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Revista de la Asociación Española de
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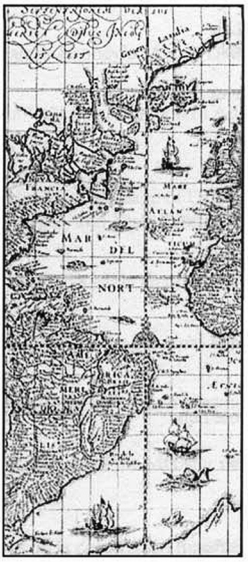

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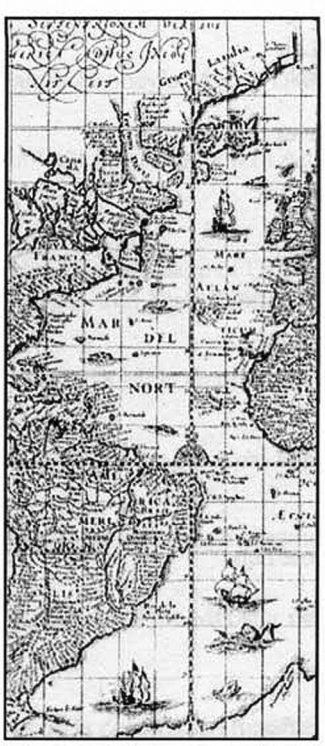

ARTÍCULOS

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Playing Hide and Seek with Names and Selves in Salman Rushdie's *Joseph Anton, A Memoir*

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The British government's protection of Rushdie after Khomeini's *fatwa* came at a cost: Rushdie was forced to change his name. Years later he tells the story of the secret life he led by revealing the names of his near and dear as if this restitution of reality would remake and reposition his self tossed between fantasy and fanaticism in a globalized world. Like Jhumpa Lahiri's, Rushdie's American experience has helped him find a creative way out of the drama of naming and identity he undergoes as a migrant writer.

Keywords: life writing; *roman à noms*; name drama; unnaming; renaming; invention of lineage

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Jugando al escondite con los nombres y las identidades en *Joseph Anton, A Memoir*, de Salman Rushdie

La protección de Rushdie por el gobierno británico, a raíz de la *fatwa* de Jomeini, tuvo un coste. Rushdie se vio obligado a cambiar de nombre. Años después, cuenta en esta obra la vida secreta que se vio forzado a llevar, revelando los nombres de sus parientes y amigos, como si esta restitución de la realidad pudiera reconstruir y reubicar su yo, zarandeado entre la fantasía y el fanatismo en un mundo globalizado. Al igual que le sucedió a Jumpa Lahiri, la experiencia estadounidense ayudó a Rushdie a encontrar una salida creativa del drama de nombre e identidad que sufre como escritor migrante.

Palabras clave: escritura de vida; *roman à noms*; drama onomástico; dejar de nombrar; renombrar; invención de linaje

Magic realism, hybridity, polyphony and interlinguistic word play are typical features of the Rushdie brand of writing. Obviously, the most appropriate critical approach to his works would be one that avoids intentional fallacy and positions itself within the poststructuralist postulate of the death of the author. If giving "a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text", as Barthes contended (1977: 147), Rushdie's hypertextual fiction, that challenges the familiar mechanisms of smooth reading, stands to gain from not being encumbered by the ostensible weight of authorship. When Rushdie, who is himself a fiercely independent literary critic, and who refutes the psychological orientation of reality (1988: 432), publishes a memoir which retraces his life and works, his readers might wonder what this exercise in life writing means. Indeed the projected novelization of Rushdie's life by Gabriel García Márquez (Rushdie 2012: 408) might have been a determining factor in his decision to write his life so as to assert his control over it. Besides, his third wife was very unwilling to return some personal photos to him after their divorce (239). The memories attached to these photos were thus locked away and the probability of a mis- or false representation of these by her at a later stage existed. If monumental biographies of famous authors written by critics establish their immortal place in literary history, Rushdie's memoir, brought out at age sixty-five,[1] is both a literary testimony and a testament, and vicariously fulfils his wish to write a novel with an eponymous title like the classics *David Copperfield*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *Tom Jones*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Daniel Deronda and Oliver Twist*.[2] It is also a homage paid to departed loved ones and friends who stood by him during trying times.[3] However, Rushdie resorts to a third-person singular narrative voice and presents it as the memoir of a fictive character, *Joseph Anton*. Although this narrative position gives him the necessary (albeit minimal in this case) ironical distance between himself as author and himself as narrator, he chooses to talk as much about himself as about the pre and post production lives of his books. In terms of Philippe Lejeune's definition of autobiography as a "retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality" (1989: 4), *Joseph Anton* cannot be strictly identified as an autobiography. Nevertheless, as Rushdie's life has been overexposed in the media because of the extraordinary circumstances he has had to confront and overcome, and as he mostly uses real names for the people who mattered and continue to matter in

[1] Compare with Rushdie's friend and contemporary Paul Auster's *Winter Journal* (2012), a history of his body and its sensations, written at age sixty-three.

[2] See Seth Lehrer's interview at the University of California at San Diego on 22 September, 2012. Rushdie's obsession with names of famous authors came to light during a recent quarrel with Facebook which obliged him to use his first name Ahmed, as in his passport, rather than his middle name Salman for his account. From what we have read about Salman, the Persian scribe of the prophet in *The Satanic Verses*, it is easy to understand Rushdie's preference for this writerly forename. Rushdie is quoted by the BBC on 15 November, 2011: "Dear Facebook, forcing me to change my FB name from Salman to Ahmed Rushdie is like forcing J. Edgar to become John Hoover" and "Or, if F. Scott Fitzgerald was on Facebook, would they force him to be Francis Fitzgerald? What about F. Murray Abraham?" (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-15733026>).

[3] Compare with Vikram Seth's *Two Lives: A Memoir* (2005) and Hanif Kureishi's *My Ear at His Heart* (2005).

his life and quotes newspaper and television reports, it is difficult, indeed even impossible, for readers to disassociate his role as author, narrator and character and function outside the "autobiographical pact" between author and reader (Lejeune 1989: 14). Besides, the book's subtitle "A Memoir" reinforces the presupposition of truthfulness. The memoir is a sub-genre of self-writing much like the letters, diary and notebook entries woven into the text of *Joseph Anton*. What is really fictional about the narrative is the posture of utterance, not its diegetic substance or its time frame.

Milan Kundera has posited that the protagonists of novels are the author's imaginary egos (1986: 51). In that sense, any novel could be viewed as being always already autobiographical. Several of Rushdie's protagonists, i.e., Saleem Sinai, Omar Khayyám Shakil, Saladin Chamcha, Rashid Khalifa known as The Shah of Blah, Abraham Zogoiby, the Cambridge educated academic Malik Solanka, the besotted singer Orphus Cama and Niccolò Vespucci dubbed the Mogor del Amore, could thus be said to bear the imprint of the storyteller and embattled writer Rushdie. *Joseph Anton* is neither an autobiographical novel, where the distance between the author and the narrator is sufficiently wide for the reader to clearly distinguish between the two,[4] nor a fictitious autobiography where the real is transfigured by the narrator. Moreover, it cannot be considered autofictional because Rushdie does not choose to give preference in this account "to the adventure of a language rather than to the language of adventure", as Serge Doubrovsky puts it (1997, dustjacket). The typical Rushdian word play is less abundant here compared to the novels and focuses more on proper names. His memoir constitutes a fuzzy, hybrid and postmodern variety of writing that combines elements of autobiography, autofiction, detective fiction and metafiction and blurs the borderline between fact and fiction.

Rushdie's memoir abounds in names —real names of the near and the dear, politicians, writers, editors, agents, translators, critics, artists, movie makers, stars from show business, journalists, estranged wives and adversaries, pet names, code names, pseudonyms and acronyms, not to mention the names he was called by his adversaries alongside the names of fictional characters— prompting an article in *The Guardian* suggesting that Rushdie should include a proper name index for this "finely produced work of non-fiction" (Sutherland 2012). Indeed Zoe Heller, in her review of the book in the *New York Review of Books*, denounces the name-dropping in the novel by deploring "the lordly nonchalance with which Rushdie places himself alongside Lawrence, Joyce and Nabokov in the ranks of literary merit" (2012). The narrative primarily deals with naming of people, literary works and characters, the invention of new names and the act of renaming. Quite naturally it explores the inheritance and significance of names, the destinies they carry, the burden of a name and the association of name and fame. The relationship between name and life and between name and self, loss of name and self, the aliases and guises that put the sense of the self to test and the retrieval of name and self and the sense of renaissance that accompany it are other narrative strands that crisscross the text. This article will first review the issues

[4] Compare with Michael Ondaatje's *The Cat's Table* (2011).

of naming, unnaming, and renaming in Rushdie's life and works as represented in his memoir, then argue that his American experience has helped him find a creative way out of the drama of identity as a migrant writer by comparing his book with Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Namesake* (2003), and finally sustain that Rushdie's forging of his fictive name, socially discarded but literarily brought back as the title of his text, is his way of inventing a cosmopolitan literary lineage.

It is not unusual for a writer to voluntarily take on a pseudonym to hide his or her gender, ethnic origin or the socio-historical context of writing in order to avoid their interference in the imaginary world of fiction. In contrast to this ideological choice is that of censored and persecuted writers who adopt pen names out of necessity with a view to continuing writing. Indeed, the French translator of *The Satanic Verses* sheltered behind François Rabelais's *nom de plume* Alcofribas Nasier, an anagram of Rabelais's own name (2012: 341). This borrowed name protected the translator from the threat of assassination by Islamic fundamentalists.[5] However, it was at a critical point in his real life that Rushdie was obliged to invent not a penname, but a name to designate himself. After the *fatwa* pronounced by Ayatollah Khomeini on 14 February, 1989, the British secret services that protected him urged him to find an imaginary name which was easy to remember and without any ethnic connotation so he could go incognito. They invented a code name for this metamorphosis of notoriety into anonymity: Operation Malachite. Ironically, this task was novel for the officers of the special branch themselves insofar as they had been trained to protect a high-profile person, not to hide him (171). Unlike a non-Muslim converting to Islam and enthusiastically donning a new first name, Rushdie perceived this sudden and forced name change as an existentially critical process that was both painful and humiliating.

Rushdie first toyed with hybrid names such as Conrad Chekhov, Vladimir Joyce, Marcel Beckett, Frantz Sterne, a fact which in itself says a world about the formative influences on his work of the writers whose forenames or surnames are mentioned here, before settling for Joseph Anton, a name that combines the first names of Conrad and Chekhov. On the one hand, the permutation and combination of various first names and surnames bear witness to the Rushdian penchant for word play and double entendre. On the other, such considerations transcribe the hesitations of a writer compelled to choose between fiction and autobiography:

> He had a fragment of a character in a notebook, called Mr. Mamouli. Mr. Mamouli was a benighted, even cursed, Everyman figure whose literary relatives were Zbigniew Herbert's Mr. Cognito and Italo Calvino's Mr. Palomar. His full name was Ajeeb Mamouli —Ajeeb like the Bradford Councilor, whose name meant "odd". Mamouli meant "ordinary". He was Mr. Odd Ordinary, Mr. Strange Normal, Mr. Peculiar Everybody, an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms. (163)

[5] Hitoshi Igarashi, the Japanese translator of *Satanic Verses*, was stabbed to death in 1991 and the Italian translator wounded in a knife attack. The novel's Norwegian editor William Nygaard survived a shooting incident in 1993.

Rushdie's choice might have been unconsciously influenced by his witty American wife Marianne Wiggins who excelled in the art of inventing names for herself as a fictional character and the other characters in her novels. The protagonist of her novel *Separate Checks* is Ellery Mcqueen and, as Rushdie points out, this plays on the pen name of a divided-self pair of Brooklyn cousins, Manfred Lee and Frederick Dannay "who used that alias to disguise names that were themselves aliases for other names" (2012: 127), i.e, Manford Emanuel Lepofsky and Daniel Nathan. According to Rushdie, the name Joseph Anton perfectly expresses the feelings of alienation and melancholy that emanate from Chekhov's writing and connects them with the stoic motto of the sailor James Wait in Conrad's *Nigger of the Narcissus*, which was adopted by Edward Said when he was suffering from cancer: "I must live until I die" (2012: 165). Although Rushdie thought he had invented a new name by combining the first names of Conrad and Chekhov, it is to be noted that 'Joseph Anton' exists as the combined name of two real people. This knowledge that his readers might have does not in any way diminish the transforming force of the moment of name change during which one name is hidden and superseded by another. "The name hidden in its potency possesses a power of manifestation and occultation, of revelation and encrypting. What does it hide? Precisely the abyss that is enclosed within it", Derrida explains in *Acts of Religion* (2002: 213-14). The proverbial lapse in memory of Reverend Mother in *Midnight's Children*, who often punctuates her remarks with a "whatisitsname" as an aural echo to the visual metaphor of the perforated sheet, already points to Rushdie's interest in the act of naming (1981: 41) and the abysmal gap that separates words and things.

In normal circumstances, naming follows birth, a christening that endows an individual with an identity and inserts him in the social fabric. In Rushdie's case, it was clearly an example of autogenesis in which the individual came into being by re-embodying himself in a new name that endowed him with a different lineage. On the surface of it, this false invented self looked like a protective shell that would give the threatened writer a new lease on life. But in reality, it caused a malaise insofar as the frontier is thin between being unknown and being a non-person. A renaming involves a necessary and preliminary phase of unnaming. In the case of African slaves, such a process of unnaming and renaming represented a break with the traumatic past and the affirmation of a newly found economic and social freedom (Benston 1982: 3), whereas for an established writer like Rushdie, who had already felt his intimate self as represented by his first name split from his social self as represented by his surname, ever since the "Rushdie affair" broke out (Rushdie 2012: 163; 251), setting aside his true name, denying his origins, and relinquishing the reputation he had made for himself —by working hard as a script writer in advertising companies for thirteen years before publishing his first novel— amounted to a symbolic death. Without a proper name, and therefore without a legal domicile, he lost his democratic right to vote (163). The humiliation of being buried alive, or condemned to live a 'life-in-death' and be on the run, was all the greater when the protection forces planned to evacuate him in a body bag after dental surgery, as if to enact his symbolic death in a literal manner (181). To

make matters worse, actor Meinhardt Raabe actually sent him a death certificate (305) by way of a humorous tribute to Rushdie's book on *The Wizard of Oz* (1992). Rushdie's own immigrant credo as expressed in *The Satanic Verses*, i.e., "to be born again first you have to die" (1988: 3), gets ironically illustrated in this autobiographical sequel where he learns that "to write a book is to make a Faustian contract in reverse" (2012: 91).

Rushdie begins the story of his life *in medias res* in 1989, incorporating flashbacks to his Indian childhood and training in Cambridge and flashforwards to his marriage in 2004 to Padmalakshmi (who seemed to embody "his Indian past and his American future") and to the subsequent divorce from her in 2007. He chooses to stop his narrative on 27 March, 2002, when he felt released, not from the *fatwa* itself,[6] but from the stifling presence of police protection after the Iranian government's official announcement that it would neither support nor stop operations to execute him. This is how Rushdie chose to perform the journey of a return to life and to his true writer's self (2012: 458). However, much as he tried to identify with his new persona of Joseph Anton, the common nickname used by the protection team 'Joe' offended his self-esteem. Even though he had himself invented the alternative and provisional name it was as if Joseph Anton had somehow become the *Dopplegänger* of Salman Rushdie. The symmetrically opposed characters of The Shah of Blah and Khattam Shud in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990) had earlier explored this struggle between the hidden and the visible, light and shadow, speech and silence, freedom and captivity. The code name used by the person in charge of security at Penguin Books to refer to Rushdie, Arctic Tern (Rushdie 2012: 149), infuriated him because it reduced him to his exilic condition as migrant. For a writer who invented the poetic and affectionate character of Butt, the hoopoe in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* by drawing inspiration from Farid ud-Din Attar's *The Conference of Birds*, this attributed avian identity was unpalatable precisely because it was so prosaic. Rushdie's anger and frustration echo Chekhov's 'name drama' (Senderowich 1993: 31) when the latter felt torn between the weight of his literary name and the inauthentic existence his career had condemned him to. Chekhov's particular sensitivity to names is illustrated in the names he chose for his characters.

Rushdie benefited from Level 2 protection by the secret service, which meant that he had to change houses for safety about fifty-six times in the course of thirteen years (1989-2002). He even had to duck down behind the kitchen counter to avoid being seen by a farmer at a farmhouse in Wales. For a person who was brought up in a Muslim honor

[6] Ayatollah Khomeini is said to have pronounced it on 14 February, 1989. However it was a typed sheet that his son brandished before the press. The aged Ayatollah was too ill to have read Rushdie's novel. Though the Iranian government had slightly relaxed its position in 1998, a religious decree cannot be declared null and void. The Khordad foundation reaffirmed it in 2006. Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad referred to it in 2007. The recent and changed regime might or might not review this issue. The initial price on Rushdie's head was one million US dollars (Rushdie 2012: 147). This was soon doubled and further increased by 600,000 US dollars in 1998. After the publication of the controversial American video 'Innocence of Muslims' on Youtube in 2012, the bounty has been upped to 3.3 million dollars.

culture, having to hide meant a loss of self-respect that was possibly worse than death (2012: 147). Yet, when, by signing a document, he officially assumed his Muslim identity and thus obliged Muslim leaders, he became aware of his share of responsibility in becoming the Egyptian dentist "Essawy's zombie" (274), and declared himself guilty of committing "a crime against himself" (276). On another occasion, when he was asked to wear a wig to go out in, he was immediately spotted as "that bastard Rushdie in a wig" (237) due to the ptosis condition he used to suffer from and his drooping eyelids, which physically and incontrovertibly made him stand out. This anecdote gives us a clue as to how, in *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995), Rushdie gets to spin a whole theory of reclaiming postcolonial identity by re-appropriating and subverting one of the outrageous names he is called: "*Bastard*: I like the sound of the word. *Bass*, a smell, a stinky-poo. *Turd*, no translation required. Ergo, *Bastard*, a smelly shit, like, for example, me" (1995: 104). When he was insulted by being called Satan, he took it with a sense of humour as he saw the similarity between the condition of the exiled Satan and that of the unhoused migrants (2012: 73), an idea that Rushdie had explored in *The Satanic Verses*. However, he was wounded by the other names he was called —blasphemer (170), apostate (168), traitor (74) and villain (260). When his opponents accused him of hiding behind his fiction, Rushdie affirmed that he was no Polonius hiding behind a curtain or a veil for that matter (75). These literary allusions to Shakespeare and Richard Burton put the emphasis on the rather derisory nature of the contraptions used for hiding in the face of impending peril in any culture. When Rushdie went to Australia to hide, he met with an accident and was taken to a hospital for treatment where he had to reveal his identity. He went through an unsettling experience in invisibility, when he as Joseph Anton (who had obliterated his existence as Salman Rushdie) encountered the Chief of American Counterterrorism, Ambassador Maurice Busby "who officially did not exist" (237).

Rushdie's readers are aware that while Rushdie resents having to resort to aliases and disguises, he easily and joyfully slips into his writing posture and pens imaginary letters to real and imaginary people to give them a piece of his mind (185-87). This continuous hide and seek with names and selves, fact and fiction, certainly gives the memoir a queer turn. Rushdie's reference to the histrionic talents that had won him various roles in school and undergraduate productions, including notably one as the "hunchbacked, woolen-stockinged drag" and mad doctor Fräulein Mathilde von Zahnd in Dürrenmatt's *The Physicists* (Rushdie 2012: 605), and another in *Bridget Jones's Diary* —a cameo appearance in which he gets to be kissed by Hugh Grant— reinforces the queer side of Rushdie. Nevertheless, he seems to be tired of such games with gender identity and confesses that it was hard to play the character Rushdie "whose dialogue was written by someone else" (605).

Naming forms part of the anthropological rite of passage (birth in a family, incorporation in a clan or religious or national community).

> The name: What does one call thus? What does one understand under the name of name? And what occurs when one gives a name? What does one give then? One does not offer a thing,

> one delivers nothing, and still something comes to be, which comes down to giving that which one does not have. What happens, above all, when it is necessary to sur-name, renaming there where, precisely, the name comes to be found lacking?

asks Derrida (1995: xiv) while analyzing the linguistic, ethical and political significance of the act of naming in making meaning of the world. It is obvious that Rushdie found Joseph Anton inadequate as a name to embody his self because it detached his name from his fame. His conscious struggle with his name and its significance is not totally tied to circumstantial factors. In his family, there exists a tradition of voluntary changes of names stemming from the belief that such a change will literally allow the individual to control and shape his or her destiny. Rushdie's memoir completes the revelation of the facts regarding his personal life started in *Shalimar the Clown* (2005), which was dedicated to his maternal grandfather, Dr. Attaulah, and to his maternal grandmother, Amir Un Nissa Butt. In *Joseph Anton*, Rushdie reveals for the first time that his paternal grandfather was called Khwaja Muhammaed Din Khaliqi Dehlavi (22). The Persian surname Dehlavi denotes that the family of the writer who was shaped by modern Bombay culture belongs to the line of those born in or residing in Medieval Delhi. But Rushdie's father Anis Ahmed decided to shed this rather long, inherited name and initiated the shift to modernity by choosing a short name for himself. The name Rushdie is a reference to the Andalousian philosopher of the twelfth century, Abdul Walid Muhammed Ibn Ahmed Ibn Rushdie, commentator of Aristotle known as Averroes in the West, for whom Anis had a great admiration because he had privileged the rational, as opposed to the literal, interpretation of Islam (23). Salman Rushdie's surname, which he considers a gift from his father, had predestined him to be the defender of rationalism against obscurantism, thus giving him the courage to fight against his adversaries. Salman Rushdie's mother Zohra Butt changed her first name into Negin after she married Anis Ahmed in order to break clean from her earlier self as the wife of Shaghil (19). Anis Ahmed was a divorcee too. The children from his second marriage were not told the name of their stepmother and their half sister who tragically died (567). After Anis's death, Negin, alias Zohra, refused to renew the relationship with her divorced husband who had not remarried (566). These real and complicated filiations pertain to the dislocated Name-of-the-Father which makes the son's position symbolically unsteady.[7] Between his father's rejection of his patronym and his mother's suppressed desire for a different name, the son was obliged to seek putative fathers. The author thus tries to establish connections between his own life and the life of the characters in his novel. The clandestine lovers Amina and Nadir Khan in *Midnight's Children* are loosely modelled on Zohra and Shaghil. Akbar's lost great aunt in *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008) might be a shadow of Anis's abandoned wife.

[7] The concept of the Name-of-the-Father formulated by Jacques Lacan (1977: 67) refers to the laws and restrictions that control the subject's desire and the rules of communication. The Father-of-Enjoyment constitutes his shadow.

Salman Rushdie mentions the real name of his elder sister and lawyer Sameen, debars the name of the second sister, who has cut off with the family after a misunderstanding, and provides a fictive name for his third sister, Nabeelah, alias *guljum* (a nickname meaning sweetheart), who died young (84). These three siblings inevitably recall the three sisters in *Shame*, while the subtle mixing of real, fictive and untold names creates a grey area of potentiality between fact and fiction. Alhough Rushdie cites the anthropologist Edmond Leach who holds that "the *family, with its narrow* privacy and tawdry secrets, is the source of all our discontents" (104), in his memoir he himself comes off as a loving and affectionate father, when, following the unique naming tradition in his family, he chooses to name his son born of his first marriage with Clarissa Luard, Zafar (14); Zafar means victory in Arabic and harks back to the last Mughal emperor of India (30). Rushdie's younger son born of his marriage to Elizabeth West was named Milan (389) after Milan Kundera. Just as *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* was written for Haroun, its sequel *Luca and the Fire of Life* (2010) was written for Milan. Rushdie, surprisingly, discloses the name of his fourth wife Padmalakshmi's father Vaidhyanathan (Rushdie 2012: 578), which she had herself kept confidential because of her mother's divorce. Apart from his several marriages with women of different cultures, this mixing of names helps the migrant author make his family a truly cosmopolitan one, as names function as metonyms for culture. Names are not mere signs here but form the material nodes of the social network.

Salman Rushdie feels secure enough to unravel the hidden side of his creative self by giving the names of his failed attempts, i.e., two novels "The Book of the Peer" (49) and "The Antagonist" (50), and a play inspired by Beckett, "Crosstalk", and by flatly acknowledging that the title of his first published science fiction work *Grimus* (1975) is an anagram of Simorg (50). "The Antagonist" is the proto-novel that would eventually become "Sinai", "Child of Midnight", and then "Children of Midnight" (56) before being formally baptized *Midnight's Children*. The name Sinai was inspired by both a childhood friend and the philosopher Ibn Sina, or Avicennes, as he is known in the West. It is the change of identity of the protagonist (an Indian living in London into an Indian living in Bombay) that would give the failed and remade novel a triumphant future. The Indian living in London would reappear in *The Satanic Verses* under a different name, Chamcha. Rushdie deconstructs the name as one derived from Kafka's Gregor Samsa and Gogol's Chichikov (69). The twin protagonist of this novel, Gibreel Farishta, has a girlfriend called Allelouia Cone, which is a sarcastic name for Rushdie's paramour at that time, the Australian writer Robyn Davidson (78). Robyn herself takes vengeance by portraying him as an unpleasant American in her novel called *Ancestors*.

Playing with names is a common feature of many authors who transmute life into fiction. Nevertheless, a prior knowledge of all of Rushdie's fictional and non-fictional works on the part of the reader is required to make sense of this *roman à noms* of celebrity culture. Obviously, Rushdie does not give this list of names to equate his fiction with coded life. His purpose is to lay bare the complex signifying process that makes a genotext

emerge as a phenotext (Kristeva 1969: 281).[8] Besides, there seems to be a mystique of onomastics in Rushdie's memoir that shows the imprint of his Muslim cultural heritage. Indeed, the Sufi mystic tradition he is drawn to lists the ninety-nine names and qualities that God uses to refer to himself in *The Koran*.

The excess of names cited and the readiness with which they are disclosed enable us to decode the meaning of *Joseph Anton* as a sign. It is an expression of Rushdie's attempt to name the unnamable abjection or narcissistic crisis (Kristeva 1980: 22) he felt as a persecuted human being and writer. While names infuse cultural depth into the characters they designate, they seem to function at times as objects that the narrator manipulates with childlike pleasure as if demonstrating how storytelling is a juggling act. The nicknames of the protection team members —Piggy, Stumpy, Fat Jack and Horse— and the name of the armored vehicle Rushdie acquires from Sir Ralph Halpern, the 'bimbomobile', attest the English language's genius of brevity and caricature and provide comic relief.

Attention also needs to be paid to place names in the memoir. As it has a global sweep, we come across place names disseminated throughout the whole world. However, metropolitan cities such as Bombay, Karachi, London, Paris, New York, Mexico and Buenos Aires, and names of homes such as Windsor Villa, Wimbledon House, Anis Villa, as well as the safe houses used during Rushdie's hiding, universities such as Cambridge, Columbia and Oslo, power centres such as 10 Downing Street and the White House, media centres such as the BBC and the CNN, theatres such as the The Globe and Abbey Theatre and paradisiacal beaches in Mauritius and Australia become household names and attest the degree of social and geographic mobility Rushdie has demonstrated in order to exist as an individual and make a living out of writing. Accelerated global time has made migrants of all and all migration a way of staying put. As Rosa Hartmut remarks, "we run as fast as we can in order to stay in the same place" (2013: 119).

The migrant writer's metamorphosis from "a nice quiet boy" in Rugby boarding school to a rebel undergraduate who takes up a course in Cambridge on Muhammad, the Rise of Islam and the Early Caliphate, and to a multiple prizewinning author who receives a knighthood, is fraught with the danger of the annihilation of his life and his name associated with his fame. This ordeal symbolizes the confusing and traumatic search for fulfilment that a migrant journey represents and warrants a comparison with the drama of identity that the American born Indian Desi undergoes in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*. Gogol, alias Nikhil, is conscious of the tentativeness of names in the postmodern world when he concludes that "there is no such thing as a perfect name" (2003: 245).

Long before Rushdie and Lahiri, A.K. Ramanujan and Bharati Mukherjee had dealt with how names change progressively in exile (Ganapathy-Doré 2008: 82). Names follow a destiny of their own in the time of migration. The shortening in length, the

[8] 'Genotext' refers to signifying infiniteness. 'Phenotext' considers the text as a fact.

alteration of spelling and pronunciation, the difference in accent, the acclimatization to a different language all transform the name and transfigure the individual who embodies it. In the case of Jhumpa Lahiri's protagonist, the good name intended by the grandmother gets literally lost in postal transit (56), reflecting the baffling and inevitable loss of cultural heritage that occurs in the migratory context. His parents give him the *daknam*, or pet name, Gogol (26, 28), for the intimate family space, reserving the proper Bengali *bhalonam*, or good name, Nikhil, which bears a vague resemblance to Nikolai, for the public space (57). Just as his parents initiate him into Bengali culture with the *annaprasan* ceremony (38), the elementary school principal Mrs Lapidus initiates Gogol into American freedom by giving him the choice of being called by the name he wants (59), and which is in the records, rather than by the good, unrecorded, official name, off record, that his parents want to bestow upon him. Little Gogol does not associate the right signified with the signifier. He confuses it with traffic signs containing the English verb "go" (66). However, the sight of the mailbox on which the surname Ganguly is abusively shortened to "Gang" (67) and combined with green, sensitizes him to racism. The name given by his father in memory of Gogol's *Overcoat*, which he was reading during the train accident that would trigger his journey to America, becomes unbearable when Gogol learns about the life of his namesake at school. The Russian surname adopted as a Bengali American forename jars the ears of American kids, while it would have been quite normal in Bengal because of both the generally cosmopolitan culture of the Bengalis and their particular interest in Russia (Dasgupta 2011: 531). They prefer to play around his name and call him "Giggle", "Gargle" (67). Even his sister Sonia good-humouredly calls him by the name of a thing, "Goggles" (74). Gogol realizes that his name is totally truncated and mixes up Indian, Russian and American traditions. He undertakes to change his official name into "Nikhil" (100). Like the former slaves who rebaptized themselves, he is a born-again and self-made American citizen. His girlfriend fully Americanizes him by calling him "Nick" (177). When Nikhil finally opens Gogol's short stories his father had given him as a birthday present (288), he mourns not only his father's death but also his own former and uneasy in-between self embodied in the alliterative Gogol Ganguli.

Between the ready-made identity given by a fixed name in an entrenched culture, and the identity-in-making of the diasporic, the journey is tortuous. Rushdie is forced to fathom the void in between two names as Nikhil does or before him the sculptor Lyon Hartwell in Willa Cather's short story 'The Namesake' (Dalton-Brown 2011: 337), both literally and philosophically, through his creative transmigrations. The connecting link between Rushdie and Lahiri, with regard to the drama of naming, is Chekhov, whom both writers admire. Gogol is another common literary reference (supra). If Jhumpa Lahiri had lived a short while in England before settling down in the US, Rushdie set up home in New York after his trying years in England. His marriages to Marianne Wiggins and Padmalakshmi and his American experience have brought him closer to the American capacity for self-invention and re-invention. It is

to be remembered that it was at Folger Library in Washington that Rushdie playfully renamed some of Shakespeare's plays (Blue 1996: 36), and that the personal archives he used for writing *Joseph Anton* are housed at Emory University's Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library.[9] Both Rushdie and Lahiri illustrate the American idea of the self-made and mobile identity through their engagement with naming, respectively in the autobiographical and fictional form.

As a migrant writer, Rushdie is compelled to invent a literary lineage. Years ago in *Imaginary Homelands* (1991) he had declared "It is one of the more pleasant freedoms of the literary migrant to be able to choose his parents. My own —selected half consciously, half not— include Gogol, Cervantes, Kafka, Melville, Machado de Assis; a polyglot family tree, against which I measure myself, and to which I would be honoured to belong" (2012: 21). His memoir is a determined step towards that ambitious objective. Rushdie invents a name evocative of literary fame that transforms him into a fictive persona, comes out of it to reclaim and remake his authorial self, recording the life of that avatar of his self as another in the process. The author's rebirth is accompanied by the resurgence of the name he had shed in the realm of literature, as the title of his voluminous text. It is Rushdie's American experience that seems to have inspired this creative and liberating way out of the crisis. The texture of this narrative that spans five continents is heterogeneous, oscillating between the existential and retrospective and experiential and dynamic modes of self-writing. It indirectly takes stock of the size, variety, quality and reach of Rushdie's literary production and consolidates his name and reputation by giving his version of the truth.

His readers may find the demystification of what was enigmatic in his writing by the author, who invites them to the green room of his creativity, slightly disappointing. Rather than flatten the paragrammatic field of his writing, Rushdie's unraveling of his true sources,[10] albeit serving to spice up the thrill of the mundane ride, also opens up newer and wider fields of interpretation by setting up a space for dialogue between

[9] Rushdie was initially Distinguished Writer-in-Residence at Emory University. He is currently Distinguished Professor.

[10] The real model for Ayesha in *The Satanic Verses* is a Shia Muslim called Sayyad Willayat Hussain Shah, who led a pilgrimage to Karbala in 1983 (1998: 70). Another character in the same novel, Rosa Diamond, is based on Rushdie's wife Clarissa's grandmother, May Jewell (2012: 308), who has an Anglo-Argentine past. Shaandaar Café is "a thinly disguised Urdu-ing of the real Brilliant Café in Southall" (71). Chaggan Bhujpal, the Shiv Sena mayor in whose house Rushdie's documentary film, *The Riddle of Midnight*, was shot is the model for the politician Mainduck in *The Moor's Last Sigh* (2012: 82). The green telephone in the form of a frog found in Bhujpal's house is the basis for the extended metaphor describing Mainduck's physique. The portrait of Aurora Zogoiby, painted by Vasco Miranda and covered over by another painting which roots the palimpsest metaphor in *The Moor's Last Sigh* is, in reality, inspired by a portrait of Rushdie's mother, Negin, by Krishen Khanna, on which the painter M.F. Husain had executed another picture (463). The names of Rushdie's friends behind the fictional characters of Yorick, Chekhov, Eliot Crane in *East, West* (1994) are respectively editor Bill Buford, diplomat Salman Haider and writer Jamie Webb. His Mangalorian ayah Mary Menezes (2012: 429-30) appears therein simply as Ayah Mary. Much later we learn that the Brazilian film, *Orfeu Negro* is the source for the musical theme in *The Ground Beneath her Feet* (1999) (2012: 495).

random and obligatory intertextualities. Such a dialogue does, however, leave the space open for the persecution of the writer by obsessive readers like Nalini Mehta (223) and religious fanatics who ignore the fact that there are seven variants of the sacred *Koran* itself (213).[11] Defining himself as a story-telling animal with freedom of speech (17), Rushdie empowers his readers by saying that a book changes when it leaves its author's desk (90). Ultimately, the author's happiness consists in being "a writer among readers" (147). This democratic and dialogic enunciatory position establishes a new power balance between the author and the reader, and allows the text to triumph.

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[11] The seven variations in the recital of *The Koran* according to the *hadith* (tradition) are known as *ahruf*. But whether they were variants at all or simply seven linguistic ways of recitation is a matter of debate as much as their total number. Non-Arabic speakers might consult Ingrid Mattson's *Story of Qur'an* for more details (2007).

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Undone and Renewed by Time: History as Burden and/or Opportunity in Sherman Alexie's *Flight*

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Zits, the protagonist of Sherman Alexie's *Flight* (2007), is a half-breed Native American teenager who has serious problems in defining his own identity and finding his place in contemporary U.S. society. A lack of parental guidance and the cruelty of the foster-care system turn him into an angry and dysfunctional young man who is brought close to committing a massacre. However, just when he is about to pull the trigger, he 'falls through time' to revisit some of the key episodes in Native-American history, and a few other recent events, in the shoes of characters belonging to diverse racial and social categories. This figurative journey through history allows Alexie —and Zits— to dig deep into the motives behind conflicts that may explain the plight of Native Americans today. Time-traveling proves an effective fictional device that helps the author —and his readers— to explore these historical junctures from unusual viewpoints in order to see what official accounts have neglected or willfully forgotten. *Flight* represents, therefore, an illuminating instance of historiographic metafiction in which the writer manages both to retrieve and reconstruct important fragments of his peoples' collective past and to surmise the kind of light that those events cast on their present condition.

Keywords: Native-American fiction; Sherman Alexie; historiographic metafiction; *Flight*; narrative technique; time-traveling

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Desorientado y renovado por los viajes en el tiempo: la historia como carga o/y oportunidad en *Flight*, de Sherman Alexie

Zits, el protagonista de *Flight* (2007), de Sherman Alexie, es un adolescente nativo americano que tiene serias dificultades para definir su identidad y encontrar un espacio en la sociedad norteamericana contemporánea. La ausencia de sus padres y el cruel sistema de adopción al que se ve sometido le convierten en un joven rebelde y disfuncional que está a punto de cometer una masacre. Sin embargo, justo antes de apretar el gatillo, 'viaja a través del tiempo' para

revisar algunos de los episodios clave en la historia nativo-americana en la piel de personajes que pertenecen a diferentes grupos étnicos y sociales. Este viaje imaginario permite al autor —y a Zits— indagar en los motivos de los conflictos que pudieran explicar la situación de los indios americanos hoy en día. El viaje en el tiempo demuestra ser un marco de ficción que ayuda a Alexie —y sus lectores— a estudiar estos acontecimientos históricos desde puntos de vista inusuales para discernir lo que los documentos oficiales han ignorado u olvidado a propósito. *Flight* es pues un valioso ejemplo de metaficción historiográfica en la que el escritor consigue tanto recuperar fragmentos del pasado colectivo de su pueblo como establecer nexos entre esos episodios y su situación en el mundo actual.

Keywords: narrativa nativo-americana; Sherman Alexie; metaficción historiográfica; *Flight*; técnica narrativa; viaje en el tiempo

> The importance of these little narratives is not only that they challenge the dominant metanarrative and the state apparatus that would prohibit or discredit them, but that they also indicate the possibility for another kind of society, of another form of social relations in fact already functioning "laterally" within the totalitarian state . . .
> DAVID CARROLL, 'Narrative, Heterogeneity, and the Question of the Political'

> [Sherman Alexie's] work carries the weight of five centuries of colonization, retelling the American Indian struggle to survive, painting a clear, compelling, and often painful portrait of modern Indian life.
> LYNN CLINE, 'About Sherman Alexie: A Profile by Lynn Cline'

1. INTRODUCTION: ON THE URGENT NEED TO REWRITE HISTORY

The term 'history' comes directly from the Greek word *ιστορία*, which means "inquiry, knowledge acquired by investigation" (Joseph and Janda 2003: 163).[1] Most people today would not even think of questioning history, as they tend to accept it as a factual and objectively recorded account of the past. Postmodernist scholars, however, view history as just another type of narrative whose structures are similar to those found in literary art, a discipline that often yields to myths, metaphors and symbols of various kinds. In fact, although its sources may at first seem objective and based on hard evidence, they gather episodes that, as these critics see it, could have been interpreted in many different ways and from manifold perspectives. In Munslow's words, "meaning is generated by socially encoded and constructed discursive practices that mediate reality so much that they effectively close off direct access to it" (1997: 11). In writing historical accounts, we often put together causal relations and explanations by employing the same devices used in fictional narratives. As a result, defenders of postmodernist poetics argue that history is just another way of representing and interpreting events in narrative (White 1987: 1-25).

Linda Hutcheon coined the term 'historiographic metafiction' to designate a new subgroup of postmodern novels that "situate themselves within historical discourse without surrendering their autonomy as fiction" (1989a: 4). As its name suggests, this subgenre emerges on the boundary between historiography and fiction, and explores the function of narrative as a construct that not only represents the past, but is also seen in itself to shape history and identity. According to Duvall, works of historiographic metafiction "question the notion of individualism and the stable self/subject that form our notions of historical agency; they are ironic, they are self-reflective about language and suspicious

[1] The research carried out for the writing of this article is part of the research project funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation (MICINN; code: FFI2011-23598) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF; code: FI2008/03833).

of political power, they show all values as context-dependent and ideological, and they highlight the artificiality of historical explanations of reality" (2012: 24).

These novels remind the reader that history is available only in the form of narrative, a narrative that has been produced by individuals who remember, represent and interpret events from a particular viewpoint. In Hutcheon's opinion, history-making practices need to be rethought so that a more pluralist view of historiography can be created, "consisting of different but equally meaningful constructions of past reality" (1989a: 5). In this regard, historiographic metafiction plays a decisive role in giving voice to groups that have generally been silenced, marginalized or just misrepresented. In fact, minority authors feel a particular urgency to re-write history in their own terms, using language as a tool to deconstruct the short-sighted stereotypes and misapprehensions that Western peoples have disseminated, as well as to reinforce their own identity (Benito 1995: 33-34). Feeling that the Eurocentric perspective has smothered their opinions and cultural heritage for too long, many ethnic-minority authors have engaged in the task of writing fiction that challenges 'dominant metanarratives' and tries to subvert the unequal power relations they have generated.

Most cultural and literary critics today would readily agree that these last two decades have seen a strong revival of what could be termed as 'contextual approaches'; that is, rather than treating literature as an autonomous system to be decoded according to its own internal rules, we tend to view texts as representations of particular historical and socio-political contexts that inevitably have a bearing on our present-day society. This does not mean, though, that we are utterly unaware of the formal constituents of narrative: we are highly conscious of their innate situatedness and partiality regarding the various discourses at work at any given time. White remarks on this point that, although narratives —historical or otherwise— strive to produce an impression of unity, coherence and transparency, they are in fact always plagued by gaps in and absences of events and figures that, for different reasons, were left out of the picture (1987: 10). What these contextual approaches do is precisely to question the idea of texts as independent and integral objects, and to show how they become convenient instruments employed by dominant groups to accrue power. The use of these alternative methods of analysis has become increasingly urgent in recent times for two important reasons: firstly, in the wake of the postmodern era we have recognized the futility of believing in any metanarrative which tries to resolve the differences, contradictions and frictions that invariably arise in multicultural socio-political spaces (Lyotard 1984: 33-35); secondly, as Carroll remarks in the first epigraph to this article, 'small narratives' are increasingly proliferating in our contemporary world, and are seen to counter the metanarratives of old by revealing their biased and manipulative nature. In this sense, these subalternate narratives hold great potential to cause a "rearrangement of relations and positions" that is proof of the more dynamic and complex nature of reality (1987: 77-78).

Most ethnic-minority groups in the United States have felt the need to come up with texts that subvert the modes of representation of the past, which were usually part of a

program to force them into the cultural molds that the dominant group had designed for them. This need has been especially pressing in the case of Native Americans, who have historically been trapped in narratives that mostly cast them as the unknown and uncivilized Other, always offering resistance to the white man's desire for expansion and domination. Tompkins claims that Indians are rarely represented in Westerns as real people with a culture and a history of their own; instead, like women, they are just "part of the repressed", which hardly ever surfaces into consciousness (1992: 8-10). And, of course, when they did emerge with any visibility in narrative, it was only to show their proneness to violence and brutality or their utter inability to adapt to the 'civilized' way of life of the pioneers. Little is said in these accounts of how they were deprived of their best lands, how their lifestyles soon became untenable on account of the pressures of the 'pale faces', or how their children were quickly acculturated by boarding school programs that showed no respect for their traditions. According to Arnold Krupat, a truly ethnocritical approach to the study of Native cultures requires the recognition that "[s]ome people *have* been hurt by others and if that is not the only and the most interesting thing to say, it most certainly remains something that still, today, can probably not be said too often" (1992: 21; emphasis in original). This critic and others have warned about the dangers of perpetuating traditional binary oppositions between Western civilization and the Others, the historical and the mythical, us versus them, which only distort and ossify the processes that took place on the frontier and cultural borderlands. LaCapra rightly notes that representations of the past that attempt to capture this simplified version of reality can easily be turned into an "instrument of control" of the in-group, which either through narratives of mastery or victimization only contributes to the prolongation of the above mentioned dichotomies (1985: 25). This general trend can only be subverted if we move away from the majority/minority and dominant/oppressed polarities, without ever denying the unequal power relations that have prevailed between the groups in history.

2. Native-American History Revisited

Since the 1970s, minority writers in different traditions, such as Toni Morrison, Amy Tan, Ana Castillo, Bharati Mukherjee, etc., have taken up the task of retrieving the histories of groups that have been underrepresented or completely stereotyped in the literature of the nation. Generally, the main goal was to deconstruct or 'de-doxify' those master narratives that had turned them into the collateral victims of the country's progress or the peripheral beings doomed to assist the protagonists in their struggles for self-realization. Of course, in order to subvert the orthodoxy of traditional narratives, such authors needed to shift the focus of interest toward the marginal figures and to present the alterity between the distinct groups in a radically different light. While it is true that in some instances it was difficult not to replicate the undesirable structures and formal patterns that had pervaded those metanarratives (see Carroll 1987: 69-70), it is unquestionable that a serious effort was made in most cases to avoid the confrontational and essentializing tendencies that

are apparent in the mainstream stories. Native American authors, with their sorrowful history of forced displacements and silenced genocide, were initially intent on recovering a sense of the specificity of tribal groups and their lost spiritual balance through inherited rituals. According to Kenneth Lincoln, "[t]hese peoples are witnesses to a common sense of dispossession forced on them as native 'Indians.' Their mythically storied, prelapsarian origins before the European 'invasion' . . . , the dream and its descent, transcend factional differences in a shared struggle for cultural survival and rebirth" (1983: 13). Writers such as D'Arcy McNickle and Scott Momaday were primarily interested in showing the damaging conflicts that characterized reservation life in the early twentieth century, and also in finding regenerative continuities that emerged from their own storytelling traditions. One needs to wait until the late 1980s and early 1990s to come across works that truly tackle the possibility of an opening in White-Indian relations, thus causing the much-desired rearrangement of positions and value systems in the general scheme of narratives.

Interestingly, the first Native authors who tried to undermine the dichotomies of West vs. the rest were women who, because they had survived forms of double discrimination, were more sensitive to the need to move beyond 'the scapegoat mechanism' that prevented others from seeing how things really work in the world. Writers such as Louise Erdrich, Leslie M. Silko and Linda Hogan transgress the divisions between present and past, the factual and the imaginative, in order to bring about the critical return to history and politics that scholars have long advocated (Krupat 1992; Owens 1992). With the aim of pushing this critical return, they begin by disrupting the conventions of representation that the dominant culture has habitually employed in its attempt to "predetermine all responses [and] prohibit any counter-narratives" (Carroll 1987: 77). By means of family histories, preserved notebooks, passed-down stories and myths, these authors manage to introduce significant elements of continuance and heterogeneity into texts that rarely aspire to produce the 'totalizing' effects that mainstream narratives usually sought. On the contrary, as Vizenor contends, "The literal translations and representations of tribal literatures are illusions, consolations in the dominant culture. There can never be correct or objective readings of the texts or the tropes in tribal literatures, only more energetic, interesting and 'pleasurable misreadings'" (1993: 5). Indeed, novels such as Erdrich's *Tracks* (1988) and Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) present the clash of two civilizations in all its complexity, weaving together family and tribal relationships, greed, dreams, betrayals and a revisionist history that gives a voice to viewpoints that had seldom been articulated before.

Sherman Alexie's novel *Flight* (2007a) can be said to fit quite squarely into the genre of historiographic metafiction, since he builds his narrative from traces and earlier representations of the past that he uses in different —often parodic— ways to generate alternative interpretations of and explanations for well-known events. As several critics have noted, Alexie's is the "art of refraction" —and probably infraction— as he invariably complicates the reappropriation of historical data by constantly transmuting them into new signifying formations (Bernardin 2010: 52). In Hutcheon's words, one of the main

aims of historiographic metafiction is precisely to "get the histories (in the plural) of the losers as well as the winners, of the regional (and colonial) as well as the centrist, of the unsung many as well as the much sung few" (1989b: 66). Daniel Grassian cogently argues that, besides trying to represent the daily lives of contemporary Indians on the reservations, Alexie's purpose is also to rewrite "dominant American history" so that those that have been stereotyped and marginalized do finally get a voice (2005: 8). In *Flight*, the protagonist-narrator, Zits, not only travels back to revisit some of the most critical —and traumatic— occasions in Native history, but quite often discovers that the events have been heavily colored by interests and myths that provided them with a certain teleology. Naturally, Zits' most important task is to try to unravel the meanings that have been encoded into some of the metanarratives of the nation in order to see how, by looking through the 'fissures', he can bring us a bit closer to experiencing the actual dynamics in different historical contexts. As several reviewers of the novel have explained, the protagonist is involved in a modern-day quest to gain an understanding of human motivations without offering, in fact, any clear "predigested moral" that would condemn one specific group (Barbash 2007). Taking a highly postmodern stance, what is most conspicuous in Alexie's 'small narrative' is actually his reluctance to pass on any definite judgment that would simply replicate the patterns found in dominant metanarratives, which try to do away with the contradictions and paradoxes that dominate human behavior. Indeed, as will be seen below, *Flight* does not really offer a reversed formulation of history in which the Natives are the heroes, their culture is more wholesome and representations become more 'authentic'. As Andrews points out, Alexie favors a more independent and critical attitude that "shows us that there are no easy answers. What works one time does not work another. What works for some does not work for others. Like life, it is complicated and just a little bit random" (2010: 51). In this regard, similar to other Indian authors such as Welch, Vizenor or Silko, Alexie does *not* "simplify complexities or ignore conflict", but simultaneously tries to validate and question "the individual's desire to bridge cultural and personal difference" (Coulombe 2011: 12).

3. Time-Traveling as a Burden and/or Opportunity to Find Oneself

It is not surprising that, like some other contemporary minority authors, Alexie should have been accused by other co-ethnic critics and writers of not taking seriously enough his peoples' need to recover their sense of a collective identity and to enhance their so-called 'cultural integrity'. One will certainly be disappointed if what one looks for in his writings is a direct protest against the policies that white America has waged on the indigenous populations or a eulogy of the tribal cosmogony. Alexie has repeated in several interviews that he is not interested in engaging in the kind of political and socio-cultural criticism that restricts the borders of what is considered authentically Native to a close set of heroes or victims that are re-imagined as the holders of the new ethical standards applied in contemporary America (see West and West 1998: 29). Indeed, the young heroes in some

of his earlier works —Victor Joseph, Thomas Builds-the-Fire, and Junior Polatkin— can be seen to be extremely disoriented by both current corporate culture on the one hand and by their peoples' ancient traditions on the other. In contrast, as his bending of tribal and genre conventions shows, he defends the artist's freedom to deal with culture and history in the ways s/he thinks most appropriate to bring about the readers' change of perception regarding certain inherited ideas. Nelson notes on this point that in Alexie's works, his "metaphorical invocation of travel through time, space, and all sorts of in-between, ephemeral moments like flight and dancing reclaim the idea of exploration as resistance against boundaries physical and imaginative" (2010: 44). Indeed, it would be difficult to explain Alexie's unexpected blend of rage and sympathy, stark realism and lyricism or tragedy and hilarity if it were not as a result of his experimental and tentative reexamination of some well-known events and conditions in his peoples' long history of conflict and displacement. In Berglund's opinion, "Alexie's inventive style conveys to readers his characters' suffering and anguish but also the enduring power of humor and imagination" (2010: xvii).

Zits, the protagonist-narrator of Alexie's novel, is a fifteen-year-old half-breed Native American who is at that stage in his life when most of us have serious difficulties in accepting our appearance and, most importantly, our identity:

> I'm dying from about ninety-nine kinds of shame.
> I'm ashamed of being fifteen years old. And being tall. And skinny. And ugly.
> I'm ashamed that I look like a bag of zits tied to a broomstick.
> I wonder if loneliness causes acne. I wonder if being Indian causes acne. (4)

But, of course, to think of Zits as the average teenager, unhappy with his looks and worried about the reasons for his social dysfunctionality, would be far too simplistic and, somehow, unfair. Like Alexie's adolescent hero, Arnold (Junior) Spirit, in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (2007b), Zits is also involved in the grinding struggle to survive between his Native culture and the mostly unsympathetic white world. Apart from the general problems assailing youngsters of that age, Zits has grown up deprived of any parental affection and support, and has suffered all manner of abuses in the more than twenty foster homes to which he has been assigned by the authorities. It is little wonder that this lonely young man, who eventually develops an inclination for arson, should feel that he is just a kind of vacuum or black hole defined by what he lacks in his life rather than by what he has: "Yes, I am Irish and Indian, which would be the coolest blend in the world if my parents were around to teach me to be Irish and Indian. But they are not here and haven't been for years, so I'm not really Irish or Indian. I'm a blank in the sky, a human solar eclipse" (5). Having been abandoned at birth by his Indian father and losing his mother six years later to a tumor allegedly caused by grief, Zits grows increasingly resentful not only of a government that places him in inadequate households but also of a culture that keeps stereotyping him and his people from "the reductionist point of

view of the white men who have misjudged Native Americans according to their Western perspective" (Mateos 2011: 126). As is the case with most of the 'heroes' in Alexie's other works, Zits feels that he is not accepted and that he does not belong in the society in which he lives. His loneliness and anger become so unbearable that he constantly seems to be on the verge of lashing out violently against the world: "Yes, that is my life, a series of cruel bastards and airplane crashes. Twenty little airplane crashes. I'm a flaming jet, crashing into each new foster family" (11).

After the customary quarrel with his latest foster family, Zits leaves their home in a rush, pushing his foster mother against the wall, but he is soon arrested by two police officers who are already too familiar with his misbehavior. Although he reacts by kicking and fighting, one of the policemen, Officer Dave, proves sympathetic and is kind to the boy since, as Zits confesses to us, Dave also seems to be one of the "severely scarred". Even though the situation is tense and they are driving him to juvenile detention for the umpteenth time, the protagonist cannot help joking about the future awaiting him in the hands of the local authorities:

> "I'm an Indian," I say to Officer Dave, "and we *hate* lawyers."
>
> The cops laugh. They keep laughing as they drive me to kid jail in Seattle's Central District. The CD used to be a black folks' neighborhood. Now it's filled with rich white people who like to pretend it's still a black folks' neighborhood. But the kid jail is still here, right across the street from a fancy coffee shop.
>
> Starbucks can kiss my shiny red ass.
>
> They put me in a holding cell with a black kid and a white kid and a Chinese kid. We're the United Nations of juvenile delinquents. (19; emphasis in original)

Two important aspects of Zits' personality become apparent in this short passage. On the one hand, he resorts to humor and rather profane language to evade acknowledging the serious implications of what he interprets as the blind alleys of the system. As Coulombe has explained, Alexie and his 'heroes' are likely to employ humor as a strategy to do several things at once, from protecting their self-esteem to revealing injustice or fostering bonds (2011: 12). On the other hand, Zits seems to be fully aware of some of the ironies and contradictions that govern a society which, albeit theoretically color blind, keeps imposing boundaries for those who belong to minorities. In this regard, Nelson notes that Alexie's "poetry and prose uncompromisingly demonstrate [that] communities are far from uncomplicated and are frequently themselves destructive, as with communities of substance abusers" (2010: 46). This becomes very clear when, at the detention home, Zits meets a handsome, seventeen-year-old white boy called Justice who seems to understand his profound anger and pain: "When I tell him I'm an Indian, he says, 'I'm sorry that my people nearly destroyed your people. This country, the so-called United States, is evil. And you Indians were the only people who fought against the white evil. Everybody else thinks we live in a democracy'" (25). Although it would be hard to dispute many of Justice's

arguments on the nation's history of conquest and genocide, the solution he proposes to Zits to correct the situation —namely, violence— will act like a drug in the protagonist's brain. By the time Zits is released from jail, Justice has become his hero and begun to fill his head with strange ideas —backed up by his readings of Nietzsche and G.B. Shaw— about how he could resurrect his parents and make all white folk disappear by means of a modern-day Ghost Dance.

A couple of weeks later, equipped with the two guns that Justice has given him —one real, the other a paint pistol— Zits stands in the lobby of a bank in downtown Seattle ready to take the lives of sixty people "of many different colors [and] religions" (35). When a man points at him and tells him that he is "not real", Zits faces a moment of doubt about his own 'ghostliness' before he shoots the man in the face and then turns the guns in all directions. The massacre goes on until a bank guard shoots the protagonist in the back of the head. If up to this point in the novel the reader may have felt a bit ill at ease because it is unclear whether s/he is enjoying a piece of deadpan realist fiction, a political polemic or a *cri-de-coeur* type of memoir, things become even more disorientating from now on, as the narrator gets caught in a surreal maelstrom of time-traveling and body jumping that will not stop until the last three chapters of the book. Bernardin underlines the fact that Alexie has always been fond of breaking conventional genre divisions but, in this case, he stretches his imagination even further when, like Vonnegut's Billy Pilgrim, "Zits finds himself 'unstuck in time' —entering and exiting the bodies of young and old, white and Indian, through the televised scenes of PBS and the History Channel documentaries on 'How the West was Won'" (2010: 53). But if the reader is quite puzzled at finding the 'hero' inhabiting the white body of an FBI agent on the Red River Indian Reservation back in 1975, the same can be said about the protagonist himself who, initially, thinks that he must have been undeservedly saved by some amazing doctors: "I wonder if it makes them mad or sad when they do that. I wonder if I deserve to live. What the hell was I thinking? What kind of bastard am I? I'm just another zit-faced freak with a gun. Man, I had no idea I was this evil. And then it makes me wonder. Do evil people *know* they're evil? Or do they just think they're doing the right thing?" (38; emphasis in original).

Zits' first thoughts when he wakes up in this alien body are to regret what he has done at the bank and to admit that he had been fooled and brainwashed by Justice. After that, he gradually manages to get his bearings on the situation but, of course, he soon realizes that what he has learnt from PBS and the History Channel about White-Native relations has little to do with the original events. As Andrews argues, Alexie is always conscious that "none of these representations are authentic or even based on first-hand experience. Instead, they are based on other invented representations, which themselves are based on previous invented representations" (2010: 50).

Alexie is quite selective concerning the historical occasions that he chooses to include in Zits' time-traveling for, while they should sound familiar to the average reader, they have all been the subject of a great deal of mythologizing. Thus, the battle between IRON (the Indigenous Rights Now! movement) and HAMMER (the traitor tribal government

officials who were eventually joined by the FBI) in the mid-1970s, Custer's Last Stand at the Battle of Little Bighorn in June 1876, or the massacre of a whole Native community by the U.S. Cavalry near the Colorado River in the same era, they are all convenient settings for exploring issues that capture the author's imagination. Among these, loyalty, betrayal, violence, relations across racial divides and revenge occupy prominent positions. As mentioned above, what is most interesting and original in the retrieval of these historical events is that Zits is invariably reincarnated in the bodies of peripheral figures and, as a result, the version we receive from him differs significantly from the more official accounts. Not only that but, as Walsh has noted, "rather than getting bogged down in the details of seminal historical events, he [Alexie] telescopes to the most intimate moments, when his characters rise and fall" (2007). The protagonist is likely to recount precisely those aspects of these historical episodes that the records say nothing about: how the FBI bribed some of the IRON leaders to achieve their purposes, how some U.S. Cavalry soldiers deserted the Army in mid-battle to help their opponents, or how awful Native camps smelled during the summer: "Justice never said anything about the smell of old-time Indians. I never read anything about this smell. I never saw a television show that mentioned it. / I don't mean to be disrespectful, but it smells like the Devil dropped a shit right here in the middle of this camp" (61). But more shocking and troubling than anything else, Zits is faced with numerous instances of gratuitous human violence that destroy his belief in the heroic character of victory. For example, after the Sioux have defeated Custer's troops, he explains that although he understands why the soldiers had to be killed, he does not understand what happens to the soldiers' bodies afterwards:

> Right there, an Indian grandmother is stabbing a soldier with his own bayonet. He's dead and bloody, but she keeps stabbing him over and over again.
>
> I stand and watch as she strips off his clothes. She wants him to be naked and ashamed in the afterlife.
>
> And now she cuts off his penis and stuffs it into his mouth. She wants the gods to laugh at him when he arrives in the afterlife. "Hey, kid," the gods will say to him, "do you know you have your own cock stuffed between your teeth?"
>
> All around me, grandmothers are cutting off penises and ears and hands and fingers and feet. (73)

The reader cannot fail to suspect that, apart from revealing the most horrendous features of these historical chapters, Alexie also wants his 'hero' to learn the lesson of how violence and revenge create a vicious circle from which it is almost impossible to escape. It is not surprising that, as mentioned earlier, Zits is disturbed by images of his own criminal deed after each of these bloody incidents. When he sees the hundreds of dead or dying cavalry soldiers on Custer's Hill he comments, "I feel sick in my stomach and brain. I feel sick in my soul. I remember that in another life I killed people like this. I left behind a bank lobby filled with dead bodies" (72). Be it in the body of an FBI agent or an innocent

and voiceless Native boy or an Indian tracker in the U.S. Army, what is evident is that Zits is confronted with situations that inevitably remind him of the consequences of his own murders. When the little Indian boy is urged by his father to kill a young white soldier after Little Bighorn, Zits cannot help contemplating the human need for revenge:

> And then I wonder if that's the reason I killed all the people in the bank.
>
> Did I want revenge? Did I blame those strangers for my loneliness? Did they deserve to die because of my loneliness?
>
> Does this little white soldier deserve to die because one of his fellow soldiers slashed my throat?
>
> If I kill him, do I deserve to be killed by this white soldier's family and friends?
>
> Is revenge a circle inside of a circle inside of a circle? (77)

Obviously, Zits' metaphorical journey into the past is far from being a pleasant and comforting experience. Besides being a witness and active participant in some of the most brutal confrontations between Native and white Americans, the 'hero' is somehow compelled to redeem his own crime by coming face to face with ordeals in which he is forced to rethink his own motivations. Clara West summarizes the contents of the 'small narrative' as follows: "Alexie's novel is extraordinary in its sweet simplicity. It locates the personal and internal human life within the framework of history and a system of racial supremacy that produces a circle of division, devaluing and violence in order to perpetuate itself. But because human beings have made this system, they also have the ability to short circuit that cycle for their own and, perhaps, the entire species' survival" (2007).

4. Building Bridges between Collective and Personal Histories

The time-traveling experience and the five body metamorphoses that Zits undergoes during the novel are, no doubt, integral to his rapid development as a character. The manifold events he witnesses and the difficult situations he faces in other people's skin provide him with an invaluable opportunity to become aware of unknown aspects of his inner self. Not only that, but his process of self-discovery runs parallel to the realization that the history of racism and oppression that his people have suffered is not without its unexpected moments of empathy and mutual understanding. While it is true that prejudice and outright hatred dominate much of the story, there are also a number of surprising reversals in which characters —both white and Native— demonstrate that they are capable of great compassion. Zits' inner maturation is provoked as much by his brutal encounter with the man-devouring giant of American history as by his discovery that the human beings he comes to inhabit are, like himself, full of regrets and guilty feelings. Walsh has correctly remarked that "by offering perspectives from both sides of the battle", Alexie convincingly allows his 'hero' to understand that no one can really overcome pain on his own, no matter how divided the situation is (2007). Nowhere does this become

more evident than in the last third of the novel, when Zits travels into the bodies of a flight instructor, Jimmy, and that of his own alcoholic father.

At first, turning suddenly into Jimmy grants Zits one of the few moments of respite in the novel: "I have survived my journey through time and place and person and war and have now arrived in my Heaven. And my Heaven is a small airplane that will forever fly. I will never land" (108). However, he will soon realize that he is once more trapped in the body of a man who is going through a terribly difficult time in his life. In fact, Jimmy is constantly tormented by the memories of a personal past that has left him psychologically scarred. Zits is privy to Jimmy's recollections of his deceased Ethiopian friend, Abbad, who betrayed him by hijacking and then crashing a plane —using the piloting skills that Jimmy had trustfully taught him. This unnamable act of betrayal has left the flight instructor devastated. His emotions reveal a mixture of bitter regret, loss, and frustration. When Abbad returns to haunt Jimmy in the form of a ghost, Zits promptly sees that the Ethiopian was full of resentment and antagonism against American society. As a matter of fact, when Abbad was trying to learn to fly, he had been turned away by seven different instructors who —one assumes, still under the shock of 9/11—thought he was a terrorist. Abbad felt, and his ghost continues to feel, profoundly wounded by this, so he explains his innermost feelings about Americans to Jimmy, thus unconsciously reinforcing his angry views and misconceptions: "You Americans love capitalism so much, he says. That man didn't tell me to get out of his house, or out of his life. He didn't tell me to go to hell or back to Africa or back to wherever he thought I came from. No, he told me to get out of his *place of business*. Business! That's all he could think about" (111).

His negative experiences make Abbad hate American people so profoundly that he even ends up accusing his friend Jimmy of thinking he was a terrorist when they first met: "You are a liar, Jimmy. When I came to your door, when I said, *I want to be a pilot*, you immediately thought I was another crazy terrorist who wanted to learn how to fly planes into skyscrapers" (110; emphasis in original). His friend's betrayal shocks and disorients Jimmy in such a way that he quickly loses his bearings in all the important relationships in his life. Zits soon discovers that the flight instructor is having a torrid love affair and that, although he still seems to love his wife, Helda, he is heading for disaster due to his mental instability. Of course, it takes some time for Zits to make the necessary connections between Jimmy's deep psychological wounds resulting from his friend's disloyalty and his own marital misdemeanor, which Zits finds difficult to untangle: "He is having an affair with a woman he doesn't love. So he's cheating on her, too, sort of. I mean, I don't think you're supposed to have sex with people you don't love. I know, I know, I know. People do it all the time" (119). However, after a while, although Zits cannot approve of some of Jimmy's actions, he begins to understand the kind of pressure he is living under, and so pities him, for he is able to see things from both outside and within his story: "Jimmy is a traitor. I'm mad at him, sure, but I also feel sorry for him. Or maybe he's just feeling sorry for himself, and so I feel him feeling sorry" (119). Regardless of whether it is he himself who learns to feel sympathy for the pilot or whether he is simply experiencing Jimmy's

own remorseful feelings, this is one of several moments of insight in the novel that show us that the narrator is moving deeper and deeper into the intricacies of the human heart (Lenfestey 2007).

Most reviewers of the novel (Murray 2008; West 2007) agree that "by far the best episode in the book" is Zits' final transformation into his lost alcoholic father, prior to returning to his own body a few moments before opening fire on the crowd. This is probably the protagonist's most painful metamorphosis, since throughout most of the novel he has been constantly blaming his father for all his misfortunes and it is against him that he harbors a strong grudge for leaving his mother and him when they most needed him: "[M]y mother loved my father. A few months after that photograph, my mother was in labor with me, and my father was leaving. By the time my mother held me, a newborn, in her arms, my father was already hundreds of miles away, never to return. Fucking bastard" (109). At first, Zits does not realize that the drunken man whose body he has come to occupy is his father; he thinks that he has just become a common beggar on the streets of Tacoma. However, he gradually learns that he is an Indian during an encounter with a couple of helpful young tourists who elicit from him all sorts of preconceived judgments regarding the superior attitudes of whites:

> "It's all your fault," I say.
> "What?" Paul asks.
> "It's all your fault," I say again.
> "What's our fault?"
> "White people did this to Indians. You make us like this". (136)

Another passerby shares a moving family story with him and inquires whether he has any kids, after which he immediately pulls out a photo of Zits from his wallet. The 'hero' is absolutely astounded at this incredible revelation, and so he rushes over to a delivery truck to check his reflection in the side-view mirror: "I stare at my bloody reflection. I am older than I used to be . . . . But I know who I am. I am my father" (150). Predictably, uncontrollable anger surges up in Zits, and he wants to kill his procreator. But first he wishes to learn the motives for his unjust treachery against his family. So he looks into the mirror again and asks him about his awful behavior. Although his father is unable to come up with an answer, Zits forces him to travel back in his mind to the day he was waiting for Zits to be born. At the hospital, his father had waited patiently in the corridor, constantly tortured by the memories of his own drunken father's abuses when he was a kid. He had been psychologically harassed all the time by this man, who blamed him for the family's misfortunes: "You're just a pussy boy. I can't believe you are part of me. I wish you'd just go away" (155). Eventually, Zits realizes that his father was scared to death of being a father himself as he had never enjoyed the advantage of having a positive role model. In fact, he decided to run away from the situation precisely because he did not want to disappoint his wife and his newborn son: "And now my father, whipped and bloodied by his memory,

stops pacing in the hospital hallway. Somewhere on this floor, my mother is giving birth to me. But my father cannot be a participant. He cannot be a witness. He cannot be a father. And so he runs, he closes his eyes. And as he closes his eyes, I close my eyes" (155).

Witnessing this scene in his father's mind makes the protagonist understand that this lost man had been deeply traumatized since his childhood, and that it is unfair to blame him for his pathological reaction. It suddenly dawns upon Zits that his father did not abandon them because he did not love them but, rather, because his troubled past prevented him from accepting his new responsibilities. Once more, as is the case with many other characters in Alexie's fiction, Zits realizes that his father was the victim of tremendous burdens and dismal circumstances that he was hardly able to control.

As mentioned above, after this last body-migration, Zits returns to the scene of the bank, to the moment when he is just about to pull the trigger on the innocent crowd. Nevertheless, now he sees things in a completely different light, for he knows that it would make little sense to sacrifice all those lives just for the sake of showing his rage. He comes to the conclusion that violence is always brutal and absurd: "Maybe you're not supposed to kill. No matter who tells you to do it. No matter how good or bad the reason. Maybe you're supposed to believe that all life is sacred" (163). In Murray's words, Zits comes to see at this point that he is not the only one alone in the world, and that others also have their own obsessions, but "connections sometimes redeem" (2008). Consequently, he decides to walk away from the bank and suddenly feels the urge to tell someone about his incredible time-traveling experience. Soon, he runs into Officer Dave, but instead of telling him the story, he asks him to help him get rid of the two guns he is hiding inside his coat. Very concerned, Officer Dave and his partner take him to the police station, interrogate him, and watch the video recording from the bank. The video shows Zits just about to commit the massacre, but he suddenly vanishes from the scene for a few seconds, which one of the policemen interprets as "just a flaw in the tape . . . . They reuse tapes over and over. The quality goes down. They got weird bumps and cuts in them" (166). Several reviewers have compared this structural device, which allows Alexie to explain his 'hero's' intense mental journey into the past, to Bierce's original experiments with time in some of his tales (see Buchan 2008).

The fact that at the end of the novel Zits is no longer considered 'dangerous' and that he is placed in a new foster family with Officer Dave's kind brother, Robert, gives the protagonist a chance to start from scratch, the chance to have a real family who truly cares for him. Unlike the previous foster families, who seemed to adopt him just for the money they would receive from the social services, Robert and Mary treat him from the beginning as if he were their own son. Moreover, his new mother helps Zits regain self-confidence by tackling his problem with acne: "No, you're not ugly. You're handsome, actually. But your skin –we need to start working on your skin. You'll be a lot happier if we do" (179). By the end of the novel, the reader is fully aware of the fact that time-traveling and body-dwelling have turned Zits into a radically different, wiser, and more trustful young man. Throughout the story, the 'hero' learns how important the choices we make

are and the serious consequences they may have for ourselves and others. He realizes, as well, that human behavior is often driven by prejudice and misconceptions, which only generate additional anger and hatred in those caught in underprivileged positions. Zits' 'flights' into the past and into himself also allow him to see that violence is useless and rather than solving problems, it simply perpetuates them, making them bigger every time. But, most importantly perhaps, Zits finally seems ready to accept who he is, and he leaves behind the dysfunctional teenager he was in order to become just Michael.

5. Closing Remarks

Sherman Alexie's latest novel, *Flight*, is a work of historiographic metafiction in which the author explores the limits and contrivances of some of the 'master narratives' of the nation so as to show that there are alternative forms of discourse —'smaller stories'—that can be equally illuminating regarding the kind of realities that people have experienced in the past. Instead of imposing fixity and stability on the events lived through by different groups, this novel tends to dialogize the significance that we have usually attached to particular historical episodes. As Benito sees it, "[t]he discourse of history as the ultimate representation of identity becomes de-privileged and relativized in literature. In its place, fiction appears as a counterfactual history that inscribes a new politics of representation within which traditionally marginalized groups can forge a more appropriate sense of identity" (1995: 42). In order to bring about this change of paradigm, minority authors have felt compelled to try other modes of representation that thematize in various ways the very process of turning events into facts through the re-codification of different information (Hutcheon 1989b: 62). In this regard, it is not surprising that Alexie should rely on techniques such as narratorial self-reflexivity, intertextual references, parodic reversals and multiple perspectives to counter the 'totalizing' effects of previous narratives governed by the logic of causality and a definite closure.

The time-traveling and body-migrating devices perfectly serve Alexie's purpose of delving into the cycles of violence and mutual denigration that have pervaded White-Native relations since the eighteenth century. As Nelson points out, apart from providing new perspectives and unexpected revelations, these devices also allow the author to "bend some of the rules" of Western storytelling to offer new openings into history (2010: 46). Rather than obtaining clear answers to his questions, Zits is perplexed by the complex ways in which human beings get entangled in situations to which it is difficult to apply any ethical standards. Thus, when, as white FBI agent Hank Storm, Zits is told by his partner, Art, that they are "soldiers" and so they have to do tough things they do not like, he wonders: "Art and Justice fight on opposite sides of the war, but they sound exactly like each other. How can you tell the difference between the good guys and the bad guys when they say the same things?" (56). Although the 'hero' is mostly confused by the acts of treachery and disloyalty, vengeance and cruelty that he witnesses in the alien bodies he inhabits, he reaches the conclusion that he is not the only one lonely and outraged by a

reality that oppresses him: "I open my eyes. I think all the people in this bank are better than I am. They have better lives than I do. Or maybe they don't. Maybe we're all lonely. Maybe some of them also hurtle through time and see war, war, war. Maybe we're all in this together" (158).

Flight shows the quality of an interstitial space between sleep and wakefulness that permits the author to reconsider and rearrange the positions occupied by diverse human categories at different historical junctures. Like Zits, the reader may feel uncertain about the benefits to be derived from these 'small narratives' but, as the 'hero' admits, maybe the lesson is so plain in them that we find it difficult to recognize: "I want to tell him [Officer Dave] the entire story. I want to tell him that I fell through time and have only now returned. I want to tell him I learned a valuable lesson. But I don't know what that lesson is. It's too complicated, too strange. Or maybe it is really simple. Maybe it's so simple it makes me feel stupid to say it" (162).

In the end, what makes Zits' time-traveling tale such a compelling and provocative narrative is the fact that it lands us where all good literature should: in the depths of the human heart. What is original about his story is that it does so by combining equal doses of the present and the past, the personal and the communal, the dramatic and the comic without missing a beat of his ultimate purpose, which is to "transmit and transmute" the possibilities of re-envisioning the intricate narrative of the nation (Bernardin 2010: 55).

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Collective Suffering, Uncertainty and Trauma in Jeffrey Eugenides's *The Virgin Suicides*: Of Bystanders, Perpetrators and Victims

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This paper offers an analysis of Jeffrey Eugenides's debut novel *The Virgin Suicides* as a narrative of survival, uncertainty and coming to terms with traumatic experiences. It contends that the experimental narrator —a group of middle-aging men— participates in the different traumatic events in a threefold way, as men who become bystanders, perpetrators and victims. The perspective offered by Trauma Studies in the study of the novel points to the text's reticence to define both its peculiar narrator and the enigma at the core of the narrator's story. The effects of such textual uncertainty are interpreted as a process of gradual realization of the collective trauma suffered not only by the female protagonists but also by the would-be narrator of the story and by the whole community of Grosse Pointe.

Keywords: collective trauma; suffering; perpetrators; bystanders; victims; uncertainty

. . .

Sufrimiento colectivo, incertidumbre, y trauma en *The Virgin Suicides*, de Jeffrey Eugenides: sobre testigos, perpetradores, y víctimas

Este ensayo tiene como objetivo analizar la novela de Jeffrey Eugenides *The Virgin Suicides* como una narrativa de supervivencia, incertidumbre y asimilación de experiencias traumáticas. Se parte de la hipótesis de que los hombres que constituyen el narrador experimental y colectivo del relato participan en los eventos traumáticos en un triple papel: como testigos, como perpetradores y como víctimas. Utilizando el marco teórico de los estudios de trauma y la importancia que tal marco ha tenido estos últimos años incluso en la narrativa de ficción, observamos la reticencia del texto a definir tanto a su peculiar narrador como el enigma existente en el núcleo del relato. La incertidumbre textual que esto provoca se interpreta como un proceso de comprensión gradual de la existencia del trauma colectivo que sufren no solamente las protagonistas, sino también el narrador y la comunidad de Grosse Pointe en la que se desarrolla la trama.

Palabras clave: trauma colectivo; sufrimiento; perpetradores; testigos; víctimas; incertidumbre

1. Introduction

Within the field of Trauma Studies, many critics understand a victim's post-traumatic condition as the paradoxical struggle between the impossibility of speaking about a violent experience and the imperative to do so (Laub and Felman 1992; Caruth 1995; Kaplan 2005).[1] In its broadest interpretation, trauma originates from a psychic and/or physical wound that leaves long-lasting mental scars. The most recent definition on the website of the American Psychological Association states that "trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical". More than two decades after the reformulation of Freud's seminal ideas on trauma, scholarly articles that focus on the issue have begun to appear again (Kansteiner and Weilnböck 2008; Traverso and Broderick 2010; Brown Golden and Bergo 2009; see also Ehrenreich 2003 and Reisner 2003). However, their focus has shifted from Freud's interest in the individual patient to the problematic nature of the narrative representation of trauma, which encompasses the political, social and cultural implications that trauma theory entails. Thus, some authors express dissatisfaction with and attack the "homogenizing effects of trauma programs" (Simon et al. 2000: 201) or the overgeneralization of trauma in the socio-cultural dimension (Traverso and Broderick 2010: 8). Others are unhappy with the concept of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) due to its frequent diagnosis and its unifying status (Ehrenreich 2003: 18-24). Still others are infuriated by the Euro-American centralization of Trauma Studies (Craps and Buelens 2008) or the conflation of trauma and loss (Beardsworth 2009: 68).

Trauma has become narrativized, commodified and 'sold' on the big screen and in thick novels bringing other people's pain to an assorted audience that soaks it up either through voyeurism, sympathy or curiosity. Furthermore, writers and literary critics are not the only ones interested in scrutinizing the effects of trauma and survival in the cultural world. The subject is explored in many other contemporary works of art —sculpture, photography, film, painting, etc.—in what seems to be an attempt to check or question the validity of the theory. The frequent use of experimental techniques, in contrast to the mere documentation and dry critique of historical facts, has become symptomatic of the popularity Trauma Studies has acquired in different fields of contemporary culture. Experimental techniques help to vindicate approaches, other than the traditional realist one, that can represent the social and historical understanding of reality from new angles. In the background remains the postmodern anxiety motivated by the belief in the ideologically constructed character of reality, in its illusive history and art. The simulacrum, rather than mimesis, still rules in contemporary art and cultural theory. While in our daily lives we frequently demand truth, honesty and transparency, art works thrive in their complex attempts to represent the troubles of trauma in life and in the definition of our own identities. Consequently, Trauma Studies flourish even if they do so in a proliferation of theories that frequently question each other.

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Jeffrey Eugenides's *The Virgin Suicides* (1993) was an early confirmation of both the author's understanding of the importance that trauma already had in the cultural redefinition of reality and of the human being, and also the contradictory and complex status of Trauma Studies. This paper contends that thematically Eugenides's novel denies prominence to the classic discourse of trauma (from Freud to Caruth) and to the notion of PTSD as the only or, at least, ultimate solution to the enigmas in the story. In other words, and as is also seen in the writer's second novel, *Middlesex* (2002), *The Virgin Suicides* subverts psychoanalytical and clinical discourse: they can be useful, but they are not enough. Structurally, the text can be regarded as a collective struggle to cope with the effects of traumatic events. One reviewer declared that "the adults in the book emerge as an incompetent, embarrassed presence in the face of trauma" (McCloy 1993). Later on, many literary critics have also discussed the presence of trauma in the novel (Millard 2007, Kelly 2010, Dines 2012). In this vein, but more specifically, I propose the view that the novel is mostly a narrative about surviving suicide and collective trauma, while stressing that classic therapeutic notions in trauma theory are not enough to explain human nature. The trauma in the story emerges from a very personal act —the suicides committed by five adolescent sisters, the Lisbon girls— which eventually reveal a collective malaise repressed beneath evasive allusions to life in the Detroit suburbs in the 1970s.

This paper examines multiple roles of the experimental narrative voice in the different events related to trauma in the story: the men who become the narrator's collective voice have a threefold role depending on the characteristic interpretation from Trauma Studies we want to assign them: bystanders, perpetrators or victims. Represented as a group of middle-aged men with "thinning hair and soft bellies", the collective 'we' looks backwards to their adolescent personas in the relatively unacknowledged past of idyllic suburban America. Many critics and reviewers have understood the suicides as the major enigma in the book but according to Griffith the "real mystery" is to be found in the answers to the following questions: "Who are 'we'? How many of 'us' are there? Why are 'we' still chasing down people whose lives briefly brushed the Lisbon girls' twenty years ago?"(1994). The adult men who compose the collective narrator tell the story of their love for and obsession with the Lisbon girls, which started when they were teenage boys, and hence the narration is focalized through the boys' perspective. Additionally, despite the fact that they appear to be collectors of the girls' possessions, it is actually the collection of mementos that possesses them, a belated 'possession' similar to the one described by Cathy Caruth in her analysis of trauma symptoms (1995: 4-5). Yet, this collective narrator is not a mere 'eternal victim'. As voyeurs, these men can also be classified as bystanders, located between the categories of perpetrator and victim. As such, they can be defined, in John Fowles's words, as the "hoi polloi" or the unthinking, conforming masses (1986: 9). According to Fowles, although virtually innocent, the many obliterate individuality. In the same vein, the suburban community in *The Virgin Suicides* obliterates individuality by repressing it and replacing it with boredom and conformity. The boys, as bystanders, resemble this position of the suburban community because they are products of suburbia and of its

ritualistic banality. However, as mentioned, the narrator is also a collector, and collectors, as Fowles suggests (1986: 9-11), can be dangerous.

Perhaps it is the book's detailed lyricism and black humor that engage the reader's attention. However, even though the narrator is a master in these textual strategies, this male collectivity is far from being or becoming the hero of the story. The group never exerts control over the narration and never succeeds in reading the unfathomable traces of the Lisbon girls' lives, in preventing them from committing suicide, or in producing an authoritative account of the tragic events of the past. Notwithstanding, their systematic failure could easily just turn into a maneuver that works to confuse the reader about the ambiguous status of their collective figure. Can the narrators' adolescent selves be seen as scapegoats, deliberately disregarded by the sisters twenty years earlier? Were they victims of trauma through their roles as witnesses of the suicides? Or were they predators trapped in an inevitable destiny predicated by the socio-economic depression that characterized the Detroit suburbs in the 1970s? Progressively, their authoritative plural voice and sense of community become shattered by trauma, guilt and shame, which ironically are also the threads that have sewn together their group identity for twenty years. Their survival posits, in this sense, a transformation of traumatic experience into a magical-realist narrative which pursues a special bonding with others and a "gathering of the wounded", as Kai Erikson puts it (1979: 110).

2. Suburban Repression, Predicaments and Traumas

The words in the second part of the title of this paper refer specifically to the complex condition of the collective narrator. They are borrowed from Sarah Kane's play written before her suicide, although their order is changed. In *4.48 Psychosis* (1995), the statement "Victim. Perpetrator. Bystander" obscures further the already unclear classification of the traumatized. In *The Virgin Suicides,* these are interchangeable categories applicable to almost all agents in the story: to the interviewed suburban inhabitants, to the Lisbon girls, but mainly to the collective narrator. Being a reflection of the whole community, the boys seem to be mere bystanders or voyeuristic observers of the events in their neighborhood: they witness the metamorphosis of the childlike girls into alluring women, their subsequent death drive, the deterioration of suburban space (chipping down of elm trees) and of industry (lay-offs in automobile factories). As the group of boys tries and fails to save the girls, symbols of their new erotic desire, they become deeply traumatized, a condition that will last for twenty years. Towards the end of the novel, these middle-aged men admit that they might have acted as perpetrators because of their deliberate negligence in not getting to know the five sisters or letting them have their own voice, narrative, otherness. Even at the end, the narrator constantly replaces the girls by the objects that belonged to them. The sentence "[w]e haven't kept our tomb sufficiently airtight and our sacred objects are perishing" (246) sounds more like a confession of their status as perpetrators than as a description of the passing of time. In addition, Debra

Shostak argues that the boys' approach to the girls —physical and also objectifying— is what does violence to the latter and makes them commit suicide (2009: 814). This violence is not the result of a hate crime, but rather an excessive, erotic desire for the girls, which produces an equally excessive reaction in the girls. The long process of coming to terms with the shame, guilt and stupefaction that followed the traumatic events begins with the discursive interconnection between the collective narrator, the subjects of its narration, the suburban community and a prospective reader.

As stated above, among the main concerns in this paper are the experimental quality of the narrator and the analysis of how this group of grown-ups faces the traumatic aftermath of the suicides of their neighbors, events that took place about twenty years before the narrative begins. Their multiple and alternating status of bystanders, perpetrators and victims hinders the reader from siding with any one of the recounted versions of events. They try to cope with their post-traumatic suffering through searching for empathic bonds with the subjects of the story (the Lisbon girls), the rest of their neighbors and an unknown addressee. The collective voice recreates the year over which the suicides take place, which coincides with their sexual awakening, by using magical realist storytelling.[2] But what the narrator also recreates is his own capacity for recollection, disrupted by the traumatic witnessing of the suicides, which cuts short their sexual awakening. Symbolically, the narrativization of their past experiences constitutes the 'grave' of the sisters, but it also serves to acknowledge the damaging interconnections between the socio-historical conditions of suburban America in the 1970s and the individual experiences of its inhabitants. However, even though the narrator follows what in trauma theory is known as the path of mourning and working through, there still remains a semi-religious "pact of remembering", to use Assmann's words (2011: 49), which does not allow the narrator to forget his own involvement in the suicides. In the end, the narrator is able to combine a history of collective trauma —that of 1970s suburban America— and a story of survival —his imaginative storytelling. Gabriele Schwab maintains that "storytelling itself requires a form of translation . . . , that is, a psychic processing of cultural narratives and conversion into an individual story" (2010: 115). In *The Virgin Suicides* the reversal of this statement is true: there is a psychic processing of individual narratives and a conversion of these into a cultural story. Although the cultural story of the suburb might appear fictitious, it is in fact a condemnation of the conformity, homogeneity and artificiality of the time, and a reflection of their disruption through the effects of the influx of black people, environmental decay, and people's disillusionment with the government in the 1970s.

[2] The phrase "virgin suicide" can be interpreted in religious terms —implying a pure, innocent suicide— and in secular terms —"suicide" being the head-noun referring to the girls who are described as chaste. Both perspectives apparently present a paradox since a sinless suicide is religiously impossible and not all the girls are virgins (what is more, they are described in erotic terms throughout the text). Hence, this oxymoronic combination might tie in with the one in the term "magic realism". Collado-Rodríguez offers a detailed interpretation of magic realism in 'Back to Myth and the Ethical Compromise: García Márquez's traces on Jeffrey Eugenides's *The Virgin Suicides*' (2005).

The narrative revolves around five suicides, committed by Cecilia (the first to attempt it) and her older sisters —Lux, Bonnie, Therese and finally Mary. Everybody in the Detroit suburb of Grosse Pointe tries to guess the girls' motives and soothe their pain in different ways. Nobody, however, had listened carefully to the girls' individual voices when they were alive or paid attention to the dangers of adolescent excess. As the suburban streets lose the only traces of natural life and fertility —the trees and the girls— the barren landscape becomes a symbol for the loss of emotional relations in the suburban community. The growing disunion among the suburbanites seems to be the result of the contagion spread by the five "virgin suicides". In his seminal work on suicide, Émile Durkheim argues in favor of a link between community and individual: [T]he victim's acts", Durkheim writes, "which at first seem to express only his personal temperament are really the supplement and prolongation of a social condition which they express externally" (1979: 299). Yet, once again in Eugenides's novel the link might also function in the opposite direction: as the narrator confirms, "Everyone we spoke to dated the demise of our neighborhood from the suicides of the Lisbon girls" (2002: 244). By minimizing the socio-historical references, Eugenides's collective narrator implies that the social space and time in which the girls lived cannot be prime drivers of their suicides. However, references to the socio-political context are tangible in nods to the Second World War and the Vietnam War ("hoisting the flag on Iwo Jima" or "the body counts from the evening war" 2002: 53, 44), the decaying city of Detroit after the 1967 race riots (231), the contaminating spill from the River Rouge Plant and the extensive lay-offs in the car industry. It can thus be argued that the novel also hides a latent criticism of suburban collective repression and its darker aspects. Suburbia —as refuge from difference and land of boredom, to borrow Laura Miller's ideas (1995)—shields its fictional inhabitants from contemporary social dangers (an escalating crime rate and the gradual impoverishment of the city), from environmental problems (Dutch elm disease and the plagues of fish flies) and from other suburban conflicts (fear of black people, increasing commodification and banality).

The text never clarifies whether the central trauma originates from the girls' suicides, from the narrator's threefold condition as bystander, perpetrator and victim or from the suburban repression of historical fears and sexual desire. According to Jeffrey Berman, teen suicide is one of the most difficult deaths to mourn because, in his opinion, "survivors generally feel that a loved one's death has killed part of themselves" (1999: 25). In Eugenides's novel, the girls' suicides destroy a substantial part of the surviving narrator, specifically the narrator's capacity to comprehend the girls and the erotic relationship that there was between them twenty years earlier. From the first page, the ghosts of the blond sisters haunt the narrative. As in trauma narratives, the "pale wraith" of Lux appears in the middle-aged men's lives, so that they can make love to her instead of to their wives (2002: 147). The narrator is haunted even in his dreams: "Many of us continued to have dreams in which the Lisbon girls appeared to us more real than they had been in life" (238). What is more, the narrator describes his story as "fingerprinting of phantoms" (182).

The story opens with an intrusive prolepsis that almost reveals the very ending of the story, and its turning point. Apart from deflating readers' expectations, the opening summary takes the reader twenty years before the narrative time, "on the morning the last Lisbon daughter took her turn at suicide" (3). What follows is a collective report written in the "language for trauma", as Caruth puts it, which is used to confront death: "a paradoxical obligation to speak without burying the silence at the heart of the story, to find a language that bears within it, although it does not submit to, the silencing power of the event" (2006: 2). Despite the gaps in his memories, the collective narrator reconstructs the story with an armory of collected exhibits, clinical and police reports, interviews with suburban inhabitants and his own conjectures, all of which are melded together in his attempt to understand and work through the painful events: "We've tried to arrange the photographs chronologically, though the passage of so many years has made it difficult. A few are fuzzy but revealing nonetheless. Exhibit #1 shows the Lisbon house shortly before Cecilia's suicide attempt. It was taken by a real estate agent, Ms. Carmina D'Angelo, whom Mr. Lisbon had hired to sell the house his large family had long outgrown" (5). However, the descriptions of the photos are anything but revealing, the coroner's reports "written in a colorful style . . . made the girls' deaths as unreal as the news", the news reporters stop asking why the girls had killed themselves but "instead, they talked about the girls' hobbies and academic awards" (221, 224).

Even though readers are provided with excessive information, the narrative clings onto uncertainty and a resistance to locate the cause of the suicides or to put the blame for the tragic events on the repressing role of the girls' religious mother, on the progressive social dysfunction of the Detroit suburb, or on the boys as passive bystanders. The wound opened by Cecilia, Lux, Bonnie, Mary and Therese is interpreted in the novel as both the symptom and the cause of a collective suburban malaise. This leads the men to realize "how truly unimaginative our suburb was, everything laid out on a grid whose bland uniformity the trees had hidden and the old ruses of differentiated architectural styles lost their power to make us feel unique" (243). The girls also want to break away from the oppression represented by suburban life. Other American novelists, such as Ira Levin, had already denounced the conformity and fakeness of the suburb back in the 1970s, when her story, *The Stepford Wives* (1972), takes place. The suburban threat of becoming homogeneous, compliant and oblivious to socio-cultural engagement and responsibility materializes in Levin's novel but in *The Virgin Suicides* this threat remains simply an impending possibility.

The social problems of the fictional suburb Grosse Pointe progressively emerge as faint references to the American historical background. In contrast to the pervasive ghosts of the girls, the invisible presence of African-Americans appears as an aside. The narrator seems to give fleeting importance to the resemblance borne by the mannequins in shop windows to Ku Klux Klan members or to the fear black people inspire in white kids. On rare occasions a black maid appears at a bus stop or a black bartender serves alcohol to underage kids. The narrator mentions these events apathetically, quickly plunging back into the story. The narrative never questions the cohesion of white suburbia in any direct

manner. However, even though the suburb might appear populated solely by whites, the ethnic component in their identity is always present: German (the Hessens' typical Alpine hats), Greek (the Anatolian decoration in the Karafilis' basement), Italian (the Baldinos' mafia business), Spanish (Señor Lorca's passion when it comes to speaking Spanish), etc.

Searching for truth, the traumatized collective narrator enacts a textual burial of the deceased via storytelling. This is carried out by reading traces of the girls' existence while also interpreting them for an unknown audience. Thus, this narrative memorial becomes a message that includes not only the dead adolescent siblings and the adolescent personas of the narrator but also an unnamed narratee frequently addressed as *you*: when talking of a song that the boys played to the girls over the telephone, "You may recall the song, a ballad which charts the misfortunes of a young man's life (his parents die, his fiancé stands him up at the altar)" (195); when drawing attention to an absent report, "you may read it for yourself if you like, we've included it as Exhibit #9" (95); or to a picture, "Here you have them, as we knew them, as we're still coming to know them" (118). In other words, the narrative burial is carried out by the collective narrator's effort to create a bond between the dead girls, himself and the addressee.[3] Dori Laub, in considering the role of the witness of trauma maintains that "the relation of the victim to the event of the trauma . . . impacts on the relation of the listener to it and the latter comes to feel the bewilderment, injury, confusion, dread and conflicts that the trauma victim feels" (1992: 57-58). He warns against the absence of "an *addressable other*" (68, emphasis in the original), because such absence would annihilate the story. Thus, engagement with this explicit *you* as other also brings the story closer to the real readers, suggesting our own role as witnesses of the traumatic events.

Not only are the multiple exhibits a means of engaging with the dead girls and the addressee, but also a manifestation of trauma. In particular, the exhibits' discursive presence but physical absence points to the unresolved struggle between traumatic experiences and memory: the traumatized narrator is eternally poised between the need to acknowledge the reasons for the girls' suicides and the failure to fully access and exteriorize the traumatic events. Trauma, Roger Luckhurst says, "falls out of our conscious memory, yet it is still present in the mind like and intruder or a ghost" (2006: 149).

The absent exhibits may also be read as a symbol for the presence of an already commodified togetherness among suburbanites. Despite the optimal conditions for togetherness, "suburbia may actually undermine familial harmony by exacerbating the strain of trying to live up to an essentially unattainable ideal" (Miller 1995: 393).[4] In the preface to *The Levittowners* (1967), Herbert Gans states that in the 1950s and 1960s life in the suburbs was questioned because such spaces did not join the national fight to eliminate racial segregation and poverty but rather promoted conformity (1982/1967:

[3] Lisa Perdigao suggests that these exhibits demand for a "reader [that] is . . . looking at the novel's end for these clues, for that appendix but is unable to find the pieces" (2009: 124).

[4] Interestingly enough, trauma critic Sharon Lamb observes that the perpetrators usually excuse themselves as being "under great strain" so as to deny any responsibilities for their actions (1996: 66).

xi). Conformity in *The Virgin Suicides* is underlined by the passiveness of the community of bystanders, the narrator included, who seem to see the girls as responsible for their misfortune. Steven K. Baum defines bystanders as a majority "characterized by their moderate stance between the highly conforming perpetrators and the independently minded rescuers"; that is to say, bystanders can easily transform into either perpetrators or rescuers (2008: 153). In chapter three, the collective narrator often refers to their adolescent personas as silent bystanders who were "telling ourselves that this would be the time we spoke to the Lisbon girls and asked them what was troubling them. . . . But it was always the same: their white faces drifting in slow motion past us, while we pretended we hadn't been looking for them at all, that we didn't know they existed" (2002: 101). This refusal to outwardly acknowledge the girls' existence, together with the violence the narrator does to them each time the girls are treated as "eternal Females" and objects, to echo Shostak (2009: 822, 824), can be interpreted also as acts of a perpetrator.

Since the rest of the suburbanites condemn the girls' suicide, the narrator-as-bystanders seem to present, as Baum says, a high concern for their "social fit and social status" (2008: 162). The bystander, according to Baum, seeks normalcy. The boys who will eventually become the narrator feel the need to belong within a society; a need paradoxically accompanied by their involvement with the female outcasts of that society —the Lisbon sisters. Given the fact that suburban society is one of conformity, in their own account twenty years later the boys are described as highly compliant bystanders who "cannot tolerate too much change" (2008: 165). While the boys can be seen as active detectives and concerned witnesses to the tragedy, offering their help to free the girls from their oppression by playing songs to them over the telephone, or by approaching their house to talk to Lux, in the last chapter of the book, there is a return to a position of inactivity until the last sister, Mary, puts an end to her life. The boys' position of bystanders is even more easily transformable into that of perpetrators since both categories are characteristic of "ordinary" people (Baum 2008: 162; LaCapra 2001: 125). In contrast to the "five glittering daughters" (2002: 8), the narrator is ordinary, bleak: neither exceptionally heroic, nor totally aberrant, comparable to what Fowles called the "hoi polloi", the many. The many, however, can be as dangerous as the protagonist in *The Collector* (1963), Frederick Clegg, the collector and killer of butterflies and of beautiful, bright girls. The collective narrator is also a collector: he compiles the girls' possessions so as to describe them in his narrative. And like Clegg and his victims, suburbia smothers the girls within its conforming masses and as a part of repressive suburbia, the narrator in *The Virgin Suicides* will not let the girls' voices have their own narrative and, by extension, individuality.

The illusive security of suburbia collapses as the inhabitants obviate their social and moral obligations to the Lisbon family and even condemn Cecilia's attempt at suicide to silence: "Our local newspaper neglected to run an article on the suicide attempt, because the editor, Mr. Baubee, felt such depressing information wouldn't fit between the front-page article on the Junior League Flower Show and the back-page photographs of grinning brides" (14). In a similar way, "[i]mmediately following the suicides . . . the

subject of the Lisbon girls became almost taboo" (245). The issue raises two important questions about the novel's ideological implications with reference to the individual and society: Is the suburban repression in Grosse Pointe an extension of the relations in the Lisbon family? Could repression be the basis for community formation? Progressively, the narrator's narrative subtly connects the private suicides of the five sisters to their capacity to shake off the repressed public conformity of the suburb and, what is more, to expose its malfunctioning. Their refusal to live brings to the fore the social effects of heavily repressed collective wounds such as race riots, lay-offs, the impossibility of integration experienced by immigrants, or the ecological crisis. It also highlights the smothered adolescent erotic desire that injures not just the girls' sexual awakening —by conflating it with death— but also the narrator's: the impossibility of eroticism and the girls' suicides, the narrator confesses, "have scarred us forever, making us happier with dreams than with wives" (169).

3. From Bystanders to Victims

The absence of true bonds among the neighbors and the social consequences unleashed by the girls' acts add to the boys' collective trauma. What traumatizes them is not only the loss of their neighbors, prospective girlfriends, but also their own participation in the 'madness', initially as bystanders and perpetrators and later as victims of collective suffering. Their roles as bystanders, perpetrators and victims become evident when they start blaming themselves for the girls' deaths and for their helplessness to prevent it. The climactic moment occurs on the night when the remaining four sisters decide to commit a mass suicide and the boys become direct witnesses on seeing Bonnie hanging from the ceiling. Their roles as victims, but also as staring bystanders and even as perpetrators combine in their own interpretation of the scene: "We *gazed up* at Bonnie, at her spindly legs in their white confirmation stockings and the *shame* that has never gone away took over. The doctors we later consulted attributed our response to *shock*. But the mood felt more like *guilt*, like coming to attention at the last moment and too late" (215, emphasis added). Gabriele Schwab argues that the change from perpetrator to victim is by no means a simple one because "the former perpetrators enter the new cycle of violence [in which they are victims] with guilt and shame" (2010: 109), as the collective voice of *The Virgin Suicides* confirms in the quote above. However, the whole story does not contribute to any clear-cut recognition of the different roles that might be assigned to the narrator's adolescent personas. As readers, we might even think that the roles have been reversed and the girls have become themselves perpetrators in order to punish the boys with eternal coldness and silence for their weaknesses. What we do know is that the narrator has suffered not a mere traumatic shock but a gradual realization of his own guilty part in the story. Structurally, it is not until the end of the narrative that the full realization dawns on the narrator: as the penultimate chapter finishes he admits, "We had never known her [Bonnie]. They had brought us here to find that out" (215).

According to Arthur Neal, collective trauma causes social disruption by threatening or invalidating "our usual assessments of social reality" (2005: 7). It may also impair the prevailing sense of communality. Erikson explains that communality refers to people connected not so much by a territorial bond but by a "network of relationships that make up their general human surround" (1979: 140). In *The Virgin Suicides*, the twenty-year-long witnessing of the suicides has strong and lasting effects on the narrator's group identity and sense of belonging to the neighborhood. The narrator confesses that as boys, they were dispossessed of that communality which "cushions pain, . . . provides a context for intimacy, . . . represents morality and serves as the repository for old traditions" (146). Suburbia, instead of being supportive, is either too nagging or too forgetful. Neal and Nytagodien state that "forgetting is frequently not a reasonable option for either the victim or the perpetrator of collective trauma" (2004: 466). A character named Mr. Eugene complains that the "liberal media distortion" provides no help but neither do the psychiatric conclusions about the girls suffering from PTSD, nor the family therapy sessions or multiple versions of the girls' self-inflicted deaths (2002: 245). The boys' need for a pact of remembering eventually results from their combining of imagination and awareness in their unimaginative suburb contaminated by collective trauma. Assmann contends that even if there is an unbridgeable gap between perpetrator and victim, their opposition could be transcended "by a shared memory based on an empathetic and ethical recognition of the victim's memories" (2011: 49). Accordingly, the narrator —as both former perpetrators and victims— fills the gaps in his "faulty memory bank" with passages retrieved from his own imagination. For example, the boys call the girls' grandmother to ask her about the girls' visit to her soon after their mother incarcerates them at home: "the old lady did not respond to questions about her involvement in the punishment . . . The smoky sound of her voice brought the scene to life for us: the old woman at the kitchen table, her skimpy hair up in an elasticized turban; Mrs. Lisbon tight-lipped and grim in a chair opposite; and the four penitents, heads lowered, fingering knickknacks and porcelain figurines" (144-45). This textual emphasis on uncertainty, frequently connected to the magical-realist mode, does not change until the last page of the novel, suggesting the narrator's difficulties in being sufficiently judgmental, given the fact that their actions as boys have left them in between the roles of victim and perpetrator.

Whereas Dominick LaCapra finds the distinction between victim and perpetrator important (2001: 79), Sharon Lamb claims that even perpetrators can be victims provided that being a victim does not exempt one from responsibility (1996: 21). Both critics exemplify their different approaches to the issue with examples from real life that open breaches in the networks of commun(al)ity —the Holocaust and sexual abuse respectively. In *The Virgin Suicides*, themes, the narrator's viewpoints and textual strategies bring to mind Primo Levi's ambiguous "gray zone" which according to LaCapra raises "the question of the existence of problematic . . . cases but it does not imply the rashly generalized blurring or simple collapse of all distinctions" (2001: 79). Throughout his report, the narrator shows reiterative symptoms of being victim, perpetrator or both.

However, this happens not without a conscious conflation of the three states, a strategy that may baffle readers and hence hinder their identifying with the narrator's perspective.

In addition, the multiple versions of the events stress the nonjudgmental, anti-categorical mode of the narrative. One by one, the neighbors in Grosse Pointe offer their speculations about the "virgin suicides": Mrs. Karafilis, the old Greek lady, claims that suicide in an incoherent American suburb makes sense to her, while Mr. Buell, the Christian Scientist, blames these suicides on the girls themselves because "[t]hey didn't have a relationship with God" (18). While the narrator reports the multifarious stories told by different neighbors about their own lives —Muffie Perry has inherited her grandmother's botanical garden on Belle Isle, Trip Fontaine is recovering in a detoxification ranch, Uncle Tucker has given up drinking, etc.—a network of affinities gradually develops with the suburban community. His storytelling in the first person plural is a gathering of the wounded in which, as Erikson puts it, they "can supply a human context and a kind of emotional solvent in which the work of recovery can begin" (1995: 187). The story told in *The Virgin Suicides* also becomes, in this sense, a therapy session that diminishes the traumatic symptoms, a discursive union between different members of the community despite the continuing fragmentation of the suburb: "With the elms gone, too, only the runt replacements remain. And us. We aren't even allowed to barbecue any longer (city air-pollution ordinance)" (246). The importance given to the term 'us' becomes obvious not only because of its graphic situation between two long clauses but also because of the use of the copulative 'and'.

Furthermore, the collective narrator-as-victim insistently fails to prove his account accurate: "Actually, none of this might have been spoken. We've pieced it together through partial accounts and can attest only to the general substance" (181). Many prolepses of the girls' deaths undermine the authorial narrative voice, too. Together with the abundant flashbacks, such anachronies point to the effects that trauma has on verbal representation. But the very insistence on prolepses and other narrative distortions such as paralepsis (unnecessary but detailed information) and paralipsis (putting aside important information) only attest to the status of the story as a therapeutic construct that creates relations and bonds among the "story community". Instead of providing definite answers, the collective narrator calls for the addressees' imaginations: "even college students, free to booze and fornicate, bring about their own ends in large numbers. Imagine what it was like for the Lisbon girls, shut up in their house with no blaring stereo or ready bong around" (175-76). Here, it is not the perpetrator or bystander speaking anymore, but a victim, concerned to consider all possible explanations for the suicidal rebellion of their neighbors: the repressive suburb, the castrating matriarch Mrs. Lisbon or the boys' own failure to become acquainted with the sisters.

Based on the numerous contradictory 'truths' reconciled in one single story, the bonds that the narrator establishes with his audience are charged with the pervasive guilt detected in Mrs. Eugene's words: "You would always wonder if there was something you could have done" (112). The mature men, after twenty years of silence, have grown

to hold themselves responsible for their actions, and inactions, in the past, as their self-absorption has shifted to feelings of selfishness, carelessness and even brutality — terms that define a perpetrator (Lamb 1996: 56). At various points in the story, with the pretext of helping the five sisters, the boys carry out several acts, such as breaking into the Lisbons' house to watch the sisters taking a shower (Paul Baldino), stealing the girls' possessions (Peter Sissen, Skip Ortega), or seducing and abandoning them (Trip Fontaine, Joe Hill Conley). As LaCapra says, such perpetrators can work through their trauma by gaining distance from "an earlier implication in deadly ideologies and practices" (2001: 79). Accordingly, the voyeuristic gaze of the middle-aged men has been transformed into a critical inspection: their textual investigation and report that encompass the rest of the neighborhood, the unknown receiver/s of the story and their own imaginative memory of the girls. The former bystanders have veered away from being mere observers of the suburban predicaments and have become the active agents of their narration. Vocalizing the suicides and passing on the story lead to new encounters within and outside their community. They insist on the need to create a story about the girls' tragedy and "to coalesce our intuitions and theories into a story we [can] live with" (241). Thus they work through their shared experience by, as Susan J. Brison remarks, "transforming traumatic memory into a coherent narrative that can then be integrated into the survivor's sense of the self and view of the world, but also by reintegrating the survivor into a community, reestablishing connections essential to selfhood" (1999: 39). Their narrative reaches out for addressees, for suburban interviewees, for the narrator's own distorted memories so as to create a new community based on the togetherness of the first person plural.

Nevertheless, in the narrative it is never clear whether the acknowledgment of the girls' suicides is the product of empathetic sufferers in their attempting to remember and overcome the loss, the product of selfish fetishistic voyeurs who have replaced the girls with an exhibition of objects or the product of the guilt and shame of perpetrators, which is meant not to be forgotten —"we began the impossible process of trying to forget about them" (231), "we might still gather . . . to reminisce about the Lisbon house and the girls whose hair clotted on brushes we still faithfully keep, has begun to look more and more like artificial animal fur in a natural museum exhibit" (246), or, as Chase Buell says, "[it is] time to write them off . . .", even though "he rebelled against [his words], as [they] all did" (186). The narrator's inability to forget and be free from the girls' ghosts attests to this fact and also to his "pact of remembering". Thus, it could be argued that his perpetrator mindset is being decolonized, a process which, to use Schwab's theory (2010: 109) follows the following phases: "identification with the victim" (the Lisbon girls), "unilateral rejection of anything identifiable with colonial (or racist) culture" (in this case, with the suburban conformity and homogeneity), "idealizing fixation on the other's . . . heritage" (on the sisters' virginal and erotic status), and finally an acknowledgement of active participation in the suicidal madness: "they [the girls] made us participate in their own madness" (2002: 248).

As considered above, the "pact of remembering" prompted by the collective narrator —in his roles as bystander, perpetrator and victim— consists of re-constructing his memories of the girls in a story that would engage everybody. Such striving for integrity symbolically adds to his own collective status as the narrator of the story, whose attachment to memory and trauma leads him to establish propitious grounds for an all-inclusive memorialization of the girls. In order to keep alive the memory of the loved ones, a proper burial or grave is a prerequisite. Klüger claims that people "are condemned to go on mourning" without a symbolic grave, i.e., "clear knowledge about the death of someone you've known" (2001: 80). Despite its unreliability and incomplete nature, the text promotes a shared mourning that is at once reticent and urgent in bringing about closure on the trauma that connects the men to the Lisbon sisters. Thus, the narrative voice is eager for an 'exodus' from the suburban space: "After deserting the city to escape its rot, we now deserted the green banks of our waterlocked spit of land" (245). At the same time, the story is never completely free of the girls' presence. What prevails at the end is the narrator's zealously kept memory of the girls. This is manifested in Mrs. Sheer's description of the four sisters' act of saving Cecilia's favorite elm tree from being cut down: "They weren't saving *it*. . . . They were saving [Cecilia's] memory" (182).

Although the narrator's voice fails to restore union in suburbia —because of the lack of authentic relations among its inhabitants— it pursues the feeling of a productive proximity through storytelling. These grown men not only decide to tell their story about the suicides but also promote listening and interpreting "from the site of trauma" (Caruth 1995: 11). In spite of their fluctuating status as bystanders, victims and perpetrators, their lack of agency is counterbalanced by the therapeutic storytelling, which confers different meanings to their traumatic experience. Furthermore, the story is aimed at an external addressee whose presence only confirms the narrator's readiness to cope with trauma not only through the (p)act of remembering but also through the act of listening and trusting the other.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has regarded the collective report of the middle-aged narrator in *The Virgin Suicides* as a therapeutic attempt to come to terms with his trauma and its threefold manifestation on him as bystander, perpetrator and victim. Based on the premise that trauma is a highly debatable concept, collective trauma in Eugenides's novel escapes a unifying definition, and complicates not only the narrator's post-traumatic condition but, and particularly, the complex notion of trauma, which was oversimplified in so many other works of the period. The collective narrator's status underlines further problems of representing trauma but also supports the refusal to accept current definitions of the traumatic aftermath in Trauma Studies, such as the notion of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The story starts and ends as a reflection on an irremediable post-traumatic condition. The willingness to honor the girls' memory and keep it alive brings about

a partial liberation from the numbness that provoked the helplessness of the boys as bystanders and their passivity as perpetrators. Their report also helps to understand the repression suburban society dictated at the time of the suicides and by extension the silence that many collective traumas suffer from. By engaging the suburban community and his audience in his investigation, the collective narrator sets the ground for future working through of both the suicides and of the societal malaise in the suburb. It does not matter in the end how many of the boys comprise the adult collective narrator, which category —bystander, perpetrator or victim— they may fall into, but only that their melancholic story and collective status may have confusing effects on the unknown narratee and, by extension, on the readers of the novel: trauma is a pervasive condition of unpredictable effects and monolithic or simple responses to it do not work.

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Recollecting Memories, Reconstructing Identities: Narrators as Storytellers in Kazuo Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go*

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In his novels, Kazuo Ishiguro uses the narrators as storytellers, both in a Benjaminian and in an Arendtian sense. He uses this literary strategy in order to connect his characters' construction of identity to their fragmented memory, a process which allows them to recover from their phantasmal and unresolved past. The central aim of this paper is to demonstrate that Ishiguro deploys the use of the literary strategy of the narrators' storytelling differently in his first four novels and that it plays a more active role in *When We Were Orphans* (2000) and *Never Let Me Go* (2005). In these later novels the storytelling is closer to a dynamic subject agency and is used to demonstrate the narrator's rejection of falling into a paralyzing sense of victimization. Self-knowledge is more actively related to a process of critical understanding of the narrators' life experiences, as in their tales they leave aside the Benjaminian apocalyptic vision of the historical experience as paralysis and enter Hanna Arendt's domain of storytelling as action.

Keywords: Kazuo Ishiguro; Benjamin; Arendt; storytelling; memory; death

. . .

La recuperación de la memoria en la redefinición de la identidad: la narración como estrategia literaria en *When We Were Orphans* y *Never Let Me Go*, de Kazuo Ishiguro

En sus novelas, Kazuo Ishiguro utiliza la técnica de la narración, entendida desde las perspectivas de Hanna Arendt y Walter Benjamin, como una estrategia literaria que relaciona la construcción de la identidad de sus personajes con un proceso fragmentario de recuperación de los recuerdos para negociar con los fantasmas irresueltos del pasado. Sin embargo, el objetivo central de este trabajo es el de demostrar que la narración como estrategia literaria no se utiliza de la misma manera en las seis novelas del autor, ya que en *When We Were Orphans* (2000) y *Never Let Me Go* (2005) el relato en primera persona define a unos personajes que rechazan ser victimizados por su pasado. El proceso de auto-conocimiento al que se someten a través de la recuperación de sus recuerdos los define como sujetos que se enfrentan a su historia vital dejando de lado la atmósfera apocalíptica benjaminiana de la experiencia histórica entendida como parálisis y entran en los dominios de Hanna Arendt, en la narración concebida como acción y progreso hacia el futuro.

Palabras clave: Kazuo Ishiguro; Benjamin; Arendt; narración; memorias; muerte

> The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule
> WALTER BENJAMIN, *Illuminations*

1. The Narrator as Storyteller

The central aim of this paper is to demonstrate that the narrator as storyteller is not used in the same way throughout Kazuo Ishiguro's six novels and that the literary strategy of storytelling plays a more active role in *When We Were Orphans* (2000) and *Never Let Me Go* (2005).[1] Kazuo Ishiguro uses his narrators as storytellers both in a Benjaminian and in an Arendtian sense, linking the construction of identity to a fragmented memory process as a (mostly ineffective) means for the characters to recover from a phantasmal past. The retelling of the past as a strategy to redefine the present and regain the sense of tradition lost through violence and war is one of the field forces in the philosophical enquiry of both Walter Benjamin and Hanna Arendt. As Eva De Valk indicates, "Arendt and Benjamin tried to do justice to the past, as well as to connect the past to the present in meaningful ways . . . but while Benjamin's emphasis is on redressing wrongs and (ultimately) hopes for Messianic redemption, Arendt sees the past as 'a network of possibilites'" (2010: 37). In *The Human Condition*, Hanna Arendt connects the action of telling stories to the narrator's belonging to the public democratic realm and identifies storytelling as a meeting point between public performance and personal life. Walter Benjamin stresses how storytelling originates in suffering, death, feelings of displacement and homelessness, while being at the same time the solution to overcoming such feelings. He sees stories as instrumental in surviving loss, an interpretation that will be useful in our analysis of *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go*.

The storytelling of the protagonists of these two novels, Christopher Banks and Kathy H., differs to some extent from that of the narrators in Ishiguro's first four novels.[2] I believe that the kind of storytelling used in the last two novels sees the narrators take on a more active role in their own lives and rejecting the impulse to fall into a paralyzing sense of victimization. In these narrations, knowledge is more actively related to a process of critical understanding of the narrators' life experiences and to a painful redefinition of their family romance. Christopher Banks and Kathy H. leave aside, with some resistance on Banks' part, the Benjaminian apocalyptic atmosphere of the historical experience as

[1] A shorter version of the second part of section two of this paper was presented in March 2011 at the International Conference "Cultural Texts and Contexts in the English Speaking World" (University of Oradea, Rumania).

[2] This is what Graham MacPhee writes, for example, about Stevens' use of storytelling: "For Arendt, the act of narration has the power to enable individuals and collectives to *experience* . . . this responsibility by assuming the role of the narrator of events, even though human groups or individuals can never be the sole authors of the history within which they find themselves . . . In Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, this relationship between storytelling and responsibility is inverted: here narration becomes a way of escaping responsibility" (2011: 178).

paralysis and enter Hanna Arendt's domain of storytelling as action. As Kazuo Ishiguro declared in an interview,

> I am not interested in writing about storytelling, but I *am* interested in storytelling in the sense of what a community or a nation tells itself about its past and by implication therefore where it is at the moment and what it should be doing next. If you want to draw a parallel between how individuals come to terms with their past and decide what to do next, and how a nation or a community approaches such things, then the issue of storytelling is an important one. (Matthews 2009: 117)

Thus, Ishiguro's perception of storytelling, echoing Arendtian theory, consists of an act that a community or an individual carries out in order to bridge past and present and to enable them to move on towards the future (Matthews 2009: 117). When considering the six novels the British author wrote between 1982 and 2005, we reach a more profound understanding of his writing as a way of illustrating the human condition as a universal moral dystopian tale. Matthew Beedham suggests that Ishiguro's novels "investigate the institutions and social structures that govern our lives, and the mental constructs we employ in our ongoing attempts to negotiate life's hardships" (2010: 101). However, while in *A Pale View of Hills* (1982)*, An Artist of the Floating World* (1986)*, The Remains of the Day* (1993) and *The Unconsoled* (1996) the narrators' storytelling is ultimately a passive account of their victimization, in *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go,* the narrators' storytelling allows them to, painfully, become the active protagonists of their own life-stories while their tales fulfil the collective responsibility towards the voiceless victims of history.

Ishiguro's writing originates from an intense feeling of sympathy with that part of humanity predestined to be victimized by a complex and merciless order of things, from the victims of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki disasters of his first novels to the human clones suffering from appalling medical exploitation in *Never Let Me Go*. Some of his characters are destined to suffer the consequences of the atomic bomb, Nazism, war, death, violence and destruction, namely the end of traditional values and the crushing of their accepted moral standards under the pressure of a new order. All of Ishiguro's narrators, at some point, have lost or are unable to recognize familiar landscapes and as a result must go through a symbolic existential nightmare.

As Brian Finney (2002) illustrates, alienation from parental relations becomes an additional issue that overlaps others such as nostalgia and personal displacement in the construction of narratives of collective trauma in Ishiguro's most recent two novels. In *When We Were Orphans,* Ishiguro both gives the impression of returning to a narrative style apparently rooted in Dickensian themes and offers a personal reinterpretation of detective novels (Sim 2005: 108). As in *Never Let Me Go*, he follows a narrative pattern that aims to surprise the reader, who gradually discovers the real heartbreaking personal reality of the characters. In both *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go*, the representation

of the narrators' consciousness through their storytellings intersects with the active use of memory to overcome orphanhood and a different approach to the nostalgia of past times, which is vectorized towards the future.

Nostalgia is an idea that has structured Ishiguro's novels since the beginning and it is widely discussed by critics particularly in relation to *The Remains of the Day* (Griffith 1993; Su 2002). In Ono's and Stevens' worlds, Ishiguro represents nostalgia as the characters' inability to free themselves from the weight of history and move on. The characters feel nostalgic for a world whose meaning was intertwined with colonialism and an exclusive understanding of the notion of national identity (Beedham 2010, 90). However, by 2001, after publishing *When We Were Orphans*, Ishiguro starts reflecting on a different way of defining his protagonists and their roles in relation to their memories, to nostalgia and to how they approach their current lives and perception of the world. He feels that critics have so far connected his characters with "emotional repression" (Shaffer and Wong 2008: 172) and with the inability to voice their feelings. He considers that it is time to use the narrators' memories as a liberating force in order to reinterpret the concept of nostalgia within their storytelling:

> But I'm wondering if it's time to try to construct a voice, a way of writing, that somehow takes on board some of the post-Freudian tensions of life, that comes not from buckling up, not from being unable to express yourself, but from just being pulled left, right, and centre by possible role models and urges, by a sense that you are missing out. That would involve a different kind of voice, would imply a different kind of writing, and would lead to a very different-looking novel. (Shaffer and Wong 2008: 173)

In a subsequent interview, the author develops this idea and explains that in the late seventies and early eighties he was influenced by the Freudian model, namely by the concept that humans are a passive product of their past experiences, which leaves little scope for subject agency. Moving away from this theory, Ishiguro now insists on the idea that the human being is rather more complex and that his or her capacity for choice and action is possibly greater than that theorized within Freudian parameters. He explains that "[p]eople's potential to change their lives or to change themselves somewhere in the middle of their lives, that has been underestimated" (Matthew 2009: 120). Ishiguro's reflection can and should be applied to storytelling; nostalgia, then, is not understood by Kazuo Ishiguro as the presence of negative phantasmal presences, but as a means to recover positive emotions of fairness and safeness (Shaffer and Wong 2008: 166-67) and to fight to actualize them.

In his essay 'The Storyteller. Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov' (1936), Walter Benjamin presents ideas that are useful to frame conceptually Kazuo Ishiguro's use of his narrators as storytellers. Benjamin begins by stressing that the real art of storytelling, that of orally transmitting experiences, is coming to an end as first the novel and then information have decreased in importance and strength although the storyteller does

not disappear but is reinvented "in the guise of the history-teller, as the very agent of redemption" (Wolfarth 1981: 1005).[3]

Benjamin draws a distinction between two kinds of storytellers: those who go on a voyage and relate their story when they get back, and those who chronicle the old stories and traditions of their villages without having travelled anywhere. In 'The Storyteller' (1936: 2), he illustrates his idea thus: "If one wants to picture these two groups through their archaic representatives, one is embodied in the resident tiller of the soil, and the other in the trading seaman. Indeed, each sphere of life has, as it were, produced its own tribe of storytellers". In Ishiguro's first four novels, each narrator takes on both roles: Etsuko moves to England and then has memories of her former life in Japan; Stevens decides it is high time to go on a journey in order to deal with past issues; Ono reflects upon the old vanished order of things; Ryder's journey is partly dreamlike and partly physical. They are peculiar storytellers, it must be said, as it is not their (conscious) aim to transmit their experience to the reader / listener. Their journeys and tales are in fact merely told to themselves; the reader is an intruder that they seem not to consider, even though s/he is actually *the one* that hears / reads each one's tale. If, as Benjamin suggests, "it is half the art of storytelling to keep a story free of explanation as one reproduces it" (1936: 4), Ishiguro's narrators are successful. The characters' inner dialogue is at times obscure and the reader / listener is left to imagine what has happened as there is room for interpretation. In his understanding of the role of the storyteller, Benjamin insists that memory is an important element, both in the telling and in the hearing of the story. The tale will be repeated time and again, thereby opening it up to the oral tradition that was lost when the novel became the bourgeois literary form *par excellence*. According to him, "memory creates the chain of tradition which passes a happening from generation of generation. It is the Muse-derived element of the epic art in a broader sense and encompasses its varieties. In the first place among these is the one practiced by the storyteller. It starts the web which all stories together form in the end" (1936: 9).

In the narrators' tales, layers of memories and of history are transformed into words, and "the perfect narrative is revealed through the layers of a variety of retellings" (1936: 6). Tradition is then reconstructed through memory, not in a scientific way as in historiography, but as a door opened on remembrance and onto a web of tales that culminate in the representation of a collective traumatic tale, such as the bombing of Nagasaki or the Holocaust, as in Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*, *An Artist of the Floating World* and *The Remains of the Day*. But memory is not the only aspect of storytelling and the presence of death is another nodal point to take into consideration. The tales of the storytellers refer back to the past and to chronicles of that past: "All great storytellers have in common the freedom with which they move up and down the rungs of their experience as on a ladder. A ladder extending downward to the interior of the

[3] For a study on the use of orality in the novel from a Benjaminian perspective, see Peter Brook's 'The Storyteller' (1987).

earth and disappearing into the clouds is the image for a collective experience to which even the deepest shock of every individual experience, death, constitutes no impediment or barrier" (Benjamin 1936: 11).

Memories do not only belong to and recount a past time, but they are also instrumental in connecting past and present. The need to explore one's past life experiences is a way of dealing with one's life. Storytelling transforms such a negotiation into an act of reconciliation (Duccio 1996: 10-11) while it also gives life to a narrating self who tells his or her life, in the present, in relation to other people's stories (Cavarero 2005: 56). Ishiguro declares with regard to his narrators: "I'm trying to capture the texture of memory . . . flashbacks aren't just a clinical, technical means of conveying things that happened in the past. This is somebody turning over certain memories, in the light of his current emotional condition" (Shaffer and Wong 2008: 48). Thus, Christopher Banks' and Kathy H.'s storytellings are not only a transmission of personal memories, but also a way of giving voice back to those who died. Recollecting the legacy of previous generations, as Benjamin suggests, is a way of fighting back barbarism. In this case, the truth about Christopher Banks' parents —especially his mother's fight against warlords and the drug market— is re-established and the memory of Kathy H.'s friends will linger. As she puts it herself, "the memories I value most, I don't see them ever fading. I lost Ruth, then I lost Tommy, but I won't lose my memories of them" (2005: 280). Although memory, remembrance, trauma and death (also understood as the end of an era) are also key aspects of the tales told by the narrators of Ishiguro's four first novels, they only voice their victimization by history. They become the symbol of people whose lives have been torn apart and who have been unable to fully reconstruct their identity and positively verbalize their trauma.

In a remarkable essay about Walter Benjamin's influence on Hanna Arendt's notion of storytelling,[4] Seyla Benhabib suggests that Arendt derives her belief regarding the "redemptive power of narrative" (qtd. in Herzog 2000: 2) from the German philosopher. Herzog also argues that both intellectuals share a similar definition of the meaning and origin of storytelling in that they both understand the past as fragmented, since memory can only retain scraps of past events; stories recover and reassemble such scraps in order to highlight the absence of those who died. In one of the first pages of her memoir, Kathy H. voices her need to put together the pieces of her past and to tell things that have been silenced for years. She attempts to reconcile herself with her past by keeping alive the memory of her disappeared friends: "[A]ll our differences —while they did not exactly vanish— seemed not nearly as important as all other things: like the fact that we'd grown up together at Hailsham, the fact that we knew and remember things no one else did . . . Tommy, Ruth, me, all the rest of us" (2005: 4, 5-6). Through her act of remembering, their memory and sacrifice will not be lost to the world.

[4] For a detailed study of the intellectual relationship between Walter Benjamin and Hanna Arendt see also Eva De Valk's 'The Pearl Divers. Hanna Arendt, Walter Benjamin and the Demands of History' (2010).

According to Walter Benjamin, history is made up of tragedies. Following this interpretation Hanna Arendt claims in *Men in Dark Times* that the world has become "inhospitable to human needs" (qtd. in Herzog 2000: 6). Within a context of horror and trauma (she refers to the rise, and acceptance, of twentieth-century totalitarian regimes and the Shoa), storytelling is used as a means to reassemble those fragments of the past that will help to redefine the present. Herzog summarizes it thus: "Benjamin's epistemological relation between 'telling a story' and 'showing' the Now becomes, in Arendt's writings, the material of a political aim: her stories aim at replacing the public realm destroyed in dark times" (2000: 9). Once the past is transformed into a confusing present, and tradition has been shattered, then the storyteller is the one who is able to give life back to the dead and to a forgotten (valuable) past (Benhabib 1990: 188) and put it "in order" (Wistricht 1998: 30).[5] Hanna Arendt begins Chapter V of *The Human Condition* (1998) with quotations from Isak Dinesen and from Dante,[6] thereby exposing clearly her literary connections. She borrows from Dinesen the saying that "All sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them"; as underscored previously, these words reveal the redemptive and comforting power of storytelling and literature in the German philosopher's view. The Arendtian concepts particularly relevant to this essay's argument are the notions of action and speech. These ideas are productive as they help to create stories and are at the origin of the storyteller's entry into the public realm, "for action and speech . . . are indeed the two activities whose end result will always be a story with enough coherence to be told" (Arendt 1998: 97).

2. Storytelling as Action: *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go*

In 2000, Ishiguro published *When We Were Orphans*. Critics have not missed the Dickensian echoes of the novel's prose and of the portrayal of its characters (Carrington 2004; Sim 2010).[7] As Howard points out, the novel is once more the exploration of "an unresolved sense of homelessness, displacement, and loss of cultural continuity" (2001: 410). The setting of present and past events in *When We Were Orphans* shifts from London to the city of Shanghai at the beginning of the second Sino-Japanese war and the Japanese invasion of Shanghai (1937). This war lasted throughout World War II

[5] One of Arendt's main goals was to explain (and understand) the political and cultural reasons for, and the meaning of, the Nazi regime and the tragedy of the Holocaust; what she called "the problem of evil".

[6] Lynn Wilkinson reminds us that these literary references "are attributed to 'Isak Dinesen', the British and American *nom de plume* of the Danish writer known as Karen Blixen in Denmark, although no source is given" (2004: 77).

[7] Another famous literary character that underlies the origin of Christopher Banks' personality is Sherlock Holmes. Hélène Machinal demonstrates how the genre of the detective novel and Conan Doyle's famous literary detective are a point of reference in Ishiguro's book: "*When We Were Orphans* directly invokes the narratological traditions and expectations of classic detective fiction, and above all the familiar figure of Sherlock Holmes . . . . In endowing Banks with something of the aura and esteem of Sherlock Holmes, he establishes his narrator's credentials as, by profession and temperament, trustworthy and humane" (2009: 80-81).

(July 1937-September 1945), a moment in contemporary history that we know to be meaningful to Kazuo Ishiguro. The book is divided into seven parts which are ordered chronologically; however, within these sections the narration follows the order of Banks' memory and corresponds to the notes he takes in the first person and not to the chronology of the events that he narrates; in this sense, Beedham indicates that the "notebook format, established in part by the detailed dates and places provided at the beginning of every chapter, is continuously overrun by the narrator's memories" (2010: 133).

Christopher Banks is a fairly well-known detective in London. At the time the story begins, he returns to Shanghai —where he spent the first ten years of his life in the International Settlement— in order to search for his parents, whose disappearance has traumatized and haunted him throughout his adult life. After their disappearance, he was sent to England to be educated as an English gentleman. As indicated earlier, the readers follow the story through the notes that Banks makes. The events that are recalled in the notebooks are based on his memory, meaning there is a certain degree of uncertainty in relation to the story, as the information related is only his interpretation of what happened. In spite of this, and unlike the narrators of Ishiguro's previous four novels, Christopher Banks is actively engaged in his own personal quest to overcome his feeling of orphanhood. As he narrates, however, he does not suspect that the end of the story is not the one he expects —not even the story of his parents' disappearance matches the one he has constructed in his mind. His search for his parents and for closure leads him to discover a truth that is much more traumatic than he had imagined: his parents were not kidnapped by Chinese rebels and kept prisoner in the old quarter of Shanghai. In fact, his father had run off with his mistress and died a couple of years after he eloped. His mother, an activist who fought the drug market and the warlords running it, had been kidnapped by one of them, Wang Ku, and then agreed to become his concubine in order to save her only child and finance his education in England. Christopher discovers all of this during his visit to Shanghai in a conversation with an old family friend, whom he calls Uncle Philip, who, in reality, is the man who betrayed his mother. It is at this point, when, as an adult, he discovers the truth, that Christopher becomes a real orphan. Following this revelation he painfully makes his way towards real closure, which leads him at the end of the novel to say to his adopted daughter Jennifer (another orphan): "Perhaps there are those who are able to go about their lives unfettered by such concerns. But for those like us, our fate is to face the world as orphans, chasing through long years the shadows of vanished parents. There is nothing for it but to try and see through our missions to the end, as best as we can, for until we do so, we will be permitted no calm" (2000: 335-36).

From the beginning of the novel, Ishiguro focuses Banks' storytelling on the phantasmal presence of the notion of orphanhood; it is actually this trauma that alters his vision of the past. In an interview with Cynthia Wong, Kazuo Ishiguro explains what he means when he defines Banks as an orphan: "There was a metaphorical direction in this condition of being orphaned. What I was interested in exploring here was the journey that

we all must have made out of a protective childhood bubble where we didn't know about the harsher world . . . . When I say 'orphan' it's in that very broader sense of having left the protective world of childhood that I am referring to" (2005: 319-20). Shao-Pin Luo suggests that Ishiguro's orphans suffer from a life-long injury that cannot be mended and that they invent fictional lives and families in order to survive their grief (2003: 59-60). It is just this psychological attitude that forms the backbone of the story and lies at the origin of Banks' need to redefine his family romance. He tells (writes) his story to compensate for the feelings of loss and death that haunt him. In the reconstruction of the events that Banks describes in his notebook, his childhood and his childhood home are associated with security and protection. The feeling of orphanhood that will be with Christopher Banks throughout his (late childhood and) adult life originates at this point, that is to say, when his parents disappear from his life and his sense of protection and safety is shattered. He will be on a childlike quest almost up until the point when the truth about his life hits him with all its violence and cruelty.

The novel, as critics have observed and as mentioned above, is indebted to Dickens' *Great Expectations*. Its Dickensian realist mode of narration is intertwined with a dreamlike atmosphere that overlaps with Banks' process of psychological growth. The cathartic entry of the narrator into adulthood takes place in the central part of the narration, while he is in the old quarter of Shanghai —a part of town virtually in the hands of Japanese soldiers— and in the middle of a terrible battle. Banks is certain that his parents are being held prisoner there and rushes to hunt for the house where he supposes them to be. The reality is altogether different. He finds only death and destruction and, amazingly, meets Akira, his old childhood friend from the International Settlement, now grown-up, and a Japanese soldier. Thus, Banks does indeed find a part of his past, but it consists of his long-lost friend rather than his parents.

In an eerie and frightening atmosphere where past memories mix with an improbable present, Christopher Banks' experience transforms the official records of history (the Sino-Japanese war) into a collective tragedy. The memories of loss and suffering are centred on individuals and not on historical events, and individual memories become once more pretexts to denounce violence, war and its effects on human beings. The destruction surrounding the narrator and his encounter with his past evolves into the discovery of the truth about his life and the painful redefinition of his (real) family romance. Akira's unlikely presence provides both a guide to the past and a door to the present. Through him, Banks discovers that the past he remembers is a lie that has only ever been real in his mind.

Banks has lost his imagined parents and his illusory childhood. But within his personal trauma, the trauma of growing up, unlike Etsuko, Ono, Stevens or Ryder, he faces the truth and painfully moves on to his future. It will take Banks fifteen more years to come to terms with his grief, achieve closure, and redefine his family romance in order to overcome the trauma of his parents' disappearance and his consequent move to England. Once he sheds light on the truth, he can at last reconstruct his life. The phantasmal past he had

created in his mind through his unreliable memory has finally materialized into his actual present and he is able to accept his story and his 'orphanhood'. Banks' personal identitarian reconstruction ends thirteen years after the end of the war, in 1958, when he finally finds his mother in a mental institution in Hong Kong. Although she does not recognize the middle-aged man in front of her as her child, she does remember her ten-year-old boy (2000: 327-28). Finally, Christopher Banks is at peace with his past and his memories. He has stepped into true adulthood through a painful process of storytelling. But, as suggested before, unlike the narrators of Ishiguro's earlier novels (Etsuko, Ono, Stevens and Ryder), he projects himself into the future by adopting Jennifer and establishing a caring relationship with her. The ending of the novel thus becomes a call for love as a redeeming force and for a new tomorrow.

Never Let Me Go is narrated in the first person by Kathy H.: "My name is Kathy H. I'm thirty-one years old, and I have been a carer now for over eleven years. That sounds long enough, I know, but actually they want me to go on for another eight months, until the end of this year. That'll make it almost exactly twelve years" (2005: 3). So begins an uncanny story about a group of students who live and study at Hailsham, a boarding school in the British countryside. The reader soon learns that these young people are clones who are educated to accept their destiny as organ producers and to envisage an early death. Despite what one might think, the story is not set in a dystopian future but rather in England at the end of the 1990s.

Ishiguro uses no scientific language and mentions no laboratory. The closest we come to a medical structure in the novel is a health facility, a "recovery centre" (2005: 4) where clones go after each operation either to complete (die) or to recover before the next operation, and where other clones act as carers. Kathy H. is one of them, and she helps her fellow clones during the transitional period between donations. The fourth donation is the final fatal one, although some of the clones complete before. In spite of the bleakness of the plot, no violence is ever mentioned openly, and a special invented jargon is substituted for a more scientific vocabulary. The use of language in the novel is evidently not casual and, according to Keith McDonald, it serves as a reminder "of the ways in which language can normalize atrocities deemed necessary in a given ideology" (2007: 78). This linguistic strategy also helps to define a melancholic environment and a constellation of different feelings in order to humanize the characters and help the reader to identify with them. Critics such as Britzman (2006) or Toker and Chertoff (2008) suggest that even the name of the school is a reminder of the ontological orphanhood of these clones, as "Hailsham is a 'sham' which people 'hail'" (2008: 165). Deborah Britzman is one of the few critics to approach the novel from a psychoanalytical perspective, an outlook that, through the thinking of Klein and Arendt, underlines how language helps to characterize the clone's finite ontological position.

McDonald, in a paper that has partially inspired my reading of the text, demonstrates that the narrative strategies and techniques used in the novel originate within the genre of autobiographical memoir (2007: 75). When Kathy reflects on her past, she cannot avoid

thinking of her life as intertwined with her friends'. Her autobiography becomes their biography to the extent that it is impossible to tell one from the other. She constructs what has been called a "family memoir as relational autobiography" (Eakin 1999: 85). The organizing of the novel as a memoir humanizes the situation of characters who are not even thought of as being human. The insights it provides of Kathy's and her friends' inner emotions, love stories and childlike desires allow the reader to empathise with them. As MacDonald suggests, we can view the novel "as a pathography, where the illness of those cared for is given testimony, with the reader acting as witness to trauma and loss" (2007: 76). Kathy's storytelling helps to preserve, in auto/biographical terms, the memory of a group of people whose humanity is denied in order to silence society's sense of guilt. Two main topics are at the foundation of the novel: one is nostalgia and the other is the human capacity of facing one's own finitude and death.[8]

Never Let Me Go is a novel in which the literary use of the auto/biographical narrative voice creates a relational text and underlines the author's determination to examine how individuals react in the face of their mortality. The narrator's storytelling then acts as a strategy to fight back against the traumatic discovery of mortality and/or the proximity of death. Indeed, "putting painful experiences into language can be a therapeutic process that has the potential to help the sufferer cope with trauma" (Levy 2011: 10). As Ishiguro himself has declared in relation to his novel, he does not seek to analyze the concept of cloning in ethical or scientific terms; rather, he uses it strategically to delve into the ways in which human beings face their own death:

> I suppose, ultimately, I wanted to write a book about how people accept that we are mortal and we can't get away from this, and that after a certain point we are all going to die, we won't live forever . . . . I wanted the characters in *Never Let Me Go* to react to this horrible programme they seem to be subjected to in much the way in which we accept the human condition, accept ageing, and falling to bits, and dying. (Matthews 2009: 124)

In the last part of the book, Kathy H. and Tommy, her lover by now, manage to find out where one of their old guardians, Miss Lucy, lives. As Tommy's first donation approaches, he and Kathy decide to visit her and seek an explanation and to ask for a deferral of their destiny as donors. During the conversation with Miss Lucy, they discover the truth about their life and destiny and about Hailsham: the school was founded as a social experiment, which, by the time the conversation takes place, has failed. Its aim was to educate the clones, who are always referred to as students, in order to demonstrate to society the cruelty of the project to use clones as simple producers of human organs. Art and art classes at Hailsham, Miss Lucy explains, were used to prove to the outside

[8] A great amount of stimulating critical work has been published on this novel (Robbins 2007; Seaman 2007; Jerng 2008; Toker and Chertoff 2008; Black 2009; Griffin 2009). This particular reading of *Never Let Me Go* is grounded in Ishiguro's declarations concerning his approach to the notion of nostalgia and to a post-Freudian understanding of the human soul.

world that these students did have a human essence. After this conversation, and after the discovery that their destiny cannot be deferred, Kathy and Tommy become fully and hopelessly aware of their fate. They realize that Tommy's time is coming to an end, a truth that most living beings discern at some point in their life. Just before Kathy and Tommy leave for good, Madame, the art dealer and Miss Lucy's partner, says farewell to them with a heart-wrenching phrase that summarizes the human situation when facing mortality: "Poor creatures. I wish I could help you. But you're by yourselves" (2005: 272).

In an interview with Carlos Alfieri in 2006, Kazuo Ishiguro explains, "When I wrote this novel, I was reflecting mainly of the euphemisms used to talk about aging and death . . . . What I tried to explain is the meaning of our journey from adolescence to mature age" (2006: 129-30).[9] The feeling of finitude, the materialization of the presence of one's own death within one's life and the epistemological questions related to these issues, are acutely present in the conversation between Tommy and Kathy in the last pages of the novel (279). The central question, to which neither of them has an answer, is: what is next?

Kathy H.'s storytelling draws a picture of her and her friends' childhood, teenage and final years. Her tale merges with the stories of other students, the only family she has ever had, in such a way that her narration becomes a relational text, which comprises both her own autobiography and Tommy's and Ruth's biographies. As Keith McDonald points out, "In telling her story, Kathy H. is also involved in a life writing project that will preserve the memory of dead and dying loved ones. By incorporating them into her own memoir . . . a symbolic binding takes place in which pathography acts as an elegiac act of witness and testimony" (2007: 80). Kathy H. seeks reconciliation through her friends' destiny as she faces her own finitude. She wants to keep her friends with her, therefore she needs to remember them: "I won't be a carer anymore come the end of the year, and though I have got a lot out of it, I have to admit I'll welcome the chance to rest to stop and think and remember. I'm sure it's at least partly to do with that, to do with the preparing for the change of pace, that I have been getting this urge to order all these old memories" (2005: 37).

But where does the necessity of negotiating with our past and telling a story originate? According to Giovanni Storace, this urge occurs when an event breaks the rhythm of our life and opens a fissure in our everyday existential routine (2004: 54). A working body, for example, helps to compensate for possible weaknesses in our mental balance, but when the body fails we become aware of our fragility and of the possibility of dying. John Eakin insists on this idea and declares that our body image "anchors and sustains our sense of identity" (1999: 11), that "consciousness is 'self-referential', and that the baseline of consciousness, of memory, of identity, is the body image" (19). First her friend Ruth's and

[9] This interview was originally published in Spanish: "Al escribir esta novela yo pensaba esencialmente en los eufemismos que rodean al envejecimiento y la muerte . . . . En realidad, lo que intenté explicar es el viaje que hacemos desde la adolescencia a la edad madura". The translation into English is mine.

then Tommy's passing away are instrumental in waking the need that Kathy feels to give life back to them. Their death is not sudden; they have parts of their body stolen until they are physically empty and Kathy's words aim to refill this void.

Once Kathy decides that she wants and needs to re-enact her story through memories and storytelling, she goes back to her friends and their precious collections of objects: "You each had a wooden chest with your name on it, which you kept under your bed and filled with your possessions . . . . I can remember one or two students not bothering much with their collections, but most of us took enormous care, bringing things out to display, putting other things away carefully" (2005: 38-9). The items that were part of these collections came from the "Exchanges", an event that was organized at Hailsham three or four times a year and where students would exchange mostly the objects created during art classes. The issue of collections is an important one within the theoretical frame I am using to read *Never Let Me Go*. Indeed, personal identity is also defined by personal belongings such as toys or clothes, for example, to which we give a symbolic meaning; portions of our life keep on living through them (Duccio 1996). This phenomenon is what Peter Raggatt calls "landmark attachments" (2006: 21) or "constellation of attachments" (22). Storace suggests that the objects we collect during our lifetime change their meaning for us depending on the moment we are living, and that collecting them is a way of defying our mortality and trying to live forever (2004: 83).

3. The Closure

On the one hand, like Walter Benjamin's storyteller, Christopher Banks and Kathy H. tell their story to construct a bridge between their past and the present time. Their storytelling deals with a past marked by tragedy and death and transforms it into a meaningful present. Their active agency in their narration is fundamentally different from that of Etsuko, Ono, Stevens or Ryder in Ishiguro's earlier novels and the tales of Christopher Banks' and Kathy H.'s lives and of the people who surround them are used as a means to come to term with truth and reality. This process is particularly true in the case of Kathy H. because, as Titus Levy suggests, "Recounting the past through narrative organization also allows Kathy to make sense of certain moments of her life, to contextualize individual instances of confusion into the stabilizing body of a coherent storyline" (2011: 11). The act of autobiographical storytelling, Duccio indicates, is deeply literary, as it needs three key moments to materialize into a tale: the moment of retrospection, the moment of interpretation and the final moment of creation ("they belong to the syntax of literary production" [1996: 18, my translation]). Thus, if art has not succeeded in demonstrating the clones' human nature, then Kathy's storytelling certainly does.

However, on the other hand, and following Arendt's line, storytelling becomes not only a way for the narrators to enter the public realm of speech, but also a way to publicly defy their ontological situation as victims. The key to understanding this process is the Arendtian notion of "speech", as it is through speech that a human being stresses his or her

uniqueness, his or her right "of living as a distinct and unique being among equals" (Arendt 1998: 178). The storyteller is able to fill the gaps between the past and the future with his or her story and to build up a present based on action, and we can categorize telling a story as action: "A life without speech and action . . . is literally dead to the world . . . . With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world, *and this insertion is like a second birth*" (Arendt 1998: 176, emphasis in original). If we consider Arendt's insights into the functions of *speech* as *action*, then Christopher Banks' and Kathy H.'s auto/biographical stories can be read as strategies which positively resist their victimization as a lifelong identitarian condition.

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Violence, Death, Sex and Psychoanalysis in Dennis Cooper's *The Dream Police*

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This essay will explore the mirroring of erotic desire and violence that Dennis Cooper undertakes in his poetry anthology *The Dream Police (Selected Poems 1969-1993)*. Drawing mainly on Jacques Lacan and Georges Bataille, it will be argued that sexual violence is the vehicle which Cooper uses to liberate eroticism from what in psychoanalysis is known as the Symbolic —the order of the human mind ruled by sociocultural prescriptions. This liberation is productive of alternative knowledge about Cooperian subjects and their vicissitudes in desire, especially the *poietic* metaphorization of their sexual drives. On articulating this view, this piece of research departs from the critical line that conceives Cooper's violent *ars erotica* as either an elicitor of nihilism or the annihilation of otherness.

Keywords: *The Dream Police*; queer theory; sexual violence; perversion; Lacanian psychoanalysis; the Real

. . .

Violencia, muerte, sexo y psicoanálisis en *The Dream Police*, de Dennis Cooper

Este trabajo tiene como objetivo explorar el espejeo entre violencia y deseo sexual con el que Dennis Cooper inviste su antología poética *The Dream Police (Selected Poems 1969-1993*). En torno a principios de Jacques Lacan y Georges Bataille, se argumentará que la violencia sexual es el vehículo que Cooper usa para liberar el erotismo de lo que en psicoanálisis se conoce como lo Simbólico —el orden de la mente humana gobernado por las prescripciones socioculturales. Dicha liberación produce operaciones de conocimiento alternativas sobre los sujetos cooperianos y sus vicisitudes en el deseo, especialmente la metaforización *poietica* de sus pulsiones sexuales. Al articular este punto de vista, este trabajo se desmarca de la línea crítica que ha considerado el violento *ars erotica* de Cooper como productor de nihilismo o la aniquilación de la otredad.

Palabras clave: *The Dream Police*; teoría *queer*; violencia sexual; perversión; psicoanálisis lacaniano; lo Real

1. Sexual Violence in Dennis Cooper's Literature: What Lies Behind

The starting assumption of this article is a very simple one: sexual expression and violence in Dennis Cooper's poetics are inseparable. All the many influences he meshes into his poetic imaginary —the intensity of punk, the indolence of blank generation preppy styles, queercore dissatisfaction, pop icononography, and the philosophically-inflected avant-garde French literary tradition of perverse desire, from de Sade to Genet— are, in the end, imbued with a patina of severe sexual violence, which usually leads to the murder, the rape or the dismembering of the characters involved in the plot. It is not without reason, then, that Bret Easton Ellis has dubbed him the "last literary outlaw in mainstream American fiction" (2000). Examples illustrating the mirroring between desire and violence in Cooper's narrative abound. From the five novels comprising the George Miles cycle — *Closer* (1989), *Frisk* (1991), *Try* (1994), *Guide* (1997) and *Period* (2000)—to his 2011 novel *The Marbled Swarm*, the reader is faced with a chronicle of extremely intense murderous events. The teenage hero's involvement in scatological sex in *Closer*, the sadistic killing spree in Amsterdam occupying half of *Frisk*, parental sexual abuse in *Try*, the sex orgies which *Period* portrays, and the sexually-imbued obsession of an adult for a dead boy and his Emo brother in *The Marble Swarm*, orchestrate a symphony of prescriptive bodily rhetoric whose disturbing appeal defies denial. In fact, as Michele Aaron points out, the appeal is such that the victims themselves end up tuning in to the fascination of the erotic violence being perpetrated on them (2004: 116). Let us take, for example, the following excerpt from *Frisk* in which one of the heroes becomes sexually aroused on being certain he is going to be stabbed by his captor:

> The knife stopped just short of Joe's right nipple. Joe gazed at the nipple. Then he gazed at the point of the knife. He raised his eyes to Gary's tight little smile. He lowered his eyes at the smudge of pre-come on the head of his own cock. When he shut his eyes a second later, the four things —pink nipple, knife point, crinkly smile, white smudge— were superimposed against the reddish darkness of his lids. It looked like a flower. "God Gary, you know what?" he said. "I—"
>
> *Stab*. (1991: 64)

Cooper's poetry also exudes violence when it comes to conceptualising desire. Among the myriad of examples which could be proffered to illustrate this claim, let the following excerpt from a poem called 'Some Whore' suffice for now:

> arm to the elbow
> inside a whatever
> year old, says he
> loves me to death,
> etc., but he loves
> death, not me.

> i could kill him
> sans knowing it,
> punch through a
> lung, turn my finger-
> tip, render the
> fucker retarded (1995: 128)

Cooperian erotic violence has been conceptualised around several critical paths which will be explored here in depth. Michiko Kakutani (1996), for instance, sees Cooper's violent ethos as sheer desire to shock the audience for the sake of it, since his literature does not deploy any radical conceptual work. Other critics, however, have conceptualised Cooper's scandalous plots as a way to explore the fringes of the human condition "right to the abyss where desire and lust topple into death" (Texier 1994). Drawing on Jameson's (1991), Baudrillard's (2001), and Bauman's (2010) insights on postmodernity, another path often followed by critics of Cooper maintains that the disquieting view of mankind which he is putting forward through erotic violence aims to reproduce the purposelessness and nihilism at the core of contemporary life. From this perspective, his literature highlights that the economic and technological conditions of the postmodern age have given rise to a decentralized, media-dominated society in which ideas are only cross-referential representations and copies of each other, with no original or objective meaning. Without a sound grip on reality, it is, therefore, easy to be prey to nothingness. Eroticism, as an integral aspect of human behavior, has not escaped this fate either. In this sense, Jackson has conceived Cooperian eroticism as an elaboration of Freud's death drive: "Cooper's work insistently exposes the relation between representation and death —the negation of the real in the image; the self-alienation within desire; the internal negation of the referent of the metaphor— all based on the resemblances of the corpse to the person who has died" (2008: 170). In contrast to traditional stances on sexuality in which the erotic drive is seen as one of the most important platforms for the production of human meaning, Jackson looks at Cooperian eroticism as a negative teleology from which it is impossible to extract firm knowledge, simply because satisfaction or love —if they ever come— serve as the intimation of death.

In a more optimistic vein, Damon Young (2008) and Paul Hegarty (2008), whose ideas will be thoroughly examined in the next section, do not interpret erotic violence as the symptom of the nihilistic relativism which Baudrillard and Bauman have preached upon in relation to the contemporary existential ethos. On the contrary, they consider Cooper's violent *ars erotica* as propitiatory for the dismantling of the monolithic socio-cultural certainties around which human beings build their sexuality.

My interpretation also stems from this assumption, but in more specific terms. I will argue that permeating eroticism with violence does not only seek to resist heteropatriarchal dominance; it is also, and mainly, a conscious attempt on Cooper's part to liberate erotic desire from the Lacanian Symbolic. At least, this proves to be so in *The Dream Police*, hence my decision to study violence as presented in this poetry collection. In so doing,

I seek to highlight a dimension of Cooper's literature to which very little attention has been paid in the existing critical commentary, which has almost exclusively centred on his narrative. But Cooper's poetry is not only worth exploring due to its peripheral presence in criticism. I will claim it also deserves attention because of the way Cooper's verse breathes erotic violence. In some of the poems in *The Dream Police* Cooper seems to be claiming back the power of the Lacanian Real in the understanding of eroticism. This is, for the American *poète maudit*, the only means, to borrow Lacan's words, "to permit the full spectrum of desire to allow us to approach, to test, this sort of forbidden jouissance [being sexually true] which is the only valuable meaning that is offered to our life" (1966). If Lacan's elaboration on the Real as a drive productive of bliss and metaphoricity proved to be operative in *The Dream Police* (other studies might explore this exegetic route in his narrative as well), the perception of Cooper's textual erotic violence might render another *poietic* conceptualisation.

2. Cooper's "Real" Sex: Moving Away from the Symbolic

As is well known, the Real, together with the Symbolic and the Imaginary, shape Lacan's tripartite model of the psyche. The Real, in short, refers to the most unconscious and irrational dimension of the human being. In it, the self has not got structure; subjectivity has not happened yet. The Real is, therefore, ineffable and endlessly metaphorical and portrays human beings as organic non-mediated wholes in contrast to their Symbolic side. This latter terrain accounts for the subject's self-conscious existence: it is the place of representation and, therefore, culture and its prescriptions. The Imaginary, for its part, stands out as the hinge of the psyche: it triggers the constant changes from non-consciousness to consciousness, from objectivity to subjectivity, from the Real to the Symbolic, through which human beings constantly go (Lacan 1985, 1994, 1997). Although the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic are associated to different sides of human beings, their spectrums do frequently overlap, bursting into each other and giving way to what Lacan calls a "Borromean Knot". In fact, it would be inadvisable to try to understand the Real as an external truth independent of the Symbolic dimension to the subject. Elaborating on Lacan's insights, scholars such as Slavoj Žižek (1989, 2000) or Renata Salecl (1998) have remarked on the function of the Real as both the trigger of the process of symbolisation, and a remaining nucleus which surpasses and resists that very process. The paradoxical nature of such a concept lies in the fact that, in Salecl's words, the kernel of the Real "is not simply something prior to symbolisation; it is also what remains: the leftover, or better, the failure of symbolisation" (1998: 177). In a similar fashion, for Žižek, "the Real is at the same time the product, remainder, leftover, scraps of this process of symbolisation, the remnants, the excess which escapes symbolisation and is as such produced by the symbolisation itself" (1989: 169). Rather than watertight compartments, then, the Real and the Symbolic are interrelated, frequently intruding on each other's domains. These intrusions tend to be from the irrationality inherent in the Real into the

grids of intelligibility that the Symbolic enforces, with the resulting destabilisation and estrangement of the reality socioculturally fixated and apprehended. This is how Lacan explains the illogical episodes that, at times, penetrate our daily lives and for which the Symbolic and its two mainstays, Cartesian reason and the Name-of-the-Father (the law), cannot provide an explanation.

It is my contention that in the understanding of the human mind that Cooper puts forward in *The Dream Police* he is indirectly alluding to Lacan's ideas. Cooper's collection of poems puts desire at the service of the Real through two main mechanisms: the carnalization and, especially, the brutalisation of desire. Cooper uses both of them in his quest to make eroticism unconscious, Real, far away from the prescriptions of the Symbolic, the only place in which sexuality, at least according to Lacan, cannot be lived: "signifiers do not suit sexual intercourse. Once human beings start to talk, the harmonious perfection inherent in copulation comes to an end" (2007: 23). For Lacan, erotic desire is tightly woven into the Real and he fiercely criticises any attempt to normalise and moralise it, that is, to take sexual expression into the Symbolic order, a tendency to be found even at the heart of psychoanalytical practice itself. As Lacan himself highlights:

> It seems that from the moment of those first soundings, from the sudden flash of light that the Freudian experience cast on the paradoxical origins of desire, on the polymorphously perverse character of its infantile forms, a general tendency has led psychoanalysis to reduce the paradoxical origins in order to show their convergence in a harmonious conclusion. This movement has on the whole characterized the progress of analytical thought to the point where it is worth asking if this theoretical progress was not leading in the end to an even more all-embracing moralism than any that has previously existed. (1997: 4)

Lacan's comment highlights that human beings' erotic drives, which, by their very nature, tend to be paradoxical and, therefore, might articulate unpredictable contents, have been purged from their uneasy contents, not only by heteropatriarchy but also, and most surprisingly, by psychoanalytical practice itself. Lacan, in the end, is suggesting that the Real, always in favour of the Symbolic —"the purpose of harmony" in the above quotation— has been sent to oblivion even by the discipline, psychoanalysis, that gave rise to it.

As in Lacan, in Cooper's poetry there is also plenty of evidence of the Symbolic not being the right place to live eroticism. Let us take 'First Sex' as the starting point:

> This isn't it.
> I thought it would be
> like having a boned pillow.
>
> I saw myself turning
> over and over in lust
> like sheets in a dryer.

> . . . Tomorrow when he has made breakfast
> and gone, I will sweep
> the mound of porno from my closet,
> put a match to its lies.
>
> I will wait in my bed
> as I did before, a thought ajar,
> and sex will slip into my room
> like a white tiger. (1995: 20)

Who or what keeps erotic desire —that "This isn't it" opening the poem— from being fulfilled? It is clearly the Symbolic: "the mound of porno from my closet" referring to all the social conventions ruling over the expression of sex, in this case, in the commercial format of pornography. Cooper distrusts anything coming from this order, to the extent he wants to "put a match to its lies". Further evidence of Cooper's stance that the Symbolic is not the appropriate dimension in which to live eroticism comes from poems like 'Teen Idol' where sex does not have anything to do with all the traditions structuring the idea of love, but something much more urgent, more basic, another thing:

> . . . "Come over
> if and only if you're
> incredibly cute, etc.,
> and if not, don't
> bother", not "Love
> is the answer", not
> some philosophy. (1995: 125)

In 'Drugged Man, Dying Boy' something similar happens to the idea of standard Symbolic love. The poematic hero finds love lived within normativity extremely boring: "and me feeling zilch, only smarter / thereafter, and bored by love". Love should be, as Cooper states earlier in the poem, "elsewhere", "wherever". Any place would be suitable for eroticism, but for the tradition that Cooper so much detests:

> . . . I'll just wend my way into
> wherever . . . the horror, etc.,
> of his removal from me, mine.
> Can't sleep at the thought of it.
> Driven to understand why, how,
> to devaluate Thomas's beauty,
> dump its contents elsewhere . . .

until nothing, whatever, a mess
where he used to stand posing.
And me feeling zilch, only smarter
thereafter, and bored by love. (1995:118)

In tune with Lacan, it is clear from the poems above that Cooper is disgusted at the idea of living eroticism at a conscious, Symbolic level. That stands out as a complete misplacement —"This isn't it". Rather than being an abstract concern of Cooper's, the difficult relationship he has with the Symbolic is here pinpointed by a biographical episode. As documented by Richard Goldstein in an interview (2000), at the age of twelve Cooper heard about the "freeway killer" who had raped and murdered several teenage hitchhikers in the mountains near his home. He decided to visit the site where he thought the killings had taken place and there became so sexually aroused that he defines what he felt as "almost a religious experience". His overall conclusion on this experience is clear: "I didn't know what it was about, but I did notice it was incredibly exciting and that no one else shared this feeling".

The episode which Cooper reports shows every trace of a nerve-raking encounter with the Real. The voluptuous delight with which he describes what he felt bears witness to a terrifying and impossible *jouissance*. What is highly relevant in this experience is the tense relationship between the unmediatedness of Cooper's budding sexuality —the "religious experience" to which words cannot be put— and society's expectations. Cooper makes reference to this mental struggle between the bliss of infinite possibilities for sexual expression inherent in the Real that innocently overtook him ("I did not know what it was about") and the world of moral rules and prescription as inscribed in the Symbolic ("no one else shared this feeling"). Cooper's sexual arousal on imagining the macabre episode both resists and exceeds any attempts at symbolisation. Situated between Eros and Thanatos —life and death— Cooper's experience cannot be acknowledged without bringing about the collapse of the subject's Symbolic universe.

Richard Goldstein (2000) claims that after being "caught between profound feelings of desire and powerful fantasies of destruction", the burden of the Symbolic tradition fell upon Cooper dictating what he had felt was not acceptable, submerging him in a state of alienation that led him to a violent repression of his primal feelings which even made him consider committing suicide: "Murder was never an option, but suicide was. He [Cooper] used to imagine shooting himself in the woods 'and having this contraption that would make the dirt cover me' so that he [Cooper] simply disappeared". This sense of wrong persisted and two years later he burned the novel he had written seeking to understand his feelings towards the "freeway killer" experience: "I wrote a thousand-page novel —*120 Days of Sodom* set in my high school— but I burned it because I was afraid my mother would discover it".

Fortunately, as Goldstein points out, instead of 'disappearing', as he had originally contemplated, or continuing to burn his novels, Cooper used creative writing as a

cathartic way to understand what had happened to him. *The Dream Police*, then, might be seen as an attempt on Cooper's part to come to terms with the Real, as a way to alleviate all the suffocation and alienation that the Symbolic had inflicted on him because of his unmediated childhood experience.

But how does Cooper articulate his poetic liberation from living sex in the Symbolic? How does he claim back the Real? As suggested at the beginning of this section, this will happen mainly through the mirroring of eroticism and violence. Though however prominent, violence is not the only mechanism employed. The objectification of desire also occupies an important role in this respect and is worth analysis, since it is a necessary first step to the full understanding of the spectrum of violence in Cooper's *ars erotica*.

2.1 The Carnalization of Desire in *The Dream Police*

That Cooper's verse does not conceive of sexuality as a natural category is easy to infer. In line with queer theory scholars such as Michel Foucault (1998), Judith Butler (1999) or Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990), Cooper's portrayal of eroticism in *The Dream Police* unveils the moral and political misuse sexuality has been prey to on the part of the Symbolic hierarchies of power. For these thinkers, the body is not naturally sexed, but becomes so through the cultural processes that use the production of sexuality to extend and sustain specific power relations. If to explore this idea Foucault relies on counter-discursive recoveries of subjugated knowledges, Butler on performativity, and Sedgwick on the synthetic nature of the discourse about heterosexuality, Cooper's strategy to challenge the Symbolic consists of objectifying desire, of presenting it as a mere display of flesh rather than one of the most traditional and prominent platforms for the production of onto-epistemological meaning. The poems in *The Dream Police* where desire is presented as false because it happens in its commercialized form should be understood in this fashion. 'Three', and the *ménage à trois* it depicts, provides a good example:

> Up top is ted, thirteen, french
> below is jeff who's fourteen and french
> they are in a hotel in paris
> they are being paid to do this, to be photographed
>
> . . . they did this once before but were only jacked off and not
> before a camera
> when this particular act is over jeff will pretend to be fucking his
> friend but it's easy to fake
> no way, ted said, will he be buttfucked, not for a million francs
>
> . . . if they want their money they have to give a little more
> they have no choice so they say yes but they won't like it (1995: 32-3)

In the poem, sexuality is reduced to a "particular act", based on pretence and which is "easy to fake". But this disaffection is not only applicable to the hustlers. Clients also experience something similar. In 'For My Birthday', a man who knows he will be given a rent boy as a present fears the moment he opens the door and the automatic sexual intercourse starts.

He dislikes the ritual he would have to go through: "arms obligated", "repaying each kiss", "caressing by reflex"..., everything but a "real fuck":

> It will be my gift, paid up
> until morning, and I'll try
> to talk with him first, then
> just give up and rattle him
> orders that he'll understand
> or embellish, teaching me love
> the easy way: arms obligated
> to take me, repaying each kiss,
> caressing by reflex. I'll be
> nice to him, hoping he might
> contract my desire, knowing he'll
> ditch me when his watch strikes
> day, anxious for a real fuck (1995: 69)

Prostitution in these poems rarefies the 'natural' drive of eroticism by turning it into a mere performance. Unlike for people within the heteropatriarchal tradition, for Cooper, having sex is not a meaningful practice; there is no sacred truth to be revealed. Sex just implies the affectless use of a piece of meat, and having it is like a "joke", an act of no consequence, as depicted in 'Some Whore':

> jerk off, come,
> pay, and he's split-
> ting, says, "hey,
> thanks a whole fuck-
> ing lot," like it's
> a joke, like he isn't.(1995: 129)

Outside prostitution, Cooper demystifies the Symbolic understanding of sexuality by shattering the alleged sublimity at which erotic desire should be lived. So he portrays sex as either not living up to expectations, as happens in 'Idol Is Available' (1995: 37) —all he remembers about his lover is "his skinny arm across my [his] chest / his bad breath on my [his] mind", which leads to the conclusion that he "is nothing like a god"—or simply as casual, a routine activity for gratuitous entertainment:

'My Past':
. . . Take you, for example,
who I found throwing up in
the bathroom of some actor's
mansion and crowned my new
boyfriend. Your ass made me
nervous till I explored it.
Now I want to forget it. My
friends feel this way too.
I know them. We've been close
since before we were artists
working to leave haunted eyes
on our lovers. I've thrown
out hundreds like you (1995: 67-8)

In objectifying sexual desire, these poems seek to bypass the illusory grid of logicality around which the Symbolic order has transmitted and sanctioned some preferred forms of sexuality to the detriment of others. Cooper sows sexual disaffection in his poetry to short-circuit any appeal to naturalness in desire beyond the sheer materiality of the bodies involved in it. His poems show that, as he himself asserts in an interview, the erotic body is just sheer flesh that has nothing to do with knowledge operations: "a machine with all this stuff inside . . . . You just see what's in front of you. And what's in front of you is this body, right?" (Laurence 1995).

In sum, Cooper's acute preference for the glow of the flesh in his conceptualization of sexuality is to emphasize the Real discourse *of* the object rather than the Symbolic discourse *about* the object. A significant portion of *The Dream Police* pinpoints desire in a materiality that precedes socioculturally constructed signification. Cooper's message is clear: beyond its carnal immediacy, its Real dimension, sexuality is just a phantasmatic construction. If, according to queer theory this is true for everybody, for Cooper it was simply vital, a suitable tool to tackle his own troubling reactions after the "freeway killer" experience. Understanding that sexuality is a question of flesh helped him, as he himself recognizes, "not [to] rely on the standard moral, religious, and legal rights and wrongs, because I don't believe in the idea of a collective truth. I'm an anarchist by philosophy" (Nicolini 1993).

2.2 The Brutalisation of Desire in *The Dream Police*

The previous section ended with the assertion that Cooper's carnalization of erotic desire worked as a challenge to the Symbolic understanding of this human dimension. However, the *coup de grâce* to the alleged truths inherent in human sexuality will come from violence. That violence is going to be instrumental in this respect, was already obvious in the very objectification with which Cooper invests sexual intercourse in his texts. His view that sex is just about the flesh of a body is, at least, for him, accompanied by an irresistible urge to

check what is inside: "you are just like a kid, and kids try to take things like toys apart to see how they work" (Laurence 1995). But kids can get overexcited when playing and the toy can end up broken. Something similar seems to happen to Cooper's toy boys.

In order to demonstrate that in *The Dream Police* violence is a way to anchor desire in the Real instead of in the Symbolic, we must summon Georges Bataille and his insights into eroticism. Bataille will reveal that what Cooper felt when he got sexually aroused after the "freeway killer" experience was far from being pathological or deplorable. On the contrary, it was simply the verification that Eros and Thanatos have always been interrelated, however difficult this is for our Symbolic laws to accept. But before exploring what Bataille's ideas might contribute to the understanding of Cooper's violent *ars erotica* as shown in his poetry, it should be noted that critical perception of this issue is not without its dissenters.

A number of critics are suspicious of the ultimate function of violence in Cooper's writings on the grounds that his seemingly severe erotic ethos, in the end, proves to be at the service of tautology or nihilism —highly unproductive contents in onto-epistemological terms. The main proponent of the former trend is Michiko Kakutani who conceives of Cooper's scandalous subjects as only a tool by which to attract media attention. She writes that, "unlike Dostoyevsky or Baudelaire, contemporary artists like Cooper and [Damien] Hirst are just interested in sensationalism for sensation's sake. Their peek into the abyss isn't philosophically interesting; it's just an excuse for a self-congratulatory smirk" (1996).

Strongly imbued by Baudrillard's (2001) and Baumman's (2010) views on the postmodern condition, the nihilistic critical trend has seen Cooper's violent *ars erotica* as a way to short-circuit the possibility of obtaining sound knowledge in contemporary life. The liquidity and the liking for simulacra, which these two philosophers, respectively, have seen in postmillennial onto-epistemological models is also to be found in Cooper's literary breath. Leora Lev, for instance, situates the question of authenticity at the core of Cooperian ethos. For her, the American author's novels thrive on "the paradoxes inherent in attempting to apprehend and aesthetically represent an existential and sexual extremity that are inexpressible, not only beyond language but beyond the understanding of the self that experiences them" (2006: 200). Neither Cooper's language nor his view on sex are able to produce stable contents since every attempt at truth through language or sex proves to be a failure, "a powerful simulacrum that has the power to bind not only projective desires, but people" (Viegener 2008: 142).

In a similar vein, Barker (2008: 53) and Patoine (2008: 160) demonstrate that in the George Miles cycle Cooperian language functions to trick readers, since Cooper's liking for unreliable narrators makes the reader doubt their very perception of the limits between fiction and reality within the piece of writing itself. As Aaron points out, another preferred mechanism which Cooper stages to trick the reader is the presence of gaps in the narrative. Normally in the form of ellipses or blank lines, they invite the readers to participate in the fiction, "to enter the scenarios and acknowledge/own his or her desires" (2004: 240).

Sex turns out to be equally futile in terms of producing truth —Paul Hegarty asserts— when he writes, "Knowledge, like sex, becomes a means to a greater (or more accurately,

lesser) end— the dissipation of knowledge through an almost exact copy of the search for knowledge". In this view there is nothing truthful about sex. Whether directed at disarticulating true knowledge or true sex, in Cooper's literature the copy usurps the place of the real eroticism which is left with no other choice but to reveal itself as 'knowledge that is lost': only that, if not less" (2008: 182).

Closely related to Hegarty's approach but in specifically American cultural terms, other of Cooper's commentators have interpreted his acutely nihilistic outlook on erotic desire as coming from his role as the main chronicler of the Blank Generation, late 20th century post-punk bourgeois preppy boys, trapped between consumerism and nihilism, with no morals or values other than aesthetic gestures (Young 1992: 1-20). They get away with it, with life, wading through drugs, extremely expensive commodities, and above-all wild sex. They are purposeless, defenceless human beings whose main goals, as Cooper himself portrays them in 'The Blank Generation', are "You see yourself dead. / You scream yourself hoarse" (1995: 78).

There are not in the Blank Generation any messages or political statements. Maybe, some denunciation: "These authors have found themselves right up against the dizzying excesses of consumer society . . . : inner city decay, extravagant commodity fetishism, sexual and narcotic extremes, information overloads, AIDS, and always 'the pressure, the pressure'" (Young 2006: 64). Neither are there personal declarations nor artistic slogans. There is no insistence upon anything: "If Georges Bataille had been stranded in Disneyland, he might have written like Dennis Cooper" (Young 2000) or "Dennis Cooper is reciting Aeschylus with a mouthful of bubble-gum" (Edmund White, qtd. in Young 2000). The relationship that White and Young's comments set between the pop quality inherent in bubblegum or Disneyland and the big themes of the human condition explored by Greek tragedy or Bataille puts forward an understanding of Cooperian violence as an aimless force. Pop's blank affect reduces the macabre acts portrayed in Cooper's literature to an aesthetic caprice, sheer nihilistic bubble-gum.

But not everything leads to nihilism in the critical perception of Cooperian erotic violence. Some critics have attached to it constructive meaning. For instance, Young asserts that Cooper's runaway liking for violence attempts to implement an ethics of attention, that is, it works as an ironic device so as to prevent the reader from tuning in to his murderous plots (2008: 48-49). On presenting Cooper as some kind of anti-violence campaigner, Young seems to be contradicting a crucial aspect of Cooper's onto-epistemological ethos: his non-denominationalism, that is, his lack of interest in moral causes. Cooper himself acknowledges this when, in an interview, he states that "I am not into collective identity at all. It just doesn't interest me at all" (Nicolini 1993). In fact, his effort to insulate his fiction from any external concern or cause seems to serve to claim the right to sexual perversion which can just be obtained if one walks away from traditions and lobbies. As he himself asserts, "you need freedom from the political community to protect your individual and ever coveted perversions of mind and body" (Nicolini 1993).

Paul Hegarty puts forward another productive reading in which Cooperian sexual violence is understood as a mechanism to denounce the fossilisation of sexual practices to just those permitted in "the charmed circle of sexualities", to borrow Gayle Rubin's words (1994: 13): heterosexual, married, monogamous, procreative, non-commercial, in pairs, in a relationship, same generation, in private, no pornography, bodies only, vanilla. For Hegarty, in Cooperian eroticism "[i]t is the attempt at overcoming that counts, even if . . . your transgressing does not culminate in freedom from all established reactions and patterns of thinking" (2008: 183). From this viewpoint, Cooper's portrayal of non-normative sexualities could be seen to aim to block the traditional, to interrupt the normalisation of only certain forms of sexualities —those sanctioned by the tradition— to the detriment of others.

Also understanding Cooper's prescriptive sexual rhetorics as a vehicle to oppose social conventions about sexuality, but this time along psychoanalytical lines, Earl Jackson Jr. suggests that the corporeal immediacy brought about by Cooper's violent view of the male body seeks to disarticulate phallocentric onto-epistemologies. For Jackson, however, the melancholy permeating Cooper's work is the price to pay for his nerve: "exploration and resignation" (2006: 163).

The argument I put forward does also conceive of violence as propitiatory for liberation from social conventions. And it also does so by drawing on psychoanalysis. But there is a difference with regard to Jackson's view: in my analysis the destination of the liberation which erotic violence enacts is not resignation, but rather the Real, understood as the realm of endless metaphoricity. To relate the Real with violence, as I suggested at the beginning of this section, we must return again to Georges Bataille.

For this thinker, any eroticism aims to destroy the isolation that, outside the copula, characterises human beings in their everyday life. That is, Bataille understands sex as an urgent desire to remember or maybe perpetuate, if the sex is aimed at reproduction, a state of wholeness that the participants in the sexual intercourse once fleetingly experienced in the perfect fusion of ovule-spermatozoon. By putting eroticism into practice, we as humans desperately try to overcome our condition as isolated beings, to overcome our discontinuous reality, no matter if it is just for a very limited time. But the change from discontinuity to continuity underlying eroticism cannot happen, as Bataille points out, without violence. Eroticism is violence, and death *per se* in the sense that, whenever human beings enact it, we want to abandon the constituted forms given to us by life: eroticism encodes an urgent desire to leave behind a life of incompleteness (the life we have) in search for the continuity and the plenitude of being:

> In essence, the domain of eroticism is the domain of violence, of violation . . . . The most violent thing of all for us is death which jerks us out of a tenacious obsession with the lastingness of our discontinuous being . . . . Only violence can bring everything to a state of flux in this way, only violence and the nameless disquiet bound up with it. We cannot imagine the transition from

> one state to another one basically unlike it without picturing the violence done to the being called into existence through discontinuity. (2012: 16-17)

However direct and fierce these words might sound, the intimation of death, the recovery of continuity, to which eroticism adheres, Bataille contends, involves the death of social conventions rather than actual death. That is, he considers sexual desire to trigger "a breaking down of established patterns, the patterns, I repeat, of the regulated social order basic to our discontinuous mode of existence as defined and separate individuals" (2012: 18).

In light of these words, Bataille seems to draw the same conclusion as Lacan did when he stated that the Symbolic is not the right place to live eroticism. Furthermore, for both authors, death or violence is the appropriate tool to facilitate this flight. Does this prove to be true in Cooper's poetics as well? I feel it is best to let his poems speak for themselves: In 'No Future' (1995: 121), for instance, the 'I' voice after killing his lover —"Then I stabbed / her. It's like / cutting a pie"—, daringly continues by saying, "So kill me for / it. What did / I know. I was / trying to what". It seems clear that, in the end, erotic violence in Cooper's poetics leads to "what", to complete unknowability. 'Being Aware' provides further evidence of this. In the poem a fifteen-year-old teenager is telling his father that he allows old men who resemble the paternal figure to sleep with him for money. Why? Partly to take revenge on his father, who pays very little attention to him, but mainly because sometimes he manages to lose consciousness falling into a very pleasant state of ineffability —"before everything", as the poem puts it:

> Or, nights when I'm angry,
> if in a man's arms moving
> slowly to the quietest music—
> his hands on my arms, in my
> hands, in the small of my back
> take me back before everything. (1995: 57)

Something similar happens in 'No God' where, while involved in casual sex, the two participants have as their sole objective to "move further away" into a state of numbness whose communication cannot even be attempted:

> He'll go
> with me, do what I do.
> Nothing else interests him this side
> of death. Like me he's just
> moving further away . . .
> We touch in a black
> car, on a back road, until numb. (1995: 81)

No doubt, it is in "?" that the expression of ineffability related to sexual violence reaches its peak. The poem tries to capture the primitive feeling of sexual arousal that overcomes the speaker on contemplating the corpse of a young boy he has just killed. The nature of the hold the image has on him is so powerful and so difficult to express that all he can do is to leave it in a question mark:

> now, he's as still as
> the past in its reaches, and
> your body is flushed, prick
> broiling. The corpse is the
> match tip which lit it, the
> formerly dangerous object,
> something played out (1995: 76-7)

Unknowability, then, seems to be the final destination of the study of eroticism through violence that Dennis Cooper undertakes in his poetics. But how to interpret this violence-unknowability pairing? Rather than directed against the other or seen as the intimation of either nihilism (Hegarty 2008: 175-86; Taylor 2006: 196) or the unconscious helplessness and passivity of postmodern mediatised societies (Elizabeth Young 1992: 258), Cooper's sexual violence is exerted with the aim of taking eroticism to a *tabula rasa*, to a stage prior to non-mediation which is synonymous with the Lacanian Real or with the Bataillan state of the continuity of being. Therefore, in Cooperian eroticism, violence and death manifest themselves as mechanisms aimed at blocking traditional stances on sexuality. They are intended to annihilate the Symbolic in favour of the ineffability of the Real as the privileged space for eroticism to happen. The going "numb", "wherever", "nothing", "elsewhere", "trying to what", permeating Cooper's poems analysed here, seek to recover the endless metaphoricity inherent in the Real.

3. Conclusions

In contrast to the majority of critical commentary on Cooper, which associates sexual violence with nihilism, *The Dream Police* seems to be putting forward a very different, rather productive message: eroticism is not a source of legitimate knowledge but an uncontrollable energy prone to be expressed in myriad ways. And to move from one state to the other, to move from the Symbolic into the Real, the intimation of violence and death understood as the collapse of our social self, is necessary. Failing to do so involves paying a very high price: the impossibility of desire. In Lacan's words, "If I am enjoying myself a little too much, I begin to feel pain and I moderate my pleasures. The organism seems made to avoid too much *jouissance*. Probably we would all be as quiet as oysters if it were not for this curious organization which forces us to disrupt the barrier of pleasure or perhaps only makes us dream of forcing and disrupting this barrier" (1966). But disrupting the

Symbolic barrier is an act of extreme courage. Is there anyone here who dares? Clearly some human beings are braver than others. And Dennis Cooper, without doubt, is one of them.

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Euphemistic Metaphors in English and Spanish Epitaphs: A Comparative Study

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Following the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, it is the aim of this paper to analyse the conceptual organisation underlying death-related metaphorical expressions in English and Spanish. With this in mind, this paper presents a comparative study of death metaphors in a sample of epitaphs from Highgate Cemetery (London, UK) and from the Cemetery of Albacete (Albacete, Spain) focusing specifically on those aimed at substituting the notions of 'death' and 'dying'. The results obtained reveal that the conceptual organisations that underlie the euphemistic metaphors for death in English and Spanish derive both from our common bodily experience and from specific cultural constraints. Although the set of conceptual metaphors for the domain of death is similar in both languages, the Spanish epitaphs show a clear preference for source domains in which Jewish-Christian beliefs and political issues play a crucial role, whereas the English epitaphs tend to display a more optimistic, life-like approach to death.

Keywords: conceptual metaphor; euphemism; taboo of death; epitaph; cross-cultural conceptualisations

. . .

Metáforas eufemísticas en epitafios ingleses y españoles: Un estudio contrastivo

Siguiendo el modelo teórico de la metáfora conceptual, el objetivo de este artículo es analizar las unidades metafóricas del ámbito de la muerte en inglés y español. Para tal fin, este trabajo presenta un estudio comparativo de las metáforas observadas en una muestra de epitafios de los cementerios de Highgate (Londres, Reino Unido) y de Albacete (Albacete, España). Dado que los epitafios constituyen una fuente inagotable de eufemismo relacionado con la muerte, este estudio comparativo se centra en las metáforas conceptuales que sustituyen a los conceptos 'muerte' y 'morir' en las inscripciones de ambos cementerios. Los resultados obtenidos demuestran que la organización conceptual que subyace al eufemismo relativo a la muerte en inglés y español deriva tanto de la experiencia física común a ambas sociedades como de las restricciones culturales propias de cada una de ellas. De hecho, aunque el conjunto de metáforas empleadas es similar en ambas lenguas, los epitafios españoles muestran una clara preferencia por dominios fuente en los que se aprecia el peso de la religión y de cuestiones políticas, mientras que los ingleses se muestran relativamente optimistas con respecto a la muerte.

Palabras clave: metáfora conceptual; eufemismo; tabú de la muerte; epitafio; conceptualizaciones interculturales

1. Introduction

Either owing to fear, religion or issues of tact and respect, death is a topic that, far from having lost its interdictive strength with the passing of time, remains one of the greatest taboos in our contemporary society.[1] In consequence, language users feel reluctant to deal with death using straightforward terms and tend to soften the effect of what they really wish to communicate. To this end, they resort to 'euphemism', the process whereby the taboo is stripped of its most explicit overtones thus providing a way to speak about experiences too vulnerable and intimate to be discussed without linguistic safeguards. In this way, death-related euphemism performs a healing function: if we use words other than death, the grief of a loved one dying may become more bearable. In this process of linguistic makeup, figurative language plays a crucial role: metaphor constitutes a potent source for euphemistic reference and a common device to cope with death, as shown in different cognitively-based studies (Bultnick 1998; Lakoff and Turner 1989; Herrero Ruiz 2007; Crespo-Fernández 2008 and 2011).[2]

Despite the reluctance to mention the subject of death, there are communicative situations in which one cannot evade the notions of death and dying. This is the case of 'epitaphs', inscriptions placed on tombstones which, for hundreds of years, have been a significant part of the death ritual in Western cultures. Given the obvious need to refer to mortality, the gravity of the situation and the social impositions of these particular texts, epitaphs constitute a breeding ground for metaphorical euphemism. This is especially true of the so-called 'opinion' epitaphs, i.e., personal and intimate funeral texts in which feelings and emotions, as well as socio-political issues, play a vital role.[3]

It is the aim of this paper to analyse the conceptual organization underlying death-related metaphorical expressions in English and Spanish. With this in mind, following Conceptual Metaphor Theory (henceforth CMT) as theoretical paradigm, this paper presents a comparative study of death metaphors on a sample of epitaphs from East Highgate Cemetery and from the Cemetery of Albacete.[4] More precisely, this study focuses on the conceptual metaphors aimed at substituting the notions of death and dying inscribed upon gravestones in order to account for cross-linguistic and cross-cultural variation in the metaphorical mappings involved in coping with death. I have focused on a concept that is so relevant to both cultures as death, since, as Wierzbicka puts it, any

[1] Parts of this paper were delivered at the 4th UK Cognitive Linguistics Conference held at King's College, London, 10 July, 2012.

[2] Thanks are due to the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier draft.

[3] By contrast, 'informative' epitaphs, i.e., objective inscriptions that provide basic information about the deceased (including the name of the decedent and their dates of birth and death), tend to rely on impersonal language and standardised formulae. For a full account of the types of epitaphs and their functions in discourse, see Crespo-Fernández (2011: 201-02).

[4] Situated in North London, Highgate Cemetery is divided into the West (original) Cemetery, built in 1839, and the East Cemetery, opened in 1854. There are about 167,000 people in total buried in the two areas of the cemetery. The Cemetery of Albacete, a city situated in southeast Spain with a population of around 150,000 inhabitants, was inaugurated in 1879. It is estimated that there are 140,000 people buried there.

contrastive study in the field of linguistics should be done "in terms of concepts which are relatively, if not absolutely, universal" (2003: 71). This contrastive analysis seems to be a worthy enterprise. Despite the substantial body of cognitively-based research in cross-linguistic perspectives related to death (Marín-Arrese 1996; Vogel 2009; Lee 2011), to the best of my knowledge, no study has been devoted so far to the comparison of conceptual metaphors in English and Spanish epitaphs.

This paper is structured as follows: After first presenting the theoretical paradigm into which this study is embedded and considering euphemism from the cognitive standpoint, I present the corpus and the methodology used. Next, I proceed to analyse the different death-related conceptual metaphors encountered in the sample of epitaphs, which constitutes the primary focus of this paper. A summary of the results obtained will bring this study to an end.

2. Euphemism as a Cognitively-motivated Phenomenon

The well-known framework of CMT, as pioneered by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), opens a new way to the interpretation of euphemism, which is primarily a mental phenomenon and, as such, can be fruitfully studied from a cognitive perspective. Broadly speaking, CMT claims that metaphor is not simply a matter of language, but also —and fundamentally— a matter of thought which stands as a means of creating, organising and understanding reality. From this standpoint, a metaphor is defined as "a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system" (Lakoff 1993: 203), i.e., a set of conceptual correspondences from a source domain (the realm of the physical or more concrete reality) to a target domain (death, in our case). Though traditional CMT claims that conceptualisations are grounded in our embodied, sensorimotor experience (that is, metaphorical projection from the concrete to the abstract makes use of our bodily and social experience), Grady (1997) states that many conceptualisations do not have an experiential basis. The so-called complex metaphors are not directly motivated by correlations in experience; rather, they are a combination of primary metaphors, i.e., those grounded in how we experience reality. In order to better assess the role that conceptual metaphors play in language, thought and culture, and thus study such a culturally sensitive phenomenon as euphemism, a more comprehensive approach to metaphor than that outlined in traditional CMT seems necessary.

The framework of CMT has been subject to redefinition over the years. Different cognitive studies have complemented and improved on the initial version (Lakoff and Johnson 1999; Gibbs 2011; Steen 2011; Ruiz de Mendoza and Pérez 2011; Kövecses 2011, among others) and explored the relationship between body, language, culture and cognition (Kövecses 2005 and 2010; Yu 2009; Sharifian 2011), which is of utmost interest for the understanding of metaphor in real-world discourse. One of the most influential contributions is that proposed by Steen. He goes beyond a strictly cognitive-scientific approach to language and offers a three-dimensional view of metaphor: "[M]etaphor may

be theoretically defined as a matter of conceptual structure, but in empirical practice it works its wonders in language, communication, or thought" (2011: 59), allowing for a deeper insight into the deliberate use of metaphors in communication. For his part, Gibbs proposes a dynamic view of metaphor to account for the interaction of brain, body and world that simultaneously operate in the metaphorical structuring of abstract concepts. He considers conceptual metaphors "as basins of attraction . . . in the phase space of the talking and thinking of a discourse community, which emerge from many different forces, operating along different time scales" (2011: 551).

Kövecses' (2005 and 2010) work on cross-cultural variation in metaphor use and understanding is especially useful for my purpose here. He argues that the influence of embodiment coexists with the influence of cultural environment to explain the culture-specific aspects of shared conceptual metaphors in different languages. Kövecses offers a version of CMT in which the pressure of context plays a central role: "Our effort to be coherent with the local context may be an important tool in understanding the use of metaphors in natural discourse. This aspect of metaphor use has so far remained outside the interest and, indeed, the competence of "traditional" conceptual metaphor theory" (2010: 206). Allied to this view of context are the key notions of 'differential experiential focus', the process whereby the embodiment associated with a target domain consists of several components that are given different priorities in different cultures (Kövecses 2005: 246); and of 'main meaning focus', i.e., central knowledge concerning a source domain that is widely shared in a community (2005: 12). This meaning focus characterises source domains: it represents the social values and cultural knowledge shared by members of a society that are preserved for the metaphorical structuring of the target. Shariffian's (2011) work on metaphor in culture is also worthy of mention. In order to account for the fact that a large proportion of conceptualisations emerge as cultural cognitions, he proposes the notion of *cultural conceptualisation*, i.e., schemas and categories that emerge in cultural groups where people have similar cognitive systems of values and beliefs and are interacting in a shared situational context.

As mappings are always partial, that is, they highlight some aspects of the source domain while hide or disregard others (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 10), metaphors are readily accessible for euphemistic (and dysphemistic) reference. In fact, the nature of the source domain chosen and the values that are singled out and emphasised for the structuring of abstract concepts have a significant effect on the euphemistic capacity of the metaphorical item. Cognitive issues, however, have been largely excluded from the analysis of euphemism. One of the few scholars to have considered euphemism from the perspective of CMT is Chamizo-Domínguez (2005), who argued that many euphemisms are structured by their integration into conceptual networks. In this vein, Casas-Gómez defined euphemism as "the cognitive process of conceptualization of a forbidden reality, which . . . enables the speaker, in a certain 'context' or in a specific pragmatic situation, to attenuate . . . a certain forbidden concept or reality" (2009:

738). That euphemism is a cognitively-motivated phenomenon can also be gathered from Lee: "Euphemism and taboo are not only sides of one coin in our pragmatic competence, but also linguistic manifestations of our cognitive system" (2011: 351-52).

From this viewpoint, I consider death as a conceptual category, which leads me to adopt a broader concept of euphemism that goes beyond a mere lexical substitution strategy. Euphemism, as a linguistic manifestation of our cognitive system, offers significant information concerning the way in which a certain taboo topic is actually perceived, understood and mitigated. By doing so, euphemism helps to understand how taboos are conceived in cultural groups and what beliefs are accepted or rejected.

3. Corpus Data and Methods

The corpus samples epitaphs collected in Eastern Highgate Cemetery and in the Cemetery of Albacete. The data for the Spanish subcorpus consists of 172 tombstone inscriptions and 140 for the English. The choice for epitaphs as the source of empirical data for this article is not random. Firstly, epitaphs are obviously a rich source of death-related euphemism, as mentioned earlier; secondly, when dealing with epitaphs I believe that it is necessary to focus on some authentic data, thereby avoiding an approach to death metaphors based on examples constructed by the author (Marín-Arrese 1996) or excerpted from lexicographic sources (Bultnick 1998). Indeed, fictitious inscriptions lack authenticity, which is necessary to ensure added sociological value. In the epitaphs used to illustrate the analysis, the family names of the deceased have been hidden under the initials followed by an asterisk, as I think that verbatim copies of the inscriptions might prove unpleasant to the relatives of the dead.

The choice for the cemeteries of Highgate and Albacete was not random either. Though I am aware that a bigger sample of epitaphs from a broader sample of cemeteries would have allowed for serious statistical work and a more representative qualitative analysis, given space limitations I had to rely on a small data sample. The two cemeteries involved in the study were chosen because they were founded at around the same time (second half of the nineteenth century), they are similar in size and are both still operating (see Note 4).

The research methodology followed corresponds to the "top-down" approach in the tradition of cognitive linguists (see, for example, Kövecses 2008). The methodology is the following: first, certain linguistic data is selected; second, generalisations are made given that data; third, cognitive structures are suggested, e.g., conceptual metaphors that underlie the selected data. As this approach is based on an incomplete set of linguistic material, it does not allow valid conclusions in quantitative terms to be reached. Despite this limitation, I believe that the corpus data used here is reasonably representative of the features of the euphemistic metaphors that appear on gravestones in Spain and England.

4. Results and Discussion

From the analysis of the corpus, I identified different types of metaphors that contribute to the understanding of death in both languages. I found five conceptual mappings for the metaphors excerpted from the English epitaph subcorpus, namely DEATH IS A JOURNEY (49 occurrences), DEATH IS A REST / A SLEEP (39), DEATH IS A JOYFUL LIFE (34), DEATH IS A LOSS (7) and DEATH IS THE END (3). As far as the Spanish subcorpus is concerned, the metaphors encountered can be assigned to seven conceptualisations, namely LA MUERTE ES UN DESCANSO ('death is a rest', 48), MORIR ES SUBIR AL CIELO ('to die is to ascend to Heaven', 42), MORIR ES VIVIR EN EL RECUERDO ('to die is to live in memory', 35), MORIR ES CAER POR DIOS Y POR ESPAÑA ('to die is to fall for God and Spain', 18), ESTAR MUERTO ES ESTAR CON EL SEÑOR ('to be dead is to be with the Lord', 15), LA MUERTE ES UNA PÉRDIDA ('death is a loss', 10) and LA MUERTE ES EL FINAL ('death is the end', 4).

Before going into further detail, it is worth noting that most of the conceptualisations used in both subcorpora imply a positive value-judgement of death. In fact, the majority of the source domains employed are domains with positive connotations, whereas those that imply a negative, or at least non-positive, value-judgement of death (a loss and the end) are, by far, the least quantitatively relevant. I will turn now to comparing the way English and Spanish conceptual metaphors deal with death by analysing those conceptualisations that imply a positive view of human mortality.

4.1. Metaphors with positive connotations

The conceptual metaphor viewing death in terms of a journey is quite frequent in both corpora. It is the source of 37% out of the metaphorical items detected in the English epitaphs. Though not considered explicitly as a journey in the subcorpus of Spanish epitaphs, the metaphor MORIR ES SUBIR AL CIELO ('to die is to ascend to Heaven') shares the same conceptual basis (dying as a departure) and appears in almost one third of the Spanish metaphors collected.

This metaphorical mapping transfers different attributes from the source domain of a journey to the target domain of death. It presents different sets of conceptual correspondences as a result of using the knowledge we have about journeys to talk about death: first, the act of dying corresponds to the act of leaving; second, the deceased is the one that embarks on the journey; and third, the destination of the journey (if mentioned) is an encounter with God in Heaven. In these correspondences the notion of death as movement from one place to another plays a crucial role, aptly demonstrated in the verbs of motion found in the English epitaphs (*pass away*, *pass on*, *depart*, *leave*, *go*, *cross* and *fly away*) and in the Spanish ones (*subir* 'ascend', *elevarse* 'rise', *volar* 'fly' and *ir* 'go'). These verbs map motion (as the euphemistic source domain) onto change (as the target domain) by virtue of the primary metaphor CHANGE IS MOTION, which ranges over all the cases included in this metaphor. Consider the two epitaphs below:[5]

[5] Hereafter the metaphorical units I wish to highlight in the epitaphs provided as examples will appear in italics.

(1) To the memory of
Michael B*
Who *departed this life*
On December 24th 2003
He gave so much to so many
Requiescat in Pace

(2) El niño
Luisito P*G*
subió al Cielo el 15 de julio de 1947
a los 6 años
Tus padres y hermano no te olvidan

[The child Luisito P*G* ascended to Heaven on 15 July 1947 aged 6.
Your parents and brother will not forget you]

The journey metaphor is an example of the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schema. As Lakoff (1993: 275) puts it, "[c]omplex events in general are also understood in terms of a source-path-goal schema; complex events have initial states (source), a sequence of intermediate stages (path) and a final stage (destination)". Lakoff and Johnson argue that the trajectory between the source and the final location is imaginative, "conceptualized as a line like 'trail' left by an object as it moves" (1999: 33). This image schema is applied differently in the English and Spanish epitaphs. Whereas most English inscriptions focus on the act of leaving, that is, on the starting point of the journey (source location), those from the Spanish gravestones emphasise the destination (goal location). This can be explained by the addition of profiling and a trajectory-landmark relation (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 33): either the destination can be highlighted and thus identified as the landmark relative to which the motion takes place, or the source can be taken as the landmark in the trajectory of motion. Consequently there are two versions of the journey metaphor at play here: DEATH IS DEPARTURE and DEATH IS GOING TO A FINAL DESTINATION (Lakoff and Turner 1989: 7-8), as I will explain in what follows.

In most of the English epitaphs with the verbs *depart*, *go*, *pass* or *leave* the destination of the journey is left implicit; thus, the journey is seen as a departure with neither the opportunity for return nor an expressed destination. There are numerous consolatory expressions within this metaphor such as "*gone but not forgotten*", "*not dead, but gone before*" and, especially, *pass away*, a euphemism that leaves the destination of the journey vague, ambiguous and, therefore, unknown (Ayto 2007: 235). By leaving the destination unexpressed, English epitaphs evoke the comforting thought that the deceased has not really died, but merely set out on a journey and will so be absent. However, some of the Highgate epitaphs do refer to the final destination of the journey in concrete and explicitly religious terms: the joyful meeting with God in Heaven. This notion provides

the euphemistic support of phrases with the verbs *to pass* (*pass into the Light*, *pass Home*, *pass into the Great Beyond*) and *to go* (*go to Heaven*, *go Home* and *go to our Father's Home above*). Consider the following epitaph:

(3) In Loving Memory
of
John Harvey Stone
who died Jan. 20th 1886
Aged 39
Not lost to memory or to love
but *gone to our Father's Home above*

In the Spanish subcorpus the encounter with God in Heaven as the final point of the journey is mentioned in *all* cases: *subir al Cielo* ('to ascend to Heaven'), *subir a la Gloria* ('to ascend to Glory') and *ir al Cielo* ('to go to Heaven') focus on the conclusion of the act of leaving, which is equated to a final location. Thus, the abstract concept of death, which does not really have a particular location, is associated with a place in space by virtue of the primary metaphor STATES ARE LOCATIONS (Lakoff and Johnson 1989: 7), a metaphor that acquires positive connotations for euphemistic purposes in (2) and (3).

Grady's work on primary metaphor (1997) considers the departure metaphor, typical of English epitaphs, to be principally based on the primary metaphor CHANGE IS MOTION: the change (passing from life to death) motivated by the fact that the deceased sets out on a journey to an unknown destination. This notion is not found in the Spanish epitaphs, which are based on the religious belief in the sacredness of the afterlife (destination). A conceptualisation which exploits the primary metaphor A CHANGE OF STATE IS A CHANGE OF LOCATION, whereby the deceased suffers a change in state —from being alive to being dead— as a result of changing location —going from earth to Paradise.

By making the heavenly destination explicit, Spanish epitaphs are directly connected with Christian death. Given that Heaven is traditionally located in the sky, death is seen as a desirable event, a reward even, by virtue of the orientational metaphors HAPPY IS UP and GOOD IS UP (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 14-21). These metaphors are motivated by cultural and physical experiences associated with the upper vertical position: an erect posture of the body usually accompanies a happy emotional state. The verticality schema, on which our preconceptual structures of spatial orientation are based, constitutes an appropriate source domain for the euphemistic reference to death (Marín-Arrese 1996: 46).

This Heaven metaphor is also based on a reoriented version of the primary metaphor PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS, which arises from our experience of going to places we intend to reach.[6] In the same way as goals in life are destinations, that is, desired locations

[6] Ruiz de Mendoza and Pérez (2011) argue that the multiplicity of journey metaphors can be explained in terms of the primary metaphor PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS. This primary metaphor underlies any metaphor in which we talk about goal-oriented activities.

to be reached, death is metaphorically conceived as a purposeful activity through which one may reach a desired location, Heaven, the highest reward for any believer in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Thus we have here the complex metaphor A PURPOSEFUL DEATH IS A JOURNEY as the product of the combining of the primary metaphors PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS and ACTIONS ARE MOTIONS, together with a religious principle according to which people are believed to set on a journey after life and move to a desired destination.

The conceptualisation that views death in terms of a rest or a sleep appears in almost one third of the metaphorical items detected in both subcorpora. Here the source domain is provided by the analogy between certain of the physiological characteristics of sleep (lack of movement and speech) and those that accompany death. "Rest" and "sleep" were chosen as source domains for three reasons: first, sleeping and resting are commonplace, temporary activities we do every day, which may lead us to conceive of death as a temporary event.

Second, as Herrero Ruiz (2007: 64) notes, these activities suggest not only a physical, but also a psychological rest, such that in death we seem to be peacefully sleeping, far from earthly worries and troubles. The third and more evident reason is that the mapping of the physiological signs of sleep onto the image of a dead person leads, ultimately, to the denial of death as such.

Though both the English and Spanish metaphors share the same conceptual basis, some significant differences arise. The relaxation that is obtained through sleep is transferred to death in the English epitaphs. As death is conceptualised as a peaceful and serene experience, this source domain provides an effective euphemistic support. Take the following epitaph:

(4) In loving memory of
Ella
who *fell asleep* July 30th 1881 aged 8 years
for the maid is *not dead but sleepth*

Note that in the target domain, Ella could not choose whether to die or not, while in the source domain humans do normally choose whether they want to sleep or not. This mismatch is a case of what Lakoff (1993: 216) has called a 'target domain override', the target domain limits what can be mapped: it cancels out a source element, while the rest of the source structure is preserved by virtue of its ability to talk about the target domain in euphemistic terms.

In contrast to most English epitaphs, in the Spanish examples this death-as-a-rest conceptualisation explicitly associates the source domain with the afterlife: the rest is tinged with a deep religious sense through prepositional phrases like *en el Señor* ('in the Lord'), *en la Paz del Señor* ('in the Peace of the Lord') or *en los brazos del Señor* ('in the arms of the Lord').

(5) *Descansó en el Señor*
Cristina C*M*
† 8 septiembre 1966
a los 64 años de edad
Tu esposo e hijos no te olvidan

[Cristina C*M* rested with the Lord on 8 September 1966
aged 64. Your husband and children will not forget you]

Here we have a cultural elaboration of a metaphor grounded in experience, that is, the previously mentioned primary metaphor STATES ARE LOCATIONS and the related metaphor CHANGES OF STATES ARE CHANGES OF LOCATIONS. In this way, a phrase like *en el Señor* makes us understand the rest in spiritual terms and separate it from earthly life and from the life-like overtones that the source domain of rest suggests in English.

Also, associated with the view of death as a desirable condition, the metaphor DEATH IS A JOYFUL LIFE is used to conceptualise human mortality in one fifth of the metaphorical items, all from Highgate. It transfers the attributes from the source domain of a joyful life to the target domain of death. In this regard, the metaphorical items of hope and consolation that arise from this conceptual association (*higher life*, *holy life*, *alive*, etc.) have positive overtones. Indeed, the fact that the word *life* and its derivatives are commonly employed in this metaphor is highly significant of this optimistic tone. The following inscription, in which the noun *life* coexists with the adjective *alive*, is a good case in point:

(6) Alive in Christ
Ralph James H*
Was called to the higher life
June 19 1932
Aged 60 years

However, death is not understood in terms of a joyful life in the Spanish epitaphs. What is emphasised is the Christian hope that death is the gateway to an afterlife in Heaven where the deceased will await the resurrection of the dead. Thus, a metaphor like ESTAR MUERTO ES ESTAR CON EL SEÑOR ('to be dead is to be with the Lord') gives rise to metaphorical items whose capacity for consolation derives from the fact that the deceased is said to be with God. The euphemistic force of this conceptualisation is based on experiential correlation through the primary metaphor STATES ARE LOCATIONS whereby a state (i.e., being dead) is equated with a particular location (i.e., being with the Lord). This idea is verbalised through a wide variety of locative expressions to which the UP-DOWN schema applies like *en la Mansion celestial* ('in the house of the Lord'),

en la Gloria ('in the Glory of God') or *en el Reino de los Cielos* ('in the Kingdom of Heaven').

(7) Antonio R*S*
8 de marzo de 2007. A los 84 años
Tus hijos y nietos no te olvidan
Buscadme *en el Reino de los Cielos*

[Antonio R*S* 8 March 2007 aged 84. Your children and grandchildren will not forget you. Look for me in the Kingdom of Heaven]

The pervasiveness of religiosity in the Spanish figurative language used to talk and reason about death can be seen in the journey and rest metaphors, as already commented. However, the metaphorical items arising from these conceptualisations are not explicitly related to a joyful life and are not as optimistic as the English ones. In fact, the life metaphors employed in the epitaphs from Highgate lead to the denial of death as a means for consolation in an overt way. This denial is not so obvious in the Spanish corpus, in which the antiphrasis death-life appears in MORIR ES VIVIR EN EL RECUERDO ('to die is to live in memory'), a metaphor that lacks the explicitly positive overtones of DEATH IS A JOYFUL LIFE.[7] After all, a life in the memory of those left alive is not necessarily a joyful life. This metaphor is, however, commonly accepted as a means of consolation in the Spanish epitaphs. Compare the different conceptions of death as life in the two epitaphs below. Whereas in (8) there is no reference to a joyful life whatsoever, in (9) the approach to death is rather optimistic: not only is the deceased said to be happily "safe in the arms of Jesus", but also to have gone cheerfully "to a happier and holy life":

(8) Julián M*R*
María L*P*
D.E.P.[8]
Vivís en nuestro recuerdo

[Julián M*R* María L*P* D.E.P. You live in our memory]

[7] The antiphrasis as a euphemistic resource plays a crucial role in the metaphors DEATH IS A JOYFUL LIFE and TO DIE IS TO LIVE IN MEMORY. This resource is based on the identification of two antithetical concepts, death and life, as a means to refer euphemistically to the act of dying through the consideration of death as a joyful life in the case of the English epitaphs and as a life in the memory of those left alive in the Spanish ones.

[8] The acronym D.E.P. (*Descanse en Paz* 'May (s)he Rest in Peace') —the Spanish equivalent to the Latin inscription R.I.P. (*Requiescat in Pace*)—is used pervasively in Spanish epitaphs (Crespo-Fernández 2008: 89-90). Latin acronyms are not exclusive to Spanish tombstones, however. They can be found on memorials of all periods in English cemeteries (Yorke 2010: 54).

(9) In loving memory of
Charles John F* D.C.M.[9]
2nd Lieut. 2nd Northamptonshire Regt.
who died of wounds received at Ypres,
28th July 1918, aged 36 years

"Safe in the arms of Jesus"

He *went with a cheerful spirit*,
and faced the battle's strife,
but God in his mercy called him
to a *happier, holy life*

It is interesting to note that in (9) there is a combined conceptualisation of DEATH IS A JOURNEY and DEATH IS A JOYFUL LIFE, the "happier, holy life" conceived as the destination of the journey the deceased embarks on, demonstrating that conceptual metaphors do not always perform their euphemistic function in isolation.

The metaphors discussed so far exploit experiential conflation; that is, culture and beliefs are ultimately based on primary motor-sensory experience, which is universal. As Yu claims, "[t]he fact that distinct languages show metaphors in a systematic way supports the cognitive status of these metaphors as primarily conceptual, rooted in common human experiences" (2009: 90). Indeed, commonality in human experience determines the emergence of the same conceptual metaphor in different cultures.

That said, some conceptual representations are in fact culture-dependent, that is, subject to the pressure of the *cultural context*,[10] and this influences and, in some cases, takes precedence over embodiment in the course of metaphorical conceptualisation (Köveces 2010: 199). In fact, not all metaphorical thinking is rooted in the body. Given the partial nature of metaphorical mappings, the pervasive religiosity of Spanish society means that metaphors highlight those aspects related to Jewish-Christian thinking that are considered to be more effective for euphemistic purposes, like the reference to Heaven as the destination of a journey or as the final resting place. These features are mapped onto the target domain of death because they are the main meaning foci associated with death in Spanish euphemistic metaphors. This explains why specific features of a given source domain are highlighted while others are ignored (Kövecses 2011: 17). The universality of metaphorical conceptualisations should not, therefore, be considered in absolute terms, but rather in relation to the particular settings in which each metaphor is developed.

[9] D.C.M. stands for "Distinguished Conduct Medal", a British military decoration awarded to non-commissioned officers and other ranks of the Army for distinguished conduct in the field. It was the second highest award for gallantry in action after the Victoria Cross.

[10] Following Kövecses (2010: 8), by cultural context we understand the belief system of a person (in which religious beliefs are included) and the physical-cultural environment.

As Lakoff and Jonhson put it, "[t]he mind is not merely corporeal, but also passionate, desiring and social. It has a culture and cannot exist culture-free" (1999: 325).

That death is a heavily culture-dependent phenomenon can be clearly seen in the conceptualisation MORIR ES CAER POR DIOS Y POR ESPAÑA ('to die is to fall for God and Spain'), typical of Spanish war epitaphs. This conceptualisation, based on the conceptual metonymy THE EFFECTS OF DEATH REPRESENT DEATH, shows a mapping of one of the physical effects of death —that of falling— onto the larger domain of death.[11] Here the UP-DOWN schema provides a useful source domain to understand death. As this conceptualisation indicates a change of state caused by downward movement, a term like *fallen* is coherent with the orientational metaphor SAD IS DOWN if we assume, following Bultnick (1998: 13), that death is generally perceived as an unhappy event. There is indeed a recurring correlation here between a dropping posture and a depressed emotional state.

The Spanish term *caído* ('fallen') makes reference, strictly speaking, to the one who falls as a result of enemy fire. However, in the Spanish epitaphs its implications go beyond a respectable description of a heroic death in battle. This word considers the deceased as a person who died in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) fighting in Franco's army or on account of his conservative political views or religious beliefs. It is important to note that Nationalists opposed the separatist movements and confronted the anti-clericalism of the Republicans; hence the inscription "caído por Dios y por España", whose aim was to honour the deceased by claiming that his death helped to build a new country free from the danger of separatism and atheistic Communism. The epitaph below thus demonstrates its partisan nature and legitimises the winners of the war:

(10) Miguel A*P*
Caído por Dios
y por España
el día 22-9-1936
a los 20 años
Tus padres no te olvidan

[Miguel A*P*. Fallen for God and Spain
on 22 September 1936 aged 20.
Your parents will not forget you]

The source domain of this conceptualisation is closely linked to the religious and political impositions in the years that followed the victory of Franco's troops. In this respect, this culture-specific conceptualisation appears to be "marked", as Sharifian (2011: 13) argues, for anyone outside the Spanish culture. In this particular case, this marked

[11] Metonymy coexists and interacts with metaphor in the conceptualisation of abstract concepts. Both devices are so closely connected that a large number of conceptual metaphors have a metonymic basis (Barcelona 2003).

conceptualisation surfaces as a distinctive conceptual pattern of association between source and target domains that derives from culture-specific constructs. This stands as proof that understanding discourse ultimately depends on understanding its underlying cultural conceptualisations.

4.2. Metaphors with negative connotations

There are only two sets of correspondences in the corpus, of little relevance in quantitative terms, in which death is portrayed negatively or, at least, not positively: *a loss* and *the end*. The metaphorical substitutes arising from these figurative associations cannot be said to provide any sort of consolation or relief; rather, they are epitaphs of lament, insofar as they tend to express the grief of the surviving relatives. Though death is portrayed negatively in these conceptualisations, it must be noted that the metaphorical substitutes for the notions of death and dying that arise from them are milder than those terms that provide a straightforward reference to death. Words like *loss* or phrases like *your last hours* show respect towards the deceased and their families and towards the subject of death itself. In addition, they express the grief of those left alive in a socially acceptable way. Therefore, in spite of the fact that the metaphorical items that present human mortality as a loss or as the end of human existence lead to the notion of death as something negative, these domains are the source of terms and expressions that can be considered as appropriate and effective euphemisms in the context of the epitaphs in which they occur, as we will see in what follows.

The death-as-a-loss conceptualisation has a metonymic basis (THE EFFECTS OF DEATH STAND FOR DEATH) that focuses on one of the negative results of death. The conceptual basis of this mapping lies in the fact that life is perceived as a valuable object by virtue of the metaphor LIFE IS A PRECIOUS POSSESSION (Lakoff and Turner 1989: 29), and death is thus seen as the loss of this possession; hence its presence in epitaphs of lament. The noun *loss* and its corresponding verb *lose* are the most frequent metaphorical alternatives in this conceptualisation in the English epitaphs. In the Spanish ones the verb *perder* ('lose') is the source of euphemistic phrases like *el bien perdido* ('the lost possession'). The following two epitaphs express the grief of those left alive through this conceptual equation:

(11) Cherished
memories of
Joseph H*
who fell asleep
26th April 1993 – Aged 59

It broke our hearts to *lose* you
but you did not go alone
for part of us went with you
the day God called you home

(12) Isabelita
Tus padres y abuelos
lloran tu muerte

Estando en la Gloria
sentí a mi padre llorar
porque *perdía* a su hija
para toda una eternidad

[Isabelita. Your parents and grandparents are crying for your death.
Being in the Glory of God / I heard my father cry/
because he lost his daughter / for all eternity]

Within this conceptualisation, in the Spanish Civil War epitaphs the expression "dar la vida por Dios y por España" ('to give one's life for God and for Spain') presents the same political motivation as the already commented MORIR ES CAER POR DIOS Y POR ESPAÑA. The fact of losing one's life in the fight against what was considered the evil of Communism was regarded as an act of generosity without limits that deserved some recognition. This is the case of the following inscription:

(13) Fernando A*M*
dio su vida por Dios y por España
el 26 de agosto de 1936
a los 72 años de edad

[Fernando A*M* gave his life for God and
for Spain on 26 August 1936 aged 72]

Through the death-as-the-end conceptualisation, human mortality is seen in terms of our bodily experience of spatial domains. By virtue of the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema into which our everyday experience is organised, life can be understood as a process with a starting and end point and a time span, as seen in 4.1. From this viewpoint, death is conceptualised as the final stage of our lifespan by means of the metaphor DEATH IS THE END, which is verbalised through the noun *end* and the phrase *end of her/his days* in the English epitaphs and the noun *finado* (derived from *fin* 'the end', meaning literally 'the one who gets to the end of life') and the adjective *última* ('last') in the noun phrase *tus últimas horas* ('your last hours') in the Spanish ones. Consider these euphemistic expressions in the two epitaphs below:

(14) In loving memory of
Enid R*

1938 – 1996
Loving and kind
in all her ways,
upright and just
till the *end of her days*

(15) Rosa M*R*
† 26 octubre 1992
a los 48 años
R.I.P.

No llores por mí, marido mío,
que en *tus últimas horas*
te recibiré en mis brazos

[Rosa M*R* † 26 October 1992 aged 48. R.I.P.
Do not cry for me, my dear husband, for in your last hours
I will receive you in my arms][12]

The expressions *end of her days* and *tus últimas horas* share the same conceptual basis, that which understands death as a concluding phase in human existence. In this respect, Johnson points out that "we have a metaphorical understanding of the passage of time based on movement along a physical path . . . toward some end point" (1987: 117). And physical death is precisely that end point. This explains why death is euphemistically conceptualised as the last moment in our lifespan in both English and Spanish epitaphs through the end metaphor, which implies an acceptance of human mortality as the final destiny that awaits all human beings, a conception devoid of any religious considerations in (14) and (15). Death as the final point is even perceived as trivial in the following case:

(16) Ella Gwendolyn J*
16 June 1914 – 2 December 2000
Stylish to *the end*

This example provides evidence for the conceptual metaphor DYING IS SOMETHING TRIVIAL —found by Vogel (2009: 203) in Swedish, Norwegian and Danish— in which the topic of death is seen as something unimportant. Expressions involving a trivial act tend to represent a secularised attitude towards death, which is not common in societies deeply influenced by Judeo-Christian values like the Spanish one.

[12] It is worthy of note that this epitaph is a message from the deceased person (wife) to the living one (husband).

Before concluding, it is interesting to note that in a number of cases presented in the course of the analysis, it is not clear whether an expression is processed metaphorically or not.[13] In fact, *go to Heaven* or *be with the Lord* are examples of lexicalized or dead metaphors, i.e., those in which the second order or figurative meaning becomes the norm in the speech community and are thus not recognised as metaphors. Though these metaphorical phrases are highly conventionalised means through which to refer to the topic they stand for and are entrenched in everyday use, I believe that they still reflect active schemes of metaphorical thought which provide socially acceptable means of dealing with death in public discourse and are intended as such.

This leads me on to the question of the deliberate use of metaphor in communication, which, as Steen argues, "seems to be a matter of revitalization of available linguistic forms and conceptual structures" (2011: 51). Death-related metaphorical units arising from conventional metaphors are deliberately used in communication with a conscious euphemistic purpose. This deliberate use of euphemistic metaphors involves using language with a persuasive purpose (Stöver 2011: 76). It is, in fact, a means to invite the readers of the epitaph to view the topic being dealt with from a different perspective, one which is oriented towards causing a particular effect on them. Indeed, the conceptualisations analysed invite those acquainted with the deceased and visitors to the cemetery to change their perspective of death to a different domain (a journey, a rest, a joyful life, etc.). By doing so, metaphors aim to provide some sort of consolation to those left alive and help them accept the reality of the loss of a loved one.

5. Concluding remarks

Following the framework of CMT, I have presented a comparative study of euphemistic metaphors in a sample of English and Spanish epitaphs. Evidence from the corpus reveals the existence of a coherent conceptual organization underlying the euphemistic expression of death and dying in English and Spanish that derives both from our common bodily and physical experience and from cultural constraints. Though the set of conceptual metaphors for the domain of death is roughly the same in both languages, with most of them implying a positive value judgment on human mortality, the cultural environment is a powerful force in shaping metaphorical conceptualisations. In fact, those elements of the source domain that are more likely to fulfill an effective euphemistic function in each culture are singled out and highlighted to target the domain of death, as summarized in the following points:

1. In accordance with the pervasive dominance of Roman Catholicism in Spain, the Spanish epitaphs show a clear preference for source domains in which Jewish-

[13] As an anonymous reviewer correctly observes, in conceptualisations like MORIR ES SUBIR AL CIELO ('to die is to ascend to Heaven') the boundaries between literal and non-literal language are quite blurred. Whereas for those who interpret the Bible in a figurative sense the expressions arising from this conceptualisation are processed metaphorically, for fervent believers who consider that the ascendant to Heaven is literally true, the metaphor may go unnoticed. For a cognitive account of metaphor comprehension, see Stöver (2011).

Christian beliefs play a crucial role. The rest metaphors invariably acquire a Christian sense through phrases like *en el Señor* ('in the Lord'), which does not always happen in the English epitaphs. In addition, the journey metaphors in Spanish focus on the conclusion of the act of leaving —conceived as a final location, namely God's Home in Heaven— whereas most English inscriptions emphasise the starting point of the journey. Similarly, the euphemistic metaphorical items in the Spanish subcorpus are strongly influenced by the sacredness of the afterlife and are not as optimistic as the English epitaphs, which tend to display a life-like approach to death.

2. The pressure of cultural context takes precedence over embodiment when conceptualising death. This is the case of TO DIE IS TO FALL FOR GOD AND SPAIN, a euphemistic conceptualisation typical of Spanish Civil War epitaphs which reflects that cultural and social issues determine the connection between the source and target domains and thus the nature of the euphemism employed. Indeed, this cultural conceptualisation proves that funerary language was adapted to fit the requirements of the political context of post-war Spanish society.

In summary, the results provide supporting evidence for the fact that commonality in physical experience is consistent with the idea of conceptualisations which are culturally shaped and motivated. As such, body schemas coexist with cultural schemas in the conceptual structure of the domain of death in English and Spanish euphemistic metaphors.

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Do Translation Students Learn Vocabulary When They Translate?

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The study investigates whether translation students learn new vocabulary when translating texts from a second language (L2, English) into their native language (L1, Spanish). Despite the belief of many translation teachers and students that one learns vocabulary when translating, no empirical study has ever been conducted to investigate the validity of this assumption. In this study, 38 undergraduate Translation Studies majors at a Spanish university were given eight English-language texts to translate into Spanish in which 19 target words, assumed to be unfamiliar to the students prior to the study, appeared at different frequencies. Tests were administered immediately after completion of the translation tasks, and again six weeks later, to gauge the extent to which the students had learned the target words. Results obtained from the immediate and delayed tests show significant gains in passive vocabulary learning; however, delayed test results indicate no active vocabulary gains, even for the target words appearing most frequently in the texts. Possible causes of these poor results are the low level of deep processing present when translating from an L2 to an L1, and the lack of intentional learning on the students' part.

Keywords: translation students; vocabulary learning; active vocabulary; passive vocabulary; deep processing; intentional learning

. . .

¿Aprenden vocabulario los estudiantes de traducción cuando traducen?

El estudio que se presenta investiga si el estudiante de traducción aprende vocabulario cuando realiza una traducción directa, es decir, desde una segunda lengua (inglés) a la lengua materna (español). No existe ningún estudio experimental que haya analizado si el traductor profesional o el estudiante de traducción aprende vocabulario cuando traduce, algo que con frecuencia se da por hecho entre profesores de traducción y estudiantes. Este estudio ofrece resultados sobre aprendizaje de vocabulario inglés por parte de 38 estudiantes de traducción tras traducir al español ocho textos escritos en inglés en los que aparecían de manera repetida 19 palabras desconocidas para ellos en distinto grado. Los resultados obtenidos tanto en el test inmediato como en el retrasado indican que traduciendo se producen ganancias significativas en el aprendizaje de vocabulario pasivo. Sin embargo, en el test retrasado no se producen ganancias de vocabulario activo, ni siquiera de palabras con las que se han tenido diez o más contactos en los textos. Se sugieren como causas de estos pobres resultados la ausencia de procesamiento profundo cuando se hace traducción directa y la ausencia de intención de aprender.

Palabras clave: estudiantes de traducción; aprendizaje de vocabulario; vocabulario activo; vocabulario pasivo; procesamiento profundo; aprendizaje intencionado.

1. Introduction

Despite the obvious importance of lexical knowledge for professional translators, it seems that many translation teachers and students simply assume that vocabulary learning occurs naturally when translating and, thus, the subject requires little direct attention in translator training programs. To the knowledge of the author, however, no empirical studies exist that test the truthfulness of this assumption. It is the aim of the present article, therefore, to shed light on the question of whether, and to what extent, vocabulary is learned when translating a written text from a second language (L2) into a native language (L1).

This is the specific perspective from which the term *translation* is used and discussed throughout the present article. The clarification of this term takes on great importance in relation to the coherence of the study when one considers the multiple contexts and perspectives from which it has traditionally been used, understood and studied. Some of these include (a) written and oral translation (interpretation); (b) translation of texts into L1 and L2; (c) translation of contextualized or decontextualized words or passages; (d) translation for learning purposes and translation for professional/communicative purposes; and (e) active translation for instructional purposes (the learner does the translation) and passive translation for instructional purposes (the learner receives the previously-completed translation for contrastive analysis).

It is surprising that given this plurality of contexts and perspectives, each with its distinct emphasis on different elements and manners of translating, authors have not felt the need to more clearly position themselves and the term when writing about translation. As a result, the literature reveals strikingly different characterizations of translation. For instance, O'Malley and Chamot equate the strategy of translation for language learning with that of repetition, both of which they describe as activities "that require little conceptual processing" (1990: 120-21). Hummel, on the other hand, expresses amazement with this analysis and asserts that "translation does in fact require access to a conceptual level, particularly when linguistic units beyond single words are translated" (2010: 62). The question arises here of whether the authors are indeed speaking about the same thing when they talk about *translation*.

2. Literature review

Relationships between vocabulary and translation have always existed in second language teaching, ranging from the Grammar Translation Method to more recent proposals for the use of translation as an explicit form of vocabulary instruction in a communicative framework. Versions of these latter proposals include Focus on Form —explicit teaching of linguistic features *within* a communicative task environment (Nation 2001; Laufer 2005; Webb 2007; Laufer and Girsai 2008), and Focus on FormS —explicit teaching of linguistic features *outside of* a communicative task environment (Nation 2001; Laufer 2006, 2010; Agustín-Llach 2009).

The use of translation as a resource for teaching and learning has generally adopted three basic forms: (a) translation of the equivalent in the L1 of a word from an L2 input (e.g., glosses), (b) lists of associated word pairs, and (c) translation from an L2 to an L1 or vice versa of sentences or texts in which particular L2 elements (in this case, lexical) are targeted for learning. While a great deal of scholarly work exists regarding the efficiency of the first two forms, much less has been written about the third (the closest to the focus of the present article). What follows is a brief examination of the efficiency of these three different learning and instructional techniques.

With regard to the first, a significant number of studies (e.g., Nation 1982; Hulstijn, Hollander and Greidanus 1996; Lotto and de Groot 1998) have demonstrated that language learners, particularly at beginner level, understand a particular received input (generally written) and retain new vocabulary present in that input better when a translation of the new vocabulary, or sentences (Grace 1998) containing the new vocabulary, are provided. Nevertheless, the size of these vocabulary gains has been shown to be relatively small (Hulstijn 1992; Nation 2001; Laufer 2003; Schmitt 2010).

The second method, focusing on the use of associated word pairs in lists or flash cards, has always had its share of critics, who highlight the importance of context for word retention and productive learning.

That said, several studies have demonstrated the efficiency of associated word pair techniques for initial lexical learning (Thorndike 1908; Crothers and Suppes 1967). This efficiency, furthermore, has been shown to be greater than that of other techniques including incidental learning (Prince 1996; Laufer and Shmueli 1997; Waring 1997, 2001), particularly when learners possess a low level in the L2 (Cohen and Aphek 1981; Prince 1996). While it is often advised that vocabulary words be contextualized, at least within sentences, in order to increase learning efficiency, results of studies aimed at supporting this intuitive position have been inconclusive (Nation 2001: 309; Webb 2007). Nation summarizes his vision of language learning techniques using associated word cards when he writes, "The strength of learning from word cards is that it is focused, efficient and certain" (2001: 300).

As such, the translation of decontextualized sentences, be it from an L2 to an L1 or vice versa, was used as a language learning technique in many parts of the world (Richards and Rodgers 1985: 5). The technique, having received support from some experts in psycholinguistics (Prince 1996), has nevertheless failed to win over experts of second language acquisition, particularly those who ground L2 acquisition in the L2 input received by the learner (Krashen 1989, 2004). Despite this, the general shortage of empirical research on such a central and controversial issue is striking. That said, two recent contributions stand out and merit further discussion.

In Laufer and Girsai (2008), the effectiveness of three different instructional conditions —meaning focused instruction, non-contrastive form-focused instruction, and contrastive analysis and translation— on the learning of L2 English vocabulary was tested using 75 Hebrew-speakers aged 15 to 16. In the data collected from tests

administered to the subjects directly after and one week following the completion of the learning tasks, the best results were obtained by students taught by the contrastive analysis and translation method, while meaning focused instruction produced the weakest results.

In a study by Hummel (2010), 191 French university students with an intermediate level of English were tested on their learning of 15 English-language words following translation activities using texts in which the words appeared. For the translation tasks, Hummel divided the students into three groups with the first performing translations of the texts from English to French, the second translating from French to English, and the third copying the French texts and their English equivalents. From a single test administered upon completion of the different tasks and to the surprise of the author, students from the copy group were found to have achieved significantly better results than those from the two translation groups. Another intriguing finding was that results attained by the group translating from French (L1) into English (L2) were not significantly better than those for the group translating from English into French.

In light of these findings, it is important to note that in the literature relating lexical learning and the use of translation in one of its many forms, the latter has been shown to be an effective tool for the former when intentional learning is present. This has been the case both for associated word pairs (Thorndike 1908; Crothers and Suppes 1967; Cohen and Aphek 1981; Prince 1996; Laufer and Shmueli 1997; Waring 1997, 2001) and for contrastive analysis and translation (Laufer and Girsai 2008).

When a student possesses a clear intention to learn, the degree to which vocabulary is acquired, through the application of any one of a number of diverse techniques, is often very high (Prince 1996; Hulstijn 2003; Laufer 2005; Schmitt 2008), at times surpassing 70% (Nation 2001: 297-99; Laufer 2005).

Furthermore, over the last few decades cognitive psychologists (Craik 1977, 2002; Craik and Lockhart 1972; Craik and Tulving 1975; Jacoby and Craik 1979; Eysenck 1982; Anderson 1990) have indicated that the durability of memory traces depends in large part on the depth of processing or the degree of analysis of learnable linguistic elements, to which Baddeley added the importance of repetition (1997: 123). Elements highlighted in the literature as important with respect to information processing for the learning and retention of L2 features (Schmidt 1990; Norris and Ortega 2000; DeKeyser 1998, 2003; Ellis 2001) and, more specifically, L2 vocabulary (Ellis 1994; Paribakht and Wesche 1997; Paribakht 1999; Nation 2001; Hill and Laufer 2003; Hulstijn 2005; Laufer 2005, 2006; Pellicer and Schmitt 2010) include the degree of consciousness raising and noticing through attention to form, suggesting that intentional learning and deep processing may be two decisive factors in vocabulary learning and, particularly, for the active recall of vocabulary.

When intentional learning is not present, such as in cases of translations of texts from L1 to L2 or vice versa (Hummel 2010) or in reading for meaning glosses (Hulstijn 1992; Nation 2001), vocabulary learning results have been much poorer.

3. The study

3.1. Research questions

The present study was designed to provide answers for the following questions:

Question 1: Is there a significant difference between the number of target words test subjects recognize in the immediate passive knowledge test and the number of target words recognized in the passive knowledge pretest?

Question 2: Is there a significant difference between the number of target words test subjects recognize in the delayed passive knowledge test and the number of target words recognized in the passive knowledge pretest?

Question 3: Is there a significant difference between the number of target words test subjects remember in the delayed active knowledge test and the number of target words recognized in the passive knowledge pretest?

With each of the questions, two additional sub-questions were also considered; namely, are results significantly different (a) if only a subset of target words with which subjects had 10 or more contacts is considered and (b) if only a subset of target words with which subjects had less than 10 contacts is considered?

3.2. Study participants

Participants for the study were selected from second and third-year undergraduate translation and interpreting majors at a Spanish university. While the study initially included 54 subjects, only 38 fully completed the three different stages comprising the study, namely, (a) regular translation of specific texts (b) regular classroom attendance, and (c) completion of the four diagnostic tests administered by the study author. Results obtained for the remaining 16 students were discarded and are not reported here.

The 38 participants were native speakers of Spanish, and studied English as a foreign language at an upper-intermediate level (i.e., roughly B2+/C1 within the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*). All of the participants also studied French or German as a foreign language subject. Permission was received from students prior to the commencement of the study and general information regarding the study and its aims was given to the students on a need-to-know basis.

3.3. Text translation and correction stages

The first two stages of the study consisted of the translation into Spanish of eight English-language texts and the subsequent in-class correction and discussion of each translated text. In total, the two stages were completed in four weeks. The texts, slightly modified to increase the number of times the 19 target words appeared, were each approximately 400 words in length and of varied types (a sports article, a description of a vacation, an article on fitness and food, an accident report, a crime report, etc.). According to the results of a pretest administered prior to the translation of the different texts, only an approximate 2.5% of the total words from the texts were previously unknown to the test subjects, thus allowing for a quite fluent reading of the texts by the students (Hirsh and Nation 1992;

Laufer 1992; Nation 2006). For the purposes of the study, distinct derivations of a word (e.g., *assess* and *assessment*) were treated as a single word (Hirsh and Nation 1992: 692). All target words were lexical words and none were Spanish-English cognates.

From the outset, the author was conscious of the fact that, prior to the translation stage, some subjects would likely be familiar, with some of the target words appearing in the texts. Nevertheless, all 19 words were maintained without change due to the fact that the selection of a corpus of target words completely unknown to each of the students would have at times required convoluted textual modifications.

While the frequency with which one has contact with a specific word is understood to be an important factor for the learning of that word (Saragi, Nation and Meister 1978; Elley and Magubhai 1983; Nagy, Herman and Anderson 1985), the number of contacts necessary for word retention has been a topic of great debate. Recently, various studies have situated this retention threshold at around eight or ten contacts (Horst, Cobb and Meara 1998; Pigada and Schmitt 2006; Pellicer and Schmitt 2010). In the present study, target words were classified into two subsets: one comprising words with which subjects had ten or more contacts (nine target words) and another for words with less than ten contacts (ten target words). Since students had contact with the texts and the target words appearing therein on two different occasions —once while translating, and once while correcting and discussing their translations— the number of contacts per target word was calculated as twice the number of times the word appeared in the texts, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The 19 Target Words in the Study

TARGET WORDS	NUMBER OF APPEARANCES IN EACH OF THE EIGHT TEXTS (including derivations)								CONTACTS (Translation & correction)
	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	
Assess	1	1					1		3 (6)
Aware	1				1	2			4 (8)
Choke		3			2	1			6 (12)
Crave	2		1	3	2		2	2	12 (24)
Crush						3	1		4 (8)
Daunt		1		1		1		2	5 (10)
Haunt			2		1	1	1	2	7 (14)
Hint						1			1 (2)
Humble		1							1 (2)
Issue			6						6 (12)
Mesmerize			2						2 (4)
Mug	1							1	2 (4)
Peer			3						3 (6)
Rate			1						1 (2)
Shatter	1	2		1				1	5 (10)
Stroll	1	1		1				2	5 (10)
Untoward	1	1	1		2		1		6 (12)
Utterly		1			1				2 (4)
Wistful	1		2			1	1		5 (10)

3.4 Testing Stage

During the course of the study, four tests were administered to the subjects: a passive knowledge pretest, an immediate passive knowledge test, a delayed active knowledge test, and a delayed passive knowledge test. The terms *active knowledge* and *passive knowledge*, used here in the manner employed by Nation (2001), denote, in the former case, the knowledge necessary to provide the equivalent of a word (generally given in an L1) in an L2 and, in the latter case, the knowledge necessary to provide the meaning (generally in the L1) of the L2 word. While this distinction has some debatable aspects (Meara 1990; Nation 2001: 24-25), its basic features have nevertheless received general acceptance (Laufer 1998; Nation 2001).

Each of the three passive tests contained 19 decontextualized sentences with a missing word denoted by a blank and corresponding to one of the 19 target words from the study. Tests were presented in multiple-choice format with four different words to choose from, one of which being the corresponding target word (Read 2007: 106). An example is offered below:

I had a _____ on the violin prodigy.

a. shatter *b. fount* *c. leash* *d. crush*

The aim of the pretest was to determine how many of the target words study participants could recognize prior to the translation and correction stages of the experiment. Immediately following completion of these two stages, a 4-week process, students completed the immediate passive test with the same structure and distracters as in the pretest. Six weeks after the completion of the two stages and the immediate passive test, students were given the delayed active test which required the 19 target words to be translated from Spanish (L1) into English (L2). To prevent the students from providing synonyms of the target words rather than the target words themselves, the first letter of each of the target words was given in the test as demonstrated below:

Anhelar, ansiar: c_____

Directly following the delayed active test, the delayed passive test was administered. The test order was thus to avoid the passive test exerting an effect on the active test had the order been reversed. Furthermore, and to avoid the answers from the recently completed active test providing clues, the three distracter words for the 4-option multiple-choice passive test all began with the same letter as the answer word. An example is provided below:

That meant the absolute security for which she had always _____ .

a. choked *b. craved* *c. cropped* *d. cued*

In the evaluation of the delayed active test, small spelling errors in the responses were not taken into account, save in cases where the error led to the production of a different word. Thus, while *assesment* was accepted for the target word *assessment*, *hunt* was not accepted for the target word *haunt*.

In each test, a correct answer was worth a point, resulting in a maximum possible score of 19 points per test. While the tests had no bearing on students' course grades, subjects were told that incorrect responses resulted in a one-point deduction to avoid random guessing. However, no points were actually deducted for incorrect answers in the study results.

3.5 Descriptive statistics

In all the Tables that follow, a distinction is made between results obtained for the total target word set (19 words), the high contact frequency target word subset (9 words) and the lower contact frequency target word subset (10 words). Table 2 presents the results from the pretest.

Table 2. Pretest Scores

WORDS	*n*	Average Number (Avg #) Correct Responses	*Standard Deviation (SD)*
Total Target Words	19	6.1	2.8
High Contact-Frequency Target Word Subset	9	2.8	1.7
Lower Contact-Frequency Target Word Subset	10	3.3	1.7

Table 3 details the number of learnable words (*i.e.*, those target words previously unknown to subjects) for each of the three word sets or subsets according to the results from the pretest. The number of learnable words was obtained by subtracting the average number of correct answers given on the pretest for each corresponding set or subset from *n* in each set or subset.

Table 3. Learnable Words

WORDS	*n*	Learnable words (*n – average correct pretest responses*)
Total Target Words	19	19-6.1 = 12.9
High Contact-Frequency Target Word Subset	9	9- 2.8 = 6.2
Lower Contact-Frequency Target Word Subset	10	10-3.3 = 6.7

The average number of words learned for each word set or subset (see Tables 4-6) was calculated by subtracting the average number of correct responses on the pretest from the average number of correct responses for each distinct test.

Table 4. Immediate Passive Knowledge Test Scores

WORDS	Avg # Correct Responses	*SD*	Avg # Words Learned	% Words Learned
Total Target Words	12.7	3.4	12.7-6.1 = 6.6	51
High Contact-Frequency Target Word Subset	6.6	1.9	6.6-2.8 = 3.8	61
Lower Contact-Frequency Target Word Subset	6.1	1.9	6.1-3.3 = 2.8	42

Table 5. Delayed Active Knowledge Test Scores

WORDS	Avg # Correct Responses	*SD*	Avg # Learned Words	% Learned Words
Total Target Words	7.2	5.0	7.2-6.1 = 1.1	8
High Contact-Frequency Target Word Subset	3.7	2.8	3.7-2.8 = 0.9	14
Lower Contact-Frequency Target Word Subset	3.5	2.5	3.5-3.3 = 0.2	3

Table 6. Delayed Passive Knowledge Test Scores

WORDS	Avg # Correct Responses	*SD*	Avg # Learned Words	% Learned Words
Total Target Words	14.3	3.7	14.3-6.1 = 8.2	64
High Contact-Frequency Target Word Subset	7.3	2.1	7.3- 2.8 = 4.5	73
Lower Contact-Frequency Target Word Subset	7.0	2.3	7.0-3.3 = 3.7	55

3.6. Responses to initial questions

Response to question 1: After applying a *t*-test to the data obtained from the pretest and the immediate passive test, it is clear that there is a significant difference between the results obtained in each. Furthermore, the significant difference is present for the set of total target words as well as for the two subsets of high and lower frequency contact words.

Response to question 2: Similarly, the application of a *t*-test indicates that there is a significant difference between the data obtained from the pretest and the delayed passive test, both for the set of total target words as well as for both target word subsets.

Response to question 3: Upon the application of a *t*-test to the data obtained from the pretest and the delayed active test, no significant difference is apparent between the two at either the total set level or the subset level.

4. Discussion

Results from the immediate and delayed passive tests indicate considerable vocabulary gains, over 50% (see Tables 4 and 6). Nevertheless, the question of where the limit should be drawn between learning and what can be considered *efficient* learning is not so clear-

cut. Statistically significant learning can, of course, be objectively demonstrated with empirical data; however, for the further characterization of that learning as efficient, the resources and time employed in order to bring about that learning must be considered, a process with a significant degree of subjectivity. For instance, in a meta-analysis of studies of incidental acquisition of L1 vocabulary through reading tasks, Swanborn and Glopper (1999) calculated the probability of lexical learning at 15%, a figure considered satisfactory by some authors. In another article, Horst (2005) presented data from studies of incidental L2 vocabulary acquisition through reading tasks. In eight of the nine studies analyzed, vocabulary gains oscillated between 7% and 28%, results also judged to be satisfactory.

In the present study, better results were obtained by students in the delayed passive test than in the immediate passive test with respect to the total target word set as well as the two target word subsets. At first glance, this may seem surprising given that —in agreement with what is known about the functioning of the memory (James 1990)— the results achieved on immediate tests are usually stronger than those of delayed tests. The cause of this anomaly can be explained by the fact that some students might have studied the words perhaps out of pure academic interest or perhaps in preparation for the course final exam, which requires a translation without the use of a dictionary. Nevertheless, the time employed to study new vocabulary was apparently not sufficient for the retention of the target vocabulary as active knowledge, given that the number of questions answered correctly in the delayed active test was not significantly greater than in the pretest, not even for the subset of target words with a high contact frequency. In other words, test subjects were unable to actively recall target words that they had translated —in one case, more than ten times— only a few weeks earlier.

This difference between active and passive knowledge test results is common in the literature (Laufer 1998, 2010; Webb 2005; Brown, Waring and Donkaewbua 2008; Laufer and Girsai 2008). Intuitively, it seems understandable that subjects would score higher on tests examining passive knowledge through the recognition of a word or definition from among various options, than on tests examining active knowledge through the production of an L2 word through the translation of a text in an L1 (Stoddard 1929; Waring 1997).

As stated earlier, intentional learning and deep processing may be two decisive factors in vocabulary learning and, particularly, for the active recall of vocabulary. Generally, translators —whether professionals or students— do not count vocabulary learning among their principal objectives when translating. In fact, vocabulary learning does not appear as an objective or strategy in process-oriented translation studies, often based on think-aloud protocols (TAP) (Krings 1986; Kussmaul and Tirkkonen-Condit 1995; Bernardini 2001: 258; Breedveld 2002a, 2002b; Presas Corbella 2003). Intentional learning of vocabulary, therefore, rarely forms part of the translation process.

It could also be hypothesized that linguistic processing may not occur on a particularly deep level when translating. In translation studies, professional translation of a text from an L2 (i.e., source language [SL]) to an L1 (i.e., target language [TL]) is understood as a

three-phase process —pre-writing, writing and post-writing— (Jääskeläinen 1999; Krings 2001; Mossop 2001) where the first two are necessary and the third is optional. While many different strategies exist for the successful completion of each phase (Englund Dimitrova 2005: 242), each phase in fact has certain common defining characteristics.

In the pre-writing phase, a translator needs to understand the source text (ST) and, for that purpose usually makes use of a dictionary whenever the meaning of a particular word is uncertain. Having knowledge of a word in an ST is to (a) understand its function in the context, and (b) be able to attribute a meaning to it in the target language (TL). When the word is found in the dictionary and its specific function in the ST is understood, the translator's specific interest in the word itself disappears, particularly in the case where a clear semantic equivalent in the TL has been found. The translator may, therefore, successfully complete the pre-writing phase without the need for deep processing of the ST or its particular elements in the SL (Königs 1986; Krings 1986).

In the writing phase, the translator reformulates the message of the ST and attempts to produce its equivalent in the future target text (TT). At this point, most translators' energies are probably focused on the TT, and consequently, on the TL, rather than on the SL (Presas Corbella 2003: 41-42). The meaning and function of the previously unknown ST word may be expressed in the TT through a lexical equivalent, various words or may be spread out throughout the length of the sentence. Regardless of the final selection, however, what is important to understand is that the writing phase occurs in the TL, i.e., the translator's L1 (Königs 1986, Königs and Kauffmann 1996: 14), with the translator focused on the best way to express the meaning of the ST in the TL. The word from the ST is neither analyzed nor developed any further and, given that the translator most likely has a dictionary or another reference work at hand, s/he may safely let the word fade from their memory. In the post-writing phase, the translator evaluates the TT produced and any weaknesses identified are generally reformulated in terms of the TL rather than the SL (Englund Dimitrova 2005: 237).

Furthermore, it has been suggested that translators read texts differently from 'normal readers'. Motivated from the beginning by the intention to translate (Reiss and Vermeer 1984: 72), translators approach an ST already thinking about the TT to be produced. Thus, the translator may dedicate less processing to an unknown word than the normal reader, since the latter may choose to develop a further understanding of the word using context-dependent conjectures, something not generally permitted to the translator who is bound to the production of a precise equivalent for the word in the TT.

The translation of text from an L2 to an L1, therefore, may not require deep processing of the L2 (i.e., the SL), particularly when unknown words have a direct equivalent in the L1 (i.e., the TL) allowing for their immediate translation without the necessity for deeper examination.

It is possible, then, that in Laufer and Girsai's 2008 study (see section 2 above), the superior learning results obtained by the contrastive analysis and translation group may not have been due to the translation of text from English into Hebrew. In the study,

students in this particular group completed three different tasks: contrastive analysis, English-to-Hebrew translation, and Hebrew-to-English translation. While it is clear that, taken together, the three tasks fulfill the conditions established for vocabulary learning —noticing, pushed output, and task-induced involvement load (Laufer and Hulstijn 2001)— it is nevertheless possible that the heavy lifting was done by the contrastive analysis —particularly appropriate for noticing— and the Hebrew-to-English translation, rather than by the English-to-Hebrew translation.

In Hummel's study (2010), various possible causes are proposed to explain the poor results obtained by the translation groups relative to the copying group. In one such explanation, the cognitive workload involved in the translation process was hypothesized as having occupied the energy of the subjects, preventing them from memorizing the vocabulary —a hypothesis completely opposing others emphasizing the importance of the processing load for vocabulary retention (Coady 1997; Hulstijn and Laufer 2001; Laufer and Hulstijn 2001; Horst 2005; Peters, Hulstijn, Sercu and Lutjeharms 2009). Hummel also suggests that subjects from the two translation groups —immersed in their translation tasks— had less intention to learn new vocabulary than subjects from the copy group who could afford to dedicate more time and attention to the memorization of the new vocabulary.

It is possible, therefore, to explain the results presented by Laufer and Girsai (2008) as having arisen due to the intentional learning implied by contrastive analysis and to the fact that a certain degree of deep processing may be required by the translation of text from an L1 into an L2. In Hummel (2010), on the other hand, while L1 to L2 translation tasks may have required some deep processing, intentional learning was absent. In the L2 to L1 translation tasks, neither intentional learning nor deep processing was present.

To the extent that intentional learning and deep processing are considered key factors for vocabulary retention, the results of the present study are compatible with those of Laufer and Girsai (2008), and Hummel (2010). Although the vocabulary gains indicated by passive tests were significant, the lack of significant active vocabulary acquisition — even for target words with which students had the greatest number of contacts— raises serious questions about the robustness of the students' vocabulary learning.

5. Limitations and future research

As regards potential shortcomings of this study, one may be the generalizability of the results obtained. Simply stated, the degree of post-translation vocabulary learning recorded here for the English (L2)-Spanish (L1) language pair may not necessarily be generalizable to all other possible language pairs.

With respect to the study methodology, one potential shortcoming may be the lack of verification of whether any students had attempted to memorize the target words from the texts. However, the poor vocabulary learning results recorded for students in the delayed active test suggest that this is a rather remote possibility.

That said, a potential shortcoming of greater significance for the conclusions reached here may be found in the number of times study participants were said to have processed unknown words, as well as the depth at which such processing occurred. The present study starts from the assumption that students perform some degree of processing of an L2 term each time it is encountered. Thus, each term was considered to have been processed two times, that is, once when encountered during the translation of the text and another time when encountered during the correction of the translated text. Nevertheless, it is conceivable, for instance, that a particular term could be the object of a student's extended reflection, beginning at the very moment in which it is first encountered.

In future research on the topic, it is advisable to steer experimental data collection methods away from any sort of student evaluation which results in an academic grade. Insofar as a student is conscious of the fact that any part of a translated text or the unknown words appearing therein could be the object of graded testing, the student may make a concerted effort to memorize these, effectively undermining the study objectives.

6. Conclusions

If one agrees that lexical knowledge is a crucial element for the comprehension of a text (Nation and Coady 1988; Laufer 1992; Nation 2001) and that vocabulary constitutes "the real intrinsic difficulty of learning a foreign language" (Sweet 1900: 66), the necessity of paying specific attention to vocabulary acquisition in translator training programs becomes clear. Nevertheless, two factors have traditionally thwarted the practical application of this conclusion: (1) the fact that a translator may always turn to a dictionary to resolve a lexical doubt and (2) the belief that the mere act of translating results in vocabulary learning. With regard to the former, dictionary searches are time-consuming and, thus, excessive dictionary use becomes antagonistic to efficient professional translation activity. Concerning the latter, it has been hypothesized here that the act of translating a text from an L2 to an L1 lacks two factors —sufficient intentional learning and deep processing— necessary for vocabulary retention. Given that the professional translator requires wide lexical knowledge when translating and that this knowledge cannot always be attained from professional practice, it may be concluded that more specific attention should be paid to vocabulary learning in translator training programs.

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Translating Taboo Language in Joyce's *Ulysses*: A Special Edition in Spanish for Franco and Perón

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In the years following its publication in 1922, James Joyce's *Ulysses* inspired great controversy. It was banned in much of the English-speaking world because of a number of passages considered pornographic. Paradoxically, *Ulysses* was never banned in Spain during the Franco regime, nor was it in Argentina during the regimes of Ramírez and Perón. This contrast is puzzling, given the strong censorship policies in both countries during the first part of the twentieth century. The reason Joyce's work was not banned in the Spanish-speaking world may be found in several crucial differences between the original text in English and its first Spanish translation. A comparison of the passages in English marked as objectionable by the US censor and Salas Subirat's first translation of them into Spanish shows a series of shifts that produce a lack of equivalence and accessibility, as well as fragments of text omitted by the translator.

Keywords: translation studies; censorship; James Joyce; *Ulysses*; taboo language; slang

. . .

La traducción del tabú en el *Ulises* de Joyce: una edición especial en español para Franco y Perón

En los años que siguieron a su publicación en 1922, el *Ulises* de James Joyce provocó gran controversia. Fue censurado en gran parte del mundo anglosajón debido a numerosos pasajes considerados pornográficos. Paradójicamente, la obra nunca fue censurada en España durante el régimen de Franco ni en Argentina durante las dictaduras de Ramírez y Perón. Este contraste resulta contradictorio teniendo en cuenta la estricta censura vigente en ambos países durante la primera mitad del siglo XX. Las razones por las que la obra de Joyce no fue censurada en el mundo hispanohablante pueden encontrarse en una serie de diferencias esenciales entre el texto original en inglés y su primera traducción al español. Tras realizar un análisis comparativo entre los pasajes que las autoridades americanas habían catalogado como censurables en la versión original y la primera traducción al español, pueden observarse alteraciones que producen una falta de equivalencia y accesibilidad en el texto de Salas Subirat, así como, incluso, fragmentos omitidos por el traductor.

Palabras clave: traducción; censura; James Joyce; *Ulises*; tabú; argot

> I am James Joyce. I understand that you are to translate *Ulysses*, and I have come from Paris to tell you not to alter a single word.
> RICHARD ELLMANN, *James Joyce*.

According to José Salas Subirat, the first translator of *Ulysses* into Spanish, despite its length, Joyce's *Ulysses* is not a difficult work to translate (Arbó 1974: 205). Yet, one may disagree with this statement once one essential detail is taken into consideration, namely the historical frame in which the work was published. One of the main challenges for the translator was the translation of taboo language at a time when both the Spanish and the Argentinian authorities imposed a strong censorship policy. By means of a comparative analysis between the original text and the first Spanish translation, this paper aims to shed light on the level of accessibility of passages that contain taboo language. Also, this study analyses whether the strategies used for the translation of these passages may have influenced the verdict of the authorities. The conclusions and implications of this study may be a useful source of inspiration and reflections for TS scholars interested in the influence of censorship in the translation of texts.

The publication of Joyce's *Ulysses* took time, effort and legal fights of epic proportions. According to Paul Vanderham, it took eleven years for the novel to be published in the United States, after its first appearance in Paris in 1922. As a result, during that period the work remained banned in much of the English-speaking world (1998: 57). In the United States, the obsession with banning *Ulysses* reached a degree of absurdity that ultimately led to the authorities' defeat in their crusade against the book: "*Ulysses* would not be legally available to US and English readers until 1934 and 1936 respectively. . . . By 1931, almost three years before the English version could be circulated, the French translation of *Ulysses* was being 'sold openly' in New York" (84).

While the saga of the process of making *Ulysses* available in the United States was unfolding, a French translation was published. One year later the translation process of the Spanish version of the novel started in Argentina. One of the enigmas surrounding the translation of *Ulysses* into Spanish is that of the translator's identity. Little is known about José Salas Subirat, who according to several sources was born in Buenos Aires in 1900, where he also died in 1975. He was an employee in an insurance agency, and he also published several works of fiction, translations of two biographies of music composers for children, a work on Beethoven, and a posthumous book on insurance in essay format.[1]

What we know about the circumstances of the first Spanish translation is also limited. It took eight years to complete, and was finally published in Buenos Aires in 1945. This was an unstable period for Argentina, marked by significant political and economic changes. Salas Subirat started work on the text in 1937 (Ríos 2004), during the final three

[1] *La ruta del miraje* (1924), *La traición del sol* (1941), *Las hélices del humo* (1942); *Bach* (1949), *Beethoven: el sacrificio de un niño* (1949); *A cien años de Beethoven* (1927); *Cómo se rebaten las objeciones al seguro de vida* (1979).

years of General Agustín Pedro Justo's government (1935-1938), in which Argentina experienced considerable economic development. Yet by the time the Spanish translation of *Ulysses* was ready for publication, political instability had increased, due to such events as the outbreak of World War II and General Pedro Ramírez's coup. One consequence of the coup, and the authoritarian regime it led to, was the establishment of censorship in Argentina in 1943.

The situation in Spain was similar in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). The outcome of the war was the General Franco regime, and in the first half of the 1940s censorship also became a reality. In fact, the press laws date back to April 1938, exactly one year before the end of the Civil War. These changes in the Argentine and Spanish governments share certain features. At the time Salas Subirat started translating *Ulysses* into Spanish, there was freedom of speech in both countries, although within the year the situation in Spain had altered. When censorship appeared in Argentina in 1943, Salas Subirat had been working on the translation for six years. The publication of the Spanish *Ulises*, however, took two more years.

The censorship norms in Spain and Argentina were not exactly the same, although both countries exercised censorship prior to publication. As one can observe in the forms that had to be completed by censors during the Franco regime, censorship focused on four issues in Spain: dogma, morality, religion, and politics. However, at the time, dogma and morality were subject to religious approval. As Alted Vigil points out, censorship was based on criteria that represented the new State: Catholic dogma and morality (1984: 70). Unlike Spain, Argentina had freedom of worship and during the 1930s and 1940s the authorities were concerned with purity of language, political ideology, and moral virtues (Guy 1995: 184). According to Donna J. Guy, "censorship was justified by the principles of the anti-white slavery organization, the International Abolitionist Federation, which supported the 'fight against profligacy and pornography'" (183). Guy adds that the members of this organization throughout the world "urged municipalities to monitor all 'public spectacles', prohibit cafés with female singers, and fight alcoholism" (184). Censorship in Argentina after the 1930s was motivated by conservatives, who "were more willing to force the Argentine public to conform to moral virtues" (184). Whereas Catholicism was a central concern for the Spanish authorities, Argentinian censors were not interested in dogma, but in a very specific problem in their society at the time: prostitution. Bordellos were banned in Argentina from 1936 until 1954, a period which coincides with the translation process of *Ulysses*. General Ramírez published a series of decrees on December 31, 1943, which stated that "signed copies of commentary and news wired abroad were to be deposited with the Undersecretariat within four hours of transmission", and newspaper publishers were compelled "to submit fifteen copies of each edition to the Undersecretariat" (Cane 2011: 113).

Despite the general banning of *Ulysses* in the liberal English-speaking world, Joyce's work was not banned in the Spanish-speaking world during an epoch when Argentina and Spain were characterised by strong military regimes that had established severe press laws

and censorship. Alberto Lázaro's account of the *Ulysses* file in the Spanish censor's archive is extremely revealing in this regard:

> It is a puzzling file which raises several important questions. It contains a request from the bookseller D. Joaquín de Oteyza García in Madrid to import only 100 copies (100 pesetas apiece) of José Salas Subirat's translation of *Ulysses* (published in Buenos Aires in 1945). Unfortunately the censor's report is missing. Was it accidentally mislaid or intentionally destroyed? I cannot tell. But on the application form, somebody had written "Suspendido" (literally "suspended") and a date, 12 June 1946. It is difficult to guess what really happened to Oteyza's request. The term I have generally found to be used to ban the importation of books was "denegado" (rejected). One may suppose then that the process of the book evaluation was just being temporarily interrupted. Perhaps the censorship office needed more time to study the book in detail. Perhaps the bookseller himself did not want to go on with the transaction and asked to "suspend" his request. However, I have seen some other censorship files concerning, for instance, the printing of George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* in the 1960s which also have the word "suspendido," and it clearly meant that the book was being banned. . . . Nevertheless, in 1947, eight moths after the above-mentioned file was "suspended," there was a piece of news in the journal *Ínsula* which makes us believe that the book had finally come to Spain and passed the filter of the Spanish censors. The reporter is José Luis Cano. . . . If José Luis Cano covered the news of the book's arrival in Spain so openly and clearly, it was probably because the censorship board had made no objections to the novel. Let us not forget that the journal was also scrutinised by the censorship office. (2001: 44-45)

Lázaro's research proves that *Ulysses* was not banned in Spain. The reception of the novel elsewhere in the Spanish-speaking world likewise shows greater tolerance. In this sense, Borges' feel for Joyce's work is extremely revealing. In 'Borges' Writings on Joyce: From a Mythical Translation to a Polemical Defence of Censorship', Andrés Pérez Simón analyses a number of articles in which Borges dealt with Joyce's masterpiece. Pérez Simón remarks that "Borges' attention to *Ulysses* shifted from an early admiration to a publicly declared state of scepticism about Joyce's achievements" (2001-2002: 135). He firstly alludes to two of Borges' essays, 'Narrative Art and Magic' (1932) and 'A Defense of *Bouvard et Pécuchet*' (1954), in which Borges acclaims Joyce, and *Ulysses* in particular. Pérez Simón then also refers to an interview in 1985, a few months before Borges' death where his view appears to be radically different, and according to Pérez Simón, "Molly Bloom's interior monologue, with its abundance of coarse words, disgusted the old Borges" (2001-2002: 134). A logical question in light of Pérez Simón's study concerns Borges' change of heart. Why did Borges' view of *Ulysses* change? Did Borges have access to the second Spanish translation of *Ulysses*, José María Valverde's version published in 1976? We should mention that Valverde's translation was published one year after Franco's death, and ten years after a more permissive new press law was established in Spain, the 'Ley de Prensa e Imprenta'. The historical circumstances that framed both

translations of *Ulysses* seem to have influenced both the process of translating and the final product.

Salas Subirat's translation of *Ulysses* was circulating freely, in Spain as well as in Argentina, two years after its publication in Buenos Aires in 1945. This situation stands in stark contrast to the difficulties the original version faced. The fact that *Ulysses* was banned in the United States for eleven years, and in the United Kingdom for nearly fifteen, whereas the Spanish translation was immediately published, seems contradictory. Indeed, such a paradox raises two questions:

1) Does Salas Subirat's version differ from Joyce's original?
2) Is the Salas Subirat translation as easily understood by readers in Spain as it is by readers in Argentina?

The answers to these two questions will shed light on the influence of a specific geopolitical situation on the translation of taboo language in a work of literature. The first question concerns whether the Spanish text conveys a different message in comparison to the original passages marked as objectionable by the US authorities. The second question entails variations in the Spanish spoken in Europe and Latin-America. Many scholars have already analysed the translation strategies used by Salas Subirat. Focusing on style, María Luisa Venegas Lagüéns explains how Salas Subirat's version "domesticates the source text and tends to insert too many explanations" (2006: 143). In fact, several previous authors had highlighted the fact that Salas Subirat's domesticated text was less accessible for readers from Spain because of the use of a local Argentinian variety of Spanish. One such critic is Gaya Nuño, who remarked that the regionalisms found in Salas Subirat's version interfered with the comprehension of a text that was intended for a varied readership from either Mexico or Spain (qtd. in Santa Cecilia 1997: 150).

In order to provide a thorough and convincing answer to the two questions above, a comparison of the English and Spanish versions of *Ulysses* has been carried out focusing specifically —but not exclusively— on the passages marked as objectionable by the US authorities. In addressing the first question we must consider, as does Jacob, the notion of 'equivalence' in studies that deal with translation of obscenity. He points out that "'[e]quivalent effect' stipulates that a good translation should produce the same effects on its audience as those produced by the original text on *its* readers. 'Equivalent effect' refers to lexical and stylistic levels, and, while admirable in intent, it raises difficult questions: Who were the original readers? What was the text's effect on them? (2006: 104).

One should also take into consideration the notion of 'equivalence' as it appears in the definition of dynamic-equivalence translation provided by Nida, i.e., "the closest natural equivalent to the source-language message" (1964: 166). The canonical nature of *Ulysses* must also be considered, because for such works —the Bible, for instance— Nida emphasises that "an easy and natural style in translating, despite the extreme difficulties of producing it —especially when translating an original of high quality— is

nevertheless essential to producing in the ultimate receptors a response similar to that of the original receptors" (163). Similarly, Azevedo points out that "insofar as readers are concerned, a translation constitutes the real text, and is expected to offer them a close-enough target-language equivalent of the source text". Yet, he adds that "even under the best of circumstances, however, that equivalence is approximate" (2007: 125). Indeed many scholars have challenged the notion of 'equivalence' in TS lately. However, despite the controversy surrounding it, the concept is still an essential element in assessing translations nowadays, and several scholars have also developed further interesting theories on this issue recently. Nord defines equivalence as a possible aim in Skopostheorie, "a relationship of equal communicative value or function between a source and a target text or, on lower ranks, between words, phrases, sentences, syntactic structures etc. of a source and a target language" (1997: 138). Rabadán adds a crucial element in her definition of 'equivalencia translémica', namely that it is subject to socio-historic rules (1991: 291). Baker, in her manifesto on 'equivalence', analyses different types, such as equivalence at word level, above word level, grammatical equivalence, textual equivalence, and pragmatic equivalence (1992). With regard to the first type — at word level— and focusing on taboo language, María Sánchez gives an example, the term *bastardo*, to emphasise that "the translator will need extreme care when having to deal with it", because "in English, the word 'bastard' is generally regarded as having quite strong connotations, but its Spanish equivalent, *bastardo*, is not normally used as an insult and simply refers to a person born outside marriage. Therefore, something that has strong connotations of the same type for Spanish speakers will have to be found, the answer being usually *hijo de puta*" (2009: 80). Sánchez adds that evoked meaning does not only apply to register variation, but also to dialect variation. In this regard, the obscure form of expression resulting from Salas Subirat's use of regionalisms from Argentina may have had an effect on the verdict in the Spanish censorship file. The Spanish censors might have not banned the text because it was not as explicit or accessible as if it had been written by a native speaker from Spain.

One of the main challenges for the translation of passages that contain slang and taboo language has to do with register. According to Halliday, "a register can be defined as the configuration of semantic resources that the member of a culture typically associates with a situation type. It is the meaning potential that is accessible in a given social context" (1978: 111). As regards accessibility, Bell states that

> accessibility shows the assumptions the sender has made about the knowledge he or she shares with the receiver; assumptions about the universe of discourse . . . . The more the writer assumes is shared, the less needs to be made explicit in the surface structure of the text and the more inaccessible the text becomes to the reader who lacks the assumed shared knowledge. . . . [I]naccessibility may depend not so much on the words but on the concepts which they realize in the text, concepts which may be presented together with a novel method of argumentation. (1991: 188)

A text's accessibility is strongly influenced by and related to what Bell calls "user-based (dialect) variation", which implies that "the individual's speech . . . would carry indications of age (temporal dialect), of geographical origin (regional dialect) and social class membership (social dialect)" (184). Bell's postulates indicate that a message formulated in a dialect variation may have consequences for the level of accessibility. Accordingly, issues such as the translation of slang, which strongly depends on this matter, will be less clear for those readers who, despite sharing the same language as the author of the translation, are users of a different dialect variation.

Yet, in the translation of a work such as *Ulysses*, and, in particular, of the passages that were marked by the US authorities, Venuti's application of Lecercle's 'remainder' theory to translation must also be taken into account. According to Venuti,

> [t]he remainder consists of such variations as regional and social dialects, slogans and clichés, technical terminologies and slang, archaisms and neologisms, literary figures like metaphors and puns, stylistic innovations, and foreign loan words. In varying the standard dialect, the remainder complicates the communication of a univocal signified by calling attention to the linguistic, cultural, and social conditions of any communicative act, to the fact that the standard dialect is merely one among a wide variety of possible forms. In a translation, the remainder consists of linguistic forms and textual effects that simultaneously vary both the current standard dialect of the translating language and the formal and semantic dimensions of the foreign text. The variations that comprise the remainder complicate the establishment of a lexicographical equivalence with the foreign text because they work only in the translating language and culture and reflect the linguistic, cultural, and social conditions of the receptors. (2002: 219)

The publication of the first Spanish *Ulysses* coincided with the final years of what Guillermo L. Guitarte calls the divergence period of the Spanish language (1991: 72), which started with the independence of most Latin-American countries in the nineteenth century, and finished in 1951 with the *Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española* (81). During this period an increasing separation between Spain and the colonies took place politically, culturally, and linguistically, and the Latin-American countries each developed their own distinguishing linguistic features, which produced the different variations of Spanish. When the first Spanish translation of *Ulysses* was published, regional meanings of Spanish were obscure because the distance between the linguistic variations in Spain and Latin America was notable at that stage. All of which suggests that verification of whether the remainder within Salas Subirat's translation affects the accessibility of the text to a specific readership is needed.

Indeed, *Ulysses* contains a considerable amount of slang and taboo language. As such, a comparative study between source text and target text may be extremely revealing in discerning whether the translator made use of strategies that imply self-censorship. According to Santaemilia, "self-censorships may include all the imaginable forms of

elimination, distortion, downgrading, misadjustment, infidelity, and so on" (2008: 224). He also mentions some of the strategies applied by translators in passages that contain taboo language: "partial translation, minimisation or omission of sex-related terms" (225).

A focus on the translation of passages containing taboo or slang items is essential to assess whether Salas Subirat's translation is firstly, 'equivalent' to the source text in English, and secondly, 'accessible' to readers coming from Spanish speaking countries besides his native Argentina that have other regional dialects. These questions are especially germane to the study of passages of *Ulysses* marked as objectionable by the US censor. Back-translation will be used here in order to check whether the translator's version is accurate and convincing, as well as comprehensible for all Spanish readers.

One of the first passages marked by the US authorities as obscene or objectionable which merits looking at in translation appears in 'Calypso': "the grey sunken cunt of the world" (*U* 4.227). Salas Subirat translates this as "la hundida concha gris del mundo" (Salas Subirat 1945: 91). "Cunt" in the original is rendered as "concha", which is a correct option in Argentina in this context, but less equivalent in terms of register in the rest of the Spanish-speaking world, in which it means simply "shell" and has no taboo connotation, 'Concha' in fact being a typical female first name in Spain. The censor from Spain would thus have never considered making any objection to this expression. This word can be found again in the use of the related term 'conchuda' in the translation of a character in 'Circe', "CUNTY KATE" (*U* 15.4633), as "CATITA LA CONCHUDA" (Salas Subirat 1945: 550). The term 'concha' is applied in Argentina with the same meaning and register as 'cunt', and it is also found as the translation of *fucking*: "PRIVATE CARR (Loosening his belt, shouts.) I'll wring the neck of any fucking bastard says a word against my bleeding fucking king" (*U* 15.4643-4645), translated as "[v]oy a retorcerle el pescuezo a cualquier conchudo bastardo que diga una palabra contra mi puñetero conchudo rey" (Salas Subirat 1945: 550). Salas Subirat's Spanish version does not even provide a translation of the term 'cunt' in another passage in 'Circe' marked by the US authorities: "you're not game, in fact. (*Her sowcunt barks*)" (*U* 15.3489). This is rendered as "quieres decir que estás fuera de juego en realidad. (*Su cuerpo de marrana ladra*)" (Salas Subirat 1945: 527). The translation strategy applied to this passage, in which the reference to taboo language is omitted, strongly suggests self-censorship on the translator's part.

This strategy of not translating the English terms that the US censor objected to at all is also used in other passages, such as: "I know what boys feel with that down on their cheek doing that frigging drawing out the thing by the hour question and answer would you do this that and the other with the coalman yes with a bishop yes I would" (*U* 18.87-90). In Spanish this is the tame "yo sé lo que sienten los muchachos con esa pelusa en las mejillas, siempre a punto para andar con el chiche pregunta y respuesta harías esto y aquello y lo de más allá con el carbonero sí con un obispo sí" (Salas Subirat 1945: 687). Vanderham points out that the term 'frigging' was underlined by Assistant US Attorney Sam Coleman (1998: 202). Although the expression 'andar con el chiche' could be considered as an implicit

reference to masturbating in Latin America, it is vague and certainly not considered taboo. Accordingly, the reader's interpretations may also be ambiguous.

In the same vein, Molly saying, "he commenced kissing me on the choir stairs after I sang Gounods Ave Maria what are we waiting for O my heart kiss me straight on the brow and part which is my brown part he was pretty hot" (*U* 18.273-276), is translated as "comenzó a besarme en las escaleras del coro después que canté el Ave María de Gounod qué estábamos esperando oh mi corazón bésame bien en la cara y parte cuál es mi parte cara él era bastante ardiente" (Salas Subirat 1945: 692). Notice how there is no reference to Molly's "brown part" in the Spanish version. The interpretation of this expression and the reasons for the US authorities' objections become clear a bit further on: "he can stick his tongue 7 miles up my hole as hes there my brown part" (*U* 18.1522-1523).

Another fragment of interest appears in a conversation about the erection *post mortem*: "[t]he poor bugger's tool that's being hanged . . . . He told me when they cut him down after the drop it was standing up in their faces like a poker" (*U* 12.457-462). This is translated as "[l]a herramienta del pobre diablo que acaba de ser colgado . . . . Me dijo que cuando iban a cortar la soga después del colgamiento para bajarlo, tenía el asunto parado, delante de la cara de ellos como un atizador" (Salas Subirat 1945: 329). The choice of three terms affects the message in Spanish. 'Herramienta' is the correct translation of 'tool', but it may confuse the reader. It is not an equivalent of the English term, because, pragmatically, it is not used with the same frequency as in English in the same euphemistic sense. In fact, when one looks up this word in a dictionary of *lunfardo*, the Argentine slang dialect, the only meaning that appears is 'gun' (Dis 1975: 138). The meaning of the whole sentence is even more puzzling for the Spanish reader in the next sentence with a reference to "tenía el asunto parado". An Argentine reader would understand that the hangman's lover was standing up in front of everyone (Dis 1975: 13). However, by means of back-translation one can observe how a reader from Spain would interpret it as 'the matter being stopped'. The formulation of this passage, marked as objectionable by Asst US Attorney Sam Coleman (Vanderham 1998: 175), is then difficult to understand in the Spanish version.

There are other occasions too in which the Spanish version is inaccessible for speakers of Spanish in general, such as in the following fragment from 'Penelope': "Ill change that lace on my black dress to show off my bubs" (*U* 18.900). This appears in Spanish as "cambiaría ese encaje de mi vestido negro para exhibir mis combas" (Salas Subirat 1945: 709). There is not a single dictionary of Spanish or any of its American variations that contains the meaning of the word 'comba', either in the singular or in the plural, as 'breasts'. Another example can be found in the translation of the reference to Paul De Kock in 'Sirens' (*U* 11.500), which appears as Paul De Koch in the Spanish version (Salas Subirat 1945: 294). The Spanish reader with notions of English will definitely miss the pun of the author's name.

An even more interesting example is found with the verb 'to come'. This verb appears repeatedly in passages marked as objectionable where it refers to 'ejaculation'. However, all such references are translated into Spanish as 'venir', which implies a movement toward

the speaker, but lacks the sexual interpretation.[2] In the Spanish version of *Ulysses*, such a situation occurs for the first time in 'Nausicaa', after Bloom's masturbation in Sandycove: "[t]ook its time in coming like herself, slow but sure" (*U* 13.1016). This is translated as "[s]e tomó su tiempo para venir, como ella, lenta pero segura" (Salas Subirat 1945: 396).[3] One can actually speak about a pattern within Salas Subirat's translation, because each time the verb 'to come' appears, in explicit or implied reference to 'ejaculation', in a sentence included in the list of objectionable passages of *Ulysses*, the first Spanish translation includes the verb 'venir', which lacks any sexual interpretation. This can be noticed again in 'Circe', where: "[s]uppose you got up the wrong side of the bed or came too quick with your best girl" (*U* 15.1970-1971) becomes in Spanish "[t]e debes haber levantado con el pie izquierdo o debes de haberte apurado demasiado con tu novia" (Salas Subirat 1945: 493).[4] Here, 'apurar' is in fact a verb that combines the meaning of 'to come' —as moving toward the speaker— together with a reference to the fast performance of the action implied by the word 'quick'.

A similar example can be found in 'Penelope': "I wished he was here or somebody to let myself go with and come again like that I feel all fire inside me" (*U* 18.584-585). This is expressed by the Spanish translator as "quisiera que él estuviera aquí o alguien con quien dejarme ir y volver otra vez así me siento poseída por un fuego interior" (Salas Subirat 1945: 701). The Spanish version is, again, different from the original because it ignores the sense of the verb marked as objectionable by the American censor. Salas Subirat opts for the other meaning ('motion') and, by combining it with the adverb 'again', he decides to form 'volver', which in English means 'to return'. In terms of equivalence then, the Spanish text can be seen to differ considerably from the original.

A bit further on, the same verb reappears: "when he made me spend the 2nd time tickling me behind with his finger I was coming for about 5 minutes with my legs round

[2] Of all the dictionaries consulted, there is only one, *Diccionario de hispanoamericanismos no recogidos por la Real Academia*, which includes an allusion to such a meaning. However, the source specifies that it is only applied in Cuba, Costa Rica, and Colombia for both 'venida' as a substantive, and 'venirse' as a reflexive verb. In addition, the example that has been selected comes from the novel *Tres tristes tigres* by Guillermo Cabrera Infante. Significantly, in the first paragraph of the Introduction to this same dictionary, the author, Renaud Richard, makes use of Guillermo Cabrera Infante's novel as an example to remark that many contemporary Latin-American texts pose problems of comprehension in terms of vocabulary. Richard explains that a text may acquire one or another specific meaning depending precisely on the regional meaning of a term. Finally, one must not forget that Cabrera Infante's *Tres tristes tigres* was published in 1983, which may be the reason why such a meaning of the verb 'venir' does not even appear in other older dictionaries of Cuban Spanish, such as *Diccionario de cubanismos*, and *Los cubanismos en el Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*.

[3] One must bear in mind that the only occasion in which the verb can have the same interpretation as in English in this context requires a reflexive pronoun, which is not present. Simultaneously, this Spanish version of *Ulysses* was translated by an Argentine who may have aimed to address either Argentine readers or the Spanish-speaking world in general. Consequently, the reference to an 'ejaculation', restricted to Cuba, Costa Rica, and Colombia, seems to be improbable.

[4] According to Paul Vanderham, the words "came too quick with your best girl" were underlined by Assistant US Attorney Sam Coleman (1998: 235).

him I had to hug him after" (*U* 18.585-587). This is translated as "cuando me hizo gozar la segunda vez cosquilleándome atrás con el dedo estuve como 5 minutos rodeándolo con las piernas gozando luego tuve que estrecharlo" (Salas Subirat 1945: 701). The Spanish version lacks the references to Molly's orgasm. According to the *Diccionario de la lengua española de la Real Academia Española*, which is the only source consulted that contains the term,[5] 'gozar' can be understood as an equivalent of the English verb 'to enjoy'. There is a meaning of the verb that implies 'a carnal encounter with a woman', but the verb in this sense is transitive, unlike the use found in Salas Subirat's text.[6] It should be noted as well that the original alludes explicitly to the duration of Molly's orgasm, whereas the translation conveys the idea that Molly spent five minutes with her legs round him, and that she enjoyed the situation.

Similarly, one finds in the same episode: "of course she cant feel anything deep yet I never came properly till I was what 22 or so it went into the wrong place always" (*U* 18.1049-1050). In Spanish this is "por cierto que no puede sentir nada profundamente todavía yo nunca me puse bien hasta que tuve cuánto 22 ó algo nunca se llegaba a nada" (Salas Subirat 1945: 713). Again, the explicitness of the English version when Molly refers to her first orgasm is not present in the Spanish text. According to the *Diccionario de la lengua española de la Real Academia Española*, 'ponerse bien' can either mean 'to dress up' or 'to heal'. Some alternative meanings of the verb in Latin America included in the *Diccionario de hispanoamericanismos no recogidos por la Real Academia* suggest 'getting drunk' (as 'ponérsela') or 'to pay attention' ('poner asunto') but in those cases the verb is either combined with a different element ('la' instead of 'bien'), or not used pronominally ('poner asunto' instead of 'ponerse bien') (Richard 1997). Again, the Spanish version does not convey the same message as the English original.

There are other sections in which the verb 'to come' contains a reference to 'ejaculation' in English that seems to have been lost in the translation into Spanish. A good example is "he must have come 3 or 4 times" (*U* 18.182), which in Spanish has been expressed as "él ha de haberlo hecho 3 ó 4 veces" (Salas Subirat 1945: 689). The Spanish text includes the verb 'hacer', which has a broad meaning, as 'to do' or 'to make'. The pronoun 'lo' ('it') refers to an antecedent, which in this case must be sought in the former sentence, and can be identified as the adverbial clause "cuando encendía la lámpara" ('when he switched on the lamp'). The Spanish text lacks the clear reference to the ejaculation in the original, and it is also difficult to understand, due to the inaccurate relation of pronoun and antecedent.

One can observe that the references to ejaculation in *Ulysses* are frequently censored by the US authorities, even if they are not as explicit as the ones already mentioned. For instance, in 'Nausicaa': "[d]rained all the manhood out of me" (*U* 13.1101-1102). This appears in Spanish as "me ha dejado vacío" (Salas Subirat 1945: 398). The use of the verb 'to drain' in English conveys another explicit allusion to Bloom's ejaculation. Yet,

[5] The other dictionaries of American Spanish do not provide other meanings of the term.

[6] The translator may have been influenced by the English verb 'to come', which is intransitive.

in the Spanish translation this reference can only be interpreted by Argentine readers.[7] It is also significant that the definition of the term provided by the *Nuevo diccionario de argentinismos* includes a note that explains that this verb is the equivalent of 'correrse' in Spain.[8] This is the only source which contains the term with this sense. Although Spanish readers in general may understand the meaning of the sentence as the Argentines do, the reference to ejaculation is not explicit and would probably be interpreted as a metaphor of sorts. Also, due to what Bell calls "regional dialect" (1991: 184), Bloom's characterisation would differ in these two countries: readers coming from Argentina noticing how Bloom makes use of a colloquial expression, whereas for readers from Spain, he appears to be a witty character who makes use of an ironic metaphor to refer implicitly to his action.

There are more passages in which a difference of meaning can be observed due to the variations of Spanish, such as the sentence from 'Penelope' "how did we finish it off yes O yes I pulled him off into my handkerchief" (*U* 18.809). This is translated as "cómo terminamos sí oh sí yo lo saqué dentro de mi pañuelo" (Salas Subirat 1945: 706). The use of the verb 'terminar' is taboo in Argentina and, like the original, refers to an orgasm. However, the term is not taboo in Spain, and it simply means 'to finish', without sexual connotation. In a similar way, the sentence "Ill let him know if thats what he wanted that his wife is fucked yes and damn well fucked too" (*U* 18.1512) appears in the Spanish version as "se lo haré saber si eso es lo que él quiere que le trinquen a la mujer y requetebién trincada" (Salas Subirat 1945: 725). This translation is also controversial depending on the reader's country of origin: the verb 'trincar' is taboo in Argentina and is a perfect equivalent of the verb used in the English version, but it is not exactly the same in Spain, where it means 'to grab with force' and, unlike in Argentina, the register is not taboo. This example confirms the idea mentioned at the beginning of this study, namely, that the translator was aware that the Argentinian censors were not as concerned with taboo language as they were with other aspects, such as references to prostitution.

A final example of the lack of equivalence of the Spanish text in terms of register in Argentina and Spain is found in the next sentence, also from 'Penelope': "Ill put on my best shift and drawers let him have a good eyeful out of that to make his micky stand for him" (*U* 18.1508-1510). This is rendered as "me pondré la camisa y los calzones mejores para que se le llene bien el ojo que se le pare el pito" (Salas Subirat 1945: 725). The term 'pito' is an equivalent translation of the original in both Argentina and Spain, according to, respectively, the dictionary of *argentinismos*, and the Real Academia Española. However, the verb 'parar' has dissimilar connotations: it is taboo in Argentina and refers to having an erection, but it is not taboo in Spain, where the meaning is radically different, and it only means 'to stop'.

Sometimes one can observe that the objectionable passages have been marked by the US authorities not only because a reference was explicitly pornographic or taboo, but

[7] According to the *Nuevo diccionario de argentinismos*, 'vaciar' means 'to ejaculate' in Argentina.

[8] The corresponding entry reads: "**vaciar** *v* ~**se** *coloq!* Eyacular el hombre [E: correrse]" (604).

because of erotic suggestions. Such is the case with the following sentence from 'Nausicaa': "[c]lings to everything she takes off" (*U* 13.1021). This is translated as "[s]e aferra a todo lo que ella ha llevado" (Salas Subirat 1945: 396). The translator has here made use of 'modulation', a common resource in Translation Studies. Hatim and Munday define it as "a variation of the form of the message, obtained by a change in the point of view" (2004: 150), and Pym nuances that the adjustments carried out in 'modulations' "are made for different discursive conventions" (2010: 14). In the example above one observes how Salas Subirat has, in fact, expressed the same idea as the original, but from an alternative perspective, in this case by putting the idea into words as "everything she has worn". The problem this time is the total lack of eroticism in the translation. The original text contains a veiled erotic allusion to a woman undressing ("everything she takes off"), which can be related to the scene in 'Nausicaa', and to Gerty's movements in particular. However, Salas Subirat's modulation removes the eroticism by substituting an active verb, "to take off", in the present simple, by a passive, 'to wear', in a past tense.

Apart from the objectionable passages included in the Appendix to Vanderham's *James Joyce and Censorship*, there are other occasions in which the meaning of the original is lost or altered in translation. One of the most notable shifts is the conversion of almost all the instances of 'whores' in the English text into 'prostitutas' —equivalent to 'prostitutes' in English— in the Spanish translation. The contrast between these passages in English and their Spanish versions is noticeable: out of 43 instances, there are only three passages (in 'Cyclops', 'Circe', and 'Penelope') in which the word 'whore' has been translated as 'puta', the most corresponding term in Spanish: "The curse of a goodfornothing God light sideways on the bloody thicklugged sons of whores' gets!" (*U* 12.1198-1199) translated as "[l]a maldición de un inservible Dios los ilumine de costado a esos puñeteros hijos de puta" (348); "trying to make a whore of me" (*U* 18.96-97) as "tratando de convertirme en una puta" (687); and "I'm only a shilling whore" (*U* 15.4385) as "no soy más que una puta de un chelín" (545).[9] Although the English terms 'whore' and 'prostitute' are synonyms, there is

[9] The following instances are all translated as 'prostituta/s': "Whores in Turkish graveyards" (*U* 6.757); "a whore of Babylon" (*U* 9.338-340); "an age of exhausted whoredom" (*U* 9.810); "Rosalie, the coalquay whore" (*U* 9.1090-1091); (the coalquay whore)" (*U* 9.1186-1188); "O, the whore of the lane! A frowsy whore" (*U* 11.1250-1252); "Why that high class whore" (*U* 13.900); "murdered his goods with whores" (*U* 14.274-276); "a certain whore of an eye pleasing exterior" (*U* 14.448-449); "if they met with this whore Bird-in-the-Hand" (*U* 14.457); "an old whoremaster that kept seven trulls in his house" (*U* 14.620); "Cheap whores" (*U* 15.596); "THE WHORES" (*U* 15.599); "*Zoe Higgins, a young whore*" (*U* 15.1279); "Give a bleeding whore a chance" (*U* 15.1980); "*where two sister whores are seated*" (*U* 15.2021); "*Kitty Ricketts, a bony pallid whore*" (*U* 15.2050); "*Florry Talbot, a blond feeble goose fat whore*" (*U* 15.2073); "THE THREE WHORES" (*U* 15.2212); "Bloom surveys uncertainly the three whores" (*U* 15.2406); "A son of a whore" (*U* 15.2575); "*a whore's shoulders*" (*U* 15.2588); "*in talk with the whores*" (*U* 15.2705); "*a massive whore mistress enters*" (*U* 15.2742); "*Points to his whores*" (*U* 15.2973); "*the girl, the woman, the whore, the other*" (*U* 15.3047); "*Smiles yellowly at the whores*" (*U* 15.3830); "*Lynch and the whores reply*" (*U* 15.3903); "*the whores at the door . . . . The two whores rush to the halldoors*" (*U* 15.4252-4254); "*The whores point. . . . all the whores clustered talk . . . . Bella from within the hall uses on her whores*" (*U* 15.4313-4321); "*Whores screech*" (*U* 15.4664)"; "the amours of whores and chummies" (*U* 16.1041); "that English whore" (*U* 16.1352); "a whore always shoplifting anything she could" (*U* 18.657-659);

a difference in use and register which is absolutely consistent with the register difference between 'puta' and 'prostituta' in Spanish.[10] The constant substitution of a derogatory term for one that is more neutral forms a pattern in Salas Subirat's translation. This would seem to be evidence of intentional censorship in this case, most probably, self-censorship of the translator. One observes the translator's concern to soften explicit references to prostitution —in this case, by means of a change of register— in order to avoid further problems with the Argentinian censors. As said above, allusions to prostitution were one of the main concerns for the Argentinian authorities at the time.

A comparison of the original version of *Ulysses* in English and its first translation in Spanish reveals significant differences between the two texts in terms of both equivalence and accessibility. One observes that passages marked by the US authorities as objectionable are frequently translated into Spanish in ways that do not maintain the meaning or register of the original. Such is the case with the substantives 'cunt' and 'whore'. The translation of 'cunt' remains obscure for the Spanish reader, due to language variations between the regional versions of Spanish spoken in Argentina and in Spain, and the reference of 'whore' has, in most instances, been neutralised by using a term with a different register. Similarly, the verb 'to come' has been systematically neutralised in the translation, appearing in Spanish as if it referred to a movement toward the speaker in contexts where it is in fact used as a synonym for an orgasm. The use of these strategies is recurrent in the translation of other passages for which the authorities' objections were comparable. The comparison of both texts shows that some of the objectionable expressions were not even translated into Spanish in a number of instances. Accordingly, the first Spanish text does not reach the semantic equivalence that is today expected of the translation of a work that has become a point of reference in twentieth-century literature. This comparative study also proves that both texts significantly differ in ways that make the Spanish version more acceptable to the eyes of a censor, indeed confirming Lefevere's idea that "for readers who cannot check the translation against the original, the translation, quite simply, is the original" (1992: 109-10). In terms of accessibility the first Spanish translation also at times adds to the ambiguity of the original. In fact, the second Spanish censor's report on *Ulysses*, dated 1962 and quoted by Lázaro, considers Salas Subirat's translation ambiguous or even sometimes unintelligible. The censor wrote: "With truly incomprehensible fragments, James Joyce's Ulysses has pages regarded as already classic by literary critics, within the new lines of expression characteristic of our century. . . . Therefore I consider that IT MAY BE PUBLISHED.[11]

[10] In *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, the entry 'whore' reads: "**whore** is, in mid-C.19-20, considered a vulgarism; *harlot* is considered preferable, but in C.20, archaic; *prostitute*, however, is now quite polite" (1336). Accordingly, the term 'puta' is considered vulgar and offensive in the *Diccionario de uso del español* (896), in the *Diccionario de expresiones malsonantes del español* (237), and in the *Diccionario de argot* (256). These Spanish sources refer to 'prostituta' as a general and polite synonym. Notice as well that neither the *Diccionario de expresiones malsonantes del español* nor the *Diccionario de argot* include the term 'prostituta'. Therefore, the term should not be understood as derogatory.

[11] "Con fragmentos verdaderamente incomprensibles, el 'Ulises' de James Joyce tiene páginas consideradas por la crítica literaria como antológicas, dentro de las nuevas líneas de expresión propias de nuestro siglo. . . . Por todo

Would the second Spanish censor's report on *Ulysses* have been as 'flattering' —as Alberto Lázaro states— if instead of Salas Subirat's translation, any of the more recent texts by translators from Spain —such as that of Valverde, or Tortosa and Venegas— had been considered? What did the censor from Spain actually mean by "incomprehensible fragments"? Did he refer to cultural references such as those analysed in Gifford and Seidman's annotations (1974)? Did he allude to the Argentine variation of Spanish instead, or rather to some passages that, as seen above, were formulated with what Paul Grice calls "obscurity of expression" (1975)? An accurate answer should definitely take into consideration all these difficulties.

This paper has shown how differences in register can influence readership: obscure translations can have the same effect as deleting a passage. However, they should not necessarily be understood as mistranslations, but rather as a means of restricting the understanding of the audience addressed through the use of regionalisms. The use of such a regional dialect has an effect on the reader, and in this particular translation, one observes how Bloom's characterisation differs slightly from the original text, depending on the reader's country of origin. Such contrasts are also evident in different editions of a work of literature. Could Salas Subirat's translation, therefore, be regarded as an edition of Joyce's *Ulysses*? The two initial questions of this paper may be helpful to solve this conundrum. In terms of equivalence, Salas Subirat's edition does, in the passages the US authorities considered objectionable, differ from Joyce's original version. Similarly, Salas Subirat's translation does not maintain the same level of accessibility for all Spanish speakers in that his text is not as comprehensible for readers from Spain —such as Franco's censorship board— as it is for readers from Argentina. The most logical conclusion that can be reached after analysing all the differences between the English and Spanish texts is that the first Spanish translation of *Ulysses* seems to be what one might call an alternative edition of Joyce's masterpiece in another language.

One should not object to Salas Subirat's translation because of the lack of equivalence with the original version in a series of passages, or because the reader's interpretation of the text is influenced by 'regional dialect'. These quirks are precisely what, together with its historic context, make this translation unique and may have been the reason why, despite being a banned book in the English-speaking world, *Ulysses* was never banned either under the Franco regime or under the Argentine military governments of first General Ramírez, and later Perón. The register of a series of passages —marked as offensive by the US authorities— was indeed adapted, but there were no substantial changes in the content of the story. There are excerpts with neutralisations, and omissions, which suggest the translator's self-censorship. But if the scope of the translation was focused on avoiding censorship and making Joyce's work available to the Spanish readers, then Salas Subirat's work can be considered a real success. Accordingly, those passages which

ello considero que PUEDE PUBLICARSE" (File 1219 – 62, Box 13,815). The translation of the text from this file into English was made by Alberto Lázaro (2001: 45-46).

lack correspondence with the original, or which contain ambiguities, should be afforded a considerable degree of indulgence. Without them who knows how long the Spanish-speaking world would have had to wait to read Joyce's masterpiece.

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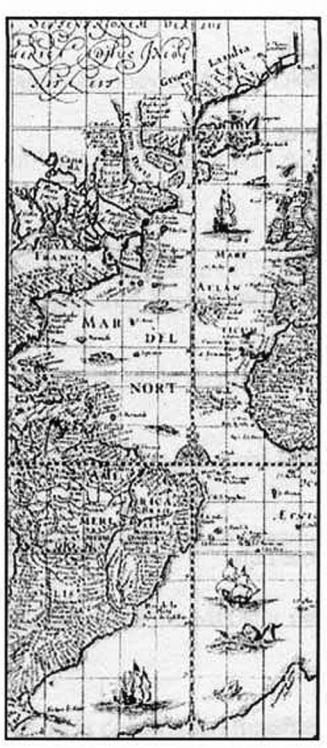
INTERVIEW



ENTREVISTA

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On Music in Her Mountain Novels: An Interview with Lee Smith

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Lee Smith has been writing fiction for more than forty years. The renowned author of eleven novels, a novella, and four collections of short stories to date, she is a prolific Appalachian writer whose work has been translated into a number of languages. Recently distinguished as a member of the Fellowship of Southern Writers, Lee Smith has also received numerous writing awards, among them the Lifetime Literary Achievement Award from the State of Virginia (2010), the Thomas Wolfe Award (2010), induction into the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame (2009), the Southern Book Critics Circle Award for *The Last Girls* (2002) and the Academy Award in Fiction from the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1999), all in nearly a decade. Her ability to capture Appalachian voices and create stories rooted deeply in the folklore of her mountain region has become a hallmark of her fiction. Mountain musicians, like Mack Stiltner in *Black Mountain Breakdown* (1980) and Little Luther Wade in *Oral History* (1983), populated her earlier fiction. The author also includes references to popular mountain ballads like "Come All Ye Fair and Tender Ladies" in the epigraph of *Oral History,* and later even uses part of it for the title of one of her best novels, *Fair and Tender Ladies* (1988). But the two novels where the author delves most deeply into the theme of music are *The Devil's Dream* (1992) and *On Agate Hill* (2006), her latest work, where she explores the relationship between music and literature from a broader perspective.

The following interview took place on May 26, 2011, at her home in Hillsborough, NC, during my time as a SAAS-Fulbright Scholar at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where I was researching contemporary Appalachian Literature.

CRR: *The theme of Appalachian music is one particularly dear to your heart. Why is that so?*

LS: For me it is entirely personal. I grew up in Grundy, in Buchanan County (Southwest Virginia), hearing Appalachian music on every side all the time. To me, that is just the sound of my childhood. It is very beautiful. It corresponds in my mind to the natural beauty of the mountains and then to all that big family that I had then and that I loved. There was always music out there, and there was always somebody playing music. Music was very much a part of every single thing we did. It was like the soundtrack of my childhood. My childhood was also filled with stories because all of these people —the men

and the women— were big storytellers. Nobody was a reader much or a learned person, but they could really tell a story and every single piece of information was just presented as a story. I just grew up hearing a story and the stories were completely interwoven with the music, which is appropriate too because Appalachian music so often is telling a story. It is very narrative. I just grew up with it being so much a part of me, who I was, the way I was learning language, and the way I was learning how to interpret and express the world. It was completely personal. It is not something I came to later in life.

CRR: *Are there any musicians in your family?*

LS: There are, yeah. In fact, there were two twins, both of them named Bill Smith way back. Blind Bill Smith was a kind of a barrelhouse piano player. This Bill Smith made furniture and he just played all over the county. He was always getting too drunk and always falling in and out of jail. He was my great-uncle, actually. And my granddaddy, who was his brother, was always the one who had to go get him and my grandmother wouldn't let him spend the night in their house because he was stealing stuff [*laughs*]. But he was apparently quieter and he typed a whole lot of letters to my granddaddy, Earl Smith, because he had a little Braille typewriter. Anyway, we were not a singing family. But my best friend, Martha Sue Owens, and her father, Herbert Owens, were and they were just wonderful, wonderful. He was like two houses down and so he would take us to where he would go off to play music. There were lots and lots of people that we knew really well, cousins and all, other than my immediate family [*laughs*].

CRR: *Why is music so important in Appalachia? Is it because it tells the history of mountain people as a distinct group in the South and in America?*

LS: That's probably true. It does do that. But I think that is someone else's interpretation from a more learned distance, you know, from an academic or sociological distant point. I think that music is so important because, for one thing, it was a survival culture. I mean, it was a very poor culture early on. The one thing everybody had was music because the songs were handed. Not everybody was literate, knew how to read and write, but the music was free and you didn't have to be able to read or know anything in particular to know a lot of songs or to be able to play great music. It was just simply pervasive. It expressed all these very deep and very honest emotions that the people themselves were having or going through —whether these were religious songs, with a very primitive view of God and the desperate heart-felt belief in the afterlife, or whether these were love songs. But the most important thing this music is about was work and money, as well as the land itself. So it was simply an expression —really a literary expression— of who we were. Also it was a way early on to remember the history because there were so many songs that were telling stories so that people could remember, for example, the death of Floyd Collins that inspired so many songs. I think it comes out really, at that early point, of the lack of a reading culture. It's more like the troubadour, that sense of history in store and being in the collective memory. And, of course, it's mnemonic. You can remember a song.

CRR: *In her 1905 book,* The Spirit of the Mountains*, Emma Bell Miles said that "[t]he music of the Southern mountaineer is not only peculiar, but, like himself, peculiarly American" (147). She even expressed her hope that Appalachian music might "take a high place among the world's great schools of expression" (171). My question is, was she prophetic somehow?*

LS: She certainly was, yes. It's interesting that she perceived that because so many of us growing up there were being, as my friend Pam used to say, "raised to leave". But she was able to perceive what was really there, so that's great. She was really prophetic. But I think this is part of a whole national trend and the kind of standardization that we have entered into now, particularly with these new media where everything is national immediately. I think it has made us all treasure what is particularly local and particularly ours because we see it threatened.

CRR: *Emma Bell Miles considered the compositions of mountaineers in song, proverb and story, including ballads and rhymes, as "literature" (172). Do you also view these Appalachian oral forms of expression as literature or as cultural expressions deeply interrelated?*

LS: I view a lot of it as literature, absolutely, particularly the early ballads. I see the difference between them and Robert Burns, so to speak [*laughs*]. But I think she's right. I read her a long time ago but she had a certain education that she brought back to her appreciation of the mountains. She was local. Well, that's the thing. It's very hard to adequately appreciate your own culture if you're right in the middle of it and you've never been anywhere else or learned anything beyond it, because that's you there and that's all you know. But if you can get something that gives you a sort of a distance so you can have an aesthetic, that distance makes all the difference so that you can perceive and articulate it. And she did it so well in that book. I mean, Emma Bell Miles was quite a writer herself.

CRR: *You mention Emma Bell Miles as one of the sources you consulted to write* The Devil's Dream*. Has she influenced your work in any way?*

LS: It's hard to say because I have read so much over all the years. When I first read her, she influenced my work immensely, enormously. It was at that point that I had already begun writing and cataloguing, writing down and saving all the remarks of my family and the people around the home and taping them, but I didn't know what I was gonna do with it. And then to come across someone like Emma Bell Miles and see her own beautiful writing about my life and about my own culture was just ticking to me. Jean Richie's book, *Singing Family of the Cumberlands* (1955), is again beautiful writing — this appreciation of what was here, what was all around us. So those were among the first, and they make impressions that are big impressions. James Still was another one although he didn't deal so specifically with the music, but as a storyteller. He was writing literature, simple mountain stories, out of this stuff. So it's very moving, shocking and inspiring for me.

CRR: *Have you been inspired by the way other writers, like Eudora Welty or even Virginia Woolf, used music and musical elements in their fiction?*

LS: Oh, yeah. Eudora Welty has been an immense influence to me always, in general, and not only the musical elements. It's interesting to me that she too has a mountain past. Did you know that? She went up to West Virginia every summer to visit her grandmother and her five banjo-playing uncles. You hear a lot of music coming through in her work and it's very important to her. And it's also very important to the quality of her writing, to her prose, because she has this perfect pitch, the perfect musical prose. Also, her stories often are more like tales or songs than they are like stories. I think there is a difference between a tale and a story, and hers are more in that mountain tradition of the tale and the song. It's not just conflict, complication, and resolution —that's a story. It's just this happening and this happening and this happening, and there's a sort of a repetition, a rhythm. She writes in that tradition and she was very important to me. Also, there's often a lot of mythology going on in Eudora Welty, and you find that same kind of thing in the ballads and the mountain music. There's folk belief as a part of daily life. Like 'Shower of Gold', anything can happen: the witch can come in daily life and the mountain stories. So there is a definite resonance there with her. As to Virginia Woolf, I don't know. As a young writer and as a student at college, I've always absolutely adored Virginia Woolf. But I think, for one thing, because I'd go toward impressionism, impressionistic writing or impressionism in art kind of naturally, because it's hard for me to see and grasp and express the whole. I like to make the reader work a little, put it together. And somehow the way Woolf writes just hit me, in a way, like Faulkner. I mean, Woolf, Faulkner and Eudora Welty are all just huge influences, the major influences.

CRR: *Now let's talk about your novels. Apart from* The Devil's Dream *and more recently* On Agate Hill*, you have used references to traditional Appalachian ballads and musicians in your earlier fiction. Music has been a constant in many of your novels.*

LS: It has. Oh, absolutely. I think if you tried to take the music out of my books, there wouldn't be any books left. I mean, it's a huge influence on me and it's the soundtrack. When I'm writing, I more or less gather material, plan what I am going to write and do all this pre-writing. But when I sit down to actually write, it's like I go into a little trance and I hear the story. I guess that's one reason why I so often have first-person narrators because often they are telling their own story. But whether they are or not, I actually hear the story and usually there is music along with it. It's the whole shebang —it's like there's a film, there's a story, there's the whole sound of the story and the course of the story that's in my mind. And I am just writing it down as it happens. So it's all a part of it for me.

CRR: *Let me ask you first about* The Devil's Dream. *In the past, the fiddle was often called 'the Devil's box'. What is it that made fiddle music so devilish?*

LS: [*Laughs*] Because I think it makes you want to get up and dance, and dancing is somehow sexual in a very closed-down kind of life. In certain kinds of churches, you

weren't allowed to dance. In fact, many women had to sit on opposite sides of the church and all. So the fiddle so often led to a bodily expression and lascivious behavior —all these things that were forbidden in certain ways, that were a threat to this very narrow construction of a family or a marriage.

CRR: *This is a novel about music and musicians. Can you explain Lucie Queen's uneasy feeling, her "terrible sense of loss" (1992: 124), after singing their songs to strangers during the Bristol Sessions?*

LS: Yeah, it's funny that you would pick that up because after that book came out, Vivian Mason wrote me a letter about that scene, which had made her cry. She was trying to figure it out, why she took it so personally, and why it made her cry. It made me cry too when she said it, but not when I wrote it down. I think it's because your sharing something which has been so private and so personal means that now any old stranger can hear it, can hear what has meant the most to you, and can just appropriate it. It's no longer yours.

CRR: *Is it like giving it away?*

LS: Yeah, you're losing it because you're giving it away. Of course, the problem is that music is performance and it is to be heard. It's like writing something and putting it in your drawer, instead of trying to have somebody else read it. But there is something very sad about taking something that has just meant so much to you and then sharing it. You have a sense —and Lucie had a sense there— that it would immediately be snapped up, which it was, and it would immediately belong to the world.

CRR: *In this novel you fictionalize the history of country music. You go back from the ballads and hymns sung in the rural world of the Appalachian mountains, the early commercialization of hillbilly music in urban areas, to all of its later derivations (rockabilly, etc). And the novel ends with the apex of country music's popularity in the 1970s and with a return to roots, to the origin. Can you comment on that?*

LS: Yeah, I really saw the structure of this novel like a record, like an album —those big records that we used to have before CDs— in which all the different family members had their own cut, and everybody had his or her song on it. I saw it as a circle. I saw it as a circular thing. So at the very end, Katie Cocker was being interviewed by the lady in Nashville and then going back to her roots, their roots, where it all started.

CRR: *To me* The Devil's Dream *tells more than just the history of country music or what some people even call 'all-American music'. In this novel, you are also telling the process of what John Egerton called "The Southernization of America" (1974) and reminding Americans of the Appalachian origins of country music. Would you agree to that?*

LS: Hmmm, that wasn't what I had articulated, what I had consciously realized I was doing. But looking at that book, I think now that it does do that. I mean, that novel could not have imagined Faith Hill, Garth Brooks and the degree of commercialization

or success —popular, mainstream, worldwide success— that country music has had since. Take Dolly Parton and her own very humble beginnings, and now she's a complete worldwide phenomenon. This book didn't even quite imagine that that could happen.

CRR: *It just struck me that you decided to finish this long, long period of history right in the middle of the 1970s, which is this really important moment in the history of country music. Then I read about John Egerton and this idea of the Southernization of America, and I thought this was all related somehow.*

LS: Oh, it is related. It is related. It was at the point where suddenly we were being appreciated. I remember one thing and it's true. My publisher did not get this book at all. They just thought, well, who would want to read about country music? But as my editor was a good friend, she published it and they were still thinking like that because they lived in New York and didn't know anything. But at the same time, the publisher really just didn't do anything when the book came out. You see, my editor, who I loved so much, had cancer then and she could get it published, but she couldn't really have a big say anymore. They were keeping her on but she was ill. So when that book came out though, and they said who cares about country music, and we will just print a few copies and see what happens, Garth Brooks was on the cover of *Time* magazine! He was a huge phenomenon, a huge national success, a worldwide success. At that time, the big hats and Tim McGraw and this whole thing had gone national, as had NASCAR, as had Dolly. All that stuff was really happening right then. So the book itself did end right at that point and was published right at that point, right before it all became such a huge deal.

CRR: *I read somewhere that balladeer and novelist Sheila Kay Adams inspired the beginning of* The Devil's Dream *with the tragic story of fiddler Kate Malone. Tell me about it.*

LS: I knew Sheila early on because I would teach these workshops for the state of North Carolina, that they still have, to reward good teachers in the public teaching system. When I began to do research for *The Devil's Dream*, I knew enough to know that many of the very earliest ballads had been collected for the first time by Cecil Sharp up in Madison County, in Hot Springs. There was a group of famous ballad singers up there, and somebody told me that one of the younger members, Sheila, was singing publicly. Then, strangely enough, I was teaching at the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching (NCCAT), just teaching creative writing as an enrichment course, a weekend seminar type of thing, to pamper deserving teachers and she was one of them. She thought we were doing writing exercises, directive writing from prompts and so on, and she wrote this incredible piece about going hunting for ginseng with her granny. And everybody was like "Oh, my God". Then, she started just writing out the story. She was always such a great storyteller. She would tell stories in her public performances as well as sing. And she sang for us all and told stories. But she turned out to be —and this is rare— just as good at writing them as not, so she started writing them down and she would send them to me. So, finally, she got

enough for a book that UNC press published. It's called *Come Go Home with We* (1995), and I wrote the introduction. So I did get a lot of those earlier ideas from Sheila because I went up to visit with her and I stayed with her, and then we went up to visit with her granny Dale Norton and all of them up in Sodom. That's how I got the material from the early ballad part of the book.

CRR: *Right, and I think the title of that collection of short stories or sketches is a line in an old ballad. I can't remember which one, but it's a line in an old ballad...*

LS: It is. That's why she chose it.

CRR: *Another musician, Alice Gerrard, and her song 'Agate Hill' also proved to be pivotal to inspire you your new novel,* On Agate Hill. *Can you tell me about that?*

LS: Yes, I have loved Alice's singing all my life. I was living in Chapel Hill and she was up in Galax, and then she moved down here. So I got to meet her and we have been friends for many, many years. When she sings, she's got that old traditional sound, like nobody's business. Anyway, she had a new CD coming out with many original tunes on it, as well as her versions of some older ones and some fragmentary older things she had finished. So she asked me to write the liner notes, and I did, and the song 'Agate Hill' was one of the songs. She wrote it after her mother died, and it was the most haunting song. It just kept going through my mind as I wrote the liner notes. Meanwhile, we had just moved into this house and I was becoming very interested in Civil War letters and correspondents. That was just for my own pleasure really, reading a lot of that, and that 'Agate Hill' ballad just kept coming back and coming back.

CRR: *How did* On Agate Hill *begin then? With a character, an image, a voice, a particular emotion, or a song?*

LS: It began with the song 'Agate Hill', which somehow kept resounding in my mind, as I was reading all this Civil War and reconstruction material. It was about a lost world, and the song itself was written out of grief and loss. I don't know why but it just kept playing in the back of my mind when I was reading all this stuff, and at a certain point I realized I was gonna write a novel. Then I just started writing the novel, but it was always absolutely in the center of it because that whole time period is so emotional. There's never been a body of literature —and I really say Civil War literature like the letters, journals and diaries kept and so on— that has been so charged with emotion. I think everybody was aware that they were living through circumstances that had never occurred in this country before and would never happen again, that their lives were significant and could end at any minute. They did not know that their lives were being changed utterly, and that's why they were writing to set this down. So this is the most emotional kind of reading and writing that has ever occurred. Oh, I don't know if I would have ever written the novel if I hadn't heard that song 'Agate Hill'! Somehow it really became a part of what I was doing and the soundtrack for *On Agate Hill*. It was all I was ever going to name it.

CRR: *Music is a powerful vehicle for our emotions and transcendence. It has the ability to empower us and evoke memories, and it also has immensely healing powers. What function has music had for you in this novel?*

LS: Gosh, it's had every function in *On Agate Hill*, every function. So many of the songs just expressed the time, like the minstrel song 'Old Dan Tucker'. I mean the music was a vehicle for history, for expressing history, and for capturing the mood of time and place. And it was such a dire time, so charged with emotion, that it's almost too much for any sort of reasoned writing. I think music captured it better than anything else. The ballad is a way to tell Molly's own story. For me, what happens in that book, what happens to Molly Petree, is she goes from being a girl who has no role in her own life —is just a little observer of the life around her, has no power and is an endangered child in many ways— to becoming a really fully realized person and having her own song, singing her own song. The whole ballad is an expression of her, of her life, and what she has gone through. She not only finds her voice, she lives her own life in a way that surprised even me, I have to say! [*Laughs*]

CRR: *Was Alice Gerrard's record* The Road to Agate Hill *(2007) the result of a creative exchange between a singer and a fiction writer? Or to put it differently, did she inspire you and then you inspired her to create her record of traditional Appalachian songs?*

LS: Yes, absolutely! Well, actually we started performing together! When this novel was going to come out, somehow I couldn't conceive of it, of doing any readings from it, without her. So I asked her if she would come and play the music. And she said yeah and she got two other women to come as a band, and sometimes we even had more. It was just great. So every reading I did was really a lot of fun. It would be me reading and her performing, and we had so much fun. We did it to small groups and we did it to enormous groups. At Appalachian State University, we did it for a thousand people. It just depended. We just had the best time. And then she decided to make a CD out of the music.

CRR: *For this novel, you wrote the ballad of 'Molly and the Traveling Man', but this is not the first time you write songs of your own in your fiction. You also did that in* The Devil's Dream. *Most of the music you mention in* The Devil's Dream *is music that is there, music somebody else created, but...*

LS: It's public domain. That's older songs. But then there are songs that I wrote, like Little Luther Wade's song [in *Oral History*], and the ballad at the beginning, and 'I'm a Single Girl, Laying Here Alone Again'. I've always written songs. I can't sing a lick. I think this is all out of some sort of envy, wish fulfillment. [*Laughs*]

CRR: *A ballad is a narrative song, a song that tells a story, which is in fact what country music is all about. This novel has many of the elements and themes you usually find in ballads. Tell me about it.*

LS: Oh, absolutely, and that's the popularity of it, I think. It's because people want a story. They really do. They want a story. And this novel, *On Agate Hill*, has many themes

you would usually find in ballads. It has the tragic love story, the murder, the dramatic deaths, the long separations, fights, wars. You know, it's got all that stuff.

CRR: *And betrayal?*

LS: Betrayal, yeah.

CRR: *Death is one of the main components of American ballads, and your novel includes a murder ballad. What is it about ballads that you find so fascinating?*

LS: I always feel like they are telling a true story somehow because all stories are finally sad. All true stories end in death, and they will deal with that, and they go right to the heart. They are about love, death, betrayal, belief, hope. They are just about the major things of our lives, and I think so often other forms of art tend to trip that stuff up too much and sugarcoat it. The ballad to me captures the beauty of the sound and the beauty of the expression, and it provides some sort of comfort through repetition. Somehow you can accept what is inevitable if it comes to you in the form of a ballad. So I guess that's why it seems to me this book should be a ballad. I think of it as a ballad the way I think of *The Devil's Dream* as an album! [*Laughs*]

CRR: *What happens in real life does not always coincide with the story a ballad tells, and you show that in your novel. 'Molly and the Traveling Man' tells only a part of the story. Were you making a point about ballad history and ballad making here?*

LS: Yes, I was. I was, yeah, because I believe that there can be parallel stories, and each one can present a vision of the truth that gets it pretty much as well as the others. There can be sort of parallel stories. But I was saying something about how stories are constructed, how they are created and why. It's always the storyteller's story or the balladeer's song. Because once the artistry gets in there, there's always a twist. It's always twisted by whoever is singing it or presenting it or whatever. So it's hard to tell quite what the story is.

CRR: *I found some interesting parallelisms between 'The Ballad of Frankie and Albert' and the one you created for the novel: a woman shooting her man, a musician who is a womanizer, and the trial that followed the murder. Despite the obvious differences between these two stories, did you find inspiration for your story in some existing ballad or story?*

LS: Well, I think that I had just internalized that, you know. But I'm sure I found inspiration on some level that was unconscious, for sure. Oh, let me say just one more thing. For many years, I have been thinking about some of these ideas and even going back to when I was first beginning to do so many oral history interviews and also taking down songs. I was catching songs. I was a songcatcher —that's what they used to call somebody who would go around the mountains. But as a really young woman doing all this just for my own pleasure, I was always so struck by the different versions I would get of the same thing. I just remember one in particular. I have never actually written about this particular thing, but I was interviewing at one point a whole bunch of really old people in Grundy,

where I am from, about the last public hanging that had been in the square there. It was a famous one. John Harden found his wife in bed with another man and killed them both. It was the hanging of John Harden and it was in the public square. Over a thousand people came. They brought sandwiches and they were selling stuff on the square. Anyway, I was interviewing a whole lot of people who had either been there when they were very little or heard it first-hand from parents who had. And I got a million different stories like was he tall, was he short, did he sing a song that he wrote, did he actually give a chaw of tobacco to my great-grandmother who was the jailer, all this different stuff. It has just always been completely astonishing to me to find all the different versions, and you get that when you get along to something like *On Agate Hill* and a ballad is done. I had this again in *Oral History* about making up —how somebody says they've seen a ghost and everybody's saying it starts to tell the story. It's the crazy girl who has been spurned by somebody and she says "I seen her and I seen this and that". So she's making up a story and telling it. So I guess I have always been interested in that, the sort of appropriation of the truth by the storyteller or the singer.

CRR: On Agate Hill *also includes several musicians like Spence, Jacky Jarvis, and towards the end even Juney*.

LS: Yeah, well, real life does inform the writing of any book, and my son had died during the writing of it. He was a musician too, so it just seemed totally natural that Juney would be a musician. It was a source of enormous strength to me and a kind of healing thing, too, when Juney appeared.

CRR: *In Jacky Jarvis, Molly finds her own 'Jack of Diamonds', so to speak. He is a character associated with orality, like Honey Breeding in* Fair and Tender Ladies *in many ways*...

LS: Oh, that's right! I did not even think about that, but that's true. [*Laughter*] Oh, he is and I was not aware of that, but I can see that when you say it. I hadn't really thought about that. Well, they are both very close to the land, to the animal. Honey is like the honey bee or whatever, and Jacky doesn't live by the rules of civilization, either.

CRR: *At different points in the novel, you also make specific references to the exchange that took place between black and white musicians, particularly with the banjo, thus alluding to the significant contribution of black music to Appalachian music and American music in general. Tell me about it*.

LS: Yeah, and I guess one reason I have been aware of all my life is that I have been fortunate enough to know a number of musicians very, very well. Along about the first time when I met Alice Gerrard, which is 30 years ago or something, I met Tommy Thompson and Cecee Conway. Cecee was doing all that research on the banjo then, and of course Tommy Thompson —her husband, who is dead now— was playing a lot, adapting a lot of his banjo tunes from the black. So all that interested me and found its way in the novel.

CRR: *Apart from 'Old Dan Tucker', a banjo song from the minstrel tradition, you have also included old hymns, such as 'Climbing Jacob's Ladder', which Liddy sings, pointing to the emergence of spiritual songs and subsequent creation of African American hymnbooks soon after the Civil War*.

LS: Well, so many of those spirituals had a hidden meaning. The Negro spirituals had a hidden meaning because they were about the end of slavery, like 'Climbing Jacob's Ladder' was about escaping from slavery. I didn't know this when I wrote it, but one of the most pervasive slave narratives was the one about flight. This is so weird to me. I just feel with this book I was kind of tracked in psychologically to a lot of things I wasn't aware of. When the older couple, the slave couple, run away and Molly is watching it from the snowy balcony, I had no idea that they would fly, that they would just start flying. That was not anything I had thought about before. I was just writing it and all of a sudden they just fly. I was kind of astonished by that. Then I went to Nashville, where there's an old plantation house, and I had taken my children to lunch. There they had in their tours an interpretation; they had not only the plantation life but the slave life. In their gift shop, they had stuff for sale, including the slave books about slave narratives and so on. I was looking at that and it turns out that the most pervasive image of all is flight! You have all these different songs and slave drawings, where people are literally taking flight out of the field, whole groups of them, and this flying is a whole big thing, the flying Negro! Then I talked to Cindy [Lucinda MacKethan] about it, and she said "Oh, yeah, that's one of the most pervasive images, and a lot of times it is told with a gospel framework but it is leaving, escaping from slavery". I had no idea where this came from.

CRR: *Well, it works as a beautiful image*.

LS: Well, it does. But I mean, again, it's just one of these images because it certainly wasn't me consciously seeking out. It was wild.

CRR: *One thing I find very fascinating is this recurrent notion of your fiction coming out of the pages of a book and coming to life in stage adaptations, with your stories being heard and the music played. There is almost a natural match between your fiction and the stage, don't you think?*

LS: Yeah, I do. I always loved the stage, always loved it. I always acted as a child. I was always writing plays and making everybody put on the plays for me. So it is very vivid. I mean, I tend to write in scenes. These are not abstract —I am not an abstract writer. People are acting out things on the pages, so it's a natural transition. But I think it has also to do with serendipity. I mean, I think early on, well with *The Devil's Dream*, Paul Ferguson began to teach this course on oral interpretation of Southern literature at UNC, and he began to get his students to adapt from contemporary Southern authors. One of them did a really good job with part of *The Devil's Dream*, and then Paul got the idea of writing the play of *The Devil's Dream*. After that, he's done several others and it's sort of just sprung from there.

CRR: *And now you even write musicals like* Good Ol' Girls *that make it to Broadway! Again literature and music go hand in hand. What made you enter this new terrain along with fellow writer and friend Jill McCorkle?*

LS: Well, it's really not new terrain because I have loved music so much. When I do readings, I would get different musicians to come do stuff with me. And when *The Devil's Dream* came out, Clyde Edgerton and his then wife, Susan, began performing with me. He was great. I lived in Nashville, so I have real good friends who are musicians and songwriters, particularly Marshall Chapman. And Marshall does this thing every autumn during the southern festival of books at the Bluebird Cafe. Well, it's this 'Songwriter's Night' and 'In The Round' thing, where she started, and they've done it for fifty years. She asked me if I would do 'Songwriters' and 'The Round' with her, and I did. She would sing a song and I would just read something. I said, well, let's get Clyde, so we did it one time. The first time we ever did it, there were four of us —it was me, Clyde reading, her and Guy Clark singing. And, of course, there're tough songs and stories, too. So they started doing this and I got Jill to do it. Then we all just got used to the idea, and when I got a new book out —I can't even remember what it was— I got Marshall and Matraca to get up on stage with me and sing with me. So it kind of evolved. But Matraca is the one that had the idea of making a specific show because she wrote the song 'Good Ol' Girls', and she called up Marshall. Then they called me and, of course, I said yes immediately and got Jill in on it. Then we had all this stuff, and it really just needed help with form and so on, so we got Paul Ferguson in on it. But we had the concept and the monologues, the stories and so on. So it was very organic. This whole thing has been very organic.

CRR: *Now you are writing a novel based on Zelda Fitzgerald, who died in a fire at Highland Hospital in Ashville, NC. Any country music in it?*

LS: You know what? Maybe not. I am not sure. Well, there's music in here because there's a lot of theatricals at the hospital. But it's a different kind of music. It's more like the jazz age and that kind of thing.

CRR: *Thank you so much, Lee.*

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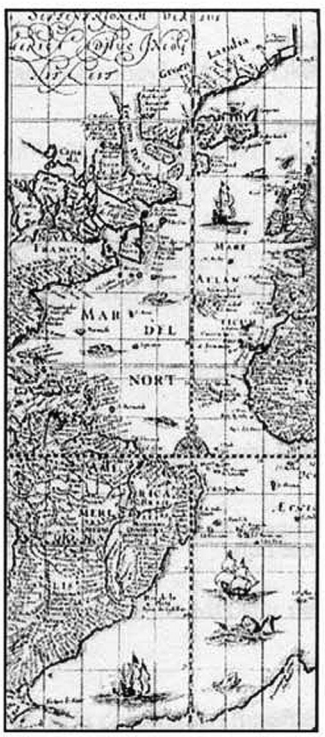
REVIEWS



RESEÑAS

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Hayes, Kevin J. 2012: *A Journey Through American Literature*. Oxford: Oxford UP. 220 pp. ISBN: 978-0-19-986206-1.

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Unless you are a hobo and hop a freight train to wherever it takes you, a 'journey' means an itinerary, which means a series of choices of destinations and an organization of possibilities: how long to linger, what to report, what photos to keep and to share with your friends, what souvenirs to buy. Inevitably your choices would not necessarily be mine, but nor do personal preferences (and a somewhat idiosyncratic selection) mean that the journey is less interesting. Kevin J. Hayes' decision to organize his journey through American Literature not by the traditional chronology or different movements but by genre and by theme is full of pitfalls, yet even these challenges give us a new way to approach and a different sense of understanding of the 'journey'.

In a more straightforward chronology one can examine the specific socio-historical moment within which to explore each literary text as a response to that era, as a cultural production of its time. Choosing a 'thematic' approach is tenuous: what themes are consistent? How do different authors develop them? What happens if themes are mixed within one text? Even considering all these possible limitations, Hayes' personal *Journey* is often interesting and a lot of fun. In spite of, or perhaps even because of, the problematics of his selection, there is a wealth of information here, particularly for an instructor of American Literature who wants to teach a course on, say, 'travel literature', or for the graduate student reading widely in order to decide on focus and familiarize him/herself with the multitude of possibilities. For the less well-versed, however, the selections and focus are not always useful as an overview. Sometimes trying to make a general statement about a variety of very different works leads the author into difficulties. Each of the eight different chapters are subdivided into various sections and, although what is included in each section is sometimes arbitrary, a fairly inclusive index makes it somewhat easier to read for content and specific writers or their works.

Chapter 1, 'Beginnings', piques the reader's interest by citing the 'Opening Lines' of many of our major writers. And we may confidently agree with the author when he asserts that "American literature is about identity . . . [and] there may be no general theme more prevalent in it or more pertinent to it" (3). Yet Hayes is on more slippery ground when he asserts on page six that "[i]n the United States, the expression of individuality is

an expression of nationality". This can be effectively argued, as Hayes indeed does, when reviewing Poe, Melville, Whitman or Twain, but not particularly if you are black... and 'invisible', which the author acknowledges by including Ralph Ellison's unforgettable opening, and then, in his own short discussion, stating: "He exists in a society that does not acknowledge his existence" (11). Included here are the most obvious choices —John Smith, Franklin, Jefferson and Crevecoeur (though not Payne). Although Hayes rightly points out that the term 'American Dream', so prevalent in American mythology, is scarcely one hundred years old, he centers this rather (too) short discussion on Horatio Alger with a nod to Franklin, Henry James, and even Ralph Ellison. In this section, however, one cannot help but expect to see included such established texts as Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman,* or F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, to name only two. For these we must wait until later chapters (6 and 7, respectively). And herein lies one of the problems with trying to organize a thematic journey, which the author then abandons in favor of specific chapters on genres rather than themes: travel literature, autobiography, the short story, poetry, theater, the novel, yet finally returning to a mix of all of the above in 'Endings'.

Hayes is at his best in Chapter 2 on 'Travels' (26-48), an erudite *tour de force* of a rather neglected area of the literature. Within this chapter he in fact organizes his discussion chronologically: 'Eighteenth Century Travels', 'Classics of the West' (roughly coinciding with the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), 'The World' (again covering the nineteenth century) which begins with Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast* (1840) and in which Melville, James and Twain are all represented. This chapter winds up with 'Twentieth Century Travels', and then relies on a very brief review of John Steinbeck's novels (to represent the first half of the century) and a more detailed examination of Paul Theroux's work (for the second half of the century). My guess is that this particular genre is both Hayes' specialty and his passion. The chapter is lively and invites further reading, concluding with a vigorous defense by the author to consider excellence in writing as good literature "regardless of genre" (48). Hayes is obviously not only very well read and informed, but also revels in sharing that knowledge. A rollicking good read.

Obviously a chapter on 'Autobiography' (Chapter 3, 49-69) will begin with the ubiquitous Benjamin Franklin. Though acknowledging that not all autobiographies are "the whole truth and nothing but the truth", Hayes nevertheless affirms that "[f]or most autobiographers, the writing process is a matter of selection, not imagination" (51), though perhaps enhancement is a first cousin to imagination. However, the statement that "the slave narrative is another genre of American autobiography" (53) is misleading. Frederick Douglass wrote his life story three times during his life, but the specific characteristics of his slave narrative make its uncritical inclusion as 'autobiography' rather problematic. This ex-slave mastered not only the skills of reading and writing, but also of effective rhetoric, and was quick to adopt the literary techniques and conventions that would be most effective in achieving his objectives. The specifics of the Slave Narrative as genre will spill over into Hayes' section on 'Jazz Autobiography', the personal stories of jazz

musicians, where he cites both their documentary value as well as their aesthetic qualities. Perhaps he should have more creatively followed his own nomenclature, as 'jazz' music is traditionally thought to be improvisational and much more about process than product, less about 'truth' than performance. Hayes leaves us in this chapter within post-modern reader response theory: Forcing "readers to make sense of the material, . . . [Theresa Hak Kyung] Cha's literary gem beautifully demonstrates how readers construct the identities of the autobiographers they read" (69). The author has thus ultimately compromised his own initial description of 'autobiography'.

In Chapter 4, 'Narrative Voice and the Short Story' (70-93), the author returns to look specifically at genre more or less within a chronological framework. Beginning with Washington Irving, Hayes describes *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon* (1819) as "essentially a book of travels" (70), which ostensibly takes us back to 'travel', while Hawthorne's short fiction explores "the depths of the soul and the intricacies of the past" (73), so aren't we back to 'identity'? I actually do not agree with Hayes in 'Naturalism and the Short Story' (82) because making Crane's 'The Open Boat' emblematic of the naturalist short story is also problematic: This particular story in many ways constitutes a challenge to naturalism and can be analyzed as both impressionistic and symbolist. Jack London's short stories are more to the point here, but unfortunately there is no referencing in this chapter of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's seminal story, 'The Yellow Wallpaper'.

Ernest Hemingway in 'Modern Voices' emphasizes the "moral vacuity of modern existence" (85) and forces readers to fill in the gaps and make sense of what is there as well as what is not. In 'Postmodern Voices' Hayes points out the ironic, more allusive, "discordant mix" of humor with seriousness, genre and styles as well as self-conscious playfulness (89), although the reader must content him/herself with good discussions of only Thomas Pynchon and Raymond Carver. It is unclear, however, if the author includes Sandra Cisneros as a postmodern short story writer, nor why he would do so. While the discussion of 'Woman Hollering Creek' is an interesting representation of her work, including it at the very end of this chapter only points to the painful omission of a slew of very successful short story writers, representatives of the post 1960s' loosening of the canon. Why not a section on the 'multi-cultural' short story, including some if not all of the pioneers of the 'new frontier' of American fiction?

Chapter 5, 'Poetry' (94-116), begins in the nineteenth century with the obligatory Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman. Whitman, of course, writes as an extension of his 'self', the 'I' that democratically represents the whole of the American nation (Whitman being the Transcendental Poet Emerson was waiting for). "The contrast between Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman, between private and public . . . [is] absolutely vital to American poetry" (98), writes Hayes, but then he fails to give other examples that might have been useful in backing up this claim. This review of poetry then jumps backwards in time to 'Colonial American Verse' with not only the obligatory references to Anne Bradstreet and the Rev. Edward Taylor, but also an interesting analysis of the Virginian Robert Bolling and Ebenezer Cook's mock-epic, 'The Sot-weed Factor' (1708).

A look at the 'Other Major Nineteenth-Century Poets', including Poe, Melville and Crane, suggests "growing complexities in the relationship between poet and public" (103). 'Modernist Verse' makes mention of Ezra Pound, W.C. Williams and H.D, T.S. Eliot, Robert Frost, and though I was pleased to see Langston Hughes included among the Modernist poets, he is dispatched in only three sentences. It would, of course, be absolutely impossible to deal with the plethora of American poets of contemporary times, but in 'The Private Poet', Hayes' selection of Richard Hugo is a good one, particularly because as a vet he speaks for the many who have sought homecoming from multiple wars through their art. This journey becomes infinitely more interesting when the author actually takes time to delve a little more deeply into the authors/poets he chooses to include.

I find it rather curious that the first section of Chapter 6 is entitled 'Representative American Plays' and not 'Playwrights', because after citing 'adaptations' from the nineteenth century, the chapter does indeed turn to the 'golden age' of American theater to discuss the three 'greats': Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller, and Tennessee Williams. As with the section on O'Neill, the pages given to Arthur Miller pique my interest yet again. But while Tennessee Williams is described as writing about what it means to be a Southerner (*á la* Faulkner), the 'ideas central to American literature' fully expressed in *The Night of the Iguana* are not cited, much less discussed. The reader is left hanging: which ideas is Hayes referring to? Hayes obviously knows a lot, but at times he needs to be a little more explicit so as to enable us to more fully follow his arguments.

Hayes makes his way into 'Writing for Cinema and Television' by noting that many contemporary screenwriters, specifically Sam Peckinpah, cut their teeth on Williams' dramatic productions, and then by delving into the successful work of Paddy Chayefsky's writing for television drama (though according to Christopher Bigsby, Chayesfky despaired and felt demeaned because he did not receive much credit for his work). While only commenting that playwrights like Edward Albee had a distaste for writing for TV, Hayes also totally ignores a long list of contemporary dramatists. Although celebrating writers Larry David and Jerry Seinfeld for their sitcom *Seinfeld*, Hayes rather despairs of writing 'the literary history of television', given that so many contemporary programs are written by committee. But while the author certainly latches on to a critical move from live theater to the TV series, even more innovative is Christopher Bigsby's take on 'everyday drama' in the first dozen years of the new millennium. In his latest book, *Viewing America: A Critical Introduction to 21st Century American Television Drama* (2013), Bigsby argues convincingly that writing for TV has gained a new respectability and that what used to be the domain of live theater, in depicting an edgy, critical response to socio-political concerns, has migrated to the smaller screen and is reaching an ever-widening audience. A new generation of 'playwrights' has been drawn in this new century to the radical critique of a 'culture in crisis' now possible on television, in which this new writer of the 'drama of the everyday' becomes absolutely central, not the committee writers that Hayes signals. Though drama might not be the American strong suit (we can, perhaps, leave that accolade for the novel), still it seems unfair of Hayes to eliminate so many strong

playwrights in favor of two or three screenwriters and the 'committee writing' of many popular TV series.

Some of Hayes' strongest writing is in Chapter 7 (136-57), 'The Great American Novel', and not because I agree with his choices, but because his discussion of just how this was/is to be evaluated over the centuries (in 'The Birth of a Literary Ideal') is both illuminating and a fascinating read. Hayes uses this 'review' of its evolving definitions and implications to consider the contributions of both critics and authors throughout the later nineteenth and the twentieth century. Included in this section (finally) is Fitzgerald's masterpiece, *The Great Gatsby,* as is William Faulkner, though the latter's prestige is alleged to rest not on one particular novel but on the cycle of novels written about Yoknapatawpha county.

In Hayes' definition, 'The Postmodern Novel' moves from the 1950s (Kerouac, Heller, Kesey) through Barthelme's *Snow White*, "which effectively sounded the death knell of the American novel as an evolving and coherent form" (151). Hayes argues that in the late sixties "many of the best writers turned toward nonfiction" (152), leading into 'The New Journalism and the Death of the Novel', and on to talking about Tom Wolfe and briefly mention Truman Capote. Be that as it may, 'The Genre That Wouldn't Die' touches on Philip Roth, returns to Tom Wolf, and then moves forward (or to the side) to include Maxine Hong Kingston, who proposed an alternative to the Great American Novel, 'the Global novel' (155). At least Jonathan Franzen receives a page and a half with descriptions of *The Corrections* (2001) and *Freedom* (2012), "another saga of a Midwestern family in tatters", for which "the new book's inadequacies have not shaken the mantle of great American novelist from Franzen's shoulders" (156). But in Hayes's view,

> [a] truly great novel, American or not, requires more daring. . . . The author must not only tell a story that encapsulates the nation but also tell it in a new way, inventing a mode and method of storytelling different from what other novelists have done before. Novelists with the ambition, talent, and daring to accept this challenge come along only once or twice a century. (157)

Such a sweeping evaluation makes it even harder for me to understand why, of all the authors included in this book, not one mention is made of Toni Morrison's oeuvre. *Beloved*, winner of the Pulitzer in 1989 and selected by the *New York Times* informal survey in 2006 as the best novel of the previous 25 years, is not even mentioned, not even included in the 'Timeline', which for 1987 only lists Tom Wolf's *The Bonfire of Vanities*. Yes, I am a Morrison devotee, and yes, I believe she is the best writer in contemporary USA, but even beyond my very personal (and very defensible) personal biases, Toni Morrison is the only living recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature from the United States. Surely that would warrant an acknowledgment of some kind in a book of this nature, even admitting that Hayes' preferences are hardly mine. I would argue that *Beloved*, by focusing on the very contradiction of the American experiment (Life? Liberty? Pursuit of happiness?) certainly 'encapsulates the nation' and the national experience with daring and ambitious,

new modes and methods of storytelling, and that Toni Morrison has demonstrated the requisite talent to *at the very least* be a contender for the GAN, even if you have other preferences.

So after that little diatribe, let me end with Hayes' 'Endings' (Chapter 8, 158-71), which begins by returning to Henry James and his denouement for *The American*, which closes "with ambiguity and uncertainty" (159). Christopher Newman "remakes himself into someone different . . . a sadder and a wiser man, perhaps, but a new man nonetheless" (159). But in this view, "[w]hoever assumes a new identity, after all, forgets the former self and erases the past" (160). Yet In Hayes' own words, "a mix of experience and emotion, memory need not destroy us; it can enhance and enrich our identities" (171).

As teachers and scholars we have often erred on the side of specialization, teaching what we like best, what we think works well with the students in the classroom, and what is somehow representative of our own journey or narrative viewpoint or our own particular, albeit not quite so comprehensive, overview. But still the question lingers: who is the ideal reader for such an exploration of American literature? Hayes' *Journey* is often entertaining as well as erudite, and for the more experienced reader in the field, provides a chance to sharpen wits and mount a challenge to his more 'controversial' readings. For the lay person who just wants a general overview with an eye to selecting one or another text, more or less at random according to what strikes his or her fancy, the book might also be useful as an inspiration to delve more deeply into the literature. But for teachers and their students, it is hard to see how this type of overview can compete with the more traditionally organized *From Puritanism to Postmodernism: A History of American Literature* by Richard Ruland and Malcolm Bradbury (1991) or with the more recent *A History of American Literature* by Richard Gray (2004). Nevertheless, it's a good read, and accompanying Hayes on his journey is always interesting and sometimes even refreshingly illuminating; but almost inevitably, my journey has been and probably will always be a different one.

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Begoña Simal, ed. 2011: *Selves in Dialogue: A Transethnic Approach to American Life Writing.* Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi. 255 pp. ISBN: 978-90-420-3398-6.

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Selves in Dialogue "can be accurately described as a multifarious collection of transethnic explorations of American life writing", states Begoña Simal, its editor, in her introductory chapter (13). And many of the words included in this sentence describe the most important aspects of this collection of essays: it deals with selves (self-writing in autobiographical narrative), transethnicity and establishing dialogues (that is, each essay takes a comparative or contrastive view of at least two different cultural traditions), dialogues that cultivate a spirit of "mixing rather than segregating" (13).

The meaning of transethnic, to begin with, requires clarification, since similar terms such as postethnic, cross-ethnic, and inter-ethnic are likewise poised to claim a prominent position in ethnic studies these days. In her recent essay, 'The Challenge of Going Transethnic', Simal (2011) herself proposes the use of 'transethnic' as the term that both captures the crucial idea of 'crossing' ethnic boundaries and/or 'color lines' and, more importantly, suggests a problematization of the term 'ethnic' while not erasing the concept altogether. In the particular context of this book, 'transethnic' reflects at once the comparative approach of this volume, but it also suggests a critical, revisionist agenda regarding ethnicity. And this reviewer welcomes such a comparative approach, which creates bridges and cultural connections between the many voices that compose the chorus of American Literature. In many ways, this book seems to respond to critical views that have argued for the need to transcend group-specific approaches to ethnic literatures. Paul Lauter's defence of a comparativist model for the study of American Literature (1991) is acknowledged as an inspiration for this collection (2011: 10). But I also hear responses to Werner Sollors' views against obsessive ethnic essentialisms and their resulting isolationist, group-by-group approaches that emphasize cultural heritage within the particular, and somewhat idealized group —at the expense of dynamic interaction and syncretism. As a matter of fact, I would argue, with Shirley Neuman (1992), that challenges to the dominant/classic theories of autobiography have led, in the recent past, to a number of different poetics of the genre, which seek to describe how particular group identities function in the discursive creation of the 'self' in autobiographies by African Americans, Latinas/os, Native Americans and other ethnic groups. The problem with

these theories of group identity is that they are constructed around a very specific and monologic category ('Native', 'Black', 'Chicana/o', and so on), and, thus, could end up being reductive, for they engage in an essentialism of otherness which fails to account for complicities, overlaps, and commonalities between the different groups. Such commonalities (or the absence thereof) are what *Selves in Dialogue* is most interested in seeking. For the nine essays that constitute the volume apply the very much needed comparative lens across ethnic groups to the study of authors from different cultural backgrounds, while some also incorporate dialogues between traditional, mainstream texts (such as Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* or Paul Auster's *The Invention of Solitude*) and other, less canonized life-writing expressions.

Jeffrey Gray's opening chapter, 'Identity Cards: Autobiography and Critical Practice', is an exception, for his comparative exploration does not limit itself to two particular authors or texts, but extends to an overview of the "autobiographical turn" in scholarly writing of recent decades. The chapter focuses on a sampling of critical works by authors, male and female, and of various ethnicities, exploring autobiography not as it appears in memoirs or novels, but rather as it has begun to inhabit, over the past two decades, scholarly articles or books, impregnated with statements of "situatedness, of self-interpellation and self-affiliation" (21) —what Gray calls "identity cards". This is an essay very much in line with some of those included in the volume *Confessions of the Critics*, edited by H. Aram Veeser in 1996, which evidences the confessional mode adopted by much recent literary criticism that has moved from the High Theory of the 1970s and 80s, with its densely philosophical or impersonal tenor, language, and style, to the more experiential, subjective tenor and language of autobiography.

In Ana Manzanas's essay 'Self and Nation in Franklin's *Autobiography* and Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*', these works are studied side by side, thus bridging not only 'Anglo' and 'ethnic' literatures, but also the tradition of life writing as a story of success, with that of postmodern autobiography. In developing her parallel vision of self and nation in these two texts, Manzanas draws from Mikhail Bakhtin's and Homi Bhabha's theories in order to prove how both authors inscribe themselves into the 'narration of the nation' through the wide gateway of autobiography, yet chronicle their 'doubleness' in radically different ways. Contrary to what one often finds in contrastive readings of white and ethnic texts, Manzanas does not sanctify the ethnic text at the cost of undermining the Franklinian classic, but places both alongside the historical and social context in which they were produced.

'Ethnic Authorship and the Autobiographical Act', co-written by Rachel Ihara and Jaime Cleland, analyzes one instance of Native American and one of Asian American life writing from the beginning of the twentieth century: Zitkala-Sa's 'Impressions of an Indian Childhood' (1900) and other short stories by the same author, and Sui Sin Far's 'Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian' (1912). Although little known, these two writers were pioneering American authors who helped pave the way for future minority writing, the authors of the essay claim. Moreover, through autobiography each

writer tried to convince the sceptical reader that the roles of 'ethnic' subject and artist were not mutually exclusive.

Another of the essays that reveals to the reader ignored, neglected, or lesser-known writers is David Río's 'Autobiographical Writing in the Sin State: Latina and Basque American Perspectives', which focuses on 'Nevada literature' (159). Río resorts to a comparative analysis of the political works of three Basque American authors, all three belonging to the same Laxalt family, and a Latina writer, Emma Sepúlveda. Particular attention is paid to the way in which the Laxalts and Sepúlveda address issues such as self-representation, identity formation, the descent-consent tensions, and the private-public conflict. The four texts analyzed in this essay, Río contends, are concerned with the need to reconcile the immigrant heritage with the reality of modern-day American life, and, more specifically, with the demands of American politics in Nevada.

Three more Latina/o authors, Esmeralda Santiago, Junot Díaz, and Julia Álvarez are compared and contrasted in Aitor Ibarrola-Armendáriz's essay 'Puerto Rican and Dominican Self-Portraits and their Frames'. The 'frames' of the title are the various boundaries that mainstream culture demarcates for these bicultural authors, and to which each has chosen to adhere for various cultural, social and reading market reasons. In fact, while Manzanas focuses her essay on how Kingston departs from the tradition of the classical Western autobiography represented by Franklin, Ibarrola is interested in showing how the three fictional autobiographies he analyzes —Santiago's *When I Was Puerto Rican*, Díaz's *Drown*, and Álvarez's *¡Yo!*— owe much to the traditional patterns of the 'forefathers' of the genre in the New World, and to their 'utopian blueprints'. Finally, Gloria Anzaldúa scholars will certainly welcome the new analysis of *Borderlands / La Frontera*, done this time in dialogue with Scott Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain* in Anna Brígido-Corachán's essay 'Native Journeys of Self-Figuration'; the grounds for comparison being their similar portrayal of how individual and communal histories are intertwined in indigenous memoirs and testimonies. However, while Momaday calls for 'af-filiation' (rather than filiation), Anzaldúa mystifies her Aztec heritage, a strategy that sometimes ends up reinforcing the dominant narrative of Mexican nationalism.

A comparative analysis of divergent migrant subjects is convincingly carried out by Brenda R. Smith in her essay 'The Construction of American Subjectivity in African American Migration and European Immigrant Autobiographies'. While she focuses on migration narratives in the early nineteenth century following Boelhower's classic critical model of a three-step trajectory (Old Culture, New Culture and Syncretisation Moments), she does not limit that model to European immigrant narratives (those by Mary Antin and Marcus Eli Ravage), but applies the model also to African migrant autobiographies (James Weldon Johnson's and Zora Neale Hurston's). The narrative themes and strategies that Johnson and Hurston employ to construct the identity mark 'American', Smith contends, parallel those used by nineteenth-century European immigrant autobiographers. Moreover, she sees a clear difference between antebellum and postbellum slave narratives, which leads her to construct a new critical paradigm for the analysis of

the *African American Migration Autobiography*, a subgenre she distinguishes within the African American autobiographical tradition. Another unusual comparison, this time between "two ostensibly antithetical writers" (133) such as Paul Auster and Samuel R. Delany, is made by José Liste in his essay on what he calls their "double narratives" (132-158), where he focuses on the doublings of memory and writing as shared themes and motifs in the autobiographical writings of these two New Yorkers. In their self-conscious, postmodern narratives, Liste explains, Auster and Delany exploit the dual temporal and thematic articulation that autobiography relies on —past and present; life and writing— in order to respect more fully the very notion of the autobiographical as experience in writing and writing as experience. Liste builds cunning bridges between Auster's *The Invention of Solitude* and Delany's *The Motion of Light in Water*, mainly around the dense allusiveness and intertextuality of both texts, memoirs "not only of part of a life but of a life of reading, writing and translating" (144), and around both texts being reflexions on the "metaphysical conundrums of memory" (146) that "refuse final coherence or unified meaning" (145).

The essay that closes the book belongs to an ever-growing field of interest within American Studies: food studies. In her essay on two 'food memoirs', Paula Torreiro discusses the symbolic uses of food and culinary scenes in Diana Abu-Jaber's *The Language of Baklava* and Leslie Li's *Daughter of Heaven*. The comparative analysis of eating rituals, recipes, commensality and other food-related matters opens the way for a comparison between Arab-American and Chinese-American identities and their self-representations in writing. Owing to its myriad varieties of symbolic meanings and connotations, Torreiro contends, "the trope of food is fundamental for the formation of the self, the building of communal identity, and the preservation of collective memory" (209).

As Begoña Simal states, the transethnic approach proposed in this collection does not imply erasing the very difference and diversity that makes American autobiographies thrilling to read and study. Group-specific research of an intra-ethnic nature should and will continue to thrive. And yet, when one looks at the critical literature in the field of American Studies, one does perceive that the transnational, transethnic, and transgender approaches to American literature are finally gaining their well-deserved status, after decades of excessive pigeon-holing of intra-ethnic literary expression. As a matter of fact, some similar volumes have been published recently, such as *Trailing Clouds: Immigrant Fiction in Contemporary America* (2006), whose author, David Cowart, shows immigrant writers drawing inspiration from and contributing to the Western literary tradition. In writing a book organized around the dominant tropes and formal elements of diverse immigrant fiction, Cowart also demolishes the walls of ghettos erected by the kind of scholarship that is mainly guided by group identity politics. So, instead of relegating immigrants from Caribbean and Pacific Islands to "ethnic laundries" (Ferens 2010: 130), Cowart reads ethnic writers such as Julia Alvarez, Cristina García and Jamaica Kincaid alongside Hoffman, Nabokov and Bellow, making multiple cross-references to Western and ancient classics. A number of classic volumes on life writing published since the

1990s —reviewed by Simal herself in the bibliographical essay mentioned above (Simal, 2011)—, if not exactly so dialogical and comparativist as *Selves in Dialogue*, have indeed fostered the comparative and revisionist agenda we are discussing here, and have thus contributed to a transethnic project of literary analysis. Other previous transatlantic, transethnic projects in the field of autobiography have come from German scholars, especially those led by Alfred Hornung, resulting in his two edited volumes of 2000 and 2010. And, finally, one further valuable contribution to this transethnic turn coming from Europe is that produced by Dominika Ferens in her *Ways of Knowing Small Places*, a book that brings together comparative analyses of autobiographical "fiction written at the interstices of cultures" (2010: 23) by Gloria Naylor, Jamaica Kincaid, Achy Obejas, Karen Tei Yamashita or Paule Marshall, to name but a few.

As tends to be the case in compilatory volumes, some of the articles are more compelling than others and, while most of them are extended dialogues between the compared texts with intertwined tandem analyses (as is the case with Ihara and Leland's, Liste's, Ibarrola's, Manzanas's, Smith's or Torreiro's essays), others are parallel readings of two or more texts, with a lesser dialogical discourse, which choose to leave the exercise in comparative analysis for the concluding paragraphs (as is the case with the essays of Rio or Brígido-Corachán). In all cases, however, *Selves in Dialogue* is a highly recommendable book for life writing scholars, but it is also a valuable reading for a wider spectrum of scholars interested in ethnicity. Indeed, I myself found *Selves in Dialogue* particularly refreshing and a very outstanding contribution to the field.

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Eusebio V. Llácer Llorca, María Amparo Olivares Pardo and Nicolás Estévez Fuertes, eds. 2011: *A 21st-Century Retrospective View about Edgar Allan Poe/Una mirada retrospectiva sobre Edgar Allan Poe desde el siglo XXI*. Bern: Peter Lang. 257 pp. ISBN: 978-3-0343-0595-2.

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Poe scholars and readers around the world commemorated in 2009 the 200th anniversary of Edgar Allan Poe's birth. Such a propitious year inspired conferences and generated books on the American author aimed at revaluating Poe's importance in twenty-first-century society. Ever since Charles Baudelaire translated his stories, Poe has enjoyed the long-lasting favour of a worldwide readership as *Poe Abroad* makes clear (Vines 1999). With respect to Poe in Spain, John Englekirk's early book *Edgar Allan Poe in Hispanic Literature* (1934) was for a long time a lonely milestone in Poe bibliography, and this was not remedied until the 1990s when certain scholars focused new attention on the study and reception of Poe in Spain (Rigal 1998; Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan 1997; Gurpegui 1999; Roas 2001).

My reference to the reception of Poe merely aims to indicate the place of *A 21st-Century Retrospective View about Edgar Allan Poe* within Poe studies in Spain, where scholars are largely interested in reception. It is quite unusual for Spanish books on the American poet not to devote a chapter, an article or a section to reception, as is the case in, for example, Margarita Rigal and Beatriz González's three wide-ranging collections: *A Descent into Edgar Allan Poe and His Works: The Bicentennial* (2010a), *Edgar Allan Poe (1809-2009). Doscientos años después* (2010b), and *Los legados de Poe* (Rigal 2011). However, this strong contribution by no means indicates that Spanish scholars are simply interested in the reception of Poe. On the contrary, they pay careful attention to, and provide illuminating insights into other issues, as *A 21st Century Retrospective Vie*w testifies.

Poe's life and writings continue to be a relevant reflection on American literary culture as well as its rejection, in their ambiguity towards evil and its correlate perversity, the fascination for ambivalent psychological abysses, the enthralment with the ratiocinative, and the appeal for scientific enquiry. That teachers and critics alike consider his work still capable of shedding light on society in the twenty-first century lies at the heart of this interesting collection.

In the Preface, the editors write: "In addition to speculation, analysis and evaluation of different hypotheses, this collection of essays is an attempt to provide innovative,

multidisciplinary perspectives on Edgar Allan Poe's life and works from the point of view of the newly-born twenty-first century" (11, my translation). This goal is variously achieved by the authors of the chapters of the book.

The volume is divided into five sections plus an introductory essay, which is the most debatable piece of writing in the book. In it, Estévez and Olivares highlight the reasons for Poe's continued presence in contemporary society, considering one of the most important to be his literary achievement, which they ascribe to his mastery of the *novella* ("Sobre todo la habilidad para la novela corta", 15), but this is not really the case, as Poe was a master of the short story but not of the *novella*, unlike, say, Herman Melville. They also assert that Poe excelled as a novelist ("aquellos géneros en los que sobresale el escritor norteamericano, es decir, como crítico literario, poeta y novelista", 17). Poe, however, only published one novel, although he left another unfinished, whilst he published a good number of outstanding short stories; his most enduring legacy in American narrative. The essay sketches Poe's life with an emphasis on the tormented aspects. They base their information and comment on a wide array of biographies, although the omission of the important conclusions of two widely acclaimed works, Kenneth Silverman's *Edgar Allan Poe: A Mournful and Never-Ending Remembrance* (1991) and Dwight Thomas and David Jackson's *The Poe Log: A Documentary Life of Edgar Allan Poe 1809-1849* (1987), is a surprise. They list some of the conferences that took place during 2009 in Spain and abroad and the resulting publications but fail to mention Rigal's *Los legados de Poe* and her critical edition of Poe's works in Cátedra (Poe 2011), as well as the *Edgar Allan Poe Review* issues that collected some contributions to the conferences on Poe in Albacete and Romania, neither of which are included.

In the second part of the introductory essay, the authors briefly summarize Poe's achievements as a literary critic, as a poet and as a writer of short fiction. Quite interestingly, they link Poe's critical writings to a rejection of America's Manifest Destiny, though in my opinion Poe's dark romanticism has deeper roots and must be read against Transcendentalism and Jacksonian society, which favoured him as a writer. They also mention other authors' accusations of plagiarism vested against Poe, an issue already explored by Galván (2009) and Martín (2011), among others. When discussing Poe's narrative, Estévez and Olivares mention his influence on subsequent authors in mystery and fantastic narrative. However, they have overlooked the fact that the common link to Poe's narratives is the ratiocinative, which indeed functions as the core aim in the poetics of Poe's narrative pieces.

The third part of the essay is devoted to the reception of Poe in Spain in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and states that there were few translations of Poe's writings in the nineteenth century ("La carencia de traducciones en español de sus obras fundamentales de referencia", 25-26). However, Roas lists translations into Spanish of 42 narrative pieces (out of 67 short stories and a novel), plus 'The Conqueror Worm' and 'The Raven' (2011: 37-38; 187-94), all in the nineteenth century. There are some rather serious inaccuracies within this section; for example, the ascription of Benito Pérez Galdós to the Spanish

Generación del 98 (26) or the mention of Juan Ramón Jiménez's poems as indebted to Poe: "La huella de Poe quedaría reflejada entre otros en el poema 'Ida, ninfeas y alma de violeta' (29), which are, in fact, three independent poems. Similarly, the translation of 'The Raven' that Estévez and Olivares attribute to Jiménez was actually completed by Viriato Díaz Pérez and published in *Helios* in April 1904, where Juan Ramón Jiménez would read it. Jiménez's translations were made later in his life and not published until 1953 in his essay 'En casa de Poe', one of the many pieces of critical writing in which Jiménez discussed the importance of Poe's poetry in America and in Spain. Finally, Estévez and Olivares emphasize the oblivion into which Poe fell following the Spanish Civil War, an assertion that should be qualified in many respects: it is true that censorship limited the translations of foreign works, but Poe was a popular author, whose writings, mainly the narrative pieces, were in fact translated into Spanish between 1950 and 1975. It must also be mentioned that there was a revival of interest in Poe in Spain in the 1970s when he was much praised and discussed by important Spanish philosophers such as Fernando Savater and Rafael Argullol. As a final comment on this introduction, the authors should have provided a list of references at the end. They use footnotes and in-text citation but do not give the full reference, which could well lose the non-specialist reader of Poe among the many abridged references.

The first section of the book proper is devoted to Poe and society. Daniel Ogden's 'Edgar Allan Poe and American Expansionism on Land and Sea' brings the reader back to Estévez and Olivares' assertion that Poe's works were a rebuttal of American Manifest Destiny. Ogden aims to examine Poe's "critique of American expansionism in the early decades of the nineteenth century on land and sea" (38). He places Poe's narrative in its cultural context and then explores some stories that have traditionally been neglected, for instance, 'The Man That Was Used Up', 'The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scherezade', 'The Balloon Hoax', 'Some Words with a Mummy' (a narrative that indicates the interest in Egypt that seized America in the nineteenth century), and, naturally *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*. In putting together this array of narratives, Ogden succeeds in demonstrating that Poe's interest in travel literature went beyond *Pym,* and he manages to contextualize the stories. As Ogden puts it, "In the production of this literature the line between fiction and non-fiction was not always observed" (44). Poe himself wrote some narratives that were meant to be facts rather than fiction and others that merged both under the implicit objective of exposing the limits of scientific inquiry, as he meets with skepticism America's plans for commercial expansion.

Next, Christoper Rollason's 'Perspectivas psicoanalíticas sobre Poe — ¿Dupin, inventor del psicoanálisis?' draws on a large tradition of psychoanalytic studies on Poe's writings and life. A cursory glance at, for example, Scott Peeples 'A Dream Within a Dream: Poe and Psychoanalysis' (2004) shows the immense attention that Poe's writings have attracted, starting with Lorine Pruette's article 'A Psychoanalitical Study of Edgar Allan Poe' (1920), followed by Marie Bonaparte's psychoanalytical interpretation (1933) and continued by many others, such as Daniel Hoffman (1972) and Jacques Lacan (1988). Rollason does not stick to an orthodox understanding of psychoanalysis. While he pays homage to previous research on psychoanalytic Poe, he also explores the early mentions of the word psychology

in literature and indicates that Otto Rank was the first psychoanalyst to be interested in Poe's writings, more particularly in the figure of the double (56). Rollason reports Bonaparte's and Lacan's conclusions but also reviews Walter Benjamin's and Hélène Cixous' unorthodox writings on Poe. The article provides valuable insight into Poe and psychoanalysis through its addressing of new approaches that could overcome the crisis of psychoanalysis that Rollason addresses. Rollason hints towards a reformulation of psychoanalysis to include studies of mass communication as well as the Internet, and their impact on subjectivity. Unfortunately, the article falls short of its subtitle as only a small paragraph is devoted to the exploration of Dupin as the creator of psychoanalysis.

Emma Sopeña's contribution examines the psychopathic characters in Poe's writings. She first reviews theories on the matter to then apply them to 'The Tell-Tale Heart', 'The Cask of Amontillado', 'The Imp of the Perverse' and 'The Black Cat'. While the article is valuable in itself and its conclusions shed light on the stories, Sopeña fails to contextualize madness in American society or the role of science in the US in the nineteenth century. I have a feeling that such contextualisation would have shown the common origin of psychotic and melancholic characters, the only difference being one of degree. It would also have explained that stories which deal with the fantastic and with perversity are originated in the same theory on human nature, and more importantly, it would have linked Poe's theories on madness to contemporary science.

The issue of science is investigated in the second section of the book, along with other chapters that deal with Poe and the Arts. Fernando Ballesteros, a scientist himself, follows Sopeña and deals with this most interesting issue of science in Poe's writings. He aims to link Poe's 'scientific discoveries' to contemporary science (it seems that Poe had some insights on astronomy that were duly demonstrated in the twentieth century). Ballesteros' scientific expertise is evident, as is his thorough knowledge of Poe's work. He examines Poe's interest in science as a reader of popular scientific literature, his education at West Point where he took various science courses, his use of scientific vocabulary in his narratives, his scientific hoaxes and his last work, *Eureka!*, challenging some common assumptions. It is my view that a broader contextualization of science in the nineteenth century would have led Ballesteros to different conclusions. In fact, Poe's approach to science is fully romantic, in the vein of J. W. Goethe, and, as other Romantics, Poe would contribute to scientific development by highlighting the limits and inconsistencies of nineteenth-century scientific theories (Frank 2003; Scheick 1992; Tresch 2002).

Pilar Pedraza's and Michel Duchesneau's articles are most appealing. Pedraza investigates the figure of the maiden in the writings of Poe as other writers such as Ramón María del Valle-Inclán, and the filmmaker Luis Buñuel have also done. Pedraza has explored the topic of the maiden in other books such as *Máquinas de amar. Secretos del cuerpo artificial* (1998) or *Espectra. Descenso a las criptas de la literatura y el cine* (2004), and shows a comprehensive command of the bibliography. All this makes her conclusions engaging. In contrast, Duchesneau focuses on the issue of Poe's influence in French modern music, an issue that has rarely been explored. There are few studies on Poe and music, which makes

this article a valuable contribution due to its novelty, its methodology and its conclusions. While difficult to imagine, perhaps, Poe is shown to be a source of inspiration for the works of such fascinating composers as Maurice Ravel and Claude Debussy, through their exposure to Charles Baudelaire's and Stéphane Mallarmé's readings of 'The Philosophy of Composition' and 'The Poetic Principle'.

The third section is miscellaneous and includes an article on the translation of contrastive connectives and the influence of Poe's *Pym* in Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* (2001). The fourth section discusses literary and stylistic aspects of Poe's writings. In 'Ex nihilo nihil fit: Dystopian Satire in Poe's 'Mellonta Tauta', Miguel Martínez explores "a far less frequented avenue: the atypical Poe of satirical, anti-utopian, dystopian philosophy and politics" (169). In this most informative and engaging article, Martínez examines Poe's skeptic view of contemporary American society and concludes that 'Mellonta Tauta' is an attack on Western civilization and nineteenth-century USA. Martínez's article should be read coupled with Ogden's, as both scholars discuss the same story and, to a large extent, share the same purpose. Rather than overlapping, they complement and illuminate each other.

The final section focuses on Poe's poetics. Siles' article reads Poe's poetics as discussed in 'The Philosophy of Composition', 'The Poetic Principle' and 'The Rationale of Verse' against nineteenth-century literary poetics. He clearly demonstrates Poe's indebtedness to tradition and his novelty as a poet and a theorist of poetry. Siles pays detailed attention to significant points in Poe's poetics and relates them to previous theorists and with the aim of finally describing Poe's originality he examines his ideas on verse, meter, rhyme, grammar, rhetoric and prosody.

A final reservation about the book: Rollason is the only contributor who uses Mabbot's edition of Poe's works (1969-1978) while only a few make use of Quinn's (Poe 1984). All things considered, the book is a valuable contribution to Poe studies in the wake of his bicentennial. It must be noted that the book does not include a single study of Poe's poetry and his mystery fiction is likewise not discussed. Contributors have preferred to concentrate on Poe's critical writings on poetry and on a handful of stories, not always the most popular or most analysed, a definite positive for the book, for which the contributors and editors must be credited. Similarly, they do not discuss traditional topics such as the grotesque but rather explore Poe's resistance to shared opinions and prejudices then prevalent in the USA. The apparent limitation of its scope is thus compensated for by the novelty and the depth of most essays.

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Viorica Patea, ed. 2012. *Short Story Theories: A Twenty-first Century Perspective*. Amsterdam: Rodopi. 346 pp. ISBN: 978-90-420-3564-5.

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This collection of essays on short story theory and practice from a twenty-first century perspective, edited by Viorica Patea, suggests the existence of a renewed academic interest in the genre, corroborated by the prestigious publications produced in the first decade of this century: Farhat Iftekharuddin et al.'s *Postmodern Approaches to the Short Story* (2003); Per Winther, Jakob Lothe and Hans H. Skei's *The Art of Brevity: Excursions in Short Fiction Theory and Analysis* (2004); Adrian Hunter's *The Cambridge Introduction to the Short Story in English* (2007); José R. Ibáñez, José Francisco Fernández and Carmen Bretones's *Contemporary Debates on the Short Story* (2007); Heather Ingman's *A History of the Irish Short Story* (2009); Paul March-Russell's *The Short Story: An Introduction* (2009); or Jorge Sacido's *Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Short Story in English* (2012), among them.

It could be argued that these twenty-first century reflections on the short story exemplify a theoretical twist which departs from the valuable contributions on the genre produced in the last quarter of the twentieth-century, such as Charles E. May's *Short Story Theories* (1976) and *The New Short Story Theories* (1994), Valerie Shaw's *The Short Story* (1983), Susan Lohafer and Jo Ellyn Clarey's *Short Story Theory at a Crossroads* (1989) and Barbara Lounsberry, Susan Lohafer and Mary Rohberger's *The Tales We Tell: Perspectives on the Short Story* (1998), to name just a few. The abundance of these critical reflections on the poetics of the short story and on the achievements of its practitioners may testify to the gradual movement of the genre from the margins of the literary canon and from its 'anxiety of influence' in relation to the novel towards a more centred position, possibly due to its capacity to tease the reader's expectations, to foreground incompleteness and to resist definition, a tendency most in tune with a postmodern sensibility.

Certainly, Patea's insightful compilation is informed by such a sensibility, which, in critical terms, was inaugurated by Farhat Iftekharuddin's own edition of critical essays, aimed at providing new critical insights of the short story by exposing to critical analysis "postmodern theoretical issues and themes, such as gender and sexual roles, cultural, postcolonial, linguistic, psychological, historical studies" (Iftekharuddin et al. 2003: xi). Similarly, Per Winther, Jakob Lothe and Hans H. Skei's *The Art of Brevity* aims to move

away from essentialist conceptions on the nature of text types in order to speak of "sets of textual tendencies and practices that are present in varying degrees in different texts", which in itself is not intended as a disavowal of traditional short story theory, but rather as a "willingness to align our analytical efforts with recent developments in the theory of the genre" (2004: ix). The collection edited by José R. Ibáñez, José Francisco Fernández and Carmen Bretones also succeeded in offering a sample of the variety of critical perspectives and theoretical slants which have infused literary analysis in general, and the short story in particular, during this century. As they explain in their introduction, the book is designed as a space to foster critical discussion beyond the traditional "state-of-the-art critical frameworks so that the tremendous possibilities of this genre are not constrained" (2007: 9).

Adrian Hunter and Paul March-Russell's introductions to the genre share certain notions. Hunter departs from the well-established critical premise that the modern short story is a nineteenth-century invention, and thus offers an interesting approach to those writers who have been decisive in our contemporary understanding of it. Hunter holds that the short story has often served as the medium for what is new or innovative in English fiction (2007: 3), and arranges the chapters of his book accordingly, paying close attention to the structure, form and development of the short story in different periods. Short narratives here are critically examined against the cultural, social and material contexts in which they were produced and to which they contributed. In the final chapter, he productively borrows Deleuze and Guattari's notion of 'minor literature', defined as the writing which "a minority constructs within a major language" (1986: 16) enlightening our contemporary understanding of the short story in contexts of national, cultural and social estrangement and defamiliarization. Significantly, a similar notion informs March-Russell's overview of the social and literary function of the short story, which he ultimately understands as "a dissident form of communication" (2009: ix). He holds that the modern short story is a development from folktale narratives, and offers a critical overview from the genre's inception to the first decade of the twenty-first century, also introducing the reader to areas of critical and theoretical discussion on the short story. Most interestingly, March-Russell hints at a relationship between Deleuze and Guattari's potentiality of minor uses of language to generate new products with Jacques Derrida's notion of dissemination (1981), understood as the scattering of knowledge into new and provisional fields of meaning (2009: 248). As March-Russell takes it, this emphasis upon fragmentation allows the concept of minor literature to be applied to the short story as a tradition, rather than solely discussing it against a postcolonial background.

Ingman's *A History of the Irish Short Story*, although centred on the tradition in Ireland from the nineteenth century to the present, raises relevant issues concerning the genre from a theoretical and practical perspective, as well as some clues to verify the upsurge of interest in the genre in a postmodern society, which somehow contradicts the assertion that inaugurates the book: "Even in Ireland, short fiction has been relegated at the margins of critical discourse" (Ingman 2009: 1). Ingman departs from the premise that the

traditional difference between the oral tale and the modern short story —which Hunter and others align with the experience of modernity— breaks down in Ireland, which she explains in terms of Ireland's strong sense of community: Unlike the short story in other Anglophone countries, Ingman holds, the Irish short story incorporates the oral tradition as a speaking voice. Jorge Sacido's volume, on its part, provides insightful reassessments of modernism, postmodernism, and of the thorny yet slippery relationship between the two *through* the short story. In the first chapter of the collection, Sacido states that Frank O'Connor's idea of the relationship between the short story and the marginal prefigures Hunter and March-Russell's conceptualisation of the short story as minor literature (21).

In this particularly self-reflexive context of the short story, Viorica Patea's volume aims to conjugate theoretical approaches to short story theory —from early practitioners and critics, such as Edgar Allan Poe, Brander Matthews or H.E. Bates, to contemporary commentators on the genre— with text-based analyses of different short stories, examined from a variety of critical perspectives. In the introductory chapter to the volume, Patea also accounts for the structure of the book, arranged according to cross-generational approaches to the short story which interweaves new essays by some of the founders of short story theory (Charles May, Farhat Iftekharuddin, Per Winther and Lauro Zavala) with essays produced by younger scholars (2012: 21). Similarly, some of the short story practitioners under inspection here already occupy a canonical position within the genre, as is the case of Edgar Allan Poe, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Katherine Mansfield, Sandra Cisneros or Margaret Atwood, which by no means implies critical neglect of less central authors that illustrate new approaches to the genre, such as David Leavitt, Douglas Glover, Katherine Govier or Baltasar Lopes.

Patea's introductory chapter provides a useful overview of the central aspects concerning the poetics of the short story, as well as its evolution up to the present day by means of a thorough reassessment of major practitioners and critics of the form. The history of short story theory is revised in the chapter's first pages, describing landmarks such as Poe's famous 'unity of effect' or Bowen's adscription of the genre to Russian Formalism, and concluding with comments on most of the groundbreaking studies to date, such as Charles May's *Short Story Theories* (1976), Susan Lohafer's *Coming to Terms with the Short Story* (1983), Clare Hanson's *Short Stories and Short Fictions 1880–1980* (1985), Dominic Head's *The Modernist Short Story* (1992) or Farhat Iftekharuddin et al.'s *The Postmodern Short Story: Forms and Issues* (2003).

Furthermore, Patea does not elude one of the most debated and controversial issues concerning the nature and epistemology of the short story, which is whether the genre partakes of inherent conventions and assumptions other than brevity and its related restrictions. As Hunter and March-Russell have argued before, Patea seems to align herself with those who suggest a potential for subversive powers in the genre, exerted from an ex-centric, marginal position, and quotes as authorities previous practitioners and theoreticians of the short story, such as Frank O'Connor, Marie Louise Pratt or Clare Hanson. As a consequence, Patea argues, many critics of the short story believe the

genre to be concerned "with an exceptional, mysterious, strange, unexpected or unusual experience" which may often probe the nature of the real (14).

In addition to this, Patea looks into the origin and evolution of the modern short story as a nineteenth-century literary invention and as a form to which the practices of Poe, Irving, Hawthorne and Melville provided a larger conceptual framework, to later extend to Anderson, Hemingway, Joyce, Faulkner and to the short fictions of postmodern writers (17). Patea's closes her introduction by offering an insightful and comprehensive account of the short story's transition from realism to modernism, concluding with some postmodern reformulations of the genre that focus on some of its most outstanding formal and ideological features.

The sixteen essays of the volume are arranged into four sections: 'The Beginnings of the Short Story and the Legacy of Poe'; 'The Linguistic Turn'; 'Borders, Postcolonialism, Orality, and Gender', and 'Postmodernism and the Twenty-first Century: Intertextuality, Minifiction, Serial Narration'. The first section opens with Antonio López Santos's 'The Paratactic Structure in the *Canterbury Tales*: Two Antecedents of the Modern Short Story', in which he argues that the modern short story reaches back historically to the medieval tale as its literary antecedent (25). As such, looking into literary patterns and narrative formulae (especially those which pertain to medieval tales which deliberately draw from the oral tradition) may result in illuminating perspectives for the study of the modern short story. López Santos analyses Geoffrey Chaucer's most salient and innovative narrative techniques in the *Canterbury Tales*, such as the use of time, place, characters, narrators and narrative closure, which in his view prefigure the dynamics of the modern short story (26). In 'Anticipating Aestheticism: The Dynamics of Reading and Reception in Poe', Peter Gibian reads Poe's 'The Oval Portrait' and 'The Fall of the House of Usher' as key narratives to understand Poe's aestheticist poetics, as well as his role in transmitting these particular literary tenets. Gibian's insightful and thought-provoking article departs from the assumption that for Poe, as well as for many of his followers, aesthetic influence was often conceived of in terms of 'haunting', "a return to something that had been repressed" (50), which brings to mind Freud's definition of the nature of the uncanny. Gibian reads Poe as a writer who 'haunted' prominent writers of his own and of subsequent generations; revealingly, many of Poe's most influential stories dramatise the process of reading, transmission and literary influence, whose analysis foregrounds Poe as a literary model for his contemporaries, most notably for Charles Baudelaire and Joris-Karl Huysman in France and Oscar Wilde in England, as well as being a predecessor of the European definers of Aestheticism and Decadence in the American *fin-de-siècle*. Erik Van Achter's 'Revising Theory: Poe's Legacy in Short Story Criticism' traces the evolution of short story theory and criticism through the twentieth and twenty-first century in order to reassess the effects of Poe's influential ideas on the genre. Van Achter sees contemporary short story theory positioned in a "sterile and ultimately static" place, largely due to Poe's influential critical views —later reformulated by Brander Matthews (qtd. in Sacido 2012: 77)— whose legacy has not been surmounted.

The second section of Patea's compilation is insightful and groundbreaking due to its application of discourse analysis to short story theory and practice. The section is inaugurated by Per Winther's essay 'Frames Speaking: Malamud, Silko, and the Reader', where he holds that some of the conceptual models of discourse analysis may help to systematise the processes at work in the production and reading of short fiction (89). Winther looks into the concept of framing as a means to achieve narrative and hermeneutic closure in order to then apply just such a conceptual framework to Bernard Malamud's 'The Magic Barrel' and Leslie Silko's 'Lullaby'. Pilar Alonso's 'A Cognitive Approach to Short Story Writing' looks into the different relationships that writers establish with their shorter and longer works. According to Alonso, the ideas and equipment brought into play by authors is that "which belongs to the human cognitive system and has been systematically raised to the level of conscious analysis by cognitive scientists" (115). In terms of short story theory and practice, such an assertion can be founded on the correspondence between the theoretical projections of the cognitive system at the level of production and reception and the moves that critics use in their critical assessments. The section closes with Consuelo Montes Granado's article, 'Code-Switching as a Strategy of Brevity in Sandra Cisneros' *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories*', which analyses Cisneros' collection of short fiction from the perspective of the increasing interest shown by linguists in English-Spanish code-switching as revealing of aesthetic and ideological positions (125). Granado examines Cisneros' preferred choice of English as a "cultural mediator" (126) along with the writer's use of Spanish as unobtrusive "brushstrokes of paint in the hands of the artist" (136).

The third section of the collection, entitled 'Borders, Postcolonialism, Orality and Gender', opens with Carolina Núñez Puente's 'The Yellow Hybrids: Gender and Genre in Gilman's Wallpaper', a reassessment of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 'The Yellow Wallpaper' from a hybrid critical perspective which is both feminist and dialogical. Although the essay draws from Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogic theory, Núñez Puente aims to complement Bakhtin's scope by extending the theoretical focus to the field of the short story, thus providing enlightening conclusions in terms of genre and gender. Rebeca Hernández's 'Short Narrations in Letter Frame: Cases of Genre Hybridity in Postcolonial Literature in Portuguese' takes as starting points the short story's potentiality to perform experimental and borderline functions and the subject of orality as predecessor to both traditional and modern short stories. From those tenets, Hernández argues that in certain literary contexts the epistolary genre may operate within a dynamic similar to short stories, and applies such conceptualization to Luís Bernardo Honwana's 'Rosita, até morrer', Baltasar Lopes' *Chiquinho* and António Jacinto's poetry. As Hernández demonstrates, these writers' particular use of language and genre proves an efficient means to denounce social marginality and to bring to the fore the power of orality as proof of the existence of a national identity that emerges from the intersection between dominant and dominated cultures (172). María Jesús Hernáez Lerena's article, 'Short-Storyness and Eyewitnessing', stems from the conviction that the short story departs from orderly, logical and causal

arrangements of events (175) due to the genre's engagement in the visual as an index to reality. Teresa Gibert's 'Margaret Atwood's Art of Brevity: Metaphorical Conceptualization and Short Story Writing' provides an insightful reassessment of Atwood's short fiction through an analysis of the author's use of metaphorical conceptualization as a strategy of subversion. The section closes with Farhat Iftekharuddin's article, 'Body Politics: Female Dynamics in Isabel Allende's *The Stories of Eva Luna*', which examines the concept of 'enigma' as the key strategy to the dynamics of the short story in relation to Allende's collection, which epistemologically would complement what he sees as the enigmatic nature of the feminine.

The last section of the compilation, 'Postmodernism and Twenty-first Century: Intertextuality, Minifiction, Serial Narration', opens with Luisa María González Rodríguez's 'Intertextuality and Collage in Bathelme's Short Fiction', an examination of the writer's achievement in defining and promoting the popular revival of the short story genre. Santiago Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan's 'Realism and Narrators in Tobias Wolff's Short Stories' analyses literary minimalism as a critical reaction to postmodern excess and provides a thought-provoking insight into Wolff's short fiction through this lens. Lauro Zavala's 'The Boundaries of Serial Narrative' is articulated as a critical reflection on short story cycles as a useful strategy to reassess traditional criticism concerning the nature of the novel and the short story, and the relationship between the two. The collection closes with 'The American Short Story in the Twenty-first Century' by Charles May, whose work has been a landmark for contemporary theories on the genre. May offers a thorough panorama of the contemporary American short story by discussing works produced by a new generation of writers whose narratives primarily rest on fictional tricks and games, 'novelistically' linked stories, and stories which transcend any such categories (300).

In tune with other critical compilations produced in this century, Patea's book emerges as a valuable critical reflection on the short story through the lens of postmodern theory. *Short Story Theories* successfully gathers the work of scholars from different countries that approach a range of issues related to the European, American, Canadian, South American and African short story. The combination of critical insights produced by established scholars with younger voices builds up a suggestive composite of readings that succeed in widening the scope for approaching the short story as a genre. In short, Patea's volume constitutes a readable and critically informed collection that addresses theoretical and practical issues concerning the short story from a wide variety of perspectives, and will constitute valuable and enriching reading for both the scholar and the newcomer to the genre of the short story.

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Ángeles de la Concha, coord. 2012 (2010): *El sustrato cultural de la violencia de género: Literatura, arte, cine y videojuegos*. Madrid: Síntesis. 324 pp. ISBN: 978-84-9756675-9/324.

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"No te saltes las señales. Elige vivir". This is the slogan of the latest campaign launched by the Spanish Ministry of Public Health, Social Services and Equality (2011) to offer women the mechanisms to identify everyday behavioural patterns closely connected with gender violence. But, where should we be looking to identify these behaviours? *El sustrato cultural de la violencia de género,* originally published in 2010 and re-edited in 2012, provides a fruitful answer to this question, arguing that the signals of gender violence are continuously present in cultural representations.

This book stems from the North-American and British feminist trend of the 1970s that called for the demolition of the cultural structures that normalised the subordinate position of women in society. Following the mother figure of second-wave feminism, Simone de Beauvoir, Anglo-American feminists like Kate Millet, Eva Figes, Germaine Greer, Elaine Showalter, together with materialist feminists such as Shulamith Firestone, Sherry Ortner and Juliet Mitchell, denounced the relationships between men and women as being embedded in power structures that constructed gender on biological, economic and cultural grounds. Their renowned feminist manifestos, alongside post-feminist critical studies like *Writing on the Body* (Conboy et al. 1993), *Violence Against Women* (French et al. 1998), *Feminine Sentences* (Wolff 2008), have inspired the contributors to this volume, who, like their English-speaking predecessors, denounce the cultural contribution to gender inequality. The use of this common feminist background should be welcomed, as it provides the essays with a shared theoretical framework that strengthens the feminist analysis of the texts.

The reason for these Spanish critics to look to their English speaking predecessors can be linked to the fact that, although Spanish women also fought actively for their rights in the 1970s, the institutional support for the research on gender violence did not arrive until a decade later with the creation of El Instituto de la Mujer in 1983. However, it was not until the end of the 1990s that social awareness of the dangers of gender violence increased in Spain, and studies like *Chicos son, hombres serán* (Miedzian 1995) and *Violencia contra las mujeres* (Instituto de la Mujer 1999) inspired more recent works on these issues, such as *La lucha por la erradicación de la violencia de género* (Bengoechea 2007), *Estudios*

Interdisciplinares sobre Igualdad y Violencia de Género (Figueruelo 2008) and *Los géneros de la violencia* (Arisó and Mérida 2010). Continuing this line of action, *El sustrato cultural de la violencia de género* in fact goes a step further by deploying the tools provided by literary, film and cultural studies to unmask the patriarchal violence rooted in society. In keeping with this, de la Concha's collection can be seen as related to the compilation of essays *Violencias invisibles* (Martín-Lucas, 2010), which also sought to denounce symbolic violence through the analysis of cultural productions. In fact, I see a mutual dialogue between these books, as Martín-Lucas' work covers some cultural practices, such as music, comics and advertising, not addressed in *El sustrato cultural*, which in turn considers issues such as poetry, fiction, painting, film and electronic games, not covered in such detail in the previous study. Both collections testify to the fact that the cultural component of gender violence has become a topic of increasing critical concern and they point to future lines of research which should examine those cultural forms which have not yet been analysed in depth but which foster male aggressiveness against women.

The book starts with an introduction that sets the tone for the subsequent debates, where Ángeles de la Concha shows her expertise. Starting with a conceptualisation of gender violence, she states that "la violencia de género ha adoptado múltiples formas a lo largo de la historia. Unas son más visibles que otras, aunque, a menudo, las formas menos visibles han sido las más insidiosas por actuar bajo diversos ropajes que la han ocultado, arropándola en discursos varios de índole científica, moral, psicológica o artística, activamente operantes en el seno de la cultura" (7). The main aim of this book, therefore, is to uncover the underlying cultural structures that have contributed to the maintenance of the violence practised upon women. Although there has been an increasing awareness of the dangers of gender violence, de la Concha believes that much more work needs to be done. She prepares the ground for the essays to follow by alluding to Pierre Bourdieu's theories on symbolic violence, defined as "violencia amortiguada, insensible, e invisible para sus propias víctimas, que se ejerce esencialmente a través de los caminos puramente simbólicos de la comunicación y del conocimiento o, más exactamente del desconocimiento, del reconocimiento o, en último término del sentimiento" (2000: 11-12).

As coordinator, de la Concha also highlights the multidisciplinary perspectives of the volume, one of the most positive aspects of the book, as it broadens the spectrum of the cultural artefacts to be taken into account when examining the sources of gender violence. Indeed it contributes to achieving the main goal of the book, helping readers to realise that every cultural form may hide signals that promote female subjugation. She also underlines the chronological criterion that structures the articles, a wise choice that creates a coherent structure and allows the readers to grasp the evolution from extreme female objectification to more realistic approaches in cultural representations of gender. Further, she justifies what could be interpreted as the main drawback of the book: the selection of a corpus formed mainly from British and North-American works. She anticipates the criticism which could be levied against the volume by claiming that the intended Spanish speaking readership should not consider this negative because, as the second wave of

feminism emerged in the USA and spread quickly to Britain in the 1970s, there is a more established feminist tradition in the English-speaking environment. Although I agree that this Anglocentric aspect might disengage the readership, who may not be so familiar with the field of English Studies, I also believe that the variety of the arguments of the texts presented help to demonstrate that gender violence is grounded in the majority of cultural representations prevalent in a nation at any one time, and probably more so in the globalised societies of the early twenty-first century. In fact, I would praise the fact that a Spanish publisher has judged this corpus, apparently more related to the field of English Studies, to be interesting to a wider audience, and in so doing highlighted the universal phenomenon of gender violence, occurring from classical to contemporary culture.

The first chapters address literary representations of gender violence. In 'El canon literario y sus efectos sobre la construcción cultural de la violencia de género: los casos de Chaucer y Shakespeare', Marta Cerezo Moreno underlines the role of canonical literature in the normalisation of gender violence. Her claim is that literature has usually contributed to naturalising the subjugation of the female sex to male dominance (19). In fact, this emphasis on the performative value of art is evident throughout the collection. Showing a thorough knowledge of classical texts, Cerezo Moreno problematises Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* and Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* as examples of texts where any female challenge to patriarchal authority is doomed to failure. She also argues that the influence of classical myths can be observed in contemporary representations like Iciar Bollaín's *Te doy mis ojos* (2003), a film that is also analysed in Chapter Nine. In Chapter Two, '"Me poseyó un deseo salvaje": articulación de la violencia masculina de género en la novela inglesa del siglo XIX', Antonio Ballesteros González starts by contextualising nineteenth-century British society, whose social changes are depicted in the English novel of the time. He examines some of the male characters in these novels to prove that women always appear as the victims of patriarchal violence (51). Establishing the sentimental and the gothic novel as a precedent, Ballesteros analyses the most representative nineteenth-century English novels in order to show that the atmosphere of extreme male passions acts as a metaphor for the sexual repression of the time. Chapter Three, '"Si las miradas matasen...": la perturbadora mirada del deseo en la poesía romántica', by Mercedes Bengoechea, is a noteworthy contribution to the book, unveiling the fact that classical love poetry supports patriarchal conceptions of love. Providing examples from the poems of a wide range of authors, from Francisco de Quevedo and Garcilaso de la Vega to Octavio Paz and Pablo Neruda, Bengoechea lists the main rhetorical devices present in this genre, like the fragmentation of the female body and male voyeurism. Also, she provides examples supported by pertinent theories like Barkty's and Lakoff and Johnson's notions on the sexual reification of women in literature. In contrast, she makes reference to female poets like Eavan Boland, Elizabeth Jennings, Clara Janés, Miriam Scott and contemporary male poets like Luis Javier Hidalgo and José Angel Valente who create images of sexual reciprocity between men and women to offer the optimistic conclusion that an egalitarian conception of love is possible. Juan Antonio Suárez, in Chapter Four,

'La violencia en el campo queer', analyses the representations of violence within queer relationships, motivated by the 'new queer film'. His examples, such as Gregg Araki's *The Living End* (1992), Denis Cooper's writing, Rick Castro's visual art, Andy Warhol and other representatives of the 1960s, support his argument that many homosexual creative artists depict aggressiveness as a component of personal relationships. Within the framework of Freudian psychoanalysis, according to which violence provides cohesion to the social order, Suárez wonders why this emphasis on violence is stronger in queer representations and concludes that queer sexuality actually acknowledges to a higher degree the violence underlying human relationships. He offers an innovative perspective on queer representation, highlighting its ethical dimension, which reminds us that any individual has the potential to be either aggressor or victim. Thus, if violence is considered an ingredient of sexuality, understanding the way it works might help to avoid its disastrous consequences. Next, in 'En el umbral de una nueva poética: cambios en la representación literaria de la violencia de género', Ángeles de la Concha frames her chapter within the field of trauma studies by relating the collective traumas produced during armed conflicts to the traumas suffered by women. Taking as an example Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy, she wisely relates the acknowledged collective traumas, those of soldiers after the First World War, to female suffering (Brown 1995; Root 1992). Endorsing the theories of Irigoyen (2005) and Bourdieu (1998), she examines certain novels that have represented the unspeakability of gender violence and trauma, *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors* (Doyle 1996), *Rape. A Love Story* (Oates 2003), and *The Lovely Bones* (Sebold 2002), and rightly claims that works such as these should be read in relation to works by recent writers, Margaret Drabble, Angela Carter, A.S. Byatt, Margaret Atwood, Ruth Ozeki among them, who derogate female subjugation in their writings.

Following the well-structured pattern of the book, the next chapters examine the representation of gender violence in pictorial images and establish a coherent dialogue. In 'La herida femenina: representaciones de la mujer en la historia de la pintura', Amparo Serrano de Haro sets the scene for this section as it depicts the evolution from men painting women to the first women to create their own images. She traces some of the main stereotypes of male pictorial representations of women —"la mujer paisaje", "la mujer bodegón o mujer comestible", "la mujer víctima" (177-79)— and, as happens in Chapter Five, psychoanalysis is used to explain male pictorial supremacy, equating the symbolic power of the phallus to the paintbrush. Serrano argues that the Surrealist women painters of the 1930s and 1940s began their search for identity through art; however, it was not until the 1970s that female artists began to reclaim female sexuality. Praising works like Shirin Neshat's *Speechless* (1996) and endorsing Bengoechea's optimistic conclusions, Serrano concludes that contemporary representations of femaleness effectively challenge patriarchal violence. Next, in 'Los espacios de feminidad y sus violencias: la ciudad y las mujeres en la pintura victoriana y moderna', Teresa Gómez Reus focuses on the role of space in the construction of identity in Victorian pictorial discourses. Drawing on feminist theories that point to the different distribution of space according to gender and

class, she examines the Victorian ideology that related men to the public and women to the private spheres, arguing that the city was an immoral place for women. Nevertheless, the article addresses the first inclusions of acceptable women in the city life of London with the arrival in 1890 of a group of young female artists —principally Gwen John— who challenged these stereotypes by portraying the loneliness that characterised the life of female artists in their paintings. Following this, Pepa Feu's 'Anatomía de una represión: lo sobrenatural como rito de paso en la pintura y la escritura de mujeres' fuses interest in pictorial and literary representations of female submission by relating surrealist female painters with gothic women writers. In keeping with Serrano's earlier analysis, she argues that the surrealist female painters used the same archetypal traits as female Gothic writers, thus evidencing the existence of a female collective consciousness created out of the violence that characterised earlier representations of women. Offering the examples of Remedios Varo, Leonora Carrington and Frida Kahlo, she points to some of the main motifs they depict (the heroine, the castle, the double, the archetype of the mother earth), tracing a movement in female literary and painted works towards the supernatural, a rite of passage looking for a distinctive female voice.

The last two chapters are also concerned with visual representations, but focus on films and videogames. Pilar Aguilar Carrasco's essay 'El cine, una mirada cómplice en la violencia contra las mujeres' studies the mechanisms by which spectators usually identify with the male gaze, reminding us of Laura Mulvey's classic analysis. This chapter will close the gap between the Spanish language readers and the texts analysed, as Aguilar uses many contemporary examples from the Spanish-speaking context to illustrate the objectified role of women. In her view, in many of these films gender violence is silenced, comically depicted or represented in an unrealistic idyllic way, as happens in León de Aranoa's *Barrio* (1998). Yet, she explains that films denouncing domestic violence only finally arrived in Spain at the end of the 1990s with *Solas* (Zambrano, 1999), *Amores que matan* and *Te doy mis ojos* (Bollaín, 2000, 2003), *Solo mía* (Balaguer 2001*)*, and *El Bola* (Mañas, 2000). The piece ends with a claim for works that show women as they are in real life (274). Closing the collection, Eugenia López Muñoz's 'Sexismo, violencia y juegos electrónicos' criticises the sexist violence depicted in electronic games. This is one of the most original contributions to the volume as it fosters the idea that electronic games reproduce the same patriarchal discourse that prevails in other more extensively analysed cultural artefacts. Employing Galtung's violence triangle (1999), she concludes that the violence exerted through electronic games is structural, it deprives the individuals or groups of their basic rights, and the model of learning that such games offer is vicarious and social. Although works on this topic are scarce, she uses Enrique Javier Díez's study (2005) as a referent, and agrees with his conclusion that most electronic games reproduce sexist stereotypes. Finally, she points out that, even if it is hard to assess whether violent chauvinistic social behaviours inspire the creators of electronic games or whether the behaviours they depict increase sexist violence, it would be quite naïve to assume that electronic games only teach positive values.

All the chapters, therefore, meet the challenge of demonstrating that the ideological substratum of culture needs to be changed if we want to bring about an end to the violence that sustains it. *El sustrato cultural de la violencia de género* becomes, in this sense, compulsory reading both for scholars interested in gender violence and for a general readership. The reader familiar with the texts and with the theories used will feel closer to the analyses, but for those with only a superficial knowledge of the content, the volume will be a perfect introduction to cultural gender violence. This book joins a pioneering tendency in Spain that seems to be increasingly concerned with the way in which cultural practices support gender discrimination. I would like to finish by quoting Aguilar's enlightening words: "Es evidente que la existencia de relatos socialmente compartidos que formularan y respaldaran nuevas posibilidades de ser y estar en el mundo, contribuiría poderosamente a generar cambios positivos" (273). Reflections like this draw to a close a collection that succeeds in deciphering the patriarchal signals that sustain our cultural artefacts, opening the door on a possible new representation of gender —as outlined in Chapters Three, Five, Six and Nine— where both men and women find realistic models of representation in a society that needs to eradicate gender violence from its intricate roots.

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In the present context of international crises, and in a world characterized by cultural diversity and by the global range of cultural production (Ashcroft 2012: xvi), a title such as *Literaturas postcoloniales en el mundo global* seems more relevant than ever. However, the validity of Postcolonial Studies is still under interrogation, as Robert Young's question suggests: "Has [the postcolonial] already perished, leaving only its earthly relics, forgotten books, abandoned articles floating in cyberspace, remnants of yellowing conference programs?" (2012: 18). Counter to this statement, Bill Ashcroft argues that the postcolonial has not only flourished, but has even embraced its critics, channeling their objections into the broad collective agenda of creative cultural engagement with imperialism in all its forms (2012: xv). In the midst of this ongoing critical debate, a book such as this is a welcome addition to the still relatively scarce Spanish bibliography in the field, and joins earlier studies like María José Vega's *Imperios de papel* (2003). In *Literaturas Postcoloniales en el mundo global*, Sánchez-Palencia and Perales concentrate on the literary production of two European empires, the French and the British. The volume consists of an introduction by Sánchez-Palencia, followed by a section dedicated to Francophone literatures (four chapters), and a second to Anglophone literatures (five chapters), the innovative feature of this work being its handling of different languages and cultures.

In her accessible and well-structured introduction, highly recommendable for a beginners' course on the subject, Sánchez-Palencia deals with the cornerstone concepts of Postcolonial Studies, which will be expanded on in the various chapters of the collection: orientalism, alterity and the subaltern, place, language, nation, diaspora, hybridity, mimicry, globalization, and the relationship between feminism and postcolonialism. She provides a variety of bibliographical sources —from books to general knowledge articles and websites— as well as current examples from the different languages and cultures addressed in the book and contemporary events, like the Arab Spring of 2011. Starting with the debate on the definition of the term 'postcolonial' as either, strictly, "what occurs or exists after the period of colonial rule" (*Shorter OED*) or, in a wider sense, as "all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment

of colonization until the present day" (Ashcroft et al. 2007: 2), Sánchez-Palencia corroborates Justin D. Edwards's statement that postcolonial literature, criticism and theory are about scrutinizing power relations and resisting imperialist prerogatives (Edwards 2008:11).

Sánchez-Palencia emphasizes the current revival of Said's theories about Orientalism. *Orientalism* (1978) is, undoubtedly, a book that still continues to invite much commentary and criticism (see Ashcroft and Ahulwalia 2008). The renewed orientalist gaze which pervades bestseller lists in First World bookstores has boosted the publication of literature, mostly fiction by "ethnic/ized" writers, "not usually read in political terms" (Martín-Lucas 2009: 200). Other critics (Huggan 2001; Ponzanesi 2006) have also commented on the role of literary prizes in the commodification of these 'exotic' authors. As foundational as *Orientalism* are the writings of the Subaltern Studies Group, which question nationalistic Eurocentric historiography for reproducing the models and epistemology of the colonizer while ignoring other subjectivities (Freitas and Pires 2007: 302). The project of recovering hidden voices and subjectivities originates in the studies of British Marxist historians from the 1960s and is embedded in many of the postcolonial literary works mentioned in the volume, from Derek Walcott to Le Clézio.

The section on Francophone literatures offers a thorough survey of French postcolonial writing, and consists of a chapter on the Antillean Francophone literatures by Marie Dominique Le Rumeur; one about literatures from the Indic Ocean by Mar García López; one on Francophone Maghrebi literature by co-editor Juan José Perales Gutiérrez; and a final essay on Francophone African literature. All of them are enlightening for scholars without previous knowledge of postcolonial literature in French. Here I shall not discuss the chapters in the order they appear but rather consider them with respect to their geographical and thematic links. The chapter about Antillean literatures by Le Rumeur highlights the influence of the French Revolution, which led firstly to emancipation and, secondly, to dependence and assimilation (44). A case in point is Haiti, which achieved its independence in 1804 and became the first black Republic in the world. The notion of 'Negritude' (translated into English as 'the fact of blackness'), crucial for the understanding of the psychological effects of racism, is aptly contextualized by Le Rumeur. Often neglected by scholars of postcolonial literatures in English, 'Negritude' is a creation of the Martinican poet Aimé Césaire, later developed by his countryman, the well-known critic Frantz Fanon in his seminal books *Black Skin White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*. The stages of theorizing following 'Negritude' ('Antillanité' and 'Criollité') coincided with increased global interest in and official recognition of Antillean writers, who were awarded several literary prizes in the 1990s: Derek Walcott, from the Lesser Antilles received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1992, and Patrick Chamoiseau from Martinique was awarded the Goncourt for his novel *Texaco*.

The concepts of 'Negritude' and alterity, though originating in the French-speaking Antilles, can be applied to other African literatures written in French. Díaz Narbona starts

her chapter reflecting on the fact that over centuries the African continent has been the source of inspiration and an apt décor for the European craving for exoticism (185). She emphasizes that war conflicts, famines and epidemics in this area are, to some extent, the result of the neocolonialist politics enforced in these countries (186). These problems justify the presence of an overtly political literary production which the author calls "una literatura de reacción" (185), aimed at the moral reconstruction of African peoples and the defense of human rights, including those of women, who, in postcolonial countries, are doubly oppressed by the patriarchal and imperial establishment (21).

Mar García-López's chapter on the Francophone literatures of the Indian Ocean provides abundant historical and contextual data for the understanding of these literatures, still *terra incognita* for many Spanish readers. According to historical and geographical parameters, the prolific literary production of these territories can be divided into two sections: the first includes that from Madagascar and the Comoros Islands; the second, that of the Mascarene Islands (the Republic of Mauritius and the islands under its dominion) and Réunion (which is still, like Mayotte, a French Department overseas). As García-López explains, Mauritius was initially a Dutch colony that the French made prosperous after they settled there in 1735 and that became an English possession after the Napoleonic wars (125-26).

Mauritius has been, since the 1990s, the home of a number of internationally acclaimed writers, including the 2008 Nobel Prize winner Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio. For scholars who are interested in multilingualism and interculturalism, García-López's chapter opens up new paths for research because of the variety of languages and cultures which co-exist in this large area: official languages, the colonial languages (French and English), ancestral languages from India and China and the vernacular languages (Creole languages, Malagasy —the national language of Madagascar— and dialects of Swahili). This intersection of languages and cultures results in a rich literary production that is trans-linguistic and trans-generic and inclined towards oral genres (short story and drama). Juan José Perales' chapter on Francophone Magrebhi literature provides a vivid portrait of the crude realities of this African territory, immersed since the 1990s in armed conflicts and political repression, a suffering exemplified by the Algerian writer Tahar Djaout. Djaout was very much against Islamic fanaticism and, as a result, was assassinated by the Armed Islamic Group in 1993. As Margaret Atwood once observed, in oppressive political systems artists and journalists are the first to be suppressed (1982: 350). Tahar Djaout's posthumous writings seem to anticipate the Canadian writer's 2004 warning (337) that the world we live in is becoming more and more 'Orwellian': "L'Oeil Omniscient peut s'allumer à tout moment pour surprendre vos émois, vos manginances, ou vous arracher à votre honteuse conspiration" (1999: 122).

Like the chapters on the French language literatures, the chapters on Anglophone postcolonial literatures are all written by experts in the area: the first, by Antonia Navarro-Tejero, deals with the inscription of gender in the history of India; the second, by Ana Bringas, touches on history and hybridization in Anglo-Caribbean literature;

the third, by Belén Martín-Lucas, is about Canadian literature in English; and the last two by Asunción Aragón-Varo and Manuel Almagro-Jiménez, respectively, deal with literatures in English in two African countries: Nigeria and South-Africa. The essays present a variety of approaches to these postcolonial literatures in English, but they all offer fascinating insights into the authors and texts they deal with. Once again, I will group them here according to thematic considerations in the following discussion. In her chapter on Anglo-Caribbean Literature, Ana Bringas insists on the great ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity of the Caribbean, resulting from the complex historical processes that took place in the region since the first arrival of the Europeans in the late sixteenth century (263). Like some of the authors of the other chapters, Bringas claims that all Caribbean countries share a common history of genocide, colonialism and slavery, as well as the neo-colonialist domination of the United States (264). Bringas's historical overview of slavery and indentureship —which she rightly translates as 'contrato de trabajo pseudoesclavista'— and its impact on Caribbean literatures is both concise and illuminating for newcomers to the topic. She offers examples from writers who are transnational: Derek Walcott, George Lamming, Jamaica Kinkaid, Fred D'Aguiar, Caryll Phillips, David Dabydeen and the Caribbean-Canadian Dionne Brand. The author ends on a politically committed note by commenting on the acculturation of these authors under the subsuming category of 'postcolonial literatures', and their appropriation by Western publishing corporations, who use them to satisfy the reading public's demand for exoticism (265).

In keeping with Ana Bringas's argument, Asunción Aragón-Varo, when discussing African literatures in English, also highlights their plurality and the risk they run of becoming acculturated: "Hay pues muchas Áfricas en esa 'África' que al fin y al cabo es una invención europea" (23). Like the previous contributors mentioned, Aragón-Varo connects the history of African literature with the processes of colonization and decolonization of the continent, which started after World War II and culminated in the 1960s. The chapter offers some geographical contextualization and divides this large literary territory into three areas (Western Africa, East Africa and South Africa) and then focuses on the literature of Nigeria because of the importance of its writers, headed by Chinua Achebe, Flora Nwapa and Wole Soyinka (the first African author to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature, in 1986), followed by Ben Okri, who bridges the gap between them and the third generation of young authors currently at the forefront— Chris Abani, Chimanda Ngozi Adichi and Unoma Azuah among them, who guarantee the continuation of a literary tradition in the country. Instead of providing an overview of authors and texts, the second chapter on African literatures in English, authored by Manuel Almagro-Jiménez, is a lucid reading of the novel *Waiting for the Barbarians*, by the South-African writer J.M. Coetzee. The relevance of Coetzee as a postcolonial author is unquestionable since he is not only a fiction writer, but has also published numerous critical essays on the discriminatory South-African phenomenon of apartheid. After describing the South-African historical background in which Coetzee's fiction is set, the

author establishes parallelisms between *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Heart of Darkness* (to which another seminal text of African literature, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is often also compared) characterizing the latter as another example of 'writing back to the Empire' (Ashcroft et al. 2007).

Antonia Navarro-Tejero's essay on gender and Indian literature and Belén Martín-Lucas' chapter on Anglo-Canadian literature in English present two very different approaches to their subjects. In her specialized and thoroughly researched chapter, Navarro-Tejero concentrates on historical and sociological considerations rather than literary analysis. Divided into two sections, the pre-independence and the post-independence periods, this chapter offers abundant information about Indian history and culture, which proves the inaccuracy of the European belief that there was no Indian literature by women before the nineteenth century. The second section of the chapter concentrates on the history of Indian feminisms and its connections to nationalism.

The postcolonial condition of Canada has often been discussed and questioned (Moss 2003; Sugars 2004). Belén Martín-Lucas takes it for granted and presents a survey of Canadian Anglophone literature specifically oriented to non-expert Spanish language readers. The chapter has four sections: an introduction, a section about Canadian literature and nationalism (including references to authors like Northrop Fry and Margaret Atwood), one about Canadian books translated into Spanish and a final section about cultural transference, focusing on the Canadian poet of Galician ancestry Erín Moure. As Martín-Lucas acknowledges, the topic of rewriting Canadian literature in Spain through translation has been explored by other Spanish Canadianists (Somacarrera 2009) and is the subject of the volume *Made in Canada, Read in Spain: Essays on the Translation and Reception of English-Canadian Literature* (Somacarrera 2013) and other forthcoming titles. After describing the historical, geographical and sociological backgrounds, Martín-Lucas adroitly guides us through Canada's literary production and its distinctive traits and tropes, highlighting Northrop Frye's idea of the 'garrison mentality' (the hostility to the environment which characterized early Canadian literature), and the literary nationalism of the 1960s and 1970s. Especially interesting for the international reception of these works are Canadian women writers, from the pioneers (Susanna Moodie, Catherine Parr Trail) to well-known present-day authors like Margaret Atwood, who was granted the Prince of Asturias Award in 2008 (297, 302).

After this fascinating journey through the postcolonial literatures in French and English, I conclude, like other critics, that the agenda of Postcolonial Studies is more necessary than ever (Loomba et al. 2005: 1; Young 2012). "Postcolonialism", in Robert Young's words is, "not just a disciplinary field or a theory . . . but [rather] a wide-ranging political project —to reconstruct Western knowledge formations, reorient ethical norms, turn the power structures of the world upside down, and refashion the world from below" (2012: 20). In this context, books such as the present volume, edited by Sánchez-Palencia and Morales, which make this crucial project accessible to non-expert readers in their own language, should be encouraged and are worthy of praise.

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When discussing Postcolonial Studies, it is commonplace to recall that from its infancy the discipline has systematically been decreed as being at a dead end. Yet the capacity of Postcolonial Studies to absorb criticism from both within and without has proved astonishing. Probably, such severe criticism has even strengthened the area, to the point that in the twenty-first century Postcolonialism turns out to be one of the most solid philosophies in Western academia, both as a political perspective and as a critical practice. The release of essay collections like *Literature for Our Times: Postcolonial Studies in the Twenty-first Century* testifies to renewal within the discipline, while it also illustrates the basic idea that there is life beyond the classic *noeuds* of colonialism and the post-colony.

This collection of thirty-five essays results from the largest ACLALS conference in its thirty-five-year history, held in Vancouver in 2007. In the introduction, Bill Ashcroft redefines the discipline in both a new and a traditional sense. He points out that Postcolonialism is not a chronology or a specific ontology but a way of reading; a centrifugal rather than centripetal energy. It comes as no surprise that he should praise the virtues of a discipline whose foundations he heavily contributed to cementing. Revising its traditional concerns, he mentions "a vast array of cultural developments: race and racism; expressions of anticolonial nationalism; the paradoxical dissolution of the idea of nation along with the continuous persistence of national concerns; the question of language and appropriation; of the transformation of literary genres, the question of ethnicity and its relation to the state; the growing mobility of formerly colonized populations" (xvi). The field refuses to be contained. Understandably, then, rather than a Grand Theory, for Aschcroft, Postcolonial Studies amounts to a "convivial critical democracy" (xvii). The key idea is cohabitation: of cultures, of arguments, of worldviews. As he contends, cohabitation and transdisciplinarity inform contemporary knowledge production (xviii), a knowledge where, it is crucial to remark, boundaries are "to become increasingly fuzzy" (xix).

The first chapter includes five articles intended to foreground conceptual and methodological issues. In 'The Commonwealth Legacy: Towards a Decentred Reading of World Literature' and 'Global Literary Refractions: Reading Pascale Casanova's *The*

World Republic of Letters in the Post-Cold War Era', Franz Schulze-Engler and Debjani Ganguly, respectively, effect severe critiques of Casanova's controversial study. They criticize her narrowing of literature to the scope of the nation, precisely when she claims to go beyond it, and her setting of Europe at the centre of what purports to be a global approach. Schulze-Engler, who, echoing Ashcroft, equates Postcolonial Studies to "a loose alliance . . . of approaches" (7), deplores the fact that a specific methodology "for a transcultural comparative study of English-language literatures" (7) that would allow "an alternative perspective of 'world literature'" (11) has not been created thus far. He and Ganguly review alternative energetic paradigms to Casanova's that will find echo later on, in the papers devoted to different takes on the postcolonial. In 'Frailty and Feeling: Literature for Our Times', Paul Sharrad complements their suggestions by incorporating the theory of affect, arguing that affect takes us away from either/or dualities, a persistent ambition among postcolonial scholars, and that it integrates, pace the translation of feeling into affect, the private and the public sphere —a virtue of the discipline noted by Ashcroft and Robert Young, among others. Nela Bureu adds desire to this methodological layout in her nuanced approach to prairie writing in 'Spaces of Desire: A Pleasant Séjour in Robert Kroetsch's *The Hornbooks of Rita K*'.

Race and ethnicity, and the attention to the colonial discourses pervading nineteenth-century culture and literature, have not ceased to be an issue, as the brief chapter 'After Said: Imperial Scholarship, Race and Ethnicity' demonstrates. Another relatively short chapter on a classic matter is 'Gendered Bodies', where Feroza Jussawalla's article 'To Veil or not to Veil: Muslim Women Writers Speak Their Rights' stands out in its treatment of a burning question. Jussawalla reminds us that Muslim women need to struggle to free themselves of oppression from different sides: both fundamentalist Islam and homogeneizing Western paternalism. Through discussion of works by several Muslim women she proposes that we learn about and respect Muslim women's plurality and their right to choose their own ways, enacting culture as they desire and practicing religion if and how they wish.

The chapter devoted to 'Translations and Transformations' underscores the outstanding role of translation in Postcolonial Studies. The title of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's contribution, 'A Multi-Centred Globe: Translation as the Language of Languages', is eloquent in its account of the demise of outdated Europe-centred theories such as Casanova's. Ngũgĩ elaborates on his classic *Moving the Centre* (1993), where he advocated a move away from nation-centric conceptions of culture, and incorporates the idea of translation as the signifier most capable of linking words and worlds, peoples and languages in the modern day. Following this, several pieces explore Ngũgĩ's work and the problematics of translation. Most remarkable in this chapter is the closing article, by Robert Young, where he assesses English as a world language, a language of hybridity prone to change through "rhizomatic contact" (169). To put it in a nutshell, English, according to Young's provocative essay, has turned into a "cosmopolitan vernacular" (181). This is an invaluable piece for those interested in the close-knit connection between languages and postcolonial cultures.

Diasporas and migratory movements could not be absent from such an ambitious collection. The chapter 'Literatures of Diaspora and Migrancy' contains five articles dealing with issues as varied as Jamaica Kincaid's *Mr Potter*, Bhangra or contemporary pilgrimage narratives. A remarkable theoretical ground wherefrom to tackle the complexity of the moving world we inhabit today is laid by Sissy Helff in 'The Missing Link: Transculturation, Hybridity, and/or Transculturality?' which opens this block. Profusely informed by Migration Studies theory, Helff's article is unusually structured in that, after a short introduction, it analyses a case study before extending to a longer theoretical argument. The core of this significant excursus is the proposal of the concept of transculturality as a possible way forward for Postcolonial Studies. She suggests that transculturality takes stock of the complexity of contemporary cultural exchanges, paying attention to power imbalances and the subversive possibilities implicit in artistic products that are often neglected by useful yet sometimes insufficient concepts such as hybridity. Notwithstanding, she also warns that socially marginal groups, such as unsuccessful migrants detained in camps or airports, run the risk of exclusion (as well) at a theoretical level if tackled from such a supposedly encompassing perspective. Therefore, Helff concludes, an alliance of postcolonial criticism (with its attention to otherness and exclusion) and transcultural studies (with its focus on cultural transactions and moves) is needed as of today. This could change in a not-so-distant future, as one of the most crucial ideas exposed in this piece is that, like critical approaches, theories also need to be connected to their specific locations. To conclude this chapter, Kavita Ivy Nandan's 'Writing as Healing: Fijindians – The Twice Banished?' illustrates the convenience of complementing transcultural concepts ('Fijindians') with a more traditional postcolonial approach, revising the calamities which Fijians of Indian origin have suffered and continue to go through on a nation island where their distressing story has barely entered the national narrative. In this context, writing becomes a healing power. Nandan signals how, out of scraps of a nearly lost memory, Fijindian authors are creating a past and a history, and thus a present, because, as this critic remarks, memory is a dynamic, empowering force.

It may seem paradoxical that, next to the necessary attention paid to displaced and hybrid peoples, another rich source of 'literature for our times' should be indigenous cultures. The title of the chapter devoted to this field, again comprising five papers, is borrowed from that of Jeannette Armstrong's opening article, 'Literature of the Land: An Ethos for These Times', where she develops a theory on the connection between orality and the land in the Syilx culture (whose territories refuse to abide by European-imposed borders, spreading into the neighbouring states of British Columbia and Washington). Its language, as the author explains, is an "orality-based schema, organized in a way that facilitates collective memory transmitted through story and as an ethics arising out of a long association with one place" (348). After a fascinating illustration of this lead, Armstrong makes the call that we pay heed to our connections to the land, as these are days when "ecological illiteracy" is causing havoc in our essential humanity. It is time for us to react, like Turtle in one of the Syilx stories that Armstrong decodes for us, "with

compassion and courage in the face of the greatest of odds" (355). In the same chapter, Sam McKegney's 'Masculindians: The violence and Voyeurism of Male Sibling Relationships in Recent First-Nations Fiction' and Michaela Moura-Koçoglu's 'From Noble Savage to Brave New Warrior? Constructions of a Maori Tradition of Warfare' explore aboriginal masculinities and their familial and/or social connections in cultures from lands as distant as Canada and Aotearoa-New Zealand, yet reaching analogous conclusions: that reading literary self-representations by aboriginal or native writers is a means to resist the misleading stereotypical essentialisms reproduced for so long. Two articles closing the block introduce an area so far underexplored by Postcolonial Studies: the Philippine Islands. Chelva Kanaganayakam's '*A Native Clearing* Revisited: Positioning Philippine Literature' claims that there is still "a need for recognizing writing from the Philippines as an important segment of postcolonial writing in English" (383). Stephen Ney, for his part, with 'Asia's Christian-Latin Nation? Postcolonial Reconfigurations in the Literature of the Philippines', begins to fill the gap indicated by Kanaganayakam, but also takes the discussion to a connection which, like the Philippines, is relatively under-researched in Postcolonial Studies to date: that between Christianity and postcolonialism, or, more accurately, 'the postcolonization of Christianity', a provocative idea which calls for further explorations, in this as well as in other contexts: Much has been written about colonialism and Christianity, but not so much about the combined 'post' of both.

Equally foundational are the three articles compiled under the heading 'Dalit Literature and Its Criticism', which explore matters of gender and feminism and the politics of caste, class and representation in Tamil and Telugu Dalit texts. Dalit literature, which has blossomed in different languages since the 1950s, has huge potential, which is still to be fully acknowledged by a discipline often reluctant to tackle works not written in English. This bears relation to international publishing policies, as, quoting Pavithra Narayanan, "when publishing is an economic decision, what defines postcolonial literature in First World institutions is what private capital enterprise makes available" (2012: 7). Hopefully, it is only a matter of time before Dalit and indigenous literatures worldwide (including that of the Adivasis, noticeably absent here) become more accessible for the benefit of all.

I was initially surprised that a very short chapter entitled 'The City' should contain, besides an essay on the contemporary multicultural city, which Zadie Smith's writing epitomizes in London ('Streets and Transformation in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and "Stuart"', by Pamela McCallum), a piece on Harry Potter. However, the inclusion makes sense in so much as in 'Plotting Hogwarts: Situating the School ideologically and Culturally', the quintessential contemporary school of magic is read by its authors, Vandana Saxena and Angelie Multani, as an index to the situation "in the cultural space of a heterogeneous and multicultural society" (471). After a detailed analysis revising white and non-white, human and non-human characters, the conclusions are not very optimistic: What Rowling depicts in Hogwarts is what Stanley Fish has termed 'boutique multiculturalism', a merely aesthetic acceptance of otherness that screens a once again white-centred, exclusionist ideology. Rowling's series has thus revived the boarding school

genre, which had been "more or less dead" (483) for many years, but has not significantly challenged its reactionary dogmas and the racist assumptions that so contributed to buttressing the Empire. Having said this, and because the paper does not make an explicit connection between Hogwarts and London —or any other city for that matter— I believe that 'Multiculturalism', however loose and overexploited a label, would have been a more fitting title than 'The City' (which disowns the conspicuous multiculturality of small towns and villages) for this brief chapter.

To conclude the collection, 'Terrorism, Trauma, Loss' incorporates several pungent topics signaling relevant directions of late Postcolonial Studies. 'Ethics' could also be a suitable epigraph here, a block where theories of affect return as a haunting presence to round up the deeply emotional breadth which, one states again reading this volume, seldom fails to characterize postcolonial approaches. Despite the composite title, the block is not quite as miscellaneous as one would expect, since the articles are thematically knitted together. Two of the four papers deal with terrorism; Fred Ribkoff writes about the injustices of national memory discussing Bharati Mukherjee's revision of the 1985 Air India bombing, and Summer Pervez unpacks racial politics as articulated by Hanif Kureishi, and reads his works as warning calls to intercultural understanding prior to London 7/7. The two remaining papers explore vicissitudes of witnessing: Susan Speary's deals with the thorny contexts of Rwanda and South Africa, while Pilar Somacarrera's delineates a careful study of Margaret Atwood's protracted career as a poet, concluding that, contrary to some opinions, Canada's leading writer has been consistently political throughout her career.

The sections are coherently structured, while of course the contributions could have been organized differently. Not only in the geographical sense (a rather outdated criterion, in any case, in the global dynamics that the book so well represents) but also in its attendance to thematic clusters: the chapters on gender and racial politics could have absorbed several others; a specific block might have been devoted to dealing exclusively with religious matters; indigenous literatures could have been linked or joined together with Dalit writing as, while they are distinct, they have common concerns in denouncing social inequalities and the need for recognition, as well as their youth and their quickly germinating status; ethical matters might have been presented perhaps more creatively. Each article, in short, fits into several niches, and given the scope and significance of the book, which is destined to have a place in any good library concerned with the postcolonial, one interesting possibility would have been to suggest a list of alternative or cross-arrangements. A more practical alternative to this list would have been the inclusion of an index. The lack of either, however, does not diminish the quality of the product in any significant manner.

Attesting to the felicitous "convivial democracy" that Ashcroft announces in the introduction, the collection covers all areas revised by other recent relevant works of its kind (Huggan 2008; Lazarus 2011; Wilson, Sandru and Welsh 2012). To my mind, though, one area is underrepresented. It is old-fashionedly geographical, and unfortunately, as is often the case, I shall refer to its multiplicity through a generalization: Africa. Three papers

are devoted to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (including his own), one to the novels of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichi and a third, as was mentioned, to Rwanda and South Africa. Only five in all, against something like twice the number (the count is complicated by diasporic authors, etc.) of articles dealing with India. Of course the collection compiles pieces originating from a conference, therefore the editors should not be blamed for this imbalance. I do think it is worth mentioning, however, because of the agreed need, identified by several authors, for our often intrepid discussions to trespass academic boundaries —the written page, the conference, the classroom— and reach somewhere beyond. While completing this review, I hear on the radio the announcement of a lecture, to be given in a respectable culture hall of a medium-sized Spanish city, "on Africa, to learn about the continent and the situation of the African people" (in the singular in the announcement). An ambitious topic for a single lecture —my point here being that, as postcolonial scholars, we have a duty to denounce such gross generalizations. And in order to create the tools and weapons to do so, we must first turn our attention to places and peoples still greatly disregarded in postcolonial discipline(s).

Indeed, the collection's most solid binding force is its pedagogical purpose. This idea is confirmed by the inclusion of an Afterword on this matter by Henry Giroux. In 'Collaterally Damaged: Youth in a Post 9/11 World', he denounces the harmful educational policies of the Bush period in the US. Then, praising the value of education in democratic societies, and after making a scary analysis of the mercantilized state of US and Canadian universities (which should make us reflect on the recent turn taken by European higher education), Giroux makes a convincing call for the expression of our ethical responsibility as teachers and, therefore, social activists. Taking his cue from Edward Said (and thus unknowingly completing the circle of the collection), Giroux proposes that educators envision "a critical pedagogy" (612): He reminds us of the need "to become provocateurs, . . . fighting against the imposed silence of normalized power, 'refusing to allow conscience to look away or fall asleep' [he quotes Said here], and critically engaging all those social relations that promote material and symbolic violence" (614). His ideas encapsulate the philosophy of this major contribution to Postcolonial Studies and of the field itself.

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Álvarez Mosquera, Pedro 2012: *Identidad y Language Crossing. El uso de inglés afroamericano por raperos blancos*. Bern: Peter Lang. 164 pp. ISBN: 978-3-0343- 1220-2.

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Language crossing has been the object of recent interest in the field of sociolinguistics, especially following the pioneering work of Rampton (1995a, 1995b),[1] who coined the term in his study of adolescents' friendship groups in England to refer to "the use of language varieties associated with social or ethnic groups that the speaker does not normally 'belong' to" (1995a: 14). Studies of a similar nature had already appeared, looking at how language is affected in multiethnic contexts (Hewitt 1986; Gilroy 1987) and at the interaction between language and identity, also a recurrent and productive issue in the field of sociolinguistics (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985; Zentella 1990; Butcholz 1999; Smitherman 2000; Morgan 2002; Fought 2006, to mention just a few). Prior to Álvarez-Mosquera's monograph, studies on language crossing had focused principally on the crossing of adolescents and were mostly of a qualitative nature (Ramptom 1995a; Cutler 1999; Vermeij 2004). In this respect the current work is pioneering in that it constitutes a study of language crossing within the context of rap music between 1980 and 2000, and assumes both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. Using sociolinguistic parameters, among which ethnicity, language variety and chronology are of utmost relevance, the author investigates how white rappers in the USA make use of linguistic devices traditionally associated with African-American Vernacular English (henceforth AAVE), and thus belong to the domain of black rappers.[2] This makes the study most innovative, and fills a gap in this burgeoning field of research.

The study is contextualized on solid theoretical, descriptive and methodological grounds (Chapters 2-4). First, the author describes the phenomenon of language crossing itself, distinguishing it from other phenomena with which it might overlap, such as code-switching and 'passing'. He concludes succinctly yet precisely that the primary difference between these two phenomena and language crossing is that, only in the latter, do crossers have no ethnic relation with the group with which they cross and no intention of belonging to the group whose features they imitate. Language crossing is therefore a

[1] For support with this study, my gratitude goes to the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation and European Regional Development Fund (Grant Nr. FFI2011-26693-C02-02).

[2] Both the author and I are aware of the different terms available to denote this linguistic variety; here I will use the terms employed by the author in his monograph.

conscious act and the only motivation crossers have to justify the act of appropriation is related to notions of power and prestige. Chapter 3 then offers a comprehensive account of AAVE, given that the case study to follow will present crossing towards this variety. The description of AAVE is diachronic in nature, beginning with its origins in 1619 when the first slaves arrived in the USA, and ending at the present-day, including theories on its origins (English-based tradition and African-based tradition). This chapter also includes a section that describes the presence of AAVE in American society, with a particular emphasis on urban contexts, notably Los Angeles and New York; the latter will also receive a more exhaustive treatment in §5.2.3, since it is the geographic location of the informants in the study. Finally, Chapter 3 closes with a catalogue of the most typical linguistic features associated with AAVE (vocabulary, semantics, pronunciation, and grammar), based on Rickford and Rickford (2000). From the outset, the study presents AAVE as the reference to which the other variety is compared, namely to what the author refers to throughout the book as 'Standard American English' or *inglés estándar* and justifies the suitability of these labels because of their broader meaning. However, in my opinion, 'Standard American English' is not an adequate term for this type of study. Not only is the word 'standard' a politically-loaded term, but also, and more importantly, it seems contradictory as a term referring to the variety of language used in songs from which a selection of non-standard linguistic variables will be analyzed. In this context the label 'standard' is unfortunate and misleading, and other terms such as 'Mainstream U.S. English', used only once in a footnote, might have been more appropriate. In Chapter 4, the author justifies the use of rap for a study of this nature. Rap music constitutes an innovative subject for linguistic research, one which has become very popular following work by Alim (2006). There are two main reasons for this. First, using rap music makes possible a comparative analysis of rappers belonging to both ethnic groups (white and black). Second, given that rap music is a genre with strongly rooted origins in the African and African-American tradition,[3] language crossing from non-African-American ethnic groups is favored in this context.

Chapters 5-8 constitute the main body of the monograph, presenting results from the quantitative and qualitative analyses. From a technical point of view, the author's rigor in the compilation and processing of data, included in these chapters, must be praised. The analysis has been conducted meticulously, with the appropriate method of analysis used in each case: SPSS for the database compilation and the quantitative analysis, *Praat* and *Wavesurfer* for the phonological variables and *WordSmith Tools* for the qualitative part.

Chapter 5 offers a thorough description of the corpus used for the analysis. Its compilation follows sociolinguistic criteria, taking ethnic group and chronology as the main factors for data collection. The resulting corpus comprises 36 songs per ethnic group, with a chronologically balanced distribution. All songs were performed by rappers from New York, in order to avoid potential biases from dialectal variation. A single album of songs (mean number of 12 songs) was used for each of six singers, one black and one white from each of three decades (1980s, 1990s and 2000s). An issue which might arise immediately in the reader's mind is whether one informant per decade from an ethnic

[3] A rapper is described as "a post-modern African griot, the verbally gifted storyteller and cultural historian in the traditional African society" (Smitherman 2000: 269).

group is representative enough in order to extrapolate results for the whole group. Drawing conclusions about a decade of language use from a single informant (e.g., use of *ain't* by white rappers in the 1990s) seems to me to be potentially dangerous, in that we cannot know for sure whether data reflect common trends at the time or simply an idiolectal feature of one performer (see footnote 5 for an example illustrating such differences). Consequently, the validity of the analysis should ideally be confirmed by controlling for idiolectal idiosyncrasies through the use of further informants from each of the decades selected or indeed by using more than one informant from the outset.[4] Despite detailed information on the corpus compilation, the number of words in each sample is not mentioned in the book, and judging from the list of most frequent words provided in Chapter 7, it seems very likely that there may be significance differences here;[5] in the quantitative analysis (Chapter 6) normalized —rather than absolute frequencies— should have been included, in order to avoid any possible skewing in the findings.

For the quantitative analysis (Chapter 6), the author selects the following linguistic variables: invariable negative marker *ain't*, copula deletion, invariant present tense forms in the 3rd person singular and the alveolar pronunciation of *–ing* (/ɪŋ/>/ɪn/). Following Rickford and Rickford (2000), the author considers that these variables are specific to AAVE. Undoubtedly this reference constitutes an excellent source on AAVE, but it might have been complemented with more updated sources (Green 2002; Edwards 2004; Wolfram 2004) in order to account for potential innovative linguistic traces, bearing in mind the speed with which non-standard varieties of English evolve. The recently launched *Electronic World Atlas of Varieties of English* (Kortmann and Lunkenheimer 2011) illustrates that the use of copula deletion is in fact a recurrent phenomenon in different Englishes, but has not been attested in Colloquial American English. As to the invariant present tense forms, although it is a very widespread phenomenon among different varieties of English, with an attestation rate of 66.2% and indeed is pervasive in AAVE (Kortmann and Lunkenheimer 2011), this feature has not been recognized for Colloquial American English either. Hence, both these variables constitute good examples to test language crossing in this context. By contrast, in Kortmann and Lunkenheimer (2011), the use of invariable negative marker *ain't* is a feature catalogued as pervasive in AAVE and not excessively rare in Colloquial American English; thus, its use here, where the variable might indeed exist in the crossers' own variety, is less suitable as a means of judging language crossing and the question arises as to what extent the results from this variable should be considered cases of crossing at all,[6] based on its AAVE origin, or rather as instances of a global, American-based youth

[4] The author uses the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* to corroborate his results, but as he acknowledges, this material does not provide any information on ethnic origin, so another source of data which fits with the author's sociolinguistic study would have been more useful here.

[5] This conclusion can be inferred from footnote 36 ("el corpus de Everlast está formado por 4.354 palabras, mientras que el corpus de 2Pac contiene 6.458"), 96.

[6] In fact, in this variable, the 90.5% use of *ain't* by Everlast, a white rapper, is highly surprising, being by far the highest here, which perhaps leads us to think that it might be an idiolectal feature, rather than a linguistic feature of white rappers in the 1990s. The same argument can be used with respect to the case of the omission of the 3rd person singular: "observamos que los raperos de etnia blanca tan sólo presentan un único caso de este tipo (*she don't*, por Cage)" (85). In this sense I disagree entirely with the author when he says that "el hecho de sólo centrarnos en dos de los raperos [black and white from the 1990s] radica en que si los resultados son lo suficientemente contundentes

culture. The same argument can be made for the phonological variable used concerning the alveolar (/ɪn/), rather than velar (/ɪŋ/) realization of *–ing*, a recurrent phenomenon in many varieties besides AAVE. In fact, the author himself acknowledges that this variable is not exclusive to AAVE (86), which seems a clear enough indication of its inappropriateness as a variable in a study of language crossing.

As to the qualitative analysis (Chapter 7), the author provides a very complete analysis of high-frequently used words and of a selected number of lexical words belonging to a determined set of semantic fields. Very interesting information is drawn from the analysis on the issue of how women are referred to as well as the use of terms belonging to the semantic field of violence. Less clear, however, is the examination of the word *nigga*, not surprisingly confined to black rappers; here an interesting comparison would be to search for an alternative term among white rappers to mark ethnicity and in-group membership, as similar studies on rap music in different contexts have done (Mitchell 2001: 1-2). In fact, according to Clarke and Hiscock, "[t]he use of the term *nigger* is unusual since this racially and politically charged term is generally avoided by white rappers" (2009: fn. 12).

Chapters 8 and 9 present evaluations of the sociolinguistic analysis (Chapter 8) and of the motivations for language crossing (Chapter 9). The information in both cases is of the utmost interest, with the summarized findings confirming previous studies on language crossing (e.g., Cutler 1999). Although linguistically the presence of language crossing is clear, it cannot be concluded from the results that it affects all levels, in particular cases such as the replication of certain cultural values inherent to the black tradition, such as concepts of the 'hood', resistance or authenticity, for instance. The phenomenon of 'hybridity' (Clarke and Hiscock 2009: 245) may in fact account for what appears to be 'superficial language crossing'. This coexistence of convergence and divergence in language crossing has been found in a number of studies cited by the author (such as Bennett 1999), but also in other relevant studies not included (Wermuth 2001; Androutsopoulos and Scholz 2003; Hess 2005; Pennycook 2003, 2007, to mention a few studies of rap music worldwide) which would have served to strengthen and further contextualize some very original findings here.

Conclusions to the study are given in Chapter 10. Álvarez Mosquera's research convincingly shows how the analysis of rap music can be used as a means of describing the language crossing of white singers in their appropriation of some AAVE linguistic features. However, he demonstrates that language crossing is not achieved in the conceptualization of cultural values related to the black experience. The analysis reveals the author's broad knowledge of the subject, and his exploration and review of a very comprehensive list of bibliographical sources is employed effectively throughout the book in support of his own views. On the whole, and despite some methodological shortcomings, this

para mostrar una correlación o desajuste entre los datos cualitativos y cuantitativos, éstos responderían a pautas etnoculturales que pueden ser extrapolables al conjunto global de los datos" (96).

monograph constitutes a pioneering piece of research. It will serve to fill a gap in the field of sociolinguistics and, at the same time, is innovative in its use of rap music to study language crossing, a phenomenon which up until now has only been analyzed through the spoken component of the language. All this makes the current work an attractive and accessible one for any scholar interested in the field of sociolinguistics, either from a didactic or research perspective, as well as for young researchers who may feel inspired by this vibrant and somewhat trendy line of research.

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Carmen Luján García 2013: *The English Language and Anglo-American Culture: Its Impact on Spanish Language and Society*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars. xiv+103 pp. ISBN: 9-781443-842105.

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This book, by Carmen Luján García, is one of the first attempts at providing a comprehensive picture of the presence and importance of English in Spanish society at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The author tries to provide a sociolinguistic-oriented account of the impact of English in Spain in key social fields by examining a variety of data, more precisely, advertising discourse, textual data from media sources, film titles, and questionnaire-elicited attitudinal and self-report data. She approaches data analysis from a quantitative perspective mostly, but also draws on qualitative discourse-analysis tools to gain a wider understanding of the theme discussed. One of the merits of this publication is that it goes beyond traditional scholarship in the field of English-Spanish language contact, which has tended to focus either on the influence of English upon Spanish lexis (Görlach 2001; Oncins-Martínez 2009) or on attitudes towards English of the Spanish population (Lasagabaster and Huguet 2007). This book is, in fact, a compilation of different pieces of research conducted by the author and previously published separately elsewhere. The publication is intended for a broad audience of students, scholars and the general public.

In the introduction, the author offers the rationale for the publication, which she frames within the increasing presence of English worldwide as a result of globalisation and international trade. She situates this book within current debates about the nature of English. In particular, she draws on both the *World/New Englishes* and the *English as a Lingua Franca* (ELF) paradigms. She aims to provide evidence on the impact of English in Spain, where, like in other southern European states, the presence of this language has traditionally been rather limited, but is now on the increase (see *Special Eurobarometer* 386 [2012], published by the European Commission).

Chapter One is devoted to the analysis of the use of English in advertising, and more specifically, in shop window messages. The data was collected during the Christmas season in seven major shopping centres located in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. The author compares her results with similar studies of the use of English in shop signs conducted in other non-English speaking areas of Europe. She concludes by delving into some of the social, cultural and psychological factors that may trigger the presence of English in the

discourse of advertising. On the one hand, she claims that English works as an attention-catcher, because it forces readers to put more effort into deciphering the commercial messages, and thus, pay more attention to them. On the other, she points out that English conveys key social indexicalities, such as coolness, modernity and cosmopolitanism, that certain shop chains, products and brands may want to be associated with.

Chapter Two tackles the analysis of another social field where the penetration of English is becoming ever more noticeable, i.e., the translation of film titles. The author undertakes the analysis of the titles of all Anglo-American films premiered in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria from January to September 2008 and the ways in which these titles were (not) translated into Spanish. The comparison of her findings with previous studies in this area throws light on the abundance of original titles in English present in Spanish cinemas. Some explanations, such as the increasing familiarity of cinema goers with English, the fact that English allows for greater compactness in film titles, and issues of global distribution and advertising, are put forward to explain the high number of untranslated film titles. Finally, the pragmatic and cultural aspects that play a role in translating film titles into Spanish are examined.

In Chapter Three the field of media discourse is explored, with particular reference to the use of Anglicisms. Twelve issues of a renowned film magazine are subject to both a quantitative and a qualitative type of analysis. The findings are then compared to those of previous studies of similar types of magazines. As in Chapter Two, an increase in the number of Anglicisms is observed if compared with earlier work. The author then embarks on a qualitative assessment of each of the instances of use of English lexis in one of the categories, namely technical words in the field of cinema. She concludes that half of the English lexical items used have corresponding Spanish equivalents. This leads her to claim that the motivations for choosing to employ English are extra-linguistic, to do with the prestige and modernity associated with the English language, the global primacy of the US film industry, and the self-construction of cinema critics as experts in a field dominated by English. This is, for the author, a further index of the impact of Anglo-American culture on Spanish society.

Chapter Four intends to address the growing presence of English in the Spanish educational system. Data comes from a survey carried out in different parts of Spain aimed at finding out (a) the opportunities students have for contact with English outside of school; (b) the attitudes they hold towards English; and (c) their self-assessment of language proficiency. The results show that opportunities for extra-curricular contact with English come mainly from the media and ICT, that attitudes towards English are generally positive and that students consider their proficiency levels to be fairly satisfactory. The author moves on to provide some pedagogical advice for teachers of English regarding speaker models and varieties.

Chapter Five is the only chapter that is not based on research data. Instead, it contains the author's reflections on the changing status of English in Spain and whether this is having an impact on people's sense of identity. In the first part, Luján García centres once again on

language use. She addresses the use of English in the workplace, and examines how English is now a must to be able to secure a highly qualified job in the Spanish labour market. She also dwells on the key role of English in the powerful tourist industry. In the second part, issues of identity, and legitimate varieties and speaker models are addressed. The growing presence of English leads the author to posit that English should be considered a second rather than a foreign language in Spain. With regard to legitimate language models and speakers, she frames her position theoretically within globalization-sensitive approaches to the nature of English, such as the ELF paradigm. The author emphasizes the need to move towards a more flexible, heterogeneous perspective on English and its ownership that is acceptant of locally-inflected varieties and accents.

The sixth and final chapter contains a list of questions for reflection on the topics and issues raised in the first four chapters.

This book is a welcome contribution to the field of the sociolinguistics of English in Spain as it provides empirical data on the presence of English in prominent social fields, such as advertising or the media. One of the strengths of the book is that all research-based chapters (1 to 4) follow the same structure, which facilitates reading and comprehension. Another positive aspect is that, apart from the last, each chapter provides readers with relevant pedagogical material for awareness-raising workshops or seminars in the context of adult education, high school or introductory English courses for general Arts and Humanities university degree programmes. By contrast, the relevance of this publication for researchers in general, and in particular, for English Studies sociolinguists or discourse analysts appears rather limited, mainly because of its descriptive focus and limited analytical findings. Indeed, the analyses presented in most of the chapters come across as fairly superficial, which raises the question of whether some potentially interesting insights have been missed. In my view, the book would greatly benefit from a more fine-grained theoretical discussion of the main concepts (see below for more detail), clarification of where it stands with regard to the relationship between language and culture in the key case of English, and thirdly, the establishment of a dialogue with different pieces of data, as I will suggest later.

As refers to theory, and despite the fact that the author emphasises her wish to make the topic accessible to the general public, there is a need to discuss —even if only briefly and in simple terms— her understanding of the concepts she draws upon. A key example is *globalisation*, which is sometimes described as a 'fact' (1), sometimes as a 'phenomenon' (75), most often equated with the Anglicisation/Americanisation of the world, and always underspecified. The reader is left wondering what it is that the author has in mind: Compression of time and space (Harvey 1989)?; ease and rapidness of circulation of texts, ideas, values and cultural practices across the globe?; economic interdependence?; processes of downscaling and upscaling of nation-state power?; or perhaps all of the above at the same time? This must be clarified. Also, the relationship between English and 'globalisation' is in need of further complexification and more refined explaining, along

the lines proposed/presented by Pennycook (2007) and Saxena and Omoniyi (2010). The author shows that she is acquainted with the relevant literature —she mentions the above scholars, for example— but there is far more of relevance in their writings than is mentioned in this publication.

Linked to the above, there is a contradiction between the theoretical position the author adopts with regard to the nature of English (a *lingua franca*) and her understanding of the relationship between English and Anglo-American culture. While Luján García advocates a decentering of English, away from *inner circle* (Kachru 1990) speaker models and in favour of more hybrid, contingent and localised varieties, in most chapters, the language is still equated with Anglo-American culture; the presence of English, in its various forms, in previously monolingual Spanish spaces, amounts, in the author's words, to evidence of the influence of Anglo-American values and beliefs. This is an analytical leap that contradicts her theoretical stance and is not supported by the data she examines.

This takes me to the third area which would benefit from some rethinking, i.e., the empirical data on which analytical claims are made. There is a mismatch between what the book aims to do and what it delivers. By simply reading the title we observe that the author purports to describe the 'impact' of English on Spanish language and society. Yet the purely linguistic data the author handles does not allow her to make any claims on the societal impact of English in Spain; she can only actually discuss the growing presence of the language in the public sphere. What Luján García ends up doing is claiming that English is having a greater and greater social impact in Spain without there being data to support this claim. She also hypothesises about the reasons why Spanish speakers increasingly resort to English, especially in certain social fields, but this is mere speculation. No matter how plausible her arguments are, they are not supported by the data she examines. In fact, the only way in which she can make any claims as to the 'impact' of English (and maybe, of Anglo-American culture) is by asking the speakers themselves, either directly through interviews and questionnaires, or indirectly, through observing them in action; that is, by means of ethnographic data. A good case study would be, for example, to investigate how advertising campaigns are designed, what the process is for global chains and products, who decides what to say and in what language(s), in short, what the local economy of a text is. This type of data would supplement that presented in Chapter Two nicely. It would also throw light on the multilingual nature of contemporary advertising discourse, a perspective that is missed in the book because of its exclusively focus on English (we do not even get to know how English combines with Spanish in the advertising campaign examined in Chapter Two).

To conclude, despite its limitations, this is a thought-provoking publication. It opens up a whole new line of research in Spanish academia that has the potential to eventually become a major study area. The book may inspire many a new researcher, as it points towards interesting avenues for investigation in the sociolinguistics of English in Spain.

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G.S. Amur 2012: *Transgressions: Studies in Indian Literature in English*. Bengaluru: Kanva. xvii +623 pp. ISBN: 978-93-81803-10-3.

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The emergence of Indian literature in English as an object of study is a landmark in the history of English Studies in India.[1] One need not reiterate the space it has occupied in English Studies curricula and research over a period of more than five decades, although the pioneering work undertaken by eminent Indian teachers of English from the early generation —K.R. Srinivasa Iyangar, C.D. Narasimhaiah, G.S. Amur and M.K. Naik among them— in promoting the field and attaining international recognition should be acknowledged. They trained several generations of students in the field through their courses, their extensive research and abundant publications. Of these pioneers, G.S. Amur stands out as unique,[2] for his sheer profundity and range of engagement not only with Indian literature but also with American and postcolonial literatures and, more prominently, Kannada literature. He initiated interest in the field by conceiving the idea of a book on Indian literature in English, *Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English* (1968), which over the years became a standard reference on the subject. Apart from his substantial work on major Indian English writers, G.S. Amur was responsible for bringing Manohar Malgonkar into the mainstream of Indian writers in English, as his acceptance as a master narrator of fiction by the academia was the result of Amur's monograph *Manohar Malgonkar* (1972).

Amur's academic interests range from the theory of comedy to different forms of literature; in his much-acclaimed *The Concept of Comedy* (1963),[3] he makes a significant contribution to this field by arguing that the crux of comedies is an element of joy rather

[1] I would like to thank Dr Simon Barnabas, Ahmednagar College, Ahmednagar, Maharashtra (India) and Mr Ashwin Kumar AP, Tumkur University, Tumkur, Karnataka (India) for going through the early drafts of the review and making valuable suggestions. I would also like to thank *Atlantis* editors and anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.

[2] There are several articles on the contribution of G.S. Amur to literary criticism in both Kannada and English. Among the Kannada articles, see M.G. Hegde's 'G.S. Amur' (2005), also available in *A. Na. Kru. Prashasti Puraskrita Pratibhavantaru* (2010).

[3] G.S. Amur is the only Asian to figure in *Wessen Und Formen Des Komischenim Drama* (1975). From the English speaking world, his contribution joins essays by Northorp Frye and Susan Langer.

than laughter. He is also one of the makers of modern literary criticism in Kannada. Amur's critical writings evince his brilliant scholarship in both the western critical tradition and in the indigenous intellectual traditions of Kannada and Sanskrit. One important pattern in his engagement with literary criticism is his 'double bind' (dual loyalties) in the best sense of the phrase; as a teacher of English, he has done a commendable job in both teaching and writing literary criticism in English. His unflinching commitment to Kannada literature, especially after his retirement, has resulted in the publication of a vast body of Kannada criticism, which has brought him several awards. Thus, having emerged through his long and erudite career as a bilingual critic of exceptional scholarship and with a wide area of influence, G.S. Amur has now compiled essays, originally written as reviews or articles for scholarly journals, in the volume *Transgressions: Studies in Indian Literature in English*.

Transgressions, the most comprehensive collection of Amur's critical writings in the field of Indian literature in English, is divided into five parts. The first, titled 'General', deals with reviews of anthologies, including Salman Rushdie's controversial *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing 1947-1997* (1997) and Amit Chaudhuri's *The Picador Book of Modern Indian Literature* (2001). In addition, this section, while reviewing books like Sudipta Kaviraj's *The Unhappy Consciousness* (1995), Sumita Chakravarty's *National Identity in Indian Popular Cinema* (1996) and *Interrogating Modernity*, edited by Tejaswini Niranjana et al. (1993), also discusses conceptual and theoretical issues such as cultural studies, modernity, orientalism, culture and colonialism, and women's discourse. The second part, 'Poetry and Drama', includes essays on the poetry of Adil Jussawalla, P. Lal, Jayanta Mahapatra, Keki Daruwalla, A.K. Ramanujan and Shiv K. Kumar. This section also contains an essay on the English-language plays of the Kannada dramatist T.P. Kailasam. Part III deals with the Indian English novel. Along with three general essays on Indian political novels, Muslim novelists, and the East-West encounter, it contains scholarly probing into the works of the three founding fathers of the Indian English Novel (Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao), of women novelists, including Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy and Namita Gokhale, and postmodernists like Shashi Tharoor and Upamanyu Chatterjee. Part IV deals with the texts of expatriates and writers such as Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, Bapsi Sidhwa, Hanif Kureshi, Peter Nazareth and Meadows Taylor. Part V contains essays devoted to the study of prose, including the writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Raja Rao and Khushwant Singh; and travelogues, biographies and autobiographies, such as those by Narayan and P. Lal.

'Seemollanghana' (Crossing the Borders), to borrow a phrase from the title of one of his Kannada books, has been the hallmark of Amur's writing and this work is no exception. Its title is appropriate, as the volume is a transgression not merely in the sense that it goes beyond Amur's present engagement with Kannada literary criticism, but because the book convincingly transgresses genres, texts, authors, and more importantly, the very idea of literature as a semi-philosophical discourse. Further, the idea of transgression makes reference to Amur's "nagging feeling that his time would have been better spent on the great Sanskrit Classics and Kannada literature than on English and American literature".

In this sense, Amur clearly acknowledges "a sense of moral wrong", echoing another connotation of the word 'transgress', by going beyond "his natural limit as a writer in Kannada language" (2012: x). This is not only illuminating in terms of Amur's identity crisis as a writer, but it also accounts for the crisis of teachers of English in India, especially those of Amur's generation; they began their career as teachers of English, borrowing insights and methods from the western tradition, and later, in the postcolonial context, found themselves obliged to recover Indian intellectual traditions in their work. Amur's transgression can be seen as related to his intellectual milieu in India.

The section 'Culture Studies' (Part I) is one of the strongest in the book, as Amur is at his best when discussing theoretical and conceptual issues as he does here. Unlike K.R. Srinivas Iyangar (1962) and M.K. Naik (1997), he deals with problems and concepts beyond Indian literature in English, including issues such as modernity, diaspora, colonialism, orientalism, national identity, creativity, popular culture, together with the idea of Indian literature and the problems of Indian novelists.

Part II includes only one essay on the genre of drama, albeit one of the most important pieces in the collection. It shows the deep connections between Kailasam's Kannada plays and his English plays. In fact, most of the articles in this section can be turned into topics for significant advanced research in the area of Indian literature in English. However, one wonders why there is only one contribution on theatre when Amur has written extensively on another Indian playwright in English, Girish Karnad. Karnad does write his plays in Kannada first, but then translates them into English himself, and is therefore considered to be an Indian writer in English.

Part III, which includes in-depth studies on the Indian English novel, is the most extensive and pedagogic section in the book. It evidences Amur's close reading of the novels of prominent authors, and includes his altogether different, unorthodox but perfectly valid (and valuable), interpretation of Narayan's novels. Special mention must be made of his reading of *The Guide*, the most widely read Indian novel in English, in the essay 'A Saint for Malgudi: A New Look at R.K. Narayan's *The Guide*', from the point of view of "human possibilities for self-recovery and self-transcendence" (255). In another essay, 'R.K. Narayan in His Own Culture: An Approach to *The Vendor of Sweets*', Amur offers an entirely new reading of the text to underscore the point that Narayan is firmly rooted in his own culture:

> Narayan's characters are controlled by values and ideas originating in their own culture, though their actual understanding of these values and ideas and their relationship with them reveal a high degree of complexity and demand a variety of modes of expressions, ranging from the comic to the serious. The most important of these concepts are the *purusharthas* (*dharma, artha, kama* and *moksh*) and *Ashramadharmas* (*brahmacharya, grahasthya, vanaprastha* and *sanyasa*), concepts unique to Hindu culture and the Hindu way of life. An awareness of how these concepts appear in Narayan's work is, I feel, essential for a proper understanding of it. (257-58)

In both readings of Narayan's work, Amur's concern is to probe into what constitutes a meaningful life —the most important question for the Indian character, whether reader, writer or scholar. This is what makes Amur a very Indian critic, his endeavor to resist a Western framework in the reading of literary texts and his engagement with the deeper concerns of philosophical problems. Peter Nazareth describes him as "an example of the best produced by the Hindu intellectual tradition —the capacity to be a true comparatist without losing the judgment of a literary critic" (qtd. in Amur 2012: 621).

Another key article in this section is 'Individual Consciousness and Social Reality in Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* and Shivaram Karanth's *Chomana Dudi*'. It is not only an illustration of Amur's approach to Indian literature in English as being part of Indian literature, but also a fine example of the development of an argument through the comparative study of literary texts from the same culture. The connections he makes between the canonical Indian writer in English, Mulk Raj Anand, and Shivaram Karantha, the most celebrated Kannada novelist, is typical of Amur's engagement with literary texts. Few literary critics in India have fashioned their approach in this mode; they have often, according to Amur's own observation, "tended to consider it [Indian Literature in English] in isolation, as though it was totally unrelated to writing in regional languages" (198). Amur's studies on Raja Rao are equally important. 'Self-Recognition in *The Serpent and The Rope*' offers a new reading of Raja Rao's metaphysical novel, and other essays on Rao's fiction included here have become valuable reference sources for scholars and students working in this area.

A further value of the book is the fact that it is not simply a collection of academic essays, but rather an attempt to build a theory of literature and provide an opportunity for the readers to engage themselves with the discipline, which has many promises to keep. For instance, Amur reveals his position about the creative possibility of English for Indian authors like Kailasam: "Kailasam, perhaps, thought that his lasting contribution in the field of literature were the English plays, . . . but his surest claims to immortality are, undoubtedly, the epoch making plays in Kannada, where he does achieve originality as well as greatness. *If this has a moral for all Indian writers seeking creative expression in English, well, it is a moral, which deserves to be shown a great deal of respect*" (173, emphasis added).

The mark of intellectual sophistication and profound scholarship is evident in the pages of the volume. In a way, the collection can be read as a short history of Indian literature in English, in the sense that it covers the major authors and trends, without simply offering a catalogue, a tendency one finds in many literary histories. In terms of academic standards, Amur's careful documentation and the range of references are models for Indian scholars. The para-textual evidence reveals the kind of research undertaken when reading texts. Furthermore, the meticulously prepared index at the end of the book is invaluable as a quick reference source.

Since most essays in the volume are reviews, the author, in keeping with the requirements of the genre, places each book in its context, not only describing its relevance but also offering guidance for reading. Amur has always been very conscious of his use of language, and this tendency seems to have grown with his career as a critic. His accessible style avoids

poststructuralist and postcolonial jargon, even though his work deals with many issues to be found in these areas.

On the whole, the book makes a rich contribution to the study of Indian literature in English through its broad scope and scrutiny of groundbreaking texts and issues, and offers a series of acute analytical observations and proposals for further study. In engaging with writers from the early period to the most recent, Amur shows not only his continual commitment to the field of Indian literature in English, but also his love for truly intellectual pursuits. My sole criticism is that a book of this nature, a collection of reviews and essays written over a period, would greatly benefit from a critical introduction, which would orient the reader towards the link between the variety of themes, issues and texts discussed. The Preface shows the author's own awareness of this: "I have tried to create the illusion of a solid book but there are obvious omissions, imbalances and inadequacies which readers and critics will easily notice" (x).

In recent times, literary criticism has lost ground to cultural theory, and some academics, especially in English Studies, might be faulted for 'dabbling' in the social sciences, without a thorough grounding in either these or in literary theory. The literary criticism that gave a central place to human experience in literature seems to have disappeared from the scene. Terry Eagleton, whose works are associated with literary theory, bemoans in his *After Theory* the neglect of human content in the study of literary texts (2003: 101-02). In many of its pieces, *Transgression* does give place to what Eagleton calls "a large slice of human experience" (2003: 102). It certainly acts as a companion to Indian literature in English; it will be of immense help to teachers who offer courses in Indian literature in English and to students of English Studies. The style is highly readable, as page-turning as that of the master storytellers Amur deals with in his book, making the reading of *Transgressions* a thoroughly enjoyable experience.

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Nota

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