upper- and middle-class students through the programme of sports education adopted in girls' schools and colleges in the 1860s and 1870s (McCrone 2006, 143; Parratt 1989, 142). Having experienced a sense of satisfaction from sporting rivalry and physical wellbeing resulting from active recreation, young women reentering society at the end of their formal education were unwilling to submit to the passive, domesticated model of femininity that Victorian androcentric, patriarchal society tried to impose on them. Therefore, in their leisure pursuits, they sought ways of negotiating a degree of independence from the restraining rules of the Victorian ideology of gender (Tosh 2005, 342). As the ultimate "freedom machine" (Norcliffe 2016, 2), the bicycle offered women the prospect of spatially and temporally unrestrained mobility, as they could ride wherever and whenever they wished. Arguably, cycling, more than any other form of recreation, became a significant contributory factor to the progress of women's emancipation in the late Victorian period. Thus, it is not a coincidence that in newspapers and periodicals of the period, the New Woman—"a condensed symbol of disorder and rebellion" (Smith-Rosenberg 1985, 247) and emancipated womanhood—is often portrayed with or on a bicycle.

A significant number of women developed enthusiasm for moving on their own wheels when the tricycle was launched onto the market in 1877. Although heavy and cumbersome, it offered "the weaker sex" greater safety and stability than the ordinary model. The tricycle was suitable both for young girls and middle-aged matrons, such as Miss Elizabeth Wordsworth, the principal of Lady Margaret Hall, the first women's college at Oxford, who took up tricycling at the age of sixty, convinced of its beneficial health effects (McCrone 2006, 153). Perched on the tricycle's seat, women could pedal slowly down the road, gaining sporting pleasure and a reasonable amount of moderate physical exercise. Indeed, because of its nonstrenuous character, tricycling was accepted as an appropriate form of outdoor recreation for women to such an extent that it was recommended by medical practitioners and by the press: "it is a really delightful exercise, and you can enjoy the scenery to perfection going at the rate of six, seven, and eight miles an hour. There is nothing in the necessary movement of feet to deter ladies from attempting it" (*Dundee Evening Telegraph*, August 19, 1878). Its other crucial feature was the fact that female cyclists did not need a special costume as "the pedals do not raise the dress in moving" (*Dundee Evening Telegraph*, August 19, 1878), so the activity did not threaten to indecently expose women's legs and was therefore within the bounds of respectability.

Public debate on women's pursuit of cycling was further invigorated by women's adoption of the safety bicycle in the late 1880s, which enabled them to cover longer distances faster and in greater comfort (Anderson 2010, 123-24). By the last decade

of the nineteenth century, cycling had become a real craze among middle- and upper-class women. The spectacle of scores of women on wheels caused the public prejudice against female cycling to slowly wane and give way to gradual acceptance, as confirmed by numerous accounts and press reports from the period: "A woman on a bicycle is now such a common sight about town that people appear to be getting over their prejudice and more than one paper has expressed an opinion that a lady mounted on a bicycle is a more pleasing sight than one on a tricycle" (*Ludlow Advertiser*, August 30, 1890). In her monograph on London parks and gardens, Mrs. Evelyn Cecil (Alicia Amherst) observes that in the summer of 1895 it became "the thing" among ladies to cycle to breakfast to London parks, especially Battersea Park. Female cyclists "flocked there in the early mornings" because it was "away from the traffic that disturbed the beginner" (Cecil 1907, 160). Thus, cycling started to be regarded as an essential social accomplishment among high society ladies, who took to enrolling in cycling classes (McCrone 2014, 180).

The change in attitude towards female cycling was, however, a slow process and was marked by an undercurrent of fear. As noted earlier, various figures of authority cautioned against its detrimental effects on women's moral constitution, health and reproductive capacity. Such ominous predictions effectively appealed to public sensitivity to these matters. As a novelty, cycling had not yet developed any history of documented bicycle-related injuries and diseases, but established medical journals still presented it as dangerous to female health, particularly during puberty when girls needed all their energy for their reproductive organs to develop appropriately. They warned about chronic diseases and injuries caused by overstrain and riding on bumpy roads, including uterine displacement—incapacitating women for childbearing—hardening of abdominal muscles—which could cause problems during labour—jarring, jolting and spinal shock as well as body deformities, nervous prostration and even sudden death (Vertinsky 1990, 79; McCrone 2014, 179-80). Even around the mid-1890s, when reservations against the adoption of cycling by women seemed to be waning, medical criticism of the activity's suitability for women was not uncommon. As one renowned representative of the medical profession proclaimed, "cycling renders women awkward in their walk; they gradually come to move with a plunging kind of motion the reverse of graceful" (*Dundee Evening Telegraph*, May 29, 1894).

On the other hand, progressive physicians envisaged in the bicycle a worthy alternative to walking, which was then universally recommended to women as a healthy exercise that could contribute to offsetting the adverse effects of a sedentary lifestyle and enhancing their reproductive functions (Vertinsky 1990, 77). Their opinions were put forward not only in medical journals and the popular press, but also in scholarly debates. During one such event, the Newcastle Sanitary Congress in 1896, Dr. E. B. Turner read a paper praising the beneficial effects of cycling on women's health, supporting his conclusions with medical stories of his female patients "suffering from lassitude, bloodlessness and loss of appetite, who had become well and strong after taking to the wheel" (*Boston Guardian*, September 12, 1896). At the same time,

however, he warned about the possibility of women being unsexed as a consequence of racing and long-distance riding, both of which caused overstraining and were thus a threat to womanhood. Nevertheless, relying on the favourable opinions of a growing number of physicians, British newspapers began to display tentative approval for it as a legitimate pastime for women—a mark of a gradual shift in public attitudes:

> Under certain given conditions of health, strength, and above all, prudence, there is […] no more beneficial exercise than cycling. […] By a general consensus of opinion it is not advised for growing or undeveloped girlhood. After 18, however, there is no reason why every lady so inclined should not permit herself a share in those "pleasures of the wheel" so highly prized by brother, father, or husband. (*Blackburn Standard*, August 18, 1888)

A decade later, there seemed to be little doubt that cycling was beneficial for women's physical constitution and health. The *Girl's Own Paper*, aimed at teenage girls and young women, strongly recommended a daily dose of "an hour's bicycling" to its readers (February 18, 1899). The journal also quoted professional doctors advocating regular cycling as a cure for such maladies as "delicate chests," "sleeplessness," "nervousness," "anaemia" and "torpidity of the liver" (*Girl's Own Paper*, March 4, 1899).

Now, no longer discouraged by moral and medical objections and tempted by the sense of freedom and independence that the bicycle promised, women took to cycling in their thousands. From the 1880s they could join male cycling clubs, but many wheelwomen preferred to establish their own groups, which encouraged female bonding and promoted women-only recreations (*Wheelwoman*, October 16, 1897; January 8, 1898; March 19, 1898; April 30, 1898). Unlike previously, when female leisure activities were either restricted to the home or chaperoned visits in respectable leisure amenities, cycling clubs offered wheelwomen a chance to escape from their domestic confinement and plan their own leisure in the company of likeminded females. The clubs organised not only riding outings, but other events whose planning and execution required good management skills. Ladies' cycling clubs, then, became instrumental in women's emancipation by providing them with opportunities to prove their entrepreneurial potential and advance their cause (McCrone 2014, 183). For many female cycling aficionados, the social side of cycling was as important as the sporting pleasure it offered. In June 1894, the *Citizen* reported that a meeting of twenty-five women cyclists was held at the Ideal Club in London "in advocacy of the promotion of cycling among women, the formation of a common centre and the extension of a social side of cycling, a London club-house and a country cottage, and dress reform for lady cyclists" (June 20, 1894). Clubs often acquired or rented out-of-town premises to be used by their members for social events, teas or picnics. It is hard to estimate how many ladies' cycling clubs existed in Britain in the 1890s, but the great popularity of the sport among females is unquestionable. When a cycling club was established at Girton College, Cambridge, in 1894 it became so popular that the number of bicycles

brought to college by its members each term caused a storage problem. Similarly, in Oxford, female students at Lady Margaret Hall promptly organised a cycling club, on which thirty-seven out of the hall's fifty-seven students enrolled (McCrone 2006, 153).

One of the most significant controversies connected with female cycling concerned racing. Moral, medical and aesthetic arguments were garnered against women's participation in bicycle races. Competitive sports were generally regarded as a male preserve. Rivalry, fair struggle and ambition to win constituted the essence of Victorian manliness, developed on the playing fields of boys' schools. They were the obverse of the paternalistic bourgeois ideal of Victorian womanhood. Therefore, women who participated in sporting rivalry were accused of transgressing standards of acceptable female behaviour, encroaching into male territory, aping mannish ways and thus denying their own sexual identity.

Despite such grave objections, some records indicate that women took part in bicycle road races as soon as men began racing (Simpson 2007, 50). In Britain in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, most bicycle races were organised in purpose-built velodromes which could seat large crowds and, following a ban on racing on British public roads imposed by the Cycling Touring Union (CTU), became the premier venues for organising such events (Huggins 2004, 119; Norcliffe 2016, 5). In the last decade of the Victorian period, track racing was both a profitable commercial enterprise and a spectator sport attracting large audiences. Female riders featured routinely at such events, but as an additional attraction to the main event, the men's race (Simpson 2007, 51-52). It appears, then, that women racing on bicycles were initially crowd-pleasers, offering an element of exciting novelty and a voyeuristic spectacle to mostly male audiences (Gilles 2018, 14). At the turn of the century, as the freshness of male bicycle racing wore off and female racing ignited public interest, the owners of racing tracks began to organise ladies' races as events in their own right. It is quite possible that the prime interest of the investors and organisers of such contests was to capitalise on the aura of outrageousness which, despite increasing acceptance of female cycling, still surrounded its competitive form (Simpson 2007, 48). The press of the period, more or less subtly, alluded to the fact that the pecuniary interest of the organisers was their chief motivation and that the artful entrepreneurs cynically exploited female racers. In 1895, *London and Provincial Entr'acte* published a cartoon presenting Mr. Josiah Ritchie, the manager of the Royal Aquarium—London's largest velodrome—riding a bicycle. The caption read: "The Biggest Winner by [*sic*] the Ladies' Bicycle Races at the Aquarium Is Mr. Josiah Ritchie" (7 December). In order to ensure high attendance and consequently considerable profits, the organisers of ladies' races often invited foreign riders and widely advertised the events in the press. So, for instance, on November 16, 1895, the upcoming women's race at the Royal Aquarium was promoted as "unique and likely to bring our best English riders into competition with well-known lady cyclists from France and Belgium" (*Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*).

Due to the scant records, it is difficult to estimate how many women participated in bicycle races or what their social background was. Considering, however, the intensity of social prejudice against women's participation in competitive sports and the damage to a lady's reputation it could cause, it appears rather unlikely that many middle- and upper-class wheelwomen were daring enough to take part. On the other hand, the prospect of considerable financial gain from prize money, ranging from six pounds for a lower place to as much as sixty for the winner, induced talented, less well-off women from the middle- or working class to become professional riders (Simpson 2007, 54). What is more, bicycle and tyre manufacturers and other investors in bicycle races often provided additional prizes, such as jewellery or other valuable objects for the best performing riders. For instance, in the women's international race at the Royal Aquarium in 1895, the extra gifts for the best racers included "a valuable gold watch set with diamonds and pearls, and many other articles of jewellery" (*Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, November 16).

Opposition to female racing was widely and often vociferously expressed in the press by morally-motivated commentators, officials of sporting organisations and members of the reading public. For instance, the *Pall Mall Gazette* published an appeal from one of its readers, signed "One Who Respects Women," to ban female races in the Olympian bicycle track since the spectacle was vulgar, utterly unbecoming and degrading to women:

> The spectacle of a lot of women […], careering around any track—hot, perspiring, breathless, with anxious faces, dirty hands, visible bruises, and in more or less (generally more) hideous costumes—is not one which commends itself to those who seek in the "fair sex" evidences of refinement, cultivation and cleanliness. […] Let women ride bicycles for amusement and pleasure; let them if they will, go in for feats of skill; but Mr. Editor, don't let them race in public, don't let them lower themselves to the position of poor man […]. Do try to induce them to remember that a woman's mission is to improve the race of men, and not to race for the improvement of bicycles. (January 7, 1896)

Even cycling journals for ladies, like the *Wheelwoman and Society Cycling News*, spurned women's races as "hideous spectacles" (September 26, 1896). Such judgements confirm the intensity of gender stereotypes in Victorian society, boxing men and women in clearly defined roles marked by a set of social prescriptions and proprieties and according women the role of a higher moral authority responsible for setting a good example to society as a whole.

Various cycling organisations also expressed strong opposition to admitting women to bicycle races. The largest of them, the National Cyclists' Union, adopted a resolution forbidding the licensing of women for open or club races, stating that "no races for women riders be permitted at any open or club race meeting held under N.C.U. rules" (*Supplement to the Cheltenham Chronicle*, June 27, 1896). The opinions expressed by the

members of the NCU Council are a testimony to the pervasiveness of the paternalistic angel in the house stereotype in Victorian society and the depth of the prejudice against female racing based on the premise that women were physically and mentally weaker than men. In sum, women's races were proclaimed "injurious, morally, mentally, and physically" and "most disgusting exhibitions" representing the "lowest tastes of mankind" (*Supplement to the Cheltenham Chronicle*, June 27, 1896).

However, in the middle of the last decade of the nineteenth century, the discourse of moral agitation with respect to women's bicycle racing began to intermingle in British newspapers with more favourable attitudes. These unequivocally positive reports on women's bicycle races may indicate the gradual acceptance of women's participation in competitive sport as a legitimate facet of British sporting culture. In November 1895 an international bicycle race between "The Ladies of France and All of England" was organised at the Royal Aquarium track (*London Evening Standard*, November 19, 1895; *Times*, November 21, 1895). The fortnight-long contest was split into two events of six days each, during which eight riders representing England competed against twelve French wheelwomen. The event attracted "daily large crowds of interested spectators" (*St James' Gazette*, November 20, 1895) and achieved a good deal of positive press coverage. The atmosphere was patriotically charged—the spectators clearly sided with the English team, loudly expressing their discontent whenever the French riders broke the rules and cheering enthusiastically when one of the English riders was in the lead (*London Evening Standard*, November 19, 1895; *St James' Gazette*, November 20, 1895). The British press commended the English riders' "perfect mastery of their machines, [...] their powers of endurance [...] [and] their skill," while the French team was accused of "tricky riding," "fouls" and "unsportsmanlike trickiness" (*St James' Gazette*, November 20, 1895). The newspaper-reading public was offered a comprehensive commentary on the progress of the race, spectators' reactions, contestants' riding skills, as well as a full list of the riders' names and positions. The tone was characteristic of sports reports—enthusiastic but factual, with no hint of censure or indignation. Such reports signalled an ongoing change in the perception of women's competitive sports—there must have been a sizeable group among the readers who recognised women's bicycle races as true sporting events, not as lowbrow and morally dubious entertainment.

One of the controversial issues connected with women's pursuit of cycling was the appropriate dress. The use of the bicycle by women, not only as a piece of sporting equipment but also a means of transport, necessitated a change in female fashion. Therefore bicycling—perhaps more than other forms of female recreation—became inextricably connected with the dress reform movement. In the case of other sports that women practised, such as tennis, the sporting costume was worn only for the game and then replaced with socially acceptable ladies' apparel. However, the use of the bicycle as a means of transport meant that the female cyclist would also wear her cycling costume in public, challenging the prevalent notions of femininity and decorum (Gordon 2001, 24-25). This explains why the adoption of a rational style of dress for cycling

women was so contentiously debated, the arguments ranging from health and safety to morality, decency and female attractiveness. The subject, of course, was reflected in the press, pamphlets, satirical cartoons and public lectures.

Women's approach to the question of an appropriate cycling costume varied, but was generally rather cautious. Some rode in skirts with elastic stirrups sewn into the hem to keep them down and prevent an indecent display of the ankles (McCrone 2006, 150). Such a costume, however, posed a safety risk for the cyclist—if the skirt got caught in the spokes, the wheelwoman could fall and be injured. Pioneering cycling women therefore looked for more convenient, but socially acceptable, cycle wear and some even had their most inventive designs patented (Jungnickel 2018). Many women in the 1890s advocated rational clothes for cycling that followed the French fashion. For instance, Miss Bacon, a secretary of the Mowbray House Cycling Association, pleaded at the lecture to the Society of Cyclists in London that "women should be allowed to adopt a dress which should be both safe and comfortable. [...] It will probably be knickerbockers and a tunic" (*Lincolnshire Echo*, February 23, 1894). Such a costume was already so ubiquitous among female cyclists in Paris that it stirred up little or no public interest or indignation. As an English correspondent reported, women dressed in "pseudo-masculine habiliments riding a bicycle excited little attention or no attention, and no comment"—presumably because of their costume's "total lack of beauty"—and when they needed to dismount and make part of their way on foot, they could do so "with impunity" (*Shepton Mallet Journal*, August 31, 1894). The news from France earned derisive commentary in many British newspapers, which contemptuously wrote about the "ridiculous appearance" of the French women cyclists "with their baggy knickers and spindle shanks" while at the same time they praised English female riders, most of whom preferred the "old-fashioned and more graceful manner of raiment." The editor also extolled those English cyclists who, despite following the French fashion, adhered to modesty and propriety in public and invariably carried with them a bundled-up skirt which they would put on when dismounting their machines (*Advertiser for Somerset*, September 13, 1894). Such a compromise towards the rules of propriety in public proves the powerful hold of the bourgeois moral code on women. They preferred to negotiate social acceptance by making concessions to the canon of respectability, rather than openly defy it by insisting on wearing "offensive" clothing.

Despite an optimistic pronouncement in the *Manchester Guardian* in 1894 that the general adoption of rational cycling dress in Britain was "only a question of time" (October 22), two years later little progress had been made. As the *Leicester Chronicle* noted, "there are still many bicyclists who simply refuse to don bloomers" (June 27, 1896). A more optimistic view, however, was presented in the *Wheelwoman*, which maintained that evolution in women's cycling costume, though gradual, was indeed relentless (June 25, 1898), making knickerbocker-clad ladies in the streets of London in 1898 as "familiar to the eye as policemen," and accredited the change to "the development of cycles" (May 21, 1898). However, in provincial cities the public

may have been more resentful of the dress revolution because in 1899 the *Leeds Times* reported that the battle for the uniform use of rational cycling dress was "a losing one," explaining that women were "bound by the tyranny of custom to the hampering, unhealthy and strength-sapping skirt" (February 4). Such press reports confirm how contentious the question of rational cycling costume was. The fact that its adoption progressed relatively slowly, particularly outside the capital, may indicate that some female cyclists were not as adventurous as to risk public disapproval and accusations of immodesty for wearing "unfeminine" clothes.

While to progressive members of British society this revolution in female clothing was little else but a choice for convenience and safety, for its more conservative members the use of masculine rational clothes marked a symbolic overstepping of the boundary between the sexes, a transgression of the established rules of decorum and propriety. As Julie McCormick Weng argues, the public spectacle of female cyclists riding astride their machines in what was considered a masculine posture and wearing men's clothes alarmed the less progressive members of the public (2016, 53). Such a display of "masculine" attributes by wheelwomen was regarded as an overt subversion of the established gender roles, a departure from the passivity, domestication and motherly calling of the angel in the house. Wheelwomen wearing knickerbockers and tunics were often snubbed and ostracised in public places. One such situation was described by the *Daily Telegraph* and then carried by the local press. It was reported that two young ladies wearing rational costumes were refused dinner by the owner of a country inn in a Surrey village unless they hid their bicycling garments under the skirts she offered to lend them. As the women refused, they "left the inn dinnerless" accompanied by the jeers and condescending smiles of those who witnessed the scene (*Aberdeen Evening Express*, June 8, 1894). Such situations were not uncommon as similar stories were still being reported a few years later (*Wheelwoman*, June 18, 1898; *Times*, April 6, 1899). Women wearing rational clothes were, then, often the target of unceremonious attacks not only by members of the public but also by the establishment press, where they were ridiculed, derided and accused of senselessly aping men and losing their femininity.

4. Conclusions

Cycling in late Victorian Britain, probably to a greater extent than other sports, offered women an opportunity to break free from the social constraints of Victorian society, become geographically mobile, explore new forms of active recreation unrelated to the prevalent models of respectable female leisure and liberate themselves from the restrictive dress and corset of the time. Competitive, recreational and social aspects of bicycling were instrumental in developing women's self-knowledge and awareness of their physical capabilities. Although it would be too far-fetched to maintain that the bicycle paved the way to women's emancipation, it can be inferred that it certainly smoothed it. There is little doubt that cycle mania was conducive to a change in attitude to women's sport

and made inroads into the stereotyped perception of women as physically weaker than and dependent on men. However, this progress was made in an atmosphere dense with prejudice that was rooted in the bourgeois perception of male and female roles in society.

Information on the attitudes to female cyclists gleaned from regional and local press of the period reveals a public discourse dominated by a paternalistic and judgemental attitude to women, based on dichotomies of right and wrong, moral and immoral, ladylike and unladylike, reputable and disreputable and the like. The moralising tone of many accounts is a testimony to the hegemonic relations in Victorian society resulting from the economic empowerment of middle-class men during the Industrial Revolution and their perceived physical and mental superiority over women. In the public debate on women's cycling, such deeply ingrained attitudes were fortified with moral, social, medical and scientific arguments, which were used to persuade women against involvement in an activity that might lead them to question established gender relations.

The tone of moral panic in the discourse on women's cycling, though strong, was not overwhelming or exclusive of other views. Women's perseverance in bicycling did eventually lead to a change in public opinion and the surfacing of more favourable attitudes. These were presented in the press, often concurrently with negative views, and demonstrated the growing acceptance of women's cycling, both as recreation and as competitive sport. Thus, the debate on women's cycling that engaged social, moral and scientific authorities in the last two decades of the nineteenth century revealed a society in which views on women were being remoulded as the conservative division into two spheres gave way to a more progressive, liberal and inclusive attitude.

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Returning to "Ezuversity": Feminism and Emancipation in the Letters of Ezra Pound to Forgotten Modernist Iris Barry, 1916-1917

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At the beginning of the twentieth century, many young male and female poets attended "Ezuversity," that is, Ezra Pound's programme through which he educated them on the art of reading and writing. This study focuses on the case of Iris Barry (1895-1969), the English poet, novelist, film critic and forgotten modernist pioneer, to whom Pound sent a series of letters at the beginning of the twentieth century encouraging her to emancipate herself and avoid marriage. It also analyses "The Ezra Pound Period," a text written by Barry and published in the *Bookman* in 1931, which serves as a response to the poet's letters and instruction. The aim of this article is to contribute to feminist modernist studies by rescuing Barry from oblivion and by highlighting Pound's promotion and support of many women writers who would later play a significant role in literary modernism.

Keywords: Iris Barry; Ezra Pound; "Ezuversity"; literary modernism; feminism; women's emancipation

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Regreso a "Ezuversity": feminismo y emancipación en las cartas de Ezra Pound enviadas a la modernista olvidada Iris Barry entre 1916 y 1917

A comienzos del siglo XX, muchos y muchas poetas tuvieron la oportunidad de asistir a lo que el propio Ezra Pound denominó la "Ezuversity," un método propio de instrucción a través del cual Pound los educaba en el arte de la lectura y la escritura. El presente estudio se centra en el caso de Iris Barry (1895-1969), poeta inglesa, novelista, crítica de cine y pionera modernista olvidada, a quien Pound envió una serie de cartas donde la tuteló y animó a emanciparse y descartar la idea de casarse. Además, se analiza "The Ezra Pound Period," un

ensayo escrito por Barry y publicado en 1931 en *The Bookman* que constituye su posterior respuesta a dichas misivas. El objetivo de este artículo es rescatar a Barry del olvido, así como señalar la labor que Pound desempeñó promocionando y liberando a muchas mujeres escritoras que más tarde contribuirían de manera significativa a la construcción del discurso modernista.

Palabras clave: Iris Barry; Ezra Pound; "Ezuversity"; modernismo literario; feminismo; emancipación de la mujer

> For a woman in the 1920s, putting pen to paper was,
> consciously or not, a feminist act.
> (Childs 2007, 92)

1. Introduction

"What did a woman expect of life in early years of the century?" asks Hugh Kenner. "We do not know," he implies, "since we have no sense of the fine line those years were demarking between matrimony and liberty" (1973, 293). A woman's position in society depended upon treading the right side of this line. Marrying was the only socially acceptable reason for a young girl to leave home. However, women such as Iris Barry, Mary Butts, Nancy Cunard and Hilda Doolittle did choose the bohemian option, which meant making a break from their own mothers and families and, indeed, from the very idea of family itself (Brooker 2007, 107).

Ezra Pound saw a world divided into artists and nonartists and thought that an artist should not marry: "it ought to be illegal," he wrote to his mother, "if the artist must marry let him find someone more interested in art, or his art, or the artist part of him, than in him" (Carpenter 1988, 105). In this dictum, he included women artists too, as he demonstrates in his early letters and advice to many of them. This article focuses on the epistolary exchange he maintained with the English modernist poet, novelist and film critic Barry between April 1916 and January 1917. While Pound's letters are included in D. D. Paige's edition (Pound [1950] 1974), no trace of Barry's response has been preserved, as her biographer Robert Sitton states: "Although the letters from Iris Barry to Pound appear to have been lost, and may after all have been mostly cover letters of packets of poems, many from Pound to Barry were deposited by her in the Buffalo collection in the care of her one-time brother-in-law, Charles Abbott, founder of the collection" (2014, 417).

This article thus analyses the letters that Pound wrote to Barry and goes on to focus on "The Ezra Pound Period," a text written by Barry and published in the *Bookman* in 1931, which serves as her response to the poet's letters and instruction. The overall aim is to highlight the importance of these letters and the role that Pound played in Barry's emancipation and life decisions. From this perspective, I will first argue that Barry's feminist stance was based on the early advice she had received from Pound. Secondly, that not only did Pound introduce Barry to the London avantgarde, but he also shaped her evolution as a modernist writer and as a woman adopting a pioneering role.

2. Who is (Afraid of) Iris Barry?

With the exception of Virginia Woolf, women's key contribution to the development of modernist art has been largely ignored (Felski 1994, 193). In fact, a number of

women well-known in the 1920s have been excluded from most canonical studies on modernism. In particular, "although scholars have shown some interest in Virginia Woolf's 1926 essay, 'The Cinema,' we are just beginning to realize the vital role of Iris Barry, who was born in Birmingham and came to London to become one of the most prolific and influential figures in film forums of her day" (Hankins 2004, 491). Iris Sylvia Symes, also known as Frieda Crump (Edwards 2017, 8), was born in Birmingham in 1895, that is, at the same time as cinema was born. In 1916, she published some poems in *Poetry* and began an epistolary exchange with Pound, which marked the beginning of a life devoted to cinema and literature. Following his advice, she moved to London in 1917, where she met vorticist artist Wyndham Lewis, "the real leader of the London avant-garde," according to his biographer, Paul Edwards (2017, 11). In 1919, they started a relationship and lived together until 1922. They had a son in 1919 and a daughter in 1920.

Barry studied cinema in a self-taught, compulsive way in London at a time when motion pictures were regarded as lower-class entertainment. Lewis also encouraged her to go to the movies so he could meet other women while she was there (Sitton 2014, 58). She spent hours and days watching the films of Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd, to the point that she could quote the subtitles word for word, as she would later recall. In the mid-1920s, Barry led a complete revolution in film culture in London as she became the most widely read film critic and contributed to the creation of one of the most important cultural institutions for film, the London Film Society. In her book *Let's Go to the Pictures* (1926), which was published in the US in the same year as *Let's Go to the Movi*es, she analysed the experience of going to the cinema, both as entertainment and as art. In 1929, she published her novel *The Last Enemy*. She wrote more than forty articles for the *Spectator* (1924-1927), at least five for British *Vogue* (1924-1926) and more than sixty columns for the *Daily Mail* (1926-1930), where she also worked as a film correspondent. When she was fired by the *Daily Mail* for not promoting British films as much as Hollywood cinema, she left for America, where she became the first curator and, subsequently, the director of the Film Library at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). After the Second World War, Barry and her staff from the Film Library at MoMA were constantly under threat from right-wing detractors who saw them as Bolsheviks. These attacks damaged the careers of several members, such as the Spanish filmmaker Luis Buñuel, who was hired by Barry to translate propaganda films for Latin American audiences. She finally left the museum and the United States in 1951, dying of cancer in Marseilles in 1969, alone and forgotten.

As a film critic, Barry's most important task was to legitimise film as an art form throughout the first half of the twentieth century. It is true that she was not the first writer to rise to this challenge. In 1915, Vachel Lindsay (1879-1931) had published *The Art of the Moving Picture* ([1915] 2000), the first book to treat movies as art. However, while Lindsay compares cinema with other artistic expressions based on the properties

that they all share, Barry's *Let's Go to the Pictures* develops her precursory theory where she highlights and defends what makes cinema an art form that is unique and different from any other. Before Barry, another woman, Caroline Alice Lejeune (1897-1973), had written about cinema in the English press, first for the *Manchester Guardian* and then, from 1928 to 1960, for the London *Observer*, the oldest Sunday newspaper in the world. Yet, unlike Lejeune, Barry also had essays published in journals and literary magazines, such as the *Spectator* and the *Adelphi*, which were read by modernist artists and contemporary intellectuals. Likewise, Barry had a wide readership for her film reviews for the *Daily Mail*, the most widely sold British newspaper during the first two decades of the twentieth century.

With the exception of a conference paper, "Iris Barry, a Forgotten Pioneer: From Modernist London to New York MoMA" (Morató Agrafojo 2008), and the PhD dissertation "*El dibujo del califa. Arquitectos, ¿dónde está vuestro vórtice?* (1919), de Wyndham Lewis. Estudio preliminar, edición y traducción," where Barry is mentioned in a chapter devoted to the role of women in the British avantgarde (Morató Agrafojo 2011, 155-74), she was unknown to most Spanish scholars until the writing of the PhD dissertation "Iris Barry: The Birth of Film Criticism within Anglo-American Modernism" (Camacho 2017). This thesis analyses a collection of her articles published in London between 1924 and 1927, arguing that they inaugurated the birth of serious film criticism within Anglo-American modernism. Apart from this, Barry briefly appears in work by Spanish scholars focusing on filmmaker Buñuel during the period in which he lived in the US. For example, "*Buñuel: novela*, de Max Aub. Un testimonio generacional y un reto literario. Los materiales preparatorios para la obra" (Antequera Berral 2014) devotes a passage to the arrival of Buñuel in New York, where he met Barry, and how subsequently, thanks to her, he was hired to work at MoMA from 1939 to 1941.

Outside Spain, a few scholars have also tried to "find" Barry. Among them it is worth mentioning Margareta Akermark, a good friend and correspondent of hers who published *Remembering Iris Barry* in 1980, and Ivor Montagu, who co-founded the London Film Society with Barry and authored the article "Birmingham Sparrow: In Memoriam, Iris Barry 1896-1969" in 1970. More recently, Columbia University Press published the first biography to date, Sitton's *Lady in the Dark: Iris Barry and the Art of Film* (2014). Other published studies include Leslie K. Hankins's comprehensive "Iris Barry, Writer and Cineaste, Forming Film Culture in London 1924-1926: the *Adelphi*, the *Spectator*, the Film Society, and the British *Vogue*" (2004) and the articles by Haidee Wasson, "Writing the Cinema into Daily Life: Iris Barry and the Emergence of British Film Criticism" (2002), "Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema" (2005) and "The Woman Film Critic: Newspapers, Cinema and Iris Barry" (2006).

Given the richness and relevance of Barry's life and work, it is surprising that the first biography of her life was only published in 2014. Such lack of academic and

biographical attention can perhaps be explained, firstly, by her being a woman and, secondly, by her having lived in three different countries: first in England, then in the US and finally in France. Furthermore, after moving away, she never returned to any of these countries. Thus, her manuscripts, letters and professional documents are distributed over different geographical locations, housed in archives and personal collections. In order to gain access to them, one must travel between Europe and the US. An added problem for researchers is that she never wrote an autobiography or left written notes of any kind, and only a few letters are available: "some of her correspondence with Ezra Pound is published in *The Letters of Ezra Pound*, *1907-1941* (1950) and there are unpublished letters between them in the Poetry Coll. at the State Univ. of N.Y. at Buffalo. There is also interesting correspondence with Lewis in the Cornell Univ. Library and Virgil Thomson in the Yale Univ. Music Library" (Green and Sicherman 2012, 58).

Unfortunately, Barry is omitted from most studies on English modernism. For example, in *Writing for their Lives*:

> There is another "group" or, more accurately, a loose network, who are less well known but who were women living and writing between the 1890s and the Second World War. Unlike Virginia Woolf's set, these women, who knew each other, or each other's work, or both, were often expatriates; many were poor; all were more bohemian than bourgeois; and they were more linked by shared choices and interests than by the tighter ties of traditional background and common blood. Nor were all the women poets or novelists; some were editors and publishers, others ran bookshops, yet others provided patronage of both spiritual and material kinds. (1989, 2)

It is surprising that someone as important as Barry was to the London cultural scene during the first half of the twentieth century, and who also conforms perfectly to the above profile, is not mentioned as being part of this group of bohemian women. Other scholars, such as Tania Modleski (1986), Andreas Huyssen (1988) or Maria DiBattista and Lucy McDiarmid (1996), have emphasised the importance of evaluating modernism through its relationship with mass culture. However, Barry is not mentioned in any of these studies either, not even in "Fashioning Readers: The Avant Garde and British *Vogue*, 1920-9" (2002), in which Aurelea Mahood explores the relationship between modernist literature and *Vogue* magazine precisely during the years Barry wrote for this publication.

3. Ezra Pound's Letters to Barry, 1916-1917

On April 2, 1916, Pound reads some of the poems that Barry has published in the British magazine *Poetry and Drama* and writes to her asking if she could send him some more as yet unpublished poems: "It is one of my functions to gather up verses

for an American publication [...]. I should be glad to see some of your stuff" ([1950] 1974, 124). Barry's biographer, Sitton, mentions that she responds to Pound's first letter with a suitcase full of poems and with the wish to receive constructive criticism from Pound (2014, 26). However, Pound confesses that he is disappointed with what he has received, despite the fact that the poems are in line with the imagist aesthetic: "I am not satisfied with the things you have sent in, still many of them seem to have been done in accordance with the general suggestions of imagisme" ([1950] 1974, 124). In Pound's eyes, Barry does not seem to know what she wants to do and how she wants to do it, so he asks her questions like, "Have you very much intention of 'going on with it,' mastering the medium? Or are you doing *vers libre* because it is a new and attractive fashion and anyone can write a few things in *vers libre*?" ([1950] 1974, 124; italics in the original).

Through such comments and observations, in this letter, numbered 89 in Paige's edition (Pound [1950] 1974), Pound invites Barry to reflect on her writing and the responsibility that she must assume as a writer if she finally chooses to lead a literary life. She must understand writing as a constant learning process. This letter, in which the teacher gives long explanations and offers detailed suggestions for each of the poems, reflects the essence on which the entirety of Pound's advice to Barry is based, that is, simplicity and sobriety. He also attempts to instruct her on expression and metrics. A good example of this is when he describes Barry's style as monotonous due to her abuse of the iambic pentameter: "you fall too flatly into the 'whaty whaty whaty what' of the old pentameter. Pentameter OK if it is interesting, but a lot of lines with no variety won't do" ([1950] 1974, 125).

He complains that the poems published in December 1914 in *Poetry and Drama* that so drew his attention "have more passion and individuality than anything you [Barry] have felt in this sheaf" and goes on to suggest that Barry "send on [her] stuff to Chicago as it is, if you like," although he adds that he would prefer "to see more of it first, if that is convenient" ([1950] 1974, 125). A couple of years later, in the July 1916 issue of *Poetry*, a magazine founded in 1912 in Chicago and edited by another woman, Harriet Monroe, Barry, encouraged by Pound, publishes a series of poems. In relation to Pound's view of Barry's poetry, it is very interesting to note how the latter's poems ended up being published in *Poetry*. Bruce Fogelman, the author of *Shapes of Power: The Development of Ezra Pound's Poetic Sequences* (1988), found an unpublished letter from Pound to Monroe in the University of Chicago library in which he expresses his very favourable impression of Barry's talent and style. Surprisingly, Barry's biographer offers such important information only in a note at the end of the biography, along with the following fragment from Pound's letter, sent sometime after April 1916:

> I enclose 14 brief poems by Iris Barry. I want you to print the lot, and as soon as possible [...]. She certainly has something in her. More grip and sense of inner form than the generality of late-imagists. I can't see that anything in this group can be omitted. I have

> had a bunch of about forty poems to go over and have arranged this group out of it with a good deal of care. (Quoted in Sitton 2014, 417)

This letter conveys Pound's admiration for Barry's talent, which contradicts what he led her to believe most of the time in his personal feedback to her.

In a subsequent letter to Barry, dated April 24 and numbered 91 in Paige's edition, Pound refers to "Impression," a poem included in the selection he made for *Poetry*:

> The orchids are white again . . .
> There was one I knew
> Whose body was white as they: fairer.
>
> Alas! That we drifted apart
> Faster than pear-petals fall to the ground! ([1950] 1974, 128)

Pound criticises the expression "friendship was dissolved," which was originally used by Barry in this poem instead of "we drifted apart," because he sees it as "newspaperish," probably implying that it sounds overly stereotypical, even mechanical, rather than poetic: "dissolve is bad not only because it is, as I think, out of key with what goes before but because it really means a solid going into liquid, and when you compare that to pear-petals falling, you blur your image" ([1950] 1974, 128). He offers Barry the following advice: "It is not so much 'getting a better word' very often as doing a new line" ([1950] 1974, 128). In addition, he suggests avoiding the passive voice and using the active instead, which led Barry, once again following Pound's advice, to replace "friendship was dissolved" with "we drifted apart" in the final version.

The American poet appreciates Barry's metric sense, even though, in his view, she should only practice regular metres for the purpose of improving her use of free verse, which Pound himself pioneered: "Your practice with regular metres is a good thing; better keep in mind that [it] is practice, and that it will probably serve to get your medium pliable. No one can do good free verse who hasn't struggled with the regular; at least I don't know anyone who has" ([1950] 1974, 128). In the same letter, Pound also refers to "The Fledgling," another published poem where Barry's style already shows his influence in that it is characterised by the aforementioned parameters of simplicity and sobriety:

> The fire is nearly out,
> The lamp is nearly out,
> The room is untidy after the long day.
> I am here, unhappy,
> Longing to leave the hearth,

Longing to escape from the home,
The others are asleep,
but I am here, unhappy.
The fire is nearly out,
The lamp is nearly out.

Pound first notices the phrase "emancipated from home," used in the original unpublished version of "The Fledging," and describes it as a "cliché" ([1950] 1974, 128). Nevertheless, he tells Barry that he likes the serious tone of the poem as a whole and praises the effectiveness of her reiterative style at the beginning and the end. Pound suggests simply replacing the abovementioned phrase with "escape," which is what finally appears in the published version.

This is the beginning of what Pound calls Barry's "Ezuversity" phase, during which he guides and advises her on the philosophy of writing. His method and teachings were later to be included in his *ABC of Reading* ([1934] 2010) and *Guide to Kulchur* (1938). Above all, in letter 103, sent to Barry on 27 July 1916, Pound insists on the need for simplicity and brevity in writing, as reflected in the following excerpt: "The whole art is divided into: (a) concision, or style, or saying what you mean in the fewest and clearest words; (b) the actual necessity for creating or constructing something; of presenting an image, or enough images of concrete things arranged to stir the reader" ([1950] 1974, 141). Letter 103 is indeed an excellent example of the method used by Pound in his "Ezuversity." It begins with a list of French poets the reading of whose work he considers mandatory, including Charles D'Orleans (1394-1465), Théophile Gautier (1811-1872) or the sixteenth-century group La Pléiade. However, he advises Barry not to spend too much time with French poetry and says that she would do better to devote herself to French prose. He compares Flaubert with Stendhal and states that the former's *Trois Contes*, especially "Coeur Simple," contains everything there is to know about writing:

> I think however you'd do yourself more good reading French prose. How much have you read? How much have you read as a reader reading the story? How much as artist analysing the method? As I said Sunday, I suppose Flaubert's *Trois Contes*, especially 'Coeur Simple,' contain all that anyone knows about writing. Certainly one ought to read the opening of the *Chartreuse de Parme*, and the first half of the *Rouge et Noir*. Shifting from Stendhal to Flaubert suddenly you will see how much better Flaubert writes. And yet there is a lot in Stendhal, a sort of solidity which Flaubert hasn't. A trust in the thing more than the word. Which is the solid basis, i.e. the thing is the basis. ([1950] 1974, 140)

He then goes on to suggest that Barry should also read Voltaire's *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, arguing that she will be the first woman to do so and that she must always strive to do things that nobody has ever done before:

> Presumably no other living woman will have done so. One should always find a few things which 'no other living person' has done, a few vast territories of print that you can have to yourself and a few friends. They are a great defence against fools and against the half-educated, and against dons of all sorts (open and disguised). [...] Your first job is to get the tools for your work. Later on you can stuff yourself up with erudition as much as or little as suits you. At forty you will probably thank god there is something you haven't read. ([1950] 1974, 140)

As for the English poets, Pound advises Barry not to read Chaucer as there is a risk that she might start writing archaic English, as happened to him, even though Chaucer "has in him all that has ever got into English" ([1950] 1974, 140). He also laughs at Wordsworth and dismisses Byron's style (141). However, he does recommend Robert Browning and Kipling, as long as she first of all reads the most important Russian novels. In Spain there is, according to him, only one great modern writer, Benito Pérez Galdós (142).

In other letters, such as 105, Pound emphasises the importance and urgency of Barry's leaving Birmingham and the farm where she plans to live as soon as possible and moving to London. He also says that she should forget about the idea of getting married and consider making a start on writing her autobiography instead. She could begin by writing a series of letters addressed to him, this being "much easier than trying to write it all at a sitting, and it will keep the style simple and prevent your getting literary or attempting to make phrases paragraphs" ([1950] 1974, 140).[1] In Letter 110, dated September 22, 1916, Pound again insists that Barry should go to London, which he describes as "'intime,' but scarcely ever familiar." He also mentions the war in this letter as a topic that she should never refer to during conversations in the metropolis:

> Dear Iris:
> On the whole, it is all rubbish your going to a farm. The soul is more than flesh, etc. You had much better come up to London [...]. Simply the capital is 'intime,' instantly 'intime,' scarcely ever familiar. One talks aesthetics, literature, scandal about others, political intrigue (war, for the present, though no stranger should introduce this last topic) [...].
> General instructions:
> Ask questions. Every one likes to be asked questions.
> Super-strategy:
> Ask questions showing knowledge of or sane interest in something of interest to the interlocutor. ([1950] 1974, 149)

Pound's epistolary relationship with Barry comprises more than a dozen letters and extends from April 1916 to January 1917, according to the sources consulted. However, their first physical encounter, which marks the beginning of a new life for Barry, took

[1] Sitton quotes part of this letter, but does not include the date, only a footnote indicating "undated" (2014, 417). However, the letter does appear dated (August 24, 1916) in Paige's edition (Pound [1950] 1974, 144).

place on July 13, 1916 in London. Barry reminisced about the encounter years later in her article "The Ezra Pound Period," published in 1931 in the American magazine the *Bookman*. This article is discussed in the section that follows.

4. Barry's "The Ezra Pound Period"

> WALKING across Wimbledon Common one autumn day, Ezra Pound gave me what was undoubtedly an illuminating and comprehensive account—a sort of bird's eye view for a provincial just arrived in the metropolis—of the state of literature and the arts in England in that year 1916. Though we had corresponded for some time, it was the first time I actually laid eyes on him. (Barry 1931, 159; capitals in the original)

This is the beginning of the article in which Barry portrays Pound and the London scene in the context of the First World War. Now older and much more experienced, Barry reflects on the personal impulse that led Pound to act as her mentor and, later, to exert his influence on around a dozen of the most respected English and American writers in history.

In the first part of the text, Barry recalls her first encounter with Pound. She offers a caricatured description of him and attempts to define the extraordinary manner and the original accent in which he used to express himself: "the base of American mingled with a dozen assorted English society and Cockney accents inserted in mockery, French, Spanish and Greek exclamations, strange cries and catcalls, the whole very oddly inflected, with dramatic pauses and *diminuendos*" (159; italics in the original). She then turns to the artistic and social scene, about which she writes, "ragtime had barely become jazz then and skirts were still only creeping up" (159). This helps the reader to understand the sociocultural context and the innovative nature of Pound's poetry at that time in England. As Barry points out, the general public had barely even heard of the artistic avantgarde. The differences between artistic movements such as futurism, cubism, imagism and vorticism were not appreciated or understood and were collectively seen as something sinister.

As a direct witness, then, Barry remembers what the rebellious minority poetry of Pound and his allies and disciples meant within literary modernism:

> There was a feeling that something exciting had happened which belonged peculiarly to them. Pound's poetry, reprinted derisively in popular periodicals, immediately found for him a following. For fear of seeming to exaggerate now, I hesitate to say just what his poetry and that of his associates did mean to the rebellious minority at the time. […] The influence of Pound was immediate and considerable, in the widest sense as well as in its more obvious effects, on a dozen writers now eminent in English and American literature. (160)

Barry refers to the young people who gathered around Pound as the "war generation," underlining the historical First World War context rather than their own interest in the topic of the war, which indeed was not very strong. As she remembers it, the conflict was inevitably present and at the same time generally avoided. Only when it came to an end was it finally considered and qualified as "devastating and abnormal" (161) by its survivors.

Throughout the article, the author mentions many of the artists and writers of that generation who, together with Pound, contributed through their talent to the recording of this historical period and the defining of modernism. James Joyce had recently completed *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.[2] D. H. Lawrence had managed to publish in *The English Review*, with the help of Ford Madox Hueffer (Ford). Monroe had founded the abovementioned *Poetry* magazine and Lewis had by now written *Tarr*.[3] She also pays tribute to great promises who were killed during the war, such as the sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, and the writers who suffered so bitterly in it, such as Richard Aldington and Robert Graves. However, according to Barry, the conflict did not manage to put an end to the new aesthetic and moral attitude of this period; rather, it seemed to intensify it (161).

To Barry, Pound's role was always to remind the world that the only thing that really triumphs over time is artistic work. Pound always defended the idea that civilisations do not go down in history for their military victories but rather for their artistic achievements. A good example of Pound's personal struggle for art is provided by the letters that he wrote and the editorial and literary work that he carried out through them. As the following passage from "The Ezra Pound Period" shows, twenty years before Pound's letters were published for the first time in 1950, Barry had already recognised their value:

> It has never been sufficiently recognized what heavy and important work he did for letters at that time. There were innumerable aspects to it. As literary adviser to *The Egoist* and London editor of *Poetry* (afterwards of *The Little Review)* he was forever combing obscure periodicals and tracking down new and unprinted manuscript. It was natural to him to encourage and groom young writers [...]. Only the postman knew how many tons of manuscript poured into his little flat behind the church in Kensington. Pound not only read it all, but, if there seemed the least promise anywhere, he commented on it and criticized it in explosive letters many pages long, blue-pencilled it, later received it back corrected and—often—urged the best of it on not always willing editors. (162)

[2] *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* was serialised in the *Egoist* in twenty-five installments from 2 February 1914 to 1 September 1915, thanks to Pound. It was first published in book form on 29 December 1916. It was also Pound who arranged for its publication by the American publishing house B. W. Huebsch.

[3] *Tarr* was written in 1909-1911, revised and expanded in 1914-1915 and first serialised in *The Egoist* from April 1916 until November 1917. The American version was published in 1918 and an English edition, published by the Egoist Press, appeared shortly afterwards. The revised final version was published by Chatto and Windus in 1928.

Nowadays, a century after these letters were written, Pound's correspondence enjoys great attention in the academic world (see, in addition to Paige's edition (Pound [1950] 1974), the critical introductions to Pound 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011 and 2015). However, the letters addressed to Barry have never been analysed in depth and have rarely been cited in academic journals.

As well as from writers, the correspondence that Pound was receiving at that time in his Kensington flat also came from artists, sculptors and emerging musicians whom, according to Barry, Pound intended "to encourage, to find patrons for, to find inexpensive rooms for, to find friends for, to find a meal for, to find mental stimulation and aesthetic education for, to render happy by placing them in a restaurant where the shadow of the great—Yeats or Arthur Symons, perhaps—might fall upon them, or to be regaled with anecdote or that pointed or as-yet-unprintable bit of literary gossip which must be forever forgotten" (163). These same motivations led Pound to introduce Barry into the most avantgarde artistic and literary circles of London society, a fascinating world where, in spite of her youth and non-metropolitan provenance, she did not miss the opportunity to make her way. Barry's "The Ezra Pound Period" describes in detail the weekly meetings Pound organised for all the acquaintances with whom he shared common interests and tastes. Held first of all in a cheap restaurant in Soho and later on in another restaurant in Regent Street, these dinners were of an informal nature but had the very ambitious intent of bringing together the most innovative, brilliant voices and minds of Anglo-Saxon modernism.

Barry seems to be developing the characters in a play when she describes many of them. When introducing Ford Madox Hueffer (Ford), who was completely unknown to most people at the time, she starts by defining his physical features, his appearance, his clothing and some personality traits, in order to finally reveal who he is:

> Semi-monstrous, bulging out his uniform, china-blue eyes peering from an expanse of pink face, pendulous lower lip drooping under sandy moustache as he boomed through endless anecdotes of Great Victorians, Great Pre-Raphaelites, Henry James, and somebody no one else had ever heard of and hardly believed in even then, was Ford Madox Hueffer—of particular interest to some of us when we realized that he had once been the little William Tell boy in the Rossetti painting. (165)

When describing T. S. Eliot, she highlights that even on social occasions he dressed in the manner of the bank clerk he actually was, as well as how his presence was irresistible to the female guests, whose attendance was permitted only if Pound had previously perceived in them some kind of artistic skill or talent, as Barry points out: "Tall, lean and hollow cheeked, dressed in the formal manner appropriate to his daytime occupation in Lloyd's Bank—that was T. S. Eliot, generally silent but with a smile that was as shy as it was friendly, and rather passionately but mutely adored by the three or four young females who had been allowed in because of some crumb of promise in painting or verse" (165).

Among these women was Doolittle, whom Barry describes as "taller and more silent even than Mrs. Pound and looking, somehow, haunted" (166). Barry includes a photo and caption of this "American girl who went to Europe for the summer in 1911 and never came back, having been drawn into the Imagist movement by Pound," who "sent some of her poems to Harriet Monroe's *Poetry*, her first work to be published" (166). After this, Barry spends some time introducing the editor and suffragist activist Harriet Weaver, who she considers to be "lion-hearted":

> And who was the lady sitting up so very straight with her severe hat and nervous air—she might have been a bishop's daughter perhaps? That was the lion-hearted Miss Harriet Weaver who printed Joyce when nobody else would and who, indeed, I believe made it possible for Joyce to enjoy sufficient leisure to write *Ulysses* at all, though she had never even seen him; who printed T. S. Eliot and Wyndham Lewis and Amy Lowell when nobody else did. (167)

This fragment stands out for its use of the rhetorical question and the admiration expressed by Barry for the female editor. She reminds the reader that it was Weaver who first edited works by Joyce, Eliot, Lewis and Amy Lowell, when nobody believed in them, and emphasises Weaver's humility when she states that "she was never known to speak either of herself or of anything to do with that remarkable publishing activity" (167).

The last part of Barry's "The Ezra Pound Period" focuses on the faith that Pound had in art, similar to that which other men had in patriotism, freedom, suffrage or religion. Barry supports his convictions, put forward in *The Spirit of Romance* (1928), that "artists are the antennae of the race, though the bucket-headed will never learn to trust their great artists. [...] Peace comes of communication [...]. The whole of great art is a struggle for communication," as well as his claim that "all ages are contemporaneous" (Pound quoted in Barry 1931, 169), which underpins his belief in the existence of a continuous present. According to Barry, it was this passion for communication and continuity that was behind the weekly dinners that Pound held in London, a city he considered to be "a larger university" where "the best specialists are perhaps only approachable in chance conversation" (169). This finally triggers Barry's epiphany; now, many years later, she is able to fully understand and explain what really motivated Pound to offer her that unique opportunity to attend the Ezra Pound University:

> *That* was why he would waste an afternoon on the unpleasant and conceited youth who had come up from the country to see him after writing a poem or two, or a morning writing a long letter to advise an uncouth young woman how to behave in literary society, or an evening typing a long letter on the Whole Art of Writing which, if digested, might perhaps help to turn one disciple into a tiny contribution to the general stream of letters. (170; italics in the original)

Barry closes "The Ezra Pound Period" with a declaration of gratitude for the vast quantity of work carried out by Pound. Without fail, in her view, he expressed himself with freedom and fought in an unconventional way to encourage and defend the artistic talent not only of men like Joyce, Eliot and Gaudier-Brzeska, but also of some struggling women pioneers, like Barry herself, whose path was strewn with obstacles.

5. Conclusion

Barry did read the list of literary works recommended by Pound in 1916 and throughout her career faithfully followed his most significant piece of advice: to make decisions that no woman had ever made before. The guidance she received and the literary know-how she gained from her first mentor paved her way into the modernist scene, first in London and later in New York. All this experience subsequently allowed her, during the 1920s, to become, among other things, the first film critic in England to write for a serious English journal (Montagu 1970, 106), that is, the *Spectator*. She became a pioneer in the defence of film as art, leading the way for women in the worlds of film culture and literature by adopting roles and conquering spaces that had traditionally been reserved for men.

Examining Barry's relationship with Pound sheds light on her first intellectual efforts years before she laid down the foundations for modern film criticism. And from a current feminist perspective, it also throws into relief the role Pound played in the liberation and promotion of modernist women writers. In conclusion, even after the enormous efforts made by feminist scholars since the 1970s in retrieving from oblivion countless women writers and artists, further extensive, in-depth research is required to rescue the many women who have been excluded from canonical histories of literature. A case in point are the numerous modernist women, such as Barry, whose silenced influence and key contributions deserve to be unveiled.

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T. S. Eliot in the Art of R. B. Kitaj: Anatomy of an Influence

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R. B. Kitaj's keen interest in literature, which he connected with his Jewish heritage and its reverence for the written word, shows through as an essential characteristic of his art. As a young artist, Kitaj's cultural referents included Ezra Pound and, especially, T. S. Eliot. The external and imaginative structure of *The Waste Land* (1922) inspired the composition of Kitaj's *Tarot Variations* (1958), while Eliot's "Notes" to the poem were a model for Kitaj's "prefaces," short texts supplementing many of his paintings. *If Not, Not* (1975-1976) memorialises the Shoah, also drawing on *The Waste Land*—the definitive text as well as its drafts and critical reception. Like Eliot's poetry, Kitaj's art is highly allusive, in a way that conforms to Eliot's views on tradition and creativity. This is one of the reasons to stress the continuities with modernism in Kitaj's figurative art, which developed in the predominantly non-figurative context of postmodernism. In later years, Kitaj distanced himself from Eliot—prominently in *The Killer Critic* (1997)—rejecting the poet's early emphasis on impersonality and the anti-Semitism of his verse. Despite these differences, Eliot's influence on Kitaj was intense, long-lasting and productive.

Keywords: R. B. Kitaj; T. S. Eliot; modernism; influence; tradition

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T. S. Eliot en el arte de R. B. Kitaj: anatomía de una influencia

El profundo interés de R. B. Kitaj por la literatura, que él mismo relacionó con la cultura judía y su reverencia por la palabra escrita, destaca como característica esencial de su estilo. En los inicios de su carrera, Ezra Pound y sobre todo T. S. Eliot figuraban entre los referentes culturales de Kitaj. La estructura externa e imaginativa de *La tierra baldía* (1922) inspiró la composición de su obra *Tarot Variations* (1958) y las "Notas" que Eliot adjuntó al poema constituyeron un

modelo para los "prefacios" de Kitaj, textos breves que complementan muchas de sus obras. *If Not, Not* (1975-1976) conmemora la Shoah, inspirándose también en *La tierra baldía*—tanto el texto definitivo como sus versiones anteriores y su recepción crítica. Como la poesía de Eliot, el arte de Kitaj es marcadamente alusivo, recordándonos en este aspecto a la visión eliotiana de la tradición y la creatividad. Esta es una de las circunstancias que nos permite argumentar la continuidad entre el modernismo y el arte figurativo de Kitaj, desarrollado en un contexto en el que dominaba un posmodernismo no figurativo. Hacia el final de su carrera, Kitaj se distanció de Eliot—claramente en *The Killer Critic* (1997)—rechazando el énfasis en la impersonalidad de su crítica temprana y el antisemitismo de algunos poemas. A pesar de estas diferencias, la influencia de Eliot sobre Kitaj fue intensa, duradera y productiva.

Palabras clave: R. B. Kitaj; T. S. Eliot; modernismo; influencia; tradición

1. Introduction

In 1994, the Tate Gallery hosted a retrospective of the American artist R. B. Kitaj (1932-2007). He had arrived in England in 1958 and during the following two decades became associated with other figurative artists based in London: Michael Andrews, Frank Auerbach, Francis Bacon, Lucien Freud and Leon Kossof—the School of London, a label that Kitaj was in fact the first to use in the catalogue of a collective exhibition titled *The Human Clay* (1976) (Wilson and Lack 2008, 193). The Tate retrospective seemed like the culmination of Kitaj's career, but it received scathing reviews that dismissed his work and attacked him personally. In one of these, Andrew Graham-Dixon sarcastically wondered whether Kitaj, accused of grandiloquence and vacuous name-dropping, could truly be "the T. S. Eliot of painting" (1994, n.p.).

Kitaj's early training at New York's Cooper Union introduced him to the main figures of modernism in art while, at the same time, he was becoming fascinated by modernist literature. In a letter addressed to the art critic Marco Livingstone, Kitaj explains, "I had discovered Pound and Eliot and Joyce and Kafka and an innate bibliomania was rekindled there as it would be, on and off, manic and depressive through my life, feeding and bloating the pictures I would do" (Livingstone 2010b, 13). From its earliest stages, literature was an essential part of Kitaj's art, an influence he would, in retrospect, attribute to his Jewishness and the Jewish reverence for the word (Kitaj 2010, 230-31). As an artist in the making, he looked up to Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot; as an American expatriate in Europe—first in Austria, then in Britain—he could also relate to the poets' transnational experiences. Indeed, because of the vitality and passion with which Kitaj pursued his career in a strange country, he has often been compared to Pound (Hyman 1977, 61). Interviewed by Andrew Lambirth in 1991 as a mature artist whose style had evolved through the years, Kitaj still recognised Pound's modernist motto as his own: "I aim to Make It New as that damned Pound proposed" (Lambirth 2004, 60).[1]

Although Kitaj admired Pound, Joyce, Kafka and many other writers, Eliot stands out as a constant point of reference. Despite an open rejection of Eliot's early emphasis on artistic impersonality and, more importantly, of his anti-Semitic verse, Kitaj saw in the poet a model artist who represented a facet of modernism that he could relate to and continue in his own work. The sections that follow explore the ambivalence of Kitaj's feelings for Eliot and the extent of his influence, which includes the visual imagery and poetic technique in *The Waste Land* (1922) as well as critical notions that he set forth, principally, in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919). Kitaj's views on Eliot's work and on art in general will be discussed, along with three paintings that exemplify the changing but lasting nature of Eliot's influence: *Tarot Variations*, *If Not, Not* and *The Killer-Critic Assassinated by His Widower, Even*.

[1] The use of "damned" is probably indicative of the artist's grudge against Pound on account of his anti-Semitism.

2. Eliot's "Inspired Notes," Kitaj's *Tarot Variations* and "Prefaces"

Tarot Variations (1958) was one of the paintings Kitaj completed during his first year at the Ruskin School of Art in Oxford, the city where Eliot had tried to settle during the outbreak of war in the autumn of 1914. It is Kitaj's earliest allusion to Eliot's poetry, specifically to the Tarot cards that add to the anthropological and Arthurian symbolism of *The Waste Land*. The canvas is divided into four numbered sections that might either remind the viewer of cards laid out on a surface or be perceived as the windows of an urban façade. The sections contain several human figures stylised to varying degrees (figure 1).

Figure 1. R. B. Kitaj, *Tarot Variations*, 1958. Collection Fondation Grandur pour l'Art, Genève. Oil on canvas. 109 x 86 cm. Photograph courtesy of Sotheby's. © R. B. Kitaj Estate

The most immediate assumption is that images, characters and situations in Eliot's poem inspired Kitaj. However, in writing about *Tarot Variations*, he laid emphasis on his attempt to make images stand for poems, which he thought of as visual textual objects—"to lay down pictures as if they were poems to look at" (Kitaj 2010, 232). Kitaj's comparison suggests an equivalent for concrete poetry in art, as well as the reversal of the Horatian simile *ut pictura poiesis*. The juxtaposition of visual images in *The Waste Land* led the bookish young artist to experiment with composition, but he was equally fascinated by Eliot's notes to his poem: "Eliot inspired me [...] to place images abreast (and later annotated) as if they were lines on a page" (Kitaj 2010, 232).

Kitaj makes this statement in a short text about *Tarot Variations*, where he quotes one of Eliot's notes: "I am not familiar with the exact constitution of the Tarot pack of cards, from which I have obviously departed to suit my own convenience" (Eliot 2015, 72). The artist declares that he was "besotted since teenage years by Eliot and Pound and *The Waste Land*," identifies with both poets as American expatriates in Britain and recalls that the poem "seemed revolutionary to me"; he praises Eliot's "inspired" notes, alluding specifically to the one where the poet explains how Tiresias subsumes all characters, male and female; and finally, as Eliot himself does with the Tarot, acknowledges the poet's influence but subordinates it to his creative purposes (Kitaj 2010, 232).[2]

As he did with *Tarot Variations*, Kitaj wrote commentaries for many of his other works. These commentaries, which the artist called "prefaces," often developed from notes he took during the process of composition, were displayed beside the paintings in some exhibitions and were eventually included in catalogues. Kitaj's prefaces "are not intended as explanations, but rather as accompanying short stories or prose poems" (Lambirth 2004, 61). Far from being descriptive or merely explanatory, these prefaces should be considered ekphrastic in the broadest sense, in that they do not fulfil the purpose of authoritative or restrictive clarification but are supplementary in nature: "it is precisely the gap between the apparent explanation provided by the associated texts or references and the experience of looking at the painted or drawn object which is the most pungent and memorable result of encountering one of Kitaj's works" (Peters Corbett 2000, 51). Commentary both connects and creates a gap with its object, which is also true of Eliot's "peculiarly selective and evasive notes" (Longenbach 1994, 180) and the content of *The Waste Land* upon which they are supposed to shed light. Eventually, Eliot would regret "having set so many enquirers off on a wild goose chase" (1957, 110), encouraged by his notes. Kitaj's paintings, which have been termed "picture puzzles" or "visual riddles" (Livingstone 1998b, 113, 115), coupled with their ambiguous and digressive prefaces, also invite a hermeneutic approach.

While the initial inspiration and model were Eliot's notes to *The Waste Land*, "in his later years Kitaj came to conceive of his prefaces as his own acts of Jewish exegesis"

[2] The notes to *The Waste Land* quoted and alluded to by Kitaj are those relating to lines 46 and 218 of the poem.

(Grosen 2007, 77). He had been a Jewish child growing up in a "heavily Irish Catholic" community (Livingstone 2010b, 12). In his early twenties, in Vienna, where he was a student at the Akademie der bildenden Künste, he became aware of the Shoah and affirmed his Jewish identity: "people like me had recently been pulled off the streets and taken away to be murdered" (Kitaj 1998, 132). At the same time, during this stay in Vienna, Kitaj established a friendship with the artist Frederic Sprague and with Monsignor Leopold Ungar. He found their Catholic faith "tempting" but, in those days, he "had no [strong] Jewish faith to convert from" (Kitaj 1998, 132).

Kitaj's Jewish faith strengthened in later years, taking prominence in his art from the mid-1970s and becoming stronger in the following decade through the influence of his second wife, the artist Sandra Fisher, and of close friends like Isaiah Berlin and Philip Roth (Grosen 2007, 88). This religious commitment—a personal transforming force accompanied by a sense of communal and cultural belonging—can be compared to Eliot's new vision of life and art following his conversion to Anglo-Catholicism in 1927, when he had come "to believe that religious sentiment could be a potent catalyst for artistic emotional forces" (Cuda 2014, 8). In this period, Eliot and *The Waste Land* would continue to exert a significant influence on Kitaj's art.

3. Presence of *The Waste Land* in Kitaj's *If Not, Not*

The most interesting product of Kitaj's exploration of Jewish culture and history is arguably *If Not, Not* (1975-1976). Surprisingly, the Jewish theme emerges as a result of the artist's interpretation of *The Waste Land* and is visually concretised as the image of the vaguely anthropomorphic Auschwitz gate that, from the upper left corner of the canvas, crowns the composition (figure 2). In his preface, Kitaj quotes Eliot's famous assertion, made during a lecture, that *The Waste Land*, far from having been intended as an expression of the collective state of mind after the First World War, "was only an insignificant grouse against life" (Kitaj 2010, 241). Although Kitaj echoes Eliot's wording, he does so in a radically different mood in order to evoke the fatal development in the Second World War: "the grouse here [in *If Not, Not*] has to do with [...] the murder of the European Jews" (2010, 241-42).

Kitaj also comments on "Death by Water," the section of *The Waste Land* that most intensely conveys the ambiguity at its core: is the dead Phlebas, the Phoenician sailor, vanishing into physical and spiritual nothingness in the depths of the sea, or are we to entertain hopes of rebirth, where drowning is not such, but rather a baptismal rite? In Kitaj's view, the drowning central to the poem is "the death of someone close to the poet or the death of a Jew" (2010, 242). These identifications of Phlebas, however, cannot be derived directly from the text of *The Waste Land* or its notes. Instead, they suggest Kitaj's familiarity with the poem's history and scholarly reception. During the 1950s and 1960s, John Peter defended a controversial "new interpretation of *The Waste Land*" (1969, 140) as a homoerotic elegy for Jean Verdanal, Eliot's beloved

Paris friend, killed in action in 1915—"someone close to the poet" (Kitaj 2010, 242). On the other hand, 1971 saw the publication of *The Waste Land* drafts, including peripheral material like the discarded poem "Dirge," where the drowned man is not Phlebas but Bleistein—"a Jew" (Kitaj 2010, 242).

FIGURE 2. R. B. Kitaj, *If Not, Not*, 1975-1976. Oil and black chalk on canvas. 152.40 x 152.40 cm. National Galleries of Scotland. Purchased 1976. Photograph by Antonia Reeve. © R. B. Kitaj Estate

Eliot's "Dirge" parodies Ariel's song "Full fathom five" from *The Tempest*, whose echoes remained in the definitive version of *The Waste Land*, reinforcing the central thematic death-rebirth tension. "Dirge" not only makes the predictable anti-Semitic association of the Jewish Bleistein with materialism and ostentatiousness—"Though he suffer a sea-change / Still expensive rich and strange," "From the teeth, gold in gold"—it also describes with disturbing coolness his decomposing body, dehumanising it beyond animalisation—"Under the flatfish and the squids," "Lower than the wharf rats dive" (Eliot 2015, 285). The lines in question have been defined as "the ugliest

touch of anti-Semitism in Eliot's poetry" (Ricks 1988, 38) and as "an anti-Semitic poem of exceptional force" (Julius [1995] 1996, 143).[3]

Kitaj's association of "Death by Water" with "the death of a Jew" would thus suggest that he was familiar not only with the definitive text of *The Waste Land*, but also with sections integral to the poem in its earlier stages, specifically with "Dirge." Despite the landmark publication of the *Waste Land* drafts in 1971, five years before the completion of the painting under discussion here, the artist does not comment on the anti-Semitism of Eliot's pre-*Waste Land* verse in his preface for *If Not, Not*. And yet, he identifies the "grouse" in the painting as "the murder of the European Jews" (Kitaj 2010, 242). Kitaj's painting could be considered, in Harold Bloom's terminology, an act of "misreading" or "creative interpretation" (1997, xxiii). His reference to Eliot's poem in order to support the Jewish theme is a further example of his free use of sources: as he suggests in writing about *Tarot Variations*, he does not always endorse sanctioned meanings or interpretations, often adapting them to the execution of his creative purpose.

In the general plan of *If Not, Not*, the presence of the Shoah, both as an image—the Auschwitz gate—and as a theme, "coincides with the view of the Waste Land [*sic*] as an antechamber to hell" (Kitaj 2010, 242). Kitaj's definition would be even more exact for the Unreal City, the Dantesque London depicted in "The Burial of the Dead":

> Unreal City,
> Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
> A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
> I had not thought death had undone so many.
> Sighs, short and infrequent were exhaled,
> And each man fixed his eyes before his feet. (Eliot 2015, 56-57)

By quoting Canto III of Dante's *Inferno* and documenting the source in two of his notes (Eliot 2015, 73), Eliot clearly identifies the Unreal City with the threshold of Dante's hell, reserved for the neutrals, neither virtuous nor sinful, and having no place in the circles of hell nor in the spheres of heaven. Kitaj may have linked these banned souls, as well as the crowd in the Unreal City, with those whose moral neutrality was complicit in making the Shoah possible. Interestingly, in an interview, the artist declared that "Hitlerism was like the Living Dead: *unreal*" (Kitaj 1998, 132; italics in the original).

Another indirect allusion via *The Waste Land* links *If Not, Not* with Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), further evoking the imagery of Dante's hell. Kitaj claims that Eliot "used" Conrad's novella and that "my canvas makes similar use" of that source (2010, 241). It is well known that the poet had chosen Kurtz's dying words, "The horror! The horror!" (Conrad 2002, 178), as the epigraph of *The Waste Land*, that

[3] Daniel T. McGee discusses "Dirge" focusing on anti-Semitic images and sound qualities and connecting these with the jazz poetry of Langston Hughes (2001, 512-13).

Pound did not consider the quote "weighty enough," that Eliot defended it as "much the most appropriate," and that he finally capitulated (Eliot 2011, 625, 629). The definitive poem does not, therefore, quote *Heart of Darkness* and, although Eliot did not acknowledge any allusions to the novella in it, his earlier emphatic vindication of the original epigraph is suggestive of deep associations. One of these may be the convergence of both texts in Dante.

In *Heart of Darkness*, as he climbs his way to the traders' Central Station from the river bank, Marlow finds himself in a shady grove, only to discover the spot where enslaved natives who have fallen ill are abandoned to their death:

> It seemed to me I had stepped into the gloomy circle of some Inferno. […] Black shapes crouched, lay, sat between the trees leaning against the trunks, clinging to the earth, half coming out, half effaced within the dim light, in all the attitudes of pain, abandonment, and despair. […] They were dying slowly—it was very clear. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now,—nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom. (Conrad 2002, 118)

Although these dying men are the victims of exploitation, the poignancy of their state and their fate, as well as Marlow's role as witness to it, his horrified pity and impotence, are reminiscent of Dante's vision of the neutrals in Canto III of *Inferno*. Conrad's scene is also an integral part of *If Not, Not*, as Kitaj explains—"the dying figures among the trees to the right of my canvas make similar use of Conrad's bodies" (2010, 241)—which echoes Eliot's use of *Heart of Darkness* in *The Waste Land*.

The correspondence of certain images in *If Not, Not*—the Auschwitz gate, the dying men among the trees—with themes or literary allusions—"the murder of the European Jews", *Heart of Darkness*—give them a special individual relevance within a composite whole. The same applies to other images that allude to specific art works that are identified by Kitaj in his preface: "the scattered fragments […] suggested by a Bassano painting," "the Matisse bust" on "the waste-like middle ground," "the little pool" that is "a reminder" of Giorgione's *Tempesta* (2010, 242). All these allusive visual units are juxtaposed on the canvas, creating an effect of fragmentation that is also reminiscent of Eliot's use of images, languages, scenes and allusions in *The Waste Land*.

Significantly, *If Not, Not* has been defined as "these fragments" or as "a heap of broken images, where the sun beats," quoting or echoing Eliot's verse lines (Ríos 1997, 26). Kitaj compared his composition with the structure of *The Waste Land*, which he considered remarkable for "its family of loose assemblage" (2010, 241). A characteristic of Kitaj's style is also the assemblage of conceptually powerful images, a practice that could be traced back to his earliest influences: surrealism, Warburg iconography and the collage technique, which he used "literally," but also "obliquely, in the translation of a number of sources onto a single surface" (Livingstone 2010b, 15). As a student in Paris during the academic year 1910-1911, Eliot had become interested in the various

currents of avantgarde art, which would prove inspirational in subsequent years—"the most radical technique which Eliot adapted for the poem [*The Waste Land*] was collage," associated with Picasso, Braque and Synthetic Cubism (Hargrove 2009, 137). Writing about Kitaj and Eliot's poem, John Ashbery argues that "*The Waste Land* achieves its effect as a collage of hallucinatory, random fragments" mirroring "the randomness and discontinuity of modern experience" (1983, 10). The absence of a unified lyrical voice, the incongruous elements that make up the spatial and temporal setting, the multiple allusions, the episodic structure—all these aspects make of Eliot's poem "a Cubist collage" (Patea 2011, 145-46).[4]

In sum, *The Waste Land*, including drafts and secondary literature, is present in both the compositional technique and allusiveness of *If Not, Not* and the theme of both works revolves around the collective experience of trauma. Further, it has been claimed that Eliot himself is present on the bottom left of the canvas, "a clerkish figure with spectacles and hearing aid [...] an irritable St. Anthony dreaming of the horrors of history and tempted by a naked demoness, in the manner of Bosch or Pieter Brueghel" (Hughes 1990, 270). The character has alternatively been identified as "an archetype representing a condition of man" (Livingstone 2010b, 35) and, more specifically, as a prototypical Jew whom Kitaj calls Joe Singer and who appears in several other paintings from the same period, for example in *The Jew, Etc.* (1976), where he is also portrayed with a hearing aid.

As "a secretly continuous, chronological figure, but with a changing face" (Krempel 1998, 136), Joe Singer has something of Pound's personae and of the recurrent shapeshifting characters of Eliot's early poetry, such as Bleistein or Sweeney. He can also be compared to the character who sums up all characters in *The Waste Land*, Tiresias: Singer is deaf and Tiresias, blind; Singer is a "witness" or "intruder" and Tiresias is a "mere spectator" whose perspective, nevertheless, delimits "the substance of the poem" (Eliot 2015, 74). Indeed, in a similar way, what the man with a hearing aid sees is the essence of *If Not, Not* (Livingstone 2010b, 29). The tendency to allude to art and literature from the past creatively and comprehensively is, as we have seen, an important component of this essence, which invites reflection on Kitaj's vision of tradition.

4. Kitaj, or How to Be a Traditional Modernist after 1945

Kitaj's use of literary sources does not consist in illustration or simple transposition to a different medium. In *If Not, Not*, for example, "a wonderful equivalent" to *The Waste Land*, the artist chooses Eliot's poem in order to "dramatize his own dilemma" (Hyman 1977, 55). Considering the relevance of literary allusions in Kitaj's style, his friend Robert Creeley pointed out that the texts chosen are "occasions for his [Kitaj's] own

[4] For a general assessment of the influence of painting on Eliot's early poetry, see Frances Dickey and John D. Morgenstern (2016, 4-5).

preoccupations" (quoted in Eckett 2011, 48). This modus operandi, exceptional in the art scene of the 1960s and 1970s, is what, in Eliot's view, also defines "mature" or "good" poets, those who turn what they borrow from their predecessors "into something better, or at least something different" (2014, 245). This is one of the basic contentions in the essay "Philip Massinger" (1920), where the critic also claims that "immature poets imitate; mature poets steal" (Eliot 2014, 245)—the statement that an artist like Kitaj "scrounges more than invents" (Grosen 2007, 82) echoing Eliot's famous distinction. Kitaj's practice as an artist is thus remarkably akin to Eliot's ideal of creative "maturity"; at the same time, Eliot is one of the literary authors from whose work Kitaj frequently "stole."

Eliot's "mature poets" can be assimilated with the "traditional writers" defined in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," those who have developed the "historical sense," consisting in "a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together," and involving "a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence" (Eliot 2014, 106). Becoming aware of the simultaneity of past and present, and of the timelessness inherent to it, will lead to the acquisition of the historical sense. Kitaj's artistic practice correlates with Eliot's concept, as it follows from "the searching out of pre-existing forms in order to keep alive the experience of the past in the present" (Aulich 2000, 154). Kitaj's "visualizing strategies [...] render the dissimultaneous simultaneous" (Krempel 1998, 139) and his allusions—like Eliot's, in *The Waste Land* most particularly—neutralise temporal as well as geographical demarcations: "from Giotto to Degas, from Kafka to Benjamin, he attempts to build up a certain lack of definition of time and space" (San Martín 1998, 127).

If past literature is present by virtue of its resonance and past and present literature are simultaneous, literary tradition is a timeless body and allusion stands out as the most direct way for creators to interact with it. Although Eliot's most immediate referent is poetry (or literature more generally), his notion of tradition can be understood comprehensively to embrace thought and the arts. For the School of London, tradition is certainly inclusive and multifaceted, "defined by what actually exists in the museum, the gallery and the library" (Aulich 2000, 159). Kitaj's allusive and traditional style has a parallel in the bibliophilia of an admired Jewish intellectual: he "gathers together images, styles and ideas from the history of art in much the same fashion that [Walter] Benjamin collects books" (Grosen 2007, 80).

Eliot's tradition is comprehensive, nonchronological and liable to change as its components accrue or when innovative artists successfully engage with it: "the existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them" (Eliot 2014, 106). Kitaj's interactions with cultural tradition find a model in Talmudic study of the Torah and the accumulated rabbinic exegesis, a body of literature that, resembling Eliot's organic tradition, is subject to constant analysis, revision and reelaboration. For Kitaj, equally acquainted with art and literary history and with his Jewish inheritance, "tradition is no dead letter, but a living creative process of the acquisition of textual sources" (Deppner 2000, 191).

A writer with a historical sense, Eliot argues, will be aware of the simultaneity connecting "the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer" and "the whole of the literature of his own country" (2014, 106). Kitaj, however, lacks a nationalist sense of belonging; his commitment is to Judaism and to Jewish culture. His work can be considered a continuation of the Jewish "liberal Enlightenment tradition preserved in Europe amongst secular Jews whose energies had been directed towards assimilation in the years leading to the Second World War" (Aulich 2000, 164). The development of this tradition and the possibility that it should inform and add to European culture were truncated by the rise of National Socialism and ultimately by the Shoah, "the one single event in history that speaks for the failure and collapse of the project of modernity" (Aulich 2000, 162). In his *First Diasporist Manifesto* (1989), Kitaj declared that "after 1945, the world changed for the Jews" (quoted in Krempel 1998, 140) and that Jewish artists could not ignore this. There is an echo of Virginia Woolf's famous assertion that "in, or around December, 1910, human character changed" (2008, 38). The years in question have an obvious historical and social relevance—the end-of-nineteenth-century mores and models around 1910, the defeat of Hitlerism in 1945—as well as coinciding with significant phases in the history of modernism: its heyday and its decline.

Modernists like Eliot and Pound were traditional writers in times of upheaval. Kitaj is an artist with a comparable approach but, as a Jew, his exploration of history and cultural tradition cannot be dissociated from the trauma of the Shoah (Aulich 2000, 168). His art honours Semitic culture and, more specifically, aspires to reconnect with a disrupted Jewish modernism that, as he argued in an interview, lacks the "great iconoclastic father figure in art" that exists in other areas of creativity and knowledge (Kitaj 1998, 134).[5] It would seem that Kitaj attempts to fill this significant gap, becoming a late or anachronistic modernist who revives the Eliotic model of tradition in a postmodern context decades after the horrors of 1940s Europe.

Although his work is contemporaneous with postmodern currents such as Pop Art, Kitaj is considered to have maintained a modernist affiliation, and this is largely due to his indebtedness to Eliot. Like the poet, who expressed the zeitgeist of the 1920s-1940s in a way that is emblematic of modernism, Kitaj "alludes to the sense of loss and estrangement experienced by many people in the twentieth century in relation to the roots of their own culture" (Livingstone 2010b, 118). Kitaj can also be compared with Eliot on account of their allusive and figurative style, characteristic of high modernists but considered—especially in Kitaj's case—objectionably conservative, opposed to "the principles and techniques of nonfigurative arts" on which "the aesthetics of twentieth-century Anglo-American poetry is based" (Patea 2011, 137). It can be

[5] Kitaj argues that Jewish modernism has "no Marx, no Freud, no Schönberg, no Wittgenstein, no Proust, no Kafka, no Einstein, no Warburg, no Hollywood and so on. In other words, no Jewish Picasso or Matisse or Bonnard or Mondrian or Duchamp or Brancusi" (1998, 134). Nevertheless, Marc Chagall (1887-1985), whom Kitaj does not mention, could be the missing Jewish artist on his list.

claimed, however, that the artist's "stance was by no means retrogressive or reactionary, for Kitaj has always loved and identified with the Modernist spirit" as essentially innovative (Lambirth 2004, 39). Similarly, Eliot is unquestionably a traditionalist but finds tradition especially interesting as the basis for innovation. His allusions are "distinctively modern (if not postmodern)" and, in any case, the "stylistic pastiche" and "radical fragmentation" of *The Waste Land* prefigure "the irreducible multiplicity of the postmodern condition" (Schwartz 2014, 16, 25).

We can think of Kitaj, therefore, as a late modernist, namely an artist who still believes in the imbrication of art with history and experience and in its universality (Peters Corbett 2000, 50), who can still relate to the language of modernism—as opposed to the developing varieties of postmodernism—and who continues to find it relevant and productive beyond the 1940s, adapting it to his own style. Chronological relativity characterises Kitaj's notion of modernism not as a clear-cut period, but as a creative philosophy whose exponents flourished throughout the twentieth century. In a letter to Livingstone, Kitaj declares, "if Cézanne in 1906, Degas in 1917, Kafka, Joyce and Eliot in 1925, Matisse in 1953, Picasso in 1971, Auerbach in 1991, etc., etc. are modernists then so am I" (Livingstone 2010b, 48). Kitaj followed the earliest of his modernist predecessors, Cézanne, in drawing from the works of the masters as if from life (Grosen 2007, 103-104). Tradition, therefore, is more than a repository to preserve and resort to. Almost a physical entity, it is itself the object of representation and daring transformation. A tradition with this potential, vindicated in Eliotic terms, has something of progressive resistance for Kitaj: it "exists as a challenge to contemporary cultural values rooted in the market" (Aulich 2000, 165).

These values are associated with Pop Art, often with the idealisation of the American way of life portrayed with carefree immediacy. Kitaj used the adjective *Diasporist* to refer primarily to artists who are geographically displaced or who occupy marginal positions. He called himself a Diasporist and included Eliot and Pound in this category—Americans for whom European tradition was a fertile territory. Eliot equated tradition with "the mind of Europe" (2014, 107); Kitaj was defined as a "European" artist, having distanced himself from postmodern trends in his country of origin (San Martín 1998, 127). In considering Kitaj's and Eliot's affiliation to either American or European culture, Ashbery distinguishes between their subject matter and its treatment: "a deep-seated sense of cultural malaise that seems distinctly European [...] though presented with a directness that seems distinctly American" (1983, 10).

Like Eliot, Kitaj relied on European tradition in order to develop as an artist. The interaction between the art of the past and the creativity of the present, essential to the modernism represented by Eliot, is also characteristic of Kitaj's work. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot argues that superior art should be traditional but also impersonal. Kitaj can be defined as a traditional artist, but he never championed impersonality. His objection to the ideal of impersonal art is one of his disagreements with the poet and critic whom he otherwise admired.

5. Escape to Personality (*The Killer-Critic*) and Rejection of Anti-Semitism

Eliot concludes "Tradition and the Individual Talent" hinting at a contradiction between personal emotion and the historical sense, having argued that the artist should undergo "a process of depersonalization" and that "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind who creates" (2014, 112, 108-109). The emphasis on impersonality characterises Eliot's early criticism and, although the poetry of the same period is generally assumed to be coherent with it, it is difficult to read its culmination as purely impersonal: "despite its elliptical allusions and apparent detachment, *The Waste Land* is a profoundly personal poem" (Cuda 2014, 7). However indirectly, it translates the poet's difficult circumstances at the time of its composition, exemplifying a paradox that applies to Eliot's verse in general: "the more the poet [Eliot] tries to hide himself the more he seems to give himself away" (Ellmann 1987, 15).

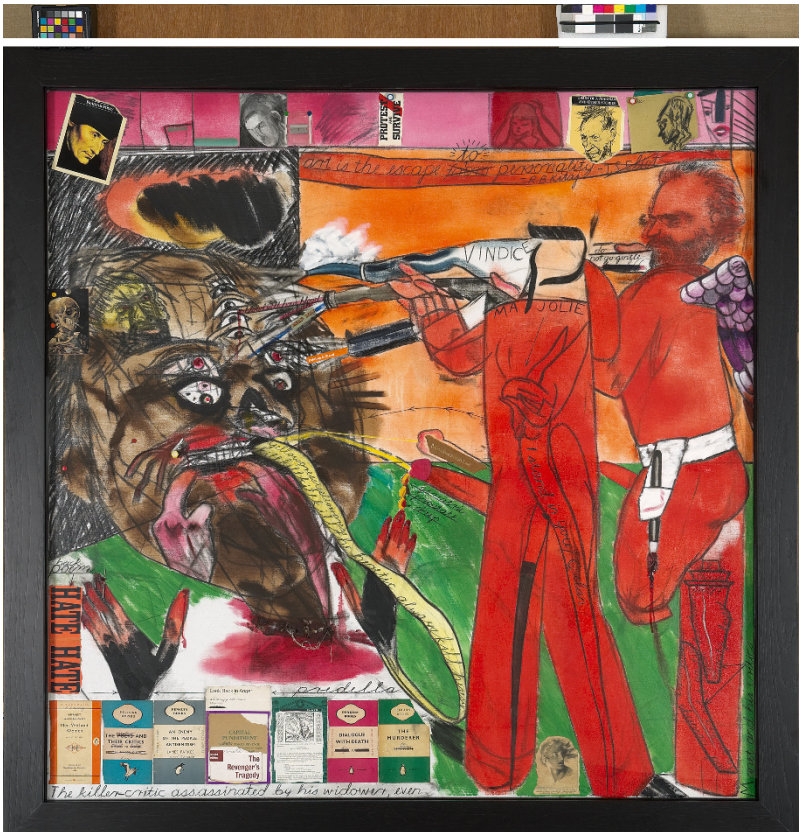
In later critical works—*The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933) and "The Frontiers of Criticism" (1958)—Eliot would reconsider the prominence he had given to impersonality, conceding that readers inevitably receive and interpret poems on the basis of their personal experience (Shusterman 1994, 40). In parallel, in his poetry polyphony and ventriloquism are gradually superseded by a single unified voice, perceived as not wholly distinct from that of the poet. *Four Quartets* (1936-1942), for example, has been defined as Eliot's spiritual autobiography (Olney 2014, 5), and his *Collected Poems 1909-1962* close with the heartfelt, sincere poem, "A Dedication to My Wife."

In Kitaj's art, where the historical, the autobiographical and the emotional mingle (Lambirth 2004, 55), we can trace a comparable evolution towards unity, which Ashbery expresses in terms of contrast: "there is the tension between the extremely fragmented look of Kitaj's early work and the apparently more unified and single-minded character of the late work" (1983, 12). The latter is also more personal. Livingstone argues that, from the 1980s and 1990s on, Kitaj's frequent self-portraits and paintings from life confirm the predominance of "frankness" over "secrecy," pointing to an art "with a therapeutic or autobiographical intention," to "the honest and naked expression of self" (1998b, 122, 125). The climax of this progression is the *Los Angeles* series, produced in the 2000s—after Kitaj's return to the United States in 1997, three years after the tragic death of Sandra Fisher—and depicting the artist and his deceased wife in scenes of spiritual and erotic intimacy.

The artist was certain that Fisher's sudden death from a brain haemorrhage had been precipitated by her distress over the fiercely negative reviews of Kitaj's retrospective at the Tate, earlier in 1994. In the context of the so-called "Tate War," Kitaj's counter-attack consisted in an art of revenge, powerfully exemplified by *The Killer-Critic Assassinated by His Widower, Even* (1997) (figure 3). The artist is represented in it as two separate figures: one has his face and wings, but only one leg, and carries his brush in a holster; the other has the Hebrew letter *kof* for a head (the initial of "Kitaj", transliterated) and contains the silhouette of a winged naked woman, presumably Fisher. The two bright red figures

shoot at a monstrous head—large and dark between two bloody hands—and one of them urinates or ejaculates into its mouth. The painting incorporates written words and phrases, as well as pasted sketches or book covers that define the thematic spectrum of the work—artists and their critics, revenge, anger, death, murder, anti-Semitism. All these elements characterise Kitaj's style—his earlier use of collage, his commitment to Jewish culture, his propensity to allusion and quotation. In short, "all the aspects of his art to which they [the critics] had expressed such violent objection" (Livingstone 2010b, 52).[6]

FIGURE 3. R. B. Kitaj, *The Killer-Critic Assassinated by His Widower, Even*, 1997. Oil and collage on canvas. 152 x 152 cm. Astrup Fearnley Collection, Oslo, Norway. Photograph by Thomas Widerberg. © R. B. Kitaj Estate



There are three literary quotations in *The Killer-Critic*. "I stand in you / Celan," written on the body of the winged female figure, is a present tense variation on a line by the

[6] For a dissection of the allusive components of *The Killer-Critic*, see Cilly Kugelmann et al. (2012, 234-38).

Jewish poet, "ich stand / in dir," which closes his poem "Es stand" ("There stood"). Apart from describing literally the position of the female angel in the painting, the line echoes an earlier one in the poem that hints at the lovers' being Jewish ("es stand / Jerusalem um uns," "there stood / Jerusalem around us") and it can also mean "I was erect / in you" (Bernstein 2000, 118-19), which may explain why the two red figures have erect penises and anticipates the eroticism of Kitaj's *Los Angeles* series. "Do not go gentle," written on one of the guns, quotes Dylan Thomas's famous elegy for his father, "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night." Finally, above the firing squad, in a red band, we can recognise Eliot's dictum "poetry is an escape from personality," from "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (2014, 111). Crucially, however, it is altered and contradicted: Kitaj writes "art" instead of "poetry," and the preposition "from" and the name "T. S. Eliot" are crossed out and replaced by "to"—marked with scintillations—and by "R. B. Kitaj" respectively.

Kitaj's deliberate misquotation shows that, by the time *The Killer-Critic* was first exhibited in the late 1990s, he had indeed come to think of art as "an escape to personality." The painting shows that his style remained as allusive as ever and still indebted to Eliot, but he makes allusions and quotations cohere in order to transpose his personal anger and bereavement in a very direct way. He confronts the critics by affirming the defining traits of his style, his love for Fisher, her memory and their union in the Jewish faith. The loss of his wife made Kitaj even more committed to his religion (Eckett 2011, 48). His refutation of artistic impersonality, expressed in *The Killer-Critic*, precedes a stronger rejection of the anti-Semitism of Eliot's poetry.

In 2007 Kitaj published *Second Diasporist Manifesto*, defined in its subtitle as "a long poem in 615 free verses"—these are, in fact, short paragraphs reflecting on various aspects of art and Jewish culture. One of them begins with the capitalised motto "PAINT THE OPPOSITE OF ANTISEMITISM," then quotes two lines by Eliot—"The rats are underneath the piles, the Jew is underneath the lot," from the poem "Burbank with a Baedeker, Bleistein with a Cigar" (1920)—and ends "Hi, Tom. Fuck you in my art each day" (Kitaj 2007, n.p.). Kitaj's sharp remarks, which may be read as exemplifying the "Oedipal rivalry" often associated with Bloom's "anxiety of influence" (1997, xxii), can be connected with the intensity with which the anti-Semitism of Eliot's poetry had been discussed in recent years. Anthony Julius's *T. S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism and Literary Form* had appeared in 1995, proposing what he called an "adversarial reading" ([1995] 1996, 1-2). As John Xiros Cooper explains, "Julius's book had the effect of inciting others to disparage Eliot" (2011, 287) and it was followed by heated debate in cultural supplements and academic journals. Julius himself defended his study in an article bearing a revealing dedication: "For R. B. Kitaj" (1998, 43). Subsequent scholarship continued to reinforce Eliot's reputation as an anti-Semite, with accusations of expelling Jews from the realm of tradition, of associating them with "noise" rather than language, with "an absence of poetry" and with "barbaric liberalism" (McGee 2001, 518, 523, 520)—such prejudice standing in stark contrast to Kitaj's vision of Judaic culture as eminently literate.

Asked about his favourite poets in a 2004 interview, Kitaj mentioned Paul Celan and Emily Dickinson (Lambirth 2004, 121), but not Eliot. Yet, despite this, he would approve the project for a limited Arion Press edition of *The Waste Land* using details of *If Not, Not* to illustrate the poem, which appeared in the year of his death (Eliot 2007).

6. Conclusion

Kitaj first approached Eliot's poetry as an art student and it seemed natural for him to establish connections between his interests and inclinations in art and literary modernism. The literary quality of Kitaj's paintings can be ascribed to the artist being an avid reader and a Jew, educated to honour the textual. It is not surprising, therefore, that the artist was as attracted to the visual imagery of *The Waste Land—Tarot Variations*, *If Not, Not*—as to its "Notes," on which he modelled the exegetic "prefaces" or "commentaries" that accompany many of his paintings.

Kitaj's art and his religious and cultural commitment soon became closely interconnected. *If Not, Not* finds inspiration in the Dantesque imagery of *The Waste Land* in memorialising the victims of the Shoah. If aspects of Eliot's poem had urged Kitaj to experiment with images and their layout in *Tarot Variations* and to enrich or condition reception through commentary, *If Not, Not* attempts to offer a visual correspondence for the same source as a whole in order to express a subjective moral concern. Further, Kitaj's painting not only draws on the definitive text of *The Waste Land*; it alludes to literary works to which Eliot alluded in the poem—Dante's *Inferno*, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*—shows knowledge of earlier drafts—the poem "Dirge," for example—and familiarity with secondary sources that elucidate the text. At a formal level, *If Not, Not* reproduces the poem's collage effect and its aesthetics of fragmentation.

Allusion to *The Waste Land* is thus central to *If Not, Not*, but it is only one among many. Like Eliot's, Kitaj's style is highly and multiply allusive, evidencing the artist's "historical sense" and his way of relating creatively with a tradition inclusive of all the arts and bringing the past into the present. We can therefore think of Kitaj as the equivalent in art of Eliot's "mature" or "traditional" poets. In reflecting on modernism, the tradition most immediate to him chronologically and culturally, Kitaj notices and laments the absence of a prominent Jewish visual artist. Bearing this observation in mind, his work may be perceived as an attempt to fill in this gap. Aware of the continuities of his art with that of the first half of the twentieth century and of the substantial differences with the dominating postmodern trends of his own time, Kitaj thinks of himself as belonging to modernism as a creative philosophy rather than a delimited period in art history.

Kitaj's vision of modernism is largely shaped by his knowledge of Eliot's poetry and criticism. Although he adapted the imagery of *The Waste Land* to his purpose of dealing with the trauma of the Shoah in *If Not, Not*, he inevitably distanced himself from Eliot after the anti-Semitism of his poetry was exposed and openly discussed

in the 1980s and 1990s. In these years of Kitaj's artistic maturity, his allegiance to Judaism was stronger than ever and he forcefully rejected Eliot's controversial poems in his *Second Diasporist Manifesto*. At the same time, Kitaj strongly vindicated an eminently personal art: for example, in *The Killer-Critic Assassinated by His Widower, Even*, where Eliot's early emphasis on artistic impersonality is contested, the challenge taking the form of deliberate misquotation from "Tradition and the Individual Talent."

And yet, despite aesthetic differences and moral objections, which cannot be overlooked, Eliot was far more than an occasional or superficial influence on Kitaj. The artist found in the poet and critic a model that allowed him creatively to embrace tradition while developing his own art. That art does not cling nostalgically to the past or renounce originality. Rather, it attests to the continuities between modernism and postmodernism as well as to their chronological relativity, thereby perpetuating the spirit and validity of modernism beyond its decline in the 1940s.[7]

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Pain and Narrative Shape: Beyond the Indocility of Trauma in Three Newfoundland Novels

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This article looks at trauma beyond the fixation on the limits of narrative as expressed in the mainstream theory of trauma in the 1990s, in the work of Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, among others. Its purpose is to achieve an appreciation of narrative as a navigable textual itinerary whose very flows and discontinuities are energized by a reconciliation (or lack thereof) with life's shocking and incomprehensible moments. I build upon Amir Khadem's rejection of the polarity between narrative and the incurable psychic wound in order to provide textual analyses of a corpus of three contemporary novels set in the context of a historically traumatized regional identity, that of Newfoundland in Canada: *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* (2003), by Kenneth J. Harvey, *February* (2009), by Lisa Moore, and *Sweetland* (2014), by Michael Crummey. A revision of the role of genres traditionally used to describe historical and personal crises will help us observe how their conventions function within a context of outrage at the global and regional mismanagement of natural resources.

Keywords: Canadian literature; testimony; trauma; gothic; environmental disasters; Newfoundland

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El dolor y su forma narrativa: más allá de la indocilidad del trauma en tres novelas sobre Terranova

Este artículo examina el concepto de trauma más allá de la fijación recurrente sobre los límites del lenguaje que se manifestaba en influyentes estudios de la década de 1990—de Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman y Dori Laub, entre otros—que definían el trauma como la

antítesis de la narración misma. Cuestionamos esta interpretación para poder observar las narraciones como itinerarios textuales cuyos flujos y discontinuidades se manifiestan a través de las reacciones de los personajes con respecto a momentos desgarradores e incomprensibles de sus vidas. Partiendo de la propuesta de Amir Khadem, que sugiere dejar atrás la polaridad entre suceso traumático y narración, este artículo ofrece un análisis textual de tres novelas contemporáneas que giran en torno a una identidad regional canadiense traumatizada por su historia, la de la isla de Terranova: *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* (2003), de Kenneth J. Harvey, *February* (2009), de Lisa Moore, y *Sweetland* (2014), de Michael Crummey. Una reflexión en torno a cómo los géneros utilizan ciertas convenciones narrativas para canalizar momentos de densidad emocional de difícil descripción puede ayudarnos a identificar cómo operan las convenciones genéricas en un contexto de indignación por la destrucción a nivel regional y global de los recursos naturales.

Palabras clave: literatura canadiense; testimonio; trauma; gótico; desastres medioambientales; Terranova

The sea as it spends itself
can teach us how to grieve—the way
it rushes onto a rock beach, seethes
and sucks back, informationless
the way
it booms under a cliff,
calling all things to their hollows.
(McKay 1997, 24)

1. Introduction: "To What Extent Is Grief Not Narratable?"

The novels *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe*, *February* and *Sweetland* deal with major tragic events in the history of Newfoundland, Canada—namely, the collapse of the Grand Banks cod fishery in the late 1980s, the sinking of the oil rig Ocean Ranger in 1982 and the resettlement of Newfoundland outport communities starting in the 1950s, respectively. *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* (2003), by Kenneth J. Harvey, describes what happened to the members of an outport (i.e., a small coastal community) after overfishing led to fish stocks falling to unsustainable levels. The demise of the fishing industry in Newfoundland in the 1980s was an environmental disaster that involved massive job losses in the region and the disappearance of a way of life that for centuries had depended on the sea for sustenance. The novel encompasses the life of those whose existence no longer has a purpose in a place where the magical and the sinister start to run amok, causing its inhabitants to die in strange circumstances. *February* (2009), by Lisa Moore, focuses on what it meant for a young mother of four to lose her husband in the sinking of the oil rig Ocean Ranger in 1982, where all 84 men on the rig died after it capsized 300 kilometres east of St. John's in the Hibernia oil field. This tragic event, caused by the company's carelessness in matters of safety procedures, still reverberates in Newfoundland, in the past an underindustrialised region historically sensitised to the Canadian central government's lack of concern toward them. *Sweetland* (2014), by Michael Crummey, revolves around the day-to-day tribulations of an aging man who refuses to accept the Newfoundland government's package to leave the small island he lives in and move to a more urban location. When everyone else leaves the island, called, like himself, Sweetland, he has to confront the hostile environment. This, together with recollections of his somewhat failed life, threatens his inner peace as well as his physical integrity.

These three iconic Newfoundland crises—environmental, economic and social—were provoked by aggressive international fishing technologies, a lack of security protocols in the extraction of oil and inadequately thought-out resettlement policies. However, the three novels under examination in this article are not limited to a warning message against global greed or to a description of the unease provoked by the loss of traditional lifestyles. Their value also lies in how they tap into a range

of genres, literary resources and motifs that have been frequently used to narrate tragedy and loss, from allegory to journal writing. Thus, their textual rendition of historical disasters gives visibility to the manner in which generic conventions can make pain and loss tractable and observable within a story. In their appropriation of the allegorical ghost story and of the journal's first-hand account of ongoing experience, Harvey, Moore and Crummey explore ways in which fantasy and elegy, among other generic modes, can come to terms with the contemplation of destruction, loneliness and death. A reflection on the effects of crises on literature, whether social or individual, demands we bear in mind questions about how reality is represented in fiction and about the adaptability of established narrative structures to absorb and articulate contemporary catastrophes.

The creative act of giving narrative form to crises, trauma and harrowing situations signals the need to give meaning to experiences which a priori undermine any attempt "at explanation or rationalization," according to Shoshana Felman (1992, 4). That trauma is at odds with representation, that it lies outside the explicable, has been a predominant approach taken by trauma and witness studies, their main claim being that narrative is insufficient to express acute distress (see, for example, Scarry 1985, 2-22; Felman 1992, 5, 9, 200-201; Laub 1992, 78-80; Van Alphen 1997, 43-53; Gilmore 2001, 32; Müller 2002, 20). These formulations, as Judith Butler has noticed, set "violence and language in opposition, as the inverse of each other" (1997, 6). In the 1990s, the definition of the violent traumatic event as a physical or psychological wound that exceeds our cognitive and linguistic capabilities was often both the starting point and the conclusion of highly influential studies that centred around the memories of the Holocaust, such as those by Felman and Dori Laub (1992), Cathy Caruth (1995, 1996) and Kirby Farrell (1998), among others. These interpretations, which focused on the drama produced by the impossibility of verbalising the effects of extreme violence, seemed to emerge from an overpowering interest in the moments when language and narrative tried and failed to communicate properly. Literary expression or expression of any kind, especially in the form of a story, becomes, clearly, a desired aim in the aftermath of any shocking event, and this instinctive search for understanding makes any thwarted attempt at narration an even more anticlimactic and painful experience, a kind of paradigmatic moment of genuine pain that bears a powerful hypnotising attraction. Narrative as such was therefore often regarded by trauma and witness criticism as a medium whose value lay precisely in its very impracticability (Felman 1992, 3; Engdahl 2002a, 8-9). The subtitle of Felman and Laub's influential *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992), as well as the mythological image invoked in the title of Horace Engdahl's introduction to the field, "Philomela's Tongue: Introductory Remarks on Witness Literature" (2002), significantly emphasise the centrality of the idea of failure of verbal articulation to mainstream witness and trauma theory. The impossibility of the telling became valuable in itself because it seemed to reach

beyond linguistic and narrative structuring in order to take us to the authentic reality of an unmediated contact with unbearable grief (Kansteiner and Weilnböck 2010, 230), a sort of "dramatization of obstruction" (Al-Kassim 2010, 120).

Although this general conceptualization of trauma has also been used in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, there have been other theoretical approaches that have sought to surpass this fixation with the indocility of the traumatic occurrence by shifting attention from the pain of the individual psyche to the social construction of trauma. This constructivist explanation of the traumatic event claims that trauma "appears as a complex composition of material elements, social scripts and protocols for agency" (Tygstrup 2012, 198) and is produced by acts of collective memory. It is this approach to trauma that serves as the starting point of this article.

Horrific events, according to Jeffrey Alexander, "are not inherently traumatic"; instead, "trauma is a socially mediated attribution" (2012, 13). Amir Khadem, following Alexander's approach, defines historical trauma not as a natural response but as a social construction produced and maintained by the media. On this basis, he suggests addressing the issue by moving beyond psychoanalytical theories applied to separate individuals and then automatically projected on society, as if society "at large" could be studied "like an individual human being" (2014, 183). From Alexander's and Khadem's perspective, trauma is not first-person and impassable, but rather it can be analysed as a cluster of texts, images and narratives that are instrumentalised by political and cultural institutions. Khadem focuses on the processes through which individual memories have been collected, accumulated, publicised and made to represent the index of a shared past. He addresses literature as "part of the social interplay of forces that lead to trauma" (2014, 187). Through stories, movies, documentaries, books, television series, photographs, interviews and other forms of representation, trauma is mobilised and ascribed a set of meanings, as well as a set of emotional reactions. Thus, when literature is defined not only as a container of shocking situations but as an active agent that generates interpretations of historical crises, the observing positions from which trauma can be studied in literature are expanded.

In the quotation that forms part of the title of this introductory section, Rochelle Almeida succinctly questions the non-narratability of grief, before going on to explore other (related) issues (2004, 217). Similarly, Khadem's proposal is to look at narratives outside the bonds of a blinding preoccupation with cognitive walls and linguistic blockades by shifting the main question from "is it possible to narrate?" to "how is the narration perceived?" (2014, 182). He considers literature to be one of the instruments that solidifies memories of a horrible past. His discussion of the ways in which novels may construct, in different and various ways, the established Western trauma narrative of the 9/11 terrorist attack in New York shows how narratives can deploy existing strategies to redefine the response of the victims to memories of violence and injustice.

Narratives about disasters have historically given cohesion to Newfoundland as a cultural community. A foundational loss was the failure to establish itself as a nation in

1949 when the vote in favour of joining Canada won by a whisker. A string of political and social plunders followed, like the traumatic resettlement program, starting in the 1950s, which uprooted whole communities across the island, relocating people in urban centres where jobs failed to materialise. Other economic disasters were the failure of the attempted new industries in the 1950s and 1960s and, in particular, the 1992 cod moratorium, which provoked massive out-migration to distant parts of Canada and beyond. These losses still resonate deeply in the region and they often feature in popular and serious literature along with stories of tragic adventure, shipwreck, sealing disasters and the extinction of one of its indigenous groups, the Beothuk. Although perhaps no longer so relevant, a strong sense of separateness has been sustained in Newfoundland by this sense of loss and outrage, which became part of a renewed sentiment of nationalism in the 1970s. My focus in this article, however, is not to assess Newfoundland's long emotional bondage to a history of victimisation, as this issue has been amply discussed elsewhere (Chafe 2004, Hanrahan 2015). And although it is necessary to allude to these important concerns in Newfoundland's collective imaginary for the sake of contextualisation, my aim is to redirect Khadem's proposed paradigm of inquiry from social context toward generic choice and the inner workings of the texts themselves.

In *Precarious Life*, Butler emphasises the importance of paying attention to the kind of narrative frame or genre within which a cataclysm is explained because it delimits "what we can hear" (2004, 4). Jakob Norberg has also insisted that formal choices bias our "opportunities of thought" in a crisis (2011, 135). In this connection, Ilka Saal insightfully notes that when "translating a wound into narrative," it is not only the incomprehensibility of trauma that is at stake, but also important questions "with regard to what kind of narrative perspectives, structures and tropes we ultimately deploy to render the ineffable fathomable" (2011, 453). I will therefore attempt to reach an understanding of how three internationally read novels coming out of Newfoundland have imagined crucial traumatic events in its history by discussing how those harrowing moments that, according to mainstream trauma theory, seem to lie outside language, are actually given shape by the conventions of certain literary genres.

2. The Gothic as Appeasing Narrative Structure

Narrative is a source of intelligibility, a human resource meant to alleviate meaninglessness and chaos, at least in traditional storytelling (Andrews et al. 2004a, 7). Genres, as meaning-making structures, are formalised symbolic practices that give form to imaginative experience thanks to the use of certain familiar conventions. They also organise and generate the writer's desire to act, creating certain appetites in the reader (Bawarshi 2003, 78, 91). Genres make the intersection of literature and ritual visible (Nünning et al. 2013a, 6); they channel emotion into pattern, eliminate "randomness from life by turning it into a plot" (Ryan 2013, 32) and create

a sense of human relatedness. Plot has traditionally been defined as an "armature," "a promise of progress toward meaning" (Brooks 1992, xii) that symbolises our desire for synthesis and retransmission. From this perspective, story itself seems to be epistemologically in contradistinction to the apparently intractable nature of the traumatic psychological wound.

Each of the stories that Harvey, Moore and Crummey create in order to ponder the traumatic event follows a different pattern. Harvey organises grief and social chaos through an allegory of epic proportions and shapes it as an apocalyptic tale; Moore and Crummey, on the other hand, register the effects of social vulnerability through an itemised stream of consciousness, similar in structure to the journal, where characters are engaged in a disciplined routine aimed at counteracting a psychological process of depression. Their novels occupy different positions within a representational spectrum ranging from the uncanny incident (*The Town That Forgot How to Breathe*), apparent domestic banality (*February*) and gritty naturalism (*Sweetland*). In these literary spaces, individuals live isolated lives in the aftermath of decisions taken in remote centres of power.

The Town That Forgot How to Breathe (henceforth *The Town*) adapts gothic protocols to the description of a Newfoundland outport called Bareneed after the demise of the cod fishery. People in Bareneed are dying because of a strange physical disorder that causes them to forget how to breathe. They become apathetic and violent, they wonder where they are and who they are, and then die. This disease soon assumes huge proportions: the town comes to resemble an epic apocalyptic movie of the most commercial kind, where doctors, scientists, soldiers and police officers become distraught by the baffling turn of events. The town is gradually seized by a paroxysm of gothic occurrences, and the danger of the spread of a virus that causes people to drown in air comes together with the sighting and fishing of anomalous sea creatures. Also, the uncorrupted bodies of men who were lost to the sea centuries ago resurface dressed in their old clothes and, for lack of a better location, they are laid on the filleting tables of the community's abandoned fish plant.

Some wise locals claim that the strange events are caused by industrial progress and by the refusal of the community in general to believe in spirits. Their knowledge of local lore, conveyed in Newfoundland dialect, is bizarrely mixed with the massive display of the military paraphernalia of a quarantined town. The story of Joseph, a fishery officer and a "towny"—a slightly derogatory word Newfoundlanders use for city dwellers—is the thread that helps the reader keep up with the unstoppable supernatural manifestations. The motifs of the apocalyptic tale, the ghost story, the gothic grotesque and satire are adapted and combined by Harvey to fit the specific history and geography of a Newfoundland outport at a time of inaction and despondency.

The gothic genre has traditionally provided conventions to represent shocking events: violence, slavery, power abuse, cruelty, inequality and so on. It creates a territory where the actual and the imaginary can meet and display a variety of

resonant motifs, including burial, invasion, personality disruption, disease and entrapment, among others. Its codes are often studied on a par with trauma narratives because the gothic is an instrument of translation, a comparison model that, like any other genre, endows narratives with a certain amount of navigability. We expect the strange occurrences in the gothic to embody fears and anxieties, to flesh out historical breaches of the natural or desirable order of things. The potential of haunting as a trope for Canadian identity may operate within the unsettling atmosphere of "traumatized nations" and "the return of the repressed," as Justin Edwards has noted (2005, 131-2), but also within a more invigorating scenario where acceptance of the supernatural has positive implications, since it provides humanity with spiritual reparation and cultural sustenance. Brian Johnson (2009), Cynthia Sugars (2010, 2011) and Marlene Goldman (2012), for example, regard the gothic as a genre that enables poetic justice.

This latter therapeutic goal is given narrative shape by Harvey's novel in a literal fashion. At the end of *The Town*, a tsunami engulfs Bareneed and we get a glimpse of what comes after this metaphorical cleansing. Locals stop using electricity and other technological commodities, forget about television and turn to storytelling. The fish are "gradually replenished" (Harvey 2003, 470) along with the spirits. Sugars concludes that, in this novel, characters have been punished "for a failure to believe" in ghosts (2011, 67), their sin consisting in not having been "haunted enough" (2010, 17). There is in Newfoundland a long tradition of the supernatural story, both oral and written, and the novel's final turn to the gothic genre's healing project reinfuses the community with the sense of belonging they allegedly possessed before capitalism. The return to a neglected legacy of ghosts is the antidote for mental vacancy, for "the plague of pointlessness" (Harvey 2003, 27), and its curative effects come in the form of successful community management.

According to Sugars (2011, 17), the gothic as a corrective implies a conservative ethics in the case of this particular novel. Indeed, its apparent facile outcome is tongue-in-cheek, appearing childish in its automatic transformation of every detail of stereotypical outport life into elements of the horror tale. Adherence to the generic codes is so relentlessly pursued in the novel that the gothic atmosphere becomes a caricature from the very start. Characters become puppets who blindly follow a stereotyped symbolic agenda and the final surrender to the happy ending appears too shallow a trick to heal what has been an open wound in Newfoundland's memory. But perhaps rather than assessing *The Town* in relation to the mode of fantasy, we should relate its playfulness regarding the supernatural with a deliberate adhesion to ritual and game as it stays at the level of the children's tale, its ending being a staged performance of grief followed by reward. Wellbeing is restored to this wayward community once it accepts, as in the past, the nonmaterial and otherworldly guidance of a mellowed gothic version of social life. The gothic here does not send mortals a dose of damnation, but the promise of renewed spirituality.

3. The Fight Against Commodified Explanations of Reality

In view of this appeasing final solution, we might think that *The Town* conveys a superficial view of life as a controllable, and explainable, project. The characters' assimilation of trauma no longer seems a daunting task once it is made amenable to the conventions of a popular genre. However, in my view, what really acts as a catalyst in the novel are the few moments when what is witnessed is rendered not as a ready-to-use symbol but as actual impressions of the fear deeply rooted in the characters' minds. In these instances, the characters become humble witnesses who are unable to absorb the historical dimension of the idea they are supposed to represent. This happens most frequently in the visions they have of the ocean.

Lloyd Fowler, one of the main characters, refuses to draw another breath, loses his command of language and shuts his eyes before dying: "He felt the pitch-black swell of the sea, rising, the death that the sea held for them all. His hands pulling on the latticework of a net, his weather-beaten hands dragging in the empty weight, black water running from the net holes" (52-53). Miss Laracy, town elder and prey to solitary visions of apocalypse, remembers the tragic toll a storm took in the past, "Without a gust of warning, chaos had blustered in on the wind, boiling the sea black in an unsteady count of minutes. […] The sky descending, the ocean rising to become one and eclipse the two human specks in the speck of a boat that had dared to venture forth" (70). Joseph, the fisheries officer, imagines "how the rain must be beating against the surface of the ocean and how all the drowned bodies with their heads tilted upward were watching the pinpoints striking the division between air and water, the barrage of piercing that might fully fragment the surface" (129). Through these lyrical depictions of the sea, what I would describe as the generic incontinence of this novel is momentarily punctured. These moments of, so to speak, inner sinking, are perceived by the reader as sincerity pieces, lying, as they do, outside of nature's premeditated gothic plan to take revenge on those who have forgotten to respect traditions. The attitude toward grief shown here is not an attempt at domestication, but the realisation of a power of destruction beyond oneself. Lyricism counteracts trite allegory: the act of witnessing, as in the selected quotes, is not associated with a loss of words, but with a renewed capacity to look at the ocean in all its fearful intensity. No healing narrative is needed, or sought, simply the capacity to visualise an immense body of water rising and falling.

Surprisingly, the intimacy and terror conveyed by these images of the sea closely resemble the visions that the characters have in the other two novels, where people's heads are seen tilting upward while they descend into a dark ocean. In *February* and *Sweetland* respectively, Helen, the bereaved wife, and Moses Sweetland, the old timer, use stories to save themselves from despair and loneliness, but their memories seem to contain only suspended moments of panic and sorrow, vivid recollections of death they cannot digest with only the discourses available: clichéd consolatory thoughts provided by relatives, anecdotes of resignation provided by neighbours, political justifications provided by the media. Helen's life is relentlessly haunted by the image of her husband falling into the icy

water in the darkness of the night. And Sweetland often remembers the painful moment when his brother fell overboard into a fishing net, the white of his face disappearing under the weight of fish, dying as he was being pulled down "into that black" (134).

These are occasions when characters are trapped by the physicality of a situation whose underlying motives are not defined. Although the impact of what is imagined or witnessed may outweigh any verbal response, the plot of the narrative is precisely created out of a dynamic of emotional continuity and discontinuity, of fluidity and blockage around the moment of shock. The lack of intelligibility of the situation becomes an incentive on a diegetic level for the characters. On the extra-diegetic level, the story's hold on the reader is not only energised by the hurtful event as such or by the impossibility of encapsulating it in words—this in itself forms part of the ritualised scenario of affect cherished by trauma criticism—but also by its role in propelling or hindering narration. The danger of being forever engulfed by muteness, by the "magnitude of the shock," in Khadem's words (2014, 192), is overridden by the characters' struggle to find alternative scenarios and discourses that prepare them to assimilate what has happened. In *February* and *Sweetland*, the moments when the accidental or the unaccountable occur, that is, those events for which there is no epistemology, are revered rather than pathologised. There is disorientation and disconnection, but other kinds of logic and emotion are sought.

In *February* events and emotions are mostly portrayed as effects of light on surfaces, and the constant rendering of emotional life in these terms becomes in itself the dialectics through which Helen understands what has happened to her. For example, her recollections of married life are "bits of afternoons that sharpen in focus until they are too bright" (249). When she hears the news about the sinking of the oil rig where her husband Cal was working, tragedy is perceived as a flood of light that dazzles her, leaving people and objects around her forever altered: "A blanket of white was aglitter out there. Magnificent and frigid and light-spangled. As long as she lives Helen will never forget how beautiful the snow was, and the sky, and how it flooded her and she couldn't tell the beauty apart from the panic. She decided then, and still believes, that beauty and panic are one and the same" (271).

The death of her husband on the night of February 14 on the Ocean Ranger rig turns her life into a sustained effort to try to see, not just to imagine, his last moments alive. With three young children and another one on the way, her existence becomes a whirl of tasks and jobs and life lessons to teach her kids, but what crosses like a burning arrow through the details of her life is her inability to move beyond the moment of Cal's body hitting the sea. Her longing to be with him *inside* that moment undermines the deceiving grammars of cause and consequence that the oil company uses to appease the victims' families, "the linguistic dimension of neoliberalism," as Herb Wyile describes the corporation's glossy definitions of risk for workers (2010, 67). It was a lexicon around safety that was actually detrimental to safety: "Shoreline Group specialized in risk assessment, organizational restructuring. They specialized in all the touchy-

feely stuff from the 1980's: lateral thinking, creativity in the work-place, psychological support during downsizing or natural disaster, pink slips, sweater-vests and distressed denim, a bold new self-generating speak that boiled over and reduced to a single, perfect word: *efficiency*" (Moore 2009, 130; italics in the original).

For Helen, the persistence of that moment actually helps her to deconstruct any reparatory narrative of explanation, whether from relatives, the company or the government. The entrepreneurial, legal, institutionalised phrasings, even the language of mourning, of counselling and of yoga instructors, which takes healing for granted, are unusable. They are presented as sham discourses, deceitful argumentations full of their own smug morality. Helen wishes to avoid catharsis and mourning, since surrendering to them would somehow imply her acceptance. She does not allow the reabsorption of the disturbing element into the continuity of her life, even when this would enable her life to begin to flow again. The ethical position she takes in the face of tragedy is not the management of grief, but she internalises what has often been called resistant mourning, an attitude that discards closure and objects to any healthy measure of forgetting. This personal choice is in keeping with the concept of unresolved mourning, advocated, for example, by Jacques Derrida (1986) and by other critics such as Almeida (2004), R. Clifton Spargo (2004) or Daniela Agostinho et al. (2012), who have questioned the ethics of any conventionalised strategy of grief management. It is also in keeping with other proposals claiming that individual pain cannot be subsumed under a universal master trope of trauma (Saal 2011).

Helen's is the repeated enactment of a maddening experience, refusing to abide by "the societal imperative to get over loss quickly" (Charman 2014, 143). Again and again, she plays in her mind the scenes previous to the sinking of the rig, creating a mixture of fact and nightmare. By trying to figure out this moment and the sequence of events that led to it, she engages in a narrative that combines elements from the detective story, the documentary, or the legal and business statement, including imaginary descriptions of the domestic details of the men's lives on the rig and the technicalities of safety procedures. In order to better appreciate the direction of her thoughts, a fragment of the novel will be quoted at some length here:

> THERE WAS A smashed portal, and that is key. But everybody knows this already; there is always a key, there is always a portal. A wave of ice hit the window and it smashed. The metal lid had not been drawn shut over the glass, as it should have been, and the window smashed and water got over the electrical panel and short-circuited it. The men had to operate the ballast doors manually and they didn't know how. But everybody knows that; so let's just take a moment. Just slow down.
>
> Imagine instead a man with his feet up—for the sake of argument—and a cup of coffee cradled near his crotch, and maybe he's reading the manual. For the sake of argument: he has a manual open on his lap, and he's going to place a call later to his wife, and he's also got a book. It's a long shift. Later on he will read the book.

> Do we know what they had on the rig for supper that night? Helen does not know. She is imagining pork chops with applesauce and she is imagining big steel plans of mashed potato on the steam table, dusted with paprika, smoothed over, decorated with parsley. The men won't eat the parsley. The Newfoundland men won't. Cal wouldn't. [...]
>
> Imagine his surprise when the ocean forms itself into a fist and flies across the ballast room through that portal. The ocean burst through the window sometime between 7:45 and 8 p.m. [...]
>
> The portal and the fist of water, a piston driving itself through that portal, a fist of ice with stone knuckles; the ocean has become part monster, part machine [...]
>
> She tries to run down the corridors, she tries to find out where Cal is, what he's doing, but she gets lost. (148-51; capitals in the original)

Helen has read the reports, has learned the mechanisms of the systems on the rig, is aware of the lack of emergency training. Her strenuous act of imagination, her language of distress, her defining of the ocean—all these emotional paths undermine the certainties of apologetic jargon that circulated in Newfoundland after the disaster. Our reaction to this passage is not only a realisation of agony, but also an awareness of the conventions invoked at the moment of utterance, the kind of discourses the character is familiar with and the resources she uses to discard them. Almost at the end of the novel, when Helen has already started a new life, she is still trying to face the real story in a section entitled "She sees it":

> This wall of water has always been. It did not design itself or come from anywhere else or form itself. There was never a forming of. It just is.
>
> It is still and self-combusting. Hungry and glutted with love. Full of mystery, full of a void.
>
> Full of God. Get down on your knees before this creature.
>
> It is the centre of the outside.
>
> This wave is death. When we say death we mean something we cannot say. [...]
>
> The ocean is full of its own collapse, its destiny to annihilate itself thoroughly, but for a brief moment it stands up straight. It assumes the pose of something that can last. (298-301)

Panic does not really threaten to destroy language here; it only creates a different kind of language, one that uses old beliefs to describe the fallibility of new technology. The uneasy juxtaposition of an apprehension of apocalypse with a resistance against a technological dialectic exposes how absurd it would be to believe in the rational continuum of causally interlocked events that science claims reality to be. As Helen's short, bumpy sentences convey the unstoppable fury of a rogue wave, they carry a truth that does not admit any of the subordinate clauses that are so abundant in the company's report of what happened. Rather, her language strives to approach the radical nature of a poetic statement. The Royal Commission adheres to a different kind of factual

account: they claim it was a fatal chain of events plus a lack of technical information. For Helen, however, "there is also the obdurate wall of water, and because of it [she] will finally give up her careful recital of the fatal chain of events" (301).

In spite of her sui generis explanation, which identifies a sea storm with god, Helen's acute desire to know is not placed outside of the political and economic implications of the disaster, as Wyile (2010, 63-65) and Caitlin Charman (2014, 135) have noticed. It is precisely her not knowing what it was like, what happened, how it happened, that compels her to create a string of words that can take her there, to the moment of the capsizing and to the moment of the aborted rescue. Paradoxically, her fiery recitation is the only account that exposes the risks associated with oil extraction that had not at that time been seriously considered by corporate industry. Helen's thoughts mobilise our attention because of this enigma. And we can choose to consider enigma as an obstacle to comprehension or as a catalyst that produces, in this narrative, an internal revolution of the senses while a voice strives to articulate a different kind of reasoning for incomprehensible death.

If the gothic approach in *The Town* transformed a catastrophe into a collective traumatic event only to be finally exorcised and tamed, in Moore's *February* an uneducated woman's rant has the power to continue resisting cursory explanations of disaster. Her words lash at narrative itself and at its effect of diluting grief through logical order and catharsis. She could, but does not, adhere to the codes of the genre of elegy regarded as a ritual or a theatre of mourning; instead, she prefers to slip out of her skin into the void to be with her husband forever. She longs to learn from emptiness itself, from the hollowness of truth that Don McKay captured so eloquently in the poem that introduces this article, "Grief and the Sea." In order for the pain not to be subdued by oblivion, she chooses to continuously position herself before the time the event happened. The men are still standing there: "Cal is on the deck and he is almost gone" (301). Helen's hopeless diatribe allows for an enigma to be newly upheld as "scandal" and as "interpellation," two conditions that are, according to Engdahl (2002, 10), defining features of witness writing.

In a similar vein, *Sweetland* is constructed through the haunting of those who are absent. Sweetland, like Helen, finds himself tracing the steps of other lives when he becomes the only remaining inhabitant of an island. Like a detective, he continually draws inferences from the useless objects others left behind when they departed from the place. His memories are literally attached to the rubble scattered on the island; he pursues the ghosts of those gone both as a scrupulous janitor and as an avid chronicler. He tries to disengage himself from official and local discourses, those of the government men and of his friends and neighbours. All of them tried to talk him into leaving the island, but he refused to become a migrant. However, all his efforts appear to be in vain. Gradually, his recollections of past conversations with his neighbours acquire a phantasmagorical nature and his chance of survival on the island decreases.

Sweetland, like *February*, becomes a coherent narrative by showing the defocalising power of life's random occurrences. Sweetland's existence is, like Helen's, in a

permanent state of disconnection. He is threatened anonymously, probably by his former friends, because he does not accept "the package" and leave the island, an island from which he cannot escape when he needs to. In the meantime, he is assailed by regrets of his inability to form a family and to save the lives of the only two people he cared for, his brother and a young friend, a mentally disabled boy who worshipped him. The distressing scene in which he is hanging onto a ladder attached to a cliff, clinging to the drowned body of the boy above the foaming ocean, represents the extremity of his stance, his lack of relatedness to the world, an effect often associated with trauma.

While in *February* no effort is made on the part of the protagonist to accept the assistance of ritualised healing methods, the last moments in the life of Sweetland create an alternative space where he can see himself connected to other members of his community. The end of the novel has him joining a crowd of figures that walk silently toward the island's lighthouse; they seem to have a common purpose and destiny. They look like ghosts but are real to him: "strangers every one of them, though he felt they knew him. That he was known to them somehow" (264), "they seemed resigned and expectant standing there, their eyes on the fathomless black of the ocean" (318). In this final scene, the novel makes room for Sweetland's longing for community and seems to provide the reader with a final moment of hopeful and ecstatic union.

However, what galvanises the reader's attention may not be so much this consolatory attempt at communion—Sweetland is, after all, gravely ill and has lost his grip on reality—but those other sections of the novel that narrate Sweetland's real encounters—his rescuing of Sri Lankan refugees in the middle of a cloud of fog, his attempt to recover the body of the drowned boy, his finding of the corpse of his dog, his looking at his own emaciated body. What prevents us from believing that Sweetland is just the literal embodiment of the author's desire to give transcendence to Newfoundland's history of courage and marginality is Sweetland's unanswered attempts at understanding why things happened in a particular way. His unending meditations provide suspense and effectively counteract any temptation to transform the disaster that engulfed him into a conciliatory epilogue. He accepts the impenetrability of life throughout but keeps ruminating about the mystery of his failures: "A crazy person wouldn't be capable of separating the strangeness from the rest of his life, he thought, of settling in the midst of it" (243), as he has done. His unhinged stance, his refusal to agree with what others think life is worth, propels the narrative forward before its mollifying ending.

4. Conclusion

The genres available in each culture translate social problems into fiction and thus make them observable within literature's complex imaginary dimension. However, individual works contain cognitive impediments, hollow spaces that deemphasise the legitimacy of the very same conventions narratives use to achieve their transcendent

goal of making meaning. This subversive strategy can be described as "writing within a genre against a genre" (Nünning et al. 2013a, 12). In the three novels analysed in this article, the irruption of extreme grief makes the characters' power for reasoning falter. The literary strategies that keep these characters' ordeals in a perpetual present in our mind are the compelling language and "alter-narratives" that their subjectivities create—submerged stories that are triggered by a realisation of life's opacity, by an acutely-felt ignorance about why things happen and an impotence to change them. These emotional predicaments show to various degrees the characters' loyalty to that uninterpretable strangeness; there is a stubbornness on their part to remain inside a disturbing moment of wrongness. There is no giving up of those lost; the alleged liberating power of catharsis becomes tainted.

The textual approach given to this dilemma in these novels allows us "to see the pathos of the simultaneous pursuit and evasion of meaning in narrative," using Dennis Foster's words when describing the role of confession in narrative (1987, 10). A continual insistence on saying and knowing may perhaps serve as a vantage point from which to destigmatise the presence of the traumatic wound as an unsurmountable obstacle, a presence that has often led in witness and trauma criticism to a definition of the literary text as a truncated narrative space. If critical attention moves from the disarming magnitude of pain to the textual itinerary of advances and retreats from suspended moments of shock, the plot can be regarded as productive and transformative, especially in *February*, where the protagonist wholeheartedly accepts beauty in grief and discomfort. In the final moments of joy in this novel, there still lurks a terror that the protagonist can no longer live without—the image of her husband seconds before being swallowed by the ocean in the horrendous accident. However, even when she knows that her grief can never be stabilised and that it is inextricable from the idea of drowning in the sea, she can still experience the ocean "blasted all over with light. Each wave capped in silver. It was like hammered metal, sparkle-pocked" (306).

Reading novels like these augments our capacity to observe trauma beyond concern for the limits of representation and encourages us to assess how the power of what is unsolved pulls the strings of narrative in different directions, forming parallel lines of narration. In *The Town*, the acknowledgement of the inevitability of disaster brings about a lyrical language that, in occasionally surfacing over the heavy plot of a sensationalistic apocalyptic tale, defeats the trite logic of predictable allegory. In turn, in *February*, a woman's courageous insistence on delving into the details of an unbearable traumatic moment causes her to dethrone the unethical vocabularies of efficiency displayed by neoliberal thinking. She does it through the matter-of-factness of her experience as a working-class wife. Finally, in *Sweetland*, the protagonist's utter inability to communicate to others his intimate attachment to the land and his first-hand knowledge of loss leads him to develop a subtle, detective-like internal language for the observation of change in the human and natural worlds.

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Louise Erdrich's *Future Home of the Living God*: Uncertainty, Proleptic Mourning and Relationality in Native Dystopia

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This article examines Louise Erdrich's latest novel *Future Home of the Living God* (2017) in the light of the current conversation about the attacks on women's reproductive rights and the devastating effects of climate change. Erdrich's speculative novel describes an unspecified future where evolution has reversed itself and human reproduction is under threat, as a response to which a Puritan authoritarian government takes control of women of childbearing age to try to sustain procreation. The article contends that, using the dystopian mode—and more specifically, a theorization of uncertainty as characteristic of the present situation of many people—Erdrich addresses persisting, historical unresolved grief, making current feminist and Native vindications visible. She also continues the challenging of the whitestream idea of progress and the subversion of stereotypes that characterize her oeuvre. Most significantly, the article reads the novel as representative of both Indigenous resurgence and the global transmodern paradigm insofar as it articulates a relational understanding of language and identity as our best hope for the future. The article concludes that Erdrich's use of the future perfect tense is best interpreted as a ritual of proleptic mourning that connects this novel to Native American literary activism.

Keywords: Louise Erdrich; Native dystopia; Native American resurgence; transmodernity; relationality; proleptic mourning

. . .

Future Home of the Living God, de Louise Erdrich: Incertidumbre, duelo proléptico y relacionalidad en la distopía nativa

Este artículo ofrece un análisis de la novela más reciente de Louise Erdrich, *Future Home of the Living God* (2017), desde el punto de vista de su relevancia en la conversación actual sobre los ataques a los derechos reproductivos de las mujeres y los efectos devastadores del cambio climático. Esta novela especulativa describe un futuro indeterminado en el que la evolución ha comenzado a dar marcha atrás y la reproducción humana se ve amenazada, como respuesta a lo cual un gobierno de corte autoritario y puritano toma el control de las mujeres en edad fértil para intentar sostener la procreación. El artículo argumenta que, partiendo de la idea central de la distopía—y más concretamente, de una teoría de la incertidumbre como característica de la situación actual de multitud de personas—Erdrich da cuenta del dolor histórico sin resolver persistente en nuestra era, visibilizando reivindicaciones feministas y nativas actuales. También contribuye al cuestionamiento de la idea dominante blanca del progreso y a la subversión de estereotipos, dos temas habituales en la obra de Erdrich. El artículo destaca la concepción relacional del lenguaje y la identidad, fundamentales en la novela y esenciales en la visión esperanzada del futuro que ofrece la autora. Dicha relacionalidad conecta el texto tanto con el movimiento de resurgencia indígena como con el paradigma global transmoderno. El artículo concluye que, mediante el uso del futuro perfecto, Erdrich ofrece un ritual de duelo proléptico que conecta esta obra con el activismo literario nativo estadounidense.

Palabras clave: Louise Erdrich; distopía nativa; resurgencia nativa estadounidense; transmodernidad; relacionalidad; duelo proléptico

1. Introduction

According to American historian and critic Jill Lepore, the abundance of dystopian novels being published in the last few years is a sign of contemporary pessimism. She sees this as a literature of political desperation: while "dystopia used to be a fiction of resistance[,] it's become a fiction of submission. […] Its only admonition is: Despair more" (2017). Louise Erdrich's latest novel, *Future Home of the Living God* (2017), a dystopia that has been compared to Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), may be one such product of our disheartening times, but it is far from being a narrative of resignation. In it, Erdrich sends a message from a fictional future which, in accordance with the activist impulse that characterizes Native writing (see Blaeser et al. 2017), attempts to make us react in the face of climate change and the persisting attacks on women's rights all over the world.

The novel is set in Minnesota in an unspecified near future when evolution has suddenly and mysteriously stopped and seems to be reversing itself. As animal and vegetable species change in strange, scary ways, women start giving birth to primitive babies, spontaneous abortions become frequent, pregnancies are fatal for many mothers and male sex organs are not developing properly. Science cannot stop the world from running backwards; in fact, it cannot even start to explain what is happening. The Church of the New Constitution, which has replaced the US government—whose borders with Mexico and Canada have been closed, making Americans illegal aliens in their neighboring countries—is rounding up pregnant women and imprisoning them. Eventually, all women of childbearing age become prone to being taken and forcefully used for procreation. In order to escape control, people go underground, try to hide expecting women and take them North, discard their cell phones and other screens and go back to more traditional and reliable means of communication like snail mail and face-to-face talk. Amidst this chaos, Native Americans take the opportunity to recover lost lands and decolonize their lives in a bid for Indigenous resurgence.

The protagonist and first-person narrative voice of the novel was given the name Cedar Hawk by her white liberal adoptive parents, Glen and Sera Songmaker. However, as she is quite disappointed to discover, her Ojibwa birth name is the rather unexotic Mary Potts, and she is one in a long line of namesakes who are no old-time Indians but middle-class reservation Catholics. The developing ecological and reproductive crisis finds Cedar pregnant at 26, which motivates her to visit the reservation, where she reconnects with both her mother Sweetie and her husband Eddy, as well as with her ancient storyteller grandmother. Cedar, who had rebelled against her Buddhist and ecologist adoptive parents by embracing Catholicism—to the point of working on the edition, publication and distribution of a "magazine of Catholic inquiry" called *Zeal* (Erdrich 2017a, 6)—goes through a personal process of learning how to subvert her previously erroneous, stereotyped expectations about ethnicity. Forced to hide and run away from the authorities, and not knowing exactly what is happening or whom she can trust—including Phil, the father of her baby—

her journal is a therapeutic account of capture and escape, of support and betrayal. After weeks of hiding in her house, she is forcefully taken to a prison-hospital where pregnancies are monitored and the rare surviving newborns are taken away by the authorities. Cedar manages to escape with the help of Sera and is on the run for a while, finding refuge on the reservation, only to be finally betrayed and captured again. At the end of the novel Cedar has given birth to a viable baby boy who is taken away from her, and is kept in a reproductive prison where she will be inseminated. The political thus becomes very personal for this character, who soon learns that her body is no longer her own but the property of the dictatorial state.

The dystopian focus of *Future Home of the Living God* may arguably seem like an anomaly from a writer who has been widely recognized for her recovery of Native traditions in the whitestream, capitalistic world of today. Although future-oriented fiction by Native Americans is not a novelty, the idea that Native writing is mostly focused on the past is still widespread.[1] Erdrich's novel challenges such stereotypical expectations about indigeneity while, at the same time, its warning about the future that may await us unless we react to gender and ecological violence is also meaningful within the current boom of feminist dystopias. Following in the footsteps of Atwood's literary classic *The Handmaid's Tale*—whose Hulu adaptation has been a hit since its first season came out in 2017, bringing it back onto the bestsellers' list—both Erdrich's *Future Home of the Living God* and Leni Zumas's *Red Clocks* (2018) denounce the current onslaught on women's reproductive rights by creating a totalitarian male chauvinist society, while British writer Naomi Alderman's *The Power* (2016) and Chinese-American Maggie Shen King's *An Excess Male* (2017) offer fictional reversals of patriarchal social roles. All these recent texts can be read as warnings about the present state of women's rights, but in the case of Erdrich's novel, the feminist urge of the dystopian motif goes hand in hand with specific cultural and political vindications. This author's deliberate groundedness in contemporary reality is compatible with what Judith Merril describes as the main objective of speculative fiction, which introduces "a given set of changes […] into the common background of 'known facts'" in order "to explore, to discover, to learn, by means of projection, extrapolation, analogue, hypothesis-and-paper-examination, something about the nature of the universe, of man [*sic*], of 'reality'" (2017, 27). However, Erdrich resists the whitestream idea of dystopia, arguing instead that for Native Americans the term might refer to a realistic scenario (Erdrich 2017f), partly because "Indigenous people in the Americas are descended of relatives who survived the dystopia of genocide. To us, dystopia is recent history. (For many, it is

[1] And yet, since the publication of Gerald Vizenor's *Darkness in St. Louis Bearheart* (1978)—reissued as *Bearheart: The Heirship Chronicles* (1990)—other important names in Native American fiction, like Sherman Alexie, have tried their hand at speculative fiction. Grace L. Dillon, who coined the term "Indigenous Futurism," edited *Walking the Clouds* (2012), the first anthology of indigenous science fiction, and the Native presence in the genre is currently on the rise, including prolific authors like Stephen Graham Jones alongside new voices like Elizabeth LaPensée, Cherrie Dimaline and Rebeca Roanhorse.

the present)" (Erdrich 2017b). The dystopian motif thus gains a new relevance in its visibilization of very real and persisting Native American historical unresolved grief.

In a review entitled "Do We Need Another *Handmaid's Tale*?," Ron Charles asks "this awkward question" about *Future Home of the Living God* only to conclude that, although the novel is unquestionably timely, the way "the political and environmental context is only vaguely and rarely hinted at" keeps us "largely in the dark with [Cedar] as she hides or flees from people out to capture her and steal her unborn baby" (2017). Charles argues that, in comparison to previous works by Erdrich and to Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Future Home* seems "slack and minor," and he ascribes this to the conflicting motives of "wanting to make a point but knowing that polemical novels are a drag" (2017). While acknowledging that Erdrich's readers' expectations may have been unsettled by her new text, an unusual one in her trajectory, I contend that the uncertainty or lack of more detailed context is in fact the crux of the novel and the key stylistic choice around which Erdrich is making an important point.[2] By constantly emphasizing the impossibility of knowing, Erdrich theorizes uncertainty as a way of denouncing the vulnerability of the rights of women and Natives, who live under the constant threat of violation. Starting from this basic assumption, this article examines how the novel questions the foundations of the idea of progress, subverting stereotypes of civilization and savagism, unsettling preconceptions of biological race and culture and theorizing a relational understanding of language and self instead. This basic relationality is compatible both with the idea of Native resurgence (Simpson 2011) and with recent developments that point to a new global cultural paradigm that is coming to be known as transmodernity (Rodríguez Magda 2004; Ateljevic 2013). Also, interestingly, Erdrich expresses relationality in the future anterior or future perfect tense, which turns the novel into a literary ritual of proleptic mourning aimed at making us react before ecological disaster becomes inevitable.

2. "Nobody Knows": The Ethics and Aesthetics of Uncertainty

Erdrich has written about the violations of women's bodies before, most notably in *The Round House* (2012), which dealt with the lack of protection of Native women against white rapists. In *Future Home of the Living God* she aims at exploring "what a public creature you become when you're pregnant," and how pregnant women are vulnerable "to an extreme degree" (Erdrich 2017c). The dystopian ownership of the pregnant woman's body on the part of the state in this novel is inspired by real and specific attacks on women's rights. When she wrote a first draft in 2002, at the regressive times after 9/11 when George W. Bush signed the Global Gag Rule and the Patriot Act, Erdrich started wondering why evolution had begun and what would happen if, just as mysteriously, it

[2] Although the novel also received a good number of positive responses (Corrigan 2017; Athitakis 2017), the more critical reviewers (Franklin 2017; Garner 2017; Scholes 2017; Merritt 2018) offered similar opinions to Charles's.

stopped.[3] After years working on other projects, she retrieved and finished the novel in 2017, when Donald J. Trump reintroduced the Global Gag Rule, which "cruelly cuts off US funds from international family planning and goes further to eliminate HIV testing, Zika testing, and birth control. Death from unsafe abortions, vaginal maiming, fistula, HIV, and unknown suffering will result, but all that was and will be largely invisible to the American public" (Erdrich 2017d). Acting on the conviction that older women with strong voices like her have a responsibility towards younger ones, Erdrich writes as a reaction to current antichoice campaigns, which "are simply about controling young women's bodies" (Erdrich 2017c)—a statement of intent that emphasizes both the timing (Erdrich 2017d) and the political content of her work.

Through Cedar's first-person narrative, by means of which this character tries to come to terms with uncertainty and speculation, Erdrich visibilizes the vulnerability that comes with lack of knowlege. Characters constantly wonder about the meaning of what is happening, but "nobody knows" (53) because "the first thing that happens at the end of the world is that we don't know what is happening" (93). In interview, Erdrich has pondered the significance of not having reliable sources of information: "How do we respond to a huge catastrophe with a system of information that's becoming centralized in the hands of huge, corporate, money-making concerns? Where do we go?" (Erdrich 2017e). The journal-structured novel is a response to this reflection; it is, in Erdrich's words, "about things falling apart, about the chaos in the wake of disaster, and about how little we know when we need information the most. It is about how vulnerable women's rights are" (Atwood and Erdrich 2017). Cedar reflects on the radical changes that accompany the crisis, like the fact that women become less and less visible in the media or that, perhaps not surprisingly, "there are no brown people, anywhere, not in movies or sitcoms not on shopping channels or on the dozens of evangelical channels up and down the remote. Something is bursting through the way life was" (44). Information grows more and more scarce, and the fascist-like government eventually imposes a complete news blackout, with no newspapers, no television and "radio extremely sketchy" (84). As a result, people start protesting and organizing themselves, and instead of traceable and hackable technology, "there are news kiosks all through the city where people congregate to share rumors" (84-85).

From the bits and pieces of information that Cedar manages to collect while she is in hiding, we learn that animals have stopped breeding (44), that "ducks are not ducks and chickens are not chickens, insects are nutritious, and there are ladybugs the size of cats" (90). Still able and willing to observe nature, she finds out that strange species that seem to be primitive versions of animals are appearing, like "a bird about the size of a hawk" that might be similar to an Archaeopteryx or a Confuciusornis (92),

[3] Less well-known than the Patriot Act of 2001, the Global Gag Rule—officially known as the Mexico City Policy—requires that any overseas organization receiving US aid, including those in countries where abortion is legal, is not involved in any way with providing abortion or even mentioning it, or else they will lose any US funding.

while others are acquiring enormous sizes, like "a saber-toothy cat" big enough to devour a dog (104-105). Mirroring the unpredictable changes in nature, pregnancies are fatal to most women because the developing babies attack their mothers' immune system (256-57). Those babies who make it through childbirth show abnormalities in the neocortex and the sex organs of male babies are defective or sometimes do not develop at all (69). As a result of the reproductive crisis, pregnant women—whom people are encouraged to report via the Unborn Protection Society line (124)—are rounded up and "sequestered in hospitals in order to give birth under controlled circumstances" (72), which becomes official policy when it is assigned a denomination, "*female gravid detention*" (74; italics in the original). Violence and torture are exerted by the government, which uses tools of control such as insect-like spy drones or Mother, an androgynous figure with "a Prince Valiant helmet hair" (68) that appears on Cedar's computer screen, a kind of parody of Big Brother. Because viable pregnancies are so scarce, eventually all young women's bodies are prone to being taken captive. To make space for them, prisons are now reserved for women (85), who are forced to either "try and carry to term a frozen embryo from the old in-vitro clinics" or "be inseminated with sperm from the old sperm banks" (159).

The lack of detailed information about the changing natural and political contexts is a strategic element in the narrative, expressed both explicitly and through literary subtlety. Reflecting on the disruption of the natural course of motherhood, for example, Erdrich's narrator often needs to correct the verbal tenses in her diary, revising her use of the future and resorting to the conditional mode instead. Cedar becomes painfully aware that previously objective scientific knowledge about pregnancy has become utterly unreliable and that, although she is still compelled to try to keep track of the weekly development of her foetus as expecting mothers often do, she "should form no expectation" (116) or take anything for granted. The insecure, vulnerable perspective of this young expectant woman is aimed at triggering an emotional reaction on the part of the reader, who has to face the fact that the world we have always known may not have a definite future. The author's theorizing of uncertainty thus requires the active participation in the construction of meaning on the part of the reader, whose often frustrated search for truth is guided by Cedar's. Erdrich's aesthetic choice is thereby endowed with strong ethical implications.

3. "The Narrative Is All that Matters": Searching for a Language of Relation

In spite of uncertainty and danger, Cedar—and the novel—resist resignation and take great pains to look for meaning in language. Indeed, she exemplifies the human urge to know the story we are part of: "I want to see the story. More than anything, I am frustrated by the fact that I'll never know how things turn out" (67). She is writing in an attempt to defy her lack of knowledge in this moment of crisis and to leave her legacy

for posterity, an idea she struggles to believe in despite everything: "Historic times! There have always been letters and diaries written in times of tumult and discovered later, and my thought is that I could be writing one of those. And even though I realize that lexical knowledge may be useless, you'll have this record" (3).

In Erdrich's characterization of Cedar's notebook, there are reminiscences of the famous epitaph Benjamin Franklin wrote in 1728, when he was only 22. In Franklin's text, body and book are one and the same; the decadence of the body is anticipated by the decadence of the book, "stripped of its lettering and gilding" (Franklin 1728). Both would be "food for worms" were it not for the fact that they will hopefully appear once more "in a new and more perfect edition, corrected and amended by the author" (Franklin 1728), which we can interpret as either a religious resurrection or an account of writing as a way to eternity. In *Future Home of the Living God*, Cedar writes, "This notebook has become my life, or perhaps better to say that this notebook has become the way I remain connected with my life, and with you" (171). The cover of Cedar's notebook "has peeled in places, or scratched down to the gray pulp"; the back, with a blank area reserved for the baby's name or picture that may never be filled and decorated with garlands of roses, doves and pointing cherubs—"foolish little signs of romance" (171)—is smudged, showing the wear of much handling. However, the "tape-protected ultrasound" she has glued on it "looks perfect" (171). The cover is also decorated with a photograph that Cedar takes at the beginning of the narrative during her first drive to the reservation to meet her biological family. Although she knows that everything she sees is "physically balanced on this cusp between the now of things and the big, incomprehensible change to come" (13), the only unusual things she encounters are the quietness and the alarming sermons advertised on church billboards: "In one enormous, empty field a sign is planted that reads *Future Home of the Living God*. It's just a bare field, fallow and weedy, stretching to the pale horizon" (13). By choosing this picture to decorate her notebook, paper and field become one in their bareness and emptiness, but also in their potential for cultivation and growth. This possibility of starting something new allows the reader to hope that, as the living god he is, Cedar's baby may eventually find a home in land and language.

Side by side with her words, Cedar starts creating a new world for her baby by compiling "bits of paper from the now and from the before, as mementos of the curious world you will be entering soon" (171). These keepsakes, which have made their way "from all corners of the earth" (172) to the Material Recycle Facility where she temporarily hides after escaping the hospital-prison in a recycling truck, include lemon candy wrappers from Spain, tags marked Made in China, Taiwan, USA, Sri Lanka and Berlin, cards printed in Korea, gilt and lavender wrappers from France, Australia and Indonesia, wine labels from New Zealand, scraps of iconic American soup, laundry soap packaging and a long etcetera of objects coming from all over the transmodern, globalized world. The bits and pieces that Cedar salvages from the world that is disappearing symbolize her diverse attempts at finding an appropriate language

for self-expression. On the one hand, while she reflects on evolution in her writing for the last volume of *Zeal*, Cedar alludes to the heap of broken images representative of modernism as she ponders, "Maybe T. S. Eliot had it right. Our world is ending not with a bang but a puzzled whimper" (190). On the other hand, she is drawn to the study of the Catholic Incarnation, which leads her to reflect on the creative power of language: "The word is an idea, the idea of God" (64). She wonders whether there exists a language outside the human experience of words spoken and thought, "or perhaps a pre-language made up of words so unthinkably holy they cannot be said, much less known. Perhaps you will know how to speak this language. Perhaps it is a language that we have forgotten in our present home" (65). Pointing to her baby's future, connecting him to the past, Cedar invokes a language of connection which nevertheless remains ungraspable and vague in her Christian account of it.

Cedar's connection to her Ojibwa ancestry is more definite, as shown by her encounter with her biological grandmother soon after they first meet on the reservation. Observing this ancient woman, it occurs to Cedar that "perhaps she has lived through the final efflorescence of human culture and thought. She is perched on top of the pyramid, Grandma Virginia, a tiny, pinched gargoyle riffling a pack of cards" (34). When, asking for information about her ancestry, Cedar mentions the word "pregnant," something is registered, and the old woman starts sharing story after story, her memory shifting, telling and retelling many versions of her history, so that Cedar soon realizes that "the narrative is all that matters" (35). She thus becomes keenly aware of the dynamic, living nature of the creative storytelling process.

Another way in which the longed-for language materializes is through two songs that connect Cedar to women and mothers, on the one hand, and to her baby and Native heritage, on the other. The first of these songs appears when Tia, a pregnant young woman who escaped from the hospital with Cedar, gives birth to a stillborn baby and sings to it, relating past and future, the song becoming a language beyond linear chronology. It was "not a song composed of words, but a song made of sounds that I will hear later, in a different place," says Cedar; "Sounds that were made a hundred thousand years ago, I am sure, and sounds that will be heard a hundred thousand from now, I hope" (185). Later, when Cedar is imprisoned for the second time and surrounded by powerless but undefeated pregnant women, most of whom will die at childbirth, the women hum to accompany and mourn those whose turn it is to be taken away by the authorities:

> It is a beautiful, powerful, all-knowing sound. They open their mouths to sing a song that I already know. The song must be in me. [...] Maybe we all learned it in former lives, deep places, gathering grounds, caves and huts of sticks, skin houses, prisons, and graves. It is a wordless melody that only women sing. Slow, beautiful, sad, ecstatic, we sing a hymn of war and a march of peace. (253)

As for the second song, it appears when a spirit visits Cedar nearly every night as her own labor approaches and brings her the song that Sweetie's husband Eddy—a sensitive, well-educated man who is devoted to the writing of a memoir about why he decides not to kill himself every day, a homage to the small joys of life—composed for the baby: "it is high, repetitive, and comforting, like a lullaby" (258). Connecting her to her Ojibwa family, this is the baby song that Cedar hears during labor, supporting and accompanying her. It is also the song that she sings once her baby has been taken away from her, when she says, still addressing him, "I sing your song. My guardian spirit has returned" (266).

4. "My Explorations of Identity": Transmodern Indigenous Resurgence and Relationality

Cedar's search for a language of relation in spite of and as a reaction to uncertainty goes hand in hand with her quest for a coherent sense of her self, which she refers to as her "explorations of identity" (56). As I contend, for a solid reflection on what it means to be Indigenous in the contemporary US—which requires a negotiation of the differential and the relational—two perspectives should be taken into consideration: the idea of resurgence, specific to the Native context, and the broader transmodern paradigm, currently in the process of being theoretically characterized. As for the former, in her characterization of Native resurgence, Nishnaabeg author and critic Leanne Betasamosake Simpson states that it is now time for Native people to take the seeds of their culture and political systems—which they had been forced to pack away—and plant them again (2011, 15). Resisting offering a predetermined definition of resurgence, she instead makes "a call to Indigenous Peoples to delve into their own culture's stories, philosophies, theories and concepts to align themselves with the processes and forces of regeneration, revitalization, remembering and visioning" (2011, 148). Interestingly, Simpson's view of resurgence tries to reverse "the violence of dispossession" and is, accordingly, not oppositional—for possession is associated with capitalism—but relational, based on recognition, or "a process of seeing another being's core essence," a series of reciprocal, continual and society-generating relationships (2015). Erdrich's pondering the future of society in the face of the overt control of technology and its destructive impact on humans and nature can also be interpreted as an example of the literary representation of transmodernity—"the emerging socio-cultural, economic, political and philosophical shift" (Ateljevic 2013, 201) or simply, in the words of Rosa María Rodríguez Magda, who coined the term, "the paradigm that allows us to think our present" (2019, 21).[4] Transmodernity is sustained on the basic motifs of transformation and transcendence, and some of

[4] See also Rodríguez Magda (2004) for a complete account of her definition of the term, which she first used in 1989. Although her work is originally written in Spanish, some translations into English can be found on her blog (Rodríguez Magda n.d.).

its main themes are globalization, virtuality and the excesses of capitalism. It also accounts for "a new *relational* consciousness" (Ateljevic 2013, 213; italics in the original) or, as Christian Moraru states in his definition of cosmodernism—a literary articulation of transmodernity—an emphasis on "self and other's foundational co-relationality with respect to one another" (2011, 17). The relational center in *Future Home of the Living God* is thus both a way to articulate resurgence in literature and an example of the "new hopeful fictions" that Rodríguez Magda calls for at the crossroads of transmodernity (2019, 29).

A reflection on resurgence can be found in one of the subplots of *Future Home of the Living God*, which relates to the Native movement to recover lost land and profit in the context of the turbulent situation. When Cedar goes to the reservation to meet her biological family, she is surprised to find that her well-to-do mother Sweetie, who owns a Superpumper gas station, is all business. Sweetie tells the tribal council meeting that the apparition of Kateri Tekakwitha—also known as Lily of the Mohawks, the patron saint of Native people—on the reservation is an opportunity to make some financial profit. Filtering Sweetie's act through Cedar's surprised perspective, Erdrich teases stereotypes and presents Natives who can adapt to the new circumstances. In fact, the current chaotic situation is not as traumatizing for them as it is for non-Natives for, as Eddy explains, "Indians have been adapting since before 1492 so I guess we'll keep adapting" (28). The visible leader of resurgence on the Ojibwa reservation, he makes his case thus: "Quite a number of us see the governmental collapse as a way to make our move and take back the land" (95). This motivation gives Eddy a sense of purpose that heals him of his depression. He makes use of the opportunity to take action—he grows out his hair and "doesn't slouch anymore" (225); he plays hand drum songs and sings warrior songs which confuse the surveillers; and he "plots strategies. Thinks of survival measures. [...] He wants to make the reservation one huge, intensively worked, highly productive farm" (226). His objective is for the reservation people to be self-sufficient, "like the old days" (227). Under his leadership, the Natives grow pot to trade to the white people and to be used as medication; they seize the National Guard arsenal at Camp Ripley so that whites do not bother them; and they "decoloniz[e] the uniforms of the militia" (227), welcoming non-Indian veterans from across the nation. The Natives even have a "new unbreakable code" (228), a non-verbal language based on the howling of wolves, which is Erdrich's in-joke reference to the code-talkers of World War II (Erdrich 2017e).

Whites peacefully returning their lands to the Natives—to the point where the "compassionate removal of non-tribal people" (214) living on stolen land is not even necessary—is not a likely situation, even in a chaotic context like that described in the novel. Nevertheless, Erdrich's fictional reversal of power in order to confront settler colonialism makes a lot of sense as a Native utopia in the middle of dystopia. It shows that interpretation is contingent on perspective and puts forward a literary representation of Indigenous resurgence that highlights the current imbalance of white-

Native power relations. It also complements the novel's blunt challenging of the idea of progress and of the stereotypes around the foundational dichotomy of civilization and savagism. One such reversal relates to the expectation of Natives being trapped in the past. This puts artists in a double bind, as one of the characters in Tommy Orange's debut novel *There There* points out: "The problem with Indigenous art in general is that it's stuck in the past. The catch, or the double bind, about the whole thing is this: If it isn't pulling from tradition, how is it Indigenous? And if it is stuck in tradition, in the past, how can it be relevant to other Indigenous people living now, how can it be modern?" (2018, 77).

Erdrich addresses this double bind not only by writing a dystopian novel set in the future, but also by emphatically creating a Native hero for posterity. As aforementioned, at different points during her pregnancy Cedar is visited by a guardian spirit, a calming, powerful presence that comforts her: "As I am floating on that tide, something happens that may be supernatural. A presence sits on the edge of the blow-up mattress, weightless, formless, protective. It is a kind of shadow. Maybe an angel. Magnetic and gentle, its love settles over me like a buoyant cape. Together, we sleep" (217). Although the spirit could be related to Cedar's biological grandmother, who is often nearby when it appears, or to her baby's father Phil, referred to as an angel by Cedar, the ambivalence is sustained until the end of the novel. As her due date approaches, the good spirit visits Cedar almost every night and when she finally gives birth to a healthy baby boy, for the brief moment when Cedar can hold him, she recognizes him: "*It's you*, I said. *It was always you*" (264; italics in the original). Erdrich thus suggests that Cedar's baby, wherever he might be after being taken from his mother, will survive and become the living god of the future.

Interestingly, resurgence in this novel does not necessarily equal biological inheritance, just like identity does not directly or irrevocably correspond to ethnicity. The novel delves into the transformation and transcendence of such categories. This baby is the son of Phil—a vegetarian who "becomes carnivorous in times of stress" (79); a white man of Italian and Spanish origins whose ancestors "worked the building trades, put up the basilica and the cathedral" (79)—and of Cedar, a mixed-blood woman who describes herself as "a walking contradiction, maybe two species in one body […], an insecure Ojibwe, a fledgling Catholic, an overstriving brain cooking up conflicting dramas" (66). Erdrich reflects on the mixture of identities common to Native people, which is in fact "common to all of us. We are all mixtures of some sort or another—usually one heritage predominates, but that isn't at all predictable" (Erdrich 2017b).

Assuming that she was adopted out of a Native tribe—although she will eventually learn that Glen, whom she believed to be her adoptive father, is actually her biological father—Cedar's understanding of her ethnicity while growing up was theoretical and romanticized, something that made her special until she went to college and found herself a Native without a tribe or a trauma to define herself by. What she later learns about her biological mother's family is disappointing, starting with her real name or

her mother's occupation. Neither can match her expectations about "special powers or connections with healing spirits or sacred animals" (5), which she imagined in her youth when she defined herself as a "Native girl" and an "Indian Princess" (4). In her subsequent explorations of identity, Cedar looks for answers in spirituality and embraces Catholicism, both as a form of rebellion and in an effort to obtain the connections she lacks. This is the same reason why, when she learns that she is pregnant, she bonds with her Ojibwa biological family, so that her baby can "enter the web of connections" that she herself never had (6). Her mixed heritage makes her very much in need of reconciling and relating, and this is particularly obvious in regard to her spirituality. As she says, "I have integrated both my ethnicity and my intellectual leanings into my faith first by analyzing the canonization of the Lily of the Mohawks, Kateri Tekakwitha" (6) and then by putting herself at the helm of the *Zeal*. When she later meets her biological mother and learns that they have this religion in common, she interprets her choice of Catholicism as "inherited genetic congruence" (13), an ironic statement. Sweetie defines herself as "a pagan Catholic" (23), an embracing of contradiction that Cedar expands in her own self-definition, which encompasses a wealth of different beliefs, since she adds her newly encountered grandmother's Ojibwe stories to her studies of the Virgin Mary and the Incarnation, of Kateri Tekakwitha and Hildegard of Bingen.

The novel sets out to prove that the borders between supposedly separate concepts or between different ethnic groups are nothing but a blurry area. Thus, the future god is of mixed ancestry, the result of a negotiation of cultures and ways to understand spirituality, which makes him, ironically—or perhaps not so, if we consider Erdrich's usual subversion of ethnic and cultural borders—"one of the originals" (245) who can survive. Being able to bear a healthy baby is a tempting possibility for Phil, who suggests to Cedar that they use their reproductive compatibility to gain power within the authoritarian system, something she perceives as a betrayal: "'We would be in charge of things. Rich. Super rich! We'd be safe. If we somehow worked out genetically, I mean, to have a normal child the sky's the limit for us.' 'We could seize power and found a dynasty,' I say, meaning it sarcastically. 'That's right,' says Phil softly, reaching for me" (246-47). Thus is ambivalence about Phil's character, which has been sustained throughout the novel, solved in the end, and he becomes, to Cedar, "[a]nother angel of deception" (242). Phil, however, is not the only one to betray Cedar. After cooking a Thanskgiving feast and feeding "absolutely everyone" (248) on the reservation—including the "Transcendence seekers […] bearing Tibetan prayer flags" and "the Catholic pilgrims," a variety of peoples who have come looking for protection (247)—Cedar goes to the statue of Kateri to pray and is kidnapped by "some random pilgrims" (248) who turn her in to the authorities for the money. The old colonial narrative of the Native woman being captured by whites is thereby repeated as a story of betrayal—as Cedar interprets it, "Kateri really let me down" (249), suggesting that the Native saint can only offer an inadequate kind of protection.

The novel thus ends with Cedar in captivity at the hands of the state, which intends to use her body for procreation. There, she observes how the women "have tried to make beauty" (258) by setting out pots and filling them with "nameless plants" whose growth they welcome with curiosity and interest. Other "accidental plants are pushing into the prison as well" and "every day there is an even thicker green profusion" (258) of nature catching hold "across the fences, across the razor wire, even along the glass towers of the guards, rearing into ferocious sunlight" (259). The creative and resilient power of nature, which will prevail in spite of human violations, echoes some of the connections that Cedar has forged and her new awareness of female companionship and the Native values of caring for nature, land and women. Appropriately, Cedar's new hybrid, relational set of beliefs shows resonances of transcendentalism, another intertext of transformation and transcendence:

> And the sky has bloomed, it is verdant with stars. I've never seen stars like this before. Deep, brilliant, soft. I am comforted because nothing we have done to this earth affects them. I think of the neurons in your brain connecting, branching, forming the capacity I hope you will have for wonder. They are connecting, like galaxies. Perhaps we function as neurons ourselves, interconnecting thoughts in the giant mud of God. (106)

Cedar's creation of a new human being connects both mother and baby to nature, the universe and God. As her baby grows inside her, she becomes more aware of the reciprocity of body and soul—"the soul is not in the body. The body is in the soul" (264)—and when she finally holds him in her arms she writes, "I looked into the soul of the world" (264). In spite of uncertainty, danger and betrayal, Cedar finds joy in the integrative power of motherhood and loves the world: "every fresh new cell of blood, every icy flash of neuron, a love of you, a love of everything" (209).[5]

5. "We Didn't Know It Was Heaven": Proleptic Mourning and Literary Activism

Apart from a reflection on uncertainty in times of crisis and an assertion of specific relational values that can be simultaneously read as global and specific to Native traditions, Erdrich's wake-up call for us to be more aware of what is happening at the present time and react before it is too late makes sense in relation to what Stef Craps characterizes as "contemporary culture's tendency to understand and address climate change through a fictional future history of the present" (2017, 484). Following Mark Currie, Craps argues that we live in an anticipatory mode of being, that is, we inhabit the present as the object of future memory, to the point where the future anterior or

[5] In this fleeting joyful account of maternity there are echoes of Erdrich's 1995 memoir *The Blue Jay's Dance*. The comparison of the two texts, however, evidences the painful regression that Erdrich perceives in women's reproductive rights, which enhances the new novel's relevance and urgency.

future perfect is "a tense for our times" (Currie 2013, 67). In Erdrich's novel, Cedar feels that "instead of the past, it is the future that haunts us now" (2017a, 63). Although the overwhelming changes she witnesses around her make her check herself—"Stop thinking about the future. *Now* is all we have, I tell myself" (69; italics in the original)—this is not easy to do, and perhaps it is not even possible. Thus, when she admits "I am more comfortable with the before-ness or the after-ness of life. I am happier dissecting the past or dreading the future. I really have no proficiency at simply experiencing the present" (69), Cedar is elucidating the complex temporality of the current age.

As Craps also suggests, the future anterior tense is "built into the notion of the Anthropocene itself, which proposes that human life will be readable as having had an impact" (2017, 484). It is a kind of "posthumous stance" (486) from which we look back and mourn our own and our world's destruction. No less importantly, Craps continues, "future-history approaches to climate change tend to be driven by an activist agenda," as "they aim to ward off the imagined catastrophe by sensitizing readers to the enormity of the losses they or later generations will face if the current state of affairs continues, by making them feel ashamed about their inaction, and by inviting them to consider how they could prevent the apocalyptic outcome" (487). Towards the end of Erdrich's novel, the enormity of the loss that we may be facing is suggested by a particularly moving scene in which Cedar remembers the last snow they had in Minnesota, where winter no longer exists. When they used to have winter, Cedar says, "we didn't know it was heaven" (265). Erdrich poetically describes the deep cold that is no more as a musical and visual work of art, where one could hear "the quick staccato reports of snare drums" like a marching band (265), "a delicate whisper," a "tinkl[ing] together" of "haunting wind chimes" (265), and see "an altered world" of "jagged puzzles, mathematical labyrinths, furies of intersecting lines" where "[e]very inch was an original design" (266).

Erdrich thus literally and literarily freezes this winter scene as she has known it, making it come alive in what is already an altered world and mourning its imminent loss. In the narrative, Cedar and her parents have seen the gradual disappearance of winter. First the cold did not hurt, then snow became scarce, until there was only rain: "That was the year we lost winter. Lost our cold heaven" (266). Imprisoned as a womb slave at the end of the novel, overwhelmed by an absolute uncertainty about what is to come, Cedar remembers the last time it snowed in Minnesota, when she was eight: "The snow built up on every surface. And I can feel it now, so heavy. […] And I am in it. […] Whiteness fills the air and whiteness is all there is. I am here, and I was there" (268). Here and there—the novel's narrative present and past—are as different as heaven and hell, and Erdrich asks us to join Cedar in her grieving for a world that exists no more and to act before this dystopia becomes a reality. Devastated by the probability of this tremendous loss, we are left with the hope that Erdrich's prediction will never become true, that neither we nor our posterity will have to witness "the last time it snows on earth" (267). In *Future Home of the Living God*, a dystopian novel grounded

in uncertainty and relationality and a cautionary tale that speaks to both Native and feminist studies, Erdrich presents us with a ritual of preliminary or proleptic mourning that has the potential of becoming a powerful political practice, thus confirming the activist impulse often found in contemporary Native literature.[6]

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The Horror of Loss: Reading Jennifer Kent's *The Babadook* as a Trauma Narrative

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This article responds to the critical debate around Jennifer Kent's horror movie, *The Babadook* (2014), by offering an analysis that moves beyond its use of generic codes and its sociopolitical representation of maternity. It contends that reading the film as a trauma narrative allows us to better understand the horrifying experience suffered by Amelia Vanek (Essie Davis): her husband's premature death in a car accident. Taking Dominick LaCapra's concepts of *acting out* and *working through* as key interpretive tools, the analysis demonstrates how Kent conveys posttraumatic stress disorder as both a visceral and a material experience, inscribing absence and loss onto the cinematic texture of the film. The article offers the conclusion that, as *The Babadook* enacts Amelia's process of recuperation, figured as a psychosomatic struggle against her monstrous Other, she becomes able to express her trauma and, in doing so, is finally able to accept her husband's death.

Keywords: Babadook; horror; cinema; loss; posttraumatic stress disorder; monstrosity

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El horror de la pérdida: *The Babadook*, de Jennifer Kent, como narrativa de trauma

Este artículo responde al debate crítico sobre la película de terror de Jennifer Kent, *El Babadook* (2014), ofreciendo un análisis que va más allá de su uso de códigos genéricos o la representación sociopolítica de la maternidad. El artículo argumenta que interpretar la película como una narrativa sobre el trauma nos permite entender mejor la horrible experiencia sufrida por Amelia Vanek (Essie Davis): el fallecimiento prematuro de su marido

en un accidente de tráfico. Tomando los conceptos de Dominick LaCapra de *acting out* y *working through* como herramientas interpretativas clave, el análisis muestra la manera en que Kent caracteriza el síndrome del estrés postraumático como una experiencia tanto visceral como material, imprimiendo los conceptos de ausencia y pérdida en la textura cinematográfica de la película. El artículo ofrece como conclusión que, a medida que *El Babadook* recrea su proceso de recuperación, presentado como una lucha psicosomática contra un "otro yo" monstruoso, Amelia es capaz de expresar su trauma y, al hacerlo, finalmente logra aceptar la muerte de su marido.

Palabras clave: Babadook; terror; cine; pérdida; síndrome del estrés postraumático; monstruosidad

1. Introduction

It is noteworthy that, despite the remarkable consensus of critical approval that Jennifer Kent's debut feature *The Babadook* has received since its release in 2014, the film achieved only moderate success at the domestic Australian box office, where it opened on just thirteen screens and eventually recouped a meagre $256,000 of its two million production budget (Tan 2014). One possible explanation for this is suggested by Joseph Earp (2017), who believes that *The Babadook*, described by Kim Newman as "one of the strongest, most effective horror movies of recent years" (2014), exposes the Australian film industry's endemic resistance to championing innovative horror cinema—a factor, it could be argued, that also condemned critically lauded works such as *The Loved Ones* (Byrne 2009), *Hounds of Love* (Young 2016) and *Killing Ground* (Power 2016) to similarly disappointing commercial performances. In fact, despite having much in common with *Cubbyhouse* (Fahey 2001) and *Family Demons* (Dabrowsky 2009), two recent Australian horror movies that explore the themes of female haunting, possession and child abuse, *The Babadook* was promoted by domestic distributor Umbrella Entertainment as a psychological thriller. Not only has Kent herself also downplayed the horror elements of her film by describing it as a "love story" (Entertainment One 2013, n.p.), but she has sought to deemphasise its geographical specificity, indicating that she "didn't want it to be particularly Australian. [...] it could have been [located] anywhere" (2014b). As a "placeless film" (Howell 2018, 185), *The Babadook* performed much better at the international box office, where it was marketed in terms of its most salient horror trope: the demonic Babadook. However, it is interesting to note that one of the key debates that has since been generated amongst critics, the manner in which *The Babadook* confounds our expectations about the type of movie that we are watching, is also foregrounded by the film itself. Thus, central to *The Babadook*'s narrative is an uncertainty about what the eponymous monster actually signifies. As David Ehrlich suggests, this makes the film seem less like a "ridiculous creature feature" (in Kent 2014d), while A. A. Dowd has argued that "the *real* horror [of *The Babadook*] has almost nothing to do with the title fiend and everything to do with the unspoken, unspeakable impulses he represents" (2014; italics in the original).

This article will argue that *The Babadook* uses the horror trope of supernatural possession by a monstrous Other to represent the psychosomatic effects of posttraumatic stress syndrome (PTSD) on the film's protagonist, Amelia Vanek (Essie Davis). By replacing the dominant critical lens of cinematic genre with a perspective that is informed by trauma theory, I will explore how the film charts Amelia's belated recovery from the car crash that killed her husband, an event that she frequently revisits in her dreams, by showing her coming to terms with that experience in all its ontological complexity. For Dominick LaCapra, the need to repeat, or *act out* (1996, 210), the originary trauma indicates a state of being in which the subject is "haunted or possessed by the past" (1996, 179) and which most commonly takes the form of reexperiencing the traumatic event in flashbacks and nightmares. In contrast, LaCapra's concept of *working through*

enables the individual to gain a critical distance from the historical traumatic event and, thereby, to overcome it. Unlike in other recent films that also explore the aftereffects of car accidents, such as *The Loved Ones*, *Trauma* (Evans 2004) and *Premonition* (Yapo 2007), *The Babadook* offers a complex exploration of the dynamic between the perpetrator and the victim of horror as a way to convey the visceral nature of Amelia's trauma. Trauma is understood here as a psychic wounding, or what Ulrich Baer refers to as "unresolved experience" (2000, 1) provoked by "the shocking and unexpected occurrence of an accident" (Caruth 2016, 6). Unlike Cathy Caruth's influential conceptualisation of the traumatic event as inherently unknowable or unrepresentable (2016)—an idea that conforms to the precepts of premillennium trauma theory, of which she is one of the principal exponents—this article will instead emphasise Amelia's emerging agency as she narrativises her experience as a trauma survivor.[1] Caruth's discussion of the reemergence of the traumatic event in "flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena" (2016, 94) will, consequently, be understood not so much as evidence of Amelia's repression but as an indication of how her acting out of the past prevents her from fully accepting her current reality.

To date, only passing references to trauma as an interpretive paradigm have been made in the critical debate about *The Babadook*.[2] However, by conveying both the emotional (internal) and physical (external) impact of trauma on her protagonist, Kent's film provides an interesting example of how cinematic horror is an apposite medium through which to communicate the visceral experience of PTSD. In line with Horvitz's observation that trauma does not exist as a "unidimensional phenomen[on] that [is] experienced identically by each victim" (2000, 5), it will be argued that, by locating the narrative in a very tangible diegetic space, *The Babadook* represents Amelia's PTSD as an idiosyncratic and embodied—rather than purely mental—event. In particular, it is the specific materiality of Amelia's physical environment, the interior of the home she shares with her young son Samuel (Noah Wiseman), that serves as a locus for the protagonist's acting out of her trauma, whilst also providing the context in which she can begin the process of her psychic recovery. In this sense, my reading of Amelia's experience moves away from the antitherapeutic bias of trauma theorists like Caruth to suggest the possibility of resistance and recovery. Unlike many previous interpretations of *The Babadook*, which foregrounded Amelia's grief (Covert 2014; Ehrlich in Kent 2014d; Kidd 2014, 8) or her fraught relationship with her son (Quigley 2016, 60; Buerger 2017, 34; Harrington 2018, 180), this article will argue for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between trauma and its representation in cinematic

[1] In the twenty-first century, the application of trauma theory to literary analysis has moved away from several of its foundational authors, such as Caruth (2016) and Shoshana Felman (1992). For example, Deborah M. Horvitz insists on narrative as a tool to understand and communicate personal traumas to others (2000), a notion echoed and elaborated upon by Laurie Vickroy (2002), E. Ann Kaplan (2005) and Jennifer L. Griffiths (2010), among others.

[2] Trauma is mentioned as a concept, but without much explication, in the analyses by Lenika Cruz (2014), Ryan Lamble (in Kent 2014b), Aoife M. Dempsey (2015, 130, 132) and Shelley Buerger (2017, 36)

language. Specifically, it will suggest that *The Babadook* can be read as a narrative that represents the personalised impact of a historical psychic wounding on Amelia's current life by performing the subjective experience of her traumatic state. Further, it will claim that it is here, in the spatial, visual and linguistic tension between the countervailing forces of acting out and working through this wounding, that Amelia's trauma narrative is created.

2. Narrative Focalisation: Amelia's Experience of Trauma

The technique of narrative focalisation is crucial to our understanding of Amelia's trauma narrative as it allows us to become immersed in her world and, thereby, to participate in her story both visually and emotionally. Edward Branigan uses the term *focalisation* to refer to how a cinematic character "experienc[es] something through seeing or hearing" (1998, 101). In addition, he suggests that "external focalization" (1998, 103) is the specific technique through which the camera can depict what a character sees and hears, even if it is not always from his/her direct position in the frame. In doing so, this technique emphasises how spectators are dependent on the character for their understanding of what is occurring on screen. As well as making use of external focalisation, however, *The Babadook* makes us privy to Amelia's "internally focalized" (Branigan 1998, 103) perspective on her experiences, including her dreams, hallucinations and memories, which adds greater depth to our awareness of her emotional responses to them. In trauma theory terms, the effect is akin to what Elke Heckner refers to as "secondary witnessing" (2008, 62), a term synonymous with Marianne Hirsch's "retrospective witnessing" (2001, 6) but which will be preferred in this article for its suggestion that the spectator is a simultaneous participant in the filmic events, rather than being temporally dislocated from them. For Heckner, the consequence of secondary witnessing is that "viewers cannot remain in a distant, seemingly safe position of spectatorship. […] It demands, in other words, that viewers partake in a traumatic affect" (2008, 63).

In the opening scene of *The Babadook*, the camera first focuses on Amelia's anguished face before switching to her internally focalised point-of-view shot which shows a man, later to be revealed as Amelia's husband, Oskar (Ben Winspear), in the driver's seat of the car in which they have just crashed (01:28). This, it soon becomes apparent, is the origin of her trauma: Oskar's death in a violent accident while they were on route to the hospital because she was in labour with Samuel. In fact, in the following scene (01:33) we realise that what we have just witnessed is a repetition, or an acting out, of the event as part of Amelia's dream. Thus, the shot of her falling backwards, away from the camera and onto her bed, provides a visual segue between her past (the dream) and present reality (her bedroom) that conveys her inability to inhabit the here and now fully. This experience typifies that of a trauma survivor, who lives "in durational rather than chronological time," and so "continue[s] to experience the horrors of the past

through internal shifts in time and space" (Vickroy 2002, 5). By positioning spectators in this way, as privy to the protagonist's internally focalised thought process, the film intensifies our identification with her so that we participate simultaneously with her in the traumatic incident. As Vickroy has suggested, this "access" is crucial to Amelia's trauma narrative as it provides an important participatory dimension that allows us, as spectators, to "confront [...] our own fears" (2002, 1-2). At many key moments throughout *The Babadook*, we are secondary witnesses to the unfolding narrative from Amelia's externally or internally focalised perspective, an effect that induces in the spectator the same physical and psychological disorientation that Amelia feels. In fact, as Kent commented in conversation with Virginia Sélavy, "it always felt right to see it through [Amelia's] eyes. [...] Even when she goes to some very dark places, I still tried to keep it within her point of view as much as possible, so that people would [...] actually travel through that experience with her" (2014c).

It may be tempting to view Amelia's dream of the car crash that opens the film as an expression of her desire to see Oskar alive again in the moments before her traumatic separation from him. This would certainly seem to be the case during Amelia's later hallucinatory reunion with her husband in the basement of the house (01:02:50). However, it could be argued that Amelia's "need to sleep" (52:40), which Adam Joyce describes as her "almost liturgical lament" (2015), suggests that her wish is not so much for Oskar's return to life (for him to wake up) as for her own unconsciousness through the oblivion that sleep brings. As Amelia reads in the text of the sinister storybook *Mister Babadook*, which mysteriously appears in her house and seems to verbalise her innermost thoughts, "You're going to wish you were dead" (12:46). By interpreting Amelia's suffering from the perspective of trauma, it becomes apparent that her psychic wounding, manifested by the acting out of the car crash in her dream, is constituted in part by an eruption of the death drive, her desire to "re-establish a state of things that was disturbed by the emergence of life" (Freud [1923] 2018, 34)—a statement that is given particular ironic poignancy in the film when we learn that Amelia gave birth to Samuel on the same day that her husband died.

Samuel is crucial to *The Babadook*'s exploration of trauma because, as the child of both Amelia and Oskar, he gives physical form to the symbiotic relation between life and death. That Samuel was born in the immediate aftermath of the fatal accident adds a key impediment to Amelia's recovery from the psychic wound that Oskar's loss has created. In fact, Samuel's physical presence can be read as a key trigger that provokes Amelia to repeatedly, and seemingly inescapably, act out this traumatic event. Several critics, including Rand R. Cooper (2015, 19), Ehrlich (in Kent 2014d), Max Bledstein (2016), Paula Quigley (2016, 72) and Paul Risker (in Kent 2017, 13), have insisted on the importance of repression in *The Babadook*. However, I wish to argue that, in contrast to the trauma paradigm proposed by Caruth, Amelia's memories of the car crash are not necessarily incomplete or inaccessible to her conscious recall. Rather, they seem to be in abeyance, a consequence of her reluctance to confront the origin of her trauma, given

that to do so would inevitably sever the past (her marriage to Oskar) from her present reality as a widowed single mother. For this reason, it is significant that, in her dream, Amelia acts out only the moment of the crash itself, not Oskar's subsequent death or Samuel's birth. LaCapra has written about how the ability to distinguish between absence (as a transhistorical lack) and specific, tangible loss is crucial to an individual's recovery from traumatic events. For him, the misrecognition of the latter for the former is one of the principal symptoms exhibited by trauma survivors: "When loss is converted into [...] absence, one faces the impasse of endless melancholy, impossible mourning, and interminable aporia in which any process of working through the past [...] is foreclosed" (1999, 698). This description suitably encapsulates Amelia's state of being at the beginning of *The Babadook*. As the protagonist is unwilling to acknowledge the specific loss of her husband, we become aware of a more all-consuming existential absence that is inscribed onto the material texture of the film. Given that the events in *The Babadook* occur around the date of Samuel's seventh birthday, the lack of flashbacks to specific moments in Amelia's life before her son was born, or to her life with him up to the time of the film's diegesis, cinematographically establishes a narrative lacuna that emphasises Amelia's traumatic stasis at the moment of the car crash.

As an important trigger for his mother's acting out, it is particularly significant that Samuel wakes Amelia from her dream at the beginning of the film because he represents the current reality that her dependence on the past threatens to negate. Samuel, who functions throughout the story in parallel with his mother, also experiences disturbed sleep. In fact, his first words in the film—"Mum, I had the dream again" (01:44)—immediately establish the symptomology of trauma, including nightmares and hallucinations, that will be repeated throughout *The Babadook*. Amelia's wish to sedate Samuel by giving him sleeping pills gains another dimension when we consider that, in doing so, she seeks to induce in him the very unconsciousness that she herself craves. In fact, when Amelia later crashes her car with Samuel in the back seat (52:15), her physical acting out of the incident that killed Oskar also repeats her own and her son's survival, in spite of her unconscious wish for their nonexistence. As the man (John Maurice) into whose vehicle she crashes complains, "You could have killed someone" (52:38). Yet this incident is crucial to our understanding of *The Babadook* as a trauma narrative because it can be read as one of the moments when Amelia demonstrates her emerging ability to actively confront and, thereby, ultimately work through the traumatic event that has taken such a toll on her.

Throughout *The Babadook*, Amelia's frustration at "not having slept in weeks" (32:32) seems to be compounded by either her disturbing dreams or tooth pain, a narrative trope that is conspicuously repeated throughout the film (07:43, 48:06, 51:51, 01:00:58). In fact, despite stating otherwise, Amelia sleeps a good deal, though the use of time-lapse photography reduces the prominence of these moments (16:28, 27:12, 35:21). Indeed, one of *The Babadook*'s most effective—and affective—technical achievements is its blend of externally and internally focalised narration, which blurs the boundaries

between sleeping and waking to such an extent that it induces in the spectator the same existential disorientation that Amelia suffers from, which is particularly well illustrated by Amelia's somnambulist encounter with Oskar in the basement. The fact that, in this scene, the monstrous Babadook appropriates her husband's physical appearance, asking that she give him "the boy" (01:03:24), is indicative of Amelia's dissociative merging of the past and the present into an atemporal state of absence. Amelia is frequently seen staring blankly off screen or into space, a motif that Kent retains from her earlier short film, *Monster* (2005), which serves as the urtext for *The Babadook*. In fact, when Amelia's traumatised mind-set becomes more apparent to the spectator, her disordered thought process is inscribed onto the materiality of the film by the deliberate use of unconventional framing. As Kent explains, "people's heads start to drift to other sides of the frames, and things start to become more discordant visually" (2014c).

3. Diegetic Spaces: the Materiality of Amelia's Trauma

The house in which Amelia and Samuel live is an important aspect of *The Babadook*'s visual dynamic and one of the key elements through which the notion of trauma becomes embodied in the film. As the director herself has stated, "gradually the film becomes just the house. But the house is alive" (2014c). Several critics have commented on how this location helps to enhance the horror element of *The Babadook* by concretising the anxiety that the characters and spectators feel (Dempsey 2015, 131; Cooper 2015, 20; Quigley 2016, 68). For Amanda Howell, "the memory of that rainy night which ended in blood has somehow seeped into the skin of the house itself" (2018, 189). While this viewpoint certainly makes sense, reading *The Babadook* from a perspective that is informed by Daniel Libeskind's work on how trauma can be represented by architecture allows for an interpretation of the Vanek family home in relation to the material spatialisation of Amelia's PTSD. Specifically, by acknowledging Libeskind's insistence on "being [physically] in" a trauma space (2003, 45), it can be argued that the house manifests the dialectic between absence and loss that is symptomatic of her traumatic state.

As the house is implied to be the place where Amelia lived with her husband before his death, his "being and nonbeing" (Libeskind 2003, 44) is palpably transcribed onto the physical space of the film's diegesis. Near the beginning of *The Babadook*, a two-shot shows Amelia and Samuel sleeping at opposite sides of her bed (02:54). For Quigley, the fact that she lies with her back to her son symbolises "the distance she has put between them," which "foreshadow[s] her increasingly violent desire to escape her child as the film progresses" (2016, 62). Yet, despite Quigley's insistence that Amelia's relationship with Samuel has an unsettling Oedipal dimension, a Freudian interpretation of the film that is also echoed by Peter Bradshaw (2014) and Briony Kidd (2014, 9), it is the loss of Oskar—more than Samuel's ersatz presence—that is particularly significant in this scene. Indeed, Amelia's bed serves as a trope for the physical discontinuity of her

marital relationship. Rather than acknowledge how her home now inscribes Oskar's death as a material reality, Amelia's inability to accept his loss instead transforms the house into a void, an idea that is reflected by the uniformity of *The Babadook*'s sombre blue-grey set design. In conversation with Lamble, Kent spoke about the house as a "shell [for] a life that evaporated very quickly" (2014b). Thus, it is not just that the Vanek home becomes "a metaphor for Amelia's psyche" (Kidd 2014, 10), but that it gives material form to Amelia's experience of traumatic loss, which is transformed into a nullifying ontological absence.

The dynamic tension between absence and loss is most concretely embodied in the house's basement. Several critics have commented on the importance of this stereotypical horror trope, with Shelley Buerger suggesting that it could be interpreted as "a somewhat heavy-handed symbol of [Amelia's] repressed grief" (2017, 41). Beyond its symbolic meaning, however, Amelia uses the basement as a literal repository for Oskar's personal belongings—that is to say, those objects that concretise her specific loss. As such, the basement serves as a key physical trauma space within *The Babadook*. When Amelia chastises Samuel for playing there, she does so by reminding him that it contains "all your father's things" (21:35). Two artefacts are given particular significance by virtue of their repetition during the narrative. The first, Oskar's clothes, is seen from Amelia's externally focalised point of view when she descends into the basement for the first time (22:59) and then later when she thinks that she sees them hanging on the wall at the police station (39:45), where she has gone to report her harassment by an unknown telephone caller. Many critics have suggested that, by dressing in Oskar's clothes and adopting his physical appearance, the Babadook comes to exemplify Freud's concept of the *uncanny* (Barker 2014; Covert 2014; O'Sullivan 2014; Cooper 2015, 20; Quigley 2016, 69). While this may be true, it is also apparent that the presence in the basement of the clothes that Oskar was wearing on the day that he died—the black jacket and grey shirt that we glimpse in the opening scene, unaware at this point of their significance—serves to posit his disrupted continuity within the family home. Amelia usually refuses to enter the basement, so when she does so following Samuel's theatrical performance, seeing these items serves to catalyse the process of her working through her traumatised state. This, ultimately, allows her to transfigure absence into loss and, thus, move beyond the ontological stasis that her acting out of the past has engendered. At the end of the film, Amelia returns to the basement but Oskar's clothes are now absent, presumably because she has removed them. This implies that Amelia has come to acknowledge how these articles do not embody her husband's physical being and, thus, that she no longer needs to fetishise their relation to Oskar's past existence.

The second artefact, a photograph of Oskar and Amelia embracing, is shown three times in quick succession during *The Babadook*: first, when it is used by Samuel as part of his theatrical performance in the basement (20:50); then, when Amelia tidies up after her son's performance has finished (22:30); and, finally, when a close-up, again filmed from Amelia's externally focalised perspective, shows it on her bed, now out of its frame

and defaced (24:35). The use of this image is as an example of what Hirsch refers to as "meta-photographic textuality" (2012, 8)—the placement of a family photograph in a narrative context—which seemingly captures a moment of personal happiness in Amelia's life before the birth of Samuel. However, its incidental discovery by Amelia also inevitably triggers her to act out Oskar's death once again. In fact, the "indexical nature of the photograph, its status as relic, or trace" (Hirsch 2012, 19) has the potential to provoke a similar emotional response from the film's spectators, whose second witnessing of Amelia's grief connects with their own. In conversation with Ehrlich, Kent commented that: "I've lost people, I've lost my dad, I know what it feels like, and you think it's never going to end. So I think it's important to have stories that can help you through" (2014d). By working within the horror genre, *The Babadook* transforms its exploration of Amelia's loss into a visceral experience. Indeed, as Kent points out when recounting her satisfaction at being given feedback from spectators, "this one guy who had lost both his parents before the age of 15 [...] said, 'That was the most moving study of grief for me.' I've had people in tears after the film and that means so much to me" (2014c). For Hirsch, a photograph of the dead, as well as provoking retraumatisation, also has the potential to be cathartically transformative, a "vehicle for working through a traumatic past" so that its repetitious viewing does not necessarily indicate psychic "fixity or paralysis" (2001, 9). In *The Babadook*, the person who is responsible for defacing the photograph of Amelia and her husband remains, crucially, an open-ended enigma. Although we are invited to adopt Amelia's interpretation that Samuel is the culprit, in anger at her refusal to "let [him] have a dad" (22:10), it could equally be Amelia who has vandalised it during the fugal state of absence into which she retreats. By accepting this latter scenario, it can be argued that the destruction of Oskar's image is crucial for Amelia's psychic transformation in the film because it represents an empowering attack on the no longer existent reality of her marriage. As such, it suggests an important turning point in her belatedly coming to accept her loss.

The basement of the Vaneks' family home is a remembrance space, a personal museum that physically performs the duality of Oskar's presence/absence. For Libeskind, the architecture of the museum must materially embody what it exhibits so as to render visible, rather than erase, the historical reality of annihilation (2003, 46). In accordance with this view, we can interpret the detritus of Oskar's previous life—the music scores and vinyl records that are scattered on the floor of the basement, as well as his clothes and photographs—as mourning objects that, having become sacred totems to Amelia, reflect her stifling inability to let go of the past. In contrast, Samuel's casual verbal interaction with the photograph of his father—"Don't worry, dad, I'll save mum" (21:08)—seems much less childlike and naïve on reflection, indicating instead a more positive, participatory attitude towards Oskar's memorial space that liberates rather than restricts. It is apparent that, despite sharing the experience of loss, Amelia and Samuel have very different approaches to dealing with the artefacts that Oskar has left behind. To some extent, the character of the son can be understood in terms of

Hirsch's concept of "postmemory" (2012, 22), as his lived reality is highly mediated by the traumatic event that preceded his birth. Samuel's father is constituted for his son by his nonbeing, his photograph an affirmation of "the past's existence" that "in [its] flat two-dimensionality, signal[s] its unbridgeable distance" (Hirsch 2012, 23). By encountering her husband's personal belongings in the basement, Amelia's material encounter with Oskar's death—which, as discussed above, she initially experiences as an existential absence—also represents a point of engagement for her that provokes the belated working through of her grief. In (perhaps) destroying Oskar's photographic image, Amelia enacts the specific loss that she has previously suffered, an indication of her increased ability to resist, and move on from, this traumatic event in her past.

4. Mister Babadook: Amelia's Trauma as a Monstrous Other

The concept of the monster is "integral" (Kent 2017, 15) to any understanding of *The Babadook*. The film deploys a well-used horror trope with the gradual emergence of the sinister, eponymous monster (Tim Purcell)—a character that was visually inspired by the director's love of Expressionist cinema (Kent 2014c)—who, at the same time, conveys the psychosomatic ramifications of Amelia's PTSD. Several critics have suggested that *The Babadook* explores the consequences of Amelia's maternal ambivalence (Quigley 2016, 57; Buerger 2017, 33; Harrington 2018, 180), her negativity towards Samuel being a response to the fact that his birth coincided with Oskar's death. It is for this reason that Samuel has never celebrated his actual birthday, and also why Amelia recoils at having any physical contact with him (02:46, 04:27)—both clear examples of how she avoids, rather than confronts, these key trauma triggers within her everyday life. Given this, the choice of Samuel's name seems to be deliberately ironic, as Amelia's resentment at his birth stands in noteworthy contrast to his Biblical namesake, whose mother prayed to God to be given a child (1 Samuel 1.2; Carroll and Prickett 1998, 331). Buerger has read the film in terms of Julia Kristeva's concept of the abject and concludes that Kent's reimagining of abjection involves a woman who, instead of refusing to give up the comforting intimacy of the mother-child dyad, "is made monstrous by the absence of maternal feeling" (2017, 34). *The Babadook* can certainly be read in terms of the abject—in particular, the notion that its "vortex of summons and repulsion" (Kristeva 1982, 1) seems to encapsulate Amelia's conflicted feelings about her son. It is also noticeable that, as Amelia's behaviour becomes increasingly erratic, her home is tangibly transformed into an abject space, with the kitchen turning into a mess of unwashed dishes, discarded food items and an infestation of (hallucinated) cockroaches. This is important because, as a single mother, Amelia's failure to maintain the socially mandated maternal role that is expected of her is here manifested by the physical degeneration of her domestic space. Howell has convincingly argued that *The Babadook* critiques the economic vulnerability of single mothers (2018, 194) and, in support of this view, the film offers the suggestion that,

following Oskar's death, Amelia has had to abandon her previous career as a writer in favour of the more stable income that working in a care home for the elderly provides.

Reading the film as a trauma narrative helps to orientate our interpretation by taking account of the specific behaviours that are associated with PTSD. Indeed, Kent herself has indicated that *The Babadook* addresses the protagonist's inability to confront what has happened to her in the past (2014a), a typical behaviour displayed by the victims of catastrophic events. With this in mind, Amelia's ambivalence towards Samuel can be understood as a trauma survivor's "cessation of feeling" (Lifton 1995, 136), an emotional detachment that is not only a consequence of her confrontation with death but also, in some sense, a necessary self-protective response to what she has witnessed. Borrowing from Robert J. Lifton's ideas about survivor guilt, we can understand the Babadook, therefore, as being Amelia's "second self," which is "a form of doubling in the traumatized person" (Lifton 1995, 137). In consequence, it can be argued that the protagonist's dissociation (her existential absence), a reaction to her inability to address the premature death of her husband, leads her to hallucinate a monstrous Other who embodies those aspects of her trauma that she is unable to process. As a result, Amelia's ultimate recovery becomes dependent on her ability to reintegrate this traumatised self through the act of spoken and written narration.

Amelia's refusal to speak about the loss of her husband is a repeated element of *The Babadook*'s plot. On the few occasions that other characters do so (07:19, 28:16), they are met with either hostility or silent resentment from Amelia. In fact, when her elderly neighbour, Gracie Roach (Barbara West), mentions that "Oskar [...] always spoke his mind" (40:31), Amelia's angry response, "Do you have to keep on bringing him up?" (40:33), serves only to emphasise the lack of dialogue about her husband rather than its excess. The scene in which this exchange occurs is particularly significant, as it follows on from Samuel telling his mother that Mrs Roach has Parkinson's disease. Amelia's dismissive, "You don't have to say everything that goes through your head" (40:17), is countered by Gracie telling her, "It's alright, love. He wanted to know, so we talked about it" (40:20). Amelia's refusal to similarly give voice to her experience is indicative of the traumatic loss that manifests itself in the figure of the Babadook, and which, through the progression of the film's narrative, she is eventually able to acknowledge. For Buerger, the moment when Amelia becomes visually transformed into the Babadook—whilst watching a TV news report about a woman who has stabbed her son to death (01:01:28)—is pivotal, as it marks the "re-emergence of her agency" (2017, 38).

With this in mind, Kent's choice of name for her titular monster seems to be worthy of comment. The director has told Ehrlich that it was derived from the Serbian word *babaroga* (meaning "bogeyman"), but that "it's stupid, it's just a made up thing" (2014d). However, Dempsey considers "Babadook" to be "evocative of Aboriginal etymology" and, thus, that the character's (black) Otherness has a specifically racial dimension that reflects a "collective cultural trauma, a legacy of colonialism" (2015, 131-32). Whilst acknowledging the cogency of this reading, the

name "Babadook" also suggests a verbal stasis, the collapse of spoken language into repetitive syllabic fragments—"ba-BA-ba, DOOK! DOOK! DOOK!" (11:08)—which conveys Amelia's failure to coherently vocalise her traumatic experience. From a Kristevan point of view, the name of the monster can also be said to juxtapose the modalities of the Semiotic—the nonsensical "Babadook"—against the unified phallic signifier of the Symbolic—the "Mister" that is specified in the storybook's title—as a way of representing the fundamental tension between articulation and its negation, being and nonbeing, that underpins the film's narrative. From this point of view, the monster seems to be more than just a manifestation of Amelia's maternal ambivalence or of her repressed grief. Instead, it can be understood as a psychological projection of the hostility she feels towards Oskar for abandoning her and her own self-loathing guilt, which is discharged onto Samuel—the character who physically embodies them both. In this sense, the Babadook is the locus through which Amelia's PTSD is perpetuated by the traumatisation of her son. Ironically, we are initially encouraged to view Samuel as a monstrous character, with the school principal (Tony Mack) describing him as a boy who has "significant behavioural problems" (06:06). Yet, as the film progresses, it becomes apparent that Samuel's disturbed fantasies are generated in response to his mother's shockingly aggressive behaviour, her physical possession by the Babadook an indication of what Griffiths describes as the bodily level encoding of a traumatic memory (2010, 1).

Amelia's violent assault on Samuel, when she drags him up the stairs and throws him against the bedroom wall (01:15:15), is importantly represented via her externally focalised viewpoint which, because of her dissociation, appears to be enacted by the Babadook. For this reason, Amelia's angry confession to her son, "you don't know how many times I wished it was you not him that died" (01:09:05), is a crucial moment in the film as it marks the first time that she is able to vocalise her hostility and, thus, to begin to resist the compulsion to act out that is the mechanism of her trauma. When, at the end of the film, Amelia is finally able to declare, "my husband died the day that Sam was born" (01:22:20), her acknowledgement of this psychic wounding signals how she is finally able to transform her sense of existential absence, manifested by her previous silence, into a specific, verbal narrative about her loss.

Central to Amelia's transformative working through of her trauma is the presence of the cryptic pop-up book, titled *Mister Babadook* (perhaps in ironic reference to children's stories like the *Mr Men* series). Appearing on Samuel's bookshelf one night, apparently out of nowhere, it is Amelia's reading of this book that seems to provoke the invasion of the monstrous titular character into the Vanek family home. Yet the film script's seemingly offhand reference to the fact that Amelia was a "writer" who "did some kids' stuff" (28:09) in the past raises the intriguing possibility that she is, in fact, the author of *Mister Babadook*. As a result, we can interpret the text as Amelia's physically existent, or literal, trauma narrative. It is, in essence, the imaginary monster to which she metaphorically has given birth and which, as Buerger points out, "comes to

signify both destruction and redemption" (2017, 35). From this, it becomes clear that repetition is used in *The Babadook* as a structural device to emphasise the metafictional nature of a film in which the spectators watch a narrative that parallels the story that is both written and read by Amelia. Although one possible objection to such a reading would be to point out the supernatural properties of the book—Amelia destroys it on two occasions (26:13, 37:32) and, yet, it still mysteriously reappears "sticky-taped back together" (Kidd 2014, 39)—this would be to ignore Amelia's characterisation as a sufferer of a profound dissociative disorder throughout the film. Indeed, the scene in which the storybook returns for the first time after Amelia has torn it to pieces begins with the suggestion that she is in a somnambulist state (35:26). *The Babadook*'s repeated and highly effective visual blurring of the boundaries between sleep and wakefulness is, therefore, an important mechanism through which the spectator also experiences the disorientating effect of Amelia's PTSD.

The text of *Mister Babadook* contains a number of coded illustrations of Amelia's asocial fantasies, such as the mother figure's murder of her child and her later self-destruction by suicide. Perhaps more importantly, the book also stresses the seemingly inescapable process of acting out that keeps Amelia in a state of traumatised stasis: "If it's in a word, or it's in a look / You can't get rid of the Babadook" (12:30). The protagonist's gradual recognition of the truth of this statement—that is, that she has been profoundly and irrevocably affected by the consequences of the car crash—is the means by which a partial resolution is reached at the close of the film. Amelia's final confrontation with the Babadook returns us to the beginning of the narrative, the journey to the hospital that precipitated the onset of her trauma, with the monster in the guise of Oskar telling her to "keep breathing. Put your seat back, ten more minutes and we're there" (01:17:00). But Amelia, wearing a nightdress that seems to be identical to the one that she wore on the fateful night nearly seven years previously, is now able to negate its malevolent influence with a powerfully vocalised dismissal: "You are nothing! You're nothing!" (01:18:09). By interpreting these words from the perspective of trauma theory, it can be concluded that Amelia here finally gives spoken recognition to Oskar's loss and, by extension, to the impotence of the Babadook, as the manifestation of her PTSD, to further control her behaviour.

5. Conclusion

When Kent has discussed *The Babadook*'s ending, she has insisted that it was a "non-negotiable" element of the story (2014c), despite the offer of financial assistance if changes were made. Several critics have expressed reservations about its apparently positive conclusion, with Eve Tushnet describing the closing scenes as "strange" (2014) and Tyler Sage wondering if a "better horror film [might] have started where *The Babadook* ends" (2015). In spite of these comments, the film's finale—in which Amelia descends once again into the basement to feed the now apparently subjugated

monster (01:23:50), an echo of an earlier scene in which she is physically restrained by Samuel (01:12:30)—offers the important suggestion that Amelia has finally come to acknowledge that her traumatic loss needs to be nurtured, rather than denied or forgotten. As noted earlier, Oskar's personal belongings are now absent, a detail that suggests Amelia has come to recognise them as triggers to her previous acting out of the traumatic crash. The use of low-key lighting serves to exaggerate the basement's appearance as a void, its spatial emptiness and darkness invoking Oskar's nonexistence. As a result, this subterranean space becomes transformed at the end of the film into a paradigmatic location that embodies the visceral materiality of Amelia's loss. The fact that the Babadook is represented here as an intangible presence, no longer the visually horrific creature that previously haunted Amelia's dreams, adds weight to the idea that the basement is now a locus of memory that is transformative rather than traumatic. Amelia has accepted Oskar's death—as symbolised by the worms she feeds to the invisible monster—and, more importantly, her own survival, even though she will always be affected by both.

By reading *The Babadook* from a perspective that is informed by various aspects of modern trauma theory—in particular, Heckner's notion of secondary witnessing, the link that Libeskind makes between trauma and materiality, as well as LaCapra's work on acting out and working through—we can better understand the impact that PTSD has on its protagonist. Using narrative focalisation as a crucial technique, the film conveys Amelia's psychosomatic experience of traumatic loss in terms of her possession by a monstrous Other, a trope that harnesses the affective potential of the horror genre to express her dissociative state. In her analysis of traffic accidents on screen, Karen Beckman has written about how the car crash embodies the "tension between stasis and motion [...] self and other" (2010, 1), a notion that seems to be particularly apt in relation to Amelia. By vocalising her experience through the storybook text of *Mister Babadook*, Amelia is finally able to work through her compulsive acting out of the fatal accident and, in this way, move beyond the stifling and pernicious effect that this past traumatic event has had upon her.

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Flying Solo: Mobility in *Up in the Air*

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This article analyses the film *Up in the Air* (2009) to explore one of the ways in which mobilities are reflected in twenty-first century cinema. The film's main character, played by George Clooney, is presented as a hypermobile traveller who has adopted a rootless, nomadic lifestyle that enables him to move at will. Combining contemporary critical theories on mobility with close textual analysis, this article examines the specific type of mobility embodied by the film's protagonist, based on weightlessness and incessant, frictionless movement, as well as the effects that large-scale mobility has on people's identities and on the ways in which they relate to others. As will be argued, the representation of the protagonist's mobility changes in the course of the film, in ways that call attention to the shortcomings of his highly mobile lifestyle.

Keywords: *Up in the Air*; mobility; mobile elite; mobile intimacy; George Clooney; gender

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Volando solo: La movilidad en *Up in the Air*

Este artículo utiliza la película *Up in the Air* (2009) para explorar una de las maneras en las que el cine contemporáneo refleja el mundo altamente móvil en el que vivimos. El personaje principal, interpretado por George Clooney, se presenta como un viajero hipermóvil que ha adoptado un estilo de vida nómada que le permite moverse a voluntad. Combinando las teorías críticas actuales sobre movilidad con el análisis textual, este artículo examina el tipo de movilidad encarnado por el protagonista de la película, el cual se basa en la ingravidez y el movimiento incesante y sin fricción, así como los efectos que tiene la movilidad a gran escala en la identidad de las personas y en la manera en que estas se relacionan con otras personas. Este artículo explora cómo la representación de

este tipo de movilidad varía en el transcurso de la película, llamando la atención sobre las limitaciones de la vida móvil del personaje.

Palabras clave: *Up in the Air*; movilidad; élite móvil; intimidad móvil; George Clooney; género

1. Introduction

For some people, air travel is a hassle. Travelling by plane can be rather uncomfortable, expensive and time-consuming. You have to pack light or else spend extra time checking in your luggage, then go through security and spend hours on a stuffy plane. Overcrowded airports, endless queues, flight delays and airplane food are some of the disadvantages of air travel and the reasons why many people find it troublesome. For others, however, none of these things are a big problem. Such is the case of the protagonist of *Up in the Air*, a 2009 film directed by Jason Reitman and written by Reitman and Sheldon Turner. Based on the 2001 novel of the same title by Walter Kirn, *Up in the Air* stars George Clooney as corporate downsizing expert Ryan Bingham. His job keeps him on the road for 322 days a year, flying around the country in order to conduct layoffs in numerous companies—and he loves it. He lives out of a suitcase and enjoys the sense of freedom and weightlessness that he gets from travelling. On one of his trips, he meets Alex (Vera Farmiga), another frequent flyer and a female version of himself. Since neither of them is interested in having a serious relationship, they start a casual affair, meeting in business hotels when their busy travel schedules allow for it. Ryan's mobile lifestyle is threatened by Natalie (Anna Kendrick), Ryan's new colleague, who has designed a system to fire people remotely using video calls. As a consequence, career transition counsellors like Ryan will not have to travel anymore. He will be grounded, and in more ways than one.

The film presents a world in which travelling is not a difficult endeavour but a rather quotidian activity. Like Ryan, many people from all over the world currently live a life on the move. In their book *Mobile Lives*, Anthony Elliott and John Urry claim that "a golden age of mobility" has arrived, since people are now more mobile than ever (2010, ix). People are travelling further, faster and more frequently, and often spending more time "on the road" (Urry 2007, 4). The study of mobilities began in the social sciences in the 1990s and, since then, has brought together studies on migration, borders, transportation, infrastructure, transnationalism, mobile communications, imaginative travel, tourism, globalisation, geography, culture and anthropology. Scholars such as Marc Augé, Manuel Castells and James Clifford are considered to be the precursors of contemporary mobilities research, followed by the works of Peter Adey, Tim Cresswell, Mimi Sheller and Urry, among others. The "new mobilities paradigm" incorporates new ways of theorising mobilities which focus on "embodied and material practices of movement, digital and communicative mobilities, the infrastructures and systems of governance that enable or disable movement, and the representations, ideologies, and meanings attached to both movement and stillness" (Sheller 2014, 789).

Up in the Air received critical acclaim and earned various awards and nominations. Film critics have praised the film's timeliness and its attention to topical issues such as mass unemployment, cultural alienation and technology (Ebert 2009; Puig 2009). The film's portrayal of topics like the economic recession, personal relationships and mobility has also generated considerable interest among scholars, including Pablo

Echart (2014), who explores individualism and success in *Up in the Air* and two other films starring Clooney, Derek Nystrom (2014), who examines the film's depiction of emotional labour in a moment of economic crisis, and Amanda Du Preez (2015), who writes about mobility, places and non-places and home in the movie. This article aims to contribute to the existing literature on the film by combining contemporary critical theories on mobility with close textual analysis in order to explore the film's central themes and the visual and narrative mechanisms used to present them. I will examine the specific type of mobility embodied by the film's protagonist, who has adopted a mobile lifestyle based on relentless travel, weightlessness and frictionless movement, as well as the effects that large-scale mobility has on people's identities and on the ways in which they relate to other people.

2. Ryan, the Global Subject

"To know me is to fly with me," says Ryan Bingham in the opening voice-over (06:05). He lives "up in the air," routinely flying around the country visiting other people's offices and firing them. Yet for Ryan, ceaseless travelling is more than a job requirement; it is a lifestyle that he enjoys immensely. He loves the weightless sense of nonresponsibility that comes from living on one's own, the perks he enjoys as a frequent flyer and the feeling of being surrounded by unknown people. He likes this lifestyle so much that he is also a motivational lecturer, teaching people how to cut down on unnecessary bonds, obligations and possessions to be able to adopt it.

Ryan, like thousands of people from all over the world, lives a mobile life. *Up in the Air* portrays a world in which people move incessantly, faster and more frequently than ever before. As has often been argued, large-scale mobilities are not new, what is new is the speed and intensity with which people, objects and information move these days (Urry 2007; Elliott and Urry 2010). Ryan has successfully adapted to this environment of rapid movement, ceaseless flow and dynamism. He firmly believes that "moving is living" and, consequently, rebuffs everything that hinders his capacity to move or slows him down. "The slower we move, the faster we die," he says (46:52). He has turned travelling into a routine that he performs effortlessly. Watching him pack and move around airport check-in desks and security controls is almost like watching a meticulously designed choreography. As these actions are performed, the fast editing mirrors the frenetic pace of life in contemporary times, showing that Ryan is more than able to keep up with it. For him, the key to doing so is to become weightless, to make his life fit in a cabin-size suitcase or, as he would say, in a backpack. In his motivational speeches, he asks his audience to put all the components of their lives—their house, their possessions, their acquaintances—inside an imaginary backpack and feel the unbearable weight of their lives on their shoulders. His lectures about how to unpack one's backpack encompass his philosophy of life, which enables him to lead a life of intense mobility.

Since Ryan is constantly travelling, he spends most of his time in non-places such as planes, airports and business hotels. According to Augé, non-places are not locally specific; on the contrary, they are almost the same regardless of where they are (2006). For Castells, the similar design of these places aims at the unification of the symbolic environment of the elite around the world ([1996] 2011, 447). Non-places are "sites of pure mobility" (Urry 2000, 63), traversed by thousands of people from all over the world every day. However, they are also "in-between zones" since thousands of people pass by but they do not stay (Urry 2000, 63). In contrast to what Augé understands as anthropological places, non-places are not meeting spaces; therefore, in them one remains anonymous and alone (2006, 54). Ryan has become a willing dweller of these spaces and several times during the film, he emphasises that non-places, which he describes as "faumey" (a combination of "faux" and "homey" (12:33)), are in fact his home. As he puts it at the beginning of the film, "all the things that you probably hate about travelling—the recycled air, the artificial lighting, the digital juice dispensers, the cheap sushi—are warm reminders that I'm home" (07:00). The mise en scène of his dull, impersonal apartment, with its plain white walls, minimal, functional furniture and no decorative items displayed, reinforces this idea. The remains of an unfinished meal on the kitchen counter lead the spectator to think that he spends so little time there that he does not even get to have a proper meal before hitting the road again. The untidiness of his apartment stands in contrast to his impeccably organised luggage. In sum, his apartment cannot be described as a home. Rather, it is a home base, a comfortable and convenient place in which to recover while waiting for the next flight. In Du Preez's words, it looks "like a hotel room" that "shows no presence of its owner" (789).

Transitional non-places are for Ryan more important than the cities he visits, which in most cases would be unidentifiable without the intertitles that provide the audience with an establishing aerial shot of the city and its name. The film focuses more on the regularity and dexterity with which he travels than on the actual destination, and Ryan does not seem to care about his specific location either: "same as every place else" is his default answer when he is asked what a specific city is like. Even though the spectator knows that the film is set in the United States, Ryan's story would still work if it was set in any other developed country in the world or he was travelling globally. Therefore, in spite of the fact that he does not travel outside the US, Ryan can be considered to be a member of the new world elite whom Zygmunt Bauman calls "the globals" (1998, 99), a new social class of "hypermobile travellers" who live in the fast lane and for whom travelling is almost a daily activity (Gössling et al. 2009). According to Bauman's division of society into tourists and vagabonds, that is, individuals who move at will and those who move because they have no other choice, like migrants or refugees, globals like Ryan are tourists in so far as they travel because they want to and travelling does not pose any problem for them (1998, 93). This new elite puts great emphasis on swiftness, weightlessness, dexterity and flexibility.

Their mobile nature, as well as the mobile nature of their money, enables them to shift between various countries and regions, tax regimes and legal systems, while living affluent, opulent lifestyles well above the standards of locals living in territorially fixed societies (Elliott and Urry 2010, 67).

"Speed of movement," writes Bauman, "has become today a major, perhaps the paramount factor in social stratification and the hierarchy of domination" (2002, 27). The members of the global mobile elite are more often than not wealthy. However, megawealth is not what makes this new social class stand out from other elites in the history of humankind. While in the past being a member of the elite implied owning vast expanses of land or massive industrial plants, currently money and possessions play second place to friction-less movement, weightlessness and speed. Membership of the elite is now based on being free to move and choose where to be, and having the means to do so effortlessly, comfortably and quickly. Ryan does not own a luxurious house or a high-end car, nor does he want them, but he benefits from various premium services when he travels: he always flies in business class, stays in the best hotels and eats at fancy restaurants. The services themselves are not as important for him as the promptness with which he can get them—priority check-in at airports and hotels is indispensable for him. He does not aspire to be on the Forbes list of the world's wealthiest people, but he longs to gain executive status with American Airlines. It is the same case for Alex Goran, whom Ryan meets at the Hilton hotel in Dallas. She also lives the mobile life of a global, frequently away on business trips around the US. In an attempt to flirt, they literally lay their (credit and membership) cards on the table as if trying to trump each other. People like Ryan and Alex give great importance to the number of miles they travel per year, since they see it as an indicator of one's status. In sum, they are, as Alex says, "two people that get turned on by elite status" (13:37).

Globals like Ryan and Alex are fond of the rewards and privileges they enjoy as frequent flyers, which range from priority airport check-in to personalised greetings and elegant first-class lounges. Even though the mobile lifestyle of globals is accessible only to a miniscule elite, it is presented as a normative ideal and a sign of prestige and power in popular culture and the media, and it has become an object of desire for many people. The incessant demands for travel that the globals' lifestyle entail are not regarded as constraining and time-consuming but rather as opening up endless possibilities and projects (Elliott and Urry 2010, 73, 80-82). In line with this view of mobility, Ryan is introduced not as the "time-poor" businessman but as a privileged traveller, and his mobile lifestyle is presented not as constraining but as highly desirable.

The glamourised representation of Ryan's mobility at the beginning of the film seems to imply that it adheres to this positive view of mobilities as a source of freedom, power and privilege, and of mobile lives as attractive and fascinating. This initial representation of mobilities is reinforced by the fact that the character embodying this specific type of mobility is played by Hollywood star Clooney. From the moment that Ryan is introduced, Clooney's star persona adds certain

connotations to the character and influences spectators' expectations. Praised for his looks and elegance, Clooney has often been compared to classic actors like Cary Grant and Gary Cooper (Sterrit 2012, 220). Most of the characters he plays are imbued with his charm and classic charisma, whether he is playing a high-rolling thief in Steven Soderbergh's *Ocean's* trilogy (*Ocean's Eleven* (2001), *Ocean's Twelve* (2004), *Ocean's Thirteen* (2007)), a "fixer" for a corporate law firm in *Michael Clayton* (2007), a narcissistic divorce lawyer in *Intolerable Cruelty* (2003) or a downsizer in *Up in the Air*. As critics have noted, some of his characters seem to resemble his off-screen self and Ryan Bingham is no exception. For instance, Andrew Barker remarks that a film like *Up in the Air*, where Clooney plays a "suave, lifelong bachelor who jet-sets across the country lounging in chic hotels," makes viewers "wonder how much he is simply playing himself," since the actor himself exhibited these qualities in real life, at least until he got married in 2014 (2009, n.p.). The films where he apparently plays himself—as well as other media products, such as his international Nespresso commercials—seem to allow the audience a privileged insight into his off-screen, private self. Thus, the opening voiceover in *Up in the Air* could be seen as an invitation to the audience to get to "know him [Clooney, the star]" by "flying with him [his on-screen double, Ryan]" (6:05). The world of designer suits, VIP services and first-class travel in which Ryan lives replicates that of Hollywood stars like Clooney. This contributes to the idealisation of Ryan's lifestyle and, in turn, of the specific type of mobility that he embodies.

Due in part to Clooney's elegance and charm, the film makes the first-class cabins, airports and hotels where Ryan spends most of his time seem attractive and inviting. Similarly, at least at the beginning of the film, the specific type of mobility that Ryan embodies is presented positively and he seems to rejoice in it. Yet, as will be argued below, the character of Ryan is not without contradictions. In his lectures, he promotes detachment and individualism, but when he has the opportunity to become even more detached from people by doing his job from a distance, he stands up against it and defends the importance of face-to-face personal interaction.

3. Ryan, the Individualistic Downsizer

The world of *Up in the Air* is a world of office buildings and business travel. The film examines corporate US at one of its most unstable moments, the economic recession. However, it does so from the perspective of Ryan, a member of the professional elite who experiences the financial crisis from the winning side. It does not have negative consequences for him. Quite the opposite, since his job is to conduct layoffs in companies that, due to the poor economy, have to downsize.

After a boom period of frenetic economic activity in the West, an acute crisis of the global financial system took place in 2007-2008, leading to what is known as the Great Recession. The recession is notably present in *Up in the Air*, a film released in 2009

which deals with the activities of CTC, a fictional consultancy firm that conducts mass layoffs. In fact, Reitman has acknowledged that he adapted the original script, based on a novel published before the economic boom collapsed, to the new context of economic instability in which the film was shot and released (Reitman et al. 2009, n.p.). He even decided to use people who had actually lost their jobs at the time of filming for the firing scenes (Du Preez 2015, 787). Hence, the film not only reflects the effects of the recession but also makes some direct references to the then current economic situation. At one point, Ryan's boss mentions they are going through "one of the worst times on record for America" (20:24). As the film progresses, the effects of the Great Recession become increasingly visible in the offices that Ryan and Natalie visit. In Kansas City, they enter an office that has been greatly affected by the crisis: a devastated secretary greets them with a worried look and the camera pans to reveal an almost deserted space where only a few desks and scattered chairs remain (43:20).

Ryan's life revolves mostly around his professional career, since it is his job at CTC that enables him to travel incessantly and lead a mobile lifestyle. He is euphemistically described as a career transition counsellor, but his job is simply to fire people on behalf of their employers, who hire Ryan's company to do the nasty work. However, he is not just any downsizer; he is the best and seems to have all the skills the job requires. He gives the impression of being empathetic and caring, yet he remains indifferent to what the people he fires say to him, which is often rather unpleasant. Whether they lose their temper or tell the most depressing story, he knows how to control the situation, telling them what they want to hear. To acquire such a level of expertise, Ryan has internalised a philosophy of life that enables him to remain detached from the personal stories of the employees he fires and makes him immune to the negative consequences that losing their jobs has on them. This attitude shows him as an individualistic man who not only enjoys isolation but is also exclusively focused on his own personal success. However, the excesses of his individualism have damaging effects on the people he encounters every day in his job (Echart 2014, 120). His world seems to be ruled by the survival of the fittest and adopting a predatory attitude seems to be an effective way to achieve success. "We are not swans. We are sharks," Ryan claims at one point in the film (46:55). And yet, he is not depicted as an entirely heartless, unscrupulous villain. This is, to a great extent, due to the fact that the star persona of Clooney imbues Ryan with his particular charisma and sense of humour. As the director explained, when portraying a character that fires people for a living, "he better be a darn charming actor. And there really isn't anyone better at that than George Clooney" ("*Up in the Air*: A Down-to-Earth Take on Modern Life" 2009, n.p.).

The young CTC employee Natalie Keener, played by Anna Kendrick, is the antithesis of Ryan. She is eager to show that she is a highly qualified and competent professional, but she lacks Ryan's charm and experience. Natalie's attitude towards and experience of mobility also differs significantly from Ryan's. As scholars have pointed out, mobility is a gendered issue and it is experienced and practiced differently by men

and women. Masculinity is usually coded as mobile and femininity as static (Cresswell and Uteng 2008, 2-5). The character of Natalie supports this idea, especially since, in opposition to the hypermobile male protagonist, she is not fully mobile, which makes her unfit for Ryan's world. The squeaky wheels of her suitcase clash with Ryan's smooth movements and choreographed travelling rituals. Moreover, her suitcase is too heavy, overpacked with things that Ryan thinks are unnecessary. She carries too much in her "backpack," both literally and symbolically. While Ryan is ready to leave at any moment, Natalie needs time to say goodbye to her boyfriend. She believes in love, marriage and family, notions which Ryan considers the biggest obstacles to mobility. Among the things that Ryan takes out of her luggage the first time they travel together is a pillow, an object that can be linked to the cosiness and comfort of the home (28:44). As Sheller notes, tropes of home and dwelling are often feminised and, while men are associated with travelling, hitting the road, and escaping from home, women are more often than not described as rooted in place and home (2008, 258). Thus, Natalie's overpacked suitcase suggests that she is too attached to the local, too rooted to keep up with Ryan's mobile lifestyle.

In addition to being unfit for the globals' world of intensive mobility, Natalie is also portrayed as unfit for the downsizing business. Unlike Ryan, she is unable to remain detached from the harsh words of the people she fires and their stories affect her deeply. As the film progresses, it becomes increasingly apparent that the emotional strain is taking its toll on her. This is further emphasised by the film's use of framing and mise en scène. For instance, after a long session firing people in a company in Des Moines, Natalie is shown sitting alone in a room full of empty desk chairs, which stand for all the employees that have been dismissed (44:55). The high angle used for this shot makes her appear weak and small, overwhelmed by the mass layoffs that she is part of. Yet, like Ryan, she is not without contradictions. It is Natalie, the less mobile individual, who suggests the new firing-at-a-distance approach, even though it is an impersonal technique that seems to clash with her rootedness and, especially, with the way in which she seems to care about the workers' feelings. The hypermobile and extremely detached Ryan, however, strongly objects to Natalie's methods and openly opposes the changes that his boss has agreed to introduce.

The main reason for Ryan's disagreement is obvious: he is afraid of the consequences it will have on his mobile lifestyle. For Natalie, one of the benefits of implementing this system is to free downsizers from the relentless travel that the job currently requires; as she puts it: "no more Christmases spent in Tulsa, no more hours lost to weather delays. You get to come home" (23:01). It is precisely the lack of mobility that Ryan most fears. As a global, Ryan is afraid of immobility, fixity and the local, which he relates to entrapment, enclosure and lack of freedom. As Elliott and Urry point out, "to be immobile in a society of intensively mobile processes is a kind of symbolic death" (2010, 79), which is in line with Ryan's belief that "moving is living" (09:05). Ryan's attitude towards mobility brings to mind the ideas of

nomadic metaphysics, according to which stasis and fixity are dismissed and mobility is considered to provide a sense of independence, freedom and emotional security (Cresswell 2006, 37).

Ryan is also a defender of the importance of face-to-face communication when dealing with such a delicate situation as telling someone that they have lost their job, which is surprising in a character that, as we have seen, tries to avoid interaction with others as much as possible. For Natalie, the firing process is something one can do mechanically—she has designed a script that enables anyone to carry out the task by simply following the steps. She thinks that increasing efficiency and reducing costs are more important than being physically present when the firing takes place. Ryan, who thinks that Natalie does not know anything about the realities of the downsizing industry, defends the position that in-person meetings are necessary to give a message that leaves people devastated. "There is a dignity to the way I do it," he says (23:39). For him, firing someone is "the most personal situation that [one] is ever going to enter" and, therefore, it cannot be done via a computer screen (25:29). Ryan's emphasis on the importance of face-to-face interaction seems somewhat contradictory given his detached, impersonal way of relating to people. The fact that he recognises the value of human connection in his work could be seen as simply an excuse to preserve his mobile way of life but, as will be mentioned later on, it could also be indicative of his own desire for companionship, an aspect that he may have long repressed, but that plays a crucial role in the development of the film and especially in its ending.

4. Ryan, the Lone Wolf

Over the past few decades, there has been a growing interest in the impact that mobilities have on the ways in which people engage in intimate relationships. According to Larissa Hjorth and Sun S. Lim, along with the mobilities turn came an "intimacy turn" (2012, 477). New mobile patterns of relating have emerged to keep up with the increasing mobilisation of the world. Since people are now more mobile, intimacy and sexual relationships have to be negotiated and renegotiated across distance. Elliott and Urry use the term *mobile intimacy* to refer to the phenomenon of being intimate and managing interpersonal relationships "at-a-distance" (2010, 85). Since people are now making more active decisions about their lives, careers, families and relationships, social life becomes notably individuated and more individualised patterns of relating proliferate (2010, 90). As Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim argue, individualisation means the disintegration of previously existing social forms such as the nuclear family (2002, 2). Many scholars have called attention to the transformations that intimacy and family life have undergone since the late twentieth century. The advance of new family models has been considered to pose a threat to traditional family values and to bring about a crisis of the nuclear family and marriage (Elliott and Urry 2010, 89). The significant rise in divorce and separation

rates, one-parent families, nonmarital cohabitation and open marriages in the past few decades underscores the fact that the traditional model of family is no longer the only one possible. In that sense, other scholars suggest that family life is not undergoing a breakdown, but rather a constructive renewal (Elliott and Urry 2010, 89).

Differences of interpretation notwithstanding, there is general agreement among scholars that leading a mobile life has an impact on family life and forces the mobile individual to strike a balance between their mobility and their family obligations. Ryan is a good example of how a mobile lifestyle of relentless travelling comes into conflict with familial relations. He rarely visits his family in Wisconsin and does not feel the need to start one of his own. According to what he says in his talks, family ties and "all the negotiations, arguments, secrets and compromises" that come with them are too heavy to be carried in his backpack, so he prefers to leave them out (46:22). This point is visually emphasised in the film when he receives a cardboard cut-out of his sister and her fiancé for him to take photos of himself at iconic sights during his trips. We see him expertly packing his luggage but struggling to pack the cut-out in his cabin-size suitcase, which suggests that family does not fit into his lifestyle (27:00). A similar shot of the cut-out popping out of the suitcase can be seen later in the film, only this time the cardboard picture is damaged after so much travelling (01:02:42). This shot suggests that, just as Ryan's hectic lifestyle has had a deleterious effect on the cut-out, so it has also taken a toll on his relationship with his family.

Ryan's mobile lifestyle affects not only his family relationships but also the way in which he engages in love and sexual relationships with women. In the same way that he does not spend much time in the same place or with the same people, he does not seek to forge strong intimate bonds with anyone, but simply wants brief, casual affairs with women he encounters along the way. When Ryan meets his alter ego Alex ("Just think of me as yourself, only with a vagina" (31:45)), however, they compare diaries to see if they will be in the same town sometime soon, thus initiating a no-strings-attached mobile relationship. This scene, which takes place in a hotel room after their first sexual encounter, shows a symmetrical two-shot of both characters staring at their laptops, implying that they are mirror images of each other (15:42). Yet, when examining the shot in detail, it is easy to notice that the composition is unbalanced, since there are more objects on Alex's side: a telephone, a water bottle and, in particular, the large paintings that fill up the wall behind her. This contrasts with Ryan's side, where there is only a lamp. Thus, the symmetrical composition highlights their compatibility while, at the same time, hinting at the possibility that they may not be as similar as they might seem.

The term mobile intimacy, which has emerged as a by-product of hypermobile lifestyles, is, however, considered an oxymoron by some scholars who argue that intimacy cannot be practiced at a distance, since it inherently implies closeness and proximity (Raiti 2007, n.p.). Similarly, Elliott and Urry draw attention to the existence of a contradiction in mobile relationships in the contemporary age (2010, 110). On the

one hand, mobile relationships make perfect sense in a social context in which people are constantly on the move and, consequently, do not spend much time in the same place and with the same people. The individualistic drive that leads people to move in order to pursue their academic and professional careers has created the need for many couples to be geographically separated. On the other hand, Elliott and Urry underscore the weakening effect that living a mobile life might have on the depth and quality of personal relationships (2010, 110). Mobile relationships are more often than not short lived and unstable, as well as notably challenging. Moreover, the quality of the relationship often deteriorates due to the lack of face-to-face interaction and physical intimacy. Even though technologies can aid in simulating intimacy, shared events are still the "bedrock for relationships" (Raiti 2007, n.p.).

It is precisely one of these shared events—Ryan's sister's wedding, which he attends—that shatters his hypermobile lifestyle. The montage sequence of the wedding emphasises the importance of family and love relationships. The use of a hand-held camera gives the impression of a domestic video and makes Ryan appear to be, for the first time, part of the family. Similarly, the warm colours used in the sequence, which contrast with the cold, bluish tones of the non-places where Ryan spends most of his time, stress the warmth of home and family. After this event, Ryan goes back to his mobile life, but something has changed. Back at his apartment, the film's use of framing makes it look bigger and more deserted and draws attention to the empty closet and the one toothbrush by the bathroom sink. When Ryan is about to give his next lecture, we see him staring at his backpack, questioning the detachment around which he has built his life (01:30:20). His sister's wedding has made him realise that "life is better with company" and "everybody needs a copilot" (01:24:16). In other words, he realises that mobile intimacy fails to meet his emotional needs. He therefore takes a plane and goes to Chicago to ask Alex to be his copilot, only to discover that she is flying a different plane—she is married and has a family of her own. Her mobile lifestyle made it possible for her to lead a double life, her global work life simply being a break from her "normal" life.

After this unexpected turn of events, Ryan is shown in front of the window of a hotel room. As the camera zooms out, Ryan and the hotel room become increasingly smaller while the solid walls of the hotel building progressively take up the frame, creating a sort of geometrical composition made of parallel windows. No one can be seen through the rest of the windows, as if Ryan was the only person in that huge hotel. By the end of the scene, Ryan is just a tiny spot in an immense world, which suggests the overwhelming feelings of loneliness that his mobile lifestyle has brought about. In the fictional world of *Up in the Air*, hypermobility and mobile intimacy end up having devastating consequences, at least for the main character.

Without Alex's company, Ryan has to go back to his life on the move alone, only now aware that his former individualistic, detached way of living isolates him and does not make him happy anymore (Du Preez 2015, 796). When he finally reaches his

long-awaited ten-million-air-mile mark, he realises that it does not mean anything if he has no one to share the moment with. Although he has not achieved his romantic goal, he has discovered the need to open up to people and fully engage in emotional relationships. Consequently, he gives his ten million miles to his sister Julie and her husband and helps Natalie to get a new job. In this way, the film's ending seems to be critical of the type of mobility and lifestyle that was presented at the beginning as apparently attractive and desirable, as well as of the type of intimacy that results from such hypermobility. By the end of the film, life in the fast lane is portrayed as lonely and empty and the negative consequences of mobile intimacy are emphasised. Ryan is no longer seen as a privileged man, but as a man compelled to keep moving and for whom travelling is no longer a pleasure but a burden. He has become a prisoner of his own mobility. As Du Preez puts it, he "moves from being a tourist (being mobile at will) to being a vagabond (no longer having a say in the matter); from belonging to the privileged homeless ('in place') to being ostracised and homeless ('out of place')" (2015, 796). The film ends with Ryan entering an airport once more and staring at a huge departures and arrivals board, ready to embark on a new journey by himself. He symbolically lets go of the handle of his carry-on, which he previously held on to tightly in the same way as he held on to his weightless lifestyle. He is now aware that while "most people will be welcomed home by jumping dogs and squealing kids" at the end of the day (01:43:26), he will remain a wanderer relegated to looking at the world from above.

5. Conclusion

As Roger Ebert put it, *Up in the Air* is "a film for this time" (2009, n.p.). It is an exploration of today's executive culture and deals with issues such as job loss, individualism and alienation, the drawbacks of technology and the loss of human connection. It also reflects the increasing mobility that characterises today's world.

This article has analysed Ryan's attitude towards and experience of mobility, including its impact on his identity and on the ways he relates to other people, in the light of contemporary critical theories of mobility. *Up in the Air* invites the audience to accompany Ryan on a transformative journey that will show him the shortcomings of flying solo and the need to strike a balance between work and family, detachment and commitment, routes and roots, movement and fixity. Along the way, he starts to realise that the membership cards that used to make him happy are only pieces of plastic and that the air miles he avidly collected are worthless when you have nobody to share them with. To complete his transformation, Ryan has to confront his "backpack" and reconsider the effect that keeping it empty is having on his life. Eventually, he seems to realise that life, even if it is an "up in the air" kind of life, is better in company. In the end, as its tag line advances, *Up in the Air* is "the story of a man ready to make a connection."

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BOOK REVIEW ARTICLES

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Teaching L2 English Pronunciation: Research and Course Design. A Critical Review of

John Murphy, ed. 2017. *Teaching the Pronunciation of English: Focus on Whole Courses*. Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan P. viii + 352 pp. ISBN: 978-0-472-03644-8.

Anna Jarosz. 2019. *English Pronunciation in L2 Instruction: The Case of Secondary School Learners*. Cham: Springer. xii + 165 pp. ISBN: 978-3-030-13891-2.

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Second language (L2) speech acquisition differs from first language (L1) acquisition in that the user has an existing phonological system, namely that of the L1. As a result, adult L2 learners are likely to produce L1-accented L2 speech. In this regard, some L2 acquisition theories—especially early proposals—postulated the so-called Critical Period Hypothesis, which posits that native-like L2 pronunciation cannot be mastered after adolescence (Lenneberg 1967; Patkowski 1990; Scovel 1988). However, most contemporary speech acquisition theories, such as James E. Flege's Speech Learning Model (1995, 2002), challenge the Critical Period notion and claim that "the mechanisms and processes used in learning the L1 sound system [...] remain intact over the life span and can be applied to L2 learning" (1995, 239). There are a variety of factors that play an important role in L2 speech acquisition, such as age of arrival in a new country, amount and type of input received and amount of language use (Flege 1981; Flege et al. 1999; Piske et al. 2001). Learners in an instructional setting often receive a limited amount of input as opposed to those living in the target language country. Metalinguistic awareness, which has been found to have a positive effect on L2 pronunciation (e.g., Ramírez Verdugo 2006; Kennedy and Trofimovich 2010; Mitrofanova 2012), is therefore a key factor that could compensate for the habitually scant L2 input and use in an L1 language learning setting.

In spite of the importance of metalinguistic awareness in L2 speech acquisition, pronunciation has traditionally received less attention in English as a Second Language (ESL) courses than other language skills, like grammar or vocabulary. Jennifer A. Foote et al. reported that many teachers spent less than five percent of their class time on pronunciation (2011, 18). A possible explanation for the lack of pronunciation practice in class is related to the teacher's insufficient training in this area. As some studies point out, ESL teachers often have a limited knowledge of the English sound system and may not have received adequate training on how to teach it (Breitkreutz et al. 2001; Baker 2011). Tracey M. Derwing and Murray J. Munro (2015) published a monograph that attempted to apply the research findings related to L2 pronunciation in the ESL classroom. The book, which provides a thorough insight into L2 pronunciation teaching, aims to serve as a guide for pronunciation teachers.

The two books under review share the same spirit as Derwing and Munros's monograph. They both aim to help English instructors to teach pronunciation and offer examples of course structures and activities. *English Pronunciation in L2 Instruction: The Case of Secondary School Learners*, by Anna Jarosz, is a monograph addressed to secondary school teachers as well as researchers. *Teaching the Pronunciation of English: Focus on whole Courses*, edited by John Murphy, includes examples of course content and activities that will be of use mostly—but not only—to English pronunciation teachers at university.

The main goals of each book will be discussed here. Jarosz's main goal is "to explore whether pronunciation instruction is feasible in a Polish upper-secondary school and whether it is required by learners who come from a variety of backgrounds and whose general aptitude and English proficiency levels differ" (2019, 131). To do so, the author conducted a longitudinal study to follow the progress of secondary school students during a thirty-hour pronunciation course—one hour per week during the whole school year. The study revealed that learners did benefit from the course and improved their pronunciation skills, especially in terms of fluency. However, the study has a number of limitations that temper the strength of the conclusions that can be drawn from its results. In the first place, the participants in the study were volunteers, which may be an indication that they were especially keen on English and were motivated to improve their pronunciation skills. Moreover, the design did not include a control group that did not complete the course, meaning that the author cannot determine that improvement stemmed solely from completing the course. A traditional English course and watching original content in English—e.g., TV shows or movies—could also have had a positive influence on their pronunciation proficiency.

As mentioned before, Murphy's edited volume is addressed to ESL teachers who would like to learn how to teach English pronunciation. Its main goal, therefore, is to provide instructors with useful tools with which to design and teach a pronunciation course. The objectives listed in the book include training English instructors to teach pronunciation in "either a pronunciation-centered course or within an ESOL course of a different instructional focus", as well as to "design and implement pronunciation

curricula […], analyze language learners' pronunciation needs […], work efficiently with contemporary instructional materials [and] apply contemporary technologies to pronunciation teaching" (Murphy 2017, 4-5). Moreover, the volume aims to provide the teacher with tools—such as audiovisual resources and software programs and the references cited in the different chapters—to continue their own training independently and use "contemporary pedagogic literature and related empirical research [and to] locate additional resource materials" (Murphy 2017, 6). It is a valuable resource for English pronunciation instructors written by experienced teachers, as it describes a total of ten courses—content, structure and examples of activities. This complete guide should be sufficient to make prospective teachers of English aware of what their pronunciation courses should cover and the type of resources and activities that they could use in class. On the whole, the volume seems to fulfil its objectives, as it provides a thorough training for prospective pronunciation teachers and may offer new ideas to current pronunciation instructors.

Given the different nature of the books, it is unsurprising that they have a different structural organization. In general, Jarosz (2019) is a well-organized monograph that has five chapters, as well as a brief introduction (ix-xii) and a conclusion (131-34). The first three chapters, which serve as an introduction to the study presented in the rest of the volume, review key factors related to L2 pronunciation teaching. They are divided into main sections, which are split into subsections, all mentioned in the contents page. They are all given descriptive titles, thus easing the search for a specific topic that the reader might like to revisit. The same structure is followed in the succeeding chapters, which present the study conducted by the author. Just as in the first three, sections and subsections are named descriptively, making it easy to jump directly to a specific part of the study, such as the methodology or—even more specifically—to a description of the participants.

The first chapter, "The Place of Pronunciation Instruction in the Teaching of English" (1-24), reviews the most important approaches to pronunciation teaching, particularly the Communicative Approach, which will be returned to later in this review. "Pronunciation Teaching Techniques and Materials" (25-46) goes over past and current methodologies and their effectiveness, and introduces teaching resources that might be of use to the reader. "Attitudes towards Pronunciation Instruction and Factors Affecting its Success" (47-72) is the last chapter devoted to the literature review. It acknowledges factors related to the teacher and the learner that may affect pronunciation instruction and acquisition. The fourth and fifth chapters present the author's own longitudinal study involving final-year secondary school learners, which follows the progress of students throughout an academic year. In addition to achievement in English pronunciation, it also investigates the students' attitudes towards English pronunciation in general and the pronunciation course in particular. "The Methodology of the Longitudinal Action-Research Study Among Secondary-School Learners" (73-96) sets out the research questions and goals and explains the

design of the study, including course content, the method used to assess students' improvement and the characteristics of the participants. Finally, "Results of the Study, Analysis and Discussion" (97-130) presents the outcome of the study, including the participants' performance before and after the pronunciation course as well as their observations during the interviews.

Murphy's (2017) edited volume, on the other hand, is divided into two main parts. The first part, "What Teachers Need to Know about Phonology," written by the editor, is a description of suprasegmental features of North American English that teachers of English pronunciation need to be familiar with—chapter one, "Suprasegmentals. Thought Groups, Prominence, Word Stress, Intonation and Pitch Jumps" (31-69)—as well as the segmental aspects—chapter two, "Segmentals: Phonemes, Allophones, Vowel Sounds, Consonants and Squeeze Zones" (70-106). Each chapter is divided into subsections that address specific aspects of pronunciation, such as thought groups and word stress in chapter one and English vowels in chapter two. However, these subsections are not outlined in the contents page, so finding a specific pronunciation feature involves flicking through the chapter. The second, and most extensive, part—"Descriptions of Whole Courses" (107-326)—is a collection of chapters written by experienced English pronunciation teachers who present the structure and type of activities performed in the courses that they have designed and taught. Even though the second part of the book is written by several authors, all chapters share a common organization, which results in a coherent structure. The common sections across these chapters, delimited by headings, are "Setting," "Conceptual Underpinnings," "Goals and Objectives," "Assessment," "Course Design," "Activity Types" and "Final Thoughts." Moreover, some teaching tips and discussion questions are introduced at the end of each chapter. The fact that all chapters in part two include the sections outlined above ensures that that the reader—i.e., a potential pronunciation teacher—is provided with enough information and tools to design their own pronunciation course.

Most courses in Murphy's volume are addressed to university students, both at a graduate— chapter three (108-29), chapter four (130-54), chapter five (155-75), chapter seven (197-217)—and at an undergraduate level—chapter seven (197-217), chapter eight (218-38), chapter ten (262-84). Chapter three, "Pronunciation and Communication for Graduate Student Researchers and Conference Presenters," by Carolyn Samuel, describes a course designed to improve young academics' intelligibility and presentation skills focusing mostly on suprasegmentals. Chapter four, Veronica Sardegna and Alison McGregor's "Oral Communication for International Graduate Students and Teaching Assistants" explains a course for graduate students and teaching assistants with different L1s, which means that the teacher needs to address the individual challenges that each learner may have and hold individual interviews with them. In chapter five, "A University-Based Online 'Pronunciation Tutor'," Edna Lima and John Levis propose an online pronunciation course. In terms of undergraduate courses, the one described in chapter eight, "Small Group Tutoring in ESL Pronunciation for Pre-

Professional Undergraduates," by Christina Michaud and Marnie Reed, consists of a series of tutoring sessions with three to four students that "was developed as an innovative response to a significant expansion of enrolment of international students" (225). In chapter ten, "A Haptic Pronunciation Course for First-Year ESL College Students," Nathan Kielstra and William Acton describe a course with a haptic approach to L2 pronunciation teaching. Body movement and intrapersonal touch are used to anchor phonetic features such as vowels, word stress, rhythm and intonation. Chapter seven, "Advanced English Pronunciation for Undergraduate and Graduate Students," by Lynn Henrichsen, presents an elective university course for learners studying a variety of degrees both at an undergraduate and graduate level—e.g., Engineering, Chemistry, Business Management. The author emphasizes the importance of enjoyable learning and describes a variety of engaging activities.

Although most courses are embedded in a university context, chapter twelve (307-26) refers to a different type of learners, namely secondary school students. Under the title "Teaching Prosody to ESL Middle Schoolers: Pre-Teens and Teens," Tamara Jones explains how she introduced prosody in content-based lessons for students in grades seven to nine in a British School in Belgium. Chapter eleven, "The Color Vowel Chart: Teaching Pronunciation to Beginning-Level Adults" (285-306), written by Karen T. de Caballero and Claire Schneider, depicts a course for adults in an immersion setting. The Color Vowel Chart is used as a tool to promote phonological awareness by means of terms simpler than those used in articulatory or acoustic description.

Finally, chapters six and nine present courses designed for a more heterogeneous class. In chapter six, titled "Phonology Applied: Developing the Oral Communication Skills of L1 and L2 Speakers" (176-96), Graeme Couper describes a hybrid course attended by both a group of L2 learners and a group of native teachers, so that they can benefit from one another—the future ESL teachers help the L2 learners and simultaneously gain experience of how to teach L2 pronunciation. The ninth chapter, "Teaching Pronunciation of English as a Lingua Franca in England and in Spain" (239-61), by Laura Patsko and Robin Walker, presents a course in which English pronunciation is taught with a lingua franca approach. The course took place in two different contexts, namely an immersion setting at a private language school where mixed-L1 learners studying business were trained in their English pronunciation, and at a Spanish university, where Spanish learners of English—with a common L1—studying a degree in tourism management improved their pronunciation skills.

Having compared and described each book's structural organization and content, we shall now identify some of their recurrent topics. One of the main aspects that the two books have in common is that they both take a Communicative Approach to L2 pronunciation. From this perspective, the main objective of learning L2 pronunciation is to improve communicative competence, that is, to use language in an effective and appropriate manner (Richards and Rodgers 2006). However, the two books differ in the understanding and application of this framework. On the one hand,

Jarosz's course combines traditional audio-lingual activities—e.g., listen and repeat, listen and discriminate, minimal pair practice—with slightly more communicative exercises like acting out dialogues in order to achieve effective communication. On the other hand, Murphy's volume goes a step further and describes innovative courses where English pronunciation is taught mostly communicatively, using activities such as observing, annotating and imitating native speakers' speech, giving presentations or peer-tutoring activities.

The fact that effective communication is the main goal of the Communicative Approach is tightly linked to another point that the two books have in common, namely the emphasis on the importance of *intelligibility* and *comprehensibility*. Intelligibility—how much of a speaker's content can be understood—comprehensibility—the effort needed by the listener in order to understand the speaker—and *accent*—the perceived differences between the speaker and the listener's speech—are the three main elements that influence pronunciation according to Derwing and Munro (1997, 2015). Whereas comprehensibility and intelligibility have a direct impact on effective communication, accent does not. Both Jarosz's and Murphy's volumes follow Derwing and Munro's (2015) view, which posits that comfortable intelligibility is a realistic goal for L2 learners. Suprasegmental features are considered to contribute to comprehensibility and fluency to a greater extent than segmental features (Jenner 1989; Roach 1991; Derwing and Rossiter 2003; Hahn 2004; Gilbert 2008). As a result, the courses proposed in Murphy cover mostly suprasegmentals. The editor's recommended order of teaching begins with an early introduction of thought grouping, prominence and word stress, which provide the learner with a wider picture of English pronunciation (2017, 32). Conversely, following Celce Murcia et al. (2010), Jarosz's course takes a more balanced view, which considers that both segmentals and suprasegmentals are important and contribute to intelligibility and comprehensibility. As a result, the course that she proposes has a more traditional curriculum and thoroughly covers segmental features, whereas it only considers some connected speech processes—weak forms, assimilation, /t/ elision and linking—towards the end of the course. Even though comfortable intelligibility should be sufficient to cover the communicative needs of L2 learners, Jarosz's study, as previous works have also found (Timmis 2002; Sifakis and Sougari 2005), points out that most students would like to acquire a near-native accent. In line with John C. Wells (2005), Jarosz claims that aiming at a native accent will enhance motivation and set a clear direction for the instructor regarding course content (2019, 75).

In spite of the fact that the books under review describe courses that cover different phonetic features, both of them emphasize the importance of metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness. Being aware of the phonological and phonetic features of the target language and how a student's L1 differs from their L2 plays an important role in the mastering of L2 pronunciation and the cancelling of L1 transfer (Dziubalska-Kołaczyk 2002; Dziubalska-Kołaczyk et al. 2013). In this regard, Jarosz claims that "awareness

is the key to success" (2019, 67) and trains L2 pronunciation by explicitly teaching phonetic and phonological aspects of the target language. Metacognitive awareness provides learners with the ability to self-monitor their speech and continue improving independently outside the classroom. Furthermore, it may also increase motivation (Scott and Winograd 1990). Alene Moyer (2014) found that successful learners of L2 pronunciation have an explicit concern for L2 speech, and master metacognitive skills such as self-monitoring, imitating L2 native speakers and paying attention to difficult phonological features. The importance attached to metacognitive awareness becomes evident in both these books through some of the activities that students are asked to perform. For example, in chapter four in Murphy's volume, the first activity that L2 learners have to complete in the course consists in reflecting on their own performance during an oral self-introduction in their L1 and L2 that they have videotaped previously. After self-assessing their speech in their L2 and comparing it to their L1, students will have raised awareness of their limitations, which will help them set specific goals (2017, 137). Similarly, in Jarosz's course participants are asked to reflect on their aptitude and speaking skills and make notes throughout its duration (2019, 92).

Being aware of their own skills and limitations is not only important for learners, but also for pronunciation instructors. A diagnostic exercise at the beginning of the course is a useful tool to discover the students' initial proficiency and set individual goals, which will determine the specific pronunciation aspects that each student will need to improve. Several courses presented in Murphy's volume include a diagnostic exercise—chapters three, four, five, seven, eight and twelve. For instance, in the secondary school course presented by Jones in chapter twelve, students have to read a diagnostic passage "that demonstrates their strengths and challenges" (2017, 311). Diagnosis and individualization become more relevant in a mixed-L1 classroom. In chapter seven, the course presented by Henrichsen devotes its first few days of class to identifying each student's particular challenges and to designing what the author calls their own Personal Pronunciation Improvement Plan (2017, 204). The diagnostic test proposed is complete and includes reading a passage aloud, an oral self-introduction and a perception test involving segmentals and suprasegmentals, as well as a background questionnaire. On some occasions, the same diagnostic activity may be completed at the end of the course in order to assess the learner's improvement. In chapter eight, Michaud and Reed's students are asked to read a list of sentences—which test specific suprasegmental aspects—as well as to produce spontaneous speech on a controlled topic both at the beginning and at the end of the course (2017, 223). Similarly, Jarosz's students are asked to read the same passage before and after the course (2019, 93).

Finally, regarding style, both books use clear and concise language, which should be accessible enough for their potential audience—L2 English teachers who may or may not be familiar with more research-oriented sources. Jarosz's book does present a study, but its clear organization along with a direct language makes it accessible to a wide audience. As for Murphy's volume, even though it is clearly founded on empirical

evidence—as becomes apparent in the introduction and in the descriptions of the courses—its practical nature makes it straightforward and easy to understand. The book exhibits a mastery of narrative techniques that make it highly engaging for the reader. In part one, the editor tells a number of personal anecdotes—e.g., being mistaken for his older brothers by his teachers—and some chapters in part two start by telling a story about one of the learners enrolled in the course. For example, chapter eleven tells the story of Sandra, a Mexican woman who, despite having lived in the US for eighteen years, had heavily accented speech. Towards the end of the chapter, de Caballero and Schneider reflect on how the Color Vowel Chart helped Sandra discriminate English vowels and she could then, using her own words, "listen in colors" (2017, 303).

All in all, the two books under review are a useful read for both English pronunciation teachers and English instructors who would like to introduce English pronunciation in an ESL course. Jarosz's book is a well-documented monograph that investigates a population of pronunciation learners that has until now been understudied. Whereas most research focuses on university students, her study analyzes the progress made by Polish L2 secondary students through an entire pronunciation course and gathers their interests and attitudes towards L2 pronunciation. Murphy's collection is a valuable resource for L2 English pronunciation teachers, since it provides them with tools and examples to develop their own pronunciation course. Finally, both books address important topics, such as what the realistic objective for L2 learners should be and the importance of metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness when it comes to L2 acquisition.

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If the source contains a spelling error, insert the italicised word *sic* in square brackets ([*sic*]). Clarifications, as well as translations, must be enclosed in brackets—e.g., “He [Stephen Spender] is one of the finest poets Britain has ever produced.”

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(Samaddar 1999b)

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Allan, Keith and Kate Burridge. 1991. *Euphemism and Dysphemism: Language Used as Shield and Weapon*. Oxford and New York: Oxford UP.

(Allan and Burridge 1991, 24)

Pahta, Päivi, Janne Skaffari and Laura Wright, eds. 2017. *Multilingual Practices in Language History: English and Beyond*. Berlin and New York: De Gruyter

(Pahta et al. 2017)

Incorrect: Burford, Barbara, Gabriela Pearse, Grace Nichols and Jackie Kay. 1988. *A Dangerous Knowing: Four Black Women Poets*. London: Sheba.
Correct: Burford, Barbara et al. 1988. *A Dangerous Knowing: Four Black Women Poets*. London: Sheba.

(Burford et al. 1988, 45)

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(American Cancer Society 2016)

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Translations/editions:

Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Translated by Michael Holquist and edited by Caryl Emerson. Austin: U of Texas P.

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